Abstract

Concepts of economic wealth and Gross National Product exclude and devalue women's work and hence violate principles of appropriate methodology. A feminist framework suggests the need to develop an alternative conceptualization based on women's experience. Using feminist writing on development and on women's project activities as starting points, women's conception of wealth is found to include: material resources, social and cultural resources, and human resources. This feminist conception of wealth is based on alternative assumptions requiring a new calculus. It is multi-faceted, relational, collective, people-oriented, and equity based. Implications for scholarship, feminist strategies, and interpretations of project "misbehavior" (Buvinic 1984) are briefly discussed.

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Wealth Re-Examined: Toward a Feminist Analysis of Women's Development Projects in Canada and in the Third World

by

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WEALTH RE-EXAMINED: TOWARD A FEMINIST ANALYSIS OF WOMEN'S DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS IN CANADA AND IN THE THIRD WORLD

Introduction[1]

As feminists in the 1980's with both an intellectual interest and commitment to women and development, we are challenged by apparent contradictions. On the one hand, as an international movement we are growing stronger in our articulation of a feminist global sisterhood and in a recognition of feminism's need to transform existing structures. On the other hand, we are becoming increasingly aware of patriarchal oppression which perpetuates violence against us--through rape and battering, through traditions such as wife burning, through exploitative industries trading in pornography and female slaves, and through the diversion of our community's resources into weapons of human annihilation. At the same time as there have been innovations and achievements at the community or micro level, there have been set backs at the global level (Morgan 1984; Bunch 1983; Dawn 1985; Jain 1983; Antrobus 1983, 1984; ISIS 1984).

This situation of women and development gives rise to conflicting emotions:

-- outrage at data showing that women are being hurt by development--in spite of the current U.N. decade on women--and that development planners persistently discriminate against women

-- frustration at high-priced executives who apparently are unable to understand that major developments might impact differently on men and women and at farcial (but better than nothing) government impact studies which focus more on development's impact on fish than on people

-- admiration for the many women who have quietly and persistently fought for and achieved reforms and created wealth

-- dismay at the well-intentioned development projects which "misbehave" and/or do not seem to have any impact on the persistent power of patriarchy

-- challenge at the current economic crisis and at the potential for a changed structure

-- discouragement when our sisters are unable to change existing structures and become tired of fighting patriarchy and/or become coopted by adopting patriarchal practices

-- hope at the victories women have gained in their struggles for change and for increasing control over their lives

-- pride at the resilience of a women's political culture which, although often closeted, emerges with remarkable strength to counter injustice[2]

As feminist scholars we are also faced with contradictions and ambiguities. On the one hand, we have some understanding of the exploitation, discrimination, inhumane burdens, poverty, racism, and imperialism that affects women during the development process. On the other hand, our knowledge is limited because the concepts used by scholars, the assumptions on which they are based, and the models of development are tied to what has been called "male-stream" thinking. Current ideas and models about growth, rather than being liberating, are exploitative of women.

The concept of development itself, for example, often implies development done by and in the interests of men and international world business. Recently in Halifax, contemporary theories of development were outlined in the conference entitled "Rethinking Development in the 1980's: Perspective From the Caribbean and Atlantic Canada." The experience of listening to the theories of development as if women were not there--and of having discussion cut off when women were mentioned--led to a spontaneous feminist caucus and ultimately generated the following statement:

> The opening plenary sessions were characterized by the ommission of some significant critiques from women's viewpoint and experience.
>
> There are many ways in which this critique is important. Firstly, conventional development theories equate development with economic growth and for women this growth-centered approach has reduced, or given only slow-growing access to resources and jobs. It has made for trade-offs between employment and wages, or working conditions; it has increased work burdens in subsistence activities and in reproductive tasks. A people-centered approach to development is necessary if women are to be acknowledged as truly integral to the development process. Secondly, conventional theory pays scant attention to linkages between women's productive and reproductive work. Thirdly, it gives insufficient recognition to gender-based hierarchies in the family, the community and society at large.
>
> Conference plenaries did attempt to introduce a more people-centered approach but nonetheless neglected the vital new analytical tool the women's viewpoint provides. Moreover, while the Women and Development panel made an original and positive contribution to the process of Re-thinking Development in the 1980's, the segregation of women in this workshop deprived other workshops of their constructive contributions. We can only hope that, for example, the workshop on Models of Agricultural Development addressed the implications of women's multiple roles in agricultural production and that the panel on Labour, Employment and Unemployment considered the basis on which statistics on what is considered work and especially women's work are collected and analyzed. More importantly perhaps, did the workshop on the Role of the State in Development get to grips with the positive contribution made by Cuba's socialist government, including, as one of our panellists established, efforts to challenge patriarchy.

> Development perspectives in the 1980's must be informed by the substantial body of women's research, analysis and action if they are to have a significant impact for change.

Statements such as this are part of the task of transforming economic development. Feminists associated with development have begun the task of pointing to problems with current conceptualizations, of describing the situation of women as it is associated with development, and of proposing new concepts and solutions (for example, Rogers 1980; Dakar Seminar 1982; Antrobus 1984; DAWN 1985). This conference also has in its title the idea of transforming economic development. As part of the task of reconstruction, this paper will begin to consider the associated concept of wealth.

Introduction to the Concept of Wealth

In contemporary public discourse and in the scholarly literature, the concept of wealth is associated with economics and with financial assets or net worth. In fact, the concept is one of the cornerstones of the economics that developed after Adam Smith's Wealth of Nations. Currently, it is used in national accounting to apply to national wealth as measured by the Gross National Product (GNP) or to "the total market value of all final goods and services produced in the economy in one year."[3] The GNP divided by the population of a country is taken to indicate the standard of living in a country (United Nations 1968).

