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**IDEOLOGY, RHETORIC AND THE POLITICS OF BUREAUCRACY:
EXPLORING WOMEN AND DEVELOPMENT**

by

ROBIN G. ISSERLES

**A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Sociology in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York**

2002

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ABSTRACT**IDEOLOGY, RHETORIC AND THE POLITICS OF BUREAUCRACY:
EXPLORING WOMEN AND DEVELOPMENT**

by

ROBIN G. ISSERLES**Adviser: Professor Robert R. Alford**

This dissertation examines the changing rhetoric and practices in the area of Women and Development, treating development as an ideological concept operating within bureaucratic constraints. Over the decade, there has been a noticeable shift in the development discourse of the major international development institutions. There has been a growing reliance on rhetoric that is consistent with popular concerns—the environment, women and human rights. The language and stated objectives of the mainstream dominant institutions and more activist-oriented NGOs have to a large extent converged. Has this rhetorical shift signified a change in development practice or is it merely a gap between what is said and what is done? My conclusions are that it is both and neither. The shift in rhetoric has had an impact in changing or altering some practices. But for the most part, the rhetoric has not altered the basic ideological commitment to economic growth.

This investigation was carried out at three levels of analysis. At the policy level, I relied on a textual analysis of the mandates produced at the four international UN conferences on women, spanning from 1975-1995. At the institutional level, I drew heavily from six months of fieldwork I conducted at UNIFEM, the United Nations Development Fund for Women. At the program level, I examined Microcredit, critically reviewing the literature and incorporating material from interviews of development specialists involved in the creation, implementation or evaluation of Microcredit programs.

At each level I demonstrated an important dialectical relationship. As radical ideas become more visible and more legitimized, they become institutionalized and routinized, thus losing their radical thrust. This is both an imperative to affect change, and at the same time, it is a way for the mainstream institutions to hold onto their hegemony. The mainstream co-opts the radical rhetoric from outside, so that its power and dominance are maintained. Thus, the rhetoric of development interests shift, which is not entirely insignificant, but at the core, the practices of development remain basically the same. This dialectical relationship is central to understanding the politics of development thought and practices in the context of women.

To my parents,

Ruth and George Isserles

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I was first introduced to the political economy of development and feminist theory in my second year of graduate study. Since that time, I have sought to bridge these two interests in a way that advances both areas of inquiry. This dissertation has attempted to do just that.

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CHAPTER ONE

“DEVELOPMENT” AS IDEOLOGICAL AND BUREAUCRATIC CONCEPT

The concept “development” encompasses many related components: the history of ideas, actual social, economic and political changes as well as assumptions about progress. Little attention, however, has been paid to how the various meanings of “development” are related to these other abstractions and processes. Both the dominant meaning and the measure of “development” have been economic growth. Even alternative and critical visions of development, as I shall show, rely upon economistic meanings. Although critical rhetoric sometimes signals a movement away from economic measures, non-economic objectives have seldom been realized in practice, and generally return to economic concerns. The consequence, I shall argue, is a limited understanding of what it means to be a “developed” society and a narrow conception of progress. So much about this term is either taken for granted or ignored that we are often left with a teleological metaphor: a developed society mimics certain unquestioned characteristics of the First World.

The major concern guiding this project is a critique of the ideology of “development”. The institutionalized assumptions underlying the theories of development will be investigated. The focus is on the influence of certain ideological commitments on the design of and strategies for implementing development projects. The evidence will be the language utilized in the assessment of the problems of development and proposed solutions, budget and finances, institutional decisions and program design in one particular area, that of women and development. The evidence includes mandates issued by UN sponsored conferences on development and women over the last 25 years; fieldwork I conducted at the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM); and in-depth interviews with individuals who have worked for various international development institutions, especially in the program area of Microcredit.

This chapter introduces the analytic frame that guides this research project. First, I will introduce the working concept of ideology that directs this research endeavor, presenting development as an ideological term. Then, I will discuss the disjuncture between the rhetoric and reality of development planning. There is a gap between what the major development institutions claim, and what is actually done. Third, I will discuss the analytic frame that organizes this entire project as well as the discipline of development studies and I will explain three levels of analysis; the policy level, institutional level and the program/project level. Fourth I will discuss my methodology.

There have been few explorations of the ideological framework of development institutions and their practices. Much of the research seems to treat development as an objective, non-evaluative economic, political and social process. The status of the First World as a set of developed societies remains unquestioned, thereby creating the expectation that a developed society is one which looks like a First World one. The agents of development are sometimes criticized as driven by hard-line cost benefit analyses and profit motives, resulting in the destruction of land and lives, but the very concept of development itself is rarely questioned.

Ideology: A Working Concept

At the heart of this project is the concept of ideology. I take a broad view of ideology, addressing the assumptions and operating principles underlying “development” and its cognates and synonyms. Unfortunately, a study of ideology cannot easily break -- almost by definition-- from the parameters of ordinary language usage. Terms that I will employ throughout this research are permeated with ideology. For example, phrases like “mainstream development institutions” or the “development specialists” imply a certain set of taken-for-granted assumptions. The terms “First World” and “Third World” are ideological concepts used throughout the development discourse. I use them with a certain warranted discomfort, as they refer to problematic categorical and evaluative distinctions.

Some quasi-synonyms are also quite revealing as to how the concept “development” is constructed. Terms such as “modernization”, “industrialization”, “progress” and of course, “economic growth”, are used as descriptive concepts and as synonyms for development throughout the discourse. The assumed correlation between these terms and development, reveals an ideological commitment to a particular notion of development. What is interesting and important is that such commitment is found in both the mainstream renderings as well as alternative articulations.

For Antonio Gramsci, ideology is a world-view that is explicitly or implicitly present in all aspects of human social life. Ideology is “a conception of the world that is implicitly manifest in art, in law in economic activity and in all manifestations of individual and collective life” (1971:328). This concept of the world pervades all of social life, becoming the justification for all human activity. For Gramsci, the particular content of ideology is class bound, though it extends beyond the single class through the process of class struggle. Ideology is a concrete form of social knowledge, not a formal system of ideas and concepts unified by a particular logic. It is the knowledge of how to conduct everyday life, the abstract principles that justify and rationalize (“naturalize”) concrete human activity.

I rely primarily on Gramsci’s notions of ideology --ideology as lived relations and world-view. Gramsci argued that knowledge production is transmitted more through consent than through coercion. The existence of institutions in civil society supports the “naturalness” of the overarching ideology, so that it maintains its power (“hegemony”, in his term). I argue that a particular dominant ideology has become the skeletal framework for the general concepts and meanings of development. The categories utilized in development planning reflect this dominant ideology, though advocates and practitioners are reluctant to acknowledge this as ideological. Instead, it is considered natural, as if from some divine or better yet, scientific source. The way this hegemonic class of development practitioners and institutions maintains its dominance is through appropriating and co-opting the interests and

concerns raised from those outside—grassroots activists and marginalized groups who have struggled against the ideological dominance of development as economic growth.

Relating this concept to development, Pantojas-Garcia draws on Marx and Gramsci, arguing that “[a] development strategy is an ideological representation of a particular mode of capital accumulation” (1990:3). This strategy comes from a particular class coalition that directs the productive and reproductive processes in society according to its own interests. This class presents its own political project as representative of all of society, a reference to Gramsci’s notion of hegemony. Garcia rejects the technocratic notion that development strategies are neutral policies promoted by the state for the benefit of all society. Rather, they are part of the political project of class coalitions. In my terms, the concepts and practices of development at the policy, institutional and program/project levels are ideological constructions, expressing the interests of global capital but appearing to be unchallenged and universal constructs, and incorporating popular rhetoric to maintain its hegemony.

Garcia argues that ideology is produced in the process of class struggle, in which ruling classes impose their dominance through both coercion and persuasion. For Gramsci, if the dominant ideology is the ideology of the ruling class, then subordinated classes are immersed in the ideological categories of the ruling class. But, even as a dominant ideology is imposed through class struggle, subordinate classes develop their own ideology, expressing both a potential challenge to and repression of this imposition. This becomes particularly relevant to this research project. The subordinate classes, in the context of development, may be considered the supposed beneficiaries of development and those who work and speak with as well as on behalf of them. Alternative ideologies to the dominant exist, but rather than undermining the hegemonic model, become integrated into and co-opted by the dominant model. I will show how this happens at each of the three levels of analysis.

In the context of development, Garcia discusses the distinction between what organizations say about development and what they actually do. In Garcia's terms, there is a difference between the implementation of a particular political strategy, claiming to represent benefits to the whole society, a claim necessary to get support and legitimacy. He argues that development strategies make up the ideological terrain where the superiority of certain strategies is determined.

These processes are seen in the relations among various international development actors. That is, development specialists are constrained to operate within a particular capitalist framework. Evaluations, assessments and critical judgments about the benefits and costs of development programs and projects are defined and measured according to its precepts. Over the last forty years, at least, we have witnessed the rise in activism of non-governmental organizations, or NGOs (as well as other grassroots activists) which generally express their practical concerns in qualitative terms using very different notions of "value" than those of the specialists, representing the dominant ideology. Such challenges have come from, among other places, the global women's movement, which has pressured mainstream development agencies to make women visible in policies, institutions and programs.

Contradictions are manifest in many of the inconsistencies I have uncovered throughout this research. For example, the discourse of many of the major international development institutions has shifted over the last twenty years to focus on very popular concerns-- environmental concerns, gender concerns, and human rights, for example. I argue that this shift has occurred in order to maintain the legitimacy of these institutions, especially in the face of growing international criticism and condemnation. There is a convergence of language and objectives between the mainstream dominant institutions like the World Bank and the UNDP, and the more activist-oriented NGOs. For the most part, as will be shown in the following chapters, though the language (i.e., the rhetoric) has shifted, such new concerns have not altered the traditional thinking and policy orientation. Thus, for

example, statements of environmental concern have not hampered growth, industrialization, or privatization, but rather have enhanced these ideological commitments and their translation into programs and projects. This has also been true in the case of gender. And it is precisely this co-opting of rhetoric that allows the ideological commitments to economic growth to continue.

Development as an Ideological Construct

The concept of “development”, it has been argued, originated as an ideological concern (Escobar 1995). In 1949, President Truman’s inaugural speech centered on world poverty as a political issue. Truman argued that people living in miserable conditions were easy prey for Communism and so should be helped by those who were more “developed”. Evoking the precepts of Modernization theory (see Chapter Two), Truman believed that the countries that were further along the path of development were closer to realizing their full potential (Caufield 1996: 48; Escobar 1995: 24). When Robert McNamara began his tenure at the World Bank in 1968, he stated “our ultimate goal is to help...create a political, social, and economic environment in which individual men and women can more freely develop their own highest potential”(as cited in Caufield 1996: 97). Whereas previous Bank presidents saw development as primarily an issue of international stability, McNamara characterized development as an ethical issue, arguing that the rich have a moral obligation to assist the poor. As for Truman, this moral obligation arose largely out of a fear that the poor would succumb to Communism. James Wolfensohn, the president of the World Bank since 1995, is quoted on the World Bank website defining the institution’s mission:

If we act now with realism and foresight, if we show courage, if we think globally and allocate our resources accordingly, we can give our children a more peaceful and equitable world. One where suffering will be reduced. Where children everywhere will have a sense of hope. This is not just a dream. It is our responsibility¹.

¹ <http://www.worldbank.org/ourdream/>

Interestingly, the rhetorical connection made by Truman and McNamara, and currently Wolfensohn, between development and the realization of potential, is far more radical than the actual practices of development that are being implemented. In the past the alleged goal was to help Third World countries develop so that they would not fall under Soviet control. More recently, the ideological themes revolve around creating market economies which will reinforce capitalism (an assumed good), and of course, democracy. In every period, however, both the rhetoric and the reality of development have been contained within definite ideological commitments, though the particular claims and visions have changed over time.

The following questions highlight some of the implicit and explicit assumptions lying beneath the ideological construction of development: How is progress conceptualized? Who are the actors involved in development and how are they constructed? Who benefits from development and how? What aspects of social life are considered important for development and what role do these criteria play in the theories? More generally how will the current post-colonial relationship play itself out as we enter the next century?

Critical Review of "Development" as an Ideological Concept

In 1966, Irving Louis Horowitz wrote, *Three Worlds of Development: The Theory and Practice of International Stratification*. He argued that the modern era does not exhibit two opposing ideological frameworks competing for world dominance, but rather a shared ideology, arising from Western culture. Within this common ideology there are competing approaches. At that time, this view was fairly radical. He wrote: "We are now in the age dominated by a common industrial ideology which is just as much the property of the Soviet Union as it is of the West" (1966:63). Horowitz located this shared industrial ideology in the Western notion of human development resulting from scientific achievement. He goes on to say that "[t]he definition of economic development in terms of per capita output and rates of capital investment has become standard currency for both

“Marxian” and “Keynesian” economists” (1966:63-64). What is important about this statement is that it captures the standardization of the concept ‘development’, locating the struggle not between East and West or Capitalism and Communism, but between two different styles of Western thought. I would argue further that these two different styles maintain that economic growth and productive activity are central defining elements in this common and general image of development.

Horowitz’s work highlights two very important points that require greater attention. First, what constitutes development has become normalized. That is, the ideological struggle is not between fundamentally competing claims. Rather, a shared ideology derives from the Western philosophical traditions that justify industrialization and accumulation. Development is then defined in terms of the First World. It is a teleological definition where development is equivalent to what the First World represents, a construct often simply taken for granted. Second, Horowitz calls for greater attention to the problems of overdevelopment, which could help us to link the technical, economic, and human aspects of progress. Horowitz cites C. Wright Mills’ “The Problem of Industrial Development”² where Mills uses the terms ‘overdevelopment’ and ‘underdevelopment’. He defines overdevelopment as a society in which the maldistribution of material wealth contributes to the underutilization of human skills, and thus human potential. The overdeveloped society has the technical capacity to satisfy basic human needs, but lacks the “social instrumentalities to utilize such a capacity” (1966: 70).

Maria Mies similarly prefers the concepts ‘overdevelopment’ and ‘underdevelopment’ which are “two extreme poles of an inherently exploitative world order, divided up and yet linked by the global accumulation process or the world market” (1986: 39). The core problem derives from the natural precepts of capitalism, based upon limitless growth and expansion. Thus, no growth is ever enough; there is always and

² Irving Louis Horowitz (ed.), *Power, Politics and People: The Collected Papers of C. Wright Mills* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1963)

naturally a quest for more, which she argues, is “progressively destructive”. By conceptualizing development in this way, Mies hopes to move away from the idea that the problems of underdevelopment could be solved by conventional development aid or by creating the Third World in the image of the First.

In 1995, Arturo Escobar published *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World*. Throughout the work, Escobar is critical of the dominance of the hegemonic ideology when he writes “reality, in sum, had been colonized by the development discourse...” (1995: 5). He is interested in uncovering the discursive aspects of development; the forms of knowledge that refer to it, the system of power that regulates its practice, and the forms of subjectivity fostered by the discourse (1995: 10). He argues that these aspects are all dominated by Western constructions of what development means and ought to be. This Western-dominated knowledge system has effectively marginalized and devalued other knowledge systems. This critique has been voiced by some advocates working within the area of women and development, and will be discussed further in Chapter Three.

Escobar writes “[a] type of development was promoted which conformed to the ideas and expectations of the affluent West, to what the Western countries judged to be a normal course of evolution and progress” (1995: 26). In other words, this knowledge system and the accompanying representations have been a way to normalize the capitalist world—hardly a non-ideological endeavor.

According to Escobar, in one of its first reports in 1948, the World Bank defined as poor those countries with an annual per capita income below \$100. In doing so, two-thirds of the world’s people were transformed into “poor” subjects, marking a restructuring of colonial relationships. Following the framework of modernization theory, the problem was identified as one of insufficient income, and the solution understood as economic growth (1995: 24). For Escobar, the system of representation was that development through economic growth became seen as the only way to reach the desired state of modernization

and this would happen through technology and industrialization. “The unquestioned desirability of economic growth was...closely linked to the revitalized faith in science and technology” (1995: 38). This, of course, assumes that the lack of material and technological advancement in the Third World means that such category of countries have not experienced “development”. Thus, this new post-colonial discourse of development was that poor countries ought to mirror themselves after rich countries³. It became the function of governments and international organizations like the World Bank and the specialized development agencies of the United Nations, to take an active part in doing what was necessary to overcome the “backwardness” of the non-West, and set them on the path toward development (1995: 40).

Escobar argues that elements such as capital formation, technology, population and resources, monetary and fiscal policies, industrialization, agricultural development, commerce and trade, and education came to be associated with development, and embodied in the institutions and practices of development (1995: 40). This system of knowledge, according to Escobar, created its own abnormalities-- the “illiterate”, the “underdeveloped”, the “hungry” and “malnourished”, which the institutions would later treat and reform. In fact, “indigenous populations had to be ‘modernized’, where modernization meant the adoption of the “right” values, namely, those held by the white minority or a mestizo majority and, in general, those embodied in the ideal of the cultivated European...” (1995: 43).

To explain the emphasis on capital accumulation in the discourse, Escobar articulates a complex set of relations of technology, new financial institutions, systems of classifications (i.e., GNP or GDP), decision-making systems (national accounting systems and allocation of public resources), modes of knowledge and international factors. Escobar

³This way of thinking about the Third World was different from that of the colonial relationship. Colonialism was marked by the overriding goals of securing cheap labor and raw materials. The thinking did not include the possibility that the Third World could and should become like the West (Caufield 1996: 48).

argues that at the time, the development economists had a privileged position in this set of complex relations, so that even alternatives were framed in this developmentalist perspective.

Development was-- and continues to be for the most part-- a top-down, ethnocentric, and technocratic approach, which treated people and cultures as abstract concepts, statistical figures to be moved up and down in the charts of 'progress'. Development was conceived not as a cultural process (culture was a residual variable, to disappear with the advance of modernization) but instead as a system of more or less universally applicable technical interventions intended to deliver some "badly needed" goods to a "target" population. It comes as no surprise that development became a force so destructive to Third World cultures, ironically in the name of people's interests. (1995: 44).

Furthermore, for Escobar, development was treated as a science, which meant that it could be conceived as objective and neutral. Thus experts would be able to identify and classify problems, as well as formulate policies which would fit societies into a pre-existing model embodying the structures and functions of modernity (1995: 52).

Escobar stresses the importance of perceiving economics as a cultural discourse, bringing it out of its own neutral location to which economists and scientists cling. Economics and thus development need to be viewed as historical contingencies, not natural occurrences.

As a discourse, development is thus a very real historical formation, albeit articulated around an artificial construct (underdevelopment) and upon a certain materiality (the conditions baptized as underdevelopment), which must be conceptualized in different ways if the power of the development discourse is to be challenged or displaced (1995: 53).

In fact, Escobar proposes that we *anthropologize* Western economics and development thinking, in order to see these formations as cultural-historical productions. He argues that the language and social relations of modern life have become entirely permeated by the discourses of production and the market (1995: 60) and one way to counter this is to view economics as a cultural formation, rather than an objective science. He stresses that to do this, one has to be open to the possibility that there might exist other models and other meanings that have been marginalized under the hegemony of Western modern economics. Thus, making the West 'exotic' will remove it from its position as the standard.

Defining development as an “anthropology of modernity”, Escobar characterizes development as a culturally constructed notion of what the good life is and what it is not. Development thinking has come to rely upon certain representations of what the Third World is supposed to mean, and these have had a great impact on prescribed programs and projects. He is highly critical not only of the Western construction of the entire world system, including the Third World, but the fact that such a construction is not acknowledged, even by those critical of mainstream development thinking. Representations of the Third World as poverty-stricken, famine-laden, overpopulated, backward and traditional, have been used to justify the development industry of Western or Western-trained advisors and practitioners, who are assumed to carry sufficient knowledge and expertise for ‘what is to be done’. The West has successfully normalized the discourse, and this standardization needs to be unraveled.

By constructing the underdeveloped economy as characterized by a vicious circle of low productivity, lack of capital, and inadequate industrialization, development economists contributed to a view of reality in which the only things that counted were increased savings, growth rates, attracting foreign capital, developing industrial capacity and so on. This excluded the possibility of articulating a view of social change as a project that could be conceived of not only in economic terms but as a whole life project, in which the material aspects would be not the goal and the limit but a space of possibilities for broader individual and collective endeavors, culturally defined (Escobar 1995:83).

In a similar way, James Ferguson, in his study of development projects in Lesotho suggested that, “both the “development establishment” *and* many of its most articulate critics accept that a rural development project does in fact—for better or for worse—bring about some sort of “development”, some sort of economic transformation toward a well-defined end point” (1990:15—italics in original). So, the notion of what development is, is shared by several different development actors. This says a lot about the ideological construction of development.

In “The Political Meanings of Development: In Search of New Horizons”, David Slater argues that we need to rely on a critical approach to development, rethinking the state in relation to civil society and the economy.

The point here, however, is that within the official discourse of the World Bank, IMF and a broad range of related international organisations, one rarely if ever encounters a discussion around the need to *rethink the private sector*; in other words, the market, free trade and investment, the functioning of capitalist enterprises, the politics of accumulation and so on are predominantly protected from any questioning critique. Furthermore, it is not only the absence of a critical consideration of the economic system that needs to be mentioned but also the nature of the underlying political philosophy that governs the conceptualisation of the economic, breathing life into an often hidden but crucial definition of the individual and of ‘human development’ (1993: 95, italics in original).

According to Slater, there is a need to challenge the assumptions that claim the market is unequivocally virtuous. Viewing the market as sacred and the individual imbued with possessiveness has a particular history, which can be traced back to the 17th century. The fundamental maxims were then and still are the maximization of production and consumption. Thus, modernization is characterized by the possessive individual centered on consumption. Slater hopes that by tracing back the dominant view of the panacea of the market to the origin of ideas on property and individualism, we will move away from seeing these constructs as “the settled nature of today’s politically given” (1993: 107). Uncovering the historical origins of these concepts and assumptions thus reveals the ideological formations of the current discourse.

Like Escobar, Slater argues that the critique of development has been short sighted in that there still exists a need to “deconstruct that imaginary edifice called the Western world” (1993: 99). To do this, we must view the First World as “other”, what Escobar refers to as anthropologizing. Slater says we need to disrupt the conventional meanings which gives the West its apparent normalcy and correctness.

In the evaluation of societies, one could think of a series of factors that would make a Tanzania or a Tunisia more developed than the United States: violent crime rates, levels of drug abuse, treatment of the elderly, the value of community, etc. From the advent of slavery, through the ‘modernising innovation’ of colonialism to the barbarism of Fascism and the machine-

like violence of today's serial killer...the dark side of the Occident can be brought into focus (1993: 100).

While he is not suggesting a simple reversal of good and bad, right and wrong, the complex diversity of the experiences of the South should be emphasized as a counter to "the ethnocentric flattening of Third World reality into a series of stale stereotypes" (1993: 100).

Slater suggests that the kind of development that is now taking place, especially the practices of the World Bank, is antagonistic to the realization of human potential and flourishing, and inimical to democratization. He takes this further and calls for a change in the discourse. Slater suggests we find another meaning of development in the context of resistance and democratic innovation. He argues we should consider the reverse discourses of emancipation where there exists a different set of operating principles which stress virtues like responsibility for human rights and for the environment, for difference, and for emancipation from oppression, exploitation and subjection.

If development is seen as inscribed in these reverse discourses, then its meaning can be evocative of an emancipatory imagery. Rather than 'counter-identify' and dismiss development because of the specific way it is articulated in the orthodox discourses of the international system, we can think of ways in which development can be recast in a quite new kind of project (1993: 108).

In Chapter Seven, I suggest rethinking the concept of development as "human flourishing", and introduce a feminist inspired ideological paradigm which I am calling a Political Culture of Care. Though I am sympathetic to Slater's proposals, a call for a new set of operating principles should be more than rhetorical. The mainstream development institutions have already heeded that call and have cleaned up their image by speaking the language of human rights, sustainability and gender. Such rhetorical shifts must be supported by real policy, institutional and program/project changes, but evidence of "real" changes is so far scant.

From a feminist standpoint, Vandana Shiva has identified some important gendered ideological elements to development. In her book *Staying Alive: Women, Ecology and Development*, Shiva argues that what is usually considered "productive" is that which is

created by technological management for commodity production. So, the labor by women using a stable and clean river for water needs is not considered “productive” unless dams are built or engineers are used. Development is maldevelopment for labor that does not produce profit. While Shiva tends to essentialize women and nature in a problematic way, some of her arguments are very compelling. She defines maldevelopment as the domination of man over nature and woman, thus any activity, productivity and creativity associated with the feminine are expropriated and transformed to the qualities of man. “From being the creators and sustainers of life, nature and women are reduced to being ‘resources’ in the fragmented, anti-life model of maldevelopment” (1989:6) Women are devalued because of their association with nature and because their work satisfies needs other than profit and accumulation.

She goes on to argue that for Third World women, productivity is measured by the (re)production of life and sustenance. For mainstream development, productivity is measured by profit. When commodity production is the main economic activity, and defined as “development”, it destroys the potential of nature and women to produce life and goods and services for basic needs. “More commodities and more cash mean less life-- in nature (through ecological destruction) and in society (through denial of basic needs)” (1989:7). Countering the hegemony of the goals of productivity and growth, she argues that they are not necessarily positive, progressive or universal. From the point of view of nature and women, she argues, these terms and the practices they lead to are dangerous, and destructive. For example, the overfelling of trees in the pursuit of industrialization, has created more labor for women as they often have to travel much further for fuel and fodder-- a difference of a few hours to a few days. “What patriarchy sees as productive work, is, in ecological terms highly destructive production” (1989:9). The ideology of development, Shiva points out, brings natural resources into the market economy for commodity production. When this happens, it usually results in scarcity, affecting those who are left out of the market due to the intrinsic inequality of the market.

Poverty is automatically linked with undevelopment, and thus what is lacking is capital, markets, industrialization, technology, bureaucracy, and entrepreneurial values. The failure of countries to experience growth in recent times is considered to be the consequence of internal problems, like bad governance, corruption, waste, inefficiency⁴. The solution, then, becomes increased intervention by foreign specialists. A rather ironic twist is revealed in the case of mainstream development institutions like the World Bank and UN development agencies. Both have constitutions that forbid them from intervening in national politics, and the political sovereignty of the nation-state. That these institutions do not consider restructuring the economy or devaluing currency to be “political” interventions is an excellent example of the ways ideologies are embedded in policies and practices.

Shiva distinguishes between subsistence and deprivation, arguing that subsistence economies which satisfy basic needs through self-provisioning are not poor in the sense of being deprived. However, the conventional development discourse declares them poor because they are not part of the global market economy, and thus do not consume what has been produced for that market. People are considered poor (and thus “undeveloped”) if they eat millets grown by women rather than processed food sold by agri-businesses. They are seen as poor and undeveloped if they live in self-made houses of bamboo rather than cement houses. So, in this sense, subsistence is ideologically constructed “poverty”, even though subsistence living may be healthier, more adapted to the environment, more ecologically sound, and simply preferred. “This cultural perception of prudent subsistence living as poverty has provided the legitimacy for the development process as a poverty removal project” (1989: 10). Shiva asserts that poverty is actually created as a result of economic development, not cured by it. In fact, basic needs were often met before development projects were “imposed”. “The paradox and crisis of development arises from the mistaken identification of culturally perceived poverty with real material poverty,

⁴ This was a central argument in a 1994 World Bank report entitled, *Africa, Adjustment in Africa: Reforms, Results and the Road Ahead*.

and the mistaken identification of the growth of commodity production as better satisfaction of basic needs”(1989: 13). Shiva is challenging the basic contrast between developed and undeveloped society as the basis of an arbitrary criterion.

Samir Amin has argued that development “is by nature ideological” (1995: 11). He describes the teleological way in which development is practiced, allowing one to “judge” results according to criteria that have been drawn up a priori. These same criteria contribute to the definition of the social project of development. He goes on to argue that development institutions propose ways of helping capital to expand and subsequently identify the results as development. Development becomes inextricably linked to human activities that foster capital expansion.

These works demonstrate that development ideologies are not just important on the theoretical level. Ideologies also shape what characteristics of a society are fostered or challenged and which policies and programs are implemented, because they are viewed as most likely to bring about desired effects. But, there are dominant and subordinate ideological positions. The dominant ideology of development has remained fairly stable over the last fifty years, though the rhetoric has shifted. As I shall show, there are both ideological and bureaucratic reasons for the shift in rhetoric.

Identification of the Dominant Ideology of Development

How is the dominant ideology of development defined and constructed in this research project? It shares many of its components with the ideological foundations of capitalism. It represents a particular expression of laissez-faire, neo-liberal capitalism with all its social, economic, political and moral associations. The fundamental assumption is that capitalism is the only way to achieve development. I will refer to this in the following chapters as the “capitalist modernization project”.

The dominant ideology of development views development strategy as a technical construct that guides the process of economic growth and progress. This process does not consider political conflict or competing interests. Its appearance as neutral and universal

(Garcia 1990) is at the heart of the dominant ideology of development. The other components include a linear notion of progress, from “backwards” and undeveloped to developed. Since economic measures define and determine the state of development, there is a purely quantitative image of what is development.

The ideological commitments to neo-liberal economics are pervasive. Such commitments dictate the research questions and strategies followed by development specialists. One of the cornerstones of this development ideology is the centrality of economic growth. Countries are encouraged to improve their productive resources in order to experience growth, measured as Gross Domestic Product (GDP)⁵. It is believed that industrialization, through technology, privatization, foreign investment, and/or currency devaluation, will lead to market-led growth. If this growth is market led, the extinction of local businesses, rise in consumer prices, and ecological damage, for example, are acceptable costs in the pursuit of development. In a 1994 World Bank report on Africa, poverty and hunger are viewed as problems of governance, ethnic conflict, or ill-conceived economic policies such as state subsidies and state owned and operated industries. The possibility that foreign investment and subsequent land acquisition by multi-national corporations like the Dole corporation in Kenya, may lead to higher rates of hunger escapes any criticism, or even notice (Lappe, More and Rosset 1998). In fact, it is assumed that hunger is a result of government inefficiency. The market is not at fault, but rather the cure.

This market-led growth is then justified as enabling democracy. Capitalism and democracy (defined in narrow formal terms) go hand in hand with a parallel image of freedom. Freedom becomes defined politically by certain formal rights (the right to vote, the right to free speech and to a privately-owned press, etc.). Economic freedoms are defined by the existence of free markets-- the right to pursue profit, and the right to accumulate wealth.

⁵ Though the GDP is the standard measure of economic growth, this measure is quite inadequate and misleading. For example, GDP says little about how such income is distributed, and the measure does not include costs of growth, like pollution. See among others Clifford Cobb, Ted Halstead and Jonathan Rowe. “If the GDP is Up, Why is America Down?”, *Atlantic Monthly* 276, no. 4. (October 1995).

Such economic freedoms do not include the right to food, to safe housing, to clean water, and other basic necessities. These are not constituted as “rights”, but implicitly seen as privileges, relying on a Darwinian-individualist rationale for their unequal distribution. Following the precepts of neo-liberal economics, individuals are considered to be rational actors, pursuing benefits and minimizing costs all of the time. Core values are private property, the pursuit of profit, and the end product over the process. This masculinist notion of the individual has been criticized by feminist economists⁶.

More recently, this ideology includes an emphasis on self-sufficiency and independence, as will be shown in Chapter Six in the discussion of Microcredit. Again, drawing on elements of Social Darwinism, the assumption is that individuals should compete for survival. According to this ideology, humans are by nature “competitive” beings. If they are poor, it must be a culture-bound problem holding them back rather than a structural one. To support this competitive ethic institutionally, meritocracy plays an important role, and at times there are provisions for “equalizing the playing fields” so that the meritocracy can function more legitimately and more efficiently.

At the country level, this ideology justifies what is known as Comparative Advantage. Each country is presumed to have the resources (productive and/or natural) to succeed in at least one type of productive activity. The global economy will work most efficiently, it is believed, if each country focuses its productive energies on its identified strengths, thus enabling it to be a trading player in the global economy. For many Caribbean countries, for example, their identified strengths have been cash-crop production and tourism. Development projects sponsored by the World Bank and other international institutions have encouraged them to pursue these productive activities. Considerable evidence has shown that in the endeavor to create a world of comparative advantage, developing nations pressured to commit most of their productive resources (land use, labor,

⁶ Marianne Ferber and Julie Nelson, *Beyond Economic Man: Feminist Theory and Economics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993).

machinery, etc.) to export production have neglected the production of food crops for internal consumption. The resulting need to import food has caused both prices and hunger to increase. Similarly, countries which have expanded their tourist industry have often over-used land, causing ecological devastation. Development seen solely as market led growth has had devastating human consequences⁷.

These neo-liberal ideas and policies have been labeled the “Washington Consensus”, or the mainstream development discourse. This discourse underlies the principles of the US Federal Treasury, the government body most influential in the decisions of the World Bank and the IMF, the two most prominent international development agencies. This Washington Consensus has been in place since the Reagan administration, and was largely supported by Margaret Thatcher, during her tenure as Prime Minister of Great Britain. It has continued unabated throughout the 1990s under the leadership of President Clinton and Prime Minister Blair. As many leaders and economic advisors of Third World countries have been educated and trained in U.S. and British universities, they, too, espouse the neo-liberal creed. The United Nations development agencies seem to be less enthralled and committed to the neo-liberal development ideology and practice, as do many of the Scandinavian countries, and international non-governmental organizations. I shall argue that their dissent has affected the rhetoric of development more than the practice. At the same time, the mere fact of its predominance also makes this neo-liberal consensus more vulnerable to critique and attack. The growing international protests against the World Bank and similar institutions exemplify this quite well.

*The Dialectics of Rhetoric and Reality:
Bureaucratic Rationalization and Maintaining Hegemony*

⁷ See among others, Frances Lappe', Joseph Collins, Peter Rosset, *World Hunger: Twelve Myths*. Second Edition (New York: Grove Press, 1998); Kathy McAfee, *Storm Signals: Structural Adjustment and Development Alternatives in the Caribbean* (Boston, Mass: South End Press, 1991); John Mihevc, *The Market Tells Them So: The World Bank and Economic Fundamentalism in Africa*. (London: Zed Books, 1995).

What makes the study of development ideology particularly complicated is the dialectical relationship between rhetoric, or what is claimed, and reality, what is actually done. On one level there are two strong varieties of rhetoric coming from the mainstream development institutions. One naturalizes or standardizes the centrality of economic growth by linking it to democracy, and thus freedom. In this way, Third World countries are often characterized as *emerging markets*, by institutions like the World Bank. The following is a quote from James Wolfensohn while addressing the Board of Governors at the World Bank.

the shared responsibility and ...shared interest in promoting prosperity in developing and emerging markets...share(d) responsibility to put in place policies that can help these countries work their way out of crisis...⁸.

The second rhetorical emphasis, becoming more pronounced over the last decade, has incorporated a concern for women, the environment, and of the need for development to have a “human face”, which has come to mean minimizing the effects of the development process on the poor. In fact, the mission statements of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the main development arm of the United Nations, the World Bank and Oxfam, an example of a First World-based NGO, defines the elimination of poverty as the primary concern for all three organizations.

These two sets of rhetorical claims appear to be at odds with one another and stake oppositional ideological terrains. I would argue, however, that they represent instead, a confluence of bureaucratic rationalization and an attempt to maintain the ideological dominance of capitalist modernization through the co-optation of the ideals and values articulated by the counter-hegemonic forces from below. Although they are inter-related, I will discuss each separately, drawing on several works by Murray Edelman⁹ on the symbolic uses of politics.

⁸ Address to the Board of Governors at the World Bank, Washington, DC, October 6, 1998.

⁹ See Murray Edelman, *The Symbolic Uses of Politics* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1970); *Politics as Symbolic Action: Mass Arousal and Quiescence* (Chicago:

Bureaucratic Rationalization

In *Politics as Symbolic Action* (1971), Edelman argues that even the organizations that resist the hegemony of the establishment do not often do so in the end. In other words, once these organizations gain visibility and legitimacy, which they need to do, and their ideals and values become institutionalized, this marks the first step towards their failure. That is, the expressions of protest become normalized and neutralized. For Edelman, protest is only effective when it is disorganized, leaderless, spontaneous, and unpredictable, for then it is not vulnerable to cooptation.

This is an argument taken up by Frances Fox Piven and Richard Cloward in their classic text, *Regulating the Poor: The Functions of Public Welfare* (1993). In order for subordinate or oppositional groups to gain legitimacy and visibility, they must become organized. Given the power and influence of certain institutions, the only way for change to occur is through the mobilization and organization of those outside of the institutions. But, as Edelman argues, organization ritualizes and defuses protest. Insurgent ideas become rationalized and bureaucratized. What follows is a dramaturgy of protest, debate, and negotiations among the opposing groups. For Edelman, this only serves to conceal and contain the real elements of the conflict. The struggle, then, remains at the rhetorical level which prevents any substantive change to occur.

This is the context in which I will present the UN conferences on women in Chapter Four as well as the case study of UNIFEM in Chapter Five. The UN conferences illustrate a good example of how the organization of insurgent groups and ideas leads to the symbolic bargaining that papers over the real ideological conflicts about development. UNIFEM represents a reformist organization, perpetually struggling for greater visibility and legitimacy, but in doing so, undermining its potential to transform development thinking and practice. At each of these levels, the institutionalization of women and development into

Markahm Publishers, 1971); Political Language: Words that Succeed and Policies that Fail (New York: Academic Press: 1977).

the mainstream development agenda has both changed the rhetoric and neutered the potentially radical meanings underlying the rhetoric.

Maintaining Hegemony

Because there is often a variety of conflicting and contradictory meanings, in this case of development, rhetoric serves an important function. It simplifies the complexities by focusing on one aspect in order to win public support and/or to maintain one's position of power and dominance. With the inclusion of subordinate groups, mainstream institutions adopt their language and rhetorical buzz-words, which eventually becomes the accepted language. The rhetoric hides the differences in substantive meanings, serving to maintain the dominant interests. Thus, the World Bank, the United Nations Development Program, UNIFEM, variously located NGOs can all share a common language. They can and do all claim to be working in the interests of women, of the poor, of the environment. But more than bureaucratic rationalization is going on. The inclusion of the subversive language allows the institutions of power to maintain their hegemony. Dominant organizations can claim a common agenda with those 'outside'. The drama of protest and negotiation continue, creating a smoke-screen for continuing the domination of development as economic growth. This is shown very clearly in the case of Microcredit, as will be discussed in Chapter Six.

Rhetoric and bureaucratic jargon serve important functions in the legitimization of governing institutions and their ideologies, as well as the co-optation of insurgent ideas from those outside the establishment. The mainstream development establishment, as embodied in the policy and programs of institutions like the World Bank and the United Nations specialized agencies, as well as larger Western-dominated non-governmental organizations, continuously attempt to re-legitimize their authority and ideological commitments by bringing in challenges posed from those outside. Through political struggle, the opposition of these outsiders, often grassroots movements, eventually makes its way to the inside, shedding its contentious character. These challenges are brought in

precisely to maintain the power and desired agenda of the establishment, as well as to pacify the resistance.

The dialectical relationship between rhetoric and reality resonates throughout this study, existing at every level of analysis, as I shall show. Certainly there is a distinction between what is said and what is done, but there is also a gap between what is done, in terms of what is implemented, and what results from that implementation. This project will primarily focus on the former; the breach between the rhetoric of what is said and the reality of what is done in terms of implementation, leaving aside the “results”, as this separation has not garnered enough attention. Much more concentration has been paid to the distinctions between implementation and results.

The Analytic Frame: Policy, Institution, and Program

I will be exploring three levels of analysis that comprise the analytic frame of this project: “policy”, “institution” and “program”. This framework is important not only for clarification, but because these three terms are confused and conflated in the development discourse. By policy I mean the general directions of development thought and practice, the macro-level, within which programs and projects are presumably defined and translated into specific activities. In Chapter Four, I focus on the policy mandates of the first four UN international development conferences on women: Mexico City, 1975, Copenhagen, 1980, Nairobi, 1985, and China 1995. I will pay particular attention to the ways in which the general concept of “women and development” and its associations are formulated, discussed and negotiated, as well as the policy prescriptions that are agreed upon, weaving through this analysis the rhetoric/reality distinction.

The second level is the institutional level. I include a case study of one development institution, which was a “result” of UN policy changes occurring at the first conference on women, held in Mexico, as well as the challenges of a growing global women’s movement. UNIFEM, the United Nations Development Fund for Women, is situated at the margins of the UN system, yet it is also a part of that system. Thus, UNIFEM has played an important

role in challenging the dominant ideological assumptions and definitions of development, while at the same time it has reinforced some of those hegemonic ideals. Understanding some of these contradictions will be the focus of Chapter Five, drawing heavily from my fieldwork experience at UNIFEM and some of its work.

Within these institutions, the third level is defined and implemented: the program level. The term “program” identifies a defined area that brings together a number of projects under its rubric. Projects are specific development undertakings. Both concepts “program” and “project” will be examined at this level. In the case of UNIFEM, most project proposals come from UNIFEM’s field offices for acceptance and funding and are then sent back and implemented, usually by a non-governmental organization (NGO). I focus on one particular program, Microcredit, in Chapter Six.

The distinctions between these levels are often not clear. For example, “empowerment” represents a development program, justifying various specific projects presumably designed to bring about the empowerment of women. However, the theme of empowerment reflects a generic policy approach that advocates the empowerment of women as a fundamental goal of development. In response to this policy affirmation, organizations are created with budgets and personnel, thus creating a program area. Specific projects then implement the policy vision of empowerment. The distinction between rhetoric and reality exists at each level of analysis. To ensure that this ideological commitment to a policy is not merely rhetorical, one must find out how this commitment is implemented at the institutional level, as well as at the programming or project level in the field.

Methodology

I employed various methodologies in this research project. I conducted approximately 20 in-depth interviews with a variety of development specialists. These individuals were working or have worked either as in-house staff or outside consultants for the World Bank, UN agencies including the UNDP, UNIFEM, UNICEF, UNESCO, and

various international NGOs based in First World countries, as well as national and local NGOs based in several Third world countries. Many of these informants were involved in either policy-making, programming decisions, and/or project design, implementation or evaluation.

For six months during the year 1998-1999, I conducted fieldwork as an intern at UNIFEM, the United Nations Development Fund for women. I was assigned to cover the geographic area of Asia and the Pacific. My primary responsibilities consisted of reading and preparing project proposals from the field, primarily in the programming area of economic empowerment. In addition, I participated in preparing project summaries and in writing some of the text for the yearly Consultative Committee report. This report of UNIFEM's yearly activities is presented to an outside committee appointed by the Secretary General. As an intern, I participated in staff meetings as well as some events at the General Assembly sponsored by UNIFEM. This fieldwork experience provided me with a wealth of information about the ideological construction of development, as well as an insider's view of the institutional aspects of implementing development programs.

I also conducted a close textual analysis of the conference mandates from the four UN sponsored international conferences on women and development. When relevant, I have analyzed other documents and websites, especially yearly reports, produced by many of the major international development institutions, including the World Bank, the UNDP, and several large international NGOs. Each year the World Bank produces the World Bank Report. Since 1990, the UNDP has commissioned yearly Human Development Reports. Because these reports are widely read and used by the institutions to "tell their story" to the public, they were useful documents from which to infer the rhetorical strategies and the impact they have had on the development discourse.

Concluding Thoughts

Karl Polanyi, in *The Great Transformation*, took great pains to debunk the overwhelmingly shared notion of an individual's propensity to barter, and the consequent evolution of the market economy. Yet, because of its universal presence, especially as the central feature of the dominant development paradigm, capitalism appears to be the natural and inevitable outcome of human nature. The needs of capitalism have filtered into the consciousness of individuals around the globe through both consent and coercion. Since the assumed rewards become viewed as equivalent to all that represents the good life, development has become the precondition for such goals. As naturally as we think of the changing of the seasons, we think of development as a progression toward a better life, not just mere survival, but enough leisure goods to allow true happiness. Those societies without such amenities are by definition undeveloped and poor.

If development continues to be defined by the criterion of economic growth, we will continue to be barraged with graphs and tables identifying which countries have developed, and which have not. However, it has become increasingly clear that undeveloped conditions exist within even the "developed" world, a fact hidden behind the dominant ideology and our inability to critically examine the hazards of overdevelopment. It is possible to argue that no country in our international arena has really 'developed' in a broader and more adequate sense of the word. In the last chapter I shall look beyond economic growth to the more qualitative aspects of human existence and develop a concept of true human flourishing.

Although the development literature reflects many years of research and dialogue, largely absent is an analysis of the ideological construction of the notion of development in thought and in practice. This absence has sustained an apparent confluence of underlying assumptions and images of development, to which attention is also needed. This project intends to fill some of these gaps. Important too, is a more substantive understanding of this term in the realm of practice, making the attention to the dialectical relationship between rhetoric and reality at different levels of analysis a significant contribution to the

development field. While the rhetoric of development organizations and their mandates has shifted to include subordinate interests, the ideological connection between development and economic growth is still paramount. And the dominant paradigm has been able to maintain its legitimacy and hegemony through the adoption and incorporation of alternative values into its rhetoric.

In order to explain the ideological content of development thinking and its practice, I will analyze the philosophical traditions underlying current development discourse and practices. In the next chapter I will explore the major theoretical models of development such as Modernization, Dependency, Basic Needs, and Sustainable Development. While frameworks focusing on Dependency, Sustainable Development and Gender (Chapter Three) have made important contributions, these analyses and prescriptions seem to stay within the confines of the development paradigm. Advocates of these theories want to bring women into the growth process, or make growth sustainable, but do not really offer alternative frameworks.

Chapter Three is a detailed exploration into the theoretical debates and competing theories regarding women and gender. Since I have narrowed down the empirical investigation to areas of concern for women, an excursion into the theoretical history of women and development is necessary. Chapter Four analyzes the conference mandates of the four UN conferences on women held between 1975-1995. Chapter Five is a case study on a particular development agency, UNIFEM, formed to address specifically the needs and concerns of women, and Chapter Six examines a development program, Microcredit, which specifically targets women. These three chapters that follow look at each level of the analysis: the policy level of conference mandates, the institutional level of UNIFEM and the project level of Microcredit. Chapter Seven, the concluding chapter, sums up some the important findings and ends with my own proposal to re-conceptualize development.

CHAPTER TWO

THE DEVELOPMENT OF DEVELOPMENT THEORY

In this chapter, I review the major models of development theory, and identify the key theoretical assumptions of each. In doing so I will show that even the claims for a different approach have not fully extricated themselves from economic growth as the primary characteristic and determinant of 'development'. That is to say, development *is* economic growth. Even when a body of theory does challenge this economistic meaning of the term, an alternative concept of development is never really presented, so we are left with assumptions about what is really meant by development. Identifying development solely with economic growth is a meager and restrictive notion of development, and for that matter, human progress. Although some of the later theoretical models were constructed in response to limitations of the previous models, even these theories still do not reach beyond economic growth as the touchstone of development.

The first and still dominant development theory is Modernization theory, which will be examined in detail through a summary and analysis of one representative work. Next I will discuss the challenges to modernization theory, first, Dependency theory, for the most part by Marxist-influenced Latin American economists. Then I discuss the Basic Needs approach, which derived from research conducted by the International Labour Organization, a specialized UN agency. The Basic Needs approach, along with a growing international environmental movement, helped to spur Sustainable Development theory. A central aspect of these analyses is the competing claims made by the modernization and dependency schools. The chapter ends with an analysis of neo-liberal ideology, the conditions that explain its rise, and its shared, albeit slightly altered orientation to modernization theory. Throughout this chapter, specific attention will be paid to the dialectical relationship between the rhetoric and the reality of development theory and practice.

1950s: Orthodox Conceptions of Development: Modernization Theory

Alvin So (1990) suggests that three historical junctures formed the basis of Modernization theory in the 1950s. First, the emergence of the United States as an economic and military superpower; Secondly, the spread of Communism and the Cold War, and thirdly, the emergence of the Third World in the transition to independence. It is generally believed that the primary motivation that inspired the development policies of multi-lateral agencies was to help the Third World “develop” before they fell under Communist influences. Interestingly, So calls the early modernization studies a “school” because it had an army of researchers supported largely by the United States government and private foundations.

According to So, the theoretical heritage of Modernization is rooted in evolutionary theory. It contains the following features: First, a unidirectional notion of social change from primitive to advanced. Secondly, the value judgment that such change is ultimately good because it brings a society closer to progress, humanity, and civilization. And finally, the rate of social change is slow and gradual, rather than “revolutionary”. In addition to this evolutionist foundation, Modernization is also functionalist. That is, society is viewed as like a biological organism, or a “system” of interdependent, harmonious, and coordinated parts that “grow” or “develop” toward maturity.

One of the classic works of Modernization theory is W.W. Rostow’s *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto*, first published in 1960. Rostow published this book as an alternative to Marxist inspired understandings of the history of class exploitation in the development of capitalism and modern society (Martinussen 1997:65). In his theoretical model, development is related to economic growth and is an evolutionary description of the various stages a country follows in its modernization. “It is possible to identify all societies, in their economic dimensions, as lying within one of five categories: the traditional society, the preconditions for take-off, the take-off, the drive to maturity, and the age of high mass -consumption” (Rostow 1971:4).

The first stage is that of *Traditional Society* where the society is capable of only a low level of production and few technical innovations. Central to traditional society is that “a ceiling existed on the level of attainable output per head” (1971:4). This ceiling exists because the technology used does not have the potential for greater output. Productivity is thus limited primarily by the absence of modern technology. Moreover, the typical value systems found in agricultural or traditional societies are ‘pre-Newtonian’, in the sense that individuals do not believe they have the capabilities to manipulate or alter their surroundings for economic advantage. An intergenerational “long-run fatalism” exists-- a belief that not much changes or can change. Progress in the conventional modern sense is not seen as possible. An undeveloped or pre-developed traditional society has limited the capacity either to produce or to value innovation.

Rostow calls the second stage *Preconditions for Take-Off*, which is a process of transition. This stage is usually stimulated by internal forces, though it may come from external intrusion. “These invasions--literal or figurative--shocked the traditional society and began or hastened its undoing; but they also set in motion ideas and sentiments which initiated the process by which a modern alternative to the traditional society was constructed out of the old culture”(1971:6). While he does suggest that modern economic activity could co-exist with traditional society, it depends on the values held by the society. A commitment to advancement must exist, to a vision of a modernized social structure that includes expectations for change not found in traditional sectors. Rostow does not make clear which was more important for development-- productive capacity through technological advancement or a shared value system providing the necessary incentives, outlooks, and behaviors for progress. He argues that the population must embrace a specialized division of labor with some individuals preparing for risk in leadership, in lending money and performing specialized tasks. Both these factors, productive capacity and a change in values, must go hand in hand.

The third stage is the *Take-Off* stage where “the forces making for economic progress, which yielded limited bursts and enclaves of modern activity, expand and come to dominate the society. Growth becomes its normal condition” (1971:7). Included in this stage is capital accumulation, technological development in industry and agriculture, and the emergence of political power which has an expressed commitment to take-off. The value change is realized in the importance of entrepreneurship. Some individuals and groups must undertake “acts of capital investment” (1971:50), and regard these acts as both possible and good. Though he avoids the question of whether the profit motive is a universal human condition, he does suggest that at this stage, it is necessary for some individuals to behave according to this risk motive.

The *Drive to Maturity* is the fourth stage in which modern technology extends over all economic activity. Values now support rather than slow the growth process. The economy produces internally what used to be imported, but imports commodities that match in value to what is exported, in order to secure a balance of trade. Rostow suggests that this should happen by the 60-year mark after take-off begins. The economy is more refined and technologically complex. Production switches from coal and iron to machine tools, chemicals and electric--industries and products necessary to sustain growth.

Maturity occurs when an economy goes beyond the original industries it relied upon during take-off and absorbs and applies technology efficiently throughout the whole range of available resources. The economy can technologically and entrepreneurially produce anything it chooses to produce. “It may lack ...the raw materials or other supply conditions required to produce a given type of output economically; but its dependence is a matter of economic choice or political priority rather than a technological or institutional necessity” (1971:10).

The *Age of high mass consumption* is the fifth stage in which the leading sectors shift toward durable consumer goods and services. Rostow argues that furthering technological advancement is no longer an overriding goal. Rather, the creation of the

Welfare State—“one manifestation of a society’s moving beyond technical maturity” (1971:11) becomes important. He claims that the society moves beyond consumption, and becomes interested in other activities. The example he draws upon is the ‘baby boom’ in the United States, claiming that since many were born into a system which provided economic security and high mass consumption, a lower value was placed on acquiring more income and so, individuals started having babies.

When technological maturity is reached, and the nation has at its command a modernized and differentiated industrial machine, to what ends should it be put and in what proportions: to increase social security, through the welfare state; to expand mass-consumption into the range of durable consumers’ goods and services; to increase the nation’s stature and power on the world scene; or to increase leisure? And then the question beyond, where history offers us only fragments: what to do when the increase in real income itself loses its charm? Babies, boredom, three-day week-ends, the moon, or the creation of new inner human frontiers in substitution for the imperatives of scarcity? (1971:16).

There are some fundamental problems with many of Rostow’s underlying assumptions. It becomes apparent that he believes that the Third World is at a lower stage of social evolution, while the First World has already passed through these steps. It is unclear why this is, other than the First World were better prepared, having the appropriate value orientation, values that must be learned by the developing world. Though he claims to be historical, his arguments offer only snapshots of the development process, giving it an ahistoric quality. He does not explain how a country can get from one stage to the next, nor does he consider colonial relationships past and present as an important feature in the development of the First World and the underdevelopment of the Third World.

Furthermore, there is no examination of the actual structure of development in a global-historical context. Rostow talks about these stages as if they are totally removed from the individuals who actually engage in all this productive activity. He does not mention some of the objective consequences of this growth process such as displacement, migration, urbanization, or the transformation of family life, for example. It is as if the stages have a life of their own, separate from the activities that make them possible and the consequences that result.

Also missing from this analysis is any treatment of power and domination. In his picture of the world, countries have the ability to evolve through these stages all on their own, without any impact from other societies. But, historically, many countries have not had the opportunity to *choose* what to produce and how, but have been under the dominance of other more powerful countries.

Despite these gaps, pointed out by many critics, Rostow's modernization theory became quite popular among major decision-makers in the development field in the 1960s and 1970s (Martinussen 1997:64). More importantly for this research project, Rostow does provide some rather surprising, but important insights. While economic growth is central to modernization theory, Rostow actually goes beyond this limited scope. For Rostow, "the idea spreads not merely that economic progress is possible, but that economic progress is a necessary condition for some other purpose, judged to be good: be it national dignity, private profit, the general welfare, or a better life for the children¹" (Rostow 1971:6). Thus, Rostow sees productivity and accumulation are both ends in themselves as well as means to other ends.

This image of the final stage is quite contrary to the current neo-liberal ideology driving much of the development as practiced over the last 20 years. While the emphasis on economic growth remains significant, the conservative emphasis on reducing the role of the state and allowing the market to provide most of the necessities of life is inconsistent with Rostow's much broader view. Rostow's objective is the creation of a political system in which the government is responsible for the welfare of its people. The current global ideology dismisses the welfare state as an appropriate goal, not only for developing, but for developed countries. Toward the end of his book, he writes:

¹ In a later chapter, Rostow suggests that the value of having (many) children must change in the direction of decline. Whereas in traditional society, having many children was thought of as a blessing and an "affirmation of immortality in a hard life" (Rostow 1971:19), the transition to a modern society must be accompanied by a different outlook, especially since there will be a decline in the need for unskilled farm labor as the economy becomes more industrialized. The "productive" way in which childbearing is conceptualized should be noted here.

