

POWER AND DECISION

The Social Control of Reproduction

Gita Sen
Rachel C. Snow

HARVARD CENTER FOR POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

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Rachel C. Snow**



HSPH

Harvard Series on Population and International Health

Harvard Center for Population and Development Studies

Department of Population and International Health

Harvard School of Public Health

Boston, Massachusetts

March 1994

Distributed by Harvard University Press

ISBN 0-674-69533-X

Library of Congress 93-075000

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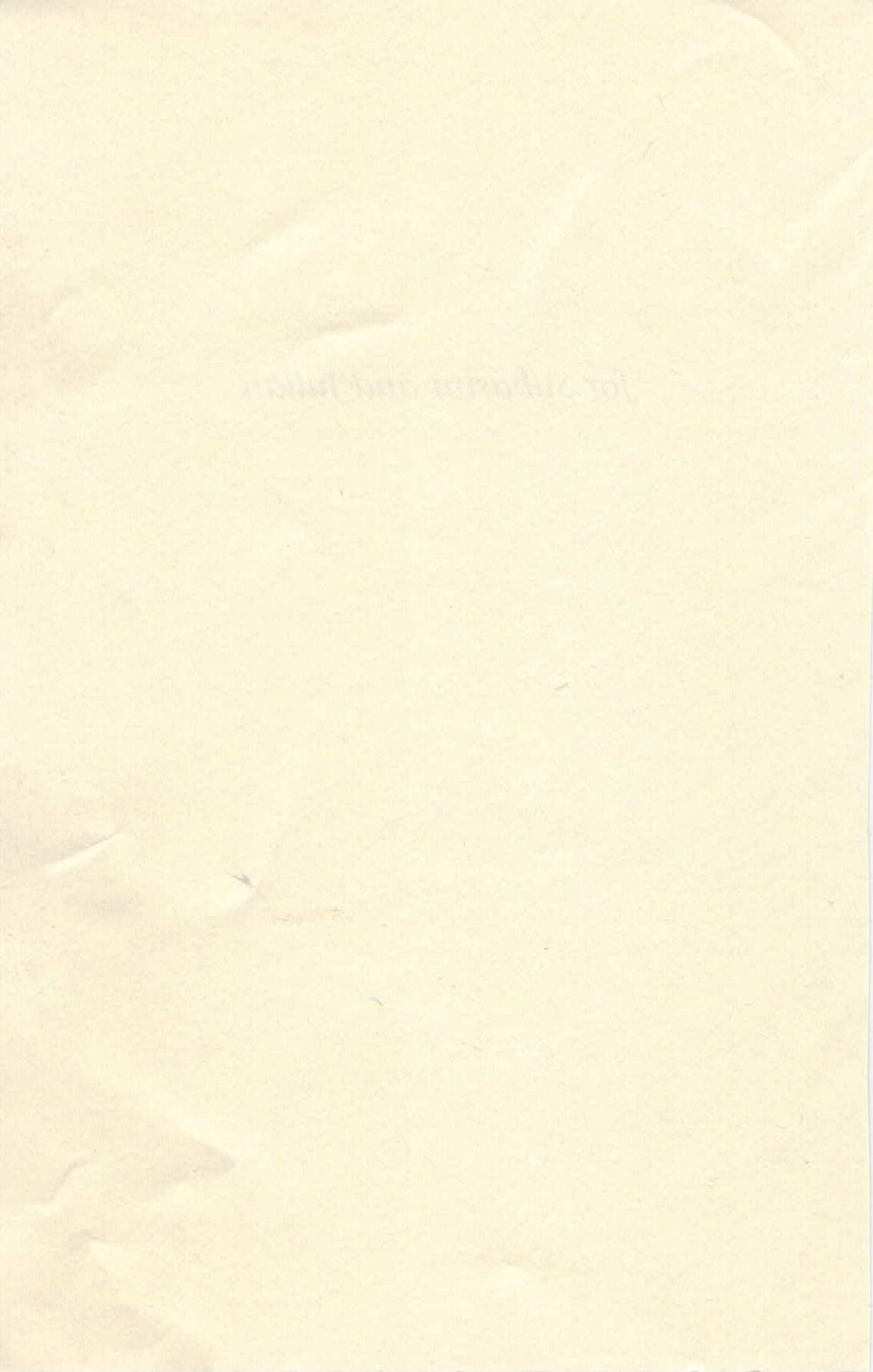


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Preface

As the 20th century draws to a close, it is timely to take stock of the progress made by the disparate feminist struggles for reproductive rights and choice that have characterized the latter half of this century. There have been notable achievements in many spheres: abortion rights have increased in many countries, family planning is directly supported by the majority of United Nations member states, and the scientific establishment has provided more effective contraceptives and infertility treatments than were probably imaginable in 1900. But the progress in selected arenas underscores the overwhelming gaps and disparities yet to be reckoned with.