This concept of wealth and its associated ideas of economic development have been widely criticized. For example, Schumacher's Small is Beautiful and the Club of Rome's Limits to Growth have questioned the general approach to development, and wealth production. Discussions of the basic needs approach, Another Development, the New World Economic Order, social indicators research, and the personal quality of life index have pointed to the need for alternative conceptualizations and measurements.

Difficulties specifically associated with the GNP are often acknowledged by economists associated with development in footnotes. Most recent economic textbooks mention the exclusion and/or inappropriate evaluation of work, as the example of a man marrying his housekeeper and lowering the GNP illustrates (Samuelson and Scott 1980:208). In attempting to justify the continual use of the GNP, economists admit that decisions are not made for logical reasons (for example, Samuelson and Scott 1980:208) and emphasize precise quantitative measurement. Both because of and in spite of precise measurement, the validity of the GNP is seriously faulty. An enormous gap exists between its claimed measurement of what is produced and its actual measurement of what is bought (Bell 1976; Rogers 1980). By ignoring women's and men's unpaid work in food production, subsistence, education, and primary and secondary social reproduction, especially in the Third World (for example, Ahooja-Patel 1982; ISIS 1984; Evers, Clauss, and Wong 1984), over half of the world's productive work is ignored (von Werlhof [1984] suggests 80%-90%). In an attempt to re-establish the validity of the GNP, Lipsey, Purvis, and Steiner (1985:498) suggest that it be used only to measure the market sector; this suggestion, however, ignores the inclusion of non-market items in the GNP.[4]

Violations of the norms of logic and validity are not usually considered legitimate in scholarly circles because they violate the principles of

appropriate methodology. Inappropriate methodology[5] is also illustrated by the ease with which sexist scholars explain away criticisms of the GNP, to label the problem simply as a "welfare" issue, to dismiss women's unpaid productive work as incidental, and to continue to utilize a concept which Rogers (1980:61) has called "a statistical illusion."

Problems with the measure have been recognized by international bodies and commissions and by scholars, but little action has been taken. As Rogers (1980:60) points out: "Perhaps the most fundamental objection, that non-monetary economic activity should be included in the estimates, was brushed aside as a "welfare" issue by the Export Group on Welfare-oriented Supplements to the National Accounts and Balances and Other Measures of Levels of Living, which met in New York in 1976." Rogers (1980:61-62;74) goes on to explain:

> The GNP and its variants are, to a large extent, a statistical illusion. It refers ostensibly to production; and increasingly it is being used, despite misgivings, as an indicator of national welfare. However, as Carolyn Shaw Bell [1976] has summarized it, 'although GNP refers to what is produced, it is usually figured by what is bought.' By definition, then, if women's productive work is not paid, it has no place as real production.... As Galbraith [1973] has observed, the concealment or disguise of women's work serves a very important function; since 'what is not counted is usually not noticed', planners are able to assume that, in a literal sense, women do not count.

Many international organizations have considered the need for alternatives and begun to work on them (ISIS 1984). In 1975, for example, the Dag Hammarskjold Report on Development, What Now: Another Development, attempted to elaborate a new vision, "Another Development," which would be:

1. Geared to the satisfaction of needs, beginning with the eradication of poverty.
2. Endogenous and self-reliant, that is, relying on the strength of the societies which undertake it.
3. In harmony with the environment.

   Furthermore,
4. Another Development requires structural transformation.
5. Immediate action is possible and necessary.

> The report is based on the premise that the present world crisis is the result of a process of maldevelopment originating from a growth model geared to the use of resources for private profit and power. This kind of development fails to satisfy the material and spiritual needs of the majority of the world's peoples and it penetrates all political and economic systems, even if it does express itself in different forms and with varying intensity.
>
> In the Third World, the crisis is particularly acute, manifesting itself in famines and misery among large masses of the people, while a small westernized elite lives in enclaves of relative affluence (quoted in Dakar Seminar, 1982:1).

Like the Halifax conference mentioned in the introduction above, however, the specific problems of women were reported as being largely kept outside of the discussion. This omission eventually led to the Dakar Seminar on "Another Development with Women" (see Dakar Seminar, 1982) which issued a five page declaration which states, in part:

> International terms of exchange continue to affect negatively the living standards and health conditions of the large majority of people in [Third World] countries.... We believe that the most fundamental and underlying principle of Another Development should be that of structural transformation, a notion which challenges the economic, political and cultural forms of domination...which are found at the international, national and household level.
>
> Accordingly, at the international level, Another Development should replace the forms of dependent development and unequal exchange with that of mutually beneficiary and negotiated interdependence....on the principle of equality....[A]spects of our cultures which discriminate, restrict and devalue women's physical, psychological and political development must be eliminated. To achieve this, women must be mobilized politically for action....
>
> Feminism is international in defining as its aim the liberation of women from all types of oppression and in providing solidarity among women of all countries; it is national in stating its priorities And strategies in accordance with particular cultural and socio-economic conditions....
>
> We believe our hope lies in joining with those progressive forces which will achieve a future human society in harmony with the environment and free of discrimination and inequality between men and women, black and white, believer and unbeliever.

The presence of inappropriate methodology and the frequency by which women are left out of attempts to develop new concepts of development are indicative of sexist bias in research. In spite of statements from international conferences such as the above and in spite of serious contemporary criticisms of development, wealth and gross national product, the concepts continue to flourish and to be used for data collection, analysis, policy, and program implementation. The concepts therefore continue to misconstruct, to misconstrue, to misdirect, and to obscure important features of life throughout the world. They have serious negative impacts on women and development.