Billions of human beings must live in the world, if we preserve it, over the century or so until the age of high mass-consumption becomes universal. They have the right to live their time in civilized settings, marked by a degree of respect for their uniqueness and their dignity, marked by policies of balance in their societies, not merely a compulsive obsession with statistics of production, and with conformity to public goals defined by a co-optive elite (1971:167).

It is highly significant that Rostow is here emphasizing the importance of “dignity” for individuals, a concept akin to what I call “human flourishing” in Chapter Seven. He is arguing against an overreliance on economistic measures and standards of development. Rostow clearly finds an overreliance on the market limiting. It is ironic that his view here is similar to Marx’s idea that the purpose of technology was to free the individual from some of the rigors of necessary, but menial labor. Rostow is asserting that the point of development is to free the individual from the rigors of productivity and the market. In other words, the end goals of development should be to establish the freedom of the individual to flourish. Unfortunately, more recent articulations of modernization theory² have stopped at the point where economic growth and productivity, and the capitalist market system have become the ultimate goals. One of the original and classic texts of development theory is not dominated by a commitment to capitalist markets as the end point of progress.

Such a sympathetic reading of Rostow is not often found among his critics. Modernization has been characterized as diffusionist, encompassing a penetration of negative influences (Berberoglu 1992). In other words, development results from the spread of knowledge, ideas and material benefits from the First World to the Third World. This same process occurs within each Third World state, from modern to traditional sectors, what has been called the “dual society”. For Berberoglu, what is being diffused are the consequences of continuing imperialist policies. That is, for democracy (and capitalism) to occur, the Third World must be given capital, technology, institutions, and values from the

² Since the 1980s, such recent articulations of modernization theory are akin to neo-liberalism, with its emphasis on the market as the answer to solving the problems of global poverty. Consistent with modernization theory, neo-liberalism implies an evolutionary view of progress, with entrepreneurialism as the identifiable, necessary value orientation.

First World. Such an ideological stance has provided the basic rationale for First World sponsored international aid programs and projects, as I shall show in later chapters.

Modernization “[b]ecame the ideological arm of U.S. expansion for the supposed purpose of diffusing “development” and “democracy” to the Third World” (Berberoglu 1992: 7). For many, especially the Dependistas (see the section below), modernization was simply a cover that hid cultural, political and economic imperialism.

For Alvin So, the policy implication of Rostow’s ideas is that if the Third World’s problems derive from a lack of capital, or a lack of productive investment, then the solution lies in the provision of aid to these countries in the form of capital, technology, and expertise. Thus, aid is the best way to help the Third World to modernize, to develop. What is so problematic is that such policies assume that “progress”, “humanity” and “civilization” are defined only in terms of First World experiences and standards, and is politically and culturally biased. Such are the problems that lie at the heart of modernization theory, insofar as it has become an ideological justification for enshrining economic growth driven by capitalist markets.

*1960s-1970s: Critiques of Orthodox Development Theory:
Dependency and World Systems Theories*

Though popular in American and some European circles, the Modernization school was considered too narrow, insufficient and Eurocentric by Marxist scholars in the Third World. They argued that Modernization theory did not acknowledge that the history of the underdeveloped world is the history of the consequences of European expansion, which has had beneficial outcomes for much of the First World and disastrous results for the Third World. In fact, consistent with Rostow, modernization theory remains completely silent on the consequences of past European colonialism or current manifestations of colonial relationships between economically powerful countries and less economically stable countries. Modernization theory clings to the idea that if economic growth occurs, democracy and equal distribution would follow.

The Dependency model, first advanced by Latin American scholars (Dependistas), was created as a response to the insufficiency of modernization theory. This theory of Dependency and Underdevelopment “is the result of the historical development and contemporary structure of world capitalism, to which Latin America is subordinated, and the economic, political, social and cultural policies generated by the resulting class structure” (Berberoglu 1992:26). Dependency theory actually encompasses varying branches of thought including non-Marxist structural analyses of ECLA³ to more radical Marxist critiques. A basic tenet of the Dependency model was the claim that the development or expansion of one economy has decisive effects upon the economy in another country. For the ECLA theorists, their emphasis was on the specialization of productive functions of the center and the periphery. That is, center countries for the most part produced industrial products for trade in the international market, while peripheral countries produced raw materials. Such a relationship, according to Raul Prebisch, a leading ECLA theorist, is inherently unequal and exploitative. First of all, periphery countries must compete to sell their raw materials to center nations, thereby bringing down the price of raw materials. In addition, the demand for these raw materials remains stagnant, which further discourages price increases on these goods. The result is declining terms of trade of the raw materials produced in the periphery. At the same time, the prices of commodities produced in the center countries and exported to the Third World tend to increase. In other words, Third World countries end up paying more for imports and getting less from their exports.

As a result of this analysis, under the recommendation of ECLA, several Latin American countries decided to produce the industrial goods they had been importing to limit their dependence on imports, and to develop their own economies. This became known as Import Substitution. But, toward the end of the 1960s, this strategy was not working, since

³ ECLA was the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America convened to address some of the problems of the Latin American economies in the late 1940s. Raul Prebisch was its most notable spokesperson. It was Prebisch who coined the

dependency persisted. Foreign companies went behind tariff walls, countries still needed to import machinery, and the internal market was too limited, because of unequal income distribution, so not nearly enough demand was generated. Countries were increasingly dependent on foreign capital. Dependency theory emerged to explain the failure of Import Substitution to reduce dependence.

Dependency theory stresses the processes through which development in the First World leads to the underdevelopment of the Third World. The more radical Marxist influenced scholars such as Andre´ Gunder Frank, make an explicit distinction between undeveloped and underdeveloped. Undeveloped has been used in the evolutionary sense to mean 'not yet developed', while underdevelopment as described by Frank and others in the Dependency school is a direct consequence of the exploitation of the Third World by the First World. Unlike modernization theory, dependency theory highlights the unequal and exploitative relationship wherein what is needed for growth in the First World, like cheap labor and raw materials, is often found and expropriated from the Third World, leaving the Third World extremely disadvantaged.

Dependency theorists argue that underdevelopment is not a stage before capitalism, but a consequence of capitalism. To argue this, Frank places the beginning of capitalism, including its early formation and penetration, at the 16th century conquests. Frank challenges the notion that their isolation causes the underdevelopment of Third World societies, a key claim of the Modernization camp. Rather, underdevelopment has been the result of centuries of incorporation into world capitalism and capitalist relations. The poverty of the agricultural sectors throughout Latin America has been produced by capitalism. For example, countries like Brazil have been the suppliers of raw materials, the producers of cash crops for world trade, the suppliers of manufacturing commodities, the places for foreign investment, and to some extent the markets for manufactured goods.

terms “center” and “periphery” to describe First and Third World nations. This language is still utilized.

Thus, the underdevelopment of Latin America is thus seen as structurally linked to development in capitalist countries.

Frank shows that the satellites⁴ which fare the worst are those which have had the closest relationship to the metropole. He takes a historical look and shows that in periods when metropole countries have confronted wars or economic crises, thereby cutting off or limiting ties to the satellite, the satellite countries experienced autonomous industrialization and economic growth. This was particularly true of Chile and Brazil during World Wars I and II. Thus, for Frank, less connection to the metropole led to more development for the satellite. The regions throughout Latin America which are defined as the most "undeveloped", are those where subsistence agriculture dominates. But Frank points out that these regions were the very areas that had been producers and exporters of raw materials in capitalist relations with the metropole. As local industries failed in competition with foreign capital and raw materials were depleted, these areas actually became *more* underdeveloped, relying on subsistence production.

By the middle of the 1970s the dependency school was challenged for failing to provide a complete and correct analysis of the development process. By this time, certain satellite countries were experiencing growth. The Dependency school could not adequately address these changes with a theoretical explanation of what was happening on the world level. During this time there was significant economic growth in some of the East Asian countries, including Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and South Korea. Such growth could no longer be explained by Dependency theory, for these countries were not "underdeveloped", but on the contrary, had experienced growth. Here, once again, we see that development is inextricably linked to economic growth by all of the competing explanations.

⁴ Frank uses the language satellites to mean the underdeveloped regions and metropolises to mean the developed areas. Other language for essentially the same distinctions includes periphery and core, North and South, etc.

World Systems theory, developed by Immanuel Wallerstein, tried to compensate for the deficiencies in Dependency Theory. Like Dependency theory, the World Systems viewed the capitalist mode of production in effect as of the 16th century, but differed in terms of the analysis of what has transpired since then. For Wallerstein, the unit of analysis was the world system, which is a social system, whose “self-containment as an economic material entity is based on extensive division of labor and ...a multiplicity of cultures” (1976:230). Wallerstein saw this world system divided into three major categories, each with its own specialization; the core, semi-periphery, and periphery. The core consists of industrialized and developed countries (the First World), the periphery is characterized by the agricultural exporting countries of the Third World. The semi-periphery lay somewhere in the middle, with some degree of industrialization, but limited productive capacities. Its functions include importing hi-tech commodities from the core and exporting semi-manufactured goods to the core, as well as importing raw materials from the periphery and exporting industrial end-products to the periphery. Such an analysis seemed to address more appropriately some of the regions of the Third World that were experiencing growth, like Hong Kong and Singapore. Societies can move between the different positions, but the possibilities of such movement are determined by the conditions of the world system at different moments.

World Systems theory shared a central argument with Dependency, that the development of the core results in the underdevelopment of the periphery. Thus, the power relations between and within countries are central for both theories. These two models differ primarily in their unit of analysis. For Frank, the unit of analysis was at the level of the nation-state, albeit in relations of dependency. So, his understanding of underdevelopment and dependency rested with the particular set of relationships between Brazil, for example, and the United States. Wallerstein, while not ignoring internal conditions, saw relationships in a global context.

A more radical outgrowth of the dependency school was the work of Samir Amin (1974) on autocentric development. The basic premise of autocentric development is that in order for a country to “develop”, it must be a “self-development” where external relations are subjected to the needs of internal accumulation. That is, historically, the development of the societies in the center has been autocentric and they have subjected peripheral societies to the demands of accumulation, which in turn has helped to expedite the development of the center societies. And although the peripheral societies have sometimes attempted to thwart the domination of the center through protectionism, the peripheral societies have never practiced a self-directed strategy. They have always reacted in response to the hegemony of the center.

Amin argues that development (i.e., economic growth) can only be achieved by “de-linking”, that is, cutting off the relationship between core and periphery. Furthermore, this process must be “popular” in that the rewards must be passed on to the masses. For Amin, autocentric development depends upon a more equitable income distribution, which will ensure marked growth, and equal consumption, and emphasize basic needs, nationalizing the surplus, and reinvestment. Autocentric development includes a priority for agriculture where industrialization is considered as a support to further agricultural productivity, and a determination to keep imports to a minimum. Modernization theory, in contrast, privileges industrialization over agricultural productivity, considering agricultural production ‘backwards’. Amin emphasizes the importance of re-organizing production like peasant control over agriculture, cooperatives and collective negotiation.

While these variations of Dependency theory and World Systems theory provide a counter analysis to the dominant and functionalist Modernization theory, even these more radical models do not question the ultimate definition of development as economic growth. They emphasize the issues of power and domination in a world context, moving away from the more static and ahistorical ideas of the Modernization theory, but notions of development, expansion, and progress are still linked conceptually to economic growth.

This represents the industrial notion of development that Horowitz wrote about as discussed in Chapter One.

Frank and Wallerstein did not offer new conceptions of development, only alternative explanations for processes already taking place. Frank was committed to showing the contradictions of capitalism as the root problem of the underdevelopment of Latin America, rejecting the notion that the problems plaguing Latin America in the 1960s were a consequence of feudal relations, especially in the countryside. Though Amin is calling for socialist development, the concept of development that he relies upon still remains tied to growth, productivity, and accumulation. His emphasis is on redistribution, but fundamentally, development is still economic growth.

While Frank and Amin are very critical of capitalism and its contradictory processes, the implication of their arguments is that auto-directed development is good and may benefit a country. In other words, they seem to be saying that ‘if only it didn’t happen like this.... Chile would be developed, could be developed’. Development is an undefined but assumed value. “I would be inclined to believe that such national liberation of a dependent country through national capitalism was probably no longer possible in the nineteenth century, as it certainly is no longer possible in the twentieth century” (Frank 1969: 56). The contradiction is that on the one hand, nationally driven capitalism through liberation is a good and desired outcome. On the other hand, underdevelopment is a consequence of capitalism. So we are left rather confused-- Is it capitalism itself that is the problem, or only its external effects? What about the internal contradictions that produce exploitation and expropriation? These inconsistencies stem from the fact that all three of these theorists never really unpack what they mean by a developed society. This taken-for-granted treatment of development is an example of the absence of the ideological analysis of the term, similar to the weaknesses of Modernization theory, although with very different political content.

*Mid-1970s: Critiques of Orthodox Development Theory:
Basic Needs Approach*

The Basic Needs approach of the mid-1970s was a reaction against modernization theory, especially with regard to its emphasis on economic growth. It was first articulated by the ILO, the International Labour Organization, a specialized UN agency. As a result of studies conducted at the time in Kenya, the ILO found that economic growth did not automatically lead to the expansion of employment opportunities or to the increase in incomes of the poor. Their focus shifted toward improvements in health, nutrition and basic education through improved rural water supplies, sanitation facilities, and primary schools. Direct provision of essential goods and services was seen as a more efficient and more rapid way of eliminating poverty than sheer economic growth. Another area of concern was access to decision making and political participation at the local and national levels. Thus the tenets of the Basic Needs Approach were that these provisions were particularly important for the poor, whom it was believed did not have the necessary political and economic resources to change their situation. In an attempt to help the poorest countries meet their basic needs, this new approach acknowledged the overwhelming failure of substantial growth in economic output to reduce poverty in most of the world.

Basic Needs theory suggests that there are certain minimum levels of consumption and access to services essential to a decent standard of living. It was believed that it was possible to target these areas. For example, minimum targets for food and housing requirements were established. Quantitatively, this was measured as daily intake of calories and square meters of dwelling space per person. More qualitative concerns could be addressed by examining the protein in food intake and the existence of basic household facilities: toilets, piped water, electricity, and basic furniture. In fact, claiming that basic needs can best be satisfied through public services, like education, health, water, and sanitation, the Basic Needs approach supported a progressive tax provision to support public services.

Perhaps the greatest contribution of the Basic Needs approach was its value orientation, emphasizing the necessities of life over the competing needs of the market. Paul Streeten et.al, (1984) argued that a systematic attack on the acute problems of poor countries should be at the center of social policies. The Basic Needs approach countered the prevailing modernization-inspired income approach, which sought to raise real income through employment, so that increased earnings would enable individuals to purchase their basic needs. The problem, which Basic Needs proponents emphasized, was that consumers may not necessarily spend their increased income on nutrition and health. In addition, employment requirements may in fact have a negative affect on nutrition. For example, female employment demands may reduce breast-feeding and the overall baby's nutritional intake. Related to this, the Basic Needs approach would be able to address the maldistribution within households, especially when women and female children are neglected in favor of boys and adult men. Furthermore, the Basic Needs approach acknowledged that a fair proportion of the poor are unemployable—the ill, disabled aged, or orphaned children. These groups are often neglected in the income approach. The traditional income oriented development programs did not address these and other related issues.

As it was practiced, however, the normative concerns of the Basic Needs approach were overshadowed by an economic rationale (Streeten 1984). Using the rhetoric of basic needs, it was argued that focusing on the poor would increase aggregate growth (Martinussen 1997:301). That is to say, such an approach would encourage more labor-intensive production, raising employment and production as well as lengthening the life and quality of the labor force. A reduction of birthrates would reduce the required resources and increase the available resources. Basic Needs amounts to investing in the poor, which gives a high rate of return, creating considerable growth. This economic rationale seems to have been a way to make this approach more attractive to the mainstream development institutions. And though the core ideas of basic needs and the emphasis on the poor

penetrated development agencies, “[n]one of the organisations or agencies has adopted the strategy as the core of its approach. Rather, they have added poverty and basic needs considerations to their mainly growth-oriented strategies” (Martinussen 1997:298). Furthermore, Carmen (1996) points out that the whole conception of Basic Needs is ethnocentric and paternalistic. Such attitudes are found in the implicit assumption that people in the Third World have “needs” that must be met through financial and technical means, and that those in the First World have wants and desires.

A further barrier to the more complete acceptance of the Basic Needs Approach exists at the planning level. One of the limitations of this approach was the difficulty with coming up with a set of universal “basic needs”, because of the historic-specificity of each country. According to Sheehan and Hopkins (1984), no accepted indicators exist for such basic needs as clothing, transportation, and participation. These needs (and poverty itself) are intrinsically relative and thus difficult to quantify. Dell (1984) advances this critique, but focuses more on the level of implementation. For example, how does this approach, in attempting to arrive at universally applicable targets, confront differences in climate that will require different calorie intake and clothing? Given the wide variety of social and cultural traditions, and the importance of respecting a country’s sovereignty, how is such a minimum standard to be established? Furthermore, does it mean that no one should be allowed a level of consumption in excess to basic needs until every member has reached that level? What degree of excess consumption should be allowed? What about excess investment? How do we deal with uneven growth in the context of reaching world wide basic needs?

These problems may explain why several of the World Bank’s purported Basic Needs projects conducted in the 1970s, carrying slogans like “People First”, seemed very similar to earlier large scale development projects. For example, between 1973-1981, the World Bank loaned the Philippines over \$1 billion for a massive 26-project rural development program. Projects included large-scale irrigation schemes to land settlement

(Bello, Kinley and Elinson 1982:71). Though the World Bank had begun to use the language of Basic Needs, at the project level, much of the same top-down, technocratic work was being implemented, but now using the rhetoric of helping people fulfill their basic needs. And as Bello et.al. (1982) argued, many of these ill-conceived projects had very dire consequences on the people in the Philippines.

The Basic Needs approach hardly dealt with these grander philosophical questions, nor did it alter the basic orientation of the major development institutions. It is important to mention here, however, because it created the situation where such concerns are now included. Thus, the rhetoric has shifted, even if the reality has not. The ideas articulated by the Basic Needs approach, its more concerted focus on the poor, led the way for the World Summit for Social Development (Copenhagen 1995) and the Sustainable development movement.

*1980s: Critiques of Orthodox Development Theory:
Sustainable Development*

The emphasis on Basic Needs and the rhetorical shift in focus to the poor along with a growing international concern over the environment led the way for another counter theoretical movement, known as 'Sustainable Development'. This 'movement' is defined by various groups of interested organizations, research institutions, development agencies and private consortiums writing reports, and making claims in their attempts to understand the environmental implications of development practices. Starting in the 1970s, Sustainable Development became more legitimate and integrated into the development agenda in the late 1980s. Two critical publications—The World Conservation Strategy (IUCN 1980) and Our Common Future (Brundtland 1987)-- were pivotal. These publications spanned the years between the first United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm (1972) and the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio (1992). This time frame provides the context for the following discussion.

By the end of the 1980s the phrase was widespread in the report of international consultancies and the agencies that employed them; it had become an accepted part of the rhetoric of Third World and First World politicians, and had provided a potent new slogan and campaigning theme of First World environmental Non-Governmental Organizations. (Adams 1993:207)

The World Conservation Strategy was prepared by an international consortium of environmental organizations. One was the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN), the second was the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and the third was the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), a specialized agency of the United Nations. The thrust of this report was to link the concerns of conservationists and development practitioners, seeking solutions to the problems of the loss of wildlife species and habitats. Three objectives were identified: First, the “maintenance of essential ecological processes”, which meant maintaining the ecosystems necessary for food production, health and human survival. Second, the “preservation of genetic diversity”, which included the variety of genetic material in indigenous crop plants and animals. The third was “the sustainable utilisation of resources”. This meant that parks and reserves had both ecological benefits, usually controlling run-off from forested watersheds, as well as economic benefits from paying visitors. The notion of conservation coming from this consortium amounted to using and managing the environment for human subsistence and economic development. Like Modernization theory, nature is assumed to be managed through human knowledge and expertise.

Our Common Future (1987), also known as the Bruntland Report, was presented to the UN General Assembly in 1987, effectively bringing the concept “sustainable development” to the UN vernacular. Martinussen writes that in the document the core term was changed from ‘environmental sustainability’ to ‘sustainable development’ defined as, “meeting the needs of the present generation without compromising the needs of future generations” (Bruntland 1987: chapter 3, in Martinussen 1997:150). As a result of this report, sustainable development was firmly placed on the international development agenda. The report linked global poverty, inequality and the environment, since poverty was seen as

both a cause and effect of global environmental problems (Bruntland 1987:3 in Adams 1993:211). Economic growth was a central goal, albeit with environmental considerations. Sustainable Development is dependent on maintaining the world economy, meaning, “more rapid economic growth in both industrial and developing countries, freer market access for the products of developing countries, lower interest rates, greater technology transfer, and significantly larger capital flows... (Bruntland Report 1987:89, in Adams 1993: 212). In other words, poverty puts pressure on the environment, so economic growth is needed to remove that pressure. It was a clear commitment to development as usual, with the centrality of economic growth. The goals of poverty eradication, economic growth, and the environment were thus defined as compatible, rather than as conflicting.

Our Common Future was predicated on two prior environmental concepts—the basic needs theory (see above) and the limits to growth theory. The limits to growth theory was presented in a 1972 publication, *The Limits to Growth* (Meadows et al. 1972). It critically assessed the prevailing idea that growth (economic and otherwise) could continue unabated, forever, part of the theoretical heritage of modernization theory. The basic conclusion was that if the current trends in population, industrialization, pollution, food production and resource depletion continued, the limits to growth would be reached within 100 years. This was avoidable, according to the authors, if production strategies were changed to conform to environmental needs and if material consumption, especially in the First World, were curtailed dramatically.

Although this report set off a great deal of international debate, it was generally dismissed both as lacking scientific rigor and as underestimating the ability of technology to solve these growth problems (Martinussen 1997:149). Interestingly, the report was published by the Club of Rome, an influential international group of bankers and industrialists. David Harvey (1998) argues that the purpose of this document was to avoid confronting the limitations of *capitalism*. In a time of economic recession and structural

unemployment, as was the situation in the 1970s, it was easier to scapegoat natural limits than the internal contradictions of capitalism. Harvey says,

The rhetoric of “sustainable development” could then be attached to the ideal of a growth economy that had to respect natural limits. Demands for higher wages or more rapid economic growth in poorer parts of the world were countered by appeal to certain immutable laws of nature, thus diverting attention from the far more mutable laws of entrenched class and imperialist privilege (1998: 342).

This charge could be made against the sustainable development framework as a whole, which takes little account of structures of inequality and the processes that produce differences in wealth and power, and the constraints that ensue. Rather than pursuing such an analysis, sustainable development celebrates indigenous knowledge and makes claims for a ‘development-from-below’ orientation. Thus, it becomes difficult to argue against and critique sustainable development, so its conservative and mainstream tendencies and its strong attachment to economic growth remain unchallenged.

[t]he key word in this formulation is *sustainability*. And even though there are multiple definitions of what this might mean (and all sorts of rhetorical devices deployed by opponents to make the term meaningless or render it harmless--no one, after all, can be in favor of “unsustainability”), the concept nevertheless lies at the heart of the politics of ecological modernization (Harvey 1998:337).

We are left with two important implications. First, radical ideas can easily become co-opted and bureaucratized by institutions with more legitimacy and power, a central theme of this research project. As Adams writes, “the success of the Bruntland Report is in part at least the result of its realism in avoiding such radical ideas”(Adams 1993:213). Secondly, “sustainable development” is ultimately a conservative and mainstream rhetoric. This second implication is, of course, related to the first.

Both the World Conservation Strategy and the Bruntland Report and their origins demonstrate the conservative thrust of sustainable development, as a concept and a practice. In general, sustainable development focused on ecosystem management and rational planning and usage of resources--reformist measures at best, rhetorical cover at worst. As Adams says,

Mainstream thinking about sustainable development, as represented in the World Conservation Strategy (IUCN, 1980) and Our Common Future (Brundtland, 1987) and Caring for the Earth (IUCN, 1991), is technocentrist and not ecocentrist, reformist and not radical and is situated firmly within a paradigm of continued capitalist economic growth. It offers little theoretical critique of that paradigm (1993:214).

World Bank policies provide a useful illustration of this conservative mainstreaming of sustainable development, where the needs of the environment and the needs of economic growth are viewed as compatible and complementary. The policy answer, consistent with the neo-liberal, modernization orientation of the Bank, lies with the market. As part of its policy prescriptions, the World Bank is against state-subsidized fuel, assuming that such subsidies will distort rational market behavior, a widely shared belief among mainstream development specialists⁵. The Bank uses its "concern" for the environment to promulgate the reduction and elimination of such subsidies, arguing that they will lead to wasteful energy consumption and thus harm the environment. The Bank, in other words, claims a sustainable development approach, using pro-environment language to support and legitimize its economic ideology. In addition to maintaining its commitment to economic growth and the market, such policies can have dire consequences on the poor. When subsidies for fuel or fertilizer are reduced, those who benefit are the less poor, as they can better afford the higher prices which result. Moreover, the very poor often experience a worsening of their conditions, in the form of losing their land (Martinussen 1997:153).

Aside from its conservative elements, Sustainable Development has been criticized for lacking a clear definition, which is necessary to translate into specific policy goals and objectives. This definitional problem is a result of concomitant forces. One is the difference in urgency of environmental problems of those in the First and Third World countries

⁵ Interestingly, there have been reports about uprisings throughout Indonesia as a reaction to the State abolishing fuel and other subsidies under pressures from the United States and the IMF. It was expected that fuel prices were to rise by 70%. See Mark Landler, Mark, "Unrest Deepens in Indonesia, But Suharto Offers Defiance", *The New York Times* (May 10, 1998):1.

(Martinussen 1997:148). For the poor, the more immediate environmental concerns relate to the scarcity and depletion of resources like land, water, forests, and bio-diversity. Life threatening illnesses are produced by unsafe water, inadequate sanitation and soil erosion⁶. In the industrialized countries of the First World, the environmental concerns that predominate are air and water pollution, as well as tangential problems of the deterioration of the ozone layer, carbon dioxide emissions and the greenhouse effect. These are certainly also problems for the people in the Third World. In many of the rapidly urbanizing areas throughout this region, these have become important concerns. But, at this point, while there may not be competing interests, there are at least competing emphases, making defining the concept of sustainable development and operationalizing the concept very difficult.

Another aspect to the definitional problem seems to lie with different ideological positions. The conservative thrust of the mainstream sustainable development proponents clearly belong to the modernization lineage with its neo-liberal assumptions that capitalist growth and the market are 'naturally' better and are necessary to override the environmental problems. The definitions of and solutions to the problem are constructed in ways consistent with this ideological positioning. Competing theories, though granted less legitimacy and policy priority, are those which come from a dependency orientation. That is most environmental problems are the result of the unfettered development of capitalism and the processes of structured inequality and exploitation worldwide. These competing claims, 'eco-socialism' and 'eco-feminism' have not penetrated the sustainable development movement at the institutional level. And while they continue to challenge the operationalization of sustainable development, important as that is, the results so far, seem to be a rationalization and bureaucratization of the terms, a co-optation of the language, and development as usual, with a very appealing rhetoric. As such, this merely serves to maintain the dominance of the neo-liberal economic growth capitalist modernization project.

⁶ A further contradiction is revealed in that the poor sometimes cut down forests for badly needed fuel, even if this is not ecologically viable.

**1990s: *Critiques of Orthodox Development Theory:
Sustainable Human Development***

Influenced by some of the concerns and critiques raised in the Basic Needs approach as well as those articulated by the international environmental and women's movements, in 1990 the United Nations Development Programme began the publication of its yearly Human Development Reports. The work of Amartya Sen, the 1998 Nobel Prize winner in Economics, inspired much of the tone of these reports under the direction of Mahbub ul Haq, a close friend of Sen's. These reports have helped to introduce a new terminology into the development lexicon, Sustainable Human Development.

An analysis of these reports provides a textured look at the changing discourse on development. The first report criticized the "excessive preoccupation with GNP growth and national income accounts," that defined so much of the development discourse and practice. Avowing that "we are rediscovering the essential truth that people must be at the centre of all development" (1990: iii), and that policies should be enacted to bring this about. The first report defined human development as a process of "enlarging people's choices"—an obvious connection to Sen's earlier works on "human capabilities". Sen defines capabilities as "whether people can live long, escape avoidable morbidity, be well nourished, be able to read and write and communicate, take part in literary and scientific pursuits, and so forth" (Sen 1984: 497). Sen is critical of the focus on economic growth in defining and measuring development as it ignores other important variables which influence capabilities. Sen is also critical of the Basic Needs approach because it treats the poor as passive victims, raising questions of what should be done for or to them. In Sen's construction, capabilities enable people to "choose a life one has reason to value" (Sen 1999:74), what he calls "functionings".

Sen introduced another important concept, that of "entitlements", which means a person's ability to establish sufficient command over resources. Human Development depends upon capabilities and entitlements, and it is through this model that Sen has

evaluated and analyzed famines and other food crises. For Sen, a private ownership market economy means that people's entitlements largely depends upon the resources they own and how they can transform these resources through production and buying and selling (Dreze and Sen 1989). However, a market economy may not necessarily entitle a person to sufficient resources. While markets potentially create new opportunities, they also create new risks. So people in market economies are vulnerable to "entitlement failure". In other words, they are unable to acquire sufficient resources because what they have to sell may not command a high enough price to buy the necessities of life. In such a situation, that person will be deprived of a life with human dignity.

These yearly UNDP Human Development Reports have become a standard part of the development discourse. They are 'political documents' in the sense that they are challenging some of the basic tenets of mainstream development theory, especially with regard to the prominence of economic growth. Though they rely often on statistics generated by the World Bank, these reports seem to try to distance the UNDP from the World Bank in offering a better understanding of development. Yet at the same time these reports are 'bureaucratic documents', in that they are commissioned by the UNDP, thus uncritically (and rhetorically) representing the work that the UNDP does. These documents serve a symbolic purpose for increasing the visibility of the UNDP and improving its public relations with the rest of the development community. In the following section I will analyze a few general aspects of these reports.

Each report has a specific theme, often accompanied by a new measure. For example, the first report in 1990 introduced the Human Development Index (HDI). The HDI added three new determinants to the prevailing measure of GDP: life expectancy, literacy and income for a decent standard of living (in other words the purchasing power to buy commodities to satisfy basic needs). The 1991 report introduced another index, the Human Freedom Index (HFI), which added new aspects to the HDI, for example, the mean years of schooling, and distributional questions over income and gender. Participatory

development was a key to human freedom, but both were presented in very ambiguous terms. In the 1992 report, the HDI was yet again honed, this time to include a Political Freedom Index (PFI), which included measures of personal security; rule of law; freedom of expression; political participation; and equality of opportunity. Each of these categories were given a checklist of indicators. For example, the degree of personal security was dependent upon the amount of arbitrary arrest and detention; torture, cruel treatment, or punishment; arbitrary killing; and disappearances. Political participation included free and fair elections; the continuity of the democratic system; and community and local decision-making. The 1995 report focused on gender, introducing two new measures: the Gender-related Development Index (GDI) and the Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM). The GDI measures achievement similarly to the HDI, but accounts for gender. The GEM uses indicators such as women's representation in Parliaments; women's share of managerial and professional jobs; women's active participation in the labor force and their share of national income to determine the level of the empowerment of women.

Some of the reports just focused on particular themes. For example, the 1992 report looked at the widening disparities between the rich and the poor in terms of income, economic growth, market opportunities, and human capital. The 1996 report focused on growth as a means to human development. In 1998, the report took up the issue of consumption and its links to human development. The 1999 report focused on globalization.

These reports reveal an interesting contradiction between what it claims to alter in development thinking and what it actually reproduces. Such an analysis is in the spirit of the disjuncture between rhetoric and reality presented throughout this work. Its most important contributions have been the impact that it has had on the development discourse as a whole. These reports have helped to institutionalize the language of "sustainable human development", and have furthered the dialogue and debate about the limitations of economic growth as a measure of development. The reports have consistently called for de-

militarization and massive cuts to military budgets, especially in countries where social spending on military far outweighs spending on health and education. Furthermore, these reports have served as a rebuttal against the more zealous versions of neo-liberal economic policies that seek to reduce the role of the state in providing for a nation's well-being. Reading through the reports, there is a definite commitment to the importance of the welfare state, which clearly sets it apart from some of the neo-liberal extremism of the World Bank and IMF.

For example, several of the earlier reports highly laud the successes experienced by countries like Hong Kong and South Korea in their commitment to well-structured social spending, in the areas of education, health, and basic social services. While the reports certainly make positive claims about the free market (as opposed to centralized economic planning), there is a recognition that the market is limited in what it can do, calling upon the State in those instances. "Free market mechanisms may be vital for allocative efficiency, but they do not ensure distributive justice" (UNDP 1990:3). Furthermore, contrary to the neo-liberal thrust of institutions like the World Bank, these reports delineate the problems with trickle-down economics. "Simply stated, economic growth seldom trickles down to the masses" (UNDP 1990:3). At the same time, however, there seems to be a fair amount of emphasis placed on "efficiency" in their suggestions that safety nets and social subsidies must be designed without hurting the efficiency of how resources are allocated. This inclusion of efficiency may be a strategic tool to legitimize the claims which run counter to the neo-liberal orthodoxy.

When the reports are the most "radical" in its content, they are most vague in its substance. Almost every report is identified as a "new paradigm for development" that is people-centered and sustainable, where economic growth is a means, not an end; and where individuals have the ability to enlarge their capabilities, putting them to the best use. These transformations are possible through global income distribution, and changes in global production and consumption patterns. Unfortunately, this new paradigm appears to be more

slogan than concrete prescriptions. Thus, the symbolic function of these reports becomes clear. Perhaps for legitimacy, as well as to eschew accountability, both important aspects of bureaucracies which the UNDP is, such slogans are the only realistic possibility.

Furthermore, as others have pointed out⁷, economic growth, productive employment and income generation are central in the construction of the HDI, GDI and GEM measures. For example, Bardhan and Klasen (1999) show that the way in which the GDI measure is calculated, the earned income gaps account for more of the GDI than do gaps in life expectancy and education. The GEM index emphasizes women's participation in formal political and economic processes, which leaves out local and community decision making as well as unremunerated labor. These inconsistencies and limitations seem counter to the spirit of the claims made of a new paradigm. Despite these problems, the new indexes clearly broadened the rhetorical definitions of the purpose and character of "development".

*1990s: The Triumph of Neo-liberalism—
Modernization in Liberal Clothes*

During the same period of time that the United Nations was publishing its *Human Development Reports*, the more influential bodies in the development world hierarchy were proposing ideas more consistent with the past. Many of the precepts of Modernization can still be identified in contemporary development thinking in the form of neo-liberal economic priorities. It seems as though the challenges brought about by environmental proponents have made some important contributions, most specifically, changing some of the rhetoric of development theory and practice. However, perhaps because of the problems inherent in the basic needs and sustainability approaches discussed above, and/or the institutional pattern of

⁷ For more detailed criticisms of the measures themselves, see T.N. Srinivasan, "Human Development: A New Paradigm or Reinvention of the Wheel?", *The American Economic Review*, Vol.84, (May 1994): 238-243; Kalpana Bardhan and Stephan Klasen, "UNDP's Gender-Related Indices: A Critical Review", *World Development*, Volume 27, No. 6, (1999): 985-1010.

co-opting more radical ideas as they become “mainstreamed”, which will be explored further in the next chapter, the wider impact of these challenges remain rather limited.

Throughout the 1990s, there was a return to development thinking where economic growth and productivity surfaced once again as paramount concerns, what Thomas Biersteker called the “triumph” of neo-liberal economics (1995). This time, however, the general discourse was accompanied by rhetorical slogans such as “gender”, “sustainability”, and “human rights”, signs that some of the challenges in the 1970s and 1980s had some impact. The concerns with distribution or basic needs which may have emerged in the 1970s have been muted and co-opted, allowing for the expansion of an unfettered, unregulated international marketplace. Though the rhetoric may be about human potential, the neo-liberal, neo-modernization strategies are clear, as I shall show. Much of the prescriptive development discourse mandates the necessity to eliminate state intervention, allowing the magic of the market to do it all. This is accompanied by a stringent fiscal discipline, marking a movement away from the state inspired growth model of Keynesianism. Related aspects to this neo-liberal growth model include a high priority given to export production, currency devaluation to attract foreign investments, trade liberalization, reducing price controls, and privatizing nationalized industries. In fact, the dominant claim is that the principal obstacle to development is unwise and naturally inefficient government intervention, which is responsible for development failures. These principles lie at the heart of most of the Structural Adjustment Programs designed by the World Bank. What is different this time around, as opposed to the original articulations of Modernization theory, is that the rhetoric has changed to include principles and concerns coming from feminist and environmental movements. This changed rhetoric, I would argue, is a central factor allowing the renewed dominance of the ideology of economic growth.

As any dialectical analysis will demonstrate, though this neo-liberal paradigm appears to be the economic imperative of this latest age of globalization, dissension abounds as to its virtues, even by many of its major proponents and ‘beneficiaries’. In the February

1997 edition of *The Atlantic Monthly*, one of the world's prominent financiers, George Soros, questions the basic democratic values of a society which holds the neo-liberal marketplace so sacred⁸. The financial crisis throughout Asia in July of 1997, brought further scrutiny upon the dominance of neo-liberal development policies and programs. Such doubt induced the open critiques against the IMF by then World Bank chief economist, Joseph Stiglitz, culminating in his resignation in the spring of 2000⁹. More recently, are the increasingly visible international protests by NGOs and other grassroots organizations against the World Bank and IMF, the World Trade Organization, and other institutions that serve as symbols of the neo-colonial masters of the developing world.

Such internal and external challenges are very important to consider for a number of reasons. First of all, it demonstrates that the stronger and more institutionalized ideological positions are, the more vulnerable to criticism and examination. This vulnerability could lead to the reforming of policy and programming priorities. Secondly, it shows that social movements are not completely powerless. Institutional change can happen. One example of this is the change in World Bank policy to include Environmental Impact Assessments for all loans "likely to have a significant impact on the environment" (Caufield 1996:182). The Bank's Environmental Department was established in 1987. Both of these policy changes were made in response to the international criticism against the World Bank over its Narmada dam project in India. This massive hydroelectric and irrigation project, begun in 1985, was denounced for the estimated submergence of thousands of acres of agricultural land and forest, as well as the displacement of 1.5 million people.

⁸ See George Soros, "The Capitalist Threat" in *The Atlantic Monthly*, Vol. 279, No.2. (February 1997): 45-58.

⁹ See Gerard Baker, "Struggling to Keep the Faith *IMF", *The Financial Mail* (South Africa), (October 16, 1998): 46; "Sick Patients, Warring Doctors", *The Economist*, (September 18, 1999); "Acid Words for the IMF", *Business Week* (April 24, 2000): 48; David Moberg, "How to Fix the IMF: First do no Harm", *In these Times*, (May 15, 2000): 9.

Unfortunately, such reformist measures usually fall short of any real change in terms of impact on the people of the Third World. This is in large part due to the institutions' ability to appropriate the rhetoric of the concerns displayed by those who protest. The co-optation serves to undermine the oppositions and neuters the charges. Remarking on the environmental changes at the World Bank, a staff attorney for the Environmental Defense Fund said,

They have co-opted environmental language, but if you look at the gap between what they say they are doing and what is really happening on the ground, there is a huge gap. True, the assessment project has been improved, but the problem is that it is never implemented, and the people living in an area never have enough information or freedom to challenge these projects" (as quoted in, *The New York Times* 1992:A9).

Contradictions such as these will be addressed in the following chapters.

The rise of neo-liberalism represents a contemporary return to some of the basic fundamentals of modernization theory: markets, productivity, and efficiency. Even more, there is a similar ideological packaging of the individual. Much like Rostow's call for the correct "values" in terms of future-oriented entrepreneurialship, neo-liberal ideas of the individual are similar. Individuals must hold these values in order to rise above poverty and underdevelopment. This ideological framework is masked with a popular rhetoric of sustainability, and gender concerns of development. What this amounts to, once again, is a separation between the rhetoric of development and the reality of what is done in development practice. As I shall explore in the next chapter, in the area of women and development, this disjuncture plays an important function. In order to quell resistance from below, or outside, and to maintain hegemony, the co-optation of challenges or alternatives is an important component. Few fundamental ideological shifts have occurred, though there have been shifts in rhetoric. Rhetorical shifts are not entirely meaningless—they do affirm a shift in consciousness, which may be built upon to create real change. But, regardless of its rhetoric of 'pro-women' or 'pro-environment', development continues to be about economic growth and the expansion of capitalist markets.

Concluding Thoughts

From the beginning of “development” as a body of theory and set of practices, covering the last 50 years or so, much of the emphasis of development thinking has been on economic growth. Even attempts to challenge the earliest dominant framework have not really addressed the centrality of economic growth as paramount. This does not mean, however, that such challenges had no impact on the way in which development has been thought about. There is evidence, explored more deeply in the next four chapters that something has shifted. Yet, because “development” is fundamentally an ideological term, and part of a political nexus of international, national and local institutions, large and small, the gap between what is said and what is done must be a primary concern. I will show that an important rhetorical shift has taken place within the mainstream development apparatus. Almost every mandate, mission statement, policy directive and program now claim a concern for the environment and women, for example. This is important because it reflects a change from earlier times and a response to opposition raised against what has been dominant. However, these concerns have largely been co-opted by the mainstream institutions in order to maintain their hegemony.

CHAPTER THREE

WOMEN, GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT: TRACING THE RHETORICAL CHANGES

Feminist theories of development emerged in the 1970s accompanying a growing number of empirical studies examining the impact of development on women¹. One particular study, Ester Boserup's *Woman's Role in Economic Development* (1970), is considered the pivotal work defining the field of women and development² by most development practitioners and scholars. In addition, a number of simultaneous events helped to establish a field dedicated to understanding and improving the lives of women throughout the world. This chapter details the rich political history of the integration of women into the development process, beginning with the origins of the field of "women in development" (WID), and continuing with the evolution and limitations of this approach. Then I describe and analyze the most current formulation, "gender and development", or GAD. WID and GAD operate at all three levels of analysis, the policy level, the institutional level and the program/project level.

In this chapter I shall argue that the rhetoric of women and gender has become central to the development discourse. In mainstream development institutions such as the World Bank and other UN agencies, as well as established NGOs, the talk is "women". This usage raises some central questions: What factors account for this change in rhetoric? What has been the impact of this change in rhetoric on development policy, programming and projects? What, if any, impact has this gendered rhetoric had on mainstream

¹ Elise Boulding (1981) mentions some earlier studies that highlighted inequalities between men and women as a result of development interventions like land reform, as well as showing women's productive roles. She cites Mary Beard, *Women as a Force in History* (New York: MacMillan, 1946) and Raymond Firth and B.S. Yamey (eds), *Capital, Saving and Credit in Peasant Societies: Studies from Asia, Oceania, the Caribbean and Middle America*. (Chicago: Aldine, 1964).

² Following Razavi and Miller, I will employ the term "women and development" to refer to all the efforts made to understanding and improving the situation of women in the development process. This term will include two specific approaches discussed in this chapter, namely WID, Women in Development and GAD, Gender and Development.

development ideology? To tackle these questions it is necessary to explore the history of the relationship between women and development. The chapter is primarily a theoretical excursion into the history of WID and GAD. Toward the end I will draw on the reflections of some of my informants to illustrate these concepts.

Women in Development (WID)

The term “Women in Development” and its acronym WID were coined in the early 1970s by a Washington-based network of women development professionals. Many of these women had been in the field on overseas missions and were frustrated with the prevailing “trickle-down” theories of modernization. They argued that the development process was not having the same impact on men and women, in fact, development programs were said to be hurting, rather than helping women (Buvinic 1983; Tinker 1990:30; Razavi and Miller 1995:6). This network of women³ lobbied the US Congress, resulting in the passage of the 1973 Percy Amendment to the US Foreign Assistance Act. This required all US foreign assistance to “integrate women into the national economies of foreign countries, thus improving their status and assisting the total development effort” (Tinker 1990:30). Additionally, the network began communicating with women working in the UN as well as women academics working on development issues relating to women. They had a great deal of influence on the ideological foundations of the early WID movement, providing its Western, liberal emphasis on equal rights, employment and citizenship. Thus, primacy was given to women’s productive roles and bringing them into the economic process was the way to improve their overall status. As Razavi and Miller point out, the implications of this strategy are twofold. One, the political objective was to bring women *into* the development

³ This network included the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) as well as other US based umbrella organizations like the Federation of Organizations for Professional Women, newly created organizations in the 1970s that sought greater professional employment opportunities for women. (Tinker 1990:29).

process. Two, little attention was given to the power relations existing between men and women in different societies (1995:6).

Sue Ellen Charlton offers a more sympathetic reading of the origins of WID. She argued that since women are secondary to men in most societies, improving the lives of women-- the fundamental objective of WID-- can be quite threatening to the social order. She wrote, “[t]he seemingly straightforward goal of “integrating women into development projects” at once challenges social and political structures, the distribution of wealth and cultural mores” (1984: 9). In this way, WID had revolutionary possibilities. Charlton realized that placing women in the development apparatus would not automatically change things. Certainly putting women in positions of power does not necessarily translate into better policy-making for women. However, women professionals might be more attentive to the gendered aspects of policies and programs, and would understand that “men” was not necessarily equivalent to “people”.

The WID approach did not represent only one set of policies and programs, nor did it remain static over time. Nor did it come only out of the U.S. women’s movement or the UN experience. Attention to women’s needs and concerns with regard to development projects was also given by women in the developing countries, especially where nationalist movements provided the foundation for struggles for gender equality (Snyder 1995).

Throughout the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, there have been different policy approaches to WID programming. These differences represent the numerous constraints under which the various WID actors confront. As Tinker argues, development practitioners operate under bureaucratic constraints, thereby limiting their visions and goals of transformation. Advocates and scholars may be less limited in this respect and more able to voice stronger calls for action. Such a scenario explains the many competing and constantly changing WID strategies (Tinker 1990:44). I will revisit this ‘politics of compromise’ in Chapters Four and Five. Over the last thirty years, WID practitioners have made certain strategic and symbolic choices in order to convince mainstream development agencies to

take the issue of women seriously. Not so incidentally, many of these choices have coincided with general policy and programmatic shifts at the mainstream level as described in Chapter Two. As Moser says,

Thus the shift in policy approaches towards women...has mirrored general trends in Third World development policies from modernization policies of accelerated growth, through basic needs strategies associated with re-distribution, to the more recent compensatory measures associated with structural adjustment policies (1993:55).

Buvinic (1983) and Moser (1989, 1993) delineated these shifts within WID in order to show the changes that have taken place. Buvinic constructed a typology of three approaches-- welfare (the approach existing prior to WID, but one that continues to be implemented for reasons that will be discussed), anti-poverty and equity. Six years later, Moser added two approaches to this matrix--efficiency and empowerment. The welfare approach is identified strongly with modernization theory, while the equity and anti-poverty approaches coincide with the Basic Needs approach. The efficiency and empowerment approaches represent both the shifts to human sustainable development as well as the dominance of neo-liberalism in development economic policy. In order to understand these connections fully, it becomes even more important to note the disjuncture between the rhetorical promises and what is really being implemented.

The Welfare Policy Approach and the Origins of WID

Boserup's fundamental empirical work made women's labor in the international political economy visible for the first time. Never before had a cross-cultural economic analysis focused on women and their role in productive life. Women had previously been treated solely as "mothers" and "wives" in the eyes of development workers. Many of the programs and projects directed specifically toward women targeted their reproductive activities. Such programs fit within what has been identified as the "welfare approach" (Buvinic 1983; Moser, 1989) The welfare approach is the oldest and still most popular set

of policies⁴, despite the criticism from WID scholars, practitioners and advocates since the 1970s.

Its origins may be found in the voluntary charity organizations that existed under colonialism, often expressed in programs of relief aid. Examples of welfare programs include mother-child health programs, which distributed food along with nutritional education at feeding centers and health clinics. Tinker points out these were often more child-focused than woman-focused (1990:36). WID practitioners have continuously criticized such programs for increasing women's dependency, even when the programs were successful. Many of these programs have not been successful, largely because of the faulty assumptions that women were non-working dependents. For example, free food programs often distribute food during the middle of the day at a centralized location. Rural women must give up a day's work and walk long distances to take advantage of such programs, so many who are most in need of such programs do not benefit. Furthermore, many of these programs were criticized because food aid did not guarantee nutritional improvement for children. Jackson and Eade found that when food aid was given, women tended to overestimate the nutritional value of this foreign food and feed their children less local food, resulting in weight loss or no weight gain. When food aid stopped, women fed their children more local food, and the children gained more weight. (Jackson and Eade 1982, in Moser 1989:1820f).

Other welfare programs focused on population and family planning, but were again, based upon some faulty assumptions. Women were frequently thought of as "targets" of family planning. Development planners did not recognize that children have an economic value for subsistence families and that improving women's income and decreasing their heavy load of responsibilities would help diminish the birth rates (Tinker 1990:36).

⁴ As of 1989, welfare programs were the highest percentage of WID programs sponsored by the World Bank (Chowdhry 1995:32)

Tinker argues that this welfare-oriented policy approach rests on three general suppositions. First, women are passive recipients of the development process, rather than active participants. Second, motherhood is assumed to be the most important role for women in society, and lastly, child rearing is believed to be the most effective social role for women. Thus, the focus on women is in terms of their reproductive roles, while the focus on men is in terms of their productive roles. "Welfare programmes remain very popular as a way of reaching women, though they make little contribution, if any, to creating independence and self-reliance" (Mosse 1993:153). Though this critique is warranted, as I will show later on in this chapter, this line of argument reveals a limitation of the WID policy approaches-- an overemphasis on "production". I argue further that such an emphasis has enabled the incorporation of WID into mainstream development policies, though it falls far short of a feminist transformation of development thinking.

The Critiques of Welfare Policy

As a counter to the "welfare" policy approach, Boserup's work provided the basis for the field of WID. First of all, she made gender the central analytic category in the division of labor. She highlighted the differences in women's work across different countries and regions (specifically in Africa and Asia) demonstrating that women are not only food preparers, or reproductive laborers, but are and have been food providers as well, or 'productive laborers'. The experience of colonialism and the introduction of capitalism to formerly subsistence economies often led to women's further subordination and marginalization. For example, during Colonial rule, consistent with the European gender ideology, African and South Asian men were taught how to use imported tools and to work the land. As a result, land was often taken away from women. These interventions eventually led to women's loss in income, status and power relative to men as well as the marginalization of their roles.

Another important finding still has a great deal of relevance. Boserup showed that unpaid subsistence labor, which is primarily carried out by women across regions, is not regarded as work and thus left out of the statistics of production and income. Not only does this make such measures unreliable and inaccurate, but there is an implicit devaluation of this type of work which furthers the subordination of women.

According to Tinker, “the scope and clarity of her [Boserup’s] presentation made *Women’s Role in Economic Development* the fundamental text for the UN Decade for Women” (1990:8). In exposing the ways that the division of labor changed as societies modernized, Boserup illustrated how the introduction of modern technologies and the expansion of cash crop production benefited men, but put women at a disadvantage. Not only were their workloads increased in the family and in the field, but their labor was devalued as well. Her critique of modernization theory⁵—the assumption that everyone will benefit, and that males are the principal actors in development practices—unleashed an explosion of research, discussion, policy-making and programming over the role of women in the development process. This is the “Women in Development “(WID) movement⁶ and corresponding set of policies, institutions and programs/projects.

Boserup’s work was accompanied by a growing disaffection with the “welfare” policy approach and the general treatment of women in the development process. Tinker suggests that the emergence of the Women in Development (WID) movement came from an international web of advocates, practitioners and scholars. Although many scholars and

⁵ As discussed at length in Chapter Two, modernization is a model of development which centers on how to transform “backward” societies into in modern economies through industrialization, urbanization, technology transfers, financial aid, and the integration of Third World economies into the global capitalist market system. The prevailing belief is that through this process economic growth would slowly trickle down and poverty would be eradicated. This model was most popular in the 1960s, but its tenets continue to be the ideological basis for much of the development work that goes on.

⁶ I am using the term WID, or Women in Development, to include the movement of international development actors-- scholars, advocates and planners-- working toward improving the lives of women.

advocates from the First World were concerned with equal opportunity issues of jobs and education, there was no consensus. Some, like Boserup, believed that the problem with development had been that women were left out and thus further excluded from participation in the society. Given this view, the solution was to bring women *into* the modernization process. These ideas provided the foundation for the WID policy and programmatic strategy. Its emphasis on equity and efficiency reveals its liberal-feminist orientation⁷.

Others challenged this view, arguing that the problem had been precisely the integration of women into the development process-- that capitalist modernization had actually exacerbated the inequalities between men and women. These ideological differences are a mirror image of those reflected in the modernization and dependency schools discussed in the last chapter. The women and development movement was thus influenced by these debates.

In a very early article, Tinker (1976) argued that the reason for the adverse impact of development on women was that planners, usually men, were not sensitized to the fact that women perform both productive and reproductive social roles and that reproductive labor was not recognized as work. A telling example of this was a U.S. Department of Labor figure⁸ that only 5% of African women work. This statistic exhibits a narrow understanding of the varying work roles of women and represents the prevailing ideological construction of women as only mothers and dependents. According to Tinker, this Western construct has had an "adverse impact" on women in more sexually equal subsistence societies, where a distinction between economic and family labor was not made, and all labor was valued. The

⁷ By Liberal feminism, I mean the brand of feminism which has sought "legal changes to educate women, to enfranchise them with political rights, and to create equal entitlements and playing fields on which to compete for opportunities and resources" (Staudt 1998:22). In other words, the emphasis is on reforming existing political and economic systems rather than replacing these systems.

⁸ U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, Committee on Foreign Affairs, Subcommittee on International Organizations and Movements, "International Protection of Human Rights" (hearings August-December 1973), 93rd Congress, p. 444, cited in Tinker 1976:23f.

point is not that development never helps women, but that as compared to men, women have lost status, income, and worth as economic growth has continued. So while Tinker had a more nuanced critique of integrating women than Boserup, the implication of her argument is that women need to be *better* integrated into the development process.

Still other critiques of the welfare approach emphasized how women were negatively affected through their incorporation into the development process. Separation was their answer. Most of these critiques were brought by socialist-feminists from the First world such as Elise Boulding (1981). Not only was she very critical of integrating women into development, but she based this argument on the problems wrought by development in the first world, particularly the U.S. Boulding said, “[w]hat we are in danger of doing now is inflicting the diseased solutions of the first world on the diseased conditions of the third world, and as usual women will get the worst of both” (1981: 14). Looking at the gendered wage gap in the United States, she said, “[t]his asymmetry should make us question very strongly the appropriateness of first world development agencies of any kind designing development programs for third world women” (1981: 13). Boulding believed that development planners⁹ should learn from the experiences of the First World, where many women also lost their autonomy through industrialization and technology. In addition, planners should ask Third world women what they want and begin with what they already know how to do. Women have always been able to generate surpluses, and have developed credit and insurance systems among themselves. Boulding drew on Samir Amin’s work on de-linking (see Chapter Two), but placed it in the context of women. That is, women should delink from men. Successful women-only communes, enterprises and cooperatives in the US and Europe demonstrated her point.

In each case the intention is to form an independent base from which to deal with men, with the West, and with development planning generally. There is

⁹ I am using the terms development planners and development practitioners synonymously. I will also make references to development scholars or researchers, and a third category of development activists. This is following Tinker’s model. See Tinker (1990).

not infrequently contempt for first world women veiled beneath the polite interaction with the West. Western women are after all “lackeys”—at least in one view. At the least, western women are the handmaidens of bureaucratization (1981: 23).