There are two types of disparity that we need to address: the disparities between women of different nations, races and economic classes; and the lingering disparity within nations between what has been achieved and what full societal support for healthy childbearing and childrearing might really look like. Even in countries where considerable advances have been in social welfare, in child support, and in the provision of health and reproductive technologies, there are deeply rooted political and cultural legacies that leave much of what we call *reproductive rights and choice* shackled by profound gender inequality throughout society.

This book is a collective effort to provide, in one publication, an overview of the disparate social forces that circumscribe reproduction within specific social parameters, with a complementary examination of how biomedical research and the new reproductive technologies reflect and sustain those parameters. Including case studies from a range of countries, this book offers a collection of Southern and Northern feminist perspectives on which social controls offer protective support for parenting, and suggestions on how to redress those which do not. The chapters in this volume illustrate both the commonalities and disparities between first and third world settings.

Initial plans for this volume grew out of a Working Group at the Center for Population and Development Studies (CPDS) at Harvard University that included several of the authors, as well as Mercy Bercerra-Valdivia,

Gabriella Canepa and Jennifer Zeitlin. A Workshop in May 1993, also at CPDS, provided a forum for the chapters collected here, and we gratefully acknowledge the participation of several individuals who fostered debate and offered expert comment: these include Nirmala Bannerjee, David Bell, Mallavarapu Prakasamma, Michael Reich, Cheywa Spindel, Grace Wyshak and George Zeidenstein. We are particularly grateful to Diana Harris for her assistance in organizing both the Working Group meetings and the Workshop at CPDS.

In large part, the inter-disciplinary nature of this book reflects the unique, inter-disciplinary climate at the Center for Population and Development Studies. Rarely do biologists and economists sit down routinely, over several months, to grapple with problems of social policy. The Center, under the leadership of Lincoln Chen, provided us with the benefits of lively collegial exchange with persons outside the conventional range of our respective disciplines; the experience has been intellectually and personally enriching. For this opportunity, we are both grateful.

Of course, no such initiative can function without the hard work of an editorial and administrative staff. For the sustained good cheer and expert support of Chris Cahill, Winifred Fitzgerald, Sarah Hemphill, Jennifer Meyers, Charlie Mitchell, Colleen Murphy, Liz Pelcyger and Jennifer Poulos, we owe much more than can be adequately expressed here. We also benefitted greatly from the seamless professional support of Marc Kaufman and his staff at Desktop Publishing & Design Co.

Finally, we wish to thank the MacArthur Foundation in Chicago and the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) in Stockholm, for their generous support of the time and research required to bring this book to publication. Their continuing commitment to the advancement of women's health and human welfare gives us cause for optimism and hope for the coming decades. Of course, the opinions expressed in this volume are the sole responsibility of the authors themselves, and in no way reflect the opinions of the MacArthur Foundation, SIDA or the Center for Population and Development Studies at Harvard. And we, the editors, assume responsibility for the shortcomings.

Rachel Snow and Gita Sen
March 1994

Section I

Reproduction: Policies and Politics

by Gita Sen

What is reproduction? In our daily, common-sense understandings, human reproduction refers to the process of child-bearing. Social science has long recognized this to be more than a biological phenomenon; child-bearing everywhere has always been surrounded by ritual proscriptions and prescriptions, by myth and symbol. But, for feminists, human reproduction has meant even more than this. Feminist theory has postulated a connection from child-bearing forward to child-rearing and the care of adults, and backward to human sexuality and its social mediations.

Broadening the meaning of reproduction in this way allows us to see the continuum between different aspects of human care needs over the average person's life-cycle. While infancy and old age represent the extremes, humans are remarkably dependent beings at all ages, requiring the involvement and assistance of others for the fulfillment of very basic needs. The difference between adults and children in their need for someone to provide food, to wash, to clean, to nurse during illness, and to provide comfort and solace during times of distress, is a difference in degree not in kind. Growing social complexity and technological sophistication do not reduce or simplify this dependence, they deepen it.

The primary providers of this care in all known societies are women, designated as such not solely by the exigencies of biology but by the weight of gender relations and the related division of social labor. Broadening the concept of reproduction renders the connections among different parts of women's work-day and working life more obvious. An incidental, but not unimportant, effect is that it weakens the hold of biology over the analytical imagination, and makes the effect of social forces more transparent or at least translucent. That women in their daily lives juggle the needs of income-earning, the requirements of jobs, the pressures of domestic work, and the demands of family members for support and assistance is now well recognized by the general public. But the policy world has remained remarkably turgid in its inability or unwillingness to acknowledge the policy implications of this recognition.

The reasons for policy inflexibility and fragmentation are not far to seek. Reproduction is governed by the interplay by biology and the social relations

of gender, class, caste, and race. While it has elements that are universal, it is, in fact, shaped by forces that are highly contextual and strongly politicized. Neither the role of economic factors nor the importance of gender ideology, and in particular, notions of what is or ought to be in the realms of sexuality and family, can be overstated. They drive the politics that push the deeply personal realms of sex, birth, and family relationships into the public arena. That these politics can be highly conflictive, and that policies can therefore be shifting and internally inconsistent, is a major theme of this section of the volume.

