

Gendering the Social Sciences: a discussion panel cohosted by the Gender Institute and the Department of Geography & Environment

Gender and Poverty in the 21st Century

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Gender, Poverty, and Inequality



Nancy Folbre
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A **Feminist** Critique of **Political Economy**

Neoclassical economic theory is **too market-centric** and
Marxian economic theory is too **capitalism-centric**.

Neither pays sufficient attention to the **social organization
of care**.

Collective conflict over the distribution of the costs of caring
for dependents cross-cuts conflict over the distribution of
“surplus.”



I AM VALUABLE
BUT NOT VALUED



Why Caregivers are Economically Vulnerable

1. Care for human dependents is costly.
2. Asymmetric investment in individual offspring by caregivers puts them at a disadvantage
3. Caregivers can be “held hostage” by their emotional attachment.
4. Children are “non-excludable” in consumption (public goods)
5. Contractual arrangements for control of children or even partial “payback” are difficult to enforce.



Patriarchal Capitalism



Capitalism emerges in a patriarchal context.

Undermines some aspect of patriarchy and weakens other.

Women gained “permission” to participate in capitalism gradually, in the face of ideological and political resistance from men (see *Greed, Lust, and Gender*).

NANCY FOLBRE



GREED, LUST
& GENDER

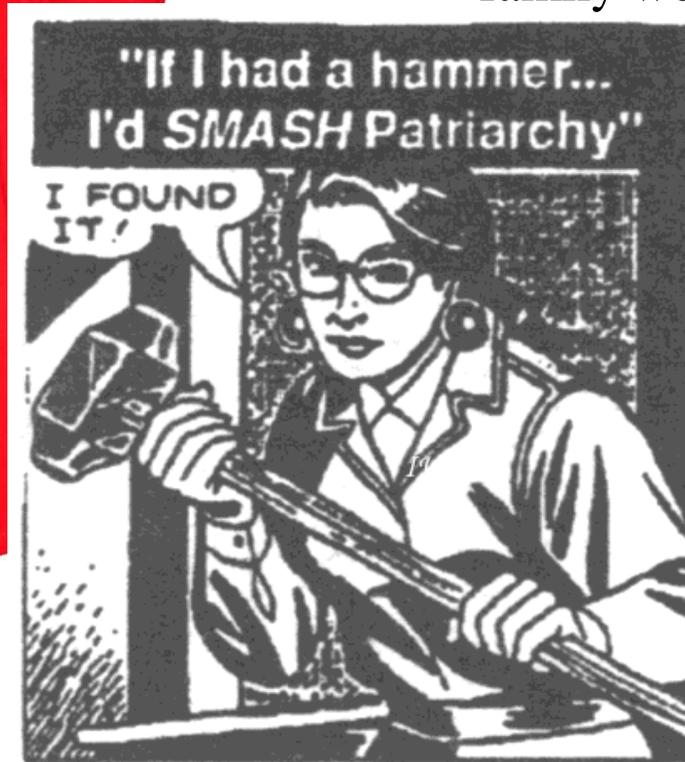
A HISTORY OF ECONOMIC IDEAS

OXFORD

Women Gain “Self-Ownership”



Wage employment is based on individual market work, not family work



Women engage in collective political action.

Both wage employment and fertility decline empower women.



Problem: “self ownership” is not sufficient to guarantee gender inequality if women continue to specialize in producing things (e.g. the next generation) that they cannot own.

The position of women improves but position of mothers deteriorates-- pauperization of motherhood or “motherization of poverty.”

The new Club World cradle seat. Lullaby not included.



Introducing the unique new business class cradle seat. It doesn't simply recline but tilts as a whole raising your knees and relieving your body of stress and pressure. Pity you may not be awake to enjoy all the other changes on new Club World.

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Care Penalties

- Motherhood is economically risky.
- Mothers are paid significantly less than other women, all else equal.
- Jobs that require “nurturance” are paid significantly less than other jobs, all else equal.
- Occupational segregation in “caring” jobs explains a large part of the difference in men’s and women’s pay.