Boulding spoke passionately about the likely outcome of further incorporation into the development process— even more vulnerability and exploitation. Her views were on the radical edge of the feminist critique of development, marginalized from much of the WID discourse. Post-modernist feminists in recent critiques of both the development process and WID and GAD are still voicing some of Boulding’s ideas.

In terms of the role of Third World women, most of the early WID literature from the US does not directly discuss the theories or practices of Third World women and their relationship to the WID movement. Snyder (1995) argues that a gender consciousness developed for many women involved in their national independence movements so that at an early stage, Third World women were involved in creating the WID discourse and practice (Snyder 1995). But, given the absence of voices from the Third World, the development of WID and its incorporation into the major development institutions continued without much input by Third World women. The problem of inclusion plagued the second wave Feminist movement in the United States, since the voices of the poor, women of color, lesbians, and other marginalized groups were largely ignored. Throughout the 1970s and early 1980s, the ‘mainstream’ WID movement in the development discourse paralleled the mainstream feminist movement in the First World, sharing similar assumptions and orientations. We begin to hear more from Third World women toward the end of the 1980s and throughout the 1990s. Since this time, their voices have been much more visible, as will be shown later on in the Chapter.

The Equity Policy Approach

Buvinic and Moser identify the earliest WID approach as the “equity” approach, marking both a rhetorical and real shift away from the welfare orientation. The equity policy approach called for redistributing the benefits of the development process through

legal reforms and attitudinal changes (Bandarage 1984)¹⁰. This approach focused on all women, rather than just poor women, implying a full-scale transformation of gender relations throughout the society, especially with regard to changing the sexual division of labor and revaluing women's unpaid labor. This was a clear move away from programs that were only concerned with women's reproductive roles as wives and mothers.

This approach was influenced by several factors: the work of Boserup and others, the declaration of the UN Decade for Women (1976-1985), and the liberal branch of the Western feminist movement. As a result, governments and development agencies established separate divisions and bureaus to focus on integrating women into the development process. Because of the dearth of statistics on women and their labor, there was a great deal of emphasis placed on research and generating data during this time. Thus, there was an implicit acceptance of the development process, where more interest was given to bringing women in, and making women visible than they had been previously (Jahan 1995). This goal corresponded to those struggles being fought for by women in the First World— equal access and opportunity to education and employment. Third World women, however, were more inclined to question the fundamental vision of development. Since most of the WID studies were carried out for First World development agencies¹¹, the

¹⁰ Of course, some feminists influenced by dependency theory were more critical of the entire development process, and did not wish for women to be brought in. Unfortunately this position has been largely marginalized throughout the WID discourse, and will be discussed later in the chapter.

¹¹ Two such studies carried out by the World Bank were discussed in Murphy (1995). The first was entitled, "The Integration of Women into the Development Process" written in preparation for the first UN Conference on Women in Mexico City (1975). This study focused on poverty alleviation; mainstreaming women in selected sectors like rural and urban development, education, population, health and nutrition. Primarily emphasizing women's traditional domestic roles, the study discussed improving women's status as one factor in lowering fertility. The second, was entitled, "Recognizing the 'Invisible' Woman in Development: The World Bank's Experience", written in preparation for the second UN Conference on Women in Copenhagen (1980). The study confirmed the links between poverty alleviation and increased awareness of women's roles, seeking the integration of women into projects and assessing the impact on women as part of projects' costs and benefits analyses.

conclusions have been “directed at influencing program directions or policy decisions rather than at questioning the values and goals of the process or challenging the theoretical underpinnings of economic development in general...” (Tinker 1990:5).

Despite its liberal focus on equality, the equity approach had some important radical implications. Since the general consensus held that women had lost ground to men because of their marginalization, the equity approach could mean redistributing the benefits of economic growth. Thus development programs were urged to give more attention to increasing equality in educational access, literacy and skill training. As Rogers (1980) points out, in response to this policy approach and to the pressure by women’s groups, international development agencies began hiring women as part of affirmative action programs, though mostly in low-level positions. Though there are more women leaders at the UN than in previous years, the issue of equality is still an issue. In March of 1999, in a speech at the General Assembly, Louise Frechette, the Deputy Secretary General, gave Kofi Annan a gift of a millennium clock and said, “we have 302 days before women get the share they deserve”.

Another consequence of the equity approach was the setting up of national women’s bureaus. As Buvinic (1983) suggests, these bureaus were not very successful. While they boosted the political organization of women’s groups, the programs were often conceived separately and independently from national strategies. This had the continuing effect that women remained marginalized from mainstream economic development programs. Moreover, the bureaus were often severely under-funded and understaffed, thereby limiting their effectiveness. Moser (1993) considers staff size and budgets to reflect the legitimacy and influence of bureaucratic departments. Such decisions mark the reality of WID policy initiatives, despite the rhetoric of its importance. As Moser stated,

Budget allocations are clearly the ultimate verification of legitimacy, when lip service must be converted to practice. Consequently, it is the biggest challenge and the most effective way in which male privilege blocks women, and reinforces their subordinate position. Well-financed units, provided with adequate supportive structures, can serve as crucial institutional structures to ensure positive discriminatory practices and oversee the integration of WID

into the institutional structure. As such, they are consequently threatening to the existing institutional system of power and control that effectively marginalizes women's gender needs, both practical and strategic (1993:128).

These limitations are not surprising for the equity policy approach met a great deal of resistance from many inside the development agencies. Rogers (1980), Buvinic (1983), Staudt (1985), Kabeer (1994), and Goetz (1994) suggest that equity policy and programs were resisted at all levels of the development apparatus. The staffs of development agencies, mostly men, were not really interested in redistributing power as the equity approach implied. Citing Staudt, Goetz argued that the equity policy approach represented a personal threat to men's power and authority. "Those who make policy, predominantly men, live intimately with the group about which policy is made, and individual characteristics of that relationship carry over into work relationships and policy thinking..." (Staudt 1985:7-8, in Goetz 1994:29). Moser does say, however, that despite the fact that the equity approach never really gained much ground because of the resistance to it, the goal of legal equality became part of the rhetorical consensus from which more controversial issues could be and have been discussed. Examples of such issues include the rights surrounding divorce and custody of children, the right to property, the right to credit and voting rights (Moser 1993:66). This supports the contention that rhetorical shifts that are not accompanied by "real" changes are not necessarily meaningless, but in fact, quite significant.

Perhaps as a way to deflect this threat, resistance toward the equity policy approach came in the form of assertions from Third World governments that it represented cultural imperialism, deriving from imported Western Feminism. Development practitioners, especially those in the UN, then rejected such programming on the grounds that they violated the sovereignty of third world nations by imposing foreign ideologies. Goetz acutely remarks, however, that, "of course such reservations about cultural imperialism do not apparently dampen the enthusiasm with which other development preoccupations-- such as population control or lately, good governance-- are taken up by development institutions" (Goetz 1994). Rogers (1980) suggested that development agency job offers

consistently went to men, justified by the claim that Third World governments would not be able to work with women. As Rogers points out, such a claim was based on Western stereotypes of traditional gender roles in Third World countries. Some of these countries, like Burundi and Madagascar, had higher numbers of women working for development agencies than many First World countries (1980: 50-51).

The Anti-poverty Policy Approach

Given the resistance and the difficulty of implementing 'equity', a different policy approach emerged—the anti-poverty approach. WID proponents began to strategically link economic inequality with poverty. This approach was a toned down version of the equity approach—toned down in terms of the language utilized as well as the emphasis of the projects. As Naila Kebeer writes,

Defining women's problems in terms of the family's basic needs rather than their unequal access to resources made a WID policy more acceptable within male-dominated agencies, particularly as measures were designed in such a way as to further minimize any potential for change (1994:7).

Poverty became the explanation of inequality, not female subordination. The anti-poverty policy approach was more in line with changes in the mainstream discourse towards basic needs and poverty alleviation. Buvinic writes, "The change in emphasis from equity -to poverty -centered analyses translated women's questions into the language used by economic development theorists and practitioners" (1983: 23). The anti-poverty policy approach, the second WID approach, then, concentrated mainly on women's productive roles. This policy approach assumed that the origins of women's poverty and inequality was the lack of access to private ownership of land and capital as well as to sexual discrimination in the labor market. The objectives of anti-poverty programs then, were to increase employment and income generating activities for women. Women began to be seen as managers of low-income households and providers of families' basic needs. Thus, women were still reproductive agents, but their productive roles were recognized. And the construction of the problem as rooted in poverty rather than discrimination, with the focus

primarily on poor women, appeared to be less threatening to the mostly male development apparatus.

Examples of anti-poverty projects included small-scale economic activities such as lace making, dress making, and clay pot making. This approach and the projects that emerged contributed to the development discourse and strategies in important ways. First, it helped to make development specialists aware of the magnitude of women's poverty. Secondly, it introduced new ways to measure and value women's productive work in the home and the market place. For example, the unit of analysis changed from the individual to the household, which helped to curtail the invisibility of women¹². In addition, time-use surveys began to be implemented to measure women's home production. As Buvinic said, "phrasing women's issues in terms of poverty and economic growth facilitates the translation of women's issues into development policy issues and hence their incorporation into development strategies" (1983:16).

Unfortunately, such projects had severe limitations, according to Buvinic. They tended to be small in scale, and did not take account of the difficulty for small-scale enterprises in bringing about autonomous growth. Secondly, these projects often promoted women's traditional activities rather than exposing them to new skills. In fact, many development workers considered projects like sewing clothes or making lace for local markets secondary or supplementary income. Anti-poverty projects were more difficult to implement. They were more expensive, staff intensive, required longer duration, and required more technical expertise.

Buvinic points out that while many projects were formulated as anti-poverty, at the implementation stage they often "misbehaved", and shifted back to a welfare-orientation (Buvinic 1986). That is, many income generation projects for women, at least rhetorically,

¹² Yet, as some have pointed out, there are certain problems with using households as a unit of analysis, most specifically, that household behavior suppresses individual needs and preferences, and that it ignores sex or age discrimination, conflict, and power dynamics (Buvinic 1983:18).

ended up as welfare interventions in practice. Like welfare programs such as maternal health programs, the anti-poverty programs for women would operate in a sex-segregated context. Many of the anti-poverty programs like training in stereotypically female areas such as sewing, weaving, cooking and gardening, depended upon the beneficiaries to volunteer their time and labor. Such training is time-consuming, and the expectation for this unremunerated labor was ill-conceived, according to Buvinic. Furthermore, many of these skills offered little in terms of income generation. Though the rhetoric for the importance of women to be involved in income generating programs shifted, the reality reflected the stereotypical idea that women's paid labor was primarily supplemental.

Buvinic also posits that perhaps the most important reason behind the misbehavior of anti-poverty programs was that welfare oriented projects are seen as less socially threatening and less economically costly. Segregating women and training them in gender-typed skills, pose no competition for funds or services between men and women. Anti-poverty projects, which emphasize women's productive roles, are more easily perceived as creating competition between men and women for scarce development resources. Furthermore, anti-poverty programs, which would entail training women for meaningful income generating activity, are often more complex and expensive to carry out than welfare programs. In terms of the 'social costs', anti-poverty programs, like the equity approach, have the potential to alter gendered relations and the division of labor in society. The possibility for any type of cultural upheaval is avoided by most mainstream development agencies. So, welfare projects are easier, cheaper and more politically feasible than anti-poverty projects.

The Efficiency Policy Approach

By the 1980s, with the debt crisis in many developing countries and the stringent elements of neo-liberal ideology, another shift in WID policy orientation emerged. Moser has called this the "efficiency approach". Given the limitations of the previous approaches

and the resistance confronted bureaucratically, WID policy advocates began to “sell” WID as “non-diversionary, low-cost interventions with high pay-offs for development” (Goetz 1994:30). The efficiency policy approach maintains that bringing women into the development process is necessary for *efficient* economic growth. This instrumental approach shifted the focus from “women” to “development”. That is, the underlying assumption is that increased economic participation for Third World women will in fact lead to economic growth.

This shift represents more than just bureaucratic strategies on the part of WID policy makers. There was a shift throughout the development industry toward efficiency as many developing countries were confronting serious economic problems such as falling export prices and mounting debt. The goal of efficiency is a hallmark of neo-liberal ideology. At the mainstream level, the IMF and World Bank began to design Structural Adjustment policies that emphasized the need for efficient and effective growth. Efficiency became a prominent theme in both the economics discourse and the development rhetoric. This policy approach has continued to be very appealing to development agencies like the World Bank, which has structured many of its WID programs and projects with this rhetoric in mind.

In a 1995 Bank policy document, the focus of programs and projects for women is aimed at “promoting gender equality and consequently, enhancing economic efficiency” (World Bank 1995). In its policy report for the Beijing conference, the Bank’s concern for gender equality is again, based on the efficiency policy approach as this statement reveals: “persistent inequality between women and men constrains a society’s productivity and, ultimately, slows its rate of growth” (World Bank 1995b). A 1994 policy paper entitled “Enhancing Women’s Participation in Economic Development” stated:

World-wide experience shows clearly that supporting a stronger role for women contributes to economic growth, improves child survival and overall family health, and reduces fertility, thus helping to slow population growth rates (World Bank 1994).

So in empirical terms, the efficiency approach has focused on measuring women's contributions to a country's GDP, for example. In general, women's issues at the World Bank have been linked to decline in birth rates which is assumed to increase economic development. The efficiency policy approach posits no conflict-- the promotion of both women and development go hand in hand. Helping women gain access to the development process is assumed to yield long-term benefits for everyone. The World Bank has consistently relied on the efficiency policy approach, even as it touts the importance of women.

Kardam (1991) found that the World Bank would only consider funding WID projects if they promote the Bank's agenda--profitability as a financial institution and the promotion of economic growth with reliance on the market. If the inclusion of women contributes to the efficiency of the project, then it is funded. Thus, women are considered if their role is economically viable, not because there is a strong concern for women. As Kardam says, "for many economists (who predominate in the Bank's staff), efficiency and productivity are seen as value-neutral and objective, equity as value-laden and subjective" (1991:116).

The efficiency policy approach has been criticized by many women scholars and advocates. One critique focuses on its instrumental tendencies. That is, the interest in women is justified not as an end in itself, but in terms of how it will help other development objectives (Goetz 1994; Kabeer 1994; Jackson 1996). While it may be argued that such instrumentalism is a good rhetorical strategy to make women more prominent in the development process, the evidence suggests that women's lives have not greatly improved. Thus, it would seem more likely that the shift to the rhetoric of women has been merely to sustain the legitimacy of the development as economic growth ideological apparatus.

Razavi and Miller (1995) make a slightly different argument in that this instrumentalism positions women as the key to solving every development problem. Women are seen as the answer to the ongoing problems of food security, child welfare,

environmental degradation, even the failures of SAPs. The danger in this, aside from its underestimation and oversimplification, is that given the changes wrought by austerity policies, trade liberalization and globalization, women are expected to compensate for the public provisions that are no longer forthcoming. Women's work-loads may actually intensify since they are expected to carry out the unpaid work as food, health and education providers, and most recently, as we will see in Chapter six, microentrepreneurs. As Goetz argues,

Women's traditional roles are not fundamentally changed or challenged and their workloads may even intensify as the onus shifts to them, as an untapped 'last resource' for development to extend their unpaid work as feeders, healers, and teachers of children to include the provision of basic services to the community (Goetz 1994:30).

Furthermore, Goetz is concerned with how the information on women that has been generated by development agencies is used. For example, it is generally believed among development practitioners that access to income and education will reduce fertility and improve family welfare. While this may benefit "development" in terms of what the numbers read, this may not translate into any fundamental improvement on women's lives. "Demonstrating the efficiency dividends in investing in women...significantly shifts the focus of gender policy advocacy away from politicizing women's needs and interests...to calculating what development needs from women" (Goetz 1994:30). We will see the effects more clearly in the case of Microcredit (Chapter Six), a program designed to increase women's economic entrepreneurial activities, with one of the benefits being lower fertility rates. What this focus leaves out is the structural or relational reasons why women lack privilege. Thus, the efficiency policy approach obfuscates the political aspects of women's needs and interests and switches the focus to show what development needs from women. Thus, women become "untapped resources".

Feminist economists have also critically responded to the efficiency approach. In her assessment of the Structural Adjustment Programs, Diane Elson (1991) demonstrates that the assumed efficiency of these programs actually hides the inefficient transfer of paid labor

provided by the state to the unpaid labor provided primarily by women in the domestic sphere. For example, through austerity measures designed to cut state funding to clinics and hospitals, Elson has found that these measures are only efficient because they rely on the unpaid labor of women who end up caring for the ill and elderly.

All three WID policy approaches -- equity, anti-poverty, and efficiency-- exhibit a move away from conventional women's health and social welfare programs, which viewed women as "needy beneficiaries" in order to stress their productive roles. Women are now "missing links" or, "untapped resources". A passage from the 1990 World Bank Annual Report illustrates this well. Describing women, it states, "no country can afford to underutilize and underequip more than half of its human resources" (World Bank Annual Report 1990 in Simmons 1997:245). Thus, bringing women in has become so attractive to the major development agencies because doing so unleashes more potential for economic growth.

This strategy has troubling implications. As confining as it is to characterize women as merely needy mothers and wives, it is just as restrictive to present them as untapped economic resources. Both strip women of their humanity by placing them in these narrow rhetorical categories. Moser suggests that women's triple roles—reproductive, productive and community management—should be prominent in any policy, program or project. Privileging one over the other results in exacerbating the conditions under which women live rather than improving them. For instance, only seeing women in their reproductive roles, as welfare-oriented programs do, narrows their choices. Yet, only focusing on their productive roles, as income-generating projects do, may overburden them with more responsibilities. While it may be that Moser's delineation of women's multiple roles in development policies may also be rhetorical, at least such categories reflect a more realistic understanding of women's actual lives.

The WID oriented policies which have become most popular-- welfare and efficiency—reveals that it has really only served the larger development aim of capitalist

modernization. The liberal bias underlying these WID policy approaches reproduces a privileging of the productive sphere that has been a consistent theme in development discourse. In this way, it reinforces the construction of development as merely about economic growth and productivity, reforming it ever so slightly to include women. While it is true that in some cases, women have benefited from the WID policy approaches, there is extensive evidence that many women continue to be poor and face subordination and that many women have been burdened with further hardships due to globalization (Buvinic 1999; Elson 2000). Thus, WID has been quite limited in its potential for improving the lives of women.

The Empowerment Policy Approach

The most recent WID policy approach has been called the empowerment approach, which became more popular in the mid-1980s and through the 1990s. According to Moser, the empowerment policy approach differs from the others in one very important way-- it originates from the experiences of Third World women. The basic assumption of this approach is that women "experience oppression differently according to their race, class, colonial history and current position in the international economic order" (1989:1815). Unlike the other policy approaches that seek to increase women's power over resources, for instance, the empowerment approach provides a redefinition of power. Rather than power being equivalent to the domination over others, where a gain for women implies a loss for men, empowerment is about the "capacity of women to increase their own self-reliance and internal strength" (Moser 1989:1815). This definition entails the right and capability to determine one's life choices by gaining control over necessary material and nonmaterial resources. Less emphasis is placed on women's social status.

Furthermore, the empowerment policy approach demands that development be embedded in Third World women's and men's experiences, acknowledging that the development process has not benefited all men, and that not all people want to be integrated

into the capitalist modernization process. Like WID itself, the initial definitions of empowerment were centered around issues of social justice and women's equality through transforming economic, political and social structures nationally and internationally.

The origin of empowerment can be traced to the writings of DAWN, Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era. Dawn is a group of Third World women who came together prior to the 1985 Conference in Nairobi. Their purpose was to analyze the conditions of the world's women, as well as to articulate their vision of an alternative development process and future society. Most of these ideas were put together into a book entitled, *Development, Crises, and Alternative Visions: Third World Women's Perspectives*¹³, authored by Dawn members Gita Sen and Caren Grown.

They begin with a challenge to the idea that "women's main problem in the Third World was insufficient participation in an otherwise benevolent process of growth and development" (1987:15). That is, the prevailing ideology was that women's particular problems resulted from being excluded from development programs and projects. Coming from a dependency orientation, Sen and Grown describe the worsening position of women throughout the Third World, largely as a result of the many Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) set forth by the World Bank. Their claim is that many long-term projects have either been harmful or indifferent to women and interests of poor people in general. While they acknowledge the "growth attained" by certain countries at certain times, they argue such growth has gone on without the improvement of living conditions for the majority of the people.

According to Sen and Grown, the focus on private property and commercialization has reduced women's access to certain resources. For instance, as part of the stipulations of

¹³ For an interesting critique of Sen and Grown, see Mitu Hirschman, "Women and Development: A Critique" in Marianne Marchand and Jane Parpart. (eds.), *Feminism, Postmodernism and Development* (New York: Routledge, 1995). She criticizes Sen and Grown for their tendency to essentialize the experiences of Third World women and to locate this oppression in their productive and reproductive roles, thus reproducing the centrality of labor in the understanding of being human.

many SAPs, land that had been used for subsistence production is commercialized for industrial or agricultural export. The assumption is that in order for the economy to grow, countries need to enter the market. Such pressure has superseded needs for the development of land for local consumption. In many countries this has had dire consequences on the availability for cheap, nutritional food for the majority of Third World people¹⁴. The needs of the First World are met in two ways as a result of these programs; they have access to cheap imports and the Third World now relies on the importation of necessary foodstuffs since they are no longer producing food domestically.

According to the authors, women provide a unique and powerful vantage point from which to study the implications of the Structural Adjustment Policies. They constitute the majority of the poor, the underemployed and the economically and socially disadvantaged members in most societies. In a sense, women represent whom development projects are supposed to help. Women also suffer from gender-based hierarchies, both imposed from the West as well as those that are local, and the authors claim that no development theory or strategy is sufficient without dismantling these hierarchies. The range of activities which women do is absolutely necessary for the reproduction of human life; food production and processing, responsibility for fuel, water, health care, child rearing, and sanitation. And it is these activities which are being drastically transformed as a result of the SAPs.

The authors give a brief historical explanation of the legacy of colonialism which introduced private property, commercial production, and export orientation--all geared to the First World. In addition, most of the populations were driven from the land, and forests were stripped resulting in large masses of populations alienated from adequate or stable resources, income or employment. Actually, most of the recent SAPs mirror the projects set forth under Colonialism, hence the often described 'post-colonial' relationship between the

¹⁴ Such programs have been able to successfully mystify the causes of widespread hunger and malnutrition, which often have more to do with political and social inequalities and issues of distribution than the amount of food produced.

First and Third World. This updated version of colonialism seems to promote “openness” to private capital flows and export expansion, and has not yet adequately addressed the inequalities of asset holdings that resulted from Colonialism. As the authors suggest, “there has been excessive emphasis on aggregate food production and the grain trade at the global/national level to the detriment of land and resource availability for regional and local food self-sufficiency”(Sen and Grown 1987:51).

Their notion of empowerment comes from a deep commitment to an all-inclusive feminist vision of what a developed society should look like. It rejects the concept of power and other divisive ethics of the current world order. As they say,

At its deepest it is not an effort to play “catch up” with the competitive, aggressive “dog-eat-dog” spirit of the dominant system. It is, rather, an attempt to convert men (and I would add, women) and the system to the sense of responsibility, nurturance, openness, and rejection of hierarchy that are part of our vision (1987:79).

The authors suggest that such empowerment would require real economic, legal and cultural changes, through a collaborative effort among various kinds of organizations that would work for these changes.

Moser (1993) suggests that similar to the equity approach, the empowerment approach presents a fundamental challenge to the status quo, and thus has largely remained unsupported financially by the mainstream development agencies. What has happened, however, is that the multilateral institutions have begun to embrace the concept *rhetorically*. As a way to neutralize its potential disruptive effects, the language of empowerment is now uttered continuously by the mainstream development architects. Bisnath and Elson (2000) point out that as this has happened, empowerment has become less transformative, focusing on “participation in decision making”, “increased access to productive resources” and “expanded choices” (2000:1). James Wolfensohn, president of the World Bank, stated at the Beijing Conference on Women in 1995:

all the evidence tells us that not to empower women is a tragically missed opportunity--not to create a more just, but also a more prosperous society. Empowering women, by the same token, means ensuring their full participation in every aspect of development (Wolfensohn 1995).

Once again, the usage of “empowerment” by the leader of the World Bank does not reflect a transformative meaning of empowerment, but an instrumental one, serving a rhetorical function to make an efficiency approach more popular. Other examples of this disjuncture between the Bank’s rhetoric on empowerment and its practice include the following statement found on the World Bank’s Poverty Net newsletter:

...our intention is to explore the role of structural inequalities— economic, social and political—in explaining not only the distribution of the pie but also overall economic growth. We believe that societies that are less unequal among a number of different dimensions have the best chance of poverty reduction, and it is the reduction of these inequalities that we refer to as “empowerment” (www.worldbank.org/poverty/news/apr.99, in Bisnath and Elson 2000:9).

As Bisnath and Elson point out, however, in practice, the Bank tends to focus on empowerment as self-help and participation, rather than altering structural inequalities. They cite a World Bank project in India on “Rural Women’s Development and Empowerment” (Report No: PIC3422 1997). The specific objectives include establishing women’s self-help groups, strengthening institutions to address women’s needs, increase the incomes of poor women, and improve access to better health care, education and “drudgery reduction facilities” (World Bank Report 1997). It is not clear that such objectives will necessarily bring about women’s empowerment, despite the rhetoric, especially if structural inequalities remain intact.

We see this disjuncture as well in the context of Microcredit, a development program which gives very small loans to poor women for entrepreneurial activities which will be the focus of Chapter Six. Microcredit has its origins as an anti-poverty program. As mainstream development institutions have become more concerned with efficiency, Microcredit has been packaged, at least to the funders of such programs as necessary for efficient economic growth. More recently it has incorporated the same language of “empowerment”, as a way to appeal to the NGOs and other organizations who often implement the programs. As I will show in Chapter Six, these projects tend to focus on

women in isolation rather than examining gender and class relations. Furthermore, the emphasis is on individual changes in attitude, not structural changes (Mayoux 1998).

These examples illustrate that as empowerment has become 'mainstreamed', its radical origins have been shed, conforming more to the neo-liberal ideological tendencies toward individual self-reliance through market participation rather than a feminist inspired challenge to altering structural inequalities. Furthermore, this rhetorical shift to empowerment has enabled mainstream institutions to continue to implement welfare and efficiency oriented programs by using the empowerment language and imagery.

One of the difficulties in terms of implementation is that empowerment is a long-term process, which doesn't quite fit into the requirements of development institutions and the desire to see quick results. This is made clear in this interview passage¹⁵ with one of my informants, a gender specialist at the United Nations Development Fund (UNDP):

T: The only way you can really empower anybody is based on their own experiences and their own desires. You really have to commit the time that it will take for people to develop the trust in each other, and so on, and in the process to make a difference.

R: Given that, given the immediacy of getting projects done and implemented and evaluated, certainly in the UN context, how possible is this work?

T: It's not possible if you have a three year time frame. And we need to find different ways of measuring results and impact. And I think tracking of discourse is a very interesting thing to be thinking about.

R: What do you mean by that?

T: Well, tracking what is said, and the outcomes of village discussions and what the women are deciding to do, what happens to those decisions. And at the point at which new ideas emerge in the group, what happens to those ideas? If anybody crushes them and if they get taken up and if so, by whom. Those kinds of things. It could be used, I imagine, to show a gradual increase or not in levels of autonomy and self-determination. It's not a measurable thing in, you can't quantify it. And certainly rates of return and overhead margins just don't get to it. (TN: 3/25/99)

¹⁵ As stated in Chapter One, as part of my methodology I interviewed over twenty development practitioners. To protect these informants, I shall use initials and the date of the interview when quoting them.

As this passage demonstrates, not only is empowerment a long-term process, but it is not conducive to quantifiable measurements, a key component of program and project evaluation. Thus, it is likely that the term's 'de-radicalization' as it has become mainstreamed is not just a resistance to feminist ideology, but a political and bureaucratic response to a very rigid, deeply entrenched development system. What this reveals, then, is the unlikely possibility that a counter-hegemonic development ideology will prevail. Rather, transformative ideas from below, among them feminist, will be incorporated into the system, neutralized of their counter-hegemonic orientation and become reformist, regardless of how radical the rhetoric remains. In spite of this, real change does occur and the inroads of neutered radicalism do have an impact on development practice, as I shall argue in the last chapter in more detail.

The Contributions of WID

As I have shown, WID has had both a rhetorical and a real impact on development discourse and practice. WID is a policy strategy of the international women's movement that has generated a great deal of discussion and research on women and the development process. It helped to make women a visible force on the development agenda at the policy and institutional levels as well as at the program and project level. The incorporation of women's issues in the UN conferences of the early 1990s, as well as the creation of women's bureaus and departments throughout the nexus of development agencies and national governments are examples of such changes.

The WID approach realized some important policy achievements. First of all, women's productive roles became more visible in the eyes of development planners, requiring better data gathering on the nature and implications of women's paid and unpaid work. The shift from welfare to efficiency also helped to ensure that women were treated not just as passive, dependent recipients of gendered aid, but as active, productive economic agents. Finally, important rhetorical and institutional changes occurred in the major

development agencies that made women and issues affecting women more central, like the creation and expansion of UNIFEM. These contributions were valuable despite their limitations. WID was essential because prior to it, women were invisible to policy makers. They were wives or mothers at best, completely irrelevant at worst. Their productive labor was ignored and their reproductive labor was considered non-economic, and thus not valuable to the development process.

However, though these shifts were important, they do not represent a dramatically different *ideology* of development. As I argued above, the equity and empowerment approaches, in their initial stages, were more resonant with a counter-hegemonic framework. But as they were incorporated into development work, their radical components became co-opted. Razavi and Miller (1995) argue that any time a more radical approach surfaces, it gets co-opted or reverted to “efficiency”. This, as was shown earlier, happened with both the equity and the anti-poverty approaches to WID. Whenever a radical idea has been addressed and pushed onto the development agenda, it is justified by how it can serve the goals of economic growth. While the rhetoric may change, the practices do not, nor for that matter, the fundamental ideology supporting the practices. The basic commitments to the overriding goals of capitalist modernization remain in place. In this way, the rhetorical shifts play an important function. That is, the changing discourse effectively hides the fact that development remains as business as usual in its implementation. This has also been found with regard to the discourse on “sustainability” and the environment. As once marginal ideas become popularized, often through resistance and struggle, they are co-opted by the mainstream institutions. In doing so, some of the approaches are altered, justifying changes in the rhetoric, but the main ideological commitments and practice remain the same. Thus, the fact that the World Bank and UN agencies now speak of women as much as they speak of growth has not meant that a different ideological imperative now drives the development discourse and its practice.

The Limitations of WID

As early as the beginning to mid 1980s, several critiques were launched against WID policy and programming (Beneria and Sen 1981; Bandarage 1984). Kabeer writes, “WID has been described as liberal feminism writ global”. Most of these attacks were based on the accusation that WID was primarily an “add women and stir” approach to the prevailing capitalist modernization project, steeped in the liberal feminist ideologies of the West. These criticisms were articulated by Socialist-feminists from both the First and Third Worlds, and more recently from post-modern feminists, primarily from the Third World. I will summarize these critiques in the following section. These ideological critiques formed the basis for the rhetorical shift to Gender and Development (GAD).

Liberal feminism has performed a pioneering task in bringing to light the sexual inequities that are engendered by the processes of economic modernization ...Nevertheless...[t]he limitations of the WID school reflect the material interests and the ideological boundaries of its progenitors-- Modernization theory and liberal feminism (Bandarage 1984:498).

In 1981, Lourdes Beneria and Gita Sen wrote an important article criticizing Boserup's work. While they recognized the contributions that Boserup made to development thinking and practice, they exposed some of the problems with her analysis, some of which have been directed toward the WID approach in general. Beneria and Sen argued that Boserup relied too much on individual preferences and a supply/demand framework to explain the nature of women's work. Secondly, Boserup drew on a notion of development that was consistent with a western, capitalist, industrial and technological concept of development. Her basic premise was that women are marginalized from the process of economic development largely because they earn less than men. In addition, because they have fewer skills they are unable to earn equal wages in the productive realm. Thus, the solution was to create policies to equalize this, bringing women more into the development process. The implication of course, was that the global capitalist system is benign, even inevitable, but needed to be made more equitable. Finally, Beneria and Sen argued that Boserup's analysis was traditionally economistic and not particularly

“gendered”. While her focus was on women’s productive role, she ignores important feminist issues of subordination and patriarchal relations. Though she made gender a central social category of study, she did not focus on the gendered character of reproductive labor. Thus, she called for integrating women into the economic and social relations outside the home as the solution.

This critique of the liberal-modernist bias was shared by Marxist feminists and post-modern feminists, albeit in different ways. Marxist-feminists were concerned with the consequences of bringing women into an inherently exploitative system. They saw WID as a strategic tool for the promotion and expansion of capitalist development, where helping women is incidental and useful as a strategic rhetorical device. Using a class analysis, they demonstrated that not all men benefit from modernization and that capitalist modernization used women’s subordination to justify sex segregation of work and unequal wage scales (Bandarage 1984:500).

A good example of this view was Maria Mies’s work, *The Lace Makers of Narsupar* (1981). In this work, Mies exposed the “housewife” ideology that was used to view women’s production of lace as supplemental domestic production, enabling traders and exporters to give low wages and deny basic labor rights to the lace producers. For Marxist-feminists¹⁶, WID sponsored anti-poverty or income generating projects like lace-making, resulted in the further exploitation of women rather than their liberation. Mies found that women were further exploited through this anti-poverty WID policy approach of lace-making for the international market.

From a Marxist-feminist perspective, Simmons (1997) argues that the WID movement is based on several false assumptions. First of all, the assumption that economic growth is equal to development and improved standards of living, leads to the objective of

¹⁶ A branch of Marxist-feminism known as dependency feminism focuses on how gender inequalities are created by and are essential to capitalist processes of accumulation. (Kabeer 1994:49).

bringing women in, allowing them to benefit just like the men had. In this view, the problem is not the process, but that women had been left out of it. Secondly, this assumes that women are not already part of the development process. Third, there is the assumption that all women want to be part of the international economy. Fourth, that economic growth and the objectives of the women's movement are compatible. And finally, that women in the developed world have progressed further than Third World women towards equality.

In the rest of the article, Simmons sets out to debunk these false assumptions. Coming from a neo-Marxist dependency standpoint, Simmons argues that economic growth does not necessarily bring about development and improved standards of living. Rather, it brings the overdevelopment of the core and the underdevelopment of the periphery. She based this argument on a summary of the amassed evidence over the last 50 years that among other changes, women have been displaced from the land because of the expansion of cash crop production in the name of "development". This has resulted in increasing their labor time for subsistence production on lands degraded by overproduction, and increasing food costs as they must now buy the food that they can no longer grow. The result has been the immiseration of women's lives throughout the South. The projects and programs designed to counter these conditions have been small-scale income generation projects aimed to raise women's market-determined productivity, like lace making. For Simmons, improving access to paid employment effectively makes women more vulnerable to exploitation, poverty and social dislocation. Simmons wrote,

These projects do not tackle the exploitation of women in export-processing zones, the sex tourism industry or agribusiness. They do not question the basic sexual division of labour or the international division of labour, in both of which women are placed at the bottom. Nor do they suggest that women might be better off resisting producing goods for international markets over which they have no control. There may be considerable advantages for women in having their own source of income, but this cannot be divorced from the social and political relations within which they must work. (1997:247).

She cites statistics of export-processing zones in Asia, where 85% of the workforce are women whose wages are 20-25% lower than those paid to male workers doing the same

jobs. Furthermore, these women are often housed in barracks next to the factories, making their work and private lives under the control of their employers. The reports of sexual harassment and sexual exploitation are staggering.

Though women may have been invisible to the development practitioners, or viewed only in terms of their reproductive roles as mothers and/or wives, Simmons argued that they certainly have been part of the process. It is women's unpaid and low-paid labor that made development programs possible. That is, when men left to work in the industrial cities or plantations through development projects funded by institutions like the UN and the World Bank, women stayed back to care for the family. Or, when families gave up their land, women still grew food on whatever land was left. Daughters of these families moved to work in factories, or as domestic workers or prostitutes. So clearly, women had been part of this process, even though they had originally not been targeted.

Just as it is untrue that women have not been a part of this process, it is also untrue that all women *want* to be part of it. Simmons wrote that by the end of the Decade for Women, it was clear to many that the position of women in both the First World and the Third World had become worse. So, the question became, who was pushing for WID? Simmons suggests that it was the development institutions which "adopted the slogans and the cause" (Simmons 1997:249). Women's departments were established, women's projects were funded, women's organizations were created. Simmons says, "it was a whole new lease of life for the flagging development establishment" (1997:249). This is a rather flippant analysis of the development apparatus. While the more WID was incorporated into the establishment the more reformist it probably became, there were and have been a number of very concerned and passionate advocates who have been involved. It is more important and relevant to analyze the political processes involved in the attempts at changing institutions and bureaucracies from below.

Countless movements of struggle have resisted the onslaught of First world development. As Simmons points out, whether the tree huggers of the Chipko movement in

India, or women setting up co-operatives to combat food shortages in Mozambique, or local grass-roots groups in Brazil fighting off policies imposed by the State and lending organizations, women have acted to thwart the spread of Western-style development. Women throughout the developing world have been demanding that they be recognized as subjects, as knowledge producers, and as life sustainers capable of delineating the problems and solutions, rather than merely being “brought in” to an externally driven development process. “The key to their success is self-definition: the antithesis of a development model that measures every country and every citizen on one single line of progress” (Simmons 1997: 250).

Many feminist scholars and activists also showed empirically that women’s poverty was a direct result of their inclusion into development policies (Mies 1982; Shiva 1989). While more public attention was given to those who were arguing that the exclusion of women should be reversed, others contended that inclusion hurt women. The dominance of the liberal bias and its unthreatening quality made the former arguments more acceptable and therefore more popular in the development institutions.

Finally, much evidence suggests that socially, if not merely economically or politically, women have made little headway in terms of equality in the North, or First World. Countless studies show that women in the United States have less leisure time, are more emotionally drained as they do more of the unpaid care labor, make less money, and have less political power than men. It is important to emphasize these consequences and the consequences in the Third World. There has been too little reflection both on the unequal conditions of women in the First world and the relationship between this situation and the conditions of women in the Third World. The simplistic and erroneous assumptions-- that First world women are more liberated, more equal, than women in the Third World reflects only a very narrow notion of development still steeped in the modernist, productivist paradigm. As Simmons says, “[t]he fact that development has left many millions of people worse off than before should lead to a questioning of development and the cultural and

political ideologies it stems from, not to a proposal for more of the same" (1997:248). Many scholars and practitioners have been willing to question the development that has proceeded in the North, and to really question whether we can meaningfully say that we have reached "development". We will revisit these ideas in the final chapter.

The WID policy approach has also been critiqued by those coming from a post-modernist orientation. From this perspective, WID is criticized for being a top-down approach where Westerners are constructed as "experts" and people in the Third world are constructed as being in need of the experts' knowledge and skills in order to become "developed". Geeta Chowdhry (1995) reveals the liberal-modernist thrust of the WID policy approaches. According to Chowdhry, both the welfare and anti-poverty programs suffered from colonial discourse. In both, women were voiceless, traditional, and homogenous. Women were not much more than "victims of endless pregnancies". They had no agency or self-determination, and the structural causes of poverty were ignored. Similarly, the efficiency policy approach reinforced the assumption that women in the Third World need to be shown how to develop-- that the knowledge and practices of the West were best because they were most efficient and that these should be taught. As evidence she examines a World Bank technical paper (1990) which states, "During each stage in the life cycle, females have clear-cut biological, economic and cultural roles" and that women "generally lack self-confidence, education and basic skills, even for feeding children" (World Bank 1990:13 in Chowdhry 1995:34).

This post-modernist critique is different from other critiques because of its fundamental challenge to the whole idea of modernization and its assumptions of how knowledge is produced and transmitted. Chowdhry wrote, "despite this critical stance, and the involvement of progressive feminist groups in the South, such as DAWN, international feminists have neither challenged the issue of modernity nor one of its expressions, colonial discourse on Third World women" (1995:35). I would add that these "alternatives" have also not sufficiently challenged the prevailing notions of progress. Thus the post-modern

contribution is a critique of modernity and modernization, focusing on power, difference, gender, and discourse. Such an analysis exposes the knowledge creation process in constructing the Third World woman as “other”, justifying their subordination and continued denial of their voices. This perspective has become very attractive to Third World women who are frustrated with the western feminist (liberal and socialist) thrust on “knowing” (Spivak 1987; Lazreg 1994; Mohanty et al.1991).

*Gender and Development (GAD): Women's Triple Roles
and the Distinction between Practical and Strategic Needs*

Many of the critiques of WID have not been addressed directly in the practical discourse of development programs. Some concern has been expressed with the tendency for women-specific programming to segregate and isolate women, especially within a climate where the legitimacy of “women’s issues” is repeatedly questioned. The isolation of WID policy and programming, it has been said (Moser 1993), has led to an evasion of the *gendered* dynamics of access and opportunity. Welfare, equity, anti-poverty and efficiency approaches have not adequately concentrated on the relationship between men and women and the role of gender relations in restricting women’s access to resources in the first place. While WID did not ignore the subordination of women, it did not focus on the structural and relational nature of that subordination. As one of my informants echoed, “it’s well and good to talk about women and focus on women and deal with these issues that are burning issues, but then you have to look at men. You can’t leave them out” (OE: 9/13/99).

These concerns provide some of the theoretical underpinnings of the more recent manifestation of WID-- that is GAD, Gender and Development. Moser suggests that this shift to GAD principally came from the scholarly community, yet it has become incorporated at the institutional level. By the early 1990s, the World Bank renamed its WID unit to “Gender Analysis and Policy team (GAP) (Murphy 1995:47). Just as WID identifies women as a special and separate target group for development programming,

GAD, in principle, identifies gender as a central part of development strategy. Thus, a gendered analysis examines the situation of women in relation to that of men.

According to Moser, the goal of gender planning is the “emancipation of women from their subordination, and their achievement of equality, equity, and empowerment” (Moser et al. 1999:16). Gender planning, another frequently used term, is a planning approach that takes into account the different roles which women and men play in most developing societies. These different roles suggest that men and women often have different needs, and these must be accounted for in development policy making and programming. Moser delineated two important underlying rationales for the GAD approach. First, the identification of what she calls women’s “triple roles”--their productive (wage labor in the formal or informal markets), reproductive (childbearing, rearing, and house maintenance responsibilities), and community management (allocation of resources/services that the state does not provide). Because reproductive and community management labor are not considered “work” in the classical sense since there is no exchange value in terms of a wage, this means that much of the labor that women do is invisible. “When planners are blind to the triple role of women, and to the fact that women’s needs are not always the same as men’s, they fail to recognize the necessity of relating planning policy to women’s specific requirements” (Moser 1989:1802). This is something that the GAD approach has sought to address.

For example, income-generating projects must account for the fact that in women-headed households, there may not be a household support system in place, as there is in the traditional two- parent household, from which men benefit substantially. Many such programs that had targeted men in the past relied on someone at home carrying out the reproductive or subsistence labor that made his labor power possible. In many women-headed households, this labor must be done by women in addition to income generating labor, which constrains women from engaging in certain types of work. This requirement must be understood when projects are designed and implemented. Likewise, child-rearing

projects, like nutrition-education projects must acknowledge women's income generating roles and how such roles may affect their ability to participate in these other projects.

Second, Moser made a distinction between *practical gender needs*, which may be defined as more immediate needs that may not challenge the system, and *strategic gender needs*, or structural changes that transform the current system (1989; 1993). Practical gender needs are defined as "needs formulated from the concrete conditions women experience in their engendered position within sexual division of labor" (Moser 1989:1804). These needs are a response to an immediate perceived need, as articulated by the women themselves. Examples would be income earning activities or housing and basic services needs. Though Moser does not frame it in this way, practical gender needs are more closely aligned with the former WID policy approaches. The main difference here is identifying the roles and needs in relation to those of men. In the earlier WID approaches, women were the primary focus, thought of as separate from men or any gendered set of relations.

Strategic gender needs, on the other hand, are identified from analyzing women's subordination to men. The concept of "strategic needs" offers an alternative way to structure gender relations within a society, and these will vary depending upon the context. Examples of such needs include the abolition of the sexual division of labor and the alleviation of the burden of domestic labor and child-care. An additional example is the removal of institutionalized forms of discrimination such as the right to own land, property or have access to credit. Other political and social needs include the establishment of political equality, the freedom of choice over childbearing, and the adoption of adequate measures against male violence and control over women.

Moser argued that practical gender needs often take precedence, especially since they are easier to carry out and the solutions and conditions are easier to attain. Oftentimes, development agencies demanding results identify practical gender needs, but use the rhetoric of strategic gender needs. In this way, development planners can say that they are meeting

women's needs, but this ultimately hinders women's abilities to identify and realize their strategic needs. Once again, Microcredit is a good example of this. Often using the concept of "women's empowerment" as a primary objective, as we will see in Chapter Six, many programs give the microloans to women, but do nothing to ensure that they keep control over the money and how it is spent. Thus, such a program may meet a practical gender need of income generation, but may do nothing to meet the strategic need of ensuring women's equality and control over material resources.

One of my informants offered a concrete illustration of the differences between practical gender needs and strategic gender needs. She described a project requesting funding from the UN agency for which she was working at the time. The project was designed to teach women environmental management skills in Northern Tanzania. As part of the project, the women would receive radios on which they could listen to information programs on environmental management.

One of the things that was really interesting was that they had radio programs and they said they would give each of the women in the household a radio so they could actually hear the programs. .. And one of the main problems was that the men bought the batteries. They had money to buy batteries for the radio. And so they controlled what the women listened to. And the women didn't listen to environmental programs, the men listened to sports. So, that kind of shows you that it's not okay to just say, "we're going to address the women" or "the women are going to be the beneficiaries". But what is happening around those women? They don't live in isolation. And they don't live in a bubble. They're connecting and they're negotiating in a household with men. Now, you have to give them radios and figure out how they're going to have a constant supply of batteries, so they don't have to rely on the men. And even if they do have this constant supply of batteries, how difficult is it for them to sit there and say, "no, I want to listen to this environmental management program". Is it really going to happen? That to me is the issue. Cause I can't even pin-point WID and GAD here. These little examples are the things that illustrate it to me. There is another dimension going on and I think if you address that dimension, you are actually changing structures. (OE: 9/13/99).

As this passage demonstrates, targeting women by giving them radios would take care of a practical gender need, but not a strategic gender need as it does not place enough attention on the context in which these women live. A focus on strategic gender needs would be attentive to the material and social conditions that would enable them to use the radios.

A second helpful example to illustrate the differences between practical and strategic needs is in the area of women and science. Meeting practical gender needs would be bringing women into science through programs designed to increase the number of women working as scientists as well as studying science at the university level. In the past, and as part of the anti-poverty approach of WID, programs were developed to give women appropriate technology, for example ovens to decrease the time spent on some reproductive labor, like cooking. The problems have always been defined as an exclusion of women from access to technology and also replaced by technology. From this assumption, it is logical to insist on bringing women, though in practice, such women represent the less poor and conventionally educated into the folds of science and technology, both as participants and as recipients. A class distinction is created that is ultimately ignored. In addition, there is no examination of the male bias of the dominant science and development framework. Women's roles as developers of science or technology are ignored; they are passive recipients. Realizing strategic gender needs questions the prevailing social structure of science and the process of scientific knowledge production. It challenges the assumption that science is neutral and value-free, and it legitimizes and values the local knowledge of women without romanticizing or idealizing this knowledge.

One last example highlighting the difference between practical gender needs and strategic gender needs is in the area of literacy. A literacy program that targets women does not necessarily affect existing gender relations. One of my informants assisted an evaluation of an UNESCO literacy program that targeted women in several rural communities in the Gambia. The main problem, as identified by this informant, was that these women were being taught basic literacy skills in order to function in the market place. But the men knew how to speak and read English, the official language of the country.

N: Well, gender sensitivity was a word that appeared everywhere. But it was not taken anywhere. It said in the outline of the ten goals of the project, and it said, point nine: "and it has to be gender sensitive". But it was not fundamentally gender sensitive. I mean it's not gender sensitive if you only address the women and if you educate them in their vernacular whereas all the men had been educated in the official language, English...

R: The official language is English?

N: Yes. And in the formal schooling, teaching is English. So, if you teach the women in their vernacular, even though they actually succeed in getting to read and write, they will not be able to read and write a letter to or from their husband, because he only knows English. They cannot understand what is said on the radio because that comes in English. They cannot run for President because that takes place in English. They're basically not....well you didn't address the subordination, you're reinforcing it. You're giving them tools to behave as secondary persons. (NC: 5/21/99)

In this case, 'gender sensitivity' is a term used frequently in GAD programs. As this informant suggests, this term is often used without much reflection on what it should mean. As a result, these programs do not truly benefit the people whose lives they are supposed to improve. Literacy programs that simply target women, but do not analyze the gendered relations of men and women, in terms of the roles and relationships to the market, or access to education is another example of practical gender needs taking precedence over strategic gender needs. It must be noted, however, that a further conflict arises in this example. That is, the teaching of English represents cultural imperialism, something beyond the scope of this analytic discussion, though very germane to many of the broader questions raised in this dissertation.

Obviously this distinction in needs is a political one and is linked to the broader issues of the politics of compromise in development practice. That is, strategic gender needs correspond to a set of counter-hegemonic objectives while practical gender needs are more reformist. Practical gender needs are more likely to be incorporated into development practice as they are less costly economically and socially. But while practical gender needs may not result in major transformations for women, they do serve an important function. By identifying practical needs and collectively working toward these needs, women, if they are not already, will become aware of the necessity for more fundamental changes in their societies, and in turn, create pressure to realize these needs.

The Limitations of GAD

As one of my informants said of GAD,

It's a very difficult thing, gender. It's not easy to say, "yeah, let's look at it from a gender perspective". Because it brings up a whole bunch of stuff that people don't want to deal with. It's transforming major old structures that have been ingrained, and social relations. If we want to do it right, it's going to involve a lot of change and a lot of change that people are not willing to make. (OE: 9/13/99).

Here she was talking more specifically of Moser's "strategic gender needs", which many feminists identify as GAD itself. She is addressing the counter-hegemonic ideological orientation of GAD which has affected its implementation.

Moser remarked on how widespread GAD rhetoric has become in the development institutions, but says, "[t]his has not, however, necessarily meant that the issue of gender has been satisfactorily incorporated into the wide diversity of planning disciplines concerned with the lives of low-income communities in Third World countries" (Moser 1989:1800). She explained this in three ways. First, most of the institutions are still male dominated as well as gender blind, and thus resistant to recognizing gender as an important planning issue. Secondly, GAD is fundamentally about highlighting the complexities of gender divisions. Because of this, less attention has been given to how these complex relations could be simplified so that tools could be developed to convert gender awareness into practice. Though Moser did not say this, this could be an internal contradiction in the GAD approach that I will discuss later in the chapter. Third, it is difficult to fit gender into existing planning disciplines. Focusing on gender relations is much more theoretically complex than focusing on women's income generation, making GAD more difficult to put into practice in the form of planning and programming.

Rathgeber (1995) is very supportive of the GAD approach in that it "provides a deeper analysis and makes demands for changes that will effect more profoundly the structure of current social, economic and cultural processes" (1995:204). Yet, she is dubious about its ability to be implemented. Like the past resistance toward redistributive

attempts of the WID equity approach, it is likely that there will be opposition from those who feel threatened by challenging the structural relations of power.

Supporting these points, Razavi and Miller state that “[g]ender’ has become the panacea of those working in the field, yet few analyses exist of the way in which ‘gender’ is being applied as a policy-making and planning tool” (1995: 14). Razavi and Miller see the problem in that gender is used in many different ways, fostering an unclear consensus around how the term is used. I think the problem originates from a lack of clear definitions of what is meant by “gender”. It seems that sometimes gender refers to women, at other times, gendered relations between women and men are meant. Such inconsistencies will be discussed further in Chapter Five, in the case of UNIFEM. While gender has become a part of the development vernacular, there is less attention given to its meaning. From my interviews, many people working in the field and at the mainstream institutions are not clear about the distinction either.

Furthermore, in the competitive environment of development funding, now that the rhetoric has shifted to “gender”, it seems more expedient to employ the language in order to impress the donors, even if the definitions aren’t clear. Many of the major donor countries like Sweden, Norway, and Japan have begun to use the language of “gender”. In response, many multi-laterals and NGOs dependent upon donor monies for their programming have followed suit by using the term “gender”. One of my informants supported this in the following story of a UNESCO project that was called “gender sensitive” because the staff thought this would please the donor, the Danish government aid organization, DANIDA. This informant said there was little intention toward making this particular project gender sensitive, but they were using the language to impress the donor.

N: It was written by the project director, the guy at UNESCO and somebody from Paris, who used to work in Dakar. And those three people were experts, so called experts in formal education. None of them knew anything about women, I mean they have wives, so it means that they planned a gender sensitive project without having a clue about what is gender sensitivity. And since UNESCO is such a huge organization, claiming to be

the intellectual capacity, it should have occurred to somebody to include a gender expert too, if you want gender sensitivity.

R: Do you know why a gender expert wasn't included?

N: I don't think it was meant to be. Danida is keen on gender things, so in order to convince Danida it sounds nice with a gender sensitive project. It's like a buzz word that works for the donor. (NC: 5/21/99)

It is still unclear why there is so much ambiguity surrounding the terms "gender analysis", "gender mainstreaming", "gender sensitivity", "gender responsiveness". While they glibly fall out of the mouths of development workers and onto policy and project documents, it is almost as if they have taken a life of their own. One informant explained

The problem, I think, is that nobody wants to say "I don't know what you mean when you say gender". I mean, just recently I've been talking to a couple of people, not at the higher levels, and we were just talking about how great it would be if there could be these informal lunch get togethers, where we can ask questions like, "what do you mean by gender mainstreaming?" Or, "what do you mean by gender?" "What does it mean to take a gender approach?" I mean there are a lot of people that I think don't have that background. Not everybody has studied it, not everybody knows what it means. But I think part of the problem is that people don't want to say it so they think they know what they talk about. This sounds so arrogant, but they don't. And they continue to do women-specific programming and calling it gender because that's what the donors are selling right now. (OE: 9/13/99).

In a 1999 policy paper for the World Bank, the authors find a great deal of confusion between WID and GAD in institutional documents and reports. Analyzing recent World Bank documents, they find this confusion widespread. They write,

Despite this overall shift, however, there is still a widespread tendency to "mix" or confuse, approaches. For example, the World Bank's 1994 Gender Policy starts by identifying GAD as its framework, but frequently refers to women as a separate target group, rather than identifying women's priorities or needs in terms of men's; in addition the term gender is used interchangeably with women such that the distinction between the two is not clear and the terms are often confused (Moser, Tornquist, van Bronkhorst 1999:6).

One reason might be that these terms are kept rather vague to avoid accountability toward transforming societies. If there are no clear definitions, it is easier to hide behind the rhetoric and eschew the 'real work'. This ambiguity is often a characteristic of bureaucratic and

institutional processes (Edelman 1971). In addition, such ambiguity makes the evaluation process that much more difficult to carry out. One informant suggested that it may not be so much this bureaucratic strategy to avoid getting one's hands dirty as it is more simply a characteristic of the term itself.

I would say that perhaps it's not so much that there are no clear definitions to keep things ambiguous on purpose, but that clearly gender is not something that you can say or you can peg it to be 'this'. Like when I'm doing a gender analysis, what exactly am I saying (OE: 9/13/99).

A gendered approach to development programming may require a great deal of qualitative work. That is, changing deeply cultural and political structures will not just come about through laws or a new well. A good example of this necessary work was mentioned by one of my informants. This was a project by an NGO in India, the Aga Khan Foundation. They were trying to sensitize the village men to the amount of labor for which women were responsible in a given day. The prevailing assumption of the men was that the women did "nothing" all day. So the NGO engaged these men in a workshop where they had to list everything the women did from the moment they awoke until they went to sleep.