Feminist Framework

The frequency of bias against women by omission (patricentric exclusion) and bias by low evaluation (patricentric ranking) is beginning to be recognized as a pattern within contemporary scholarship (Brown and Christiansen-Ruffman 1985). Contemporary scholarship is fraught with sexist biases--in assumptions (for example, Okin 1979; Harding and Hintikka 1983; Hofstadter 1982), in theories (for example, CRIAW 1984; Spender 1981) and in research methodology (Christiansen-Ruffman 1985; Roberts 1981). It is an assumption of my work that feminist scholarship must transform existing

patriarchal theories and structures of knowledge and must include both a feminist vision and a realistic analysis of patriarchal oppression in its many forms. For scholars, patriarchy's oppression is subtle and deeply infuses traditional scholarship in ways which we are still discovering.[6] For example, contemporary "male stream" thought tends not to transcend the "either/or syndrome" which informs the thought processes of western scholarship and opposes such concepts as personal and political, the macro and the micro, the material and the spiritual, the individual and society, the public and the private, the developed and the undeveloped or underdeveloped. As I have shown elsewhere, vestiges of the "either/or syndrome" still permeate feminist scholarship, as do ethnocentrism and patricentrism (see Christiansen-Ruffman, 1980, 1982a, 1982b, 1984, 1985). Patriarchal concepts and thought processes do violence and suffocate the experiences and conceptual practices of contemporary women, as well as men. Because of their existence and the persistent power of patriarchy (Kelly 1982), feminists must begin to pay careful attention to the many assumptions about their work and to the political consequences of their analyses.[7]

Before continuing this analysis, I wish to make explicit some of my assumptions and practice as a feminist scholar. My starting point is the recognition that the knowledge base of contemporary scholarship—as well as everyday thinking--is biased in looking at the world from a male vantage point.[8] Feminist scholars must begin anew to look radically and deeply at the empirical world, to understand and to peel back the levels of patriarchal knowledge, and to develop what has been called grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss 1967). In some cases our thinking will challenge existing patriarchal knowledge, its structure, and the evaluations which are implied. One of the goals of contemporary scholarship, therefore, is to develop a new understanding and to produce concepts, theories, and ideas which start by treating women's viewpoint as central and which thus broaden our knowledge base. Feminist scholarship has at its heart a transformative vision of the future society where women are not oppressed.[9] It follows therefore, that feminist scholarship is action-oriented[10] and that it should promote possibilities for women's effective political action.[11]

I have shown earlier that the concept of wealth as production and its measurement (what can be bought) excludes women's contributions. The way in which wealth is currently conceived by scholars rests on a monetary and patriarchal understanding of wealth. In order to begin to reconceptualize wealth from women's viewpoint, let us ask what women say and how they act when it comes to wealth. Admittedly, the analysis which follows is only a beginning. It is based on my reading of the development literature and my research on women and development and women in politics and community organizations in northern and Atlantic Canada.[12] Most of my empirical research has been conducted in Nova Scotia and its capital city of Halifax with a population of a quarter million. Some research has been conducted in rural fishing villages on the coast of Labrador where the individual community populations range from 12 to 600. Atlantic Canada is one of the poorest regions in Canada, and both Halifax and the Labrador Straits communities have been subject to various efforts at "development" by federal and provincial governments during the last 20 years.

Women and Wealth

Women have in the past expressed some strong and apparently very different views on wealth. Women's negative view of the patriarchal concept of wealth--as money accompanied by the greed, corruption, and human slavery--is contained in a brief section of a poem by Peggy Antrobus (1983), a feminist from the Caribbean:

> Wealth has always been our greatest enemy;
> The price of skin,
> The currency of betrayal of our kin.

An alternative feminist vision of wealth, one to which Antrobus would subscribe, is contained in a play Ngaahika Ndeenda (I will marry when I want) from Kenya:[13]

> Development will come from our unity.
> Unity is our strength and our wealth.
> A day will surely come when
> If a bean falls to the ground
> It'll be split equally among us.
> (Thiong'o 1982:130)

Both the awareness of the exploitative potential of the current concept of wealth and an alternative vision is present in the writings of Third World feminists. For example, DAWN (1985:6) summarizes the exploitation of colonialism as follows:

> As is now widely recognized, the political structures of colonial rule lent themselves to...conversion of subject territories into sources of cheap raw materials, food, and labour, and markets for the ruling countries manufactures. The system operated not only to drain resources and wealth away from the colonies. It created export enclaves in agriculture, mining and other primary sub-sectors, transformed self-provisioning communities through forced commercialization and the introduction of private property in land, and suppressed the manufacturing potential of the colonies while sowing the seeds of the destruction of traditional crafts and artisan production through imports of manufactures. Obviously the specific pattern varied from country to country, as did the extent of the resulting impoverishment of the population, the exacerbation of inequalities in access to land, resources and power, the growth of powerful internal classes and groups whose interests were linked to the persistence of an open economy.[14]

The problems of colonialism and neo-colonialism continue. As Jain (1983:32 points out:

> Inherited ideologies however modified and reoriented continue to propel the globe towards acute crisis--economic and political and moral. Apart from the build-up of arms and the threat of war global inequities have sharpened with the worse-off at the global as well as national level getting further impoverished....

Jain (1983) points to the importance of focusing on women's experiences and for the "rejection of imposing analytical techniques--concepts, categories, theories evolved in other situations." She advocates a rejection of "the existing economic order, not only in its concentration of economic power but in its organisational basis and its philosophy" (1983:32) and suggests that our "efforts still are trapped by the inherited theories, methodologies and categories" (Jain 1983:33).

Both Antrobus and Jain are working on the DAWN (1985) paper which envisions a people-centered development:[15]

> This means not only that people's subsistence, survival and well-being be the goal of development, rather than economic growth per se, but equally that people participate in economic and social decisions through decentralization of resources and power.... The values which sustain this vision are those that are widely held and shared in the international women's movement, namely, cooperation, sharing and responsibility for others, accountability, resistance to hierarchies and commitment to peace."