Carla Obermeyer, in *Religious Doctrine, State Ideology, and Reproductive Options in Islam*, uses the multiple reversals in Iran's population policies in the recent past to argue that economic pressures and political expediency played a considerable role. In each case, the reversal was justified using religious ideology and selective references to Islamic tradition. She argues that Islam (like many other religions) in itself is relatively open, containing the seeds of both liberal and conservative approaches to reproduction. But the actual attitudes taken, and the resultant policies espoused by the state are the result of historical struggles within religion, between religious and secular forces, and between states and societies. Women and their sexuality become through such processes major foci of political concern and control, but the state can also act as in Iran to shape the underlying political forces.

The complexity of the contemporary politics of reproduction is the focus of the chapters by Jacqueline Pitanguy and Janine Brodie. In *Feminist Politics and Reproductive Rights: The Case of Brazil*, Pitanguy traces the fascinating connections between Brazilian feminists struggling for reproductive justice and other actors such as the progressive wing of the church, the trade unions, and political parties, in the evolution of the struggle against dictatorship. Her chapter contributes much to our understanding of how the demand of genuine citizenship has become so central to the struggle of the feminist health movement in the country.

Janine Brodie's chapter, *Health versus Rights: Comparative Perspectives on Abortion Policy in Canada and the United States*, compares the politics of abortion in Canada and the United States to show how feminist political strategies were influenced by very different health care systems, and hence very different public perceptions of social entitlements. In the United States, where health care was not acknowledged to be a social entitlement, abortion came to be legally justified as part of a Constitutional right to privacy; in Canada, on the other hand, with its more socialized health-care system, abortion came to be justified as part of an entitlement to health. These differences in countries, otherwise similar in culture and ideology, underline the importance of the social and economic context of reproductive struggles.

Such a dialectic between states and societal politics in the sphere of reproduction is by no means new. In my chapter, *Reproduction: The Feminist Challenge to Social Policy*, I argue that state welfare policies in parts of Europe and North America in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, were driven by conflicting pressures to expand the economic entitlements of male workers and of women, and were profoundly influenced by the race and class divisions within societies. The relative political weight of social actors speaking from a vantage point of gender, of class, or of race had a profound impact on the kinds of social welfare policies that emerged in different countries. The complexity of these historical struggles and their sometimes paradoxical outcomes can help shed light on contemporary policy dilemmas in both Third World and advanced capitalist countries. In a time of global economic crisis and restructuring, states have used the fragmented struggle over entitlements among different social groups to ignore and increase women's reproductive burdens.

The extent to which states use women's reproductive responsibilities and the power of gender subordination to further economic or social goals is a second important theme of this section. In *Reproductive Experiences and Needs of Thai Women: Where has Development Taken Us?* Hnin Hnin Pyne examines the uses that the modern Thai state has made of both women's labor and their sexuality for economic ends. The irony is that state policies have built upon the fact that in many parts of Northern Thailand, traditional societies have been matrilineal and matrilocal, with less gender subordination and greater openness about female sexuality than in other parts of Asia. The greater physical mobility, control over economic resources, and freer sexual lives of Thai women have been used by the state to generate export earnings, but without providing an adequate base of public health infrastructure to deal with women's reproductive health problems or their growing economic burdens.

Jody Heymann's chapter, *Labor Policy: Its Influence on Women's Reproductive Lives*, draws on North American experience to show the extent to which, even in a high income economy with a high rate of female participation in the formal labor force, policies and practices affecting working conditions and the terms of employment conflict with schooling and parenting needs. Policies have been remarkably insensitive to the conditions under which large numbers of women struggle to balance the demands of jobs and parenting. The consequences are felt not only in women's physical and psychological stress, but in the health of children. This chapter shows that we need, in all countries and globally, a broader look at policy and at the links among different policies such as those affecting working conditions, health, and child-bearing, to name a few. A more integrated policy focus on reproduction understood in its broader sense will not only reduce the pressures on women who are the human links among these different policies, but can make policies more effective in achieving their goals.

Arline Geronimus' chapter, *The Weathering Hypothesis and the Health of African-American Women and Infants: Implications for Reproductive Strategies and Policy Analysis*, ties together the two major themes of politics and policy failures by asking whether the concern over teenage pregnancies among Black women in the United States is legitimate. Marshalling an impressive array of statistical evidence, she shows that there is strong reason to believe that, given their health trajectories over the life-cycle, the teen years may be the best years for Black women to bear children. Black women's health risks increase progressively after the teen years as a consequence of racism and social policies that do not support the reproduction of Black communities, a pattern markedly different from that among Whites. Her argument is that policy concern has been wrongly directed at the age of Black motherhood rather than at the economic and social conditions under which it occurs and to which it is forced to adapt.