What they did was they got a group of men whose wives they had been working with and they sat the men down and asked them, "what do you think your wife does all day long?" And they said, "nothing". And so the NGO staff said, "okay, if that's the case, why don't we take it from the moment she gets up to the moment she goes to bed, and let's see what she does. What does she do when she wakes up? What time does she wake up?" So, they say, "she wakes up at 5:00". "What does she do?" "She goes to collect wood". "Okay, when does she come back?" "What does she do after that?" "She goes to collect water". "What does she do then?" "she cooks". "What does she do then?" She goes off to the farm and tends the crops". Etc. And they went through the entire day with what time to what time and they got to the end, and they realized that the women are spending 18, 19 hours a day working, doing so-called "nothing". And they themselves came around and said, "we had no idea". It was so powerful. It was just unbelievable. And that's what I mean by transforming. That's taking a gendered approach. (OE: 9/13/99).

Not only is this a powerful example of the potential for the GAD approach, but it also indicates the difficulty involved in changing deeply held beliefs and practices, of institutions, local and international. In that sense it is reasonable to see why implementing GAD is so difficult and time consuming, especially in the results-oriented, and competitive environment

of development funding. In addition, especially for women's organizations and agencies that are still struggling for legitimacy and visibility, the GAD framework may seem too intense and laborious.

Another challenge to the GAD approach came primarily from WID supporters within the major development institutions, who believed that GAD was too neutral, focusing on "gender" rather than "women". Conflicts between WID and GAD advocates will be illustrated within UNIFEM. The concern was that 'gender issues', loosely and ambiguously defined, would replace 'women's issues' for whose legitimacy and visibility had been hard fought. Some of these supporters suspected that this rhetorical shift was made to be more attractive to the still male-dominated mainstream development agencies. That is, given that mainstream development is often framed as a zero-sum game, with winners and losers, many think that targeting women is at the cost of ignoring men. Certainly this has been part of the resistance toward WID from the beginning, as we saw earlier. It has even surfaced around the issue of Microcredit as I will show in Chapter Six. Gender, it is felt, would neutralize this threat of redistributing resources, productive and otherwise.

An example of this came from an informant who works for a very large international NGO in East Africa. He said, "[o]ur programs are targeted towards women and in some communities men are hostile to women controlling their own resources. Effective marketing of our program and working through local partners tends to neutralize this barrier" (QN: 7/31/98).

Gender may thus be another strategy to make women's programs and projects more acceptable, as had been done in the 1970s and 1980s with the anti-poverty and efficiency approaches to WID. If so, we learn something important from this--that the resistance towards women is still a hindrance, almost thirty years after the fact. But in this case, this rhetorical switch is embedded in a much more radical and transformative potential than linking women's issues to growth and productivity. Gender and gender analyses have the capacity to challenge deeply established structures of inequality. What seems likely is that

GAD programming at the rhetorical level is 'gendered' (Moser's strategic gender needs), but at the level of project implementation it is really about 'women' (Moser's practical gender needs). And while targeting women may still be necessary, the gendered relations behind the inequality are left intact and untouched, thereby limiting the effects of projects which target women.

Concluding Thoughts

Boserup's work and the WID policy approaches made important contributions toward increasing the visibility of women and the importance of their productive and reproductive labor in the social and economic development of their societies. The treatment of women was transformed from being perceived as passive mothers and wives to active income generators. Yet, the focus on women's productive work came at a high price. While several aspects of WID and GAD reflect a more transformative agenda like challenging subordinate structural gendered relations, the incorporation of these disciplines into development practice has had the effect of neutralizing these radical thrusts. Institutionalizing change, almost by definition, ends in reformist practices. The compromised focus on women's efficiency helped to reproduce the centrality of growth and productivity as the hallmarks of our notions of development. In this sense, WID did not represent a counter-hegemonic shift in the development discourse. Instead WID very much reflected some of the basic ideological tenets of development as capitalist modernization, reforming as to include women as an important piece in the development puzzle. In fact, the anti-poverty, efficiency and empowerment approaches of WID largely focused on economic growth. While there are strategic reasons for the way in which WID developed, such decisions have resulted in extending the development aims of modernization, rather than altering them. This is important because so much of the rhetoric that has accompanied WID programming presents itself as "transformative", an example of which is Microcredit. Such a characterization is inappropriate. As Simmons argued, the ideological definition of

development is that development “depends upon absorbing all profitable national and regional economies within a global one and opening up the way for further penetration of capital and corporations into peoples’ lives” (Simmons 1997:248). This promotes Western hegemony and categorizes everyone else as either traditional, backwards, resistant to progress, or exotic. After thirty years of WID, it continues to do this, but now has added women.

Razavi (1997) responds to some of the critics of WID/GAD, especially those who criticize the instrumental qualities. Razavi argues that there are important political and institutional reasons for the reformist-style shifts. That is, integrating radical ideas and policies into the mainstream forces compromise and modification. Radical or subversive ideas need to be packaged in a way that will get them heard through the appropriate bureaucratic channels. The alternative is to be left out and ignored, with little to no impact. So the choice is to modify and compromise or be cast aside. The WID/GAD policy approaches, while certainly making some important contributions to development practices, have primarily shifted the discourse. In order for these ideas to be taken seriously, they have been transformed to fit into already established goals and objectives of development practices. In this way, they have been merely reformist endeavors, legitimized with appropriate shifts in rhetoric. The institutional constraints, perhaps especially on people with a critical approach, tell us much about the development process in general.

GAD rhetoric, especially its focus on strategic gender needs, goes farther in challenging the assumptions underlying UN and other development programs. It is committed to relying on local knowledge, listening to the voices from below, and viewing women as agents of change, rather than passive recipients. The GAD approach explores the social institutions and the hierarchical gender relations that are a part of these structures and makes gender subordination central. However, as was illustrated, given its theoretical complexities, and the challenges to deeply held structures, GAD has been much more difficult to implement. In fact, many of the current programs use the language of gender and

strategic needs, but actually amount to WID programs when implemented, shorn of the transformative potential of the rhetoric. Perhaps this reveals the necessary politics of bureaucracy, of which development is a part. Or perhaps it reflects a deeper ideological commitment to economic growth and productivity that has appropriated the “politically correct” language in order to sound more appealing and to quell the challenges from outside. Either way, the overall impact will continue to be the same--the continuing immiseration of the lives of people, especially women.

It is ironic that many of these programs are explicitly identified as “for women”. We will explore these issues in the next three chapters. Chapter Four addresses these concerns at the policy level, looking at the mandates which have come out of major UN international conferences. Chapter Five will address these concerns at the institutional level, with an examination of a WID created organization, UNIFEM. And Chapter Six will explore these issues at the project level, with specific attention given to Microcredit.

CHAPTER FOUR

UN INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES ON WOMEN: THE POLITICS OF INTERNATIONAL POLICY-MAKING

During the United Nations Decade for Women (1976-1985), three international UN conferences on women were held. The first was held in Mexico City in 1975. Five years later, a mid-decade conference took place in Copenhagen. Nairobi was the host of the third conference at the end of the decade in 1985. In 1995, a fourth conference on the world's women was held in Beijing.

This chapter focuses on documents produced for and at these four women's conferences. The issues that were raised and the language used to describe problems and objectives allow me to trace the changes that occurred with each new conference. These conferences exhibit a discursive shift in the meanings of development, the construction of the problem of underdevelopment as they affect women, and proposed solutions. Once again, the relevant questions are: To what degree are these discursive shifts mere rhetoric? What "real" impact, if any, have they had? This rhetoric-reality split is difficult to navigate in the context of these conferences. First of all, the conferences are themselves "rhetorical events"—symbolic, formal and political. There is much concern over public relations, especially for the United Nations as well as the governments and organizations which participate. Because of this, there is a tendency either to over-emphasize the function and impact of these conferences or to minimize their importance. Both extremes are rejected in this chapter. These conferences are not the panaceas of global consensus as some posit, nor are they purely symbolic exercises. These conferences are certainly limited by what they are—political and bureaucratic fora, bringing together thousands of people for a quasi-democratic experience of negotiation and compromise to establish a set of generalized norms and commitments to a particular set of policies. Given this limitation, the real changes that some wish for are difficult to realize. As I will show, the impact of these conferences has been more "rhetorical", then "real". Yet, consistent with the argument

made throughout this research project, these conferences have had an imprint on the ways in which development is conceptualized and practiced. Rhetoric *is* reality, to the extent that symbols and language affect the behavior of actors within institutions.

One way in which this imprint is manifest is that the UN conferences have helped institutionalize a language of development and set of goals that are utilized in subsequent program definition and project construction. We see this most visibly in the aftermath of the Beijing conference. The three prior conferences, as well as other international conferences that took place in the early 1990s influenced the language written in the Beijing conference documents. In this way, the discourse of development, especially with regard to women, has shifted. As I shall show, there is a strong connection between the emphases at each conference and the WID and GAD policy approaches discussed in Chapter Three. Furthermore, many of the programs and projects that were implemented after the Beijing conference were justified and constructed according to the principles drafted in Beijing. We shall explore this more specifically in the following chapter, as we examine some of the work of UNIFEM.

Secondly, the process of preparing for the conferences forced national planners to acknowledge the implications of their own development policies as they differentially affected women (Tinker 1990:32). In order to participate in these conferences, governments had to generate and turn over relevant statistical information for use in writing the conference documents, known as Platforms for Action or PFAs. As part of the Mexico City conference in 1975, for example, governments were required to submit sex-disaggregated data on a variety of basic indicators, such as health, education levels, employment in agriculture, industry and the informal sector, as well as rural women's subsistence activities. Thus, the shift in the attention toward women was not merely rhetorical, since it contributed to the generation and analysis of information, much of which had never been done before.

A third 'outcome' of these conferences was that particular issues attained international visibility. These conferences are vehicles to turn private concerns into public issues. This has been particularly true in the example of violence against women—an issue not raised at all in the first women's conference, but one that gradually gained more attention in the following three conferences. In part because of this increased international visibility, much more attention has been given to violence against women as a global issue. In 1998, UNIFEM sponsored a video-conference on the issue in the General Assembly. Furthermore, this greater visibility is presumably connected to financial commitments by member governments to adopt actions agreed upon in the conference mandates. One way to verify whether real change is occurring at the program level would be to monitor the degree to which such financial pledges are first made and then in fact carried out.

Fourth, these conferences have provided an arena for increasing and expanding cultural awareness. Given the historic context of relations between First World and Third World nations, and the assumptions that generate about the peoples who reside in these countries, the cultural exchanges that are a part of these conferences are extremely important. Women from several countries wrote about their experiences after attending these conferences. Most of these pieces reflected on how meeting women from different countries and different locations of power and privilege expanded their understanding and knowledge of women's issues. This knowledge has helped to solidify and sustain a global women's movement¹. In the context of the problems and limitations discussed in Chapter Three, this experiential quality is quite important.

Lastly, the conferences created a venue in which feminist activists could meet and establish networks of communication. Assessing the impact of these contacts is difficult, but is undoubtedly a "real" consequence of such conferences.

¹ See Papanek 1975; Tinker 1981; McIntosh 1981; Wong 1981; Cagaty and Funk 1981; Safa 1981; Ahmed 1981; Ahooja-Patel 1981; Bunch 1981; Arizpe 1982; Navarro 1982; Tinker 1986; Hultman 1986; Gaidzanwa 1986; Guy Sheftall 1986; Callaway 1986;

A Few Words on the Global Women's Movement

Perhaps a few words are in order to describe what I am referring to as the Global Women's movement and its maturation. It is difficult to assess the number of organizations and the level of participation and funding that make up this international social movement. But a general understanding, I suggest, is sufficient for the analysis at hand. Certainly an international women's movement existed prior to the 1970s, especially around the issue of suffragist rights. I focus my discussion on the global women's movement that started to cohere in the early 1970s. At that time, the movement was primarily focused on raising consciousness about the conditions of women worldwide. As was mentioned in the last chapter, though there were quite a number of different interpretations of these conditions, the causes and solutions, there was a shared recognition of the necessity of gathering data on women and raising consciousness and visibility of issues concerning women. As we will see in the pages below, such a focus was reflected in the PFA of the first UN women's conference. In the 1980s, as more data were generated and issues became more visible, supported of course by the work and advocacy of the women's movements in individual nation-states, as well as the momentum gained at the international level, the concern shifted toward more "action". Again, this was reflected in the PFA of the third women's conference, as I will show.

The 1990s displayed an even greater coherence, organization, and mobilization. This is not to suggest that there were no disagreements, quite the contrary. But on many important levels, there was a marked change in the movement. There has been a greater effort placed on holding institutional bodies, whether the UN, or the nation-state, or multi-lateral organizations accountable for the promises they are making. At several of the other major UN conferences² in the early 1990s, the women's groups had a tremendously visible

Basu 1986; Maran 1996; Hershatter, Honig, Rofel 1996; Chow 1996; Bunch, Fried 1996; Busia 1996; Guy-Sheftall, Sanders 1996; Wilson 1996.

and active presence. In part, they had become more politically savvy at knowing how to be more effective and influential at these conferences. A Women's Caucus was organized which brought together various women's NGOs and grassroots organizations to lobby government representatives to include their concerns in the conference mandates. At the Rio conference in 1992, there was a tremendous effort made to link environmental concerns with women. As one reporter remarked the Women's Caucus "managed to get its point of view reflected in every chapter of Agenda 21. So much so that the document seems to be as much about women's empowerment as it is about environment or development"³. A major consequence of the Vienna conference, pushed through by the Women's Caucus, was the idea that "women's rights are human rights". This laid the foundation for the shift in population policy from numerical targets of reducing fertility rates to policy focusing on women's reproductive rights, viewing women's increased education and empowerment as keys to population concerns. This is particularly important in light of the history of international population policy that endangered the lives of millions of women. As foreign aid to countries was largely dependent on the reduction of fertility rates, this facilitated the importation of many untested birth control methods to developing nations. These shifts, I think, help to describe much of the positive reflections and optimism and seriousness that was apparent at the Beijing conference.

The impact that non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and grassroots organizations have had on shaping the language and the policies, especially within the UN, no doubt has been helped along by the greater reliance on NGOs by development institutions. This leads to an important question for future study. Will the process of development continue to become further democratized, which could translate into real improvement, or will the threat of real change narrow this democratization to those groups

² Environment (Rio, 1992); Human Rights (Vienna, 1993); Population (Cairo, 1994).

favorable to the institutional bodies in power, but giving the impression that the process is open to all? The role of NGOs in this process will be discussed below.

A Few Words on Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)

Most NGOs are a hybrid of what are known as PSCs-- public service contractors which are market-oriented not-for-profit businesses serving public purposes and PVOs-- private voluntary organizations, which are socially-oriented, often grassroots organizations. In 1995, 13% of total public development aid (not including food aid or military aid) was disbursed by NGOs, which is more than \$10 billion (Smith and Weiss, in Weiss 1988:251), a substantial increase from previous years.

Though the relationship between NGOs and UN agencies has intensified in recent years, as donor countries have decreased their funding, NGOs have worked with the UN system since 1944 as part of government delegations in the writing of the UN Charter. In 1968, the UN began granting certain NGOs "consultative status", which meant they were able to attend UN meetings and present evidence to UN panels. These accredited NGOs were chosen to support the work of the UN, promoting knowledge of its principles and activities (Uvin and Weiss in Glassner 1998:215). According to the UN website, there are currently just over 2,000 NGOs that are in consultative status with the UN⁴.

The function of NGOs has been viewed somewhat differently in the late 1990s. With their alleged proximity to "the people", NGOs are presumed to make the UN better informed about popular opinion, and supposed to bring the UN closer to the ultimate recipients of development assistance. The participation of NGOs legitimizes the claims of UN agencies that they are involved in bottom-up, grassroots collaboration. Such collaboration is indeed really taking place, but the relationship also plays an important

³ Jack Freeman, "I remember Beijing, also Rio, Vienna, Copenhagen, Cairo, Istanbul, and much, much more", *The Earth Times*, (June 15, 2000): 18.

⁴ <http://www.un.org>

rhetorical role. NGOs are increasingly consulted by UN agencies for designing, implementation of development projects and programs. They have also assumed some monitoring responsibilities, especially in the area of human rights. (Uvin and Weiss in Glassner 1998). This movement is a consequence of two things. First, the recent trend of paring down the UN agencies and contracting out its work and services to NGOs in order to better fulfill their mandates and reduce costs (perhaps a sign of neo-liberal economic ideology having an impact on the organizational structure of the UN). Second, a response to pressures and criticisms voiced by NGOs themselves.

As compared to the UN, NGOs, almost by definition do not rely on governmental establishments to execute their policies. NGOs are less interested in questions of diplomacy that may shape or even halt the innovative and implementation capacities of UN agencies. So in some respects, the NGOs have more freedom than UN agencies, including the ability to make public the more controversial issues dealing with human rights or the environment, for example. As Gordenker and Weiss write, “[t]he demands of diplomatic protocol may constrain their [UN] wish to innovate. In contrast, NGOs usually emphasize getting on with the job over the niceties of diplomacy” (Gordenker and Weiss 1988: 35). Though governments are often distrustful and suspicious of NGOs, on some level NGOs have more freedom, certainly when compared to the UN.

However, political issues are involved in the process of accreditation. Gordenker and Weiss argue that the NGOs that strongly advocate particular policies have the most difficulty becoming accredited. In a 1999 vote, a New York-based human rights NGO called Human Rights in China, was denied consultative status. This group was helping victims' families to bring criminal charges against Chinese leaders responsible for the 1989 killings in Tiannanmen Square. The article said that China opposed the accreditation because the group is a “political organization, most of whose leaders live outside of China”⁵. Only

⁵ See Paul Lewis, “U.N. Denies Status to Rights Group Critical of '89 Massacre in China”, *The New York Times*, (June 7, 1999): A2.

three members (U.S., France and Ireland) of a 19 nation committee voted in favor of granting accreditation to the group. The other votes were all from developing countries, including Russia, which allied itself with China. In another *New York Times* article, it was reported that human rights and democracy groups are most at risk for being denied accreditation. In 2000, a New York based research organization, Freedom House, which works on free press issues, was denied accreditation. The opposition, coming from China, Cuba and Sudan, cited a technicality—that the organization “tricked the United Nations into providing unauthorized interpreter services during the Human Rights Commission meeting in Geneva to translate for Chinese-speaking members of their delegation”⁶. The organization denied the charges.

At the Beijing conference, several Taiwanese and Tibetan NGOs were reported as having problems acquiring visas, “problems”. Many attendees claimed such problems were politically motivated. These groups were seen as threatening to the Chinese government, the host of the conference. Governments are quite wary of NGOs that oppose government policies and seek to change them. Since the UN system favors a global consensus, they are more likely to choose NGOs that do not represent any ideological threat to member countries. In that way, the work of accredited NGOs is limited.

An additional problem is that NGOs are very loosely defined. First of all they vary in size, membership, organizational capacity, international recognition and relationship with governments. There is a great deal of evidence that some NGOs are in fact Government created and or funded. This sentiment was expressed in the following quote, remarking on the NGOs at the NGO Forum in Huairo.

The so-called NGOs were highly varied in organizational form, issues of concern, goals, strategies, and tactics, creating some contradictions among them...Questions arose as to how NGOs are defined, whom a NGO really represents, and how NGOs should function to support global women's issues and efforts. In fact, some NGOs were part of their country's state apparatus, serving as

⁶ See Barbara Crossette, “Groups Fear Exclusion from the U.N.”, *The New York Times*, (May 23, 2000): A12.

advocates and even watchdogs for their governments, silencing their grassroots NGOs and keeping even those from other countries under scrutiny (Chow 1996:186).

Autonomy and freedom to innovate presumably goes to the heart of what defines a NGO, but several questions must be asked. First of all, if a government or UN agency funds an NGO for certain services, does this affect their independent nature? Are the autonomy, flexibility and social justice concerns of the NGO hampered or co-opted by their source of funding? In a 1996 article, Michael Edwards and David Hulme argue that, in fact, official funding to NGOs by nation-states or UN agencies compromises their performance, especially in the area of advocacy. They also find that this weakens their legitimacy as “independent actors”, making them less accountable to their grassroots members, and encouraging an over-reliance on short-term programming and a results-based orientation (Edwards and Hulme 1996). These findings support my general argument that as marginal groups or ideas become ‘mainstreamed’ or institutionalized, their ideas, or in this case, their practices, which challenge the mainstream, are undermined.

Secondly, with more competition for fewer resources as well as a growing practice of donors giving earmarked funding, NGOs may be asked to become more accountable. Such demands may prove to be a difficult task for many NGOs. Financial accountability in the form of expenditure accounts and reimbursement procedures could be difficult for NGOs struggling with already tight budgets. NGOs may also not have the resources for proper research and development for their services. Many NGOs find it difficult, if not impossible to devote money for research and evaluation. This situation makes it difficult for NGOs to learn from their experiences⁷.

⁷ Robert Alford presents an interesting analysis of the political language of the Non-profit sector. In this article, he divides US non-profit organizations into three categories—corporate, public and popular. According to Alford, they NPOs are subject to different and often contradictory demands depending upon their relations to the market, the state and to civil society, which is determined by what they do. Some of the conflicting goals include formal efficiency and informal volunteerism. See Robert Alford, “The Political Language of the Nonprofit Sector”, in Richard M. Merelman (ed.), *Language, Symbolism and Politics* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1992): 17-50.

As argued above, many NGOs have been brought into the UN fold, increasing their participation in development work, and enjoying a greater presence at these conferences. As this chapter will show, some of the rhetorical and real changes, in the conference documents and in definitions and objectives have been realized through the greater participation in NGOs in the process. Yet such a role is limited, by bureaucratic constraints. An example of this is a quote by Barbara Ibrahim, Regional Director of the Population Council, an NGO based in Cairo:

If we persist in bashing government efforts in our publications and public discourse, we will not be very welcome at the policy table...If we insist on the luxury of time—for long studies, months of talk among ourselves—before getting down to business; if we can't keep to schedules and deadlines; if we keep our projects small and pristine instead of taking the risks of going to scale, our government counterparts will lose patience, and rightly so⁸.

Ibrahim added that NGOs need to rid themselves of their suspicion in order to develop stronger ties with government representatives. So the price to sit at the table may be to become less activist, less radical, and more policy-oriented, revealing another example where radical elements become neutered and co-opted as they enter the mainstream institutions. While not all NGOs may be re-writing their mandates, the growing competition among NGOs for funding and the increased pressure they are under to carry out many of the development objectives decided upon at these conferences, may be neutralizing their critiques and the work that they do.

Conference Preparations

Prior to each conference there are a series of smaller preparatory conferences, throughout the different UN designated regions-- Africa, Latin America/Caribbean, Asia, and Western Europe/US. Written reports are made from these "prepcoms", which are

⁸ Reshma Prakash, "Time for NGOs to Play a More Central Role?", *The Earth Times*, (December 16-31, 1998): 8.

used to guide and influence the issues to be raised in the conference mandates⁹. The conference mandates are voted on at the conferences and are the culmination of the ideas raised during the preparatory process. The PFAs presumably form the recommended basis for future action of governments, UN agencies, and non-governmental organizations in terms of development programming and policy making. Though non-binding and legally unenforceable, these mandates have become important sources of leverage to pressure governments to act in ways consistent with the commitments agreed upon at these conferences. Symbolically, these conferences formalize and institutionalize acceptable and appropriate language concerning a variety of development themes.

The Conference Documents-- PFAs

The PFAs generally follow a similar outline, though there have been slight changes in the structure with each subsequent conference. Normally, the PFAs begin with an introduction of some of the general problems. Next, there is a review of the progress made since the last conference. Then there is a section on National Action, sometimes called "Strategies", which are general objectives directed primarily toward Governments. In all four PFAs this was followed by a section on "Special Areas of Concern", which included specific thematic areas (i.e., women and the economy) or categories of particularly vulnerable women (i.e., migrant women). Other sections are devoted to research, data collection and analysis, international targets and strategies, geared more toward the UN community, and non-government organizations, and finally to review and appraisal. At the end of each PFA is a list of objections made by various voting members directed at certain passages.

⁹ For example, the official U.S. Preparatory Meeting for the U.N. Fourth World Conference was entitled, "Report of Women Thinking Globally, Acting Locally: On the Road to Beijing and the 21st Century". The date of this report was April 22, 1994, 16 months before the Beijing conference.

In the Copenhagen PFA (1980), two new segments were added: a historical perspective section, which detailed the roots of inequality of women, as well as a conceptual framework section, describing the interrelationship between the three primary themes of the decade—equality, development and peace. In the Beijing PFA (1995), each special area of concern was comprised of a diagnosis of the problem, followed by strategic objectives and actions directed at different actors—governments, UN agencies, the private sector, trade unions, employers, etc. So while the PFAs follow a general format, additions are made with each conference.

The introductions to these documents not only reveal the difficulty of writing these documents, but even more so the difficulties of international relations in the context of the UN. The tension between a desire to reach maximum consensus and national sovereignty is an intrinsic strain in the work of the United Nations. These conferences and the documents that are produced call for universal agreement on the issue in discussion. Yet, because of the UN's commitment to national sovereignty, as well as the different political positions of international power of the member states¹⁰, a permanent tension is built into these documents.

This tension is quite visible in the introductory section of each conference mandate. This section is comprised of a paragraph authored by the First World member states and a second paragraph authored by the G77¹¹ member states. In all the documents, the G77 paragraph calls for a new international economic order, fundamentally challenging the inequity of wealth and resources between nations. Since these mandates are voted on by consensus, not majority, two contrasting perspectives may be included to ameliorate the concerns of all parties. As Arvonne Fraser makes clear

¹⁰ The “power” issue is mediated by the one country=one vote strategy of the UN. Some First World countries consider this negatively as it cedes too much power to developing countries which often vote as a bloc. This largely explains the lack of cooperation toward UN issues from many conservative members in the US Congress.

Because the U.N. prefers to operate on consensus rather than voting on an issue, the compromise often is to put the views of both sides in a document. When two contrasting views are presented in the same paragraph, readers who have observed U.N. meetings know that a long and heated debate preceded the insertion of that particular language. (1987:76)

A specific example of this comes from the introduction of the Mexican PFA. The first paragraph reads,

In subscribing to the U.N. Charter, the peoples of the United Nations undertook specific commitments: "to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war...to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small, and ...to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedoms". (Mexican PFA, par. 1, in Fraser 1987: 33).

The second paragraph, authored by members of the G77 reads,

The greatest and most significant achievement during recent decades has been the liberation of a large number of peoples and nations from alien colonial domination, which has permitted them to become members of the community of free peoples. Technological progress has also been achieved, thus offering substantial possibilities for improving the well-being of all peoples. However, the last vestiges of alien and colonial domination, foreign occupation, racial discrimination, apartheid and neo-colonialism are still among the greatest obstacles to emancipation and progress of developing countries. The benefits of technological progress are not shared equitably and developing countries, which account for seventy percent of the population of the world, receive only thirty percent of world income. For this reason, it is urgent to implement a new international economic order. (Mexico PFA, par. 2 in Fraser 1987:33-34).

These two paragraphs reveal very disparate worldviews of the state of development, corresponding to different political perspectives based on the social realities confronting First and Third world countries in the aftermath of colonialism. Furthermore the ongoing tension between universal consensus and national sovereignty is clear.

A rather interesting sidetrack, yet fundamentally important in the context of studying the conferences on women, is that the passage authored by the G77 makes no mention of women or equality. One of the criticisms of the Mexico City conference made by women,

¹¹ The G77 is the group of developing countries made up originally of 77

was that the voices of the G77 delegates seemed to express more interest in nationalistic struggles rather than in the advancement of women. The absence of women in this passage may also reveal the characterization by several Third World male leaders of the international women's movement as a form of western cultural imperialism. Many feminists from the Third World have suggested that this gender-blind nationalism was precisely what catapulted the feminist movements in those regions. On the other hand, though more attention toward women's issues were written in passages authored by delegates from First World countries, some First World feminists have argued that the inclusion of women ultimately means bringing women into a questionably beneficial development process, where development as economic growth remains central. This is a central theme discussed in Chapter Three—the contradiction between “improving” the position of women, but thereby necessarily bringing them into a global system of exploitation. Furthermore, both the inclusion and exclusion reveal the marginalization of women and women's issues that has characterized so much of international politics historically.

The UN Conferences on Women: Exploring the Discursive Shifts

The next section will focus primarily on the four women's conferences, analyzing the changes that took place in the twenty years between 1975-1995. Important discursive shifts are evident. A major issue covered in this chapter is to what degree these shifts have been accompanied by rhetorical changes in overall development objectives as well as program and project proposals. Secondly, I will be analyzing the extent to which any *real* changes in policy and practice have taken place. As stated earlier, it is important from the outset to recognize that the conferences themselves are primarily “discourse”. They are showy events of “who is who” in the particular thematic social movement aligned with the conference—in this case, the international women's movement. As Arvonne Fraser writes,

This idea, that development should not be thought of exclusively as the economic development of a nation, but should include increasing the capacity of individual citizens to contribute to and participate in

countries.

development, is reiterated again and again in decade documents. It is not, however, what most development assistance agencies or governments seem to mean when they discuss or measure development (1987:26).

Although the disjuncture between rhetoric and reality is at the heart of the next three chapters, the task is not simply to uncover the differences between what is said and what is actually done. Just the existence of that gap does not make the discursive aspect unimportant or ineffectual. Rhetorical changes provide a symbolic context and constraining language for development policy making and program development. As Tinker suggests,

[t]he three official United Nations conferences were extremely important symbolically since such international meetings legitimized women's concerns in the eyes of national leaders and required them to address and then vote on statements that clearly deplored the devaluation of women's productive and reproductive roles and recorded women's continued inequality and growing poverty in most countries of the world (1990:31-32).

The Platform for Actions, though rhetorical tools and not legally binding, provide an important mechanism for non-governmental and grassroots organizations to pressure government officials to act in ways in accordance to the PFAs. Once again, the issue of violence against women provides a good illustration. The Beijing PFA was one of the strongest international documents condemning violence against women. Though the document itself contained several controversial passages, the issue of gender-based violence became one of the most agreed upon sections of the document. The issue came directly from the NGO and grassroots communities. "[U]rged on from the sidelines by representatives of about 1,200 non-governmental organizations", 180 delegates to Beijing agreed to include strong positions against the trafficking of women and girls, change legislation to include marital rape and honor killings as crimes¹². Since Beijing, the UN General Assembly has adopted the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, and has appointed a special rapporteur on Violence against Women who has been vigorously pursuing indictments against individuals who have allegedly committed rape,

¹² See Barbara Crossette, "Rights Gains are Preserved at U.N. Forum on Women", *The New York Times*, (June 11, 2000): A4.

now considered among the lists of war crimes. At the country level, several nations have introduced legislative bills and have allocated budgets for commissions to deal with violence against women. Laws addressing physical, sexual, and psychological violence in the family were enacted in Columbia and Malaysia in 1996; Puerto Rico allocated \$1.8 million to eradicate gender violence through legal, psychological and housing services¹³. Whether these laws are having a positive impact on the lives of women require much more research. But the fact that these laws now exist is an important step, and largely a result of the committed activism and tireless advocacy of NGOs and grassroots organizations, ensuring these issues became part of the conference mandate. These examples suggest that rhetorical changes are important.

The changes that are to be expected need to be put into the context of the strengths and limitations of the conferences and the documents created. My primary task is to demonstrate how the language of women and development has changed due to the influence of these conferences via an analysis of the conference mandates. In Chapter Five I will analyze one institution and its programs and in Chapter Six I will examine a particular project constructed in the aftermath of these conferences, to provide evidence of the degree to which “real” change has occurred.

First World Conference on Women—Mexico City

Responding to the expansion of an international women’s movement as well as recommendations from the Commission for the Status of Women (CSW), the UN designated 1975 as the International Women’s Year. The CSW was created in 1945 by the United Nations to ensure the equal rights of men and women, set forth in the preamble of

¹³ See National Council for Research on Women, “Beyond Beijing: After the Promises of the UN Conference on Women”, *Issues Quarterly*, Volume 2, Number 1, (Fall/Winter 1996).

the UN Charter¹⁴. As the CSW evolved, its role expanded to include monitoring the implementation of internationally agreed upon measures and evaluating what progress had been made for women (Women's Studies Quarterly 1996).

The 1975 First World Conference on Women was held in Mexico City, bringing 1,500 official delegates¹⁵ from 125 of the 133 UN member states. At that time, it was the largest meeting ever held dealing specifically with the problems and concerns of women (Fraser 1987:17). The conference marked the beginning of the UN designated "Decade for Women", spawning national and international programs to improve the status of women. This official conference was held at the Mexican Ministry of Foreign Affairs for two weeks in June of 1975. Most of the participants were delegates chosen by their governments to represent their governments' interests. About 50% were women, higher than the usual proportion at the UN conferences, undoubtedly due to the nature of this particular conference. In addition to country delegates there were representatives from certain accredited non-governmental organizations.

The sixty-eight background studies carried out to prepare for the conference revealed the dearth of statistical data and information about women. The studies examined the connection between women's reproductive and productive labor, women's unpaid labor in the home, the markets and the fields. The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) presented a study demonstrating that small labor-saving technologies could improve daily life for women. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) carried out studies showing the prevailing preference for educating boys over girls, and that women worked longer hours and enjoyed less leisure time than men (Fraser

¹⁴ "to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small" (UN Charter in Fraser 1987:1). The inclusion of equal rights of women was rather unusual for a charter written at this time. The authors of the Platform for Action for the First Women's Conference in Mexico City used this call for women's equal rights as a basis for their document.

1987:22). Many of these issues are still being studied almost thirty years later, revealing the lack of 'real' progress, even in the research.

The conference included large plenary sessions addressed by heads of state and top UN officials, including Secretary General Kurt Waldheim. The full title of the final document was the "*World Plan of Action for the Implementation of the Objectives of the International Women's Year*" which outlined the basic themes and concerns of the conference delegates. Taking its starting point from the UN Charter's commitment toward equality between men and women, the document wrestled with a number of important issues. The document was ultimately adopted, despite objections made by several industrialized country delegates over the call to equate Zionism with racism, the denunciation of Apartheid and consistent with the G77's economic program, the New International Economic Order (NIEO), which was a call to nationalize resources.

As this was the first gathering of this kind, the issues raised were quite formative and general. As I will show, the recommendations became more detailed and specific with each successive conference. In terms of goals and objectives, the conference mandate called for increases in literacy and civic education for women; technical and vocational training; equal access to compulsory primary education and life long education; employment opportunities; infrastructural services; voting rights and greater political participation; provisions of health education and services, such as nutrition, family planning and welfare services; parity in civil and social rights, such as marriage, citizenship and commerce; a recognition of the economic value of women's work in the home, in domestic food production, marketing and volunteer work; promotion of women's organizations; and, the development of modern rural technologies to help reduce women's heavy work loads.

The section devoted to special areas of national action reiterated the major goals and objectives: the promotion and protection of human rights and conditions of equity; political

¹⁵ Milton Benjamin and Lynn Young, "Lib in a Land of Macho", *Newsweek*, (July 7, 1975): 28.

participation; education and training; employment and related economic roles; health and nutrition; the family in modern society; population; housing; and development of social services. (In subsequent conference mandates, these special areas begin to include specific groups of women at particular disadvantage).

One of the major contributions of the Mexico City PFA was the recognition of the lack of research on women, as well as the problems of categorization when research is conducted. That is, because of social customs, women were not considered the head of the household, even if in practice they were. Moreover and more importantly, the labor that they did was not recognized if it did not generate a wage. If it did, such labor was considered “supplemental” to the family income. The Mexico City PFA called for the establishment of two UN institutions to deal with the lack of research and other methodological problems. The first was the Voluntary Fund for women which eventually became UNIFEM in 1985, and INSTRAW, the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women, currently housed in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. The Mexico City conference propelled the next two decades of research on women and their relationship to the development process. A major “real” consequence has been the recognition of women’s contributions to development, both substantively and statistically.

Many who attended considered the Mexico City conference an important consciousness-raising event. It stimulated a massive underground of newsletters, as well as smaller conferences, which helped to sustain the momentum of the expanding global women’s movement. Part of this consciousness raising was the acknowledgement of the multiple roles of women, specifically those of mother, worker, and citizen. “Since the integral development of the personality of the woman as a human being is directly connected with her participation in the development process as mother, worker and citizen, policies should be developed to promote the coordination of these different roles”. (Mexico City PFA, par. 25 in Fraser 1987:37). This became a very important theoretical dimension to WID policies and programs, as well as a fundamental basis of the global women’s

movement. However, as we saw in Chapter Three, while this acknowledgement represented a step forward in consciousness of women's needs, it was criticized by some feminist activists as reifying women's traditional roles. I will re-visit this issue in the discussion on the Copenhagen PFA.

Another contribution of the Mexico City PFA was the view by many participants of the mass media as an agent of social change in removing many of the prejudices and stereotypes about women that the media helps to reinforce. The media, it was stated in the mandate, should be used to raise public awareness of the changing roles of women and their important contributions to society. This attention to the media is found in all four conference mandates, though abstracted from its commercial and privatized functions.

The media should seek to raise public consciousness with respect to these changing roles and project a more dynamic image of women—the diversity of their roles, their actual and potential contribution to society, achievements of women throughout history—thus developing more confidence in women and a sense of their value and importance as human beings. (Mexico City PFA, par. 177-180 in Fraser 1987:48).

The section on the family in modern society included a few important acknowledgements. First of all, it was recognized that the family takes on different forms. “The rights of women, all the various forms of the family—the nuclear and extended family, consensual unions and the single parent family—should be protected by appropriate legislation and policy” (Mexico City PFA, par. 126 in Fraser 1987:45). Moreover, there was an expressed need to change discriminatory attitudes and customs, “to bring about the acceptance of shared responsibilities for home and children by both men and women” (Mexico City PFA, par. 16 in Fraser 1987:36). This idea of “shared responsibilities”, specifically the sharing of domestic responsibility by women and men, was strongly linked to issues of equality and is revisited with greater thoroughness in the next three conference mandates.

While this document in many respects contributed new ways of thinking about women and development, it contains more traditional ideas about development and implementation. Interestingly, many of these aspects share a great deal in common with the

welfare-orientation of the WID policy approach, already defined in Chapter Three. One tenet of this is that development, as it has been conventionally constructed and practiced, is naturally beneficial, the major problem being to integrate women into the process. This thinking is revealed in the following passage from the Mexico City PFA

The integration of women in development will necessitate widening their activities to embrace all aspects of social, economic, political, and cultural life. Women must be provided with the necessary technical training to be effective in production and in decision-making. Full integration implies that women receive their fair share of the benefits of development (Mexico City PFA, par. 22 in Fraser 1987:37).

Consistent with the instrumental tendency of the WID approaches, the Mexico City PFA suggested that the reasons for advancing women was in terms of what is good for “development”, rather than for its own sake. One example from the Mexico City PFA is in the discussion on literacy. After asserting that illiteracy is more widespread among women and girls, the passage continues, “[t]his contributes to low productivity, poor conditions of health and welfare, and generally impedes development” (Mexico City PFA, par. 68 in Fraser 1987:40). The implication here is that eradicating illiteracy is important, not for its own sake, but because illiteracy hampers development—seen as economic growth.

A final aspect of this welfare orientation is holding governments responsible to implement these strategies. In other words, development must be done to women, so that they can benefit it by it. Hence, throughout the conference document, the nation state is called upon to act, often in the area of legislation. While governments are the primary targets of objectives in all four documents, later documents give more attention to other important institutions, for example women’s organizations and non-governmental organizations as agents to implement these goals. Presumably these organizations would generate more participation of the beneficiaries of these programs and projects.

Second World Conference on Women—Copenhagen

A mid-decade conference was held in Copenhagen in 1980, primarily to review the progress that was made in the first five years. Like the preparations for the first women’s

conference in Mexico City, regional prepcoms were conducted and documents were created. Regional documents all agreed that the limited progress made over the last five years could be attributed to the following five factors: the lack of political will among nation states and international bodies, traditional attitudes and customs, the absence of legal codes, the scarcity of education and training, and the insufficiency of women in political and decision making processes of their countries (Fraser 1987:75).

Copenhagen exhibited the maturing of the global women's movement, a process that continued with each conference. The international consciousness-raising that characterized the Mexico City conference became more aggressive in Copenhagen. In fact, Mexico City has been labeled by many international feminists as the "consciousness-raising" conference, while Copenhagen has been called the "networking" conference (Fraser 1987:77). With each conference, the issues became clearer, allowing for a deeper understanding as well as a more nuanced analysis. In part this was due to the expansion of knowledge about women and the problems with which they are confronted, a "real" outcome of the Mexico City PFA which resulted in more research and data on women. As 2,300 delegates from 133 countries and 8,000 participants in the parallel NGO Forum descended on Copenhagen, some important changes transpired.

The concept of development itself was expanded from the narrower version in Mexico City, as is seen in the two conference mandates. "The primary objective of development is to bring about sustained improvement in the well-being of the individual and of society and to bestow benefits on all" (Mexico City PFA, par. 21 in Fraser 1987:36). Five years later in Copenhagen, it is written "Development is here interpreted to mean total development—political, economic, social, cultural—and also the physical, moral, intellectual, and cultural growth of the human person... Women's development must be seen as an essential component in every dimension of development..." (Copenhagen PFA, par. 4 in Fraser 1987:94). Not only did the concept of development broaden, but the idea that every

aspect of development must be attentive to the needs of women was a rhetorical shift from the “integrating women” approach expressed in the Mexico City PFA.

The notion of equality, too, was expanded. In Mexico City, the term equality was not expressly defined, but rather taken for granted and discussed primarily in the legal sense. As the PFA states, “[t]o promote equality, governments should ensure both women and men equality before the law, in educational opportunities and training, and in conditions of employment, including remuneration and adequate social security.”(Mexico City PFA, par. 18 in Fraser 1987:36). In the Copenhagen PFA there was much more thorough treatment of the term.

Equality is here interpreted as meaning not only legal equality, the elimination of *de jure* discrimination, but also equality of rights, responsibilities and opportunities for the participation of women in development, both as beneficiaries and as active agents...Equality presupposes access to resources, the power to participate equally and effectively in their allocation, and in decision-making at various levels...The joint responsibility of men and women for the welfare of the family and the care of their children in particular must be reaffirmed (Copenhagen PFA, par 3 in Fraser 1987:94).

The idea of “shared responsibility”, which receives even greater attention at Nairobi and Beijing was much more prominent in Copenhagen than in Mexico City. This, I would argue, signifies a shift in thinking from a welfare orientation to a focus on equality as central to the advancement of women, consistent with the second WID policy approach as discussed in Chapter Three. In fact, there was a greater recognition that many programs and projects still considered women as dependents. As it was written in the Copenhagen PFA, “[s]erious problems continue to exist. Government programmes and national machineries tend to be restricted to welfare activities traditionally associated with women, thereby reinforcing stereotyping of women’s roles and attitudinal prejudices” (Copenhagen PFA, par. 26 in Fraser 1987:97). The tone of these sections was different from that in Mexico City. In Mexico City, as discussed above, it was important to see the multiple roles of women as mother, worker and citizen. In Copenhagen, this position matured. That is, with the emphasis on *de facto* equality, it was argued that women cannot be equal if they accept the

traditional roles of mother, worker, or citizen. Throughout the Copenhagen PFA, this difference was apparent.

Another example is found in the section on “Priority areas requiring special attention”. In the Mexico City PFA, this section contained a list of reiterations of specific thematic areas of importance to women like political participation, education and training. The corresponding section in the Copenhagen PFA focuses on different groups of women who require special attention, for example, rural women, migrant women, unemployed women, young women, and a rather contested category “women who alone are responsible for their families”. Incidentally, this language was agreed upon after challenges that female “head of households” was not recognized in certain countries. More to the point, however, is that this shift in focus toward specific groups of women reveals the consequences of increased research on women, enabling specific attention toward particularly disadvantaged groups. This in itself was a real change brought about by the Mexico City PFA. Secondly, this specific focus moved the analysis away from women as general dependents to women as active agents. These categorizations continued to be visible in Nairobi. In fact, this shift could be viewed as the origin of the emphasis on self-reliance and empowerment, in terms of being in charge of one’s own destiny. This change will be analyzed more thoroughly in Chapter Six.

Despite these movements forward, there were problems similar to those addressed in Chapter Three. That is, as the emphasis of WID became economic rather than equity, the language in policy and programmatic documents of the General Assembly as well as in various UN specialized agencies also emphasized economic efficiency (Tinker 1990:31). It is difficult to trace exactly which had an influence on the other, but there was certainly a convergence of this emphasis on efficiency occurring at the institutional and programmatic levels. Interestingly, the term “Women in Development” became a popular term not only among women, but among government representatives. As Lucille Mathurin Mair, secretary-general of the Copenhagen conference explained,

Early in the Decade the equity principle had been made even more persuasive by its linkage with the utility principle. Women had been a missing link in development, now they were being found; they could actually be a valuable resource, indeed were half, or more, of a nation's human resources, no longer to be wasted.... The prospect of steering women from the margin to the mainstream was as exciting to some would-be developers as to the female recipients of such policies and programmes. "Women in Development" became the Decade's overnight catchphrase, a seductive one, which for a time, at least, could evade the question of what kind of development women were to be drawn into. (Mair, in Tinker 1990:31)

It would seem, then, that the rhetorical evocation "women and development" received its legitimacy among the development establishment once it was realized that women could be useful in the furthering of mainstream development goals of capitalist modernization.

The organizational structure of the Copenhagen PFA is similar to the Mexico City PFA, including the three main parts—the introduction, a national section and an international section. As mentioned before, two new sections were added to the Copenhagen PFA; a historical perspective and a conceptual framework section. In the latter, three important sub-themes (education, employment and health) were introduced and linked to the general decade themes of development, equality and peace. In the body of the Copenhagen PFA, each of these areas were addressed separately, first in terms of objectives and then priority areas for action. The main difference between "objectives" and "priority areas for action" seem to be the level of generality. The "objectives" are more general, for instance, "to promote full and equal opportunities for women so that both women and men can combine paid work with household responsibilities and child care;" (Copenhagen PFA par. 109 in Fraser 1987:105). The "special areas for action" are more specific, yet not terribly detailed, as is true for most of these mandates.

In the tertiary or informal sector, much-needed changes include extending labour legislation coverage, especially for domestic workers; guaranteeing the right to organize trade unions and cooperative groups for credit, marketing, etc.; increasing access to managerial and technical training and to financial resources to improve occupational and educational mobility, productivity and economic returns (Copenhagen PFA par. 133 in Fraser 1987:106).

Once again, the conflict between universal standards and national sovereignty is clear. Documents like these are left vague on detail precisely because of the UN's commitment to "national sovereignty". This ambiguity allows countries to interpret these passages as they will, and perhaps more realistically, allows those in positions of power and decision making in governments to eschew accountability for implementing change.

Certain issues from the first conference remained important. These included improving the situation of rural women, the need for attitudinal changes toward women, more adequate data collection and analysis of women's lives, the role of the media in reducing gender stereotypes, and the need for more equitable sharing in family responsibilities. There were, however, some new contributions. In addition to the greater emphasis on shared responsibilities between men and women in the domestic sphere as discussed above, domestic and sexual violence was mentioned for the first time in several places throughout the conference document. For example, in the section on "Priority areas for Action" under employment it is written, "Legislative and other measures should be adopted and implemented which guarantee women protection against any sexually-oriented practice that endangers their access to maintenance of employment, undermines job performance or threatens their livelihood" (Copenhagen PFA, par. 124 in Fraser 1987:106). In the corresponding section on health, the passage reads

Research into the extent and causes of domestic violence should be promoted with a view to eliminating such violence. Measures should be taken to eliminate glorification of violence against, and sexual exploitation of women in the mass media, literature and advertising. Effective help for women and children who are victims of violence should be given by establishing treatment, shelter and counselling centres (Copenhagen PFA, par. 162-164 in Fraser 1987:109).

This issue is given even greater attention in Nairobi and Beijing as the issue becomes a greater concern in the global women's movement.

A second contribution was a greater attentiveness toward the effects of technology on women. "Transfers of inappropriate technology has worsened the employment and health conditions of women in many instances" (Copenhagen PFA, par. 37 in Fraser

1987:97). While supporting evidence was not presented, the implication of this is important. That is, rather than advocating simply bringing women into existing technology, this passage acknowledged that not all technology benefits women.

A third new emphasis, as mentioned above, was a greater recognition of the roles of NGOs and grassroots organizations. Separate passages outlined these roles in the section on National Strategies in the Copenhagen PFA, a topic ignored in the Mexico City PFA. The emphasis placed on the active roles of women-based organizations in development efforts is a shift away from the reliance upon state and UN organizations. We see this shift continue in Nairobi and Beijing. Most of this section discussed ways in which governments could facilitate these groups, financially and otherwise. A link is made between self-reliance and the role of these organizations. "Such organizations will serve as forums for women to develop self-reliance and enable them to access resources and power and shoulder greater socio-economic and political responsibilities within their communities and societies" (Copenhagen PFA, par. 227, in Fraser 1987:105). I will analyze this link later on in the chapter.

Unfortunately, one of the negative aspects of this conference was the way in which the media handled its coverage. Many participants bemoaned the fact that the mass media was much more interested in reporting the hot-button controversies like the Israeli occupation over Palestine, the system of Apartheid in South Africa, which were important international issues at the time. Such topics took attention away from some of the more important substantive issues that were raised and discussed. This was the only conference mandate of the four that was not adopted by consensus. Four countries voted against the document (United States, Canada, Australia and Israel), and twenty-two abstained from the vote. Among the objectionable issues was the approval of a special UN fund for Palestinian women to be administered through the Palestinian Liberation Organization, which essentially gave tacit recognition to the PLO, something inconsistent with U.S. foreign policy at the time. The media gave almost exclusive attention to the highly politicized issues

of South Africa, Palestinian women, refugee and displaced women, and according to many participants “diverted energy from the real point of the conference: women’s status and welfare” (Tinker 1981). *Newsweek’s* article, “Cacophony in Copenhagen”¹⁶ reveals this general treatment, as its first sentence reads, “The World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women ends this week after a fortnight of angry, largely fruitless wrangling”.

In fact the problems that these politicized issues caused led several participants to engage in a lively debate over the function and utility of the conferences in numerous articles in *Signs Journal*¹⁷. Some wondered if such meetings, dominated by the powerful men in the UN were of any use to women and the global women’s movement (Tinker 1981). Others wondered if the politicization of these issues was a way for certain countries to deflect examining gender oppression in their own countries, the problem being not that these issues were politicized, but that they were not discussed in a feminist way (Ahooja-Patel 1981). Women from developing countries challenged Western feminists to see the oppression of women in the larger context of imperialism and dominance of the developed over the developing countries (Catagay and Funk 1981; Ahmed 1981) Others still argued that the tighter rein that governments seemed to have held over their delegates, and the deflection tactics of the media actually revealed that the global women’s movement was cohering and threatening the global men’s establishment (Izraeli 1981). Still others were more pragmatic in their positions. As Charlotte Bunch wrote, “[w]hile not feminist-oriented events, the UN conference and the NGO Forum did provide the occasion for global consciousness raising, for learning more about where women stand in relation to ruling powers, and for making invaluable connections” (Bunch 1981:790). Such divergent viewpoints reflect, I think, some of the difficulties that international social movements have

¹⁶ John Nielsen and Frederick Kempe, “Cacophony in Copenhagen”, *Newsweek*, (August 4, 1980): 35.

¹⁷ See *Signs* Vol. 6, No. 3 1981; *Signs* Vol. 6, No. 4 1981; *Signs* Vol. 8, No. 2 1982.

working within the context of unequal global positions of nation-states, though they are discussions that are necessary and important to the strength of these movements.

Despite the inadequate media coverage and the dilution of the substance of the conference the Copenhagen conference and its official mandate was an important event and document, laying much of the foundation for a maturing global women's movement as revealed in Nairobi and Beijing.

Third World Conference on Women—Nairobi

Four thousand delegates to the Third World Conference on Women, held in Nairobi in 1985, convened to mark the end of the Decade for women. The purpose, like Copenhagen, was to identify the obstacles that continued to hinder the further advancement of women as well as establishing recommendations for future actions. The conference mandate was entitled, "*Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women*".

Rather than basing the conference document on "prepcom" reports and papers, the Nairobi PFA was a report generated from responses to questionnaires established by the Secretary-General of the conference and her committee which was sent to governments. Many of the 'bread and butter' issues that were addressed in the first two conferences, for instance, employment, health and nutrition, education, communications and the media, energy, water, sanitation, human settlements, refugee women, and technology, were raised in the report. The rhetoric about women changed, undoubtedly a result of the prior conferences and the continued work of the global women's movement. The document mentioned examples of some "real" changes, such as the creation of legislation to benefit and protect women in many countries—equal pay for equal work, employment discrimination, protection against industrial hazards, parental leave, property ownership, violence against women, legal aid, informing women of their legal rights. Unfortunately the document did not present many details about these policy changes, though it did suggest

that the implementation and enforcement of many of these laws were not being realized. So, this report showed that while progress for women's advancement had been made in certain areas, much more was needed. This typical rhetorical stance reveals the symbolic function of these documents. Edelman calls this "symbolic reassurance" (1971:171), which produces quiescence in those who feel threatened or marginalized. Such findings give the impression that real change is happening despite the absence of evidence that such change is having any real affect on people's lives.

Once again, the themes of education, health and employment were central, and the report was organized to reflect the three major themes of the Decade—Equality, Development and Peace. Like the first two reports, there was an Introduction, a Historical Background section, and a Substantive background section which served a similar purpose to the Conceptual Framework section in the Copenhagen PFA, discussing the interrelationship between equality, development and peace. Then the report was divided into a section on each theme, including a sub-section on "Obstacles" and "Strategies and Measures for Implementation". The section on "Special Groups", was a more specific list of particularly vulnerable groups of women including: women in areas affected by drought; urban poor women; elderly women; young women; abused women; destitute women; women victims of trafficking and involuntary prostitution; women deprived of their traditional means of livelihood; women who are the sole supporters of families; women with physical and mental disabilities; women in detention and subject to penal law; refugee and displaced women and children; migrant women; and, minority and indigenous women. Compared to the list from the Copenhagen PFA (see above), this list is more specific and targeted, reflecting an increased understanding and awareness of the situation of the most vulnerable groups of women.

Another difference is the tone of the Nairobi report. In many ways it reflects the maturation of the global women's movement, in that it is more directed and focused. Fraser suggests that this is evidence of the impact of the first two conferences—that women from

many countries had honed their lobbying and negotiating skills and that the breadth of knowledge and action had deepened (1987:159). The way that the obstacles were presented for each sub-theme reveals a greater refinement of the issues, almost as if the authors had gained more control and ownership over the ideas expressed. For example, the following passage reflects a particularly strong sentiment regarding the on-going problems stemming from the international relations of power and its connection to women's inequality. Incidentally, this passage was objected to by the United States delegation as it, "did not agree that the obstacles listed should be considered the main reasons for the inequality of women in most countries" (Nairobi PFA 1985: Notes).

The inequality of women in most countries stems to a very large extent from mass poverty and the general backwardness of the majority of the world's population caused by underdevelopment, which is a product of imperialism, colonialism, neo-colonialism, apartheid, racism, racial discrimination and of unjust international economic relations. The unfavourable status of women is aggravated in many countries, developed and underdeveloped, by de facto discrimination on the grounds of sex (Nairobi PFA 1985:paragraph 44 10a).

In terms of the tone, the Nairobi PFA was much more future-oriented than the prior conference mandates. While it considered the progress made and obstacles that stand in the way of this progress, it was constantly focused on future possibilities as the title, "Forward Looking Strategies" reflects.