A woman from Brazil, in adding to the DAWN vision, mentioned the importance of a world order "where life can grow and flourish in all its beauty and strength." She continues (1985:1):

> Such a view implies a restructuring of priorities where, for instance, the arms race in both industrialized and Third World countries is stopped, where conspicuous consumption is not encouraged and resources are reallocated towards a people-centered development. A de-emphasis on a "star-war" outlook also signifies a recognition that a prime concern with absolute profit-seeking is suicidal in nature and places people and nations in serious jeopardy. We expect that women, as the generators and caretakers of human life, will be the most effective force in guaranteeing the future safety and welfare of their children and the world.

The current society, with its patriarchal violence and oppression against women at the individual, family, group, organizational, institutional, and national level, requires transformation.

Implicit and sometimes explicit in the approach to development of these feminists is a repudiation of the current narrow economic model of development and a conception of "a holistic approach to development--weaving the social, cultural, political and economic into a single fabric of consistent values, means and methods" (Antrobus 1984:7). Feminists from a variety of countries have also been calling for a changed meaning of the so-called "standard of living." As Bunch (1983:16-17) points out:

> A feminist vision must address what kind of living and what forms of distributing resources would improve the quality of life for all people, while preserving the world's resources for the survival of future generations. This means creating a model of "development" that means not just industrial progress, as "development" is now defined, but which involves the progress of the human race as a whole.... For example, the money that is spent in the world on

military budgets in one day would be enough to provide minimal food, clothing, and housing for everyone in the world for one year.

Women's Projects and Wealth Creation

Another possible way of identifying components of wealth from women's perspective is through an examination of women's development projects. In this pursuit, one needs to start with a broad conception of wealth which goes beyond economic wealth, commoditized wealth, or monetary wealth to encompass possessions considered to be of value to women and other individuals at the community level.

An overview of development projects indicates a broad variety of types of projects: information generating projects (for example, providing health information and/or women's rights information in Toronto); change-oriented projects (for example, fighting for participation in planning a maternity hospital and preventing its effective demise); income-generating projects (for example, craft production, and building and operating a museum in Labrador); and service-oriented projects (for example, women's initiation of a transit system, a battered women's shelter, and a women's drop-in center in Whitehorse, Yukon). These projects all create wealth from the perspective of the community women who undertook them, even though only one of these ways of wealth-generation is likely to be captured by currently used scholarly ways of measuring wealth.

An examination of almost any project in slightly more detail indicates the multifaceted nature of most women's projects. For example, the service-oriented project in Whitehorse produced several forms of wealth in the community as women identified their problems of isolation and planned a local transit system to serve their needs. The project provided not only a much needed community service but also employment opportunities for women. Moreover, employment shifts were especially designed to minimize conflicts with family responsibilities and thus contributed a new cultural definition of job possibilities. Bus schedules and routes were geared to the needs of women and families. In this instance, wealth was created in the community not only by the service, subsequently taken over by the municipality, but also by strong and productive feminist interactions which developed and strengthened networks and organizations including a Status of Women group, a Women's Centre and, in conjunction with other networks and organizations, a Transition Home for Women in need of temporary shelter. These, in turn, acted to increase options for women and to make the community a wealthier place, both at the time and for subsequent generations. In the course of establishing these services, women as individuals gained training, education, skills, insights and ideas, and increased their human individual resources as well.

A project such as this, therefore, had payoffs at many levels and involved several types of non-monetary resources which could be considered wealth: material resources such as childcare, transit, and shared labor as well as income and jobs; social and cultural resources such as the collective commitment, caring, networking, education, alternative ideas of paid work time and developing consciousness of women and of the existing structure; and human resource wealth such as skills development, insights, new ideas, self-confidence, and human energy.

A second project illustration comes from Jamaica where Ford-Smith (1980) has described the feminist popular theater group of women from the ghetto of Kingston. The collective of eleven women employed as street cleaners by the government formed Sistren and used "drama as a means to explore and analyse the events and forces which make up their lives; and later, through theater, share this experience with other groups." The work in building networks, linkages, understanding of common every-day oppressions and problems of everyday life has added wealth to these women and to the working class community of women and has helped pressure for change. As Ford-Smith (1980:13) points out, "By confronting what has been considered taboo, indecent or irrelevant we have begun to make a recorded refusal of the ways in which our lives are thwarted and restricted." Such individual and collective analysis and its subsequent public presentation and discussion add social and cultural wealth; they are important prerequisites if the world is to embark on alternative courses of development.

These two projects are somewhat unique in their feminist orientations and in their successes, but they share many characteristics with other women's development projects as well. As Buvinic (1984:4-6) points out:

> The typical women's project...is small-scale, situation-specific, and uses limited financial and technical resources. It is implemented by women, many of whom are volunteers with little technical expertise, and it benefits women only. The intended target group is poor women in urban and rural communities, but project tasks usually require beneficiaries to volunteer their time and labor, which automatically excludes those with heavy demands on their time and the poorest women who cannot afford to make these investment (e.g., women who head households). The typical project works with groups of five to forty women, already in existence or newly constituted for the project; groups who want to undertake economic activities are often legalized as cooperatives. It involves substantial group participation and includes awareness-raising through group discussions, human development training, and/or skills training. Lastly, the typical project involves group activities that are in the area of community or individual self-help or that attempt to be income-generating.
>
> The design of the typical project can respond either to welfare or productive concerns. Purely welfare projects are those designed to deliver information, education, and sometimes free handouts (money, food, technology) to poor women in their roles as homemakers, reproducers, and child rearers. Examples are projects in maternal and child health, hygiene, nutrition, home economics, and home-based appropriate technologies. Although their objectives are different, projects that provide information to raise women's awareness of their own subordination, such as sexual and legal information, can also be placed in this category. On the other hand, income-generation designs...involve teaching a new skill or upgrading an income-generating skill women already have and providing resources needed to use the skills in the production of goods and services that will be sold in the marketplace. These two different orientations could lead to two very different kinds of projects for women, but in reality welfare and income-generation distinctions

> blur in the execution phase. Income-generating projects often fail in their economic goals and so replace these with community-development objectives, while welfare projects will often elicit some attempt at income generation, particularly when participants are allowed to identify group needs and poor women voice their priority to earn money.
>
> The fact that welfare and income-generation designs produce similar action indicates that there must be powerful features in the environment and characteristics of projects that shape project execution.... An analysis of woman-centered (or feminist) ideology, and of the family-centered ideology it sought to replace, provides a useful perspective on some of the causes of the persistent misbehavior of women's projects, i.e., their welfare slant in implementation.