An implicit theme in all the chapters in this section is the importance of women organizing in their own right. Where women do not (or cannot) organize in their own interest, politics and policies work to marginalize or ignore women's needs and concerns (Heymann); instrumentalize and use women's work, child-bearing, or sexuality for other interests often defined as "national" (Obermeyer, Pyne); or blame women for reproduction failures or problems that are, in fact, the result of social inequalities or poor policies (Geronimus). Yet even when women do organize, the battle is not over; it has only begun. The ideology and the practical politics of alliances are critically important. Even when organized and highly vocal in the public sphere, the "maternalists" of an earlier era in the United States were unable to bring about lasting policy support for reproduction because they were unable to ally with male workers to broaden the base of general entitlements (Sen). Nor is it always possible for women to organize in their own full interests. Feminists know only too well how often nationalist or other struggles are played out culturally using the language and symbols of corruption and moral decay which are centered around female bodies and control over women's participation in the public sphere (Obermeyer).

Even when women do organize, the political struggles can be fierce (Pitanguy, Brodie). But these chapters also show how much is learned by women in the process of struggle. The importance of an ideology that recognizes the cross cutting of gender subordination by class, race or other hierarchies, and the necessity of strategic alliances to broaden the scope of reproductive entitlements point to the need for both principle and practical engagement. Although the chapters in this section cannot point to dramatic successes, they bear witness to the painful but productive process of collective learning in which we as feminists are constantly engaged.

1

Reproduction: The Feminist Challenge to Social Policy

by Gita Sen

Introduction

In all societies, the reproduction of human beings stands at the intersection of two sets of basic social relationships. On one hand are the relations that determine different claims on subsistence or entitlements; what and how much different members of society consume. On the other hand are the relations that govern who does the work of reproduction and under what conditions; not only who bears children but who does the daily and generational tasks involved in feeding, cleaning, and caring for both children and adults. How societies handle human reproduction depends on the interplay between these two sets of relationships, which also shapes hierarchy and subordination on the basis of class, gender, age, race and a host of other social orderings, and is a core concern of the social policies of states.

Each of these relationships is subject to historical changes resulting from varying economic conditions, changes in technology, shifting perceptions of the proper division between public and private spheres of action, and changes in the political strength of different advocacy groups in national and international arenas. This paper will argue that, state welfare policies, both historically and contemporaneously, are themselves a resultant of political forces, and have often reinforced the gender, class and race/ethnic disparities in societies through the ways in which they have addressed or not addressed reproduction. This happens in three different ways:

- i) by *sbrinking* entitlements to the poor; this has not only class or race implications, but imbues policies with gender bias insofar as the costs

of reproduction are shifted from the paid economy onto the unpaid labor of women;

- ii) even if entitlements are expanding, their *distribution* may be seriously biased by gender, class or race; and
- iii) through inattention to how the *work* of reproduction gets done. How much labor is involved? Who does it? Under what sets of social relations? With what kinds of technology? Even though reproduction is largely women's work, not all women may be engaged in doing it in quite the same way, due to class, race or other differences among them.¹

By reinforcing gender-, class- and race-based divisions of labor, policies impose significant costs on many women, and constrain their options. Ironically, but perhaps not surprisingly, these constraints operate even in cases where the general entitlements of the poor have expanded. The paper draws selectively from the history of Western Europe and North America, and from state policies in the contemporary Third World, to illustrate these points. Its focus is on the child- and adult-care aspects of human reproduction, rather than on the bearing of children *per se*.

Shifting Basis of Entitlements/Reproduction

In most societies, prior to the historical emergence of the capitalist world system, claims to subsistence were based on one's membership in a tribe, caste, lineage, parish, village, or other social group. With the emergence of capitalism, these ascriptive claims tended to break down. Instead, one's relationship to the production, accumulation, and distribution of economic goods, either as an owner of productive resources or as a wage worker, became the key to one's entitlement. Older forms of entitlement, by and large, gave way as economic relations were reorganized wholesale.

For those who did not own or have access to productive resources, access to waged employment became the key to entitlement. And since the demand for labor was itself increasingly subject to a complex of shifting variables — economic trends, business cycle relationships between rates of economic growth, technological change, and profitability, as well as the natural increase of populations — the ability of people to meet their subsistence needs became contingent and unreliable. The great social debate about the Poor Laws in eighteenth and nineteenth

century England is a celebrated example of the dilemmas for social policy occasioned by this shift in the entitlement basis of human reproduction.

Not that entitlements completely lost an ascriptive basis. Labor policies at the periphery of the colonial system were often overtly based on race, ethnicity, birth or gender.² Race constituted a central basis for differential entitlement in the major capitalist countries until earlier in this century. And even as some forms of ascriptive entitlement were challenged and began to lose legitimacy in the liberal welfare states of post-World War II Europe and the United States, another ascriptive category, citizenship, became the largely unchallenged basis for claims on subsistence, excluding non-citizens and those regarded as illegal aliens.