Each of the thematic areas of Equality, Development and Peace was linked to the importance of education, health and employment. One of the greatest obstacles to equality, according to the document, was discrimination—both de jure and de facto. While some attention is given to the legal aspects of discrimination, there was a greater focus on the social and cultural aspects of discrimination. This emphasis probably reflected an assumption that the effect of laws is limited if attitudes are not also changed. A particularly interesting passage represents a cornerstone issue of the global women's movement—that is, the social construction of gender.

Although there is no physiological basis for regarding the household and family as essentially the domain of women, for the devaluation of domestic work and for regarding the capacities of women as inferior to those of men, the belief that such a basis exists

perpetuates inequality and inhibits the structural and attitudinal changes necessary to eliminate such inequality. (Nairobi PFA, par. 45).

Such a passage might be found in any number of scholarly works on gender. To find it in a United Nations document is important. Although the passage is only “rhetoric”, it is a real change from preceding documents. This statement is tied to the call, originally laid out in the Mexico City PFA, for shared responsibilities. However, the issue of shared responsibilities, merely mentioned in the first conference mandate, became increasingly important in both visibility and detail. The topic of shared responsibilities was mentioned in at least six paragraphs throughout the Nairobi document. Even the language of “double burden”, a concept coming right from feminist scholarship, was used in the following passage, “Despite changes in some countries to promote equity in all spheres of life, the “double burden”¹⁸ for women of having the major responsibility for domestic tasks and of participating in the labour force remains (Nairobi PFA, par. 18). This shift in the language, I think, reflects the growing body of research carried out by feminist scholars during this time.

The issue of shared responsibilities is an example of Moser’s strategic needs, which are structural changes that transform the current system (see Chapter Three). The increased attention given to this issue is important at the rhetorical level, but it also serves a limited political function. Once again, drawing on Edelman, who said, “[m]aking it easy for people to read their wishful thinking into an ambiguous phrase in a policy pronouncement may be the most venerable political device extant” (1971:70). What is meant by sharing responsibilities was never specifically outlined nor how governments might work to implement such change. This ambiguity allows people to read whatever meaning they want

¹⁸ As Sally Baden and Anne Marie Goetz make clear, however, is that the language connecting domestic/child care to “burdens”, is one approach to feminism that may not be shared by all women. Using the language of “burden” when it comes to domestic work and child care, Baden and Goetz argue, “does not convince people that positive value in women’s choices and identities are being recognized” See Sally Baden and Anne Marie Goetz, “Who Needs [Sex] when you can have [Gender]? Conflicting Discourses on Gender at Beijing”, *Feminist Review* No. 56, (Summer 1997): 18.

into the document, and at the same time, give the impression that real change is possible, and likely.

The section on Development was significant. Drawing on the definition of development used in the Copenhagen PFA (see above), the Nairobi document, too, spoke of development as “total development”. The first set of obstacles raised for “effective integration of women in the process of development” (Nairobi PFA, par. 95) was the lack of international security, the arms race—in other words, peace issues. This concern makes historical sense, as it was written during a time of increased political turmoil between the United States and the Soviet Union and their respective international allies. In terms of strategies for development, while some of the language still emphasizes “bringing women in”, many more passages that emphasized women in defining the objectives and strategies of development. As this passage reads,

Women should be an integral part of the process of defining the objectives and modes of development, as well as of developing strategies and measures for their implementation. The need for women to participate fully in political processes and to have an equal share of power in guiding development efforts and in benefiting from them should be recognized. (Nairobi PFA par. 111).

The growing concern with the rise of sex trafficking of women, documented by many women scholars and organizations is reflected in several passages that discussed both trafficking and pornography. While sex trafficking had been mentioned in prior mandates, this was the first time that pornography was discussed. Paragraph 85 said, “[s]teps also should be taken to control pornography, other obscene portrayals of women and the portrayal of women as sex objects” and paragraph 290 stated, “[s]ex tourism, forced prostitution and pornography reduce women to mere sex objects and marketable commodities”. Both of these passages suggest that these issues relate directly to the status of women and equality between men and women.

Another area that became more visible at Nairobi was the issue of credit, discussed in nine different paragraphs throughout the document. The lack of access to credit was defined as one of the primary obstacles to women’s advancement in society. As more

awareness about this issue surfaced through scholarship and organizational work, access to credit became an important topic.

Particular attention should be given to the restructuring of employment, health and education systems and to ensuring equal access to land, capital and other productive resources. Emphasis should be placed on strategies to assist women in generating and keeping income, including measures designed to improve women's access to credit. Such strategies must focus on the removal of legal, customary and other barriers and on strengthening women's capacity to use existing credit systems. (Nairobi PFA, par. 115).

Though there was no mention of “microcredit” or other entrepreneurial activities in the Nairobi report, this attention to the issue of credit lays the foundation for the greater visibility Microcredit earns in Beijing and afterward. This emphasis on credit also reflects a shift in the WID orientation from equity to anti-poverty. As we will see in the section on Beijing as well as in Chapter Six, as this idea of credit takes form and shape, more specifically in the development program of Microcredit, this rhetorical emphasis on anti-poverty evolves into an emphasis on efficiency or empowerment, depending upon the audience.

Violence against women, in particular domestic or family violence was another prominent theme in the Nairobi report, found in ten different paragraphs. This issue, raised initially in the Copenhagen PFA, received much more attention in Nairobi, revealing again, its importance to the global women's movement. Women's development and equality was linked to issues of safety and freedom from violence. Once again “abused women” were one of the defined categories of women requiring special attention. One impact of these conferences is to help sustain the global women's movement and bring once marginal ideas onto the mainstream agenda. I will pick up this issue in more detail in the analysis below.

In terms of the political and economic context of the time, it is important to remember that many developing countries were experiencing economic crises. In 1982, Mexico defaulted on its loan payments to the World Bank, and in response launched the implementation of the Structural Adjustment programs. As paragraph seven of the report makes clear,

The Nairobi World Conference is taking place at a critical moment for the developing countries. Ten years ago, when the Decade was launched, there was hope that accelerated economic growth, sustained by growing international trade, financial flow and technological developments, would allow the increased participation of women in the economic and social development of those countries. These hopes have been belied owing to the persistence and, in some cases, the aggravation of an economic crisis in the developing countries, which has been an important obstacle that endangers not only the pursuance of new programmes in support of women but also the maintenance of those that were already under way. (Nairobi PFA, par. 7)

While there is a discussion on the debt problem, there is no call for debt relief, a controversial topic that has only begun to be addressed in 1999- 2000 by governments, international lending institutions like the World Bank, and UN agencies, largely because of the activism of grassroots organizations.¹⁹

Though there were portions of the PFA that seemed to move away from a stringent economic notion of development as these examples illustrate, there were other examples that seemed to contradict this emphasis. The language of efficiency, corresponding to the fourth WID policy approach is also present in the Nairobi PFA. In two separate paragraphs, an “economic efficiency” orientation was employed. Paragraph 47 reads, “Discrimination promotes an uneconomic use of women's talents and wastes the valuable human resources necessary for development and for the strengthening of peace” (Nairobi PFA, par.47). Later on, the document reads, “A fully integrated system of training, having direct linkages with employment needs, pertinent to future employment and development trends should be created and implemented in order to avoid wastage of human resources” (Nairobi PFA, par.

¹⁹ Though when such discussions are carefully examined, it seems that while the discourse has changed, the practice remains the same. In 2000, the World Bank and IMF established the “Heavily Indebted Poor Country” (HIPC) initiative, which was designed to offer debt relief to countries that agree to structural adjustment conditions. In other words, the use of popular rhetoric, this time, “debt-relief”, masks a continuation of development as usual, in that the economic policy of adjustment remains in place. On the IMF website, this initiative is described as helping poor countries to reduce their debt burdens to levels that will “comfortably enable them to service their debt” and “broaden domestic support for policy reforms”. See Sarah Anderson, “The IMF and World Bank’s Cosmetic Makeover”, *Dollars and Sense*, (January/February 2001): 30-32.

172). As discussed more in depth in Chapter Three, both of these passages suggest that the importance of women to the development process remains an economic concern.

Fourth World Conference on Women—Beijing

The Beijing conference of 1995 was a culmination of twenty years of meetings and documentation of the status of women. Over 5,000 official delegates²⁰ attended the Beijing conference, the largest UN gathering up to that time (Dorsey 1997:346). The Beijing conference was designed to assess change in women's lives in the ten years since Nairobi. The focus of Nairobi was obstacles to the advancement of women, a theme replaced at Beijing by "accountability". As part of the prep-com mandates, various women's organizations demanded that governments make three promises: first, a commitment to fund one major project at the meeting itself; second, draft a schedule of implementation to be held between government officials and NGOs, with planned follow-up meetings to monitor the schedule; third, an agreement to fulfill the commitments made in the PFA by 2000. Thus, Beijing saw a greater focus on holding governments accountable to their pledged commitments so that "real" change would occur. This emphasis on accountability, I would argue, reflects a general resentment of the global women's movement at the lack of progress that has been realized in the improvement of women's lives. It also suggests a further maturing of the movement and their demands.

The organizational structure of the conference document was somewhat different. There were four main sections: the Mission Statement, a Global Framework, the Critical Areas of Concern, and Strategic Objectives and Actions. Similar to the Mexico City PFA, the critical areas were thematic rather than a list of various groups of vulnerable women. These critical areas were: Women and Poverty; Education and Training of Women; Women and Health; Violence against Women; Women and Armed Conflict; Women and the

²⁰ See Carroll Bogert, "We Turned This Around", *Newsweek*, (September 18, 1995):50.

Economy; Women in Power and Decision-making; Institutional Mechanism for the Advancement of Women; Human Rights of Women; Women and the Media; Women and the Environment; The Girl-child. For each area, the problems were defined, often including specific problems facing particular groups of women, like migrant women. Illustrating the overall emphasis on accountability, each diagnosis was followed by strategic objectives aimed at different appropriate responsible actors. For example, specific plans for action were directed toward governments, employers, employees, trade unions, NGOs, the private sector, (which included special goals for transnational corporations), the UN and its specialized agencies, multilateral institutions like the World Bank, and womens' organizations, reflecting the larger role these organizations have assumed in the development process.

One remarkable difference in the Beijing PFA was the overall tone. The idea of empowerment, though had already taken root in the global women's movement, as we saw in Chapter Three, had become institutionalized in the UN language. If Mexico City, Copenhagen and Nairobi were looked at as consciousness raising events, disseminating knowledge, refining analyses, and networking, Beijing was the conference of action, and the idea of empowerment was central to that. In fact the opening statement of the PFA reads,

The Platform for Action is an agenda for women's empowerment. It aims at accelerating the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women and at removing all the obstacles to women's active participation in all spheres of public and private life through a full and equal share in economic, social, cultural and political decision-making. This means that the principle of shared power and responsibility should be established between women and men at home, in the workplace and in the wider national and international communities. Equality between women and men is a matter of human rights and a condition for social justice and is also a necessary and fundamental prerequisite for equality, development and peace. A transformed partnership based on equality between women and men is a condition for people-centred sustainable development. (Beijing PFA, par. 1)

Dorsey argues that Beijing "marked a shift from raising global awareness and attention about the oppression of women to the implementation of plans for women's empowerment" (1997:346). The language of empowerment coincides with the fifth WID

policy approach analyzed in Chapter Three, and we will discuss some of the elements of this below. For now, it is important to note the rhetorical change. The word “empowerment” is not used, for example, in the first three conference documents.

Robin Morgan, a participant in all four UN conferences on women and a central figure in the global women’s movement, has argued that despite its flaws, the Beijing Platform for Action is “simply the strongest official statement on women internationally to date”(1996: 77). As Morgan describes, “language once used only by radical feminists has entered the so-called policy mainstream”(1996: 79). Examining the documents, Morgan notes that words like “oppression”, “liberation”, and “power”, were commonplace in the Beijing PFA, replacing less volatile and challenging language such as “discrimination” and “equality”. As it states in the PFA, “[t]his new generation of leaders must accept and promote a world in which every child is free from injustice, oppression and inequality and free to develop her/his own potential” (Beijing PFA, par 40).

Two paragraphs highlight what Morgan is talking about. For example, “[e]qual relationships between women and men in matters of sexual relations and reproduction, including full respect for the integrity of the person, require mutual respect, consent and shared responsibility for sexual behaviour and its consequences” (Beijing PFA par. 96) and “[t]he human rights of women include their right to have control over and decide freely and responsibly on matters relating to their sexuality, including sexual and reproductive health, free of coercion, discrimination and violence” (Beijing PFA, par. 97). This language is far more radical than the neutered language in the Nairobi report, which stated,

The complexity and multidimensional aspects of changing sex roles and norms and the difficulty of determining the specific structural and organizational requirements of such a change have hindered the formulation of measures to alter sex roles and to develop appropriate perspectives on the image of women in society.” (Nairobi PFA, par. 101).

And more than language has changed. There is a deeper understanding of the objectives, with more specifically stated goals. For example, in the area of decreasing

female illiteracy the objectives formulated in the Nairobi report focused on targeting the inequality of educational opportunities between men and women, and integrating women into the science and technology fields. These are ideas that had been generated since Mexico City. As paragraph 163 reads,

Education is the basis for the full promotion and improvement of the status of women. It is the basic tool that should be given to women in order to fulfil their role as full members of society. Governments should strengthen the participation of women at all levels of national educational policy and in formulating and implementing plans, programmes and projects (Nairobi PFA, par 163).

Ten years later, in the Beijing Platform, the understanding of women's education had changed. Drawing on the importance of the language on "rights", education is now seen as intrinsic to the idea of women's rights as human rights (Bodner 1996: 86). As the Beijing PFA makes clear,

Education is a human right and an essential tool for achieving the goals of equality, development and peace. Non-discriminatory education benefits both girls and boys and thus ultimately contributes to more equal relationships between women and men. Equality of access to and attainment of educational qualifications is necessary if more women are to become agents of change. Literacy of women is an important key to improving health, nutrition and education in the family and to empowering women to participate in decision-making in society. Investing in formal and non-formal education and training for girls and women, with its exceptionally high social and economic return, has proved to be one of the best means of achieving sustainable development and economic growth that is both sustained and sustainable (Beijing PFA, par. 69).

According to Bodner, eradicating female illiteracy rates, equalizing educational opportunities between men and women and integrating women into science and technology fields were important objectives presented in the Nairobi PFA. Bodner explains that such objectives were "political goals", indicating the successful incorporation of women into development (1996:86). Placing the issue of education in the context of human rights, as is done in the Beijing PFA, treats the issue of education and literacy in a very different way than the Nairobi report did. It presents education as an ethical imperative, with its link to human rights. The focus on human rights has the potential to move the implementation of education

projects away from the instrumental treatment of “education”, especially with regard to the “human capital” rhetoric that has recently become quite popular²¹.

In addition, there is a greater emphasis on the *quality* of education in the Beijing PFA, while the three prior PFAs seemed to focus more on universal access. This is another important rhetorical shift, for as Bodner argues, “[p]olicies that promote only universal access serve to standardize the white male cultural model and to deepen the divisions between good- and poor- quality schools, between students who learn and those who fail, between those who fit into schools and those who do not” (1996:87). While earlier PFAs’ emphases on sex-role stereotypes and changing education to eliminate discrimination against women were at one time “radical”, in that they were never addressed before, the Beijing PFA takes these ideas even further. It redefines the goals of education to promote and create nonsexist or gender-sensitive education. The Beijing PFA takes into account issues of diversity, technology, media, democracy and human rights in the discussions on education, consistent with the theoretical developments in the field of education, and with an eye toward gender.

Influenced by the concern for women’s empowerment, plus the importance of democratic participation and the emphasis on human rights, the objectives of the Beijing PFA are qualitatively different from those of the three prior PFAs. The question still remains, however, whether these are merely rhetorical shifts, or if there have been some programmatic and project consequences to these changes. In other words is this radicalism merely in the language, or is it implemented on the ground? Evidence of both may be found, and Chapters Five and Six will present some of this. In general, most nation-states have not

²¹ In preparation for the 2001 G7 Summit in Genoa, Italy, Paul O’Neill, U.S. Secretary of the Treasury, wrote the following in an editorial. “To start, the banks should devote more resources to the development of human capital. Education is inextricably linked to improving living standards, and it is critical that the banks place greater emphasis on it” (Paul O’Neill, “The Best Investment in Helping Poor Nations”, *The New York Times*, (July 17, 2001): A19. The banks to which he was referring were development banks including the World Bank, the African Development Bank, The Asian Development Bank, etc.

committed themselves to devote more resources to eradicating the problems raised in the PFA.

As with the understanding of equality, the notion of development was transformed as well in the Beijing PFA. Women's empowerment was said to be central to development. And development itself is described as "social development". In fact, some doubt is even shown of the role of economic growth in producing development as this passage indicates,

Accelerated economic growth, although necessary for social development, does not by itself improve the quality of life of the population. In some cases, conditions can arise which can aggravate social inequality and marginalization. Hence, it is indispensable to search for new alternatives that ensure that all members of society benefit from economic growth based on a holistic approach to all aspects of development: growth, equality between women and men, social justice, conservation and protection of the environment, sustainability, solidarity, participation, peace and respect for human rights. (Beijing PFA, par. 14)

There is no other passage like this in any prior women's conference mandates. In fact, much of this language, the questioning of economic growth, the use of the terms "social development", "sustainability", and "human rights" are clearly derived from the mandates of several conferences convened in the 1990s mentioned above. This further demonstrates a shift in the rhetoric.

Such changes are also visible in the diagnosis of the problems that are obstructing the development effort. In paragraph 13, the following is written:

Excessive military expenditures, including global military expenditures and arms trade or trafficking, and investments for arms production and acquisition have reduced the resources available for social development. As a result of the debt burden and other difficulties, many developing countries have undertaken structural adjustment policies. Moreover, there are structural adjustment programmes that have been poorly designed and implemented, resulting in detrimental effects on social development. The number of people living in poverty has increased disproportionately in most developing countries, particularly the heavily indebted countries, during the past decade (Beijing PFA, par 13)

These projections are important, for they are not coming from outsider groups monitoring the activities of mainstream institutions. The issue of the debt burden and the weaknesses of the structural adjustment programs are here enshrined in UN mandates. But the question

remains, what impact is this having in *practice*? Is it changing the policies of the institutions involved? Up to 2001, not much has changed in actual practice. One example suggests that in response to so much global opposition to the Structural Adjustment Policies, in 1999, the IMF changed the name of its Enhance Structural Adjustment Facility, the body through which they made the SAP loans, to “Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility”. As part of these changes, since 1999, the Bank and the IMF now require that borrowing governments seeking debt relief have to work with NGOs to develop strategies for poverty reduction. However, there has been much skepticism that the NGOs who are “approved” to work along with governments, exclude those organizations which have been more visibly critical of the Bank and IMF policies (Anderson 2000:31).

Looking at the area of poverty in particular, the Beijing PFA expresses a much more thorough understanding of the causes and consequences of poverty than the previous PFAs. Consider the following passage, for example:

Poverty has various manifestations, including lack of income and productive resources sufficient to ensure a sustainable livelihood; hunger and malnutrition; ill health; limited or lack of access to education and other basic services; increasing morbidity and mortality from illness; homelessness and inadequate housing; unsafe environments; and social discrimination and exclusion. It is also characterized by lack of participation in decision-making and in civil, social and cultural life. It occurs in all countries - as mass poverty in many developing countries and as pockets of poverty amidst wealth in developed countries. Poverty may be caused by an economic recession that results in loss of livelihood or by disaster or conflict. There is also the poverty of low-wage workers and the utter destitution of people who fall outside family support systems, social institutions and safety nets (Beijing PFA, par 47).

In several other paragraphs, the term “feminization of poverty” is used, a term that was absent in the three prior conference mandates. Consider now, the discussion of poverty from the Nairobi PFA:

According to responses from the developing countries, particularly the least developed, to the United Nations questionnaire to Governments (see A/CONF.116/5 and Add.1-14), poverty is on the increase in some countries and constitutes another major obstacle to the advancement of women. The exigencies created by problems of mass poverty, compounded by scarce national resources, have compelled Governments to concentrate on alleviating the poverty of

both women and men rather than on equality issues for women (Nairobi PFA, par. 19).

There was a tremendous difference in the way poverty is discussed between these two documents, a decade apart. A deeper understanding and acknowledgement of the multi-faceted issues of poverty was seen in the Beijing PFA.

Along with the change in language to “empowerment”, a fuller ‘gendered analysis’ was expressed in the Beijing PFA. The gendered orientation in the Beijing mandate separated it from the earlier conference mandates, and coincided with the GAD policy approach discussed in Chapter Three. Gender “mainstreaming²²” was the term used often among development practitioners, and was clearly evident in the Beijing PFA. Paragraph 292 stated that Governments, the UN system and relevant organizations should “promote an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective, inter alia, in the monitoring and evaluation of all policies and programmes” (Beijing PFA, par.292). Several passages suggested that the objectives are more than just “bringing women in”, but to ‘gender’ development. There was a call to examine the issues using a gender analysis. For example, [t]he application of gender analysis to a wide range of policies and programmes is therefore critical to poverty reduction strategies” (Beijing PFA, par 47). The notion of the feminization of poverty was introduced and explored, as the following passage indicates:

In the past decade the number of women living in poverty has increased disproportionately to the number of men, particularly in the developing countries. The feminization of poverty has also recently become a significant problem in the countries with economies in transition as a short-term consequence of the process of political, economic and social transformation. In addition to economic factors, the rigidity of socially ascribed gender roles and women's limited access to power, education, training and productive resources as well as other emerging factors that may lead to insecurity for families are also responsible. The failure to adequately mainstream a gender perspective in all economic analysis and planning and to address the structural causes of poverty is also a contributing factor (Beijing PFA, par 48).

²² As defined in Chapter Three, mainstreaming means that organizations have in place systematic procedures to ensure that gender issues are considered at all stages of policy making, program design and implementation (Baden and Goetz 1997:5).

Related to this, the Beijing document presented a gendered analysis of the consequences of Structural Adjustment Programs, emphasizing especially how they have negatively affected women. As this passage highlights,

For those States that have carried a large burden of foreign debt, structural adjustment programmes and measures, though beneficial in the long term, have led to a reduction in social expenditures, thereby adversely affecting women, particularly in Africa and the least developed countries. This is exacerbated when responsibilities for basic social services have shifted from Governments to women (Beijing PFA, par 18).

This GAD approach was also visible in the area of Science and Technology. In earlier PFAs, the discussions of science and technology involved bringing women into the field through education and employment opportunities. At best, the Nairobi PFA called for women's participation in creating technologies to help in their daily lives. But as this passage suggests, the GAD approach to science and technology exposes the gendered bias.

Science curricula in particular are gender-biased. Science textbooks do not relate to women's and girls' daily experience and fail to give recognition to women scientists. Girls are often deprived of basic education in mathematics and science and technical training, which provide knowledge they could apply to improve their daily lives and enhance their employment opportunities. Advanced study in science and technology prepares women to take an active role in the technological and industrial development of their countries, thus necessitating a diverse approach to vocational and technical training. Technology is rapidly changing the world and has also affected the developing countries. It is essential that women not only benefit from technology, but also participate in the process from the design to the application, monitoring and evaluation stages (Beijing PFA, par 75).

While the Nairobi PFA expressed concern that women fully participate in all aspects of the “decision-making and implementation process related to science and technology, including planning and setting priorities for research and development”, (Nairobi PFA, par 200), nothing was said about the gender bias in science and technology. Instead, science and technology were viewed both as benign and as genderless, “[t]he use of science and technology can be a powerful instrument for the advancement of women. Special research to evolve appropriate technology for rural women should be carried out, and existing and new technology should be disseminated as widely as possible” (Nairobi PFA, par 362).

Such shifts testify to the impact feminism and the women's movement have had in altering the discourse of gender and women's rights in general. It is also a reflection of the impact the conferences have had on the women and development discourse where once marginalized concepts are brought into the mainstream dialogue.

In each conference mandate, new discussions were added which have become important international topics. The Beijing PFA included several of these new contributions. First of all, several passages addressed the AIDS crisis, with specific attention to its impact on women, as vulnerable to the infection, but also as caregivers of those infected. An entire section was devoted toward strategies to "[u]ndertake gender-sensitive initiatives that address sexually transmitted diseases, HIV/AIDS, and sexual and reproductive health issues (Beijing PFA par 108). AIDS had not been mentioned in any of the prior women's conference mandates.

One of the special areas of concern mentioned throughout the document was the Girl Child, once again, a category not yet defined in the Nairobi PFA. While some attention was given to "young girls" in past documents, there was not yet such a defined focus on the Girl Child.

They often have less access to nutrition, physical and mental health care and education and enjoy fewer rights, opportunities and benefits of childhood and adolescence than do boys. They are often subjected to various forms of sexual and economic exploitation, paedophilia, forced prostitution and possibly the sale of their organs and tissues, violence and harmful practices such as female infanticide and prenatal sex selection, incest, female genital mutilation and early marriage, including child marriage (Beijing PFA, par. 39).

In prior documents, the language "female headed household" was avoided because it was contested by nations for whom this was culturally inappropriate. Instead, awkward phrases like "women who alone are responsible for their families" as in the Copenhagen PFA. Though the circumstances of this change are not clear, this was altered to "women who are the sole supporters of families" in the Nairobi PFA. But in the Beijing PFA, the term "female headed households was written in several passages, for example, "[f]ormulate and

implement, when necessary, specific economic, social, agricultural and related policies in support of female-headed households (Beijing PFA, par 58i).

More than in prior conference documents, much more attention was given to the importance of credit. Access to credit and encouraging entrepreneurial activity was considered a strategic objective to fighting increased poverty among women. In terms of strategic objectives, governments were called upon to:

promote and support women's self-employment and the development of small enterprises, and strengthen women's access to credit and capital on appropriate terms equal to those of men through the scaling-up of institutions dedicated to promoting women's entrepreneurship, including, as appropriate, non-traditional and mutual credit schemes, as well as innovative linkages with financial institutions (Beijing PFA, par. 166a).

In fact, one indication of the popularity of Microcredit is the following paragraph that calls on governments and multilateral financial institutions²³ to: “[r]eview rules and procedures of formal national and international financial institutions that obstruct replication of the Grameen Bank prototype, which provides credit facilities to rural women (Beijing PFA, par. 171). We will discuss Microcredit as a poverty alleviation and empowerment program in Chapter Six.

Another important contribution was the reaffirmation of rape as a war crime, which has had an impact in 2001 in the sentencing of convicted war criminals in the International Court at the Hague. The relevant passage in the document is:

Reaffirm that rape in the conduct of armed conflict constitutes a war crime and under certain circumstances it constitutes a crime against humanity and an act of genocide as defined in the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide; take all measures required for the protection of women and children from such acts and strengthen mechanisms to investigate and punish all those responsible and bring the perpetrators to justice (Beijing PFA, par 145d).

²³ Again, to illustrate the focus on “accountability”, this was the first women’s conference mandate to specifically call upon the World Bank and the IMF to commit to certain objectives. Among several issues raised were debt relief, incorporating a gendered analysis of the impact of Structural Adjustment programs as well as working toward minimizing the negative impact of these programs. (Beijing PFA, par 59).

Morgan differentiates the Beijing conference from prior women's conferences in some important ways. In particular, more voices of women from the Southern hemi-sphere were heard at Beijing. There seemed to be a greater sensitivity and openness from women in the North and there was more NGO material available and available in multiple languages. There was more of an activist culture present. This was confirmed by the way in which the conference was described by several attendees I met while at UNIFEM as well as the much of the media coverage on the conference. A few examples illustrate this:

Not only was this year's UN Women's Conference historic in that it was the largest of its kind, it was also the first multinational/multiracial UN conference where African and African-American women, in particular, were key players on the international front and held the captive attention of their global peers²⁴.

I witnessed a great degree of unity in diversity among women from the North and the South as they articulated their common concerns in coalitions. Prime examples were a variety of demonstrations such as the ones against France's nuclear testing in the Pacific, trafficking in women, violence against women, and exploitation of migrant women. In these demonstrations, women spoke their minds freely, unbound by cultural boundaries, class cleavages, and political restrictions²⁵.

In fact, the media was much more attentive to the events and the substantive issues than previous conferences where coverage tended to sensationalize conflicts or belittle the concerns that were being addressed. Several participants suggested that this might have been due to the greater number of women reporters at Nairobi, which continued at Beijing. This is not to say that there were no conflicts in the construction of the Beijing PFA. In fact, at the start of the conference, approximately 40% of the document went to Beijing enclosed in brackets, what came to be known as "holy brackets" by many of the participants. The insertion of brackets around any part of the PFA text means that that section was deemed too controversial by at least one voting member.

²⁴ "Black Women and the World Conference", *Ebony*, (December 1995):42.

²⁵ Esther Ngan-ling Chow, "Making Waves, Making Mountains: Reflections on Beijing '95 and Beyond", *Signs*, (Autumn 1996):185.

Most of the sections that were bracketed were found objectionable by a religious Catholic-Muslim bloc, including the Holy See²⁶. They objected to much of the language over women's roles in society, the use of "gender" and "gender roles", as well as to specific passages that in any way legitimized abortion or reproductive rights. The Vatican opposed using the language of "gender" because it defines male and female as social, mutable categories, not biological. Incidentally gender remained in the text, with a note by the Holy See that its members understood gender to be "grounded in biological sexual identity..."(UN Report 1995, p. 165, in Bunch and Fried 1996:202). In reaction to the language of "women's rights are universal human rights", the Vatican and some Islamic groups also tried to claim that feminism was a form of imperialism that disrespects culture and religion, is overly individualistic, and attempting to impose Western values that destroy the family. The language remained, though with strong reservations by approximately 19 states (Bunch and Fried 1996:202).

Given that almost half of the document was deemed controversial, the negotiating process has been characterized as an extremely arduous one by many participants. According to Robin Morgan, three forces came together -- representatives from the European Union, Scandinavian countries and the Group of 77 (a major coalition of developing countries)-- to lift most of the brackets (Morgan 1996:77).

Despite these rhetorical 'victories', some of which have had a measurable impact, as stated earlier, these conferences are limited by what they are—symbolic rituals of consensus-making. The mere fact that so many groups with sharply opposing goals could walk away from the conference and the platform feeling that their concerns were satisfied, indicates the limitations of these events. As Edelman (1985) has argued, "the public constructs its own spectacles abetted by players who have learned their scripts, and in doing so constructs a cage that inhibits both mind and political action" (1977:211). This may

²⁶ The Vatican, though not a country is granted nation-state status in the United Nations.

help to explain why not more change has occurred. There is a great deal riding on these conferences, especially for the reputation and legitimation of the United Nations, nation-states, and non-governmental organizations. These conferences serve important political functions for the actors involved as the conflicts themselves are ritualized. They help to maintain the dominance of the UN and its agencies, and give the state or the institution a moral legitimacy for supporting the issues. In fact, UNIFEM benefited greatly in terms of visibility from its active role in the Beijing conference. One of my informants said that because of UNIFEM's high-profile role in Beijing, UNIFEM has received more funding since Beijing, despite the fact that country donors are reducing their contributions to the UN system as a whole.

Nation-states benefit from the positive public relations of their participation. The conferences also help to solidify the social movements that have become a part of the process. And those in opposition to some of the language or policies may not feel too threatened because of the lack of substance behind the words. Because of these bureaucratic conditions, these conferences are limited in what they will do. Edelman says that use of political spectacle as ritual "dull[s] critical faculties rather than awakening them" (Edelman 1977:124). Though he speaks of the staleness of repeated phrases like "taxes" and "spending" in the context of U.S. democracy, his point is that the chronic ritual of evoking these terms reduces their meaning and creates conditioned responses. In the case here, "gender", "sustainability", "empowerment", are the conditioned responses of those throughout the development hierarchy. The rhetoric has certainly shifted, but whether there is a substantive transformation in how development is practiced is dubious.

NGO Fora

At all four of these conferences, a parallel NGO forum took place to which representatives from developed and developing countries, from NGOs as well as grassroots organizations, government agencies, academics, and professional women's groups came. These fora usually took place during the same week as the UN conferences, although the

Nairobi Forum occurred just before the UN conference. These NGO Fora allowed non-accredited NGOs, those prevented from attending the UN conferences, to come together at the same time in the same city as the international conference. The organization which ran the Forum obtained the permission from the host country and the UN Secretary General in charge of the conference. While these groups had no ability to vote on the conference documents, these summits enabled these organizations to pressure government delegates. They drew on media attention and counted on worldwide exposure to alternative ideas and causes. As Arvonne Fraser has said, “[f]or the duration of the world conference, the NGO forum becomes in effect, a highly sophisticated lobby, aimed, short term, at influencing the conference and the world’s media and , longer term, at influencing national governments, the media and the public”(1987:12).

Furthermore, these fora were the places where the more marginalized ideas get initial public expression and recognition, and then sometimes funneled into the mainstream conference agenda. As part of the process of institutional change discussed above, these fora played an important role. The issue of violence against women was discussed initially in several panels at the Mexico City NGO Tribune, and was incorporated into passages in the Copenhagen PFA. Similarly, lesbian issues have always been presented at the NGO Fora. In the negotiations over the Beijing PFA, there was controversy over the language. While “sexual orientation” was ultimately rejected, the language in the text reads, “[t]he Platform for Action recognizes that women face barriers to full equality and advancement because of such factors as their race, age, language, ethnicity, culture, religion or disability, because they are indigenous women or because *of other status*” (Beijing PFA, par.46, *italics added*). “Other status” was the negotiated term to include sexual orientation and according to Morgan (1996), many country delegates said they would voluntarily interpret lesbian rights to be covered under this section. While some walked away discouraged by the watered-down language, others were comforted to know that a passionate debate about lesbianism and discrimination took place at a UN conference (Bunch and Fried 1996: 202).

This example illustrates that a marginalized issue discussed originally at a forum can make its way inside the conference agenda.

The participation of NGOs has increased dramatically. For instance, at the 1975 Tribune in Mexico City, 5000 people registered, though the organizers were expecting 3000. At the Copenhagen Forum, 8000 people had registered. In Nairobi, just over 13,000 registered, with 60% coming from developing countries. In the Beijing²⁷ Forum, approximately 30,000 people participated in 3, 340 sessions. The Fora provides an environment less restrained by UN-member government political relationships. For many in attendance, these gatherings, even more so than the conference themselves, become large consciousness-raising events where women from all over the world talk, listen and learn from one another. Hanna Papanek, writing on her reflections of the Mexico City NGO Forum said,

Learning, as it does perhaps at all meetings, did not happen only at sessions. Over lunch at the packed cafeteria, new ideas took shape. At adjacent tables, two Indian women in saris interviewed Germaine Greer, a group of NOW members discussed the need for making amendments to the U.N. working document, and a Latin American academic explained her work on women in her country's economy to two newly met colleagues from the United States. Elsewhere, women with decades of experience in village work talked with others newly involved in it, or perhaps with others newly working in volunteer agencies to raise funds for work with women. In hotel dining rooms, over breakfast, we heard about the profound differences of opinion between younger and older women from Muslim countries about the need to reform the status of women in Islam. This was a useful contrast to much that was said in the public sessions (1975:217).

One of my informants had a very similar interpretation of her experiences at the Beijing Forum, which testifies to the importance of these meetings.

²⁷ It should be noted that just prior to the conference, the Chinese government moved the location of the NGO Forum to Huairou, a small city outside of Beijing, but took about 90 minutes to travel between each site. The official reason why the Forum was relocated was that the building that was to house it was structurally unsafe. Morgan (1996) suggests that the Chinese government was quite wary of the media attention that would undoubtedly go to the protests and marches expected by delegates at the NGO Forum and so moved the site to Huairou. See Robin Morgan, "The NGO Forum: Good News and Bad", *Women's Studies Quarterly* Volume XXIV, Numbers 1 and 2 (1996): 46-53.

It really was a wonderful experience. If the only thing it accomplished was a cultural exchange, was the sense of women seeing the kind of diverse sisterhood that they have around the world. Women seeing women. In Huairou they created this sort of village. You drove out to it and there was this whole village that sort of had everything inside of it. You would just be walking the streets from one place to the next and you would just see women in all kinds of various dress and various cultural attire speaking all kinds of languages. So, if for no other purpose than to have a cultural exchange. For people to meet people who were different than themselves. Then it was a very successful and powerful and meaningful experience. (KE: 6/11/99)

At Copenhagen, a separate segment of the forum was established to allow for informal, impromptu sessions. The creation of this “Vivencia²⁸” was in response to criticisms made after the Mexico City Tribune, where many women felt silenced by the formal structure of the Forum. Peace tents were erected at Nairobi and continued at Beijing. Opposing groups were invited to join in public dialogue. For example, Iranian and Iraqi, Palestinian and Israeli, Soviet and American women engaged in debate about how the conflicts between them affected them as women. Spontaneously organized “speakouts” also occurred, smaller sessions organized by separate groups designed to give briefings about what was going on at the UN conference. As in many academic conferences, an area for country and organization exhibits are also set up.

No formal documents are produced at the Fora because of the sensitive nature of the discussions as women shared personal accounts of poverty, violence, and torture. That many of the more marginal ideas ultimately ended up in the main conference document is even more remarkable. This, I would argue, is an important distinction between the UN conferences and the NGO Fora. While the NGO meetings are also “political spectacles” in the words of Edelman, with some organizational and bureaucratic expectations, there is much greater informality and spontaneity, and less ritualization that is evoked. For Edelman, these qualities are necessary for effective change. Once issues become organized and rationalized, protest is contained, the process is ritualized, and the effect is at best reformist. The problem, however, is that the more popular these events become, as has been shown in

the increases in attendance at the NGO Fora, the more likely they will become more organized and formalized.

Concluding Thoughts

The four conference documents exhibit a shift in tone and language from 1975-1995. Words like oppression and liberation, even empowerment, were not included in earlier documents. This may be a result of the greater impact that NGO representatives had in the creation of later documents. What perhaps explains this even more are two, almost countervailing trends. First, as has been discussed earlier, the maturing of the global women's movement. As Dorsey stated, "[i]n many ways, UN conferences came to frame symbolically the stages of the global women's movement" (Dorsey 1997:338). There is a great deal of evidence of this maturation as has been detailed above. A major point of debate in Mexico City was whether the needs of women should be considered separately from the larger economic and political issues (Papanek 1975). By Nairobi, there was an understanding both that feminist issues were political issues and political issues were feminist ones, and that the source of women's oppression is not the same everywhere. At Beijing, older, consistent issues like women's disproportionate share of world poverty, unequal access to work, education, training, and health care were rethought in the context of economic globalization, the debt crisis, armed conflicts, and democratization. Some of the more permanent issues were redefined, for example, placing reproductive rights and family planning along with AIDS under the section on health.

Each successive conference demonstrated an expansion of information as well as a deeper analysis of the problems and possible solutions. With this broadened understanding came a narrowing of target areas as well as a more pointed language. This maturation was not just about knowing more, but an accumulation of experience. Charlotte Bunch and

²⁸ Vivencia, a Spanish word, means "an experience that becomes part of life" (Fraser 1987:146).

Susana Fried describe the “increasingly sophisticated lobbying of governmental delegates by women whose efforts are based on years of working to build international feminist strategies around common concerns, such as reproductive rights and violence against women” (1996: 201).

This increase in knowledge and experience produced another related trend that seems almost to contradict the first. That is, as movements tend to grow and become more ‘established’, there is an incorporation of more radical ideas into the mainstream agenda. Previously peripheral issues or analyses are co-opted as they become “mainstreamed”. Once again, the important distinction between rhetoric and reality plays a part. The rhetoric has indeed changed and become more “radicalized”. This in and of itself is an important shift. As Charlotte Bunch and Susana Fried remind us,

the lowest common denominator prevails, and therefore, weak language may emerge from the most contentious and passionate debates. Nevertheless, getting reluctant governments even to agree to weak text when it represents an advancement over their prior positions can be important... To use these documents effectively, they must be approached as statements of best intentions and commitments to which organized groups can seek to hold governments and the UN accountable (1996: 201).

But to what degree will accountability matter for actual change? For the moment, we need to address the first phase of institutional change—the radical rhetoric. The process seems almost universal, in that as institutions “develop”, once radical ideas are brought in from the margins, partly to undermine or co-opt such resistance from outside. Once these ideas become more established, or mainstreamed, the rhetoric may remain radical, while the actual practice becomes at best reformed and co-opted, at worst the same as before, hidden behind the mask of changed rhetoric. As discussed in Chapter Three in the context of WID/GAD, this process resembles the bureaucratic rationalization process discussed by Max Weber. According to Weber, as any society modernizes, it becomes more bureaucratic, and rationalized. Likewise, as institutions bring in ideas from the outside, often ideas that criticize current practices, those ideas become co-opted, reformed, or neutered. This allows the power relations to remain the same. The same actors and institutions

control policy decisions. Moreover, when ideas become institutionalized, the bureaucratic managers must establish categories and priorities for programs and funding. The expected language is not of “critique” in the scholarly sense, but of “action” in the instrumental sense. But how does an organization categorize violence against women? How does one effectively prioritize human rights? So the radical, once marginal, never public issues become established and institutionalized, mere symbols, in the language of Edelman. Discussing the limitations of these conference documents, Elizabeth Anne Reid says that they,

are basically long lists of possible solutions to a whole gamut of problems. No single group or country is faced by all these problems. For each problem there are a range of possible solutions presented. The hope presumably is that each country combs the list, ticks off solutions that might work for the problems of its women and given the political will, tries them. The justification for such an inadequate approach must lie in the overwhelming range of often contradictory problems that women face throughout the world and the difficulties involved in conceiving an alternative approach (1984: 78).

Baden and Goetz (1997) make the interesting argument that institutionalizing gender has amounted to losing the feminist political content of the word in various, almost conflicting ways. Gender has been and continues to be a contested category among feminists internationally. One of the major debates in the construction of the Beijing PFA was around the use of the word “women” versus “gender”. Proponents of gender argued that it is necessary to pay attention not just to women, but to the gendered relations between men and women when implementing development objectives. If not, attention to women may result merely in reproducing traditional roles of women. Many Third World feminists argued, on the other hand, that the shift in rhetoric to gender has meant de-politicizing the issue of women. In other words, the shift of language to “gender” allows the special needs of women to be ignored, and/or believed to have been resolved by still primarily male-run institutions. Because gendered analyses are difficult to translate into policy formation, and because “gendered” policies are difficult to translate into the quantitative requirements of current program implementation (see Chapter Three), the use of the term gender has

provided an excuse not to deal with women specifically. At the same time, as opposition from religious conservative nation-states and organizations at the UN attest, the shift to gender is politically and strategically problematic. That is, the use of gender, implies that such categories as men and women are socially constructed rather than natural. This usage offends the sensibilities of the conservative religious voices. The language of “women” vs. “gender” remains contested, for excellent reasons.

In bureaucratic settings that determine policy, action is so often considered to mean legislative action, the creation of laws, representing another intrinsic limitation, or the promulgation of administrative rulings. Laws or rules promoting equality may not necessarily mean equality in practice. Whether this is because attitudes do not necessarily change with laws or enforcement is often neglected, the focus on such action is limited by bureaucratic realities. Other forces include the tension between national sovereignty and universal norms, as mentioned earlier, where vague language is used purposefully because of the institutional constraints produced by these tensions. Furthermore, the differential positioning of economic, political, military and cultural power that some countries have over others is another constraint. Some countries are in much better positions to dictate universal norms. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, though related to the others above, is the dominance of capitalism as the economic ideology underpinning the concept of development. This conclusion will be more elaborated in the final chapter.

Institutional arrangements guiding these conferences and the entire development process limit the capacity for the radical rhetorical content of new ideas to be realized in practice. The ambiguity of the conference documents surely exacerbates these problems. On the one hand, the vagueness of direction and implementation allows institutions to eschew accountability. If one’s plans are not specified, it is difficult to be held responsible for what does not get accomplished. On the other hand, in the example of sexual orientation mentioned earlier, the ambiguity of language is used to escape criticism from ideological opponents. If the language allows more progressive nation-states to interpret its meanings in

certain ways, but without using controversial language that could hold up the passage and acceptance of the document, the ambiguity serves an important function. Since a rather significant role of the UN is to mediate ideological conflict between nation-states, such ambiguity is inevitable. The PFAs, are essentially compromise documents, and because of this, naturally imperfect. These conferences and their reports are nonetheless important tools to understand the changing rhetoric of the development discourse and the bureaucratic limitations of development practices.

CHAPTER FIVE

UNIFEM: WID INSTITUTION AS CHALLENGER AND REPRODUCER OF DOMINANT DEVELOPMENT IDEOLOGY

The UN charter established in 1945, was the first international document to state the principle of equality for men and women. Thus, from its beginnings, the rhetoric of the UN included a concern for gender equality. Unfortunately, this rhetorical commitment has not always been translated into policies and practices. Gender was an invisible issue until at least the 1970s. Almost 55 years later, whilst gender has become a much more popular concern, the question remains as to how much of this legitimate rhetoric has had real impact on policy and program formation.

The United Nations is an enormous institution. It consists of six principal organs: the International Court of Justice, the Security Council, the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council, the Trusteeship Council and the Secretariat. Each organ has its own particular functions and directs various programs and agencies. Under the auspices of the General Assembly (GA) and the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), are the “Programmes and Funds”, which include the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), and various others. The World Bank Group¹ is considered part of the “Specialized Agencies”, along with the International Labour Organization (ILO), the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the World Health Organization (WHO), among others. The United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the subject of this chapter, is under the administration of the UNDP. It is this arm of the United Nations to which the following discussion is limited.

¹ The World Bank Group actually encompasses five organizations: the IBRD, International Bank for Reconstruction and Development; the IDA, International Development Association; the IFC, International Finance Corporation; MIGA, Multilateral Investment Guaranteed Agency; and ICSID, International Centre for the Settlement of Investing Disputes.

UNIFEM was formally established in 1985 and marks a watershed moment in the history of women and development, a history detailed in Chapter Three. It was the culmination of a growing international concern that the development process had ignored women. UNIFEM not only represents a rhetorical shift in the development discourse as a result of women's activism, but also a real change in that an organizational agency was created with programming mandates and funding to promote women's development and equality. As such, it is a useful site from which to examine the changing rhetoric of development and its practice. Its creation was evidently a real shift in development thinking and practice, as it was formally recognized that women matter to the development process. Yet, from its inception it has struggled with financial constraints and bureaucratic hurdles. The particular pattern of these obstacles shows the continuing gap between the rhetoric that defines women as important and the character of the actual programs advertised as promoting the social, political and economic advancement of women.

While UNIFEM is a result of WID activism, it is also a co-creator of the discursive and programmatic changes in rhetoric and reality. Given UNIFEM's particular history, it is important to look at the organization in relation to the entire UN system. Although UNIFEM is arguably on the radical frontier of the UN, and certainly sees itself in that way, it is also a bureaucratic organization which must produce its own legitimating rhetoric that papers over the inevitable gaps between what it says should be done and what it actually does.

To reiterate, the exploration into the disjuncture between rhetoric and reality is important precisely because the discourse has changed so much. The fact that development is now being talked about as a "human right" represents a progressive shift from the "stages of growth" and "modernization" theories and representations of development popular throughout the 1950s and 1960s. Yet, at the same time, as the political-economic forces of global capitalism are extending its reach into the analysis of and proposed solutions to the problems of underdevelopment, such transformative possibilities for

development become less likely. When we closely examine the “rights” rhetoric, we find at the core a productivist-pro-growth orientation, what I have been calling the capitalist modernization project. The organizations involved in the rhetoric of alternative paradigms, as in the case of UNIFEM, have been unable to resist the neo-liberal pressures of global capitalism. UNIFEM, like many other organizations which comprise the “dominant development paradigm”², is specifically committed to ensuring that women benefit from these processes. Because of its institutional location and political origins, its practices cannot escape certain limits, despite its radical or alternative rhetoric. UNIFEM must accept the main parameters of capitalist modernization, regardless of any rhetorical shifts that may have emerged. A case study of UNIFEM illustrates these dynamics, and the research presented here is based on documents, interviews and six months of fieldwork as an intern at UNIFEM headquarters in New York City.

Description of UNIFEM Headquarters

UNIFEM’s headquarters is located across the street from the main UN building, in an office building along with several UNDP offices. When I first started my fieldwork, UNIFEM shared the 6th floor of 609 E. 45th Street with a private company. The space was filled to capacity. There were not enough desks and computers for all of the interns and the spaces for filing cabinets were overflowing. About halfway during my fieldwork UNIFEM moved up to the 15th and 16th floors of the same building. They are the sole occupants of the 15th floor and share the 16th floor with the GEF-- Global Environmental Facility, a collaborative agency of the UNDP and World Bank. Once the move took place, there was definitely more room for full-time staff, including several sites for meetings and

² To remind the reader, this concept was explored in Chapter Two. Basically it is the dominant way of conceptualizing development as economic growth. What is an interesting aspect to this whole analysis is that this dominant paradigm has gone through its own rhetorical shifts. Most of the agencies which represent this dominant paradigm, like the World Bank, the UNDP, USAID, are now talking the language of “gender” and “sustainability”. This was discussed in Chapter Two.

conferences. However, space and computers were still lacking for interns, consultants and special advisors. I was assigned to a room that belonged to a program specialist who was on leave for the year. Fortunately I was able to use her desk and computer for my work assignments. If she had been there, it is unclear where I would have been placed, or if I would have been able to stay as long as I did.

While I was there, there were approximately 50 staff members. This number varied due to changing numbers of consultants and interns. Normally, paid consultants and unpaid interns are given a two or three month contract, which may or may not be renewed depending upon the work load, the progress of assignments, space and for consultants, available funding. I was an intern and my contract was extended twice for a total of six months. The staff includes an Executive Director and Deputy Director, each of whom has an Executive Assistant. There are nine full time thematic advisors; human rights, economic empowerment, governance, special advisor to the Director, a Gender, Population and Development specialist, a peace and conflict resolution advisor, advisor on CEDAW³, a UNAIDS Gender and HIV advisor, and an advisor on gender development. The three main thematic advisors (human rights, economic empowerment and governance) each had secretaries, who were also shared by the other advisors.

On the one hand these thematic areas--human rights, governance and economic empowerment -- are bureaucratic categories necessary to make the division of labor more efficient. At the same time, these categories are *ideological*, revealing both a commitment by UNIFEM to expand the notion of development to include women, and to limit and channel the activities to those politically and organizationally feasible. That is, in their effort to bring about women's development and equality, there is a commitment to work simultaneously in

³ The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) was adopted by the General Assembly in December 1979. It is a legally binding international treaty, requiring states to eliminate discrimination against women in the area of civil, political, economic and cultural rights. Currently, 165 countries have ratified the Convention. The United States has not yet ratified CEDAW. (See <http://www.unifem.undp.org/cedaw.htm>).

the area of human rights, governance and leadership and economic empowerment. In fact, these bureaucratic arrangements are relatively recent, established in 1995. This suggests that as the development discourse has expanded to include the importance of rights, leadership and empowerment, at least rhetorically, UNIFEM has responded by restructuring its organization to reflect these discursive shifts.

In addition to the thematic areas, there are four geographic sections-- Africa, Asia/Pacific, Latin America/ Caribbean and CIS, which corresponds to the regions designated by the UNDP. Each geographic section has a Chief, and program specialist, and a secretary. At times they also have consultants and/or interns. My terms of reference stated that I was an intern for the Asia/Pacific geographic section. However, at the time, my direct supervisor was both the Chief of the Asia/Pacific region as well as the Advisor for the Economic Empowerment thematic area, so much of my work bridged both areas. I will describe my role as an intern later on in the chapter.

Another department is the OLRD section, Organizational Learning and Research Development Section. This section includes a Chief, Information/Media specialist, public affairs specialists, a secretary, someone in charge of publication distribution, and various consultants and interns. The finance unit had an associate and assistant, a management unit, with a chief and two program/finance assistants. The Administration and human resources unit consisted of a chief, an assistant, and an IMA administrator (computer network). While I worked there, including interns and consultants, there were 44 women and seven men. Only one man was involved in programming, the rest were in finance, management, OLRD, and human resources.

The Origins of UNIFEM: the Voluntary Fund

Margaret Snyder, UNIFEM's founding director, wrote the only history of UNIFEM, *Transforming Development: Women, Poverty and Politics* (1995). Because an insider wrote it, the account contains details that may not have been accessible to an

outsider. However, for that same reason, Snyder does not have the degree of objectivity that an outsider might have had in her approach and synthesis of the material. Her book will be used here primarily as a historical and factual document, providing a chronology of events that led to the establishment of UNIFEM. However, the ideological and political functions of this document will also be analyzed.

According to Snyder, within the United Nations, one way in which issues of women gained attention was through the CSW, the Commission on the Status of Women, established in 1946, only one year after the establishment of the UN itself. Its original mandate was to “promote women’s political, economic and social rights through legal action.” (Women and the UN 1945-1995: 1995). As a result of the burgeoning international women’s movement, the Commission went through some significant changes. In 1960 there were six representatives to the CSW from developing nations. By 1969, this number rose to nineteen. “These delegates influenced the CSW and other UN agendas, by speaking in ways seldom heard before in the UN” (Snyder 1995:10). These delegates spoke of women as farmers, merchants, and entrepreneurs -- as the backbone of rural economies.

But more than the makeup of the delegations changed. The substance of their evaluations of the status of women was altered, according to Snyder. In 1963, the CSW reported that “there were sufficient facilities and programmes available to provide the assistance needed to further advance the status of women” (ECOSOC Report of 16th session of CSW 1963, p.22--p. 10 in Snyder). By 1970, the annual report looked very different, as the CSW issued mandates and set objectives and targets for the advancement of women. Snyder suggests that this change was a result of women from developing nations becoming part of the delegations and shifting the discourse, and the content, as well as research coming from the scholarly community.

An example of this was the 1970 publication of Ester Boserup’s, *Women’s Role in Economic Development*, discussed in Chapter Three. This empirical work made women’s

labor in the international political economy visible for the first time. Never before had there been a cross-cultural economic analysis focusing on women and their productive roles. Boserup's work provided the basis for the WID movement (see Chapter Three), identified as such in both scholarly and practitioner circles. After this publication the CSW began to push for development programming to deal with her findings. This led to the first global meeting on women and development, called the Expert Group Meeting in 1972 (Snyder 1995:17).

In 1975 the CSW proclaimed that year as International Women's Year and planned a global conference, the First Conference on Women, held in Mexico City (See Chapter Four). At this conference there was a call for the creation of a development fund specifically for women, arguing that institutions were needed to ensure that women's concerns were made central to development planning and that women were seen as integral parts to economic and social life. Two approaches were thought to be most effective. One, to target existing funds, foundations, and agencies in order to ensure that women were given "the skills, training, and other opportunities they needed to improve their situations and to participate fully and effectively in the total development effort" (Snyder 1995:26). Secondly, to create new women-specific institutions to ensure policies and programs were being designed to meet women's needs.

This proposal was supported by the General Assembly through a resolution⁴ and the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Women was established in 1978. The Voluntary Fund would eventually become UNIFEM. The function of the Fund was to "promote programming for and with women in developing countries and to channel financial and technical resources directly to these women to promote specific, local activities"(Anderson 1990:7). In addition, it was to oversee and promote the activities and goals of the Decade for Women. The United Kingdom and Iran were the first two countries to give money to the fund. Highlighting a theme touched on in the previous

⁴ GA Resolution 31/133 in Snyder 1995:266.

chapter, an important outcome of the first conference on women was a General Assembly resolution creating an institutional body that would carry out the platform agreed upon at the conferences. This action is a good example of rhetorical shifts, in this case the new theme of “women and development”, having had real consequences, at least at the level of creating an organizational framework.