The first part of this description fits the Jamaican example totally and the Whitehorse example reasonably well, except that the Whitehorse project was not oriented only to the benefit of women or to stereotypical female activities nor did it have only poor women as a target group.[16] What does not make sense from my perspective is the artificial dualism between "welfare[17] and productive concerns"[18] and the association of a "welfare" slant with misbehavior. As seems to be the case with most women's projects, the Jamaican and Whitehorse projects have large components of what Buvinic would classify as welfare, but the projects do not appear to me to be "misbehaving." Indeed, these projects seem to be graphic illustrations of the multidimensional conception of wealth held by women and currently practiced in women's projects. Rather than condemning such alternative forms of wealth creation, future research is needed with an empirical focus on practices of wealth generation which are consistent with a feminist transformative vision.

Implications for a Conception of Wealth

Analysis of women's writings and women's projects indicates that women's conception of wealth is fundamentally different from the usual economic concept of wealth. Components of women's material wealth, social and cultural wealth, and human resource wealth cannot simply be added to economic wealth as easily handled cosmetic additions. The multifaceted components comprising women's concept of wealth radically affect the assumptions embedded in the existing patriarchal concept and transform the concept itself in a number of fundamental ways. Qualitatively, it becomes a different concept, because it is multifaceted rather than one dimensional and it is people-centered and relational.

The patriarchally-based monetary concept of wealth rests on assumptions that everything important may be translated into an impersonal and amoral means of exchange or money, that everything may be reduced to one-dimension, the so-called 'bottom line', that everything may be placed along a scale of value, that the more money that on has, the more wealthy one is, and one's desire for wealth is conceived as being insatiable.

Women's projects and thinking about wealth reflect women's culture[19] in which wealth is based on women's human-oriented assumptions. The many different components of wealth, which are not reducible to a common

denominator, do not operate on the same patriarchal principles of reductionism, insatiability, commodification, and unilinear thinking. The calculus which women routinely use takes into account the innate values of human beings and is not oriented toward insatiable accumulation. From woman's point of view, for example, having 10 or 100 or 1000 times the amount of necessary food is not an indicator of wealth and, in fact, overabundance itself would create further costs and a further burden of labor. Parts of women's wealth calculus, therefore, do not follow the traditional arithmatic rules. Moreover, the bottom lines change based on circumstances and are relational rather that absolute. At the present time, wealth for women might be conceived not as presence of commodities but as the absence of the forms of oppression: poverty, hunger, unfilled basic needs, and scarcity. Wealth, for example, might be considered absence of the threats of violence to children, hunger and other forms of oppression, and the ability of children to develop their human potential.

The concept of human potential which is central to women's concept of wealth is almost totally absent from traditional concepts of wealth and standards of living. As the economist Goldsmith (1968:52) points out concerning the GNP, human resources "are omitted because human beings are not considered part of the national wealth unless they can be appropriated. Where slavery exists, the market value of slaves, which in part reflects their training, constitutes a separate category of national wealth." It is perhaps symptomatic of patriarchy that the concept of standard of living is based on an assumption which only includes human potential if it is enslaved.

In addition to the human orientation, women's wealth is distinguished by its collective and relational orientation. Partly because of the absence of written, objectified rules at the basis of women's culture, women engage in the creation and definition of the moral order[20] and hence are oriented to and help to create the collectivity. This orientation to the collectivity involves a commitment of caring and responsibility for others, of making qualitative distinctions, and of contextualizing. Women expend energy by networking and creating spiritual, social, and cultural resources; hence, the calculus of women's wealth creation involves sharing and maximizing the payoff and potential for all.

Patriarchal concepts are unable to comprehend women's community work. As Brown and Christiansen-Ruffman (1985:32,29) have argued, "women's community work contribution cannot be reduced to commodities because the process and product cannot be separated as they are within the more institutionalized patriarchal social arrangements.... [A] key feature is that of the network relations themselves.... Women's community work is networking or the production and reproduction of community," and women's community work produces wealth through which women and others are empowered. Unlike exploitative concepts of wealth, where profit is gained by exploiting the labor of others rather than working together for the collective good, all parties gain: the calculus is very different.

Superficially, both the GNP and standard of living are also said to be measures of the collectivity or the group. However, as is indicated by an example from Samuelson and Scott (1980), two housewives could add $10,000 to the GNP by exchanging jobs and each paying $5,000 for the other's labor. As this example shows, the traditional concepts of wealth, rather than being

based on activity within a collectivity, is based on formalized monetary relationships and economic individualism which is added together artificially. Concepts such as the GNP in fact mask the collective good and principles of equity by aggregating individuals. Because of this, what looks like development may be an illusion and in fact hide collective deteriortaion. For example, Hale (19855:25) makes reference to Tinker's (1981) observation from India that "the introduction of grinding mills and oil presses have [sic.] been estimated to have raised the national income by nine times the value of jobs lost, but this new technology benefitted [sic.] directly only the large farmers, and the owners of the rice mills. Women, meanwhile, lost their jobs as millers, and could not afford the new rice." The averaging feature of the GNP and the current practices of development do not focus attention on increasing inequalities. They mask individual exploitation and the absolute and relative decreases in the poor's standard of living and ability to participate actively in creating a new social order. They are unable to tap the collectivity, the collective good, or the benefit of equal sharing.