Thus newer forms of ascriptive entitlement have gained ground even as the state has increasingly been called upon to remedy the inability of the economic system to guarantee reproduction. Gender constitutes a unique category of such ascription because it combines dual features. The first is that the shift towards wage-labor based systems of production typically leaves women economically more vulnerable because they are disabled by traditional constraints on mobility and participation. Even when they have been the workers of choice, as in the early British or American textile mills, or in the export processing zones of the contemporary Third World, employers have taken advantage of gendered patterns of subordination to prevent women workers from improving their entitlements through collective action. The second feature is that the central burden of reproductive tasks generally falls on women. How states treat the work involved in reproduction, together with who they entitle and to what, is therefore crucially important to women's well-being.

The uniqueness of gender stems from the fact that it defines not only entitlements but also work and responsibility. This has four implications. It means first of all that in most societies women do most of the work and bear most of the costs/burdens of reproduction. Second, social and political forces aiming to affect any aspect of reproduction often work through women, i.e., by controlling or constraining women's behavior or options. Third, gender power itself is often cemented through control over reproduction. And, central to the purpose of this paper, state policies can often transfer previously socialized costs of reproduction back onto women, or keep such costs private (and borne by women) if they have not already been socialized.

Contested Terrain: The Boundaries between Public and Private

The role of the state in the sphere of reproduction has been a terrain of intense struggle in many countries. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, capitalists in Europe and North America disagreed among themselves and with workers and socialists over the extent to which the state ought to take responsibility for the nutrition, health and welfare of the working classes. Male workers often sought to have the best of both worlds — a family wage from their employers and a wife at home to undertake the labor of reproduction. Social reformers attempted to harmonize the inherent conflicts among different groups; women's organizations acted in different ways to legitimize their perceptions of women's needs.

The views of these different social actors often conflicted, although coalitions of interest also formed to address specific situations. These struggles to define the proper role of states in managing the reproduction of persons were, at the same time, struggles to delimit the boundaries of public and private spheres. What got accepted as the legitimate sphere of the state on one hand, or of individuals or families on the other, defined which aspects of whose reproduction would be guaranteed in the public domain.

Social historians disagree in their interpretations of the dominant forces affecting state welfare policies in different countries. Society-centered theorists tend to explain them through either the power of working-class organizations or of capitalists attempting to co-opt or subvert radical change (Shalev 1983; Berkowitz and McQuaid 1988). State-centered theorists, on the other hand, focus on the role of bureaucracies and the functioning of the machinery of the state (Evans, Rueschemeyer and Skocpol 1985). In the last decade or so, feminist and other historians have begun to examine the contributions of women's organizations and their ideologies to the shaping of social welfare policies in different countries.³

It is this last group of writings that points to the complexity of the negotiations and struggles in which women's organizations were engaged. Operating at a time when women did not have the right to vote in either Europe or the United States, these organizations attempted to redefine the social meaning of the public/private distinction in a variety of ways. Redefining the public sphere and the role of the state was not, obviously, the exclusive preserve of women. Indeed, the outcomes of

women's attempts often depended on the attitudes and strengths of other actors, such as male-dominated unions and bureaucracies who were themselves engaged in the task of expanding the scope of entitlements guaranteed by the state. These actors did not always see eye to eye with women. Nor were women themselves of one voice in the articulation of their demands for expanded entitlements and political participation.

Struggles over the adequacy of wages, the quality of working conditions, and the responsibility of the state both to provide for the needy and to expand the entitlements of the "working poor" were particularly intense during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in both Western Europe and North America. It was not, however, until late in the nineteenth and early in the twentieth centuries that legislative and policy changes were effected in most countries. The public debates about social policy covered three broad areas. The first was limiting legislation that largely related to workplace conditions, and included limits on the employment of children and women in occupations considered "hazardous." The second was programs whose aim was to create a healthier, more disciplined and productive workforce; these included compulsory education, expanded public health facilities as well as defrayed health care costs, and maternal and child welfare, including nutrition support. The third was redistributive legislation, which included unemployment insurance, workers' pensions, old age pensions, widows' and mothers' allowances, and general family allowances.⁴ Of these, only the third group and some of the second clearly altered entitlements; however, the climate of public debate was shaped by the fact that all these issues were linked in the public mind by underlying ideological positions regarding not only the role of the state but also the role of the family.

Parallel debates and major changes in family law highlight these links. Laws regarding child support, married women's rights to property, women's rights to work and to control the income from work (*vis à vis* the prerogatives of husbands), and marriage and divorce all underwent major changes during and after this period. Not all of these changes favored women. For instance, until early in the eighteenth century the word of the mother was generally sufficient to hold accountable the father of a child born out of wedlock; by the end of the century it became legally almost impossible to hold fathers accountable for child support in either England or France (Folbre 1993). This increased women's difficulties in achieving financial autonomy outside the boundaries of patriarchy.

dominated family life, a pattern reinforced by male workers through their later attempts to obtain a family wage paid to the male worker.