The Fund’s effectiveness and future depended upon establishing a track record of results. Snyder points out that other UN agencies were much better funded and supported, even at their inception. After a few years in operation, the Fund had 102 projects per one staff member. As a comparison, the UNCDF (United Nations Capital Development Fund) and UNFPA (United Nations Population Fund) had 33 projects per one staff member and 22 projects per one staff member respectively (Snyder 1995:34). Snyder writes, “the Fund has never had the human and financial resources to operate on the scale that its mission actually calls for” (1995:34).

Unfortunately, Snyder does not really explain this lack of support. She is careful not to suggest that the lack of early funding was a result of institutional resistance and/or apathy to an agency focusing on women. Other writers have made this argument (Kabeer 1995; Kardam 1991), but Snyder shies away from any speculation that promoting gender and women may not have been a high priority to the UN. In fact she repeats several times that the UN provided the institutional support for the spread of the international women’s movement. She writes, “women working in the UN quickly grasped the revolutionary notion that even the poorest women in the world are central economic actors. Thus, the UN, with its global outreach, became the principal advocate and guardian of the women and development movement” (Snyder 1995: 80). Snyder’s book is both a factual, historical look at UNIFEM, and a political document intended to help raise UNIFEM’s status and visibility within the UN system. She does not however, soften her criticism toward the World Bank and IMF, saying that they, in contrast to UNIFEM, “continue their pursuit of economic growth and the global market economy without the balance that the pursuit of

human well-being could give" (1995: xiv). Interestingly, the World Bank⁵ has been following the UNDP's lead in terms of its recent focus, at least at the rhetorical level, on women and gender.

The Creation of UNIFEM

The Fund struggled in its early years, beset by bureaucratic and financial difficulties. Bureaucratically, the Fund was under the administration of three different UN bodies, each of which had to approve all programs and projects. In addition, the Fund was expected to do too much with too few resources. Its financial resources were too small to allow large expenditures on staffing, yet because the Fund was "experimental", it had to invest staff time on small-and medium-scale projects, which cost more. The creation of a fund for women's development concerns was an important rhetorical shift from the dominant development paradigm. That it has never been properly funded indicates its low priority in UN political and resource allocation.

By 1984, the General Assembly finally agreed that the bureaucratic hurdles imposed on the Fund really limited its capacity to continue and expand its work. As a result, the Fund was reconstituted and moved to a new administrative location, the UNDP, United Nations Development Programme and renamed the United Nations Development Fund for Women. It's mandate:

1. *Decides* that the activities of the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Women shall be continued through establishment of a separate and identifiable entity in autonomous association with the United Nations Development Programme, which will play an innovative and catalytic role in relation to the United Nations over-all system of development co-operation (GA Resolution 39/125 in Snyder, p. 269-270-- italics in original).

UNIFEM was made an autonomous agency within the UNDP, maintaining its separate identity as the only Fund in the UN system set up solely to assist women. Since the UNDP was the UN's primary development agency, the move to UNDP gave UNIFEM a strong

⁵ As detailed in an earlier chapter, the World Bank is actually part of the UN system, but a completely autonomous institution.

development base from which to rely on to expand its operations and to fulfill its new, augmented mandate.

As part of its new mandate in 1985, UNIFEM was to invest in two main priority areas. One, to serve as a “catalyst”, whose goal was to “ensure women’s involvement with mainstream activities” (Anderson 1990:9). When possible, this was to be done at the pre-investment stage, when projects were initially conceived and prepared, rather than after they have been designed or implemented. Secondly, UNIFEM was to “support innovative activities to benefit women”, which were “consistent with national and regional development priorities” (Anderson 1990:9). UNIFEM was not mandated to take on the role of programming for women. Instead, it was to “catalyze” others (UN agencies, member governments, civil society) to take women and issues affecting women seriously, and to “innovate” activities with women (women’s organizations, NGOs, grassroots organizations) leading others to take them up and integrate them into regular programming. Yet, its primary functions served to isolate and segregate “women’s activities” from the more central development activity.

Though the funding landscape has changed, there is good evidence that this is still a problem through the 1990s. UNIFEM’s total budget, which was just under \$14 million in 1994, was equal to about 1.5% of the budget for UNICEF and 1% of the budget for UNDP. In 1999, UNIFEM’s total budget was \$23.6 million, and in 2000 it was \$29.4 million (UNIFEM Annual Report 2000:34). In 1999, the budget for UNDP was \$719 million and in 2000 it was \$648.7 million (UNDP Annual Report 2000:13), 22 times the budget of UNIFEM. While still significantly lower than the budgets of the UNDP, it should be noted that UNIFEM’s budget is increasing, while the UNDP budget decreased from 1999-2000. A specialist in the human rights division suggests that this is due to the increased visibility and recognition of UNIFEM since the Beijing conference in 1995, as well as the growing international concern over women’s issue in development. Regardless, UNIFEM’s budget is still quite low, and my fieldwork experience would support this as

well. Headquarters was short of space and computers. There was a general sense of being overworked among the full time staff, from secretaries to Chief of Sections. Furthermore, it was quite common to read in the six monthly reports from the field offices, many RPAs (Regional Programming Advisors) complaining of lack of resources and being overwhelmed by the need to fundraise in addition to carry out development work.

Early Resistance to UNIFEM

There were several examples of resistance toward UNIFEM. As noted earlier and as Snyder alludes to, some leaders in developing countries felt that “women and development” was a symbol of Western feminism and cultural imperialism. Snyder provides one disturbing event that illustrates the resistance toward UNIFEM in its early years. According to Snyder, over a weekend in March 1984, the Fund’s offices were unexpectedly moved from one building to another, in a careless and disorderly fashion, without any warning or preparation. Important documents and cables were strewn around, and some were never recovered. Project files were thrown in wastebaskets. Whatever material survived was moved to a space without phones. The old space from which the Fund was moved was vacant for more than a year (Snyder 1995: 67). Though Snyder did not mention who was responsible, she did say, “we were reminded that working to empower the poorest women was threatening to some high-level and powerful people” (1995: 67).

I did not observe any such egregious examples of resistance during my internship. When I asked several current UNIFEM staff members about any outside resistance toward the work they do, most of them responded in similar ways. It was generally felt that there is still a certain amount of resistance to gender in a lot of development organizations, especially within the UN system. As a staff member, who had spent time in one of the Asian regional bureaus before coming to headquarters put it, “Gender as marginalized still occurs. It’s a daily thing and is part of UNIFEM’s mandate to mainstream gender through the UN system, in that way fighting against this everyday resistance” (TJ: 8/17/01).

A Description of UNIFEM's Programming and Project Work

Most of the work that UNIFEM has done since 1996, has been work inspired by the Beijing Platform for Action. UNIFEM saw its role as an important catalyst in bringing about the principles and action programs that governments agreed upon in 1995. In that sense, a 'real' consequence of the rhetorical promises of the Beijing Conference is being realized as it has affected the policy and program decisions of UNIFEM.

The following section will present UNIFEM's programming and project work. Most of the material is taken from the Consultative Committee Report. This is a yearly progress report of the work that UNIFEM has done over the year. For almost four months a year, a key task at headquarters is preparation of this yearly report, which is presented to the Consultative Committee (CC). This committee is a group of five member state representatives who monitor the progress of UNIFEM and make suggestions on its programming and administrative directions. I will go through each section of the report highlighting the activities of the year in the way they were described in the report. In this way it will become clear how UNIFEM defines itself, its objectives, and its constraints, and will be a good way to understand UNIFEM as an ideological and bureaucratic site for the construction of development thought and action.

Economic Empowerment

UNIFEM defines women's economic empowerment as "having access to and control over the means to make a living on a sustainable and long-term basis, and receiving the material benefits of this success and control" (CC Report 1999: 15). UNIFEM's target group is poor women, but they do support women's business associations, policy makers and practitioners. The assumption is that these secondary groups can bring about economic changes for poor women. There are three levels at which UNIFEM works toward bringing about women's economic empowerment-- what they identify as the macro, meso and micro

levels. The macro level is at the level of policy making. For instance, UNIFEM worked to ensure that policy makers recognize the impact of trade policy decisions on women's economic empowerment. In addition, much of UNIFEM's work at this level involved supporting institutions and organizations to ensure that women's economic contributions were recognized and to protect the rights of home-based workers through legislative changes.

An example of this macro work is the following. The Asian economic crisis of 1998 was something that UNIFEM was monitoring with great interest. UNIFEM, in collaboration with the Canadian Development Agency's (CIDA) South East Asia Gender Equity Program (SEAGEP), developed an information briefing kit entitled, "Women and the Economic Crisis" to "help understand how these crises tend to threaten women's domestic and reproductive roles"(CC Report 1999: 16). The kit was targeted toward policy makers, advisers, development agencies, regional bodies, employers and trade unions.

At the Meso level, UNIFEM tried to ensure that women had equal access to services and resources. To do this, UNIFEM supported the creation of a Woman's Entrepreneur's Association in South Asia, a Street Vendors Union in Africa, and helped women's organizations in Latin America lobby for legal recognition of the Domestic Workers' Association.

The aim of the project in Africa was to aid street vendors in developing ways to access credit and other resources and to incorporate renewable energy systems and technology to improve their enterprises. An initial study found that most women used firewood and operated manual machines, both methods considered to be less efficient. As part of this project, a workshop was held, promoting the development of a Street Vendors' Union and offering advice on technology and energy resource uses.

In Latin America, in collaboration with a national NGO in Ecuador, first a pilot project was conducted on the living and working conditions of women domestic workers and street vendors. Then training was conducted on human and labor rights, self-assertion,

violence against women, quality management and commercialization. This training was aired weekly on local radio programs, and assisted in raising awareness of domestic worker rights, their ability to demand and exercise these rights, self-esteem and leadership skills. As a result of the training, domestic workers in Ecuador have been claiming their legal rights in order to achieve equal compensation to those working in other sectors. In 1998, the Labor Ministry finally approved the legal status of the Domestic Workers' Association.

At the micro level, efforts were aimed at increasing economic productivity and promoting "linkages to markets". In West Africa, UNIFEM supported a Shea Butter project in Burkina Faso, training 300 women in improved techniques in order to meet the quality standards required by different markets. Samples of shea butter were sent to the US and Canada, as well as national soap factories, so they are targeting both local and international markets. By January 1999, some local soap factories ordered 10 tons of the shea butter to be used in making soap. As part of this project, women received credit to buy and process additional shea nuts and to apply the training they had received. This project was being replicated in Benin.

In Latin America, UNIFEM supported a project providing training and technical assistance in embroidery to Mayan women. The training helped increase Mayan women's entrepreneurial skills and competitiveness of their enterprises. As part of this project, women were organized into embroidery groups. Some received assistance and training in new designs, marketing and organizational skills. This was carried out by a local NGO with the support of UNIFEM. They obtained a piece of land from municipal authorities for building a storage-room for raw materials so that they had space to buy materials wholesale and cut down production costs. The building also served as a center for women's meetings.

Governance

UNIFEM's work in the area of governance since 1995-- as reported to the CC-- had a two-pronged strategy. First, its work supported efforts to "engender governance

processes”, which means to incorporate gender in policy-making and legislative processes. Secondly, UNIFEM tried to facilitate the development of women’s leadership capacities at national and global levels. In addition to these two main priorities, UNIFEM also advocated the gendering of issues through “ongoing analysis, documentation, and dissemination of publications, as well as support to facilitate the participation of women leaders at strategic mainstream conferences and international fora” (CC Report 1999: 37). These strategies came right out of the Beijing Platform for Action (PFA), again demonstrating the impact that this conference has had on the policy-making and programming of development institutions as discussed in the previous chapter.

The development objective which frames the Governance programming was to create “enabling environments for women’s participation in and their influence over political decision making that affects their lives at all levels of society” (CC Report 1999: 36). Thus programming was focused on four primary categories: setting the agenda of development; strengthening women’s constituencies; promoting women’s leadership and political participation; and promoting women’s participation in peace-building and conflict-resolution.

In terms of setting the development agenda, UNIFEM focused most of its work in the area of ‘engendering statistics’ and ‘engendering budgets’. Throughout Latin America, a joint activity promoted by UNIFEM along with national statistical offices and women’s bureaus, worked to expand social and economic indicators to include the situation of women. In Guatemala and El Salvador, for example, separate statistics on women were generated in the areas of education and employment. In Costa Rica, the focus was on labor, education, health, political participation and domestic violence. This work has led to several handbooks and publications for data users in the area of health, education and labor.

UNIFEM reported the results of this work in the following way:

Data producers in these countries have been sensitized to gender aspects of statistics and major conceptual changes in surveys have been made for the 2000 Census. Gender-oriented changes have been made in administrative

records for various sectors, including health, education, labour, political participation and housing (CC Report 1999: 39)

UNIFEM has actively promoted women's leadership and political participation. In India, UNIFEM held a two-day national debate on reserving seats for women in politics. The aim was to encourage political parties to "translate into practice, their commitment to reserving seats for women political leaders" (CC Report 1999: 46). The idea is that the more women participate in national policy making processes, the more women will benefit.

As far as work in peace-building and conflict-resolution is concerned, UNIFEM was very involved in a project in Rwanda, Burundi, Somalia and Sudan, which was funded by the Government of the Netherlands. UNIFEM helped to train women peace activists. As a result, over 100 women were trained and have in turn trained wider communities of women in conflict resolution. In addition, UNIFEM facilitated the creation of an African-wide Federation of African Women for Peace, which is an important vehicle for advocacy work in the region. UNIFEM is also involved in peace initiatives in Albania, Tajikistan and in the Southern Caucasus region. Women's participation in conflict resolution was an important theme at the Beijing Conference.

Human Rights

The 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in 1999, was used by UNIFEM as the context for much of its programming for that year. This important area of UNIFEM's work was based on the belief that in order to promote women's rights, women and men must have access to and understand the international human rights machinery and process. As part of the year's activities, UNIFEM spearheaded the UN Inter-Agency regional campaigns, "*A Life Free from Violence: It's Our Right*" in Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa, Asia and the Pacific. In addition it set up a separate Trust Fund to support projects designed to eliminate violence. Separate monies were raised for these activities from donor countries and foundations, including the UN Foundation established by Ted Turner. At the time of the report, the Fund had supported 73 projects in

45 countries around the world. In 1998, 29 projects were approved, on domestic violence, health, female genital mutilation, trafficking sex workers, and femicide.

As part of its human rights work at the global level, UNIFEM has worked to raise awareness of the use of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). UNIFEM has trained women's groups in how to use the declaration as well as monitor its implementation by member states. UNIFEM has trained women's rights advocates, published training manuals for human rights education, as well as worked toward integrating gender into the UN human rights system. For instance, UNIFEM prepared a paper with recommendations to the Economic and Social Council five-year review of the World Conference on Human Rights. According to their own report, UNIFEM was the first UN agency to identify human rights as one of the thematic priorities for its programming work.

As discussed in Chapter Four, there was a great deal of attention surrounding the issue of violence against women at the Beijing Conference. UNIFEM pursued this issue in much of its work since Beijing.

*Analysis of UNIFEM as both Challenger and Reproducer
of Mainstream Development Ideology and Practice*

The following section details some themes that I uncovered through my fieldwork and research. Many of these themes, I think, shed some important light on UNIFEM as an institution involved in both social reproduction and social transformation, and helps to analyze the work that it does. UNIFEM is a complicated organization, which uneasily works for change as well as accepts some of the ideological doctrines of the mainstream institutions. Its work both alters the mainstream, and reproduces it. That is, it is an institution whose existence identifies it at the fringe of a massive bureaucracy, where women's issues have not been central, despite the language in its charter. Yet at the same time, it is a part of this institution, and yearns for more visibility and legitimacy from its UN partners. Like any bureaucracy, dependent upon recognition and financial support, its more

radical elements are neutralized as they became part of the bureaucracy. UNIFEM both challenges as well as reproduces the mainstream development ideology and its associated practices.

UNIFEM as Challenger to Mainstream Development Agenda

UNIFEM is on the “radical fringe” of the UN system. While its attempts to present itself as providing a “transformative” paradigm for development are highly limited, UNIFEM does operate against the grain of mainstream UN thinking and practice. These moments are very important to analyze.

The year-long campaigns described above, which are followed by projects in the field, seek to raise consciousness about a specific topic of concern. This has been highly effective in inserting the issue of violence against women into the development discourse. Interestingly, this push toward expanding the definition of development to focus on rights is sometimes met with resistance. At one meeting I attended, a UN representative from Uganda was expressing some opposition to UNIFEM’s focus on human rights. Encouraging UNIFEM to increase its program activities on poverty eradication, he said, “you can dump money into human rights, but if literacy is a problem, it’s no good”. The Executive Director responded,

I would like to assure you that poverty is a central concern... We have tried to look at poverty as not static...we have to prevent the regeneration of new poverties, so we need to look at macroeconomic structures, trade agreements... It’s not just an economic issue. We need to manage power...What kinds of investment has been put into human development? Taking a rights approach, we need to bring in the rights of development, and the rights to governance, empowerment, etc...We bring in a gender perspective to these questions. The mainstream dialogue is not really talking about the feminization of poverty. We have to shape the macro discussions because it has an impact on funding (Fieldnotes 1998/1999)⁶.

This is a very interesting exchange. The UN representative was expressing the more mainstream approach to development. However, even in his rhetoric, he chose “literacy” as

⁶ This passage comes from a meeting I attended while conducting my fieldwork at UNIFEM. Passages like these will from now on be denoted by (Fieldnotes 1998/1999).

a symbol of poverty, which does present a shift in the rhetoric, as was discussed in Chapter Two. The response by the Executive Director reflected an ideological commitment to a different notion and practice of development, but without ignoring the bureaucratic imperative of funding. Her tone was emphatic, perhaps even frustrated. It was not clear if this exchange represented a general resistance to UNIFEM as an agency focusing on women and/or if this individual was simply uninformed about the work that UNIFEM does.

Notwithstanding this example, there were other moments of recognition by members of other UN agencies of the impact that UNIFEM has had in the field as well as in agencies themselves. As an example, in a staff meeting I attended at UNIFEM, a representative of UNDP spoke of the impact of UNIFEM's work. She said,

UN agencies are not homogenous. There is a lot of difference in the progress made in gender mainstreaming. A lot of good work has been done regardless of the conceptual problems. Male roles and responsibilities, the Girl child and adolescents, as well as the boy child and adolescent, laws passed outlawing Female Genital Mutilation in Senegal. Without the support of UNIFEM and gender focal points, this might not have ever happened.

Another representative from UNAIDS spoke of the impact UNIFEM's work has had in that organization. She said,

UNIFEM helped UNAIDS to see AIDS as a gendered issue. AIDS is becoming a larger threat to some of the larger development goals. Two interesting initiatives where UNIFEM has led the discourse. One, was strengthening institutions to negotiate how to present safe sex and secondly, the human rights framework, that is the violation of rights of those living with HIV/AIDS.

Both of these passages testify to the importance of the work that UNIFEM has done in the field as well as in other UN agencies to alter the discourse and practice of development.

Other examples come from project documents. A project proposal for a multi-year, multi-project on economic empowerment in South Asia came to Headquarters. This particular project used the language of capabilities and entitlements, an obvious reference to Amartya Sen, the economist who won the Nobel Prize for Economics in 1998. Sen has

written much on reconceptualizing the notion of development⁷. In addition, this proposal drew on the Beijing Conference for Women as this sentence indicates:

The Fourth World Conference on Women is an important landmark in this emerging global consensus which places people, their capabilities, their participation and their empowerment at the centre of development rather than just incomes and inputs. In fact, the message from Beijing is that one of the main justifications, if any, for focusing on outcomes, income and growth must be sought in the extent to which their augmentation promotes or constrains the options and freedoms of women and girls.

This passage reveals a commitment to move beyond the mainstream norms of development meanings and measures, and is more evidence of one real impact of the international conferences. They have shifted the discourse, and presumably some aspects of the practice of development.

Further down in the proposal is another 'radical' passage, identifying the importance of reproductive labor not only as labor which should be counted and made visible, but addressing its importance because it makes productive work possible.

Women perform generally more physical work in terms of working hours. However, society discounts their work in national accounting, and the benefits that accrue from their work, despite the fact that it provides an enabling environment for those who work outside their households (Fieldnotes 1998/1999).

This argument is frequently voiced in feminist academic and activist circles. Its presence in a UNIFEM project proposal is quite impressive. In an attempt to make this reproductive labor more visible, as part of this project, UNIFEM worked with the census makers in India to add the question "*Did you work anytime at all last year, including unpaid work on family farm or family enterprise?*" In this way, women's unpaid labor can become more legitimized, they could be recognized for such labor, and this could improve the reliability and validity of the Census data.

⁷ Upon winning the Nobel Price in Economics in 1998, Amartya Sen compiled a collection of his earlier work for a wider audience in *Development as Freedom*. (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1999)

As part of another economic empowerment project, a section was devoted to migrant women workers of Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka is the only country in Asia in which the female labor migration far exceeds the male labor migration. Most of these women go to other countries as domestic workers. The project did a very good job of explaining the many problems that this group of female labor migrants confronts: low status; vulnerability to exploitation from recruitment agencies; non-payment of wages; no days off; and unsuitable housing accommodations. This project is a good example of one concerned with poor women, where income is not the only concern. It sought to assist in establishing a lobbying group for these workers, train them on ways to confront some of these problems, and provide support facilities.

While I did my fieldwork in 1998-1999, UNIFEM hired Diane Elson as a consultant. Elson is a British economist who has been writing on women, gender and development for many years. Her classic work, *Male Bias in the Development Process*, is a standard in many graduate courses on women and development. She was hired as a Special Advisor to the Executive Director and her main function was to put together a progress report on women to be published and distributed in 2000. I was able to attend a few meetings where she presented the initial stages of her work. She contributed a counter-hegemonic approach to defining development and progress. In the book, the issue of power was central throughout. Power is not normally a staple concept even where women and gender have entered the discourse. She includes in her definition of empowerment “access to leisure time” and “control over one’s life”(Fieldnotes 1998/1999). Linking the many concerns of UNIFEM, she said in one presentation of her anticipated work, “income generation doesn’t mean anything if women get beaten up at home” (Fieldnotes 1998/1999). It was quite refreshing to witness a systematic attempt to stretch the meanings of empowerment, so that it means more than one’s ability to make their own money, as is so often the case in Microcredit programs (See Chapter 6). Likewise, power is something that is generally not spoken about in mainstream discourse. It reveals a commitment to a

structural analysis of how society is shaped, rather than an individual analysis that focuses on one's values or lack thereof. The fact that UNIFEM commissioned Elson to engineer this project is testament to its willingness to enter a wider terrain than that familiar to mainstream development discourse and practice. Yet, the fact that she was a consultant and not a staff member indicates how these critical perspectives must be kept at a slight distance.

Another example of UNIFEM as “challenger” took place at a PAC (Project Approval Committee) meeting. PAC meetings are convened to discuss the approval of projects that come in from the field requesting funding. At one particular meeting I attended, the committee was discussing a proposal that came from the Bangkok field office. The project was a community-weaving project for women in Thailand and Laos. The organization that would implement the project wanted \$121,500 from UNIFEM. The need for the project was described in the context of some of the effects of the Asian financial crisis of 1998, where many people had to return home to their villages because of massive unemployment in urban areas. It was argued that the survival of many communities is dependent on traditional skills and “informal production efforts”. One of the aspects to this project was a partnership with a well-known international designer who wanted to introduce traditional Thai fabrics and designs into the international clothing market. The ‘selling points’ of the proposal was that women weavers would benefit from the income they generated from an already established international market, and the cultural practices of weaving would not only be preserved, but also enhanced with better technology. An additional component of the project would be a training program, where the women would be trained, and then given a loom and credit for supplies so that they could set up production in their home.

The PAC generally includes the chiefs of each of the geographic and thematic areas. They presumably⁸ all read the proposal and come together and discuss whether or not

⁸ There is some general skepticism that everyone always reads every proposal before each PAC meeting.

UNIFEM will support the project. I was very curious as to what the concerns would be for the committee. My supervisor, who brought the project before the PAC, led the discussion. I took the minutes which I later typed up and sent to the entire committee.

Many objections to the proposal were expressed, consistent with many of the same issues I had trouble with during my initial read. One PAC member asked, “What mechanisms are in place to ensure that these women are really empowered?” The proposal mentioned an age stipulation of “not more than 40 years old”, which was not explained and angered many of the staff members who were present. Some chiefs expressed that the project sounded too commercial, “coming too much from the perspective of the “business side” and not the “women’s side”.

Several members of the committee challenged a term describing women’s “kitchen management skills” for maintaining women’s traditional roles. One person spoke of her concern about Westerners or Western-educated people going in and exploiting the traditional craft production for the international market. Others echoed this concern, saying that it was unclear how the project would benefit the women involved. Another point of contention was that the income generation aspect to the project was framed as “supplementary” or “augmenting family income”, representing the way in which women’s income generating activities are often characterized in the developed and developing world. The proposal did include some environmental concerns like using non-toxic dyes and training on waste management.

Sitting among these section leaders around the conference table, it seemed to me that there was a real concern with the empowerment of women. These staff members strongly advocated women’s rights and empowerment, and disapproved of the narrowness in the way “empowerment” was being defined and put into practice in this proposal. The PAC ultimately rejected the proposal until major changes were incorporated. My supervisor intended to send a memo to the RPA (Regional Program Assistant) in the Bangkok office

with instructions on what the proposal needed to be passed. As of April 1999, it had not come back to PAC for review.

In Chapter Four, there was a discussion on the changing approach to the issue of education. That is, since Beijing, there has been a move from an emphasis on bringing women into the educational process to linking the issue of education to human rights. In looking at some of the recent projects that UNIFEM has been supporting that deal primarily with education, three stand out as examples of this shift. One is entitled “Popular Education and Organisation as a means to Prevent and Deter Violence Against Women”. This project was funded by UNIFEM’s Trust Fund to eliminate violence and is being implemented by the Cambodian Women’s Crisis Center (CWCC), a national NGO based in Phnom Penh. The project involves community workshops on the issue of Violence Against Women, the relevant laws and the role of local authorities. The objective is through education workshops, communities will be better able to provide assistance to victims of violence, establish support networks for women and their families and monitor the incidence of violence against women. The workshops have targeted women and men, as well as village leaders and the local police. As of April 1999, four workshops have been conducted for 123 participants in four villages. Ensuring greater involvement among participants, the workshops vary according to local needs and held during times that were appropriate to their work and family schedules.

Two other UNIFEM funded projects in the area of education deserve some notice. In Pakistan, the NGO Simorgh has introduced a human rights education curriculum in schools, aiming to counter negative images of women promoted by the media and government textbooks. In Nepal, UNIFEM is supporting the Media Alert and Relief Foundation to produce a full-length feature film, ‘Maya’. A supporting manual about the plight of girls trafficked from Nepal will accompany the film to educate the public and to alert those particularly vulnerable, to the dangers of the sex trade.

These instances illustrate the counter-hegemonic potential at UNIFEM. UNIFEM does not simply or only promote mainstream development discourse and practice. UNIFEM does provide some important counter-examples to the development business as usual with its concentration on economic growth, even when women are “brought in”. However, in other cases, UNIFEM incorporates many of the orthodox ideological commitments to globalization, neo-liberalism and the productivist thrust to development. I turn to these now.

UNIFEM as Reproducer of Mainstream Development Agenda

As a political and ideological document, Snyder’s history portrays UNIFEM as a distinct UN development agency. UNIFEM, Snyder asserts, evokes a notion of economic democracy, seeking to ensure that women have a more democratic access to the means of creating wealth. She maintains that UNIFEM offers an alternative to mainstream prescriptions, understanding the compounding effects of post-colonialism and globalization, and making women visible in these understandings and prescriptions. From its beginning, there has been an emphasis on human well-being, treating women as “agents of change”, rather than “victims of circumstance” (Snyder 1995: xvi), and allowing women to define their own needs (Snyder 1995:41).

Recognizing women as economic agents, the Fund does not merely provide for material needs but insists that people participate in its activities in order to increase their self-reliance and gain self-confidence”. It walks the line of imparting skills, empowering group solidarity, and being attentive to macro-economic policies. (Snyder 1995: xvii).

On one level UNIFEM could indeed be described as on the radical edge of the UN system. From its beginning, UNIFEM has worked within civil society, integrating NGOs as project partners. As the only multilateral UN fund directed specifically to women, it has provided both financial and technical assistance to organizations working in the field. It has played a formidable role in identifying and addressing the needs of poor women throughout the world, as defined by women. However, UNIFEM is also part of the UN system-- a

system that has as one of its goals bringing capitalist modernization to the third world.

“Creating wealth for women”, is just one aspect of an institution where economic growth is still central to improving lives. Despite Snyder’s and UNIFEM’s own rhetoric of “transformation”, its radical veneer contains a bureaucratic core.

The following examples do not suggest that UNIFEM is an unwitting agent of capitalist modernization. Rather these examples reveal an ambivalence toward the productivist thrust of development in its neo-liberal form. Some of this ambivalence may be due to competing interests—in particular of growth versus the needs of women. One way to understand this is to see the dialectical nature of ideology and how it is maintained or subverted, especially within the context of bureaucratic necessities. That is, UNIFEM needs to work within this system. Its existence is dependent upon being seen as a legitimate partner to other UN agencies. Thus it constantly rides the knife’s edge of challenging and reproducing development as usual. Moreover, UNIFEM illustrates well the difficulty with which a bureaucratic organization, once created and “legitimized”, has in keeping true to its original goals, if they challenge the ideological objectives of the dominant paradigm in place.

The treatments of globalization and trade liberalization are especially interesting in this regard. Throughout my time there, I was constantly confronted with mixed messages about globalization. The criticism of these processes was usually in the context of women being left out and not reaping the benefits. Thus, the solutions proposed were to ensure that women were substantively brought in to these processes. Global changes were accepted as long as women were included and benefiting. This position does not challenge the way in which globalization is being managed, largely by the mainstream development apparatus. As far as I was able to observe, no document or staff member considered whether the problem was not that women are excluded, but, given the inequalities in the world system, globalization, liberalization, privatization and other capitalist driven global processes are actually the causes of the many problems confronting women. When such an analysis was

given, it was directed at some of the results of the World Bank Structural Adjustment Programs.

One example of this was a project on “Globalization and Gender”. This was an “empowerment” project targeting women home-workers and women in micro-enterprises. It was designed to “strengthen the bargaining capacity in the global market”, helping them to “take advantage of the opportunities created by trade liberalization and globalization” (Fieldnotes 1998/1999). Though this gendered analysis is important, it is unclear how this empowers women, and it seems to construct globalization as a benign, inevitable process.

One interpretation could be the UNIFEM is not, as part of the UN system, interested in challenging the inevitability or the problems of globalization. This would imply a commitment to WID, in bringing women into the development process. Another possibility is that UNIFEM, in its constant struggle for maintaining legitimacy and increasing its visibility, consciously chooses to accept certain issues, as it must concern itself with the impact on women. Its bureaucratic positioning, its status as a specialized fund, limits its purview to women, not a grand critique of globalization. This is not to say that it necessarily accepts the ideological foundations of the neo-liberal understanding of globalization. Regardless, the impact is that UNIFEM participates in capitalist modernization of the developing world.

One of the concepts that have become quite popular in the globalization discourse is the law of “comparative advantage”, as already discussed in Chapter Two. Each country should produce and export those commodities for the international market in which they already excel. Since many countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, for example, have the climate and productive capacities to grow and export bananas, sugar, and coffee, then these cash crops are their comparative advantage and it is believed that is where these countries should put its productive energies. I bring this up again because UNIFEM has framed its own roles and functions according to the law of comparative advantage. Many staff members with whom I spoke about UNIFEM’s work frequently evoked its

comparative advantage of having “extended women’s networks” to carry out most of its programming. In other words, one of UNIFEM’s strengths is its ability to respond to both women’s groups and governments. Throughout my internship, whether in print or in conversation, in public meetings or private conversations, the language of “comparative advantage” was used by staff members to describe the work that they do.

Quite interestingly, there are two possible interpretations of this, revealing the dialectical nature of the rhetoric/reality divide. That is to say, on the one hand, UNIFEM’s use of “comparative advantage”, could be albeit rather subtly, an indication of its ideological attachment to neo-liberalism through the incorporation of its language. Or, it also could be strategically co-opting this neo-liberal language, strategically, to gain the legitimacy of the mainstream development actors. That is, given its struggles to be recognized, it could be consciously using the rhetoric of the dominant paradigms to push through its own agenda. Though this might be the case, once again, its work then, largely reproduces development as usual.

In another example, I was given a proposal to read over that came from the field office in New Delhi. The project was an income-generating project for girl adolescents. My supervisor was enthusiastic because as he put it, “UNIFEM has not really worked with this group of young women”. I said to him, rather humbly, “well, what about education?” His response to me was, “well, some are lucky, and some are not”. He added that this was a way of preventing young women from going into prostitution.

This is a helpful example, complicating our understanding of how development agencies make the choices they do. There is little doubt that income generation is an important goal, especially in the South Asian region where countless young girls are sold into sex slavery by their poor families. Clearly work is preferable to sex slavery. But at the same time, the decision to take on this project reflects some of the basic elements of the mainstream growth orientation to development: the emphasis on self-reliance, the idea that

any work is better than no work, and the thrust on income generation and on bringing more and more people into the market economy.

This leaves us with some important questions to consider: Would an income-generating project offer more “empowerment” to young girls than sex slavery? Is educating these girls really not feasible? Is this decision merely a reflection of an ideological bias, or is it the best possible solution to the quagmire of poverty and underdevelopment? Given the real material deprivation that exists, is this the best route to empowerment? Does this suggest the limitations of bureaucratic organizations bringing about ‘real change’? These questions are important for further study.

The following is another example of the dialectical pulls between ideology and practice. A project summary for a science and technology project included the phrase, “Science and technology are central to economic development and women’s empowerment. However it is hardly being recognized as a gender issue” (Fieldnotes 1998/1999). On the one hand, this represents an unequivocal commitment to science and technology, two important components of modern industrial, or “developed” societies, but areas that have been challenged by feminists like Vandana Shiva, mentioned in Chapter One. At the same time, it also suggests a break from the norm in its attention to ‘gender’ as a necessary concern in the area of science and technology. So, at the same time, UNIFEM is simultaneously progressively challenging the norms of the development apparatus and reproducing these practices.

UNIFEM and the Politics of Bureaucracy

A consistent theme of this research project is that ideological differences are often obfuscated by rhetorical strategies, and at the same time, the differences in practice between development institutions are blurred by bureaucratic imperatives. This dialectical relationship is central to understanding the politics of development thought and practices. UNIFEM is an important institution through which to examine these important

contradictions. In fact, it seems that UNIFEM's attempts at being an institution that challenges the mainstream development agenda is often thwarted by bureaucratic needs and realities. This is explored in the following section.

UNIFEM as Bureaucratic Institution: Reliance on "UN speak"

One of the ongoing problems I confronted in regard to the work of UNIFEM was the lack of available detail and reliance on bureaucratic divisions and terms. As mentioned earlier in the chapter, UNIFEM has divided its labor into three thematic areas—Economic Empowerment, Human Rights and Governance and Leadership. Additionally, its programming has been separated into three different layers, macro, meso and micro. Such divisions are necessary for bureaucratic organizations to work effectively and efficiently. Moreover, on the one hand, the thematic divisions that organize UNIFEM's work reveals a movement away from a strict adherence to development as economic growth. The work they do on human rights and governance and leadership moves the focus away from the narrow rendering of development in mainstream articulations. Yet at the same time, such taxonomies may stifle the effect of the work. A consultant who was working with the Economic Empowerment division made the following comments in a meeting I attended:

We have this classifying framework--macro, meso and micro. But sometimes it strains things if we have to fit things into boxes. This is always a problem. The strength of the End Violence campaign was it can unite alot of objectives around a theme that can mobilize action around the world. Perhaps the macro/meso/micro can't work like that. So, if we focus on advocacy/capacity building, will that do enough? Do the linkages between Economic Empowerment and Rights get lost with the classifications? Can we think of some large themes, sexy themes, sexy title that is flexible enough?

This consultant raises some important issues. First she expresses a sentiment that the work that is done is constrained by the bureaucratic categories, but at the same time acknowledges that this cannot be avoided. Secondly, she addresses the importance that development work must appeal to people, especially funders, which is a constant source of concern for those at UNIFEM.

In terms of language, there was an overreliance on bureaucratic buzz words. In the many project documents and progress reports, the term “engendering the census” was never fully defined or clarified. There was no discussion of the implications or what this would actually mean for women and men. The benefits to women are simply assumed. In one particular report, there was a statement that as a result of engendering the census, there was a 4% increase in women’s work participation rates. There was no further comment on what that number meant. Did this meet the expectations? Was this lower than expected? What did this mean in real numbers? When I mentioned this to my supervisor, he did not respond, as if further elaboration was not necessary (Fieldnotes 1998/1999).

For a regional economic empowerment program in South Asia, under the heading of “priority areas”, the following was written, “forming market links and building the capacity of entrepreneurs in South Asia, in terms of global trading practices”. That was all. There was no further explanation of what this meant and how this was to be implemented (Fieldnotes 1998/1999). I did not observe any staff members requesting more details about this.

These examples illustrate Edelman’s analysis of bureaucratic jargon. As Edelman argues, people in organizations tend to rely on “stale, stylized and stereotyped phrases, cliches, and pseudo-technical terms for common referents” (1971:73). But this jargon is quite inefficient for conveying important facts, “so inefficient and ambiguous in its extreme forms that it approaches total meaninglessness” (1971:73). The question then, is why is it done? Edelman suggests that bureaucratic jargon “systematically communicates something necessary to the stability of status relationships and objectives of bureaucracies” (1971:73). In other words, it serves the function of allowing the bureaucrat to appear loyal to the institution and displays competence. The stability of the institution is dependent upon reproducing the conventions of the organization. I would take Edelman’s analysis in a slightly different direction. That is, in an organization that is constantly fighting for its legitimacy, existing on the outskirts of the larger institution, like UNIFEM, presenting the

“party line” is important. If the spokespeople of the organization ‘talk the talk’, then it gives them validity and legitimacy, even if what they are saying is left ambiguous. What is interesting, and details this dialectic, is that much of the “talk” now consists of slogans that have come initially from the margins—“gender”, “empowerment”, “rights”. As argued in the Chapter Four, the use of this language by the dominant organizations is a way to appease the protestations from below. The World Bank, for example, would probably not be able to go ahead with their work without a change in rhetoric. So the inclusion of the jargon is a way to quell the protests, even if not much is changing in actual practice. In this case then, UNIFEM has conformed to language it has helped to institutionalize, and as the language has become institutionalized, it has become much less substantive.

This lack of detail and reliance on bureaucratic buzz-words is additionally a function of the bureaucratic process itself. I found that there was a great deal of cutting and pasting already written passages in report writing. In fact, in preparation for the CC report, we were told to write the least amount from scratch, and to draw on what has already been written on the projects. In a Weberian sense, this represents a “routinization of programming”, and while such an organizational practice is not unique to UNIFEM, it helps to render much of the rhetoric ineffectual. As Edelman says, the jargon “is less to find optimal solutions to current problems than to promote the stability and integrity of the established organization” (1971:74).

At the Heart of UNIFEM Programming: Steadfast Concerns Over Visibility

One of UNIFEM’s primary concerns was visibility, for real and legitimate reasons. It is a small organization that has not received the recognition that UNICEF has had, at least in the United States. Most people not involved in development work in the US have not heard of UNIFEM. With the resistance it continues to experience, and the ambiguity over its own identity, visibility and impression management have become very important considerations. In fact, this general sentiment was felt by many UN agencies. During a staff meeting there were expressions by several thematic and geographic chiefs that the World

Bank, is becoming known as the “world development agency”. At one staff meeting, the Executive Director was reporting on a meeting of several UN development agencies. She said that other agencies are feeling that they are asked to do more work, but are getting less recognition. “The UNDP name is getting weaker”, it was said, “while the UN is getting more visible”. One of my informants supported this, by saying that in the field all development and aid workers are often labeled “UN people”

In a place like Tajikistan, there was no distinction made. Big white car attached to foreigners is a big white car attached to foreigners. So we would go into a village and they would either call us Red Cross or UN, cause those are the symbols that they knew. And when we would say, “no we’re not Red Cross, we’re Save the Children or IRC, and we’re non-governmental...”, all the time, if we said this to one of the village leaders, they would introduce us at a meeting, “this is such and such from the UN”. It was very hard to get that across. Even the kids. You would drive into a village and they would all be yelling, in Russian it’s “ohn, ohn”, [UN, UN] all the kids would just run around the car and yell things like that. In other places they are much more sophisticated, mostly because they’ve had a longer relationship. So, in some places they are very attuned to that, and even attuned to the different UN agencies (LH: 8/21/98).

Many other examples of this obsession with visibility occurred during my fieldwork. It seemed to be a primary consideration when deciding what projects to take on and support, especially at headquarters. At one meeting, the Executive Director herself was briefing the staff on her recent mission⁹ to Africa. Rather than emphasizing the effects of the work that UNIFEM is doing there, she told the staff how well she was received by various heads of state and how prominently her visit was covered in the local and national presses (Fieldnotes 1998/1999). In another instance, the Executive Director asked staff members to attend different meetings during the CSW proceedings and report on whether UNIFEM was mentioned and what was said about UNIFEM (Fieldnotes 1998/1999).

In many of the six monthly progress reports from the field office, visibility was a recurring and predominant theme, seeming to overshadow project-related concerns. In fact much of the concern over the big global videoconference that UNIFEM was spending a

⁹ An interesting word choice to label when UN staff members go to the field. They are on “mission”.

great deal of time and money on, seemed to be about expanding UNIFEM's visibility more than it was about raising consciousness about violence against women world-wide. Though the rhetoric was about consciousness raising, the real objective, I think, was to increase UNIFEM's visibility within the UN community as well as with the outside public in the countries taking part in the videoconference. Such doubt was expressed by some of the members of the staff. The specialist on human rights mentioned earlier said that though she was telling people the videoconference was a historic event, she kept wondering what it is really doing. She said, "Is this merely for making UNIFEM more visible?" (Fieldnotes 1998/1999).

Evidence that visibility has become an important issue for UNIFEM was the creation in early 1998 of the OLRD section-- Organization Learning and Resource Development Section, the department that put together the videoconference. They deal specifically with public relations and external resources, information and media and maintain close relationships with NGOs. The other function for this department is to help turn UNIFEM into a learning organization and to evaluate UNIFEM sponsored projects. The rhetoric surrounding the creation of this department is to enable UNIFEM to "learn from its past practices". But an additional concern was increasing the visibility and legitimacy of the organization.

One effect of the visibility concern was an apparent change in their programming methodology-- toward year-long campaigns, which have one theme and relevant programs throughout the regions. As discussed earlier, the campaign is designed to attract popular attention and visibility to the issues and then follow it up with more substantive programming. So 1998, the initial campaign was around the issue of gendered violence. The purpose of this approach is to make UNIFEM more visible and familiar.

Related to this question of visibility, was a generalized envy of some of the more popular, well-known and better funded UN agencies, in particular, UNICEF (the United Nations Children's Fund). I attended one meeting where the discussion was on increasing

UNIFEM's visibility. The staff was being addressed by a media representative from the InterPress Service¹⁰ who was encouraging UNIFEM staff to put more time, effort and money into getting its name and the work that they do out through the printed media. In the discussion that followed his presentation, several UNIFEM staff members spoke. The chief of the Latin America section said,

In Latin America, we just had the violence campaign which was very painful and difficult. Information and communication is like an art. Many hours are used to look into ourselves. UNICEF has a marvelous strategy. When we think of UNICEF, we think of children. This is not so easy with women. It is difficult for the general public. We need children, everyone could agree. But it's a very unequal development regarding women. So, we need a specific strategy.

A public affairs specialist in the OLRD division followed by saying, "we struggle with name recognition. We have to look for ways to get name recognition better. If I talk with someone outside the UN family, UNICEF is known, UNIFEM is not." To this comment, the IPS speaker pointed out that UNICEF has spent \$3.5 million per year for the last ten years to get their name out there.

To this remark, the chief from the Eastern European region responded,

One fear of spending the money for the media. So we try to work with NGOs, especially local ones to cut costs. Professional media is prohibitive. There is also the issue of accountability. What will our constituents say if we spend alot on media? And, unless we can obtain some public recognition in a language they can understand, politicians won't be interested.

She ended by saying that they did talk to an IPS representative about coverage for the violence campaign, but they were too expensive.

Several important issues were raised in this dialogue. First, the general sense that the world community is more attracted to the plight of children than to women. This seems to be both a feminist concern (ideological) and a financial concern (bureaucratic), though it is difficult to sort out the differences since they are so intertwined. It was recognized that greater visibility and legitimacy requires a greater financial commitment, but there was a

¹⁰ The InterPress Service is a global news agency covering economic, social and political development issues. For more information, [http:// www.ips.org](http://www.ips.org)

resistance to spending more money and effort on what is effectively public relations, over the development work that is their mandate.

UNIFEM, WID and GAD—More Dialectics

As discussed at length in Chapter Three, there are certainly ideological limitations with the WID approach, and perhaps strategic or practical limitations with the GAD approach. UNIFEM provides a good empirical point of entry to analyze some of these dynamics. How does WID and GAD function institutionally? What is the relationship between these two approaches in practice?

At almost all levels of the organization from the work culture and management to the programming and projects they support to their development policies, UNIFEM seems steeped in the WID approach, in which the integration of women into development projects is central. Yet, the language that is used, spoken, and expressed is that of "gender", "gender mainstreaming", "gender sensitivity", and the like. Thus, there appears to be a real confusion in terms of their identity and function. Are they a development organization for women or do they attempt to promote a gender analysis to the development work that is done? Could they be both? Many project documents, public statements and policy decisions spoke of "gender", but it seemed quite clear that it was really "women" that was meant. In many instances "gender" became a proxy for "women". The language of gender was not a gendered analysis. Gendered relationships and structures were not often examined.

For instance, in the aftermath of the crisis in the Asian economies, several project documents identified the impact of the crisis on women, but the programs and projects designed to resolve these problems focused on bringing women into the international global markets or incorporating women into the globalization process. Little attention was given to men, or the relations between men and women. Moreover, as shown earlier, there was little criticism of the process of globalization itself. Such absence of criticism implies a subtle if not overwhelming acceptance of globalization and all that it creates. The consistent focus was on ways to bring women into these processes.

At UNIFEM, at least while I was there in 1998-1999, the rhetoric was GAD, but the reality in terms of its policies and programs was WID. This is important in light of the ideological affinities between WID and modernization theory that was discussed in Chapter Three. One of the program officers at UNIFEM is bothered by this confusion. She said to me one day after a meeting,

Supporting women-specific projects shouldn't be the role of UNIFEM. It's not where our money should be going. We should be focusing on gender and supporting women's projects through a gendered lens.

This was echoed by a member of the Consultative Committee, who stated, "UNIFEM is a motor for mainstreaming, but maintaining a women's focus. It can do both" (Fieldnotes 1998/1999).

From my observations, I saw a number of problems with this WID practice and the liberal feminist bias that it represents. A few examples show how the focus on integrating women often ignores not only the gendered relations, but class relations as well. One agency document states that as long as gender is an "integrated dimension in the design, implementation, operating assumptions, monitoring and evaluation of policies...women and men would benefit equally" ((Fieldnotes 1998/1999). Unfortunately this document did not explore the ways in which gender could be brought into these processes and it is a rather large leap to assume that the benefits would be equal. First of all, without addressing the gendered relations or power dynamics, the document assumes that things will be equal as long as gender (that is, women) is integrated. Secondly, other dynamics like class or ethnicity are ignored, which may affect who benefits from development programming. But as pointed out before by Caroline Moser (Chapter Three), implementing gender in practical ways is quite difficult.

Another example is a project that UNIFEM supported getting women into local government positions through a quota system in India. What this entire project has seemed to avoid, however, is the issue of class. The project proposal seems to stress the importance of getting women into these positions, but says little about who these women are and whom

they represent. When I asked one staff member in the Asia/Pacific department about this, she gave me a vague response that mechanisms existed to encourage women of lower castes to become active, but it was not clear what this entailed or to what extent this was monitored. The issue of class or caste was not addressed in the official project documents. Incidentally, this project was being showcased as an example of UNIFEM's "Best Practices". In other words, this project was considered successful. Interestingly, no attention was given to which women were elected or the class or caste that they represent. A similar example comes from the Pacific region, where UNIFEM helped to produce and disseminate a training manual on women and political empowerment. The results of this were a recorded increase in the numbers of women running for political office in several of the Pacific Islands. Again, the question of class was not raised. Do such examples reveal a WID orientation dressed up in GAD clothing? Does it display confusion between the essence of these terms? Is it a function of the limitations of GAD in practice? Or is it a product of an ideological attachment to the expansion of global capitalism where class inequality is often rendered invisible?

Another source of conflict over programming surrounded the issue of men. From my observations, it seems that several of the higher level administrators, section leaders as well as the directors of UNIFEM were uncomfortable with supporting programming for men. This may be reasonable, since many feel threatened by questions of institutional survival. UNIFEM is a fairly small entity and it would be understandable if they thought they would be deemed irrelevant if they took on projects that focused on men. But, on another level, this reflects a resistance to taking a gendered analysis seriously. One of the program officers told me about a project that came in requesting funding to build a counseling center for male perpetrators of violence in Bangkok, Thailand, a country which has seen a vast increase in domestic violence since the economic crises unfolded (Fieldnotes 1998/1999). This seemed to be a spot of contention among the staff at UNIFEM. Many members expressed the importance of bringing in men to these programs, especially if the

organization was going to take the issue of “gender” seriously. But there was resistance from others who, like many working inside institutions created to fill the void of women, felt that funding programs for men would be effectively eroding the need for specialized agencies for women. They saw such projects more fitting for other organizations. The project was not accepted at headquarters.

Another example of this had to do with the very successful videoconference that UNIFEM put together on violence against women in March of 1999 in the General Assembly. An email went around asking all the staff if they wanted their daughters to participate in a song to close the conference. Another staff member, one who has expressed a greater openness to a truly gendered orientation, wrote asking why the request included only daughters. She argued that it would send a stronger message to show that boys as well as girls are capable of caring about violence against women and girls. No response was sent to the entire staff list, though there were no boys on stage for the song (Fieldnotes 1998/1999). Incidentally, one of the recommendations by the Consultative Committee was to target men and boys in their advocacy programming.

A fair amount of commitment to a full-fledged GAD approach is evident, and there is a desire to reach out to men in terms of programming among some staff members. A lower-level staff member from the Latin America region informed me that especially in the area of violence against women, UNIFEM works with male judges, policemen and policy makers to raise awareness and create and enforce laws that are supportive of victims of violence. So, while resistance toward men may exist, it does not necessarily mean an ideological resistance, but rather represents a strategic resistance given the hurdles that women’s organizations continue to face.

UNIFEM and Results Based Management

There are many reasons for UNIFEM’s contradictory goals, rhetoric and activities, and why it seems so confused about its role and function. Because organizations like

UNIFEM rely on money from member governments, there is some urgency about providing 'results' to their donors. Since attention to gendered relations tend to be difficult to implement, WID approaches are much easier and faster to see results. During my fieldwork experience, there was a great deal of talk about UNIFEM's "results based management system", which calls for a focus on results. As explained by the Deputy Director, a results based management includes four steps: identify strategic goals, identify immediate steps, identify the parameters for ultimate changes, and identify the results (short, medium, long-term). In the yearly report to the Consultative Committee, the entire format was organized in such a way as to highlight the results of the programs and projects. The prevailing sentiment is that in a complex and competitive funding environment, donors want to see the results of their money, so this needs to be the focus of UNIFEM.

There are of course, some obvious problems with such a framework. First of all, there is not always a consistent understanding of what "results" are and how they should be reported. Many inconsistencies exist in how "results" were expressed. Often times, what is presented as results are actually activities that have been (or intended to be) carried out. I suspect that this has to do with the fact that a lot of the development work that is done is a process, and results are hard to assess so quickly after a project has been implemented. If there is organizational pressure to come up with "results", those working in the field may just feel the need to "fill in the spaces". Furthermore, an emphasis on results does reveal a kinship with an economic oriented "bottom line" which prevails in the business model. In fact, the 'results based management' model originated in the business world.

One of the program officers in the Human Rights division spoke to me about an interaction she had with one of the administrators. This administrator asked to be briefed on some of the events going on as part of the violence campaign in Thailand. This was in preparation for a television interview. According to this informant, they had very different ideas of what "results" were. The administrator wanted to know how many people marched, and how many newspapers covered the campaign events. This informant thought results

meant what impact the campaign was having on the society and the people— “was it raising awareness of the problems of violence toward women?” (Fieldnotes 1998/1999).

The administrative members of UNIFEM took the results-based management approach quite seriously. In fact, it sometimes dictated the kinds of programming that UNIFEM supported. A project entitled "Poverty Alleviation and Employment Generation for Women in Jordan" was initially rejected by the PAC, because it did not sufficiently reflect the Results Based Management approach. The committee offered some suggestions of what the objectives could be: "greater participation of Jordanian women in the national economy (especially the micro-enterprise sector) due to their improved entrepreneurial skills and gender sensitive operating environment. This implies a decrease in women in poverty" (Fieldnotes 1998/1999). This reflects an interesting commitment to a WID approach in that getting women into work will decrease their poverty. This causal relationship was not questioned, challenged, or even considered.

Yet, not everyone at UNIFEM embraced the Results-Based Management system. Some staff members seemed disconcerted with its growing importance and impact on the work that they do. At a staff meeting I attended, the chief of the Africa section expressed her concerns in this way,

But there is a problem with the base-line data and indicators. What are they progressing for? How do we measure that? What do we mean by lessons learned? What are we measuring from? Who can help us? What indicators do women in the world think are important? Why does UNIFEM support them? How have the results been used? The World Bank and UNDP ignore that they don't have good base-line data.

Unfortunately, her statement was not addressed by anyone at the meeting, so it was difficult for me to gauge how widespread this position was among other staff members. It does suggest, however, that the potential for real challenges to alter the mainstream is eroded by bureaucratic necessities.

I would argue that a results-based approach undermines the GAD work that could be done, and creates the necessity to rely on WID. A gender analysis and truly 'gendered' programs take much longer and is more difficult to measure than "bringing women in".

Such an integrative approach usually lends itself to quantitative measurement, for example, how many local parliamentarians are women. Understanding gendered relations, and how they are altered by development interventions, as well as addressing gender issues in program design and implementation cannot be captured as “results” very easily. So while it may be more politically correct to talk of “gender”, expressing an interesting rhetorical shift, the reliance on results may keep UNIFEM doing more WID. The problem, then, is what kind of impact will UNIFEM’s work have if its practice is more WID, given the limitations of WID as discussed earlier?

Furthermore, the emphasis on ‘results’ represents the dominant paradigm of efficiency and productivity. For an organization with an alternative agenda to become legitimized, it must succumb to the protocols of the dominant agenda. In doing so, it loses its alternative qualities. It can no longer radically challenge that status quo. At most it can seek reforms. The dialectics of ideology and practice, rhetoric and reality are woven through the necessities of bureaucratic processes.

Given these concerns, however, it was expressed several times to me that the shift to the Results-Based Management, which occurred in 1998, has made UNIFEM more attractive to donors. In fact the specialist in Human Rights mentioned earlier said that though donors are reducing their overall contributions to the UN system, UNIFEM is receiving more funding from countries like Italy, UK, the Scandinavian countries, and Japan. When I asked her why she said, rather simply, “results”. She added that the donors appreciate the efficiency of results and respond by increasing their funding (TJ: 8/17/01). This reveals, once again, the politics of bureaucracy. In order to become more visible and more recognized, an institution must follow the expectations of the majority, even if it means undermining or co-opting that organization’s objectives. The adoption of the results based management has made UNIFEM more attractive to donors, but has made it more difficult to incorporate a more radical strategy.