The patriarchal concept of wealth is unable to comprehend the collective value of resources. For example, as Goldsmith (1968:52) points out "natural resources...are excluded [from calculations of national wealth] insofar as they cannot be separately appropriated or sold, as is the case with sunshine and precipitation." During the 1970s the environmental movement has focused attention on the wealth of having access to clean air, sunshine, and pure rather than acid rain. Women's concept of wealth is associated with safe and uncontaminated collective environment.

Women's concept of wealth also considers as extremely valuable the public services and community infrastructure which help both to ease women's burdens and to enrich women's lives.[21] In fact, social and community infrastructure tends to be doubly utilized by women both in their own well-being and in their caring for others. To the extent that women do a good job caring, the need for infrastructural support becomes even more invisible to the male decision-makers. Recently throughout the world, governments have been cutting back on social services. As DAWN (1985:9) points out, "Reduced access to human services such as health, literacy, transport etc. affect women in two ways, first by reducing women's own access to these services, and second, by their having to fill the gap of providing them to others (e.g., children, the aged, infirm or unemployed) because of their traditional roles."

Conclusions and Implications

Considerable work is needed on a variety of fronts. This paper has begun to explore women's concept of wealth and the principles on which it is based. The calculus on which women's wealth rests, however, has yet to be fully articulated. With the help of a feminist framework which recognized both the difficulties and the challenges in rediscovering and recovering women's knowledge, we have only begun to specify the parameters of women's concept of wealth and to pose questions which need empirical and theoretical answers. Our study has raised the possibility of a structure of knowledge based on different assumptions and principles and having a complex set of relationships. For scholars, ultimately this line of thinking raises epistemological questions both about the current assumptions on which

disciplines are based and about the legitimacy of the current structure of disciplines within the social sciences.

It should be recognized that women's concept of wealth currently exists without articulation in a women's culture which is oppressed and exploited by dominant patriarchal forms.[22] If one were to try to implement women's conception of wealth, it would involve a radical reconceptualization and fundamental changes in the principles on which "development" is based and in its social structural mechanisms.

Ultimately, feminists around the world may organize to change the existing patriarchal structures. Part of such an organized protest might conceivably take the form of rejecting, as currently conceived, and/or of refusing to contribute unpaid productive work unless significant structural changes are forthcoming.

In the meantime as we are gaining an understanding of the differences between a feminist and a patriarchal concept of wealth,[23] we must use this knowledge to develop strategies. As Arizpe (1982:81) points out, "The strategies for the advancement of women cannot be an either/or choice, but must be assessed within their particular context." It is necessary to recognize the power of existing ideologies of money and self-interest and to recognize the politics of power. Although feminists may ultimately be working toward a society based on an alternative conception of wealth, it would not be expedient or wise politically to reject money immediately. In fact, it may be important to continue to underline statistics on the inequitable distribution of money and societal power such as that cited by the Brandt Report or to contrast the "inflexible," unfruitful, and robot-like wage worker with the comprehensive, general work capacity of the "unemployed" housewife (von Werlhof, 1984:144-145).

Women's strategizing must incorporate an awareness of the potential dangers of criticizing money while at the same time glorifying unpaid women's work. In the present world where economic and social value is seen in terms of money and where women's unpaid work is exploited, women are likely to be caught in a position where the social and cultural manifestations which they value are likely to exploit them further. For example, in Canada women are likely to consider home care to be a better alternative than institutionalization without recognizing within that rhetoric that home care may mean additional work burdens for women. The presence of patriarchal power requires constant struggle, care, and complex reasoning from women. In the Third World, for example, protest is likely needed against national and regional development plans which use government and public funds to support so-called private enterprise or industrialization and then which suggest that voluntary labor will develop the necessary social infrastructure.[24] That is another way of shifting the work burden increasingly on women. Features of women's culture may be and have been used by patriarchy against women's interest.

Feminist scholarship is useful not only in developing strategies but also in helping women to recognize the structure of patriarchy's oppression and ways to transform it. The existence of a feminist concept of wealth gives us additional intellectual freedom and allows us to assess the so-called misbehavior of projects from a variety of perspectives. For example, it

allows us to re-examine women's projects from women's point of view and to understand their implicit multifaceted orientation toward development. It may allow us to improve our understanding of the work of women and to develop more appropriate concepts of wealth which contain assumptions compatible with both women's culture and alternative concepts of development. Our analysis also alerts us to the identification of inappropriate assumptions which underlie the current conception of wealth and men's projects. It helps us to recognize that it is patriarchally conceived projects rather than women's projects which are apt to "misbehave."[25]

Notes

1. This paper was presented at the Association of Women in Development Conference in Washington, D.C., April 25-27, 1985.

   I wish to acknowledge the helpful suggestions from Peggy Antrobus and Berit Aas who read a very early draft of this paper. I invite the readers to make comments in the collective enterprise of feminist scholarship.

2. Academics are not supposed to be emotional--according to professional ethics--but it is naive to pretend that intellectuals work in an emotional vacuum. Philosophical and emotional assumptions underpin academic pursuit, and academic work is "read" both intellectually and emotionally. No matter how high the ivory towers some scholars strive to achieve, they cannot insulate themselves from the fact that knowledge is political and information has political consequences.

3. The GNP has been standarized as outlined in the 1968 United Nations publication, A System of National Accounts.

4. Other criticisms of the GNP refer to its exclusion of illegal businesses associated with prostitution and gambling as well as barter. Considerable concern has also been expressed by economists about the relationship between pollution and the GNP. The GNP does not recognize quality and so effectively ignores the polluting effects of industries. On the other hand, however, if "productive," market-oriented work cleans up pollution, then that clean-up work will be added to the GNP; the pollution is not subtracted (see, for example, McConnell and Pope, 1984).