Two additional subjects of public controversy at the time are relevant to our understanding of the links between the entitlements debate and ideologies of family life. They are contraception/abortion and suffrage. Both aroused passionate and well-known opposition on the grounds that they would destroy the moral basis of family and society. Interestingly, not all politically active women supported female suffrage. For instance, the women who in 1889 signed the "Appeal against Female Suffrage" included Beatrice Webb, who argued that winning the franchise would implicate women in the business of wars and empire (Koven and Michel 1990). Multiple and competing views of family morality were at work. While some viewed the patriarchally dominated family as inherently moral, others viewed women's nurturing role within families as the basis of family morality, while still others saw women's distance from the public (and immoral) world of economics and statecraft as giving them a special moral sensibility.

Considerable historical research now exists that uses a gender lens to filter and interpret differences across countries in the timing, extent, and character of social policies (Koven and Michel 1990; Skocpol 1992; Folbre 1993). Earlier analysis largely attributed this variability to the class character of regimes; social democracy in Scandinavia stressed the rights of workers, corporatism in Germany expanded those programs and policies that would consolidate the long term interests of both capitalists and the state itself, and in England and the United States, the weakness of worker organizations and the power of liberal ideology put forth largely limiting legislation and relatively little by way of redistributive entitlements. The newer, more gendered analyses not only highlight the role of women's organizations in these processes, but also show how gender, age and race relations biased policy outcomes (Folbre 1993).

Focusing on the differences between countries helps direct attention to differences in the attitudes of key groups of actors. Two, in particular, that interest us are male wage earners whose concerns were articulated through workingmen's associations and trade unions, and "maternalists", those women who were extremely active in initiating social welfare activities and catalyzing policy in a number of countries. In some respects, the ideologies and concerns of these two groups appeared diametrically opposed despite their common belief in the need to reform and expand the role of the state.

Organized male workers were animated by an ideology of working class solidarity and opposition to capitalist exploitation, as well as firmly patriarchal views on gender and age relations within families.⁵ Their beliefs were evident in the kinds of entitlements they supported and the legislative changes they supported or opposed. The former typically included a family wage to be paid to the male worker, workers' pensions, protective legislation that would exclude women from occupations and industries where men dominated, health-care support, and old age pensions. They typically opposed family laws that required or increased male obligations for child support, expanded property rights for married women, and greater control by women over family allowances or their own incomes, on the grounds that they would destabilize the family.

Maternalists, on the other hand, were motivated by "domestic ideologies that stressed women's differences from men, humanitarian concerns for the conditions of child life and labor, and the emergence of activist interpretations of the gospel... Women's moral vision, compassion and capacity to nurture came increasingly to be linked to motherliness" (Koven and Michel 1990). These largely middle-class women believed that the nurturance, altruistic sense of responsibility and collectivity that they identified as the feminine animus of family life ought to become the ethos of public life as well.

Motivated by this belief, they threw their energies into, among other things, setting up creches and kindergartens in France and Germany, supporting mothers' and widows' pensions in the United States, helping set up the Children's Bureau in 1912, and backing the Sheppard-Towner Act to provide perinatal care in the United States. Between 1911 and the late 1930s, 46 American states passed laws enabling localities to pension needy widowed mothers so that they could care for children at home (Skocpol 1992). American maternalists also supported protective legislation limiting the hours of women workers and raising their minimum wage,⁶ and fought for concomittant changes in family laws, including increased male responsibility for child support. Many of them were also deeply involved in the struggle to make contraception and abortion legally available, and in the battle for female suffrage.

Maternalists and male workers clearly had radically different attitudes towards both the family and public life, and focused on different entitlements. Referring to the three sources of gender, class and/or race biases defined in the introduction — the total extent of entitlements, their distribution, and the division of reproductive work — one can speculate

about the likely effects of these differences. Male workers devoted most of their energies to expanding entitlements generally,⁷ and ensuring that these were channelled through the male "breadwinner" as much as possible. Their lack of support for entitlements that would have specifically benefitted women, and their belief in domestic work being work only fit for women meant that their actions strengthened gender biases (and race bias where domestic work was the realm of distinct racial or ethnic groups).

Maternalists, on the other hand, spent relatively little energy on expanding general entitlements such as unemployment insurance, old age pensions, or general health care. By focusing on the needs of working and poor women, their efforts, where successful, functioned to redress gender bias. Rarely was their goal stated as explicitly as in a speech by Mrs. G. Harris Robertson, President of the Tennessee Congress of Mothers in 1911:

We cannot afford to let a mother, one who has divided her body by creating other lives for the good of the state, one who has contributed to citizenship, be classed as a pauper, a dependent. She must be given value received by her nation, and stand as one honored... If our public mind is maternal, loving and generous, wanting to save and develop all, our Government will express this sentiment (cited in Skocpol 1992).

Ironically, such a statement tells us as much about Mrs. Robertson's support of women as mothers as it does about her antipathy to paupers and dependents. Class bias was not, unfortunately, the only problem of the American women's movement in this period. Thus, in the struggle for women's suffrage, Elizabeth Cady Stanton stated:

If you do not wish the lower orders of Chinese, Africans, Germans, and Irish, with their low ideas of womanhood, to make laws for you and your daughters...demand that women, too, shall be represented in the government (cited in Folbre 1993).

Viewed from the vantage point of reproduction, race and class biases prevented maternalists from fully understanding the needs of working poor women, even though their welfare was the stated aim. It hampered their recognition of the importance of expanding general entitlements even when they did not directly target women. Furthermore, the fact that many maternalists themselves depended on other and poorer women to

take care of their children and domestic tasks may well have desensitized them to the often deplorable conditions under which that work was done. Their concern for the gendered character of domestic work did not extend to a recognition of its equally pervasive class and race features.

Such biases among male activists and maternalists were not equally present in all countries. Perhaps the differences can help to partially explain the country variations in policies and their outcomes. In the United States many of the gains made by the maternalists were swept away by the time of the Great Depression. The Social Security Act of 1935 turned a new and more conservative page on all entitlements, including female ones: a modest amount of contributory retirement insurance was the single federal program, and Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) with its meagre resources and onerous eligibility requirements was a pale shadow of the maternalist ethos. Gender, class and race disparities became the hallmark of human reproduction in the United States. On the other hand, Sweden with its ethnically more homogeneous population and its attention to all three aspects (total entitlements, their distribution, and the distribution of work) developed one of the most comprehensive and least biased sets of social policies and programs.⁸ In between these two lay the corporatist German state, which provided an extensive system of social welfare partially in response to male-dominated socialist pressure; its maternalists, however made little impact in imbuing these entitlements with a lasting ethos. Indeed, the state converted the schools started by the maternalists into breeding grounds for young national socialists in the 1930s (Koven and Michel 1990). The British system of social provisioning was more expansive than the American system, perhaps because organizations representing the interests of male workers were stronger. Nonetheless, it suffered from similar gender biases because the liberal ideology central to its women organizers hampered effective coalitions with poorer working women.

Contemporary Dilemmas for Social Policy

The complexity of these historical struggles and their sometimes paradoxical outcomes sheds some light on debates in contemporary social policy in both the advanced capitalist countries and in the Third World. In both regions, perceptions of unresolved fiscal crisis coupled with changing patterns of economic growth have had, in the present time, considerable influence in shaping the contested public terrain. In the post-colonial Third World, nationalist governments initially saw their

mandate as combining economic development with social welfare, driven by the engine of state activism. At different points, social policy has therefore included the provision of a broad range of so-called basic needs, and anti-poverty programs. Here, social actors other than the ones that were historically influential in Europe — that is, international development organizations and foreign assistance donors, private and public — have often played key roles in defining the legitimate functions of the state.

With the current slowdown in the world and national economies, early optimism about the state's role and capacity has given way to a strong pessimism on the part of policy makers, and a concomitant shrinking in the public sphere. During the 1980s similar sentiments dominated public discourse in both South and North. The Reagan-Thatcher revolution of shrinking entitlements turned back the clock on activist social welfare policy in a fundamental way through its critique of "big government." In the Third World, the counterpart ideology was that of structural adjustment espoused by the Bretton Woods institutions. In both regions, balancing the government budget became the rallying cry of fiscal conservatives, and cuts in social expenditures became the easiest mechanism (if costly in political and social terms) for doing so.⁹

The consequences for the general level of entitlements, for the poor and for women, have been pointed out by a number of critics.¹⁰ Feminists, in particular, have pointed out that gender biases have been reinforced during this period. There has been extensive discussion and documentation of the "feminization" of poverty in the United States. For the Third World, it has been argued that structural adjustment programs are not simply gender-blind, but gender biased by virtue of that very blindness. Elson has argued that, by failing to take into account the asymmetry of gender relations and women's subordination in economy and society, neoliberal policies are guilty of three types of bias. First, they ignore the implications of the gender division of labor. Second, they ignore women's unpaid work in reproduction, and fail to acknowledge that human beings have intrinsic value and not only instrumental worth as potential labor resources. Third, they ignore intra-household gender relations by focusing on the household as the micro unit of economic decision-making. The result of these three types of bias is that policies shift the costs of adjustment from the paid to the unpaid economy. The costs thus fall disproportionately onto women, who are the primary workers in the

unpaid economy and subordinated by gender relations within the household (Elson 1992).

Palmer calls the shifting of the costs of human reproduction from the public to the private domain a "reproduction tax" on women. It occurs whenever such costs remain unacknowledged in the domestic realm and are mainly borne by women (Palmer 1991). Examples of such shifts in costs, consequent on structural adjustment programs, are the substitution of home-produced goods for goods previously bought on the market or provided socially. The additional unpaid labor might include, for example, foraging for fuel as a substitute for purchased cooking fuel whose price has been raised, cooking and cleaning at home rather than purchasing the same on the market, and taking care of family health through home remedies and nursing when health center hours are reduced. The increased costs in each of these examples are in terms of increased female labor, while the state reduces the costs to the public exchequer. Each of these can add significantly to the burdens on women who are already overburdened by poverty and shrinking real incomes (Afshar and Dennis 1992; Beneria and Feldman 1992).

Conclusion

Current social policies in many parts of the world clearly suffer from all three sources of gender, class, and race disparities. Overall entitlements have shrunk, and the costs of reproduction have been shifted onto the unpaid labor of women. The distribution of entitlements has also become more biased since better paid (and often male) workers in the public sector have often been able to protect their turf better than the poor and women who do not have jobs in the formal sector (Jolly et al. 1991). And there is very little acknowledgement or appreciation at the level of social policy of the conditions under which poor women perform the work of human reproduction.

What broad lessons does the foray into history provide for a feminist understanding of social policy needs at the present time? First, that the interweaving of gender with class and race in human reproduction means that equal attention must be given to all three, and to the interplay among them. Thus, protecting and expanding general entitlements even if they are not directly targeted at women is critical to reducing the burdens on women. Focusing on women as the maternalists did, while necessary, will not be sufficient. Second, expanding male entitlements alone often

reinforces gender biases in the division of labor within and between private and public domains. Careful attention to the possibility of bias and the hidden costs of policies is essential. Third, parallel strategies to change family and property law are necessary as well if the longer-term entrenchment of bias is to be redressed.

Notes

- 1 Colen discusses what she aptly calls "stratified reproduction" in the context of domestic work (Colen 1990).
- 2 The South African apartheid system is only an extreme case of exclusionary entitlement policies that were common during the colonial period in many countries.
- 3 A recent example of this is Skocpol (1992). For a very useful review of this literature, see Koven and Michel (1990).
- 4 The terms limiting and redistributive have been used by Koven and Michel to describe respectively protective legislation and social welfare transfers (Koven and Michel 1990).
- 5 Obviously not all worker organizations held extreme views in this regard; for example, socialist writers such as August Bebel and Engels were critical of traditional family relations and called for overturning them along with capitalist domination.
- 6 Both male dominated unions and maternalists supported protective legislation though possibly for different reasons. Breen offers an interesting argument using historical data from San Francisco to show that male trade unionists wanted to keep women workers out of higher paying industries and occupations *in which women were in any case very poorly represented*, while women were concerned about improving the wages and working conditions of women workers in occupations where they already dominated (1988).
- 7 Some of these efforts undoubtedly benefitted women members of working class households, even if indirectly.
- 8 Unfortunately the literature on the historical contributions of the Swedish women's movement currently available in English seems to be rather thin.
- 9 For an interesting comparison of "Reaganomics" with structural adjustment see ALT-WID (1992).
- 10 For a careful review of both the policies and the evidence on their outcomes see Jolly et al. (1991).

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The first part of the document discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all transactions. It emphasizes that every entry should be supported by a valid receipt or invoice. This ensures transparency and allows for easy verification of the data.

In the second section, the author outlines the various methods used to collect and analyze the data. This includes both primary and secondary data collection techniques. The primary data was gathered through direct observation and interviews with key personnel. Secondary data was obtained from existing reports and databases.

The third part of the document details the results of the analysis. It shows that there is a significant correlation between the variables studied. The data indicates that improvements in the process can be achieved by focusing on specific areas identified in the analysis.

Finally, the document concludes with a series of recommendations for future work. It suggests that further research should be conducted to explore the long-term effects of the proposed changes. Additionally, it recommends that the findings be shared with other departments to ensure consistency across the organization.

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11

POWER AND DECISION

The Social Control of Reproduction

Power and Decision: The Social Control of Reproduction brings together feminist social and biomedical scholars from both North and South to examine the aggregate forces that affect reproductive options and outcomes. The volume provides an analysis of how disparate policies, seemingly unrelated to reproduction, are implicitly "pro-natalist" or "anti-natalist." Moreover, these biases are imbued with gender, race and class biases. Offering a rare global feminist critique of social policy, the volume exposes the implications of current legislative, economic, political and scientific trends for gender relations and women's health and well-being.



Gita Sen, Professor, Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore, and *Rachel Snow*, Assistant Professor, Harvard School of Public Health, are both members of the Harvard Center for Population and Development Studies.



The Harvard Center for Population and Development Studies is a policy research center devoted to problems of population, health, and development. The Center has published a series of books addressing critical issues in health and population policy, including a companion to this volume, *Population Policies Reconsidered: Health, Empowerment, and Rights*.

ISBN 0-674-69533-X



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