Concluding Thoughts: UNIFEM as Bureaucratized Activism

Snyder suggested that UNIFEM has had two primary functions. One, to prove that women are central to successful development, and second, to promote an alternative definition and paradigm of development where aspects other than economic growth matter. I would say that UNIFEM has been quite successful with the former, though again, “successful development” is still measured in economic terms. The latter has not really been realized. While UNIFEM has broadened the development horizon to include women and other important aspects long made invisible, a substantive shift has not happened in the way that development is defined or determined. Though it seems that this is largely because of the bureaucratic constraints under which it operates.

To conclude this chapter, I would like to introduce a concept that captures the dialectics I have tried to present in this chapter. “Bureaucratic activism” appropriately describes UNIFEM and its friction between rhetoric and reality. UNIFEM exists and operates on the fringes of the UN system, and thus also on the fringes of the dominant development paradigm. The fact that its focus is on women’s empowerment and equality already situates it in a different space from traditional development discourse. While it is true that the rhetoric in the dominant paradigm has shifted, as a result, in part, of the activism of NGOs and other grassroots organization, UNIFEM works to stretch these boundaries even further, going beyond the growth reductionism that is still maintained. Their close relationship with NGOs is proof of this, as is their organizational structure and programming decisions. In this sense, UNIFEM is an activist organization, at least in relation to many of the other UN development organizations like the UNDP and the World Bank. Interestingly, UNIFEM would probably not identify itself as “activist”, but as an “advocacy” organization, which seems to be the bureaucratic version of activist, perhaps reflecting the need for legitimacy from the mainstream institutional apparatus.

Though the posters on the wall and the images used in the annual reports paint an activist picture of its development work, UNIFEM is not an NGO or grassroots

organization. It is a part of the UN system and bound by its rules, regulations, requirement and commitments. UNIFEM's structural location and the organizational division of labor entail an acceptance of the inevitability of globalization, trade liberalization and privatization. Its activist elements are a persistent tension in the organization. Its reliance on bureaucratic language leaves concepts ill defined and ambiguous. Its utilization of a results-based management approach to its project operations and its apparent affinity toward WID programs and projects (even though the language has shifted to gender) help to explain why this activist thrust is often suppressed. Its own programming is overwhelmingly tied to "rhetorical activities", like conferences, training, workshops, information kits, which seem to employ a top-down, expert-oriented approach to defining the problem of and solutions to development for women in the third world.

Thus, UNIFEM is a complicated organization-- it is at the "radical fringe" of the development discourse, but also embodies much of the dominant paradigm and its commitment to growth and capitalist modernization. It is a very useful site to explore the intricate disconnects between the rhetoric of what an organization says it is about and the reality of what it actually does. This internal contradiction is particularly important given the discursive shifts toward gender, empowerment and rights in the dominant development paradigm. It is bureaucratic, and seeks for its own survival the legitimacy from the mainstream, which inevitably undermines and co-opts the challenges it presents. In this sense, it makes the possibility for 'real', substantive change in our ideas and practices of development rather unlikely.

CHAPTER SIX

MICROCREDIT: THE RHETORIC OF EMPOWERMENT, THE REALITY OF 'DEVELOPMENT AS USUAL'

As discussed in Chapters Three and Four, from the beginning of the United Nations Decade for Women in 1976, feminist scholars and activists internationally have struggled to alter development thinking and practice. Many of these challenges sought both to recognize women as important actors and identify the many ways in which women's lives have been disrupted by the development process. As demonstrated, some of these challenges have had an impact on the policy making of the major development institutions, particularly the World Bank, UN agencies, and NGOs, in that concerns for women have been increasingly incorporated into mainstream development policies and programs. Most of the major development institutions now have specialized gender departments that assist in the design, implementation and evaluation of many development programs, focusing on the impact of these programs on women.

A limitation explored in Chapter Three is that much of the programming done for women seems to focus more on bringing women into the development process. Much less of the programming and policy changes has altered the overall development process and the underlying oppressive gendered relations that the process creates or maintains. As discussed in Chapter Five, one of the primary UN agencies designated for women's concerns, UNIFEM, though existing at the margins of the UN system, simultaneously challenges the mainstream agenda and re-produces it. The popular rhetoric employed by development specialists and institutions--specifically gender and empowerment, seems more transformative in potential than in actual practice.

The focus of this chapter is a particular development program, Microcredit, presented as the new protocol of development, especially for improving the lives of women. This chapter presents a critical analysis of some of the ideological assumptions underlying this program and the implications it has on the lives of women it is supposed to empower.

In such an analysis, the disjuncture between rhetoric and reality and the ideological commitments to a particular notion of development is revealed. The data presented in this chapter come from a variety of sources: a critical analysis of some of the current writing on Microcredit; interviews with development workers who have been engaged in Microcredit programs in developing countries; and fieldwork I conducted at UNIFEM and at the Microcredit Summit in New York City in 1998¹.

Defining Microcredit

Microcredit is a poverty program designed to give very small loans to poor people for small business enterprises (Fairley 1998:339). The average microloan in Bangladesh, for example, is about \$75- \$100 US (Hashemi, Schuler, Riley 1996:636). Most of the time these microloans are used for small-scale enterprises: to become petty traders, small shopkeepers, seamstresses, or door to door vendors. Normally, these loans are given to a small group of people, usually women, on a short-term basis, from six months to a year. There are some programs which give to individuals, however, without financial collateral, small groups are believed to perform better, and thus are more desired by practitioners. In most programs, weekly or bi-weekly payments are required as well as attendance at group meetings, at which time the payments are made. Since most of these women have few assets to use as collateral, the peer group serves as social collateral. The group provides the necessary pressure to ensure loan repayment. If one person in a group defaults, the entire group is held responsible.

The originator of Microcredit, as it is largely implemented, is Mohammad Yunus, a Bangladeshi economist. His Grameen Bank was established in 1983, and now serves as the model for most Microcredit programs today. Grameen, which means “village”, started as an experiment in 1977. According to his own account, the experiment was inspired by a

¹ The Summit Meeting of Councils, June 25-27, 1998, New York City. This was an international conference with participants from a variety of actors in the development

group of extremely poor women in Bangladesh who Yunus had met. They would borrow the equivalent of 22 cents from middlemen for bamboo, from which would make stools or weave mats. They would then sell the products back to the middlemen at the end of each day, making only about 2 cents profit each day for their labor. This is how they and their families survived. It is from this experience that Yunus became so interested in the necessity for credit. He argued that if these women could get bank credit, even at commercial rates, they would be able to sell their products on the open market, increase their profit, and escape poverty. As an initial experiment, Yunus himself, guaranteed the equivalent of a \$300 loan from a Bangladeshi bank, and distributed microloans to 42 people in one village. From there, the Grameen Bank was born (Yunus 1999:Chapter 4). Presently, Grameen is the largest micro-lending institution in Bangladesh with 1046 rural branches, covering 34,913 villages. Its cumulative investment is more than \$1 billion U.S. disbursed among 2.02 million members, 94% who are women (Rahman 1999:67).

In the Grameen model, groups are usually comprised of six non-related people, with similar socio-economic positions, in terms of assets, housing structures, and property. Two people are each granted a loan at first and after a month of good loan performance, the next two women are each granted loans. Good loan performance means that the borrowers have attended weekly meetings and have made their weekly payments on time. At the end of the loan cycle, if everyone has repaid consistently, the borrowers could then seek larger loans to expand their enterprises. There are many different models in operation and organizations implementing Microcredit programs will usually adopt the characteristics that best fit the context in which they are working. An informant who works for the international NGO, Save the Children, described the diversity of Microcredit projects in the following passage.

That's a whole array of projects. The loans are given for business purposes. So the women, whatever is appropriate in their particular area. They might make food items and sell them. They might buy a good and sell it. That could be something like food or clothing. They can make something and sell it, seamstresses. It's just a whole array of things. They can have small stores, food items to sell in stores, used clothing. A whole array. Whatever

community.

is appropriate for a particular area. In some cases they buy pigs, fatten them up and sell them for more. Chickens and eggs. There are interesting cases too. One woman gets her loan and buys these stools and chairs and she and her family fixes them up and then they rent them to the people in the neighborhood for funerals or weddings. It's very interesting. Then they've gone beyond that to renting tablecloths and other things that people would use for these occasions. It's very interesting. Each country is different, cause each country has different needs, it depends on the market. Whether they're in an urban area or more rural area. More of our programs have been in the urban areas, simply because people have access to transportation and markets. (UT: 11/12/98).

The excitement in her voice is almost infectious, and is consistent with the general 'buzz' around Microcredit throughout the development community. With a fairly extensive list of success stories², Microcredit has become the newest answer to the problem of global poverty in both the First World and the Third World. Moreover, with the changing rhetoric towards the importance of including women, Microcredit can accommodate the concern that women benefit from the development process. Proponents often present images of women who have been empowered, economically and socially, by the microloan. Just one illustration of such images comes from a recent article in *The New York Times*.

The food was heaped in a low wooden table: round loaves of unleavened bread, crisp apples and dried apricots, pickled vegetables, pots of black tea and bowls of a pungent fermented corn drink called bozo. The pride of place belonged to a steaming stew of chicken and potatoes. A dozen guests sat cross-legged on the floor eating, and the woman in the new green dress at the head of the table could not contain her joy. Her eyes sparkled and she broke into a wide grin, four front teeth of gold shining brightly. A year ago, Minavar Salijanova and her family were close to starving... Mrs. Salijanova could not even dream of owning a new green dress, let alone putting on a feast like the one she now spread for neighbors and the visiting United Nations officials who helped her toward previously unimagined prosperity (Frantz 2000:A6).

Though successes may be exaggerated, there is little doubt that some improvements have been made on the lives of the poor it has served. For women living in especially

² See among others Abu N.M. Wahid, "The Grameen Bank and Poverty Alleviation in Bangladesh: Theory, Evidence and Limitations", *The American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, Volume 53, No. 1, (January 1994): 1-15; "Microfinance: Helping the Poor to Help Themselves". *UNESCO Courier*. Vol. 50. (January 1997); Alex Counts, *Voices From the Field: Interviews with Practitioners for the Poor* (Cashpor Publication, 1997).

repressive environments, Microcredit has allowed them to congregate with other women, giving them access to skills and training, basic literacy, and health and nutritional education. There are studies which show that the use of contraception (Schuler, Hashemi and Riley 1997), and child immunization (Amin and Li 1997) have increased not only among women participants of programs, but even for non-borrowing women in communities where programs exist. In some programs, women have participated in activities for the first time, engaging in leadership, handling and saving money, as well as decision-making (Bernasek and Stanfield 1997). Programs have been shown to help families buy more land and build new homes, freeing them from the bondage of exploitative moneylenders to carry out their businesses³. There are examples of small-scale businesses growing into larger enterprises.

In light of this evidence, Microcredit has become the answer to the problems of global poverty. Straight Microcredit projects account for about 2% of the world's \$60 billion development budget, according to a 1997 New York Times editorial⁴, though this figure does not include other kinds of programs of which Microcredit is just one component. A more telling indication of its popularity was stated at the 1997 Summit in Washington D.C., where governments, UN agencies, and NGOs pledged to raise \$8 billion to bring programs to 100 million of the poorest families by the year 2005⁵. From self-reported data compiled by the Microcredit Summit, 1,065 participating institutions are reaching 13.8 million people⁶, 10.3 million or 75 percent of whom are women. There has

³ Though there is evidence that some women rely on moneylenders to help pay back the loans, further worsening their economic position. In one study, data show that 57% of the weekly installments were paid from sources other than investment profits, usually loans from relatives or moneylenders. (Rahman, 1998:183).

⁴ See "Micro-loans to the Very Poor", Editorial, *The New York Times*, (February 16, 1997):12.

⁵ The poorest families were defined as those living in the bottom 50% of those living below the poverty line. See RESULTS, "The Micro-credit Summit February 2-4, Declaration and Plan of Action" RESULTS (Washington DC., 1997): v-vi.

⁶ Interestingly, the language of the Microcredit Summit refers to the borrowers as "clients".

been a dramatic increase of 82%, or more than 6 million new participants since the 1997 Microcredit Summit was held. This includes a 16% increase or 1.4 million new women participants (www.microcreditsummit.org/campaigns/report00.html). Clearly, this program is gaining wide-world attention, and is even being replicated in several poor rural and urban areas in the United States (Servon 1999).

The popularity of Microcredit and the lack of critical reflection of its ideological basis lie at the heart of the critique presented in this chapter. Such reflection is necessary to enable us to see the gap between the rhetoric of Microcredit and the implications for the beneficiaries. As one of my informants said,

Ah. Everybody believes that is going to solve everything. The focus on Microcredit ignores a lot of things. It ignores that very often the credit may not even be for the women, only for their husbands, who may or may not meet the needs of the women. Many times it keeps them just as poor as they ever were. (KN: 11/22/98)

We will address these and other problems later on in the chapter. First, a brief explanation of the types of microcredit programs.

Types of Microcredit Institutions and Programs

As one of my informants simply said, “there is a consensus that microfinance provides a positive service to poor individuals. There is not a consensus, however, on the technology or methodology to provide this service” (QN: 7/25/98). While I do argue that Microcredit has become a universally accepted poverty alleviation program, there is a great diversity in the institutions that offer credit services and the kinds of programs that exist.

There are several different kinds of credit institutions. First, there are *commercial banks*, which are usually under the auspices of government-owned banks, but mandated to serve small-scale borrowers. Secondly, there are *intermediary institutions*, which offer micro-businesses links to formal banking systems. These are normally run by a collaboration of NGOs and government agencies that provide referrals, assistance with loan applications, training or technical assistance, and guarantees to the lenders, thereby reducing the costs of lending to poor. Third, there are *parallel institutions*, which provide credit to the

poor via non-bank institutions, usually NGOs specifically established for lending credit. Then, there are *poverty-focused development banks*, which often start as intermediary or parallel institutions, then officially register as banks. These banks are able to reach very large numbers of poor borrowers, offering a limited range of services centered on credit. The Grameen Bank is an example of such an institution (Mayoux 1995).

Microcredit programs usually imply credit-only services, where microcredit institutions sponsor credit services which are either individual or group-based. The term Microfinance normally means that there is as much emphasis put on savings and other financial services as there is on credit. As part of the weekly repayment schedule for a micro-loan, for example, the borrower would be required to put a certain amount into a savings account.

There are also programs that provide additional components, for example, training in business models, numeracy and literacy, or more social development-oriented services like health and nutritional education, family planning, or child-care services. Some proponents argue that these additional provisions enhance the success of the microenterprises (Mayoux 1999). At the 1998 Microcredit Summit I attended, those who were advocating for more training and non-credit services primarily came from representatives of the NGOs, especially the smaller organizations. They were less concerned with the financial sustainability of the institutions running the credit programs than the larger NGOs, banks and donors as well as institutions like the World Bank. I will return to this issue of sustainability later on in the chapter.

The issue around training, however, is not at all conclusive. While some proponents believe it is necessary and irresponsible not to include training to newly credited entrepreneurs, others suggest that the training itself adds extra, and perhaps irrelevant burdens on the borrowers. As one of my informants, who has set up microcredit programs throughout Eastern Europe through several larger international NGOs said,

Training is a hoop and a barrel that people have to jump through to get the credit. The real benefit comes from the credit. You actually cut out your

beneficiaries because very poor people can't invest their time to go the training. They're too poor to do that. It's actually a worse program providing credit with training. (LH: 8/22/98)

Others have suggested that the business models from which such training is done, does not fit the reality of most borrowers' lives. For example, it is not often easy for women borrowers to sort out household and business accounts, a basic component of most business models, justified on the basis of economic rationality. However, for many poor borrowers, combining these accounts may actually give them more flexibility, and be more "rational" to their situations. As Mayoux (1995) has said,

Very poor entrepreneurs are often, in fact, highly skilled in balancing the various demands on them in the context of uncertainty. Because of the multiple constraints faced by many poor women entrepreneurs, especially very small producers and market vendors, they are unable to act on managerial extension based on "rationalist" models of business management. Where they have little control over prices, markets, raw materials, and resources coming in, there is often little scope for planning beyond what they already do "in their heads" (1995)

Furthermore, business training may be irrelevant when a family emergency could easily wipe out whatever income a family is making from the enterprise. Record keeping may, in fact, be a waste of valuable time. In environments where the expansion of women's business may be restrained by cultural practices, such training seems meaningless.

*The Political- Economic Context: Globalization
and the Aftermath of Structural Adjustment Programs*

The reasons for the popularity of Microcredit are wide and varied, and largely represent two opposing interpretations of recent global political and economic transformations. Those more aligned with mainstream development thinking explain this shift by looking at the increased necessity of efficiency, privatization, self-initiative, and a growing skepticism of large-scale development programs (Adams and Von Pischke 1992). Microcredit is consistent with these concerns, as it is a market model, encouraging the entrepreneurial spirit of advanced capitalism, but implemented on a micro scale.

Another set of explanations, more critical, but not as visible, suggest that the shift toward Microcredit is a result of the economic and political consequences of globalization,

trade liberalization and more specifically the impact of Structural Adjustment programs (Scully 1997). The Structural Adjustment programs, implemented as conditions for loans received by many Third World countries from the World Bank and the IMF, contain requirements of privatizing nationalized industries, opening markets to foreign investments and devaluing currencies. According to Scully (1997), this has effectively created a magnified informal sector by destroying small enterprises, farms and formal sector jobs limiting the potential for formal sector income generation. Thus, Microcredit is a way to adjust to what these policies and programs have helped to create-- less formal employment opportunities, greater disparity of wealth and poverty, and even greater marginalization of the poor. The structural changes occurring in the developing countries due to globalization and Structural adjustment policies have resulted in the expansion of informal economies rather than the formal economic sphere. Microcredit has emerged as the program answer to address the problems of unemployment, underemployment, low wage jobs, and growing poverty brought about through the process of globalization. (Johnson 1998a: 9; Scully 1997).

This explanation was confirmed by one of my informants, who offered a more nuanced understanding. He saw the shift toward Microcredit, especially from those in the international development agencies like the World Bank, as an "implicit acknowledgment of the failures of Structural Adjustment Programs" (NH: 9/14/98). For him, this admission is "shrouded in an over-exaggerated rhetorical set of promises of the self-reliance needed to escape poverty through credit" (NH: 9/14/98). In other words, as part of the conditions of SAPs there has been a tremendous decrease in public sector formal employment opportunities. In many developing countries, the public sector has provided the majority of jobs in the formal economy. So, these jobs have been lost, and not replaced in equal numbers by the mostly foreign private sector, creating very high unemployment rates. The self-employment attribute of Microcredit thus becomes the antidote, and an antidote that is less likely to bring about major structural changes at the macro level. As Mayoux says,

What is disturbing about much of the recent enthusiasm for micro-enterprise development for women is its promotion in the wider context of neo-liberal market reform, particularly “rolling back the state”, the removal of welfare provisions and the dismantling of all forms of labour protection. It is also widely seen as a viable and less socially and politically disruptive alternative to more focused feminist organizational strategies” (1995).

Interestingly, several of my informants suggested that Microcredit is more popular among American development practitioners and institutions. One informant said, “I think the U.S. is more aggressively involved in the whole thing than the Europeans. I think it fits nicer with capitalist rhetoric and the aid industry” (LH: 8/17/98). USAID, the official development agency of the United States, has been involved in Microcredit programs since the 1980s. The World Bank, which has been historically dominated by U.S. interests, and perhaps explains its shift to the austerity-laden Structural Adjustment programs, has become increasingly involved as well. Though Microcredit is not confined only to US development organizations.

As discussed in Chapter Four, the Beijing Platform for Action presented a critique against macro-economic processes and policies such as globalization and Structural Adjustment Policies, inspired by the integration of and greater participation of NGOs. But, as Elson (2000) points out, the solutions proposed neglect the macro-economic level, focusing primarily on micro-economic policies, in particular credit. As Elson writes,

There is a basic disjuncture between what are identified as the causes of poverty and the solutions proposed. While governments accept that there is a need to restructure and reformulate macroeconomic policies for poverty eradication, the main solution put forward is microeconomic: enabling poor women to gain access to credit for entrepreneurial activities. There are 35 references to such strategies in the Beijing Platform compared with 17 references to employment creation and other strategies for poverty. A fundamental problem with the Copenhagen and Beijing commitments on poverty is the underlying assumption that sustained economic growth will indeed benefit the poor (2000: 53).

That credit garners much more attention than creating stable, formal sector employment as the solution to poverty reveals a neo-liberal ideological understanding of the causes and consequences of poverty. Yet, such solutions are “packaged” through co-opting the language that has embodied the critiques of neo-liberal ideology and practice.

*The Appeal of Microcredit:
Neo-liberal Ideology and Populist Rhetoric*

As mentioned earlier, the success of Microcredit in the developing world has been attributed to the high repayment rates and frustrations with the failures of previous poverty-alleviation programs. This measure seems to be driven by donor interests rather than coming from the perspective of the borrowers. As one informant says,

Funding is always an issue with these organizations, so for them to go to a donor and say "for the 49th year in a row, look at our health program, look at the vaccinations, we see a 100 persons a day per clinic". Now they can say, "in the last three years our loan program portfolio has upped 1000. Several committees are now making head scarves and they are repaying their loans regularly". And the donors eat it up. (NH: 9/14/98)

Microcredit can be easily measured in terms of efficiency standards and cost/benefit analyses, as this quote reveals. I will come back to the issue of repayment rates later on in the chapter. But first, it needs to be acknowledged that Microcredit seems to be popular with both sides of the political ideological spectrum. While many policy makers would argue that such agreement is profoundly important for the success of social policy, it represents an ideological convergence of understanding the problems of poverty and the solutions to it as entirely market driven. The market has become the "functional equivalent of democracy", what Thomas Frank has called "market populism" (Frank 2000:57). Furthermore, Microcredit is ideologically akin to the liberal/neo-liberal orientation where equal opportunity is the rhetoric, but the focus is on individual attainment.

Without blaming the failures of current economic development policies or poverty alleviation programs, Microcredit becomes a vehicle through which to stress the importance and need for self-reliance, efficiency and economic independence. The logic is that poverty can be eradicated through the entrepreneurship and hard work of the poor person. This is merely a policy version of the economic individualism, or bootstrap theory, so prevalent in U.S. political ideology. That is, anyone can make it, if they work hard enough in the marketplace. The liberal component to this is that given the right tools, or social capital,

specifically training, education, or in this case access to credit, anybody can be economically successful.

Echoing this sentiment, one of my informants, who has carried out evaluations of several projects for the World Bank and the UNDP said,

Microcredit is only concerned with selling. But you can improve people's quality of life by having them grow more, of what they are going to eat. Having it be a higher quality, and having a much better distribution of stuff. So, why not put some energy into these things? Why must everything be for the market? (KN: 11/22/98)

A more recent manifestation of this economic individualism is the over-emphasis placed on the importance of self-sufficiency, self-reliance and entrepreneurship. We saw this raised most visibly in the debates leading up to the 1996 welfare reform act, befittingly called, *The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act*. As part of this bootstrap ideology, "work" was the way out of the insidious cycle of dependency that social welfare programs like AFDC had purportedly created. "Welfare queens" were exposed in the media, fostering myths about their laziness and their high fertility rates. The answer was a "tough-love" policy of making the poor and dependent work for their benefits. While I do not want to suggest that no self-esteem or economic independence could be derived from working either for a wage or through self-employment, the overemphasis on "self-reliance" and the promotion of "any job is better than no job", carries an ideological imprimatur that requires further critical examination. Such ideas are part of the rationale for Microcredit and explain its popularity. As Johnson says,

Owning your own business can be empowering, and individuals who create jobs, not only provide financial stability, but help build and restore communities. Starting your own business satisfies the ideology of the work ethic and the emphasis on self-help (i.e., pull up your bootstraps). Moreover, credit is not a handout: it must be paid back (Johnson 1998b:169).

In the drive to make Microcredit attractive to donors, the language utilized is very revealing. The poor are described as "creditworthy", poor women are considered "good credit risks", and the borrowers are "clients". Such language is found throughout the Microcredit literature. I observed several examples of this at the 1998 Microcredit Summit.

The first Microcredit Summit was held February 2-4, 1997, and there is one held each year since then. The Summit brings together a collection of microcredit practitioners, advocates, educational institutions, donor agencies, international financial institutions, non-governmental organizations and others involved with Microcredit.

At one panel I attended, a speaker affirmed that through credit, “women are placed in the driver’s seat of their life”. The rhetoric of empowerment had a condescending tone to it, often accompanied by self-help jargon of “confidence”, “self-esteem”, and “responsibility”. Several times there were statements made describing Microcredit as a switch from “charity to empowerment” or a “hand up instead of a hand out”. At one point, a speaker from a for-profit financial institution said, “all human beings are entrepreneurs”, which incidentally was followed by a room full of approving applause. One banker explained that Microcredit gives people a sense of self-worth by bringing them into the financial system. “[T]hey can be like everybody else”, he added. We may surmise that ‘everybody else’ is wealthy people in the developed world.

In this conception of development and progress, the market is the answer and self-reliance is the idealized objective. While aid has become identified with creating dependency, Microcredit has come to be seen as a perfect way to actualize the self-reliance and independence that will eradicate poverty. Poverty is thus treated as temporary, remedied by simply improving cash flow. With a little credit harnessed by certain value changes, the poor will rise to the occasion and join the rest of the world as developed people. This is a powerful construction, evoking the modernization theory of the 1950s, wherein all dependency is shunned and self-reliance is glorified.

Much of the underlying thinking lacks a sophisticated understanding of how poor people live their lives. The claim that Microcredit will restore initiative and responsibility to the poor ignores the fact that poor people are usually creative and responsible precisely because survival is so precarious. In fact, the characterization of this program creating

entrepreneurs is over-exaggerated. Many poor people subsisting in the informal economy world-wide are already necessarily entrepreneurial. As one of my informants said,

I don't like a lot of the very individualistic rhetoric that attracts this, but I also don't think it has much relevance to what actually does in the field. Like all of this creating these entrepreneurs. There is no such thing of a peasant farmer who is not an entrepreneur, they have their own land, they have very very low assets, but they manage them, and they buy and they sell and that's their life. (LH: 8/17/98)

In addition to reinforcing a narrow notion of poverty, Microcredit makes individual behavior central to overcoming poverty, avoiding any structural analyses or critiques. This construction of independence as always virtuous and dependence as always objectionable, once again echoes the ideological discourse of economic individualism, and has been critiqued by many feminist economists⁷.

Microcredit has appropriated a very potent and popular rhetoric to appeal to those frustrated with the persistent problems of poverty. Marketing Microcredit as distinct from earlier approaches, its supporters no longer claim that the poor are poor because they are lazy or culturally-deficient, but because they lack access to certain resources, specifically credit, education, and training. While this presents a well-intended liberal interpretation of the poor, it nonetheless, places all emphasis on the individual, in this case the individual entrepreneur, and does not concern itself with some of the larger structural processes that inherently creates and intensifies disparities between the poor and the affluent.

What is even more interesting is that there has not been any systematic way of tracking the number of businesses, or perhaps more importantly measuring the income levels attained with the microloans. Most of the studies thus far are more interested in the repayment rates and measuring other indicators such as the number of borrowers, the total disbursement, school enrollment, fertility and contraceptive use. There is scant attention

⁷ See Marianne A. Ferber and Julie A. Nelson, *Beyond Economic Man: Feminist Theory and Economics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993).

given to the impact of income on a borrower household. Even the Microcredit Summit Campaign, in their 2001 yearly report included the following passage:

The Campaign is committed to ensuring a positive measurable impact on the lives of the 100 million clients and their families. Yet, as with poverty yardsticks, there was no consensus in 1997 on the need for action in this area. Again, conventional wisdom argued against this theme by saying that: 1) the added expense of impact monitoring was not justified, 2) high loan repayment rates suggested positive impact, and 3) impact assessments done by practitioners would not be rigorous enough to be considered reliable. These arguments, if put into practice, meant that most practitioners would have to remain in the dark concerning the impact their programs were having on the lives of clients and their families (Druschel et al. 2001: 6).

So, the contention is that monitoring the impact is too expensive and that repayment rates are a sufficient indication of the impact of loans on the borrowers. This is rather inadequate for a program purported to reducing poverty and empowering women.

The Sustainability of Microcredit: Whose Interests Matter?

The original focus of the Grameen Bank was poverty alleviation of the most destitute and economically disenfranchised (Rahman 1999). But as the program spread in popularity, creating replicas throughout the developing and industrialized worlds, the focus has shifted to maintaining financial sustainability and increasing its loan portfolio. In this sense, sustainability is the ability for an institution to run its operations without subsidies from donors, but rather through the interest made on the repaid loans. The creation of a self-sustaining credit institution is the goal for many programs. Obviously, if the institutions lending the money are not sustainable, this does not bode well for the recipients of the microloans. One of my informants argued this in the following passage.

It is important to be very aggressive on sustainability, not because of donor concerns, but because it's a waste of time to do it any other way. Unless you are creating a permanent structure which is going to continue to be available to those communities, you are in a way sabotaging them. You're destroying institutions as opposed to creating them. (LH: 8/17/98).

While this may be an important point, the move toward sustainability seems to be putting the donors' interests ahead of those of the poor. This section will explore some of the contradictions that surface around the issue of sustainability and the implications for the

beneficiaries. As we saw in the case of UNIFEM, it appears that as Microcredit has become 'mainstreamed' and institutionalized, its once alternative set of priorities shift to coincide with the expectations set by those engineering development practice, while rhetorically presenting itself as "alternative".

The Grameen Bank receives loans from the Central Bank of Bangladesh and other Western banks at a 2% annual interest rate (Rahman 1999:78). At the same time, the rate that the Grameen charges to its 'clients' for their microloans is about 20%, approximately 8% higher than the commercial market rate in the country (Rahman 1999:79). Such fees remain attractive to its poor borrowers, as their alternatives include moneylenders who reportedly charge 100% or more in interest. As one of my informants remarked, "It's really obvious in Asian situations where their alternative is 300, 200, 100% per annum interest rates. Paying even 20-30% to a microfinance institution is great" (KU: 8/17/98).

Rahman's problem, however, is that like other formal financial institutions, the Grameen Bank has embraced the capitalist doctrine of profiting from its investment. In 1991 the Grameen Bank raised the salaries of its workers by 25%. When this move began to hinder its profitability, making it difficult to sustain itself, Grameen responded by raising the interest rates for its borrowers from 16%-20%. Not only were the borrowers pressed with higher interest rates, in addition there was a greater emphasis placed on increasing the overall number of loans granted. As evidence, Rahman shows that the loan disbursement profile of the Grameen branches under his study increased three-fold from 1991-1993 (Rahman 1999:79). This would suggest that as Grameen has become more legitimate as its program has expanded, it has made decisions that seem to put the interests of profit ahead of the interest of the borrowers.

In other contexts, banks or credit institutions serving microloans in many countries are constrained by usury laws, which keep interest rates lower than what they would need to become sustainable. Without these ceilings, many practitioners argue, these institutions could collect more interest on loans and operate more sustainably. But removing such

regulations may cause hardship for borrowers who have to pay back more in interest. Again, what seems good for banks may not translate into what is good for borrowers. It seems then, that in the attempts to bring Microcredit to conventional financial markets, which is necessary for its expansion, this often involves “making the poor attractive to banks” rather than the other way around (Aslam 1996).

Microcredit institutions that want to impress wary commercial banks to initially fund these programs are likely to speak in the formal terms of sustainability and efficiency. When asked about this interest rate issue, one of my informants, who works for the NGO Catholic Relief Services in West Africa said, “charging a market rate is not hurting borrowers; it is reducing dependency and helping them evaluate their investment opportunities rationally” (QN: 7/25/98). He then went on to support this position by discussing the rates of the money-lenders from whom many of the recipients had been borrowing, a similar response to the aforementioned informant. Both statements clearly reveal the ideological commitments to capitalism and the promotion of growth as a measure of success.

Aside from the contradictory needs of the institutions and the borrowers, another consequence of the pressures for sustainability is that programs seem to be helping the less poor rather than the very poor (Servon 1999; Scully, 1997; Bates T. & Servon, L, 1996; Mayoux 1995). Since the loans needed by the very poorest are small, the income derived from these loans is insufficient, thereby making these loans more costly. Microlenders are more attracted to those who can take out larger loans, typically those who are less poor, those who are already engaged in entrepreneurial work. So, while Microcredit may be helping some people, there is evidence to suggest that it is not really helping the poorest of the poor, despite its rhetorical promises. Such rhetoric is useful to “market” the program, making it more attractive, especially to donors who want to show their constituents that they are supporting programs to help the very poor. This is true too for multi-lateral institutions like the World Bank and United Nations Development Program, which have been

characterizing the work that they do as “pro-poor”. It would seem that targeting the less poor could effectively intensify class conflicts in areas where these programs operate. Such speculation, of course, warrants much more exploration, though remains outside the purview of this particular study.

Another concern regarding sustainability is the rotating model in which borrowers continue to take out larger and larger loans. This effectively means that the program demands that there be long-term clients in a debt relationship with banks, which may undermine the efforts to eradicate poverty since borrowers will continue to rely on loans. Rahman found that along with the pressure to expand Grameen’s loan portfolio, many borrowers were taking out additional loans from other sources in order to maintain their weekly payments on earlier loans. “Such lending processes contribute to the spiraling debt cycle in which many members in the study area feel they have become entrapped” (Rahman 1999:79). If the requirements for weekly payments is so rigid that many borrowers are getting new loans to pay off previous loans, or turning to family members or, even worse, money lenders, this only increases the borrower’s burden of debt. Rahman suggests that such a situation “increases household anxiety and tension, producing new forms of social and institutional dominance over many women clients in the program” (1999:68). It would also seem then that such pressure would undermine the “empowerment” that a program like this is supposedly bringing about. Concern over this issue was confirmed by one of my informants who said, “Very often they are borrowing to pay the loan back, from money lenders. Borrowing from money lenders to pay back the microcredit is something that I don’t think is getting enough attention” (KN: 9/22/98).

Microcredit and the Informal Economy

Though it may be the case that recent economic and political changes have created the need for programs like Microcredit, the concerns of the informal economy have not attracted much attention among practitioners. If women use loans to become petty traders,

small shopkeepers, or go door to door selling milk from their newly purchased cow, they are not really integrated into the formal economy. First of all, how many individual small-scale entrepreneurs can poor rural villages accommodate and what are the prospects for enlarging such businesses in such environments? Secondly, in the informal economy, it is vastly more difficult to be protected by labor laws instituted in the formal economy -- health and safety laws, minimum wage laws, pensions and insurance systems, and mandatory overtime laws. And in countries where such laws are non-existent or not enforced, the shift to Microcredit may take attention away from policies designed to create or enforce such laws. Sometimes the organizations attempting to implement Microcredit programs may try to encourage governments to alter legislation that would benefit the program. For example, as part of the USAIDs Gemini Project, which was a large-scale microcredit program, one of their policy proposals was the removal of minimum wage laws (Mayoux 1995). Privileging the micro- entrepreneur over legislation to protect workers in formal employment situations seems unlikely to dismantle poverty.

While controlling one's labor may be a virtuous goal, being out of the formal economy renders women much more vulnerable to exploitation. The assumption, of course, is that these microenterprises will expand and become part of the formal economy. However, in the meantime, as Johnson (1998) suggests, these programs are creating an underclass of overworked self-employed entrepreneurs who work hard for long hours, generate little income, and may be overburdened with debt. One informant, a staff member at the UNDP spoke of a study carried out on four NGOs dedicated to credit programs in Bangladesh. When her research team asked the participating women what the most important impact of the credit was for them, the women said, "we work harder". This informant added, "[t]hey didn't say that they got small businesses" (TN: 3/25/98).

A WID project in GAD clothes: Prospects for Empowerment

The Grameen bank, as well as other "successful" Microcredit programs, reportedly have over a 95% repayment rate, a fact shared by its proponents and critics (Yunus 1999;

Rahman 1999). However, there is evidence that some of its successes may be over-exaggerated and under-scrutinized. As stated earlier, the “success” of projects is often defined by the repayment rates. That is, how much of the loan is paid back within the loan cycle. While this criterion follows the goal of “efficiency”, using loan repayment as the measure of success of the program obscures what has happened with the money. What micro businesses have been started? What impact have these enterprises had on the social well-being of the borrower and her family? Have these businesses contributed to the growth of the local economy and social infrastructure? The reliance on loan repayment as a measure of success neglects some important qualitative concerns.

Since repayment rates have been accorded such a high standard in determining the program’s success, it is no surprise that the program largely targets women. Microcredit has become a good way for development institutions to carry out their promises of including women, while at the same time, remaining committed to capitalist ideologies and practices. The social positions of women, especially in many rural areas of developing countries, though not exclusively, make them much more vulnerable to pressures to repay. Speaking specifically about the Grameen Bank, one of my informants who had done an evaluation of the Grameen Bank as part of her role at a UN agency said,

Well, Grameen is run on very militaristic lines. And one could observe the way, for example, the loan officers were telling the women what to reply to our questions. Extremely patronizing. And one could observe that they had no respect whatsoever for the women. They embodied a culture that these women are children, basically. And you can’t possibly hope to empower anybody that you think is an idiot. (TN: 3/25/99)

In the earlier years of the Grameen Bank, credit was extended to both women and men. Until 1984, membership in the Bank was almost equally distributed. In 1983, men borrowers made up 55% of total members, but by 1994, men were only 6%. In this same time period, the percentage of women borrowers has increased by 700 times. In 1997, women comprised more than 95% of the 2.23 million borrowers (Rahman 1998:94).

The gap between rhetoric and reality is particularly important to clarify, for both levels present deeper problems, especially in terms of their implications for empowering

women. The publicly stated rationale as to why women are targeted for these programs is that women are believed to spend the money on the welfare of their children and family. One of my informants supported her claim with cultural interpretations of how the gendered relationships in primarily African societies function.

But they [women] are less likely to blow the money on drinking or something. I think they are less likely to be irresponsible with it. Men will spend it on other women, because that is such a cultural thing that would happen. "Ooh I got money now, I can get more mistresses and buy them something nice" (UC: 6/9/98).

I will return to the troubling gendered implications of this public rationale in the next section. Through discussions with bank workers, Rahman (1999) found that the real reasons women are targeted are two-fold: men are more difficult to extract payments from and women are much more manageable. According to one of his informants, "[i]n the field it is hard to work with male members. They do not come to meetings, they are arrogant, they argue with bank workers, and sometimes they even threaten and scare the bank workers" (Rahman 1999:69). So women make the success of the program, measured in repayment rates, much easier to realize. Another informant, a gender specialist at the UNDP responded, disclosing her feelings about how Microcredit is treated by the UNDP unit in charge of the program. She said,

The trouble is that our own Microfinance unit is very uncritical of the microfinance world and its social impacts. And, particularly not terribly interested in exploring the ramifications of the gendered aspects of it. And they're quite satisfied with the idea, "yes we want to help women because they're good payers" (TN: 3/25/99).

This one passage reveals a number of important issues. One, that despite the UNDP's rhetoric of the importance of gender, its department in charge of Microcredit programming does not appear to be practicing gender. Secondly, it confirms that women are targeted because the success of the program depends upon it.

Microcredit has many inter-related facets, especially with respect to the line between the rhetoric and the real. The following is a gendered analysis of the program and the implications for actualizing the empowerment that it promises.

The Cult of True Womanhood Revisited

Microcredit is a particularly useful development program to illustrate the limitations of WID addressed in Chapter Three. While making women central to development policies is certainly important, the reasons for targeting women require a *gendered* lens.

Practitioners often use the term “better credit risks” when referring to women because their repayment rates are higher. As stated above, when women are the borrowers, it is argued, the general well-being of the family is assumed to improve, specifically its income, nutrition, health, education and family planning, though these improvements are not yet clear. Men as borrowers have been found to spend the money on themselves and leisure activities (Goetz and Gupta, 1997; Rahman, 1998, 1999). Men are less interested in attending groups because they have freedom to be more mobile⁸.

Mohammad Yunus, in explaining to the United States Congressional Forum why such a high percentage of his loans go to women said, “Women have plans for themselves, for their children, about their homes, the meals. They have a Vision. A man wants to enjoy himself”⁹. Such explanations reveals a “boys will be boys” mentality, where men’s behavioral patterns, already known to be detrimental to the lives of their families, are excused and rationalized. Historically, such treatment of gender roles has justified the repression of women, as much of feminist theory has exposed. “This instrumental approach to women as conduits for credit for the family plays on, and reinforces, traditional cultural notions of womanhood, with women seen as moral guardians of the household and policers of recalcitrant men” (Goetz and Gupta 1997: 55).

⁸ For many women, the group meetings are their only avenues to talk with other women, interact with bank and NGO officials, etc. See Sidney Ruth Schuler, Syed Hashemi and Ann P. Riley, “The Influence of Women’s Changing Roles and Status in Bangladesh’s Fertility Transition: Evidence from a Study of Credit Programs and Contraceptive Use” *World Development*. Vol. 25, No. 4. (April 1997): 563-575.

⁹ Excerpted from: www.soc.titech.ac.jp/icm/wind/wind.html

Taking a gendered look at why women are targeted, women are once again idealized as “mother” and burdened with a new set of responsibilities because they are considered to be more reliable and more caring. Another informant who worked for an umbrella group of credit unions which supports programs to its members in low-income areas in the U.S. echoed this in the following passage,

And, I had this ire for some time and it was just recently revived at the Microcredit summit cause I was sitting in a workshop with I think it was [this man from a sponsoring organization], and he basically said, “well the bottom line is that women repay”. And I’m like, so what kind of empowerment is that? I don’t feel powerful because I’m the better credit risk... Because women are more responsible, they are the one’s that repay. And they feel more responsible for their own. Well you know what, that doesn’t seem to me a whole lot of a bargain in that context. (DN: 7/22/98)

This essentialism can be dangerous and ultimately regressive, reinforcing gendered stereotypes and role expectations. Another example of this is a quote by a representative from a development NGO explaining their focus on women. “We believe that women are more caring of the weak and if we empower women then they will be able to take care of their children better.”¹⁰ Women are believed to be more caring and men are removed from these sets of practices because they are not assumed to be capable of care-giving.

Thus, in traditional patriarchal fashion, women are idealized for their responsibility, but then rewarded by being made responsible for more and more labor activities. Little is done or even discussed to transform the oppressive sexual division of labor, whereby women are responsible for much of the subsistence work and non-paid home labor throughout much of the world. While it may be a progressive step to include women in income generating activity, if their responsibilities at home and in the field are not shared more equally, these women may not experience an improved standard of living, in the sense of their ability to flourish as humans. This ‘stalled revolution’ has occurred in the First World, specifically in the U.S., where women have entered the labor force but have suffered

¹⁰ From the People section in *The Earth Times*, (September 16-30, 1998).

the consequences of second shift responsibilities¹¹. Making women central to the development process, from family planning to nutrition and now poverty eradication, has apparently had the effect of making women more constrained by more labor activities, while allowing men to evade such responsibilities. So, in some ways Microcredit is empowering, but in other important ways, it is not.

The Vulnerability of Women: Causes for Alarm

It may be objectively true that women have better repayment rates. However, this may be because of their lower status in society. In many places where Microcredit programs have been implemented, the gendered environment is such that women are more easily coerced and pressured by loan officers to behave well as clients. The UNDP gender specialist mentioned before supported this:

I think that women do repay better than men, but it's also very clear that in Bangladesh, the high repayment rates are because the loan workers work extremely long hours, and they work very very hard to get them, and they use very coercive methods. And I think that there is a very strong likelihood that the repayment rate is as high as it is, not because women are intrinsically responsible but because they are more easily coerced. They can be intimidated more easily. They have fewer resources that they can call on to resist the loan officers. So, the high repayment rate, if that's true, is actually dependent on women's low level of power, low status. (TN: 2/13/99)

In a follow-up interview, this same informant reiterated this, by saying the following, which again, requires us to question the 'reality' of women's empowerment as an achieved goal.

There is a pressure to repay. What is hard is for the woman to extort anything from her husband. He feels comfortable in telling the loan officer to "get stuffed", I'll pay you next week kind of thing, but it's harder for her to do and at the same time she can't put pressure on her husband. So she feels a lot of distress. (TN: 3/25/99)

The issue of women's vulnerability has further consequences, as more recent evidence of increasing rates of domestic violence and physical aggression toward women in

¹¹ See Arlie Hochschild, *The Second Shift* (New York: Avon Books, 1989).

borrower households surfaces. One of Rahman's (1998, 1999) findings was an increase in domestic violence among borrowers in several rural villages in Bangladesh. In fact, all the women in his sample said they experienced violence of some kind, revealing the predominance of domestic violence in rural Bangladesh. He found verbal aggression and physical assault against 120 borrowers. While twenty-one women or 18% of his sample claimed a decrease in both because of their involvement with Grameen, 69 or 57% saw a rise in verbal aggression and 16, or 13% saw a rise in both verbal and physical violence since they received their first loans. Six borrowers encountered male violence because they refused to hand over their loan to male family members or because they challenged men's proposals for using the loans. Rahman writes, "the escalation of the violence against women borrowers in the loan centre and in the household can be seen as a repercussion of current practices of grassroots lending to the poor" (1998:158)

In addition to these findings, Rahman describes in detail the relationship between the rigid bank rules and the violence women suffered at home as a consequence. For example, if a woman does not show for a weekly repayment meeting, the rest of the group must stay at the Bank's center until the absentee woman's installment is paid. Rahman found this practice in conflict with village husbands' demands that their wives come home quickly. Several times this happened during Rahman's fieldwork, and the result was that a borrower was beaten by her husband. According to Rahman, women may suffer violence if they do not return home right away, if they do not get another loan or another loan for a higher amount. Many of these issues are out of the borrower's control. "Lending to women within the patriarchal structure of the society often fails to provide any acceptable alternatives for women-- social, economic or legal entitlements-- that are supported by society, including active individual or organized protest against aggression and violence" (Rahman 1998:163). The peer group structure may work for the success of the program, and it may even foster consciousness among the women that could lead to building collective resources if such was emphasized. But at this point, too much is being left out of the evaluations.

Unfortunately, this issue does not seem to be garnering much attention among development practitioners, despite the more recent rhetorical emphasis placed on eradicating violence against women as a condition of their empowerment. Further investigation into this connection is warranted, but beyond the scope of this project.

Getting the Loan, but Losing Control

Some recent studies have shown that women borrowers often lose control of the money once they bring it home. In one such study, 63% of the women had only partial, very limited or no control over the loans they received from institutions (Goetz and Gupta 1996). The loan is managed and controlled by male relatives, yet women bear the responsibilities of paying back the loans. This practice undermines the main rhetorical appeal of Microcredit, which is to empower participants through economic self-sufficiency and personal development. Though promoted as a project for the empowerment of women, if women must cede management and control of the loan to their male relatives their empowerment is doubtful. The women may be merely vessels for men's economic activity (Goetz and Gupta 199:55). This same informant as above supported this. She said,

I don't think it [Microcredit] is about empowerment. I think it's about introducing modern economic forms into the deepest rural areas, the penetration of capital away from the capital cities into rural areas, and transforming the way rural societies are structured. That's what it's about. And microfinance is a very good way of doing it because it's within the reach of poor people, but it's still governed by the forces of finance, which are decided millions of miles away..." (TN: 2/13/99)

She continued her critique by saying, "the effect on microfinance¹² is to introduce these people into these relationships in an extremely subordinate way". The rhetoric around Microcredit and its emphasis on empowerment is helping to expand its popularity, but it is not clear that this is in fact happening to the degree that it is advertised.

The Sen and Gupta study referred to earlier has made quite a stir in the practitioner community. The findings and methodology were frequently debated on a list-serve to which

¹² Many in the UN use the term Microfinance instead of Microcredit.

I subscribed in 1998-1999. It also came up in a few of my interviews. One informant, in particular, a high-level staff person with the UNDP program, MicroStart, referred to the study and its authors as part of a “cottage industry of Grameen bashers”. This response indicates the sensitivity with which some of the architects of Microcredit feel about the program, which may be a factor in hampering the critical reflection necessary. True too, there may be a reactionary politics among practitioners toward “scholars” in the development community.

What this study exposes is an underlying problem of Microcredit. It is, at its core, a WID-oriented project, adorned with GAD language. It is a program that has, as its goal, the inclusion of women, but is not, at least in practice, integrating the important gender concerns addressed in Chapter Three. Microcredit is about bringing women in to the development process, not transforming the process to include the eradication of gendered relations of oppression. As the informant mentioned above continued to say,

We know that gender issues are at the heart of development and this is a very good example where development is going on, without any gender concern and it may be making things worse for men and women in a sense...The loan officers have no concept at all of what is the relationship, or that the relationship between men and women is problematic. They think they're working on women. They're helping women. I don't think they have any perception or think it's important at all to look at why it is that women are getting the credit, have been prioritized (TN: 3/25/99).

Managing the poor: Top-Down Approaches

As part of the Grameen program, the weekly meetings begin with a recitation of the “Sixteen Decisions”¹³. Some of these principles are attempts at empowering the women who say them; for example, that they should educate all of their children, not practice dowry or child marriages, and act collectively. While it may be economically shrewd and

¹³ Rahman argues that early on at the Bank, the learning and recitation of the Sixteen Decisions was taken more seriously. In fact, it was considered its social development program. With the growth of the Bank and its programs, less time is devoted to these rituals and collecting loan installments takes up more of their time (Rahman 1998:19).

personally liberating to “keep the family small”, there is something disconcerting about this indoctrination. In one article it was suggested that staff members of a Microcredit institution believed that high fertility rates hurt a woman’s ability to attend meetings and make regular loan payments. They see family planning as maintaining control over household expenses and discipline in their lives. In the article, there was one story of a staff person who did not want to give a woman another loan after she got pregnant with her third child (Schuler, Hashemi and Riley 1997).

Grameen Bank’s Sixteen Decisions

1. We shall follow and advance the four principles of Grameen Bank-- discipline, unity, courage and hard work
2. Prosperity we shall bring to our families.
3. We shall not live in dilapidated houses. We shall repair our houses and work towards constructing new houses...
4. We shall grow vegetables all the year round. We shall eat plenty...
5. During the plantation seasons, we shall plant as many seedlings as possible
6. We shall plan to keep our families small. We shall minimize our expenditures. We shall look after our health.
7. We shall educate our children and ensure that we can earn to pay for their education.
8. We shall always keep our children and the environment clean.
9. We shall build and use pit-latrines.
10. We shall drink tubewell water. If it is not available, we shall boil water or use alum
11. We shall not take any dowry at our sons’ weddings, neither shall we give any dowry in our daughters weddings. We shall keep the center free from the curse of dowry. We shall not practice child marriage.
12. We shall not inflict any injustice on anyone, neither shall we allow anyone to do so.
13. We shall collectively undertake bigger investments for higher incomes.
14. We shall always be ready to help each other. If anyone is in difficulty, we shall all help him or her.
15. If we come to know of any breach of discipline in any center, we shall all go there and help restore discipline.
16. We shall introduce physical exercise in all our centers. We shall take part in all social activities collectively. (Bornstein 1997:97).

This bias reveals that the concerns of the Bank workers are based primarily on a

woman's relationship to credit, rather than being in charge of one's body as a fundamental right¹⁴. Thus, it cannot be assumed that this program, in this form, brings about the empowerment of women, as the rhetoric suggests. Moreover, a closer inspection of the Sixteen Decisions reveals an authoritarian constraint on the behavior of the poor. They are told how many babies to have, that they should save money and live in nice houses. There seems to be complete management over poor people's lives, especially women, and ironically, it is done in the name of liberating or empowering women. There is a striking resemblance to the way in which poor people are spoken about and treated in the United States, a classic example of the domination of the wealthy over the poor, where the affluent are excused from such behavior modification. One of the conditions necessary to attain higher stages of growth and development according to modernization theorist W.W. Rostow (Chapter Two), is a change in attitude and behavior. In other words, one must incorporate a new value system that is future oriented, non-fatalistic, where one is ready to take risks, and think independently. These 'Sixteen Decisions' strike a familiar chord to this way of thinking.

Another illustration comes from another informant, recalling an early project with which she was involved as part of her work for USAID. The women recipients were completely left out of the decision making. They were asked questions that they didn't seem to understand. Assumptions were made about their needs and desires and these assumptions were turned into a project.

We went out and did a survey: Did these women use credit? Did they want credit? We were asking women if they wanted roaming credit or cyclical credit. These women who we were interviewing didn't know the difference. Here we had these educated women working in a bank and these poor rural ladies were like, what the hell are you talking about? But, it was decided on the basis of that to give women credit. They decided to call it off-farm credit, it could be used for non-agricultural, this was an agricultural bank and you were supposed to get credit for buying animals or something, but they would credit for other things like, having a garage to repair tractors. (TTE: 11/19/98).

¹⁴ This critique is not to diminish some of the important population and gender issues associated with high fertility rates in developing countries.

So it seems from this example that the women who were to be empowered, were not consulted in any substantive way in the formation of these projects.

The Peer Group: Enhancing Solidarity or Individualistic Competition?

As mentioned earlier in the chapter, the Grameen model and others like it require women to form peer groups, sometimes called “solidarity groups” for loan disbursement. Once again, the rhetoric is rather different from what appears to be the real motivations behind these groups. It is generally believed that since most of these women have no collateral, the peer group becomes a proxy for what has been called “social collateral”, a safeguard for repayment (Rahman 1999:71). But the rhetorical emphasis has been to promote and enhance social solidarity among women, especially in areas where women are isolated and restricted to their homes because of patriarchal social customs. The women borrowers in a village are expected to establish a loan center, originally as a place for women to congregate, discuss issues that are meaningful to them like education, health, their enterprises, and to pay back their installments. These weekly meetings seem to have the potential to bring about the ‘empowerment’ that these programs are supposedly designed to do. Two informants shared with me the following statements. One said,

I think an important one is that women come to meetings. Women are busy. Those meetings have to be good and I think the content of the meetings have improved. When they haven't appreciated.. you have to have a high attendance of people at those meetings and they come back sometimes to pay, sometimes there are other arrangements that are worked out. But the meeting has to take place, every couple of weeks people have to be there. And if they're not coming, something is wrong with the program. Because that's where the empowerment of women really occurs. In these meetings. And where the discussions are good discussions, the discussions are determined by the women. So, what do they want to talk about, what do they want to find out more about? And often a group is given the task to find out more about what they want to find out about, let's say a disease, and so a person is given the direction to go talk with the person in public health and bring back brochures and talk to people about it. You know, 5-10 minutes, that's all. It's not a long lecture on the subject, just information. Or they can talk about things that appeal to them, what's the best age for the children to get married? Whatever they decide. It can also be business related-- what are people are doing? How do they go about getting more customers? Or other kinds of things. We don't give lessons in that, there's no curriculum. But people can talk with each other. (UT: 11/12/98).

Another informant, doing evaluations for projects in Latin America echoed this sentiment that the group work may be used for empowering women. She said,

I visited and talked with people and they were operating on a regular basis, women were borrowing and they were paying back and everything was going well on the financial end, but then they also used the group meetings as this opportunity to talk about nutrition and how to, what kinds of things that you ought to be eating when you are breast feeding and what kinds of life training and health training. (DN: 7/22/98).

What these passages suggest is that the elements of empowerment that result from Microcredit seem to come from the support networks that are created among women participants more than the borrowing of the microloan and the entrepreneurial activity that ensues. This is particularly interesting because as Rahman has discovered in the case of Grameen, as the program has become more focused on loan repayment, there is much less time and attention given to enhancing solidarity among the women. The meetings are a time for loan repayment, thus, once again, economic development trumps social development.