5. As Rogers points out, women are often simply rendered invisible by the assumptions of male thinking, and it is questionable whether the assumptions with which women are judged are an improvement. In discussing cost-benefit analysis, for example, Rogers (1980:74) mentions Gittinger (1972) as one of the few scholars who at least recognizes women's unpaid work in the Third World and then quotes the following from his work: "More recently, professional opinion has swung to the view that the marginal value product is not quite zero, but often very close to it" (Gittinger, 1972:42).

6. Hale (1985) goes beyond dualistic thinking in her presentation of five different models of development. Many of her criticisms of models, however, de facto deal with partriarchal forces external to the models she is describing; she also neglects to identify patriarchy as a model.

7. Attempts by feminists to reform present theories and knowledge structures at one extreme are overly idealistic, naive, and romantic. Politically they lead the reader to long for impossible idyllic conditions of utopia. When the romantic visions lead to enthusiastic action, initiative may quickly become extinguished or rendered ineffective when confronted by the harsh realities of power. The potential activists may then inappropriately and prematurely give up and blame themselves. At the other extreme are macrotheories of political economy and/or neo-imperialism which focus directly on the structural determinants of

economic inequality (for example, capital accumulation, investment, market relations, labor relations) and implicitly or explicitly render individual action ineffective and disempower activists. The activist reader is either led to interpret her or his role in development as meaningless or to learn and to join the existing system.

8. I start with the assumption that basic features of knowledge have a material base in what might be called the social relations of production, that is, the way one produces a livelihood for self and others. In contemporary society men and women have different structures of knowledge and different cultures and therefore have different relations to these means of production. Because of the historical division of labor, contemporary social science and what we define as political (institutional) knowledge is rooted in male knowledge (patriarchal knowledge).

9. DAWN (1985), ISIS (1984), and Bunch (1982) among others all stess the problem of simply integrating women into existing, inappropriate development. As Jain (in Morgan 1984:305-6) point out:

> Now is the turning point--whether we can transform society or whether it will seduce, corrupt, and negatively transform us.... Economic development, that magic formula, devised sincerely to move poor nations out of poverty, has become women's worst enemy. Roads bring machine-made ersatz goods, take away young girls and food and traditional art and culture; technologies replace women, leaving families even further impoverished. Manufacturing cuts into natural resources (especially trees), pushing fuel and fodder sources further [sic.] away, bringing home-destroying floods or life-destroying drought, and adding all the time to women's work burdens.

10. The action approach, in my conception, has three distinct but interrelated components. First of all, my theoretic work implicitly or explicitly contains theoretical actors who apply meaning to the world and whose activities are influenced both by the existing structures and by knowledge and information as well as the constitutive rules--or taken-for-granted features of everyday life. History is created by actors interpreting their worlds, and hence social forces are not completely inevitable. A second component of my action approach is that I consider my work as being interpreted by actors--by thinking individuals--and I consider active involvement and participation in society to be important. I also consider it important for sociologists to advocate in the society for minority and oppressed groups and for some of our intellectual work to be oriented toward social change of a progressive nature. (These three components of what I call action research are usually found in feminist work.)

11. Not every article or scholarly work needs to address directly an activist audience. Given patriarchy's control of knowledge, there may be some false starts and some articles which are written for the scholarly arena. Nevertheless, what I am arguing against is the use of unwarranted assumptions which disempower women's work.

12. My empirical research has not focused explicitly on wealth. Yet in the course of participant observation of community organizations and in some cases of organizations which attempted to create employment and development, one gains an understanding of their implicit concept of wealth which then serves as an empirical referent.

13. As Thiong'o (1982:119) points out, the play describes "the double oppression of women. As suppliers of labor in colonies and neo-colonies, they are exploited; and as women they suffer under the weight of male prejudices in both feudalism and imperialism." He also points to "the need to look for both causes and solutions in the social system of how wealth is produced, controlled and shared out." The play was put on by the people's theatre at Kamiriithu Community Education and Cultural Centre, Limuru, Kenya but it was stopped by Kenyan authorities after ten performances. A second play by the Kamiriithu Theatre was denied a license because the government claimed that "women were being misled into cultural activities that had nothing to do with development" (Thiong'o, 1982: 128). The theatre was seen as teaching politics under the cover of culture. Application for a license was a procedure introduced in British colonies as a method of vetting and censoring natural cultural expression (Thiong'o, 1982: 124). The potential importance of this type of activity for women and development is perhaps underscored by patriarchy's violent response, which, in this case, involved the physical destrution of the theater building.

14. Contemporary exploitation of women is described in an interesting way by von Werlhof (1984), who argues that the housewife rather than the free wage earner is prototypical of the exploitation of capitalism. Not only does 80% to 90% of the world's population resemble the housewife more than the proletarian, but she points out that the so-called free wage laborer is disappearing. She also gives great importance to a study of housework, claiming that "if we have understood housework, then we have understood everything... Women are always 'the ones below'. But only from below, hence at the bottom of the cask, can the whole be seen as the whole. Nothing is more important--actually nothing is more vitally necessary--than to support this tendency of analysis 'from below'." (p.131)

15. Antrobus (1984:7) suggests some of the practices to be stressed:

> While the model must give primary importance to addressing the needs of the poorest sectors, a policy for redistributive justice is not a sufficient condition if in the process the human rights of some sectors are disregarded. The methodology for the promotion of human development would:--encourage cooperation and a spirit of self-reliance,--facilitate the growth and development of the creative impulse in each person,--provide for decentralization and people's participation in decision-making and planning at all levels,--emphasize, above all, the intrinsic right of each human being to "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness".

It would have to put these principles into practice and set up the mechanisms for monitoring and holding governments and officials accountable to them.

Steady (1982) stresses the importance of adopting a principle of rotation as an operating principle in all spheres of economic production and social and political life.