The Price of Care is Rising

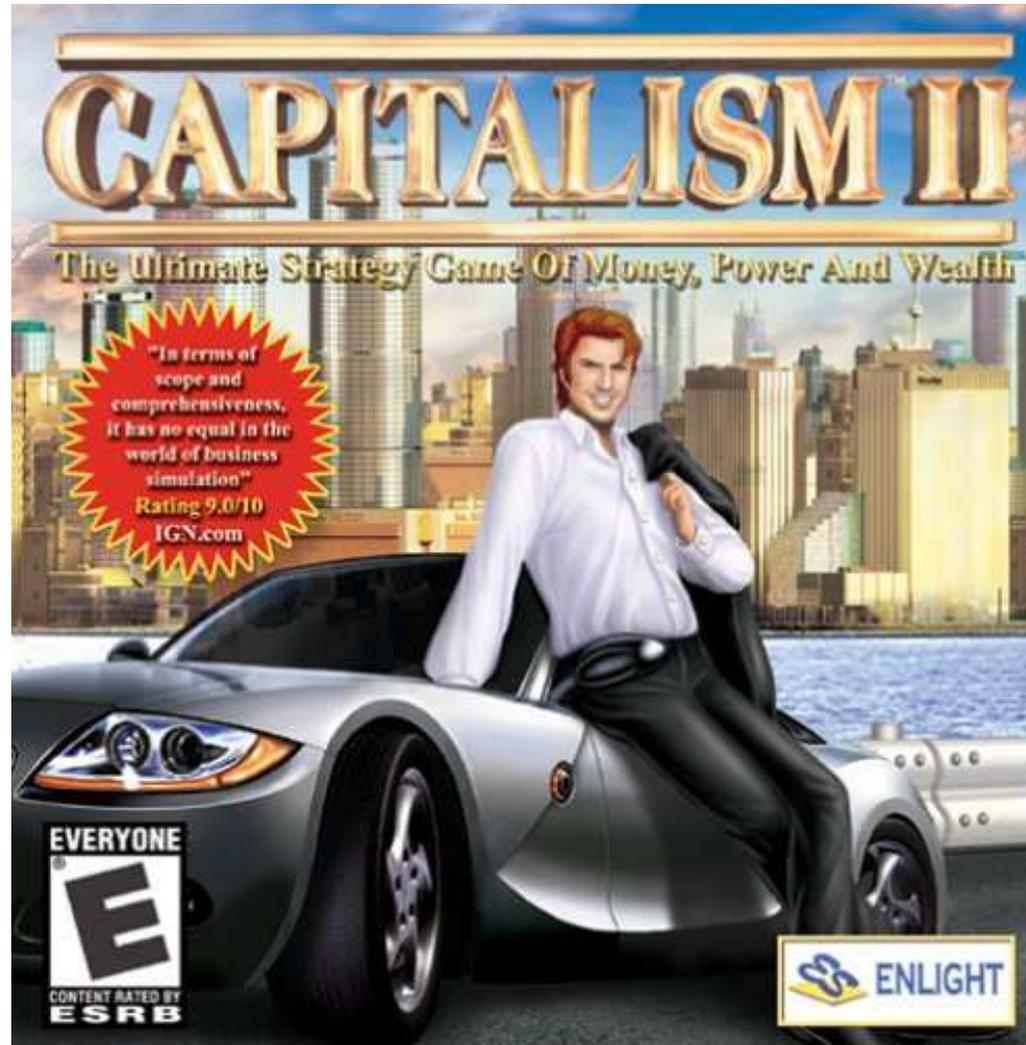
- In the family—a higher opportunity cost of women's time
- In the market—reduction of supply to caring occupations
- In the polity—greater demand for services such as child care, elder care, home health care



Responses to Increased Prices

- Distributional conflict
- Cultural backlash
- Outsourcing and immigration
- Institutional efforts to control costs and improve efficiency.
- Automation and use of information technology

Capitalism is Depicted in Masculine Terms...



...the Welfare State in Feminine Terms







The “Welfare State” DOES Fulfill a “Feminine” Role

Much entitlement and discretionary social spending is devoted to care of dependents.

There is nation-based, race/ethnicity based, gender-based, age-based and class-based conflict over who should pay the costs of care.

Globalization is increasing class conflict, because national boundaries are becoming less relevant. Why grow and educate your own workers when you can free ride on the efforts of other families/nations?

MOMMY AND DADDY HAVE
DECIDED IT'S COST-EFFECTIVE
TO RAISE YOU WITH FOREIGN
LABOR ... SO WE'RE SHIPPING
YOU TO MEXICO!



©1993
NORMAN
DOG

Family Policy: A Neoliberal Dilemma

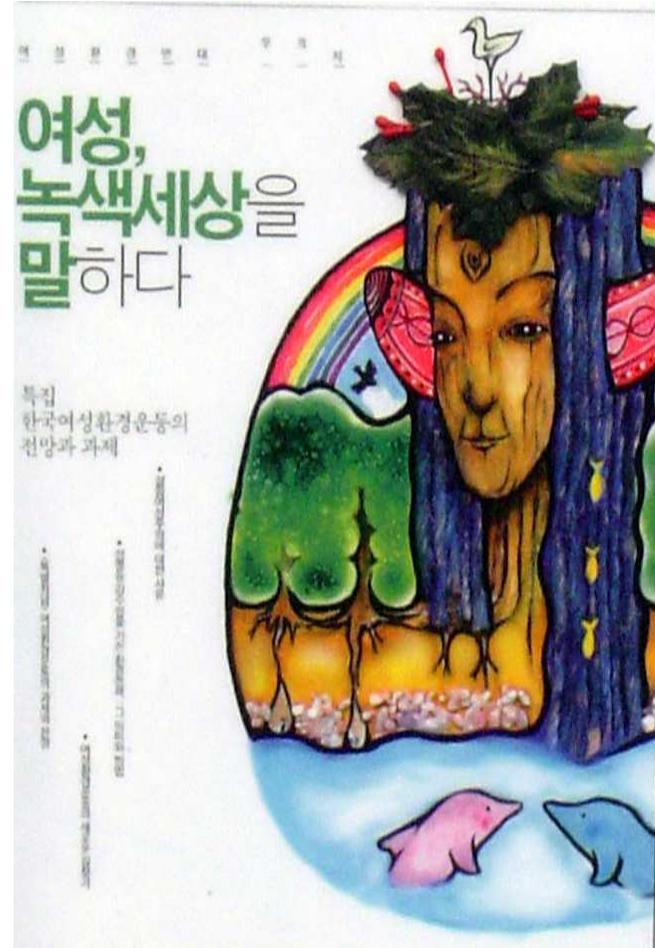


Capitalist institutions need families but would prefer not to pay for them.

International competition intensifies pressure to offload or externalize costs to non-market sectors.

Parallels with Global Warming

- Difficulty of coordinating regulation of a public good (the future!)
- Unsustainable utilization of unpriced assets—forests, fish, families, communities.
- Negative spillovers (or externalities) in the form of crime, poor health, inadequate development of human capabilities.
- High deficit/debt partly a symptom of distributional conflict.



Research Agenda

Our measures of poverty and inequality are incomplete.

We need better measures of the intra-family resource flows (both time and money).

We also need better measures of lifecycle contributions to and benefits from the state based on gender and age.

Also, a different theoretical currency...