While Microcredit uses a group framework, incorporates the language of solidarity and promises empowerment, it is individual achievement and participation that is sought. Most programs do not include group loans that would foster co-operative enterprises. Each woman, though part of a peer group, is expected to borrow for her own, individual enterprise. As one of my informants said,

Yet, it's very individualistic. And it doesn't focus on group enterprises. It's for individuals to do their own thing. It's not like a group of 6-8 women start up an organic farm. Now that's where I think there could be something different. And it is beginning to happen. They are getting government land to do organic farming on that land together. I see that as different. I think that Microcredit could move to groups. It so far has focused on individuals. (KN: 11/22/98)

These groups are formed purely to ensure loan repayment, not for the creation of collective income generating activities, which could benefit women in a different way. One of my informants described the peer groups in practice as "spying". Transforming individuals into entrepreneurs, according to the precepts of free-market capitalism, requires individuality, competition, and concerns for efficiency and rationality. Such attitudes are encouraged through the co-optation of values that represent a different and antithetical way

of thinking and operating; cooperation, solidarity, group interdependency. Microcredit is about (ab)using solidarity to foster individuality and competition, bringing in values and behavioral patterns which are perhaps insulting and offensive to the borrowers.

Microcredit that Works: Collective Goals, Savings and Empowerment

Though most of the Microcredit programs that are gaining the attention and being implemented suffer from many of the limitations addressed above, in some programs the rhetoric of empowerment seems more in line with the reality. These are generally smaller programs, run by local NGOs, which encourage collective enterprises. The structure and implementation of the programs are generally determined and designed by the women participants, coming out of their own experiences and their own efforts. Some programs are established by community-run organizations, and start first with a savings components, where the members put in a small amount each week, perhaps equivalent to one day's pay. From this, members borrow microloans for community enterprises.

One organization that seems to demonstrate this is GROOTS, Grassroots Organizations Operating Together in Sisterhood. GROOTS is a network of grassroots organizations that work primarily on rural development, housing, savings and credit. The organization was founded after the Third UN Conference on women in Nairobi in response to the exclusion of grassroots women from involvement in policy and programming discussions or decisions. One of GROOTS' member organizations from Zimbabwe, ORAP, initiated a savings program first. Then with the money, the women members reconstructed kitchens and bought utensils to cook and sell food. As a way to include the very poorest, the cooking is prepared in and sold from the home of a very poor family. A percentage of what the family makes from the sales is then deposited into the savings for future activities.

Another member-organization of GROOTS, Swayam Shikshan Prayog, in Maharashtra, India, emphasizes women's collectives and community-owned institutions. In

addition to credit related activities, these groups have become quite involved in local government issues, monitoring the delivery of public health and educational services.

Such small-scale, collective-oriented programs exist, but are difficult to find in the shadow of Grameen and some larger programs. Women learn how to manage money as a group, learn to trust and work with one another. A representative structure for decision making is created relying upon deeply held social relations. They make decisions collectively to determine how the money is to be used. Many of the methodologies used seem to be more consistent with the gendered empowerment that is so often sought and claimed among mainstream microcredit institutions, but remain unrealized. Such programs may have to remain small scale and sporadic, for if they become larger and more bureaucratic, some of their more radical attributes may be compromised.

Concluding Thoughts

Microcredit symbolizes the current ideological disdain for dependency and infatuation with “self-reliance”. While there are some very real, albeit contested, political and economic transformations that have made programs like Microcredit more attractive and necessary, the driving force seems to be a strong ideological attachment to neo-liberalism. The market is the panacea for economic and social development. These ideological commitments to economic individualism in its understanding of and solutions to the problems of poverty and underdevelopment support this economic framework. In fact, Microcredit represents a neo-Rostowian/modernization development theory. The “entrepreneurial spirit” of which it emphasizes is an updated version of the value and attitude changes called for by Rostow fifty years ago.

In addition to this particular economic ideology, there is also a powerful gendered ideology in operation. Women have become the primary targets of programs in recent years. On the surface, this responds to feminist demands for making development policies and programs relevant to women. However, beneath the rhetoric lie some very troubling

assumptions. The reasons cited for granting loans to women reproduce traditional and patriarchal notions of women and men, as well as their expected gendered roles and responsibilities in society. Gendered stereotypes are reinforced while using the language of empowerment.

Self-reliance and programs that encourage self-initiative should not be aborted. What I am suggesting, however, is that this peculiar attachment to self-reliance and its parallel anti-dependency crusade¹⁵ is part of a Western-driven, patriarchal bias of the hegemonic neo-liberal economic paradigm, the framework currently operating without much challenge, in the United States and in development practice generally. In keeping with the spirit of this entire dissertation, and certainly because policy-making is at stake, it is vital to look beyond the rhetoric of gender sensitive buzzwords and understand more fully what is being promoted and supported. The rhetoric is powerfully strong and very promising. The reality, however, may be less impressive, given these ideological currents.

Much more careful attention should be directed toward what groups are actually benefiting. Looking beyond repayment rates, other ways of measuring the success of these programs that accounts for some of the qualitative issues raised in this chapter should be included. What types of businesses are being created? Are the enterprises themselves sustainable, generating for these borrowers more than just a little profit or more debt? In what ways are they able to contribute to the betterment of the community? Are the borrowers empowered in ways other than economically? Is the time factor considered? Are there corollary mechanisms set up to protect borrowers economically, socially and psychologically, so they are not turned into overworked, overburdened entrepreneurs who internalize their own failure should this happen? Such considerations are important and they

¹⁵ The anti-dependency crusade, largely directed at the poor and at women, blurs our ability to recognize that we are all needy at certain points in our lives. Moreover, Leonard raises this point in the sense that the thrust toward independence is really transforming dependency on the State to dependency on the market. See Peter Leonard, *Postmodern Welfare: Reconstructing an Emancipatory Project* (London: Sage Publications, 1997).

must be addressed before the bandwagon continues to attract more policy makers and donors.

A further question that needs to be addressed is what the popularity of a program like Microcredit says about how “development” is defined. Turning people into entrepreneurs and self-employed workers in debt may only serve to intensify the primary development objective of creating the rest of the world in the image of the assumed First world. The consequence may be an overly narrow conception of what it means to be a “developed” society and what constitutes “progress”. Economically empowering women, if that is actually happening, means getting them involved in income generating activities, privileging the productive sphere, but does little to change the cultural practices of the gendered division of labor. How then, could this be truly empowering or emancipating? When empowerment is linked only to income generation, one's value and worth becomes reduced to income earning labor. Microcredit is symbolic of the strong ideological attachment of development to the primacy of unfettered capitalism, where humans are reduced merely to productive workers, in this case entrepreneurs. But is this development? Does this allow for the human to flourish?

If Microcredit projects were really about empowering women, as it is characterized, and reflected a gendered analysis, these programs would emphasize the following: cooperative enterprises with savings components, the gender relations within families and communities, and supporting ways to redefine the sexual division of labor and ensure that women were not overburdened with more and more responsibilities. Given that these are not the central concerns of most Microcredit projects, at least those attracting the notoriety and the funding, despite what its rhetoric claims, Microcredit is a good illustration of a WID program cloaked in GAD dressing. Women are brought into the global capitalist marketplace of goods and services and given access to credit, both a practical, but not strategic needs, and more reflective of a WID policy strategy than GAD. Notwithstanding such limitations, Microcredit has become very popular as a development program, partly

through rhetorical strategies designed to characterize it as an escape from the assumed dependency promulgated by past development efforts.

CHAPTER SEVEN

DEVELOPMENT AS HUMAN FLOURISHING: TOWARD A POLITICAL CULTURE OF CARE

Chapter Summaries

One of the overriding claims of the entire dissertation is that development theory has suffered from an impoverished understanding of what ostensibly comprises the “good life”. As outlined in Chapter Two, throughout much of its history, the primary, though unstated objective of development policies and practices has been to create the rest of the world in the image of the First World, particularly the United States, presumably the most “developed” country. The continued utilization of measures such as GDP as indicative of successful development justifies this image. Even attempts to expand the definitions of development to include non-economic measures such as literacy rates and life span have not altered the paramount commitment to economic growth, productivity, and accumulation as the best measures of the good life. The consequence is an overly narrow conception of what it means to be a “developed” society and what constitutes “progress”. That conceptions of the good life might be separated from growth and accumulation is virtually non-existent in development theory.

Analyzing the development process in the way presented here allows some important, yet ambiguous conclusions. Clearly, development has been an ideological concept ever since its institutionalization in national and international policy making. For most of its history, the concept of development has been reduced to economic growth, as a measure of its success and definition of its intended ends. The concern for economic growth has dominated not only the definition of development, but all of its associated corollaries—how poverty and underdevelopment are understood, the roles of the individual and the state, and our visions and values of what defines the good life. Even purportedly “alternative” concepts of development have been squarely about economic growth. These ideas have all been articulated in the preceding chapters.

At the same time as this narrow notion of development has dominated and been institutionalized, the rhetoric surrounding development has shifted. For this reason, studying the dialectic relationship between the rhetoric of what is said and written and the reality of what is implemented is so important. While the rhetoric of development organizations and their mandates has shifted to include subordinate interests, the ideological connection between development and economic growth is still paramount. The dominant paradigm has been able to maintain its legitimacy and hegemony through the adoption and incorporation of alternative values into its rhetoric. The problems of legitimation and co-optation as a consequence of capitalist bureaucratization has been a central concern of sociology, in general, not only in the context of women and development.

In Chapter Two I argued that economic growth has been central to the way development is conceptualized from the birth of development as an “industry”. Modernization theory was the first expression of this ideology, and theoretical critiques have mostly failed to establish a truly different way of defining development. Dependency theory was a very significant contribution in its critique of capitalist development, in understanding the processes by which some countries have “developed”, while others have not. However, dependency theory did not sufficiently question the orthodox concept of development. In fact, like Modernization theory, it offered a teleological definition, wherein development was assumed to include the characteristics of the First World. The Basic Needs approach, which was more a strategy than a theoretical model, was eventually dismissed because of the difficulty in fitting it into quantifiable categories of measurements and projections.

Sustainable development and WID, both evolving from the Basic Needs approach, exemplified the pattern by which marginal ideas become institutionalized because of the need for legitimacy, but as the ideas become formalized, they end up losing their radical thrust. In both cases, the rhetoric shifted, putting forth ideas that came from the environmental and women’s movements respectively, but at the core, the practices were

consistent with the emphasis on economic growth and productivity, what I have called the capitalist modernization project. Yet, the story does not end there. As I showed in Chapter Two, periodic moments disrupted the hegemony of capitalist modernization, especially in its neo-liberal form. Several “insiders” have leveled critical indictments of the paradigm, as we saw in the case of Joseph Stiglitz, formerly of the World Bank, and George Soros, a well-known financier. In addition, protests from those outside the dominant institutions continue at meetings of the institutional representatives who manage global development processes. The more dominant and publicly visible an institution is, the more vulnerable it is to public censure. The possibility for real change in thought and practice thus exists, however slowly. The hegemony of development as economic growth is neither static, nor unchangeable. While dominance is maintained through co-optation, small and important changes do occur.

Such small, but significant changes were presented in several of the previous chapters. Throughout its history, the Women in Development (WID) approach has made important contributions, not the least of which is a greater body of statistical information and general knowledge about women and the development process. The commitment of WID scholars and activists led to the establishment of institutions, such as UNIFEM, and the support of the UN to hold international conferences on women and women’s concerns. These events, I suggest, have been both a product of and a source for a strengthened global women’s movement, which has fostered a greater consciousness among the vast range of development workers about women and their varying roles, needs, concerns, and experiences.

I characterize these contributions as “small, but significant” because I reject the idea that nothing has changed, despite the constancy of economic imperatives controlling development practices. At the same time, given their limitations, ideological and bureaucratic, it is impossible for WID theories, institutions, frameworks, and programs to radically alter the development process. It has been the task of this project to sort out the

ideological parameters and the bureaucratic tendencies in the context of a disjuncture between the rhetoric of what is said and the reality of what is done.

At the theoretical level, WID is limited by several inter-related factors. One is its own liberal biases which, at least initially, retained and reproduced the emphasis on productivity and economic growth. Institutional resistance toward the ideas generated throughout the WID community was especially targeted at the more challenging approaches, in particular, equity and empowerment. Such resistance led to the replacement by less threatening orientations of anti-poverty and efficiency, which were more aligned with the practices of the mainstream development agencies. Thus, while the work of the WID movement is largely responsible for the shift in the development rhetoric to include gender and empowerment, much of development practices have not changed. The shift in rhetoric has been a way for the mainstream institutions to maintain the hegemony of its interests.

The theoretical base of GAD, with its focus on the social construction of gender and gendered relations may be more challenging to the dominant paradigm, which has settled for bringing women in. However, the needs of analyzing and altering gendered relations do not coincide with current programming demands, with regard to the pressures for “results” in short time spans. Furthermore it necessitates influencing cultural changes between the genders, to which mainstream institutions like the World Bank and UN agencies are unwilling to undertake. The likely result has been that the least subversive aspects of GAD have been appropriated by the institutions and co-opted. The language of “gender” is used pervasively, but stripped from its core meaning of gendered relations. Gender has become the newest way to speak of women in a way to quell the continued resistance from the global women’s movement. Furthermore, the fact that some WID advocates and practitioners fear that “Gender” will ultimately undermine the importance of “women” is evidence that its practical use is substantially different from its progressive origins.

A similar situation of inter-related factors are evident at the level of policy making. For this, an analysis of the four UN conferences on women was particularly helpful. The

institutional arrangements guiding these conferences, as well as the conference mandates themselves limit the capacity to implement substantial changes. First, the conference documents suffer from their own limitations. They are consensus documents--products of carefully constructed political spectacles that attempt to fulfill the needs and interests of a variety of different parties and interests. One intrinsic quality of the documents is that they don't say all that much concretely. They are purposefully vague, especially when it comes to implementing changes. This ambiguity allows institutions, whether development agencies, nation-states, or NGOs, to avoid accountability. If directions are not clarified, it is difficult to be held responsible for what does not get accomplished. At the same time, obscure or unclear language is used to evade criticism from ideological opponents. In Chapter Four, I presented the example regarding language describing sexual orientation in the Beijing Platform for Action. Since an important role of the UN is to mediate ideological conflict between nation-states, the documents produced purposefully avoid controversial language. The language was vague enough so that it could be interpreted according to varying ideological positions, without interfering with the passage and acceptance of the document. This is an important function since such passage is a key measure of the success of the conference.

Yet, while the conference and conference documents are necessarily limited, they are also a source of leverage for NGOs and other organizations to pressure governments to change or alter policies. The conferences and the pledges that governments make, while not legally binding, affects programming. They have also helped to raise the consciousness about women's lives both within and without the global women's movement. The point is that though we cannot expect them to be concrete and unambiguous, they are nonetheless important reflections of (and producers of) the changing rhetoric of the development discourse and the bureaucratic limitations of the development practice.

The institutional level offers additional insight, especially in the case of UNIFEM. As shown in Chapter Five, UNIFEM is a symbol of WID activism, a direct result of

agreements decided upon at the First Conference on Women in Mexico City. UNIFEM both counters conventional development practice and reproduces it. It is positioned and positions itself at the radical edge of the UN, but at the same time is also part of the UN system. In fact, it must become more institutionalized since its legitimacy and visibility are necessary to maintain its relevance. But as it becomes more formalized, more part of the process, it becomes more like the other mainstream institutions in fundamentally important ways. Conforming to a results-based management system ensures that a truly “gendered” orientation is not implemented. Relying on vague and empty rhetoric to describe its objectives and goals allows it to escape criticism from mainstream institutions from which its legitimacy is derived. Employing neo-liberal language and symbols further protects it from such scrutiny. Given these limitations, the best description for UNIFEM would be a term I have created called “bureaucratized activism”. In relation to mainstream development organizations, UNIFEM stands on the margins. But as a part of the United Nations system, its challenges to the development process are mitigated.

Chapter Six provided a close look at how the ideological and bureaucratic forces affect the construction and implementation of a particular development program. One important outcome of WID research was the recognition that women needed access to credit. Its roots can be found in the WID anti-poverty policy approach, but became a much more popular program among mainstream development agencies emphasizing the efficiency approach. As it has spread, it has incorporated the language of empowerment, so that access to credit has become aligned with furthering the empowerment of women. Ideologically, Microcredit shares many precepts with capitalist modernization and patriarchy. Central to its appeal is a shared disdain for dependency and over-emphasis on self-reliance that is at the core of neo-liberal economic ideology. Entrepreneurship is the promoted value, consistent with self-reliance, and represents an updated Rostowian value that is seen as necessary for development. Thus, the empowerment that credit is supposed to bring about is reduced to an economic pursuit—the ability to become a self-reliant entrepreneur. Thus

Microcredit reproduces traditional notions of development as economic growth, ignoring structural causes and conditions of poverty. In Microcredit terminology, the individual is central to eradicating poverty.

In addition to its capitalist ideology, an analysis of Microcredit also reveals its affinity with patriarchal ideology. The reasons for targeting women are consistent with traditional patriarchal notions of women, men and their assumed societal roles and responsibilities. That is, women are presumed to be more trustworthy, responsible and naturally more concerned with the welfare of their children. Loans are given to women because it is believed that their intrinsic nature will lead to higher repayment rates, thus making the program more “successful” and increasing its legitimacy. There appears to be little concern with the impact of these loans on women’s actual lives. Are they merely more burdened with more responsibilities to bring their families out of poverty? What aspects about their everyday lives have been improved? Are they borrowing money from other sources to pay back the microcredit loans, furthering their debt cycle to family or moneylenders? What impact are these enterprises having on the local economy? What does this so-called empowerment really look like?

Because of an unwillingness of development agencies to disrupt “cultural” traditions, the implementation of Microcredit can ignore certain shortfalls. For example, research has shown that male relatives often take over the loans and/or the enterprises (Goetz and Gupta 1996). More recent findings have suggested that there is an increase of physical aggression or violence toward women borrowers by male relatives (Rahman 1998,1999). In addition, there is no indication that there have been any substantive changes in the sexual division of labor. These examples reveal deeply entrenched systems of gender inequality, the existence of which certainly questions the “empowerment” that Microcredit is purportedly bringing to women. And they remain in the area of “culture”, which development institutions claim they are unwilling to disturb. Yet, it is rather curious that such concerns over disrupting cultural traditions do not seem so great when implementation

of programs encourage cultural values and practices such as self reliance, competition, and the profit motive where they may not have existed before. Why should gender inequality remain so 'sacred'? Thus, there is much to suggest that though the language is empowerment, patriarchal relations are either ignored or protected.

As I have shown in Chapter Six, alternative Microcredit programs do exist. There are small-scale programs that promote collective enterprises, where the decisions are made by the women borrowers. In these programs, groups are encouraged to work together keeping true to the idea of "solidarity", rather than creating groups just for the sake of ensuring loan repayment, which ends up fostering competition and resentment. There are programs that focus more on saving than on loaning, that try to ensure that all women are being included, not just the less poor, and where the money generated is used for the benefit of the community rather than for individual attainment.

Unfortunately programs like these are not the ones that are being promoted in the meeting halls of the World Bank, the UN, or even the Grameen Bank. These are not the programs that are featured in newspaper articles around the country, or the ones that are touted by heads of state. The fact that Microcredit is getting as popular as it is, and becoming more legitimized as a development program is precisely because its characteristics are much more consistent with mainstream development ideology and institutional requirements. In this way, Microcredit suffers from the same fate as the more challenging WID policy objectives like equity and anti-poverty, as well as institutions like UNIFEM. The more attention they are granted, the more funding and support they receive, the more formalized they become, the more consistent they are with the imperatives of the mainstream agenda of the capitalist modernization project. The rhetoric may be exciting, innovative and give the impression that the concerns of those on the outside are being considered and implemented. Under closer scrutiny, however, this turns out not to be the case. What evolves is something very different. There is even evidence that some of the early, more

innovative aspects of the Grameen Bank programs have been dropped as the program has become more institutionalized.

This research project was an exploration into the arena of women and development, looking at three levels of analysis, with a keen eye toward the separation between the rhetoric and the reality. In carrying out such an undertaking, the conclusions reveal more about the process of bureaucratization under capitalist-driven relations of power, than anything else. That is, in order for ideas which challenge the mainstream to become recognized enough to make an impact, they must be legitimized by the dominant powers. But that often entails a process of rationalization, institutionalization and co-optation. In order for the dominant powers to maintain their hegemony they need to bring in the subversive ideas and incorporate them. This gives the impression that the dominant groups are responding to the needs of the subordinate ones, though it is primarily an illusion papered over by a shift in rhetoric. What results is a watered-down version of the once radical ideas, more consistent with the dominant or mainstream agenda.

As I have stated several times, at this point, it is difficult to find mainstream development agencies that do not include “gender”, “sustainability”, even “human rights”, in their policy and programming prescriptions. In many ways, they sound very similar to the NGOs and grassroots organizations that have for so long been marginalized. Two interrelated processes can explain this, and I have shown these processes in the previous chapters. On the one hand, by incorporating the rhetoric of the excluded, it allows the mainstream institutions to circumvent their critics. There is an impression given that the mainstream institutions are at last hearing the voices of those from outside. The language is not merely incorporated, but it is also co-opted. For example, as a way to eschew any structural critique of power and inequality between nations in the development process, the mainstream organizations use the rhetoric of “local”, “indigenous”, “self-reliance”, or “people- centered” development which keeps the focus on the individual, evading the

structural context. So behind the rhetoric is a deeply held commitment to development as economic growth. This is clearly the case with Microcredit.

At the same time, as alternative ideas become formalized and institutionalized, which is required to gain recognition, support and legitimacy, there is a tendency for such ideas to lose their counter-hegemonic emphasis. So the ideas that end up becoming implemented are at best reformist, but very different than their origins. This was shown to be the case with regard to the conference documents and UNIFEM.

In addition to these two important patterns, there are of course, the problems inherent in capitalist development. That is, if it is capitalism that is sought, which it is in the case of development as I have shown, then it will produce the myriad of contradictions that Marx, the dependistas and others have captured. Most important, the overdevelopment of some will result from the underdevelopment of many, which has been a historical constant and continues to affect the power relations between nations.

*The Political Culture of Care:
A Feminist Challenge to Development Theory*

I conclude with a presentation of an alternative view of development that moves away from the narrow economic meanings, and instead, identifies and incorporates other aspects of human experiences. To do so, I shall draw on Feminist theory, particularly the body of work on "Care"¹ to provide a theoretical challenge to the dominant discourse and practice. Such theory questions the gender-neutral notion of the rational actor² and the apparent universality of development as economic growth and accumulation that underlies so much of the development policy implemented throughout the world. A thoughtful, critical

¹ I am largely drawing on feminist theories of Care and Motherhood, specifically the work of Joan Tronto, Sara Ruddick and Barbara Katz Rothman whose works will be discussed later in the chapter.

² The idea that the individual is a rational being, able to make decisions based upon his or her calculations of maximizing benefits and minimizing costs. See Ferber and Nelson (1993).

challenge is necessary for scholars, practitioners and activists striving to create and implement progressive and sustainable social and economic policies.

A feminist interpretation provides a new way to re-define development. As was argued above, feminist scholars and activists internationally have struggled to alter development thinking and practice since the 1970s. The goals for these struggles included recognizing women as important actors in the development process as well as identifying the many ways in which women's lives have been disrupted by development policies and programs. As I have argued in earlier chapters, simply bringing women into the development process is not enough. Rather, it is necessary to transform the way in which we think about development and what a developed society is and should be. We need to move beyond limited and unchallenged determinants of growth and development, reflecting upon how these tools are utilized in policy formation in both the First and Third worlds. A theory and practice based on feminist principles is necessary, but the change must be substantive, not merely rhetorical.

Drawing on feminist theories of care, as well as some of the writings of Aristotle and Karl Marx, I suggest rethinking development as Human Flourishing, with the accompanying societal ethic identified as a Political Culture of Care. Human flourishing, a term borrowed from Aristotle³ comes from his concept of *eudaimonia*, which is central to living a good life. A flourishing life is said to consist of pleasure, honor, and virtue, all of which come out of habit-- of doing and of action. To enhance Aristotle's notion of flourishing, I incorporate Marx's concept of species-being, which is related to the notion of individual potential, whereby individuals are capable of conscious, imaginative thought and action.⁴ Development as human flourishing means that the individual is supported

³ See Aristotle, *The Nichomachean Ethics*. Translated by D. Ross (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980).

⁴ See Karl Marx, "Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts" in Robert C. Tucker, ed. *The Marx-Engels Reader*, 2nd edition (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1978).

institutionally and ideologically to advance in ways that is healthy for herself, her family, her community and her society. Our current visions of development usually embody the material and technological gains that the First World person is assumed to have experienced. Development as human flourishing allows us to see the limitations of this version of development— economically and politically, ecologically and culturally.

Such a notion of development must be supported by what I have called here a **Political Culture of Care**. The **Political Culture of Care** is a political, economic, social and moral commitment at both the ideological and institutional levels, where the development of the individual presupposes the development of all individuals. It counters the prevailing development ethic based on a zero-sum calculation, which fosters hyper-individuality and competition, supported by masculine-derived notions of the autonomous individual. The **Political Culture of Care** challenges the traditional development discourse and its assumptions that human beings have natural inclinations to accumulate and to compete, and refutes the largely misunderstood belief that individuals need a system (capitalism) which encourages competition. Conventional theories suggest that without a system that inspires competition, both individuals and society will regress or remain in some undeveloped state. Furthermore, a scarcity of resources is taken for granted, where the gains for one, means a loss for others, ever intensifying the competition. The **Political Culture of Care** confronts these theories by allowing us to rethink the way humans really relate in a truly developed society.

I have pulled together a variety of critical perspectives on conventional notions of development and the term **Political Culture of Care** is my own synthesis. The **Political Culture of Care** is a rhetorical banner under which lies not only a critical standpoint, but also a site from where development policy could be advanced. It is important to add that a rethinking of development policy that incorporates the **Political Culture of Care** is warranted not only for the assumed developing world, but for countries like the United States as well. That is, those of us in the First World should perhaps reconsider what it means to be a

developed society and what visions of progress are upheld. This may become clearer to us through the adoption of the principles in the Political Culture of Care presented here. This feminist inspired paradigm would not only curtail the destruction that current development practice has wrought in the Third World, but would enable development as human flourishing to be realized wherever it is operationalized.

*Feminist Theories on Care:
Care as Ethic, Experience and Action*

Joan Tronto's Moral Boundaries: A Political Argument for an Ethic of Care offers a very useful elaboration of care. She defines caring as,

a species activity that includes everything that we do to maintain, continue and repair our 'world' so that we can live in it as well as possible. That world includes our bodies, our selves and our environment, all of which we seek to interweave in a complex, life-sustaining web (1993:103).

This working definition has an obvious connection to Marx's discussion of species-being in which human beings discover their identity and consciousness through activities with others. Included in the features of care are four elements. Tronto's first tenet is that care and care activities are not restricted to human interaction with others since one could care for herself, for her work, hobbies, pets, and the environment. Second, caring is not necessarily dyadic or individualistic, but social. Third, people universally need care, but the specific needs vary across cultures as well as at different historic moments. Finally, care is ongoing as well as a single activity. At times it results in an outcome or a product; at other times care is a process.

Drawing on Tronto's definitions of care, the Political Culture of Care and thus human flourishing includes a revaluing of virtuous activities and experiences that feminists have brought to our attention, such as friendship and mothering. Here I employ Sara Ruddick's (1989) meaning of mothering, as a particular set of rational, conscious care-taking practices. Ruddick's treatment of mothering is non-essentializing, explaining that both women and men could "mother". In this way, when men "mother" they are forced to

confront their own cultural fears of becoming feminized or demasculinized, debunking the myths surrounding these social constructions.

Experiences such as mothering and friendship embody Marx's conception of the individual as a social being, but goes beyond understanding this social being in the context of productive labor. In fact, the focus on care allows us to examine and appreciate the every day reproductive labor and practices which are often overlooked or glorified in their emotional and private forms. In our treatment of care, there is a tendency to exalt the care a mother is expected to give to a child, sentimentalize the care of the family, and idealize the caring for others during holidays or disasters. In the process of this idealization, care and care labor are devalued and understanding how they operate at the every day level is mystified. Tronto suggests that to avoid this, more attention should be paid to the power dimensions of care. By not noticing the importance and significance of care and care labor, people of privilege--those usually cared for-- are able to devalue activities of care and those who give care, thereby maintaining their privilege. This may not be a deliberate action of the privileged, but a by-product of two qualities valued in US society: individualism and autonomy. As Tronto suggests, where care is devalued and contained, it poses no threat to how we construct the social order.

Care is both rational and emotional, bridging the gap between the spheres of feeling, thought and action. Sara Ruddick argues that maternal care is "an ongoing, organized set of activities that require discipline and active attention"(1989:50). Tronto suggests that care is both a disposition and a practice. Rothman and Rich urge us to think of motherhood and caring as experiences (Rothman 1989; Rich 1986). In different ways these theorists view care as both labor and experience, demanding self-reflection, rational thought as well as emotional attention, characteristics that are not merely "productive". Speaking particularly of a redefined motherhood, Barbara Katz Rothman suggests:

We can focus on nurturance, caring, human relations. We can come to accept and to respect a wider variety of family relationships and arrangements. Those qualities we have come to think of as maternal could become more widely shared, by both men and women. We

could direct this nurturance, this maternal caring, not just to children, but to each other. The values and the experience of motherhood could come to shape the way we live in the world. That is, I suppose, the fantasy, the truly revolutionary potential of a recreated motherhood (1989: 23).

As this passage highlights, the practice of caring could affect the way we organize social life, perhaps no longer glorifying rigid independence, efficiency, bottom line costs and benefits nor merely idealizing the care that does occur. Throughout society, we would rebuild institutions and workplace cultures to reflect our commitment to a Political Culture of Care. Such a change would affect our very notions of what a developed society is and what progress should be. Moreover, Care as action is a universally important and necessary virtue, in the Aristotelian sense. In this way, a Political Culture of Care is a necessary means to attain a level of human flourishing, as an “end” of development.

I identify care as a feminist ethic, not because women are assumed to be naturally better at caring practices, or even because care has evolved in the private sphere of women. Rather, care is a feminist idea because it demands a revaluing of what has been marginalized and devalued by patriarchal capitalism. Care represents the antithesis of what is considered virtuous: individuality, efficiency, and rationality. Care insists on interdependency and affective and emotive responses. The thinking and actions of care are not *a priori* feminine or womanly. Caring is thus gender-less despite the way that it has operated historically. Men are fully capable of caring activities and of caring thought which go beyond the financial care expected of them as income providers. In a Political Culture of Care, societal expectations are placed on men as well as women to engage, initiate, and incorporate care and care activities as central principles and practices of social life. Thus, women and men should support institutional changes that would allow women and men to share equally in care activities.

An important consequence of care is the promotion of equality. That is to say, care as a dominant ethic of our culture would enable social beings to make choices and increase the options from which to choose. In a Political Culture of Care, where caring practices are

expected of men as they are for women, male privilege in the public and private spheres would erode. If men and women were equally expected and supported to carry out the necessary reproductive labor, everything from child-care to gathering fuel, the oppressive sexual division of labor found throughout many societies would be dramatically transformed, enabling true human flourishing to emerge.

Some Problems with Care

The definition of care on which the Political Culture of Care is based, reflects the ideas just mentioned. Care is a practice, an experience, and it has political, economic and social implications. It is something we are all in need to receive and give at different points in our lives. A Political Culture of Care necessitates a re-distributing and revaluing of both care receiving and care giving. Care requires thinking and logic as well as feeling and sensation as it is an intrinsic part of being human. These aspects of care enhance our own development as individuals and as a society.

The emphasis on care, however, has not been fully embraced by all feminists for some very good reasons. Some feminists have argued that the care discourse tends to reduce women to creatures of the family (Dietz 1985), or that it carries moralizing tones of normative behavior where traditional notions of patriarchy remain intact. Moreover, the discourse on care has suffered from essentializing women as care-takers, often linked to biological rationalizations, overlooking many of the social conditioning which may be attributed to certain dispositions and behaviors (Noddings 1984). For other feminists, care is said to be oppressive or exploitative, especially given the gendered, classed and racialized ways in which care operates in our society (Houston 1990; Tronto 1993).

Tronto emphasizes that not all care is good care. That is, some care, may be smothering care, selfish care, or paternalistic care. For an example of paternalistic care, many First World development practitioners claim that they care about the people in the Third World. Institutions express care and concern for eradicating poverty in many public

documents. According to Tronto, such care may be bad if it does not really meet the needs of the recipients. That is, good care is care that responds to the needs of others. Thus, people from the Third World, as well as marginalized groups in the First World, need to play central roles in policy formation concerning the creation and implementation of development programs that affect them. Remembering what was uncovered in Chapters Three, Four and Five, the pattern has been that when marginalized ideas become mainstreamed, they become co-opted. Perhaps if the structures that frame these processes were altered, as they would be under a Political Culture of Care, such patterns would cease.

Fortunately, many feminists who are writing on care, especially those influenced by concerns of difference and identity, have put forth a more sophisticated analysis, emphasizing the way care operates in society. Tronto argues, "...if we look at questions of race, class and gender, we notice that those who are least well off in society are disproportionately those who do the work of caring, and that the best off members of society often use their positions of superiority to pass caring off to others" (1993:113). Whether household or office cleaners, child-care workers in private homes or day care facilities, much of the caring labor in most societies is done by women, racial minorities and the working poor. If care is to be used properly as an analytic category, we must be well informed about how it functions in the political economy of everyday life.

Perhaps one of the most powerful criticisms of care as an operating principle in defining the good life is its assumed restriction on personal liberty and freedom. It is not difficult to imagine how care can be confining and at times even repressive. If care requires that we consider ourselves only in the context of considering others, our individuality and self-expression may be suppressed. Caring for others may not be enjoyable or pleasurable, but rather burdensome. Yet, even given these qualifications, there are good reasons why we should embrace care. First of all, care does not necessarily reject nor negate autonomy, self-interest, or personal satisfaction as worthy endeavors. Rather, a focus on care may encourage a close examination of the kinds of liberties and freedoms we do have, allowing

us to identify what we give up for those freedoms. Many argue that in a “free society”, one has the freedom to consume whatever is on the market, but that freedom is not without a cost to the sustainability of the environment, or the exploitation of those who make this consumption and accumulation possible. In the United States, for example, many of our guaranteed freedoms are confined to the political realm. The right of assembly and the right to vote in frequent and fair elections, for example are important and tangible symbols of democracy. However, what is often missing from our list of liberties, symbolic or real, are certain economic rights: the right to a job, a home, food and health care. We justify these absences by our beliefs in the independent, rational individual, who has the ability and freedom to ‘develop’ oneself. If one does not, it is the fault or limitations of that individual and the system is left unscathed. In our acceptance of competition as the fairest of ethics, supported by the assumption that individuals are innately competitive and self-interested, our liberal notions of freedom and democracy are reproduced.

Although the tension between care and individuality may not be easily resolved, we may recognize the importance of the tension and act in ways that does not deny the importance of one over the other. A Political Culture of Care includes redefining the individual as a social being, interdependent with others and connected to those of future generations. In doing so, it transgresses the sanctity of the individual embodied in mainstream economic theory underlying much of the development policy in the Third World, as well as in the social policy of the United States. Yet, it is actually more consistent with the experiences that all human beings have in the course of their lives. Care is a universal need, and so necessary for human flourishing. A tempered individuality where care predominates could help to bring about a more humane world.

Recognizing these tensions, a consciously constructed care, provides a critical reconstitution of current notions of development and progress. Care is operating at the level of ideology, framing our thoughts and ideas, and translating them into certain political, economic, moral and cultural practices. This occurs throughout the society-- at the macro

level of major societal institutions as well as the micro level of the every day life of the social being. The call to development practitioners then, is not only to reconsider their fundamental ideas, but to alter the ideological and structural premises upon which policy is generated, which would reflect new and more humane visions of progress, in reality, not just merely in rhetoric. Some ideas are offered later on in this chapter.

The Dialectics of Care: Care under Capitalism

In many respects, Care seems antithetical to capitalism as the needs of care envisioned as the highest social goal. These needs outweigh all others, especially those necessary for the reproduction of Capital, the pursuit of profit. However, the relationship between Care and Capitalism is more complex than this. Obviously, care exists and functions in capitalist society, but it is often co-opted, commodified, and devalued. Care is ignored in market ideology, but at the same time it is used by the market, even deformed by it. Capitalism utilizes instrumental care, but ignores and marginalizes, or glorifies the emotional and affective aspects of care. Capitalism cannot bring about care, but it is very successful in identifying the need for it. In this way, capitalism uses care to counter the very alienation that it produces. So, the market relies upon and uses an idealized notion of care through commodification. This is care in its bastardized form—where we are given romanticized versions of care that have somehow been lost through ‘modernization’ and ‘progress’, and are offered various types of products which promise to fill the void that has been created. Thus, capitalism co-opts an ethic of care, subverts it, but at the same time acknowledges the underlying need for it.

Furthermore, in a political-economic system where the product matters more than the process, value is granted only on what has a neat, efficient endpoint. The value in relationships is often seen instrumentally, not as a process. Care, however, often cannot be reducible to a product, it is much more a process—ongoing and non-tangible. Thus, it becomes very difficult to quantify, measure, and calculate care. In a Political Culture of

Care what is non-quantifiable, non-measurable, and non-countable would matter. It would be valued and included in what represents development and progress. This becomes particularly important in the context of development, when charts and measures are used on every page to determine the development status of a country, area, or region. What this implies, of course, is that some aspects of Human Flourishing may not be able to be measured in conventional ways. In other words, while economic growth, technological capability, and level of industrial output are important quantifiable measures in determining economic growth, qualitative assessments of health services and education in a social-political environment which nurtures self-respect and care would be just as central to a meaning and practice of development.

Care in Development Thinking and Practice

There has not been much discussion about care in the development discourse. Until recently it has been a rather marginalized area of concern within Feminism and Sociology. Despite this absence, the most explicit argument representing a Political Culture of Care comes out of the work of DAWN, the international feminist collective mentioned in Chapter Three. As the following passage demonstrates, their alternative vision of development is very consistent with what I am proposing in this chapter.

We want a world where inequality based on class, gender, and race is absent from every country, and from the relationships from countries. We want a world where basic needs become basic rights and where poverty and all forms of violence are eliminated. Each person will have the opportunity to develop her or his full potential and creativity, and women's values of nurturance and solidarity will characterize human relationships. In such a world women's reproductive role will be redefined: child care will be shared by men, women and society as a whole. We want a world where the massive resources now used in the production of the means of destruction will be diverted to areas where they will help to relieve oppression both inside and outside the home. This technological revolution will eliminate disease and hunger, and give women means for the safe control of their fertility. We want a world where all institutions are open to participatory democratic processes, where women share in determining priorities and making decisions (Sen and Grown 1987:80)

Eradicating systems of inequality, including care as a universal basic need, re-distributing necessary resources, valuing care and interdependency—these are all facets of a Political Culture of Care, and they are necessary for the realization of human flourishing.

If we keep this passage in mind when evaluating a development program like Microcredit, it resolutely falls very short of creating the possibility for the realization of human flourishing. Though the rhetorical claims accompanying this program may be a concern for the empowerment of women to realize their potential, the way in which it is currently being implemented in most cases does not make this likely. Focusing on the demands embodied in a Political Culture of Care help to clarify the limitations of Microcredit. For Microcredit to truly represent a mechanism of the Political Culture of Care, it would need to be accompanied by substantive empowerment, not only economic, but social and personal. A greater emphasis on collective enterprises is required where people would be encouraged to work with each other in their entrepreneurial activities, rather than in competition. Moreover, there would need to be a dramatic change in the perception of women's worth. Reducing women to preferred "clients" while idealizing traditional gendered relations is not likely to foster their flourishing. It is not enough to target women and claim that development is making progressive steps toward "bringing women in". A gendered analysis must be employed, and certainly women and men should not be pitted against each other over resources intensifying already institutionalized gender power dynamics.

Additionally, Microcredit programs would have to include the expansion of social safety nets, like locally defined child-care arrangements and access to quality health care. As it stands now, with its emphasis on individuality, competition and self-reliance, Microcredit is essentially "development as usual", attempting to transform people into the assumed "developed" individuals -- glorifying entrepreneurship, while ignoring the underlying ideologies and the burdens they create.

Interestingly, the discourse on care has recently entered into the mainstream development agenda. In the 1999 Human Development Report which focused on globalization, there was an entire chapter devoted to care and the global economy, where it was written, “Globalization is putting a squeeze on care and caring labour” (UNDP 1999: 77). The economic, political and cultural changes that have accompanied globalization were seen as altering the way caring is practiced both outside and inside the market. The unpaid care work that women often do is more difficult with the growing demands for their paid employment. And the emphases placed on efficiency and cost analysis have altered the quality of care that is purchased in the marketplace.

Attention to care and care labor has been generated predominantly by feminists, who have demonstrated that throughout the history of capitalism, economic progress has been realized by the exploitation of women’s unpaid reproductive labor. That such ideas are being expressed in mainstream development publications is quite important. The recognition that the changing economic, political and cultural landscapes due to globalization, is having an impact on the distribution of care is a significant departure from earlier analyses. Though these attempts are important, the focus on care seems to be primarily in terms of labor, and the rationale seems to stress its importance to economic growth. For example, the report mentioned a few times that care is “essential for economic sustainability” (UNDP 1999:77) or that the lack of care “not only destroys human development—it also undermines economic growth” (UNDP 1999: 79). Several times throughout the chapter, it was claimed that there needs to be more societal support for men sharing in the caring labor that is required. Unfortunately, policy ideas for implementation included “incentives and rewards for caring work, both paid and unpaid, to increase its supply and quality”. Again, while it is important that the idea of disrupting the unequal gendered division of care labor has entered the mainstream, it is clearly connected to conventional economic means of deriving value.

So far, much of the policy discussions around care revolve around the exclusion of the unpaid care labor in national statistics of productivity. In part this concentration reflects the emphasis by feminists who desired to put women's unpaid work on the agenda. The System of National Accounts (SNA), first established by the United Nations in 1953, is used to measure economic activity in a country and summarize it in terms of Gross National Product (GNP). The SNA views a national economy as "a circular flow of labor, goods and services and money, operating to produce and distribute marketed commodities (both goods and services)" (Elson 2000: 22), separating "economic", remunerative activities from the non-economic, non-remunerative activities generated in the home. In 1993, the SNA was updated by the UN to include all production of goods, whether intended for sale or for consumption in the GNP. This would include formerly "non-productive" activities like the gathering of uncultivated crops, foresting, wood cutting, collecting fuel and water, hunting and fishing, weaving cloth, dress-making, and pottery.

While these changes could dramatically affect how measures of development are generated, it has been found that despite the changes, household subsistence production is still ignored in practice, as survey questions have not been sufficiently re-worked (Elson 2000:23). Thus, care labor activities-- cooking, cleaning, looking after children, the sick and elderly, and providing emotional needs for family and community members, continue to be discounted and undervalued. However, this presents a dilemma. How do we appropriately make these labor practices "count", which is still the only way to make them important and valued. While for many of these labor activities, monetary values could be generated based upon what they are worth in the marketplace. However, in doing so, care labor is transformed into a commodity, rather than a culture of care affecting how value is determined. As Elson says, "it reinforces the tendency for more and more of life to be brought within the scope of the market and reduce the care that women provide their families to just another commodity" (2000:24).

Thus, the discussion of care represents yet another good example of the co-optation of counter-hegemonic ideas as they become mainstreamed. It seems as though in order to legitimize the attention toward care, which seems inherently at odds with economic growth, it has to be framed in the context of how it could contribute to growth. In order to bring in unconventional ideas, they must be dressed in conventional clothing. Thus, development remains attached to growth. So, while this new attention to care is important and necessary it is not sufficient. Perhaps a Political Culture of Care, in calling for both major ideological and institutional change, could resolve some of these limitations.

Operationalizing the Political Culture of Care in Development Policy

What would it look like if we transformed our notions of care and placed them in context of development theory? What role can care play in the development discourse and practice? With the ideological privileging of market productivity and transaction, individualism, autonomy, and their associations with progress and freedom, care gets further lost in the development process. The beneficiaries -- or in the language of, 'clients' -- are encouraged to become copies of the already developed, independent, autonomous individuals of the West (and North).⁵ Normally, the development discourse looks to the Third World in its conversations about development, reproducing a system of thought where First World countries are uncritically considered developed societies, and Third World countries are labeled as in need of development. An analysis of operationalizing a Political Culture of Care challenges these associations and considers that the First World, especially the United States, may not have realized the notion of development as human flourishing that I have outlined here. Rather than continuing to fashion the rest of the world in the image of the United States, the Political Culture of Care assists us to think reflexively and critically about how we ought to define progress in every society.

⁵ That is, those individuals in the middle income and wealthy classes.

The Political Culture of Care includes both an ideological and institutional commitment to reproducing social life that is non-exploitative and non-alienating. Social beings would meet one another not as isolated competitive entities, but as interdependent and relational beings, connected by the understanding that we are at some points in our lives in need of care of others. There is a consciousness, similar in potency to the consciousness of the market as panacea, that some in society will require more care than others, more of the time. Care becomes one of the primary ways in which we meet one another morally. Reactions and responses are based ultimately on this caring ethic rather than the self-interested, profit maximization ethic operating in the United States. Current societally shared mantras including “out for myself”, “get what I deserve”, “take care of my own”, “do what I need to get ahead...” would confront responses of care, rather than go unchallenged.

The implementation of a Political Culture of Care demands that certain definable aspects to life are not neglected nor disavowed in the pursuit of a development based on the idea that profit maximization represents progress. Environmental preservation, health, education, worker-safety, community life, and other activities and experiences relating to care would have full consideration and respect in policy formation. Ultimately, implementation of the Political Culture of Care would result in the dismantling of power relations that produce and are reproduced by sexism, racism, ageism, xenophobia, and the like. In this sense, the Political Culture of Care demands that the substantive ideals of democracy and freedom be fulfilled, challenging current social inequalities, and eradicating “privilege” based on dominance of certain culturally constructed categories, whether class, race, gender, education level, or occupation. There would be a willingness to embrace difference, rather than attempting to homogenize reality. A prevailing Care ethic would enable us to consider ourselves, our interests and desires in others.

On the cultural level, traditional methods of reproducing social life would be protected, rather than eradicating all that is not expedient or profitable. Women in rural areas throughout the Third World utilize their natural surroundings to live, rather than engaging in

ways to overcome or control nature for profit maximization. Relying on what is around them, they perform a myriad of tasks to sustain themselves and their families-- they are gardeners and cooks, tool makers, doctors, teachers, living and working sustainably for themselves, their families and their environment (Sittrak 1998:133). Without idealizing traditional rural life, these are important examples of ways of life that should be valued on their own merits. Though they defy conventional notions of what development is, perhaps our models of progress should include these as virtuous labor practices and experiences.

How could these ideological components be realized in concrete ways? The Political Culture of Care features eight institutional arrangements to provide individuals with the chance to flourish. First and foremost, a pre-condition for a Political Culture of Care is the provision of basic material needs like clean water and air, safe shelter, nutritional food, access to land, basic education and literacy, health care, and freedom from violence. These needs are often presumed to be lacking only in the developing world, though they are not just Third World problems. These basic needs are vitally necessary for human flourishing to emerge.

Secondly, the Political Culture of Care requires the expansion of public spaces like parks, recreation centers, theaters, arenas, museums, as well as public transportation facilities to enhance the public good. Valuing and supporting institutions for the public good, and providing open access to them, will lead to an interdependency among individuals who utilize and experience these public spaces.

The Political Culture of Care presumes that equal access to quality education and educational resources is a human right in a developed society, thus it entails an overall improvement of the public education system. This includes a commitment to building more public schools, better supporting and compensating teachers, reducing class size, and evenly distributing basic resources -- computers, chalk, calculators, updated books -- and so called “dispensable” activities like arts and music, extra-curricula teams and organizations. The Political Culture of Care presupposes that lifetime learning is crucial and necessitates access

to schooling from “cradle to grave” so that individuals may pursue interests and develop new talents.

The Political Culture of Care assumes that equal access to quality health care is likewise a human right in a developed society, thus it calls for comprehensive health care that is not for profit. This means universal access to quality health care, including a valuation of holistic and indigenous approaches, where traditional methods of healing are respected and the patient and the provision of care matter more than bottom lines and profit margins.

The Political Culture of Care assumes a basic conflict of interests between workers and owners. More worker-owned companies and cooperatives would allow workers to participate in major decision-making. Job sharing would be implemented so that various people know various tasks in professions where it is viable. When workers are not owners and are not involved in the major decisions that affect them, worker protection is necessary, especially with regard to worker safety, compensation and job security. Thus, more legislation would be enacted to make union membership easier and union leadership more accountable to its members. Workers at all levels in all occupations would have access to safe and affordable child-care. Legislation mandating parental leaves and shorter work-weeks would enable workers the time to engage in caring activities for themselves and their families.

A Political Culture of Care assumes as part of what constitutes a developed society, that people who work should not remain poor. The mere fact that many people in the United States are earning an hourly wage and yet continue to live well below a poverty line (which incidentally is distorted), should be enough to question its status as “developed”. Thus the Political Culture of Care calls for a changed definition of poverty to more accurately reflect the lives of the poor⁶ as well as a raise in the minimum wage, so that a full time, minimum

⁶ Citing a study by Schwartz and Volgy in the early 1990s, Ruth Sidel argues that the poverty line should be set closer to \$22,000 for a family of four (Sidel 1999: 69-77). A more recent study by the Women’s Center for Education and Career Advancement

wage job would no longer leave a family in poverty. In addition, the relocation of businesses would be regulated; corporations would be held accountable to the communities and workers that make their prosperity possible.

The Political Culture of Care assumes that a healthy environment is a worthy endeavor and thus calls for more stringent and enforceable environmental laws to prevent companies and individuals from polluting the air, water and soil. This would include heavy penalties for violators, and, in places where environmental needs are in conflict with employment needs⁷, there is more commitment to resolve this in sustainable ways.

There would be more creative plans for economic development. In the 1980s and 1990s, much of the economic development throughout the US has been in the form of strip and mega-malls, casinos, hotels and for-profit prisons. In many areas throughout the Third World, similar changes have occurred whether in the construction of factories for the Global Assembly Line, or the building up of the tourist industries in specific countries, often resulting in the underdevelopment of local economies, industries, as well as severe ecological damages. The Political Culture of Care would demand true democratic accountability. Individual citizens would be more involved in the process of "development" which may ultimately reduce the amount of corruption and graft when money and power are concentrated in fewer hands.

These institutional arrangements would allow individuals the opportunities to pursue their interests and talents and flourish, and be supported ideologically by a valuation of care - as a work activity, as an experience and practice central to our lives. Such institutional changes are often met with condescension from those who adhere to "conventional

(WCECA) in New York City, suggests that the poverty line should reflect what authors Diana Pierce and Jennifer Brooks call "The Self-Sufficiency Standard". They claim that "to be truly self-sufficient, the family [single-parent with two children living in Queens, New York] would need a gross annual income of \$46,836" (Mutari 2001:42-43).

wisdom” about how individuals act and what is assumed to be natural. In a capitalist system, we are told that a rewarding life is predicated on one selling her labor power for a wage. Along with this is the belief that humans are inherently lazy so there must be a strong competitive ethos to motivate us. A Political Culture of Care challenges these assumptions. It asks several provocative questions: Why should we assume that the majority of people will become indolent if a guaranteed income was enacted? Should our visions of freedom be more than just the ability to amass as much wealth as we can? Should not freedom of action have some accountability to the types of behaviors it supports?

These few examples by no means encompass all that could be changed. There are many more avenues for policy formation which require attention. We must reconceive our social, economic and political policies as well as the ideological assumptions that sustain them. Rather than ceding all that exists to the private market, in the United States and elsewhere, the Political Culture of Care supports a careful and more democratic expansion of the state and the social services that the market cannot provide for equally, fairly or justly. In the last chapter of her book, Sidel calls for a "domestic Marshall Plan" (1999:194), a comprehensive effort to rehabilitate the poorest neighborhoods by rebuilding affordable housing, schools, health facilities, and meaningful job creation. Her argument is that we need a "return to caring", rebuilding a society where people care and are cared for. These ideas are not original. Many of these institutional changes were articulated in the New Deal legislation of the 1930s and some have been instituted in democratic socialist countries in Northern Europe. What makes this attempt unique is the incorporation of a feminist principle and practice, that of care, not only into the policy-making, but also into the ideological foundations which support these policies.

⁷ In many areas in the United States and Canada environmental concerns of overfelling of trees are at odds with local employment needs for logging, especially when there are not too many employment alternatives.

While there may be a realization of certain basic needs, at least in most areas of the First World, progress along the lines of human flourishing has not been realized. In this context, the United States should not be considered a truly developed society. Just because more people are employed in comparison to prior eras and just because a higher proportion of people engage in more material consumption, the society is not necessarily better off. We need to know the quality of those jobs, remunerative and otherwise, rather than be satisfied with abstract numbers. More people are now working harder for longer hours, and more people are working multiple jobs, with less time available for individual, family and community activities. Such data do not reflect a truly developed society where the creative energies and talents of individuals may flourish.

Concluding Thoughts

When “development” is confined to the economic realm of growth and accumulation, individuals are reduced to “workers” or “consumers” and societies, especially countries in the Third World, are identified as “emerging markets”. The entire relationship between the individual and society becomes defined as only an economic relationship. However, this orthodox view ignores the fact that we should and do engage in activities and experiences that go beyond those that are purely economic and calculating. The Political Culture of Care takes this reality into account, the basic tenet being that care matters as much as, and sometimes more than efficiency.

If development continues to be defined primarily by standards of economic growth, we will continue to be deluged with graphs identifying which countries have lower and higher GDPs. However, the growing evidence of undeveloped conditions existing even within the First World remain hidden in the assumptions behind these graphs, which only serves to mystify our ideas about development and progress. In breaking these patterns and reconstructing the models, we will be capable of looking beyond economic growth to the more qualitative aspects of our existence and all that comprises true human flourishing.

These interests come out of an intellectual and political desire to re-envision development and all of its associations to go beyond stale economic measures, and to incorporate the vibrancy of human, social dimensions coming out of a very rich feminist tradition. This new notion and its accompanying measures will certainly include economic growth of a certain kind as one of many important aspects of a developed society, but our ideas of the good life must not be confined to certain economic practices and representations of material progress. It is true that humans have basic material needs that require a stable level of economic productivity. What is not necessary is this peculiar attachment to economic growth that excludes other elements that connote "development". Economic growth is a necessary but not sufficient component of "the good life". A reconceptualization of growth must challenge the hegemonic language of what defines "development".

We must construct a theory and practice which takes us further than economic growth and accumulation, and at the same time urges us to rethink the assumptions about the individual, of what individuals need, and what makes life meaningful for individuals. The orthodox paradigm constructs a nice fit between the individual as a rational agent continuously maximizing benefits and minimizing costs, and the objectives of growth and accumulation. The inadequacies and limitations of these goals are clear. Challenging the power of these ideologies, as the Political Culture of Care can do, will put us in a much better position to incorporate a notion of development as human flourishing into development policies, not only throughout the developing world, but here in the United States as well.

Given the historical record of marginal ideas becoming incorporated in a co-opted form, especially in the area of development, I cannot say for sure that this won't happen to the ideas I am presenting here. I would suggest, however, that a Political Culture of Care requires a completely different way of measuring value, worth, and legitimacy, making it difficult for the result to be the integration of new ideas. The bureaucratic processes and

structures outlined in the preceding chapters would be altered by a Political Culture of Care, where the demands for efficiency and legitimacy would be tempered by other needs—universal, caring needs. This is what Development as Human Flourishing is all about. In this way, it represents a dramatic change in the way that societies operate, and how our ideas of “development” and “progress” are determined.

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