16. In this last respect, I am reminded of the following finding from the study by the Canadian Council for International Co-operation (1982-iv): "In the projects visited, there was one income-generating project that was both financially viable and managerially self-sufficient. This was a co-operative whose success was due to the unique educational resources of one-third of its members." Obviously, a certain amount of human resources and skills is necessary for project success; one should not, however, equate formal education with human resources. For example, the museum in Labrador mentioned above was spearheaded by a woman with a grade 8 education.

The Canadian Council for International Co-operation (1982) blames the Western preconceptions of the role of women and the early program objectives of charity organizations for the prevalence of sewing and handicraft projects. One might also conceive of these two factors leading to some of the inappropriate project behavior which Buvinic (1984) has defined as project misbehavior.

Buvinic's paper suggests "ways to reverse this welfare orientation and increase projects' success in expanding employment and income-generation opportunities for poor women. It proposes useful roles for women-only agencies in research, policy, and advocacy but argues that the implementation of projects should be done by integrated agencies (1984:abstract)." It does not suggest how women will have the resources to fight discrimination in implementation, even though the article quotes Dixon's (1980:9) finding that men often take over successful projects from women. The Canadian Council for International Co-operation's (1982:v) finding is relevant:

> A major finding that emerges from this study is that the degree to which women are included in project selection and decision-making processes affects the direction of a project and the guarantee of its benefits for women. When women's decision-making power is circumscribed, while they may certainly benefit from projects, either they do not usually have the options of new roles generated by the projects or the impacts offer a mixed blessing.

17. It is necessary to distinguish different analytical meanings of the word "welfare." The extent to which patriarchal knowledge historically has depreciated the concept--and confused its many meanings--is interesting. The DAWN (1985:22) draft paper, for example refers to "the generally lamented 'welfarist' approach."

18. Another example of dualist thinking or what I have called the "either/or syndrome", which has been inherited from patriarchy and which still

inflicts some feminist writing, is the contrast between a "woman-centered (or feminist) ideology" and a "family-centered ideology." As the Halifax statement above suggests, our new approach to development must pay attention to the linkages between women's productive and reproductive work rather than treat them as mutually exclusive.

19. The assumptions of women's culture are collective and human-oriented and may be conceived as having their material basis in the responsibility of mothering. These assumptions are diametrically opposed to those on which the conventional concept of standard of living is based.

20. As case study of women's urban working-class culture stresses the importance of women's construction of the moral order.

21. Augel (1984) has begun to document the contribution of public goods to the household as well as the differential usage of public goods based on class.

22. The features of women's culture which are influenced by its subordinate, oppressed position within patriarchy is a subject for further study.

23. From a scholarly perspective, there are a number of ways of handling the discrepancy between wealth of material, social, cultural, and human resources which women produce and the lack of monetary rewards which they receive for their productive labor. For example, Ever et al. (1984:24) joins many feminists in showing how subsistence reproduction in all societies is productive since it "allows, in the long run, the accumulation of surplus value, profits, and capital." This type of formulation, however, views women's activities only in functional terms--as supportive of capitalism or industrialization--and hence is inadequate for my feminist framework.

24. For example, in spite of devoting a chapter to Women and Development, the Organization of African Unity's Lagos Plan of Action for the Economic Development of Africa, 1980-2000 contains the following area in which urgent action is recommended (in clause 29):

> ....physical infrastructural development, including the building of small bridges, dams, access and feeder roads, and the improvement of education, health and other social facilities much of which at this stage should, as far as possible, be undertaken through voluntary self-help participation.

The Plan does not discuss who will do the volunteering--or who will be volunteered.

Also, in light of women's deteriorating position relative to food in Africa (see Dakar, 1982), it is interesting that the above clause is in the section on food--and that involvement of youth in agriculture is stressed. Women are conspicuous by their absence except as the object of extension-worker training. However, in the chapter on women, some reference is made to women's agricultural labor.

25. Feminists would share with the artistic community an analysis of "development" in Atlantic Canada, by Silver Donald Cameron (1985:5-6):

Ten years ago, governments were in a lather of excitement about the oil refineries Shaheen was going to build down here. Today, Petro Canada owns the derelict refinery in Come By Chance [Newfoundland], and hopes it can sell it for scrap. As for Nova Scotia -- well, there's still a scar on the hillside near Mulgrave where the refinery was supposed to go. It's opposite the mothballed Gulf Oil refinery at Point Tupper.

Or we might remember Jerome Spevack, of Deuterium of Canada, whose heavy-water plant at Glace Bay was our passport to the atomic future. Governments were in transports over Spevack, too. We all know the unhappy history of that plant. A few years ago, the federal government very very quietly wrote off $816 million in debts accumulated by the heavy water plants here and in Ontario. It's hard to grasp just how much money that is--but at the time it was enough to cover the entire provincial budget of New Brunswick [one of the Atlantic Provinces] for six months. Well, no matter. Oil refineries and nuclear plants are hard-nosed industrial development, right? They're not pie-in-the-sky artsy-craftsy crap that drains valuable resources and wastes them on frivolities.

But compare them with Alex Colville, who all this time was teaching and painting here in the Maritimes. The last time I checked, an original painting by Colville sold for something over $100,000. He does about three a year, and they sell particularly well in Germany. Alex didn't need tax exemptions, common-user docks, new access highways, cut-rate electricity, exemption from pollution controls, special labour laws or any of the other concessions which industrialist regularly wring from government -- braying loudly about private enterprise and the free market while they do it....

And look at the activity itself: a man takes a few dollars' worth of canvas and paint, and the value of his work over the next four months turns those materials into an item of extraordinary <u>cash</u> value, not to mention spiritual and cultural value. Would any economist in his right mind not consider that performance worth fostering? The fact that economists generally <u>don't</u> look at it that way is, well, suggestive. And Colville is not alone...

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