FROM FEMINIST KNOWLEDGE TO DATA FOR DEVELOPMENT: THE BUREAUCRATIC MANAGEMENT OF INFORMATION ON WOMEN AND DEVELOPMENT

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1 INTRODUCTION

In 1977 two Dutch researchers - Janneke Ahrens and Jos van Beurden - were sponsored by an international development agency to conduct a study of gendered social relations and poverty in a Bangladeshi village which they gave the alias 'Jhagrapur', meaning 'village of quarrels'. Unlike much research into rural poverty which seeks to generalize the experiences of 'the poor' and women, this in-depth study provided detailed information about the intensity and violence of class and gender conflict in one rural area. Most contentiously, it exposed a key constraint on women's choices and actions: the experiences of domestic violence and of sexual harassment outside the home. The international development agency withdrew its sponsorship and rejected the study's conclusions. At that time, gender violence was not considered a 'real' development issue. Today, 15 years later, development agencies in Bangladesh and elsewhere are acknowledging that domestic violence is a legitimate development problem and are making efforts to assess its prevalence.

In India the 1971 Census provided information to show dramatically higher female mortality rates compared to men, to the degree that the female-male ratio had been declining during this century of 'modernization' and 'development'. This information was one factor which contributed to the revitalization of the Indian women's movement (Katzenstein 1989), and galvanized Indian women activists and academics into pushing their government to produce one of the hardest-hitting national evaluations of the status of women (India 1974) to be presented at the 1975 UN International Conference on Women in Mexico. However, it took rather longer for the implications of higher female mortality rates for the presumed equity of household resource allocation systems to be recognized by development economists and planners. In the 1980s, the work of the economist Amartya Sen and others on decision-making in families highlighted women's 'particularly precarious' and 'systematically inferior position' inside the household (1987:3). Sen's findings were alarming enough to make headlines in the New York Times: '100 million women are missing ' (Sen 1991), and helped encourage development planners to cross the threshold of the household when making policy decisions about the needs of women, men, and children in development.

I have begun with these two examples to illustrate a range of points which I will develop in this article. First, information about women's experiences of change in developing economies has tended to be distilled through the development process in ways which strongly reflect the gender politics and gendered interests of the users of information. One particularly salient feature of this distillation process has been the difficulty of development planners and policy-makers to accommodate and validate information about gender and **power**, as it is expressed in issues of women's control over resources, public decision-making roles, and physical integrity and security. This problem contributed to the fate of Arens and van Beurden's study 15 years ago. Unsurprisingly, information about women which problematizes gender inequalities has tended to be validated and used first by those most directly concerned. It is no accident that it was Indian women activists and academics who reacted first to information about mortality differentials, nor that it was the Western women's movement which 'discovered ' Ester Boserup's early synthesis of Third World women's experiences of economic development (Tinker 1990: 30). Nor is it accidental that information about gender and power (as well as race and power, class and power) can today be seen to be percolating into development institutions (particularly NGOs) which employ participatory decision-making methods, and which have implemented equal opportunities policies to allow for a broader representation of women and other subaltern groups.

Second, information about women and their relationship to men has been iterated to the development process in ways which reflect dominant development paradigms. Whereas information about women's experiences of violence within the home might have been rejected 20 years ago as

well-intended but irrelevant to economic development concerns, the concern today in the development community with human rights and democratic participation means that information about violence against women is beginning to be included in development indicators of the quality of life (Commonwealth Secretariat 1987).

Third, bureaucratic procedures for information generation and use impose a particular discipline on information about women which has the effect of stripping away its political content - information relating to women's interests - leaving a set of generalized needs for development bureaucracies to administer. A critical mechanism in this process is the imperative of framing information in a bureaucratically fungible form, what Adele Mueller calls 'the bureaucratization of feminist knowledge ' (1985), and what Arens and van Beurden's study failed to do. This process of bureaucratic 'framing' (in both senses of the word) is imposed, of course, on any kind of information received by bureaucracies. The argument to be developed below is that dominant economic paradigm for evaluating and packaging information for development planning tends to obliterate the implications of women's experience of development for our understandings of the meaning and purpose of development.

Fourth, the validity and policy significance given to information about women will depend on the capacity of 'informers' to frame their information as a matter of critical urgency. As Schaffer points out in his analysis of the politics of policy-making, allocative administration is predicated on the identification of 'deficits' and 'gaps', aggregated statistically into macro-level problems (1984:152). Sen's '100 million women are missing ' is an apt example of this; more problematic has been the promulgation of alarmist concepts like 'the feminization of poverty ' or the population 'crisis '. These last two development 'scares' have relied to some extent on misinformation or exaggeration. Worse, they promote a tendency to isolate women as the central 'problem', separating them out from their contexts of social and gender relations.

Finally, information about women tends to receive policy recognition in proportion to the social and political significance of the 'informer'. Again, the impact of Sen's work, benefiting as it does from the privileging of economics and economists in the development field, is an example. More critical has

been the tendency of development agencies to privilege the information provided by Western feminists and researchers over the often better-informed perspectives of developing world women.

2 SELLING FEMINIST KNOWLEDGE ABOUT WOMEN IN DEVELOPMENT TO DEVELOPMENT BUREAUCRACIES

One of the main objectives, and an enduring success, of the UN Decade for Women was the generation and analysis of data on women in all of the world's economies. The necessary documentation member governments were expected to produce for the three international conferences on women included sex-disaggregated data on basic indicators such as employment in agriculture, industry, and the informal sector, as well as health, education, participation in politics, and so on. Particular emphasis was put on the need to account for the sort of non-monetized productive and reproductive activities women engage in. The **Forward-Looking Strategies** of the 1985 Nairobi conference recommended that 'efforts be made to measure and reflect these contributions in national accounts and economic statistics '. (UN 1986: paragraph 120). Implicit in this approach is an assumption that the exclusion of women from development's allocational circuit is a function of insufficiently informed decisions, and that development bureaucracies will take up gender issues and women's interests if adequate and relevant information is available. This faith in a linear process from information to decision fundamentally misconstrues the way priorities for action and decisions are made in planning bureaucracies; 'in other words ', as Colin Leys pointed out two decades ago, 'planning is being thought of in terms which require the world to be other than it is if planning is to "work" ' (1972:57). In the hands of development planners and implementors, 'facts' do not speak for themselves, especially where they may challenge dominant interests.

By the mid-1970s evidence was mounting that development was often disadvantaging women in relation to men. This evidence was being registered not by decision-makers in development, but by women working in three different arenas of what can be generally called the 'Women in Development' (WID) movement. The first was Third World women who had participated in the anti-colonial struggles of the 1950s and 1960s. Their participation in these struggles provided them with a new analysis of oppression which was alerting them to matters of gender

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subordination at home, and which they used to situate their demands for equal participation within a framework of a North-South distribution of resources (Urdang 1979). The second group was composed of Western women working in the international development system. The interest in women's issues in development which surfaced amongst this group owed initially much less to an awareness of women's roles in liberation struggles, or to the mounting evidence of their declining condition in the developing world, than to their concerns with enhancing their employment experiences, as a part of Western 'second-wave' feminism and struggles for equal opportunities. The third was the feminist reevaluation of the social sciences in academia, where women were turning to historical and cross-cultural studies of women as a comparative exercise in illuminating their own, local oppression (Moore 1988: 3).

Women working in these three arenas had different political agendas motivating their interest in women's experiences of development, but at a minimum they had at least one interpretive project in common: that of disproving assumptions about gender power asymmetries as a 'natural' order inherent to the human condition, which had sustained modern (and pre-modern) patterns of social valuation. This project involved a tremendous empirical research effort to gather data to disprove the folk ideology of the unified, altruistic family with a provident male head, and of female passivity and inactivity in rural economies. Early on, research revealed the pervasiveness of female headed households, estimated to represent, globally, one third of all households (Buvenic *et al.* 1978), and up to one quarter of households even among Muslim populations which put a premium on female seclusion and male provision (Germain 1976). Since the conventional understanding of gender roles defines women and men in terms of the kinds of work that each performs, WID activists gathered substantial evidence of women's activities outside the realm of childbearing, in their 12 to 14 hour days as farmers, food processors, procurers of water and food, housebuilders, traders, craftspersons, and the like (Boserup 1970; Tinker 1976). Since a cherished certainty of modernization theory held that the distributional effects of development were gender-neutral, the WID movement identified a 'gender gap' in the effects of modernization across Africa, Asia, and Latin America, documenting gender differences in life expectancy, nutrition and morbidity, literacy, as well as ownership of resources and access to income. Research on women's roles in rural production systems demonstrated that women's disprivilege was not a 'natural' condition, but was the consequence of a secular, observable decline in their access to productive social and material resources.

The challenge for the WID movement was to get this information registered by policy makers and to introduce feminist concerns with the redistribution of resources and value between women and men onto the development agenda. In spite of the proliferation of research on the unequal status of women in relation to men, a lack of information is one of the most frequently cited reasons for planners' failure to embrace gender policy. As Schaffer shows, a claim to lack information - or the 'need to know' principle - constitutes the 'innocence' defence for the non-responsibility of decision-makers (1984: 162). The invocation of this defence in the face of the availability of information suggests that one has to ask whether planners so much 'need to know' as have to 'want to know'.

The history of the WID movement itself, and the many phases of its engagement with the development establishment, has been documented by many observers and will not be repeated here (see Staudt and Jaquette 1988; Tinker 1990; Moser 1989; Maguire 1984). As these observers point out, WID encountered profound bureaucratic and political resistance for two important reasons. The first, as Staudt points out in her incisive analysis of the history of WID in USAID, was that: 'Those who make policy, predominantly men, live intimately with the group about which policy is made, and individual characteristics of that relationship carry over into work relationships and policy thinking... ', such that WID policy proposals were seen as having the potential to 'undermine male authority, an intrusion that staff could personalize and identify with ' (1985: 7-8). The second reason was that the association of the WID movement with the resurgence of feminism in the West lead policy-makers to reject the perceived exporting of a cultural ideology of gender equality to non-Western countries. Of course such reservations about cultural imperialism do not apparently dampen the enthusiasm with which other development preoccupations - such as population control or lately, good governance - are taken up by development institutions.

This sort of resistance, as well as the persistent charge that WID concerns related to matters of culturally negotiated human rights, but were not 'real'

development issues, prompted gender policy advocates to try to 'sell' their policy ambitions for women in terms of non-diversionary, low-cost interventions with high pay-offs for development. Suggestive formulations of the WID issue as a matter of: 'how best to tap the economic resources represented by Third World rural women ' (Mickelweit *et al.* 1976), or 'the approach to the study of women's roles and status in the development context is not to be viewed as an end in itself but rather as a means to promoting more effective development overall ' (Melinda Cain 1981: 4), are not uncommon in development agency WID documents (Boserup and Liljencrantz 1975). Demonstrating the efficiency dividends of investing in women, however, significantly shifts the focus of gender policy advocacy away from politicizing women's needs and interests in development, to calculating what development needs from women.

This shift in focus has allowed planners to use information about women in development for instrumental purposes. For example, evidence from research convincingly supports the notion that women's access to income and education will result in fertility reduction and improvements in the immediate welfare of their families, communities, and environments.[1] But the fact that this is interpreted for the benefit of development, and not as a means of empowering women, has implications for the impact of policy on women. As Kandiyoti points out, isolating this aspect of women's role in family survival rests on extending an ideology of the 'good mother' (1988:5), which imposes a stereotypical self-sacrificing act on women. Women's traditional roles are not fundamentally changed or challenged, and their workloads may even intensify as the onus shifts to them, as an untapped 'last resource' for development, to extend their unpaid work as feeders, healers, and teachers of children to include the provision of basic services to the community.

Key to the instrumental use of information about women is a highly selective process which screens off information about structural and relational features of women's disprivilege — especially where wom-

en's conflicts with men are concerned. One of the most powerful and painful examples of this process can be drawn from the early history of population control policies. In population policy, it is women's bodies which are of concern[2], not the context in which fertility decisions are made, contexts of gender inequality and the various social and economic structures which maintain it. This de-linking of fertility from its social context, along with the pathologizing of parturience, and the intrusive, scientistic approach to women's reproductive functions, has been the focus of a number of feminist critiques of population policy and the management of reproductive technologies (see Kabeer 1992). But it may be precisely this aspect of population policy which has allowed donors and development states to overcome their otherwise delicate reluctance to intervene in the 'private' family sphere. By ignoring the centrality of the relationship of women to men in determining fertility and sexuality, problematic issues such as the need to challenge power relations between women and men, or to redistribute social and economic resources between them can be avoided. There are indications that a similar failure of nerve is afflicting current efforts to tackle the problem of AIDS.

The manifest failures of contraception innundation strategies, as well as objections by Third World states to the racist implications of the singular focus of such policies of the fertility of non-Western populations, eventually provoked a re-thinking of the approach to women's fertility decisions. Jaquette and Staudt trace this process as it was managed by development bureaucracies (1988). Demographers were recruited to put population policy into a broader developmental perspective, but this did not result in studies which situated fertility decisions in the context of gender relations. Instead, a particular form of social scientific discourse evolved which focused on correlating key 'status of women' variables, in particular paid employment, with reduced fertility; efforts that have proven persistently inconclusive (Birdsall 1976; Lockwood and Collier 1988). Little attention was directed to men's responsibility for keeping birth rates high (Sen and Grown 1987: 42). Social engineer-

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[1] On the link between women's employment and fertility declines, see Schultz 1973. On women's greater propensity than men's to devote their incomes to family welfare, see Bruce and Dwyer's 1988 volume; as well as Mencher 1988; Tripp 1981; Nash 1977; Palmer 1977. On women's greater care of environmental resources such as forests and water, given the means, see Agarwal 1989. Women's education had so powerful an effect on child survival and welfare that it is used in 50-year predictions of national levels of life expectancy (Cochrane *et al.* 1980).

[2] Or more precisely, women's reproductive organs. Until recently, women's health did not enter into population policy. In Bangladesh, for example, by the late 1980s 57 per cent of foreign aid targeted to women went into population policy, and only two per cent to women's health (UNDP 1988). As an unsurprising consequence, family planning was the only government policy to reach more than ten per cent of Bangladeshi women (Kabeer 1989).

ing, the manipulation of 'tools' of social and economic variables to change the 'traditional' behaviour of women, and the elaboration of new policy 'targets' such as 'at risk reproducers', rather than education or social mobilization, rather than the involvement of women making fertility decisions in the policy making process, became the dominant approach to population policy (Jaquette and Staudt 1988).

Jaquette and Staudt's analysis of this process focuses on the role of bureaucratic procedures and priorities in legitimizing and institutionalizing the disempowerment of women (1988). The analysis of the role of bureaucracies in limiting the potentials of their 'clients' (not to mention their agents) owes much to Michel Foucault's critique of modern 'welfare' bureaucracies, and has been applied to the study of development bureaucracies by analysts such as Schaffer (1984) and Wood (1985), and to the WID experience in development bureaucracies by Mueller (1985). In the next section I trace features of the bureaucratic management of information in the context of economic development which have particularly damaging consequences for the transformatory potential of information about women.

3 THE BUREAUCRATIZATION OF FEMINIST KNOWLEDGE

'Bureaucracies ', write Jaquette and Staudt, 'convert knowledge into power...[a] particular definition of a problem tends to privilege a set of solutions, and the choice of solutions determines who will set social norms ' (1988: 222). In development bureaucracies, the privileging of an economistic framework for assessing the meaning of information, for understanding motivation and for defining problems and their solutions, has fundamentally misconstrued the implications of women's experience of development.

The management and classification of information is central to the thematic organization of development policy. Information generated and used by bureaucracies is designed to measure people as aggregates of 'problems'. These 'problems' are given different significance for different policy sectors; certain of these 'problems' are aggregated across populations to create 'target groups' which are organized and prioritized into queues for therapy or provision. Gender policy advocates seeking to widen the data base on women's 'problems' with development have come up against a serious constraint given this

bureaucratic requirement for statistical simplification and aggregation. The problem is that the sheer, infinite variety in women's experience of development and their position relative to men eludes any systematization or easy categorization into bureaucratic information systems. As noted above, there is no shortage of information about women and gender differences, but the problem is, it is the wrong kind of information for bureaucracies. There is enormous variation between, and within, societies in the roles women and men play. Problems of gender inequality are not limited to one particular class or race or nation. Gender, as a significant variable determining life experiences cuts across all other sociological categories. Poverty may be experienced by women in middle-class households; gender violence may be experienced by women whatever their class, as may an under-endowment in civil rights and social status. There is no 'index' of women's subordination applicable to all women. In early evaluations of WID programmes, this was used as a defence for poor policy performance. For example, a 1978 USAID evaluation noted: 'A single, unified indicator of social status or progress of women has not been developed nor universally accepted ' (USAID 1978: 164, cited in Staudt 1985); a problem which justified the failure of field offices to determine women's pre-project status and to evaluate the impact of policy on women.

In response to this problem, much WID knowledge has become a discipline adopting the bureaucratic 'virtues' of what Schaffer calls 'technocracy and econocracy ' (1984: 159). Almost all research texts focusing on women's experience of development programmes are either funded or directly conducted by development agencies (Papanek 1985). Theoretical interpretations of key issues, such as why women's situations deteriorate with modernization, and what they need for their situations to improve, intend projects which development agencies will be able to implement. The development agenda thus references the concepts, data, methods, and theories elaborated by gender policy professionals. The effect of the bureaucratic informational grammar is to impose a Procrustean template on women's experiences of development, depoliticizing women's radically different interests through encapsulation, narrowing, and simplification.

One example of this process is the way data about women's work have been iterated to systems of generating and analysing information in develop-

ment bureaucracies. Considerable work has gone into efforts to quantify women's labour contribution to family survival for the purposes of development policy. As Jaquette shows in her reevaluation of Boserup's cross-cultural collation of information on women's work (1990), the quantification of women's labour represented an effort to demonstrate a link between women's income and status, and to justify feminist claims for women's equality by demonstrating that women are equally efficient as men, and hence equally deserving of policy attention. In other words, this process was designed to demonstrate that the economic, 'productivist' paradigm for evaluating the significance of people for policy applied as well to women as it did to men.

Jaquette notes that linking equality demands to efficiency and merit claims is a powerful argument in development agencies, where the project of modernization puts a premium on increases in productivity. But while ideologically forceful, this strategy is analytically and politically dangerous. Firstly, it does not put equality claims on a firm foundation (Jaquette 1990: 63). Counterevidence can defeat quantitative arguments for women's efficiency and merit - if women's productivity can be shown to be consistently lower than men's, then, following the logic of the market, they deserve fewer resources. And indeed, as Jaquette shows, given that narrow standard measures of productivity do not credit reproductive work such as childbearing, housework, and family servicing, much less the labour involved in the creation of community life, women's labour, even if supported by equitable access to new technology, education, and employment opportunities, will turn out to be less 'productive' (65). The dangers here are clear in a recent UNDP report which states that women's unpaid labour, if 'properly' valued, would add a third to global production (UNDP 1990: 132). A third, not an equal half.

Secondly, and more seriously, the productivist paradigm for evaluating women's status does not challenge the ideologies and practices of development bureaucracies. It conforms to a utilitarian penchant for measuring worth, or 'equality', in terms of money or a close substitute. On these terms, women's unpaid reproductive work becomes an index of their subordination. But monetized indices of worth obscure the fact that it is less the **form** of work people do, than the **relations** in which work is embedded which signals its social value. The problem is not that women's work lacks value, but rather

that monetized measurements do not capture its worth. Nor, more importantly, do they capture its **meaning**, which is critical for determining whether women's income will produce the expected pay-offs of higher family welfare and female autonomy. In relying on a simple inversion of the terms of previous approaches, attempts to monetize women's work replicate the values they oppose. The attainment of 'equality' remains contingent on measuring up to male standards and adopting male attributes (involvement in production, not reproduction).

In disembodying gender ideologies and power relationships from systems of social valuation, the 'social engineering' preoccupation with the female income variable effectively segregates women out of class and gender relations in development, from both their conflicts and their shared problems with men in the general context of systemic change. This produces the irony of separate treatment under the guise of 'integration'. Bureaucratic procedures for problem classification and solving are conducive to this. The reductive distillation of one feature of women's lives - their productivity - out of the complexity of women's social relationships, satisfies bureaucratic decision-making requirements of simplification, labelling, and ordering. A 'key variable' is identified for manipulation; the 'problem' for policy becomes women's low productivity, their seemingly stubborn persistence in clinging to forms of non-waged production and pre-commodity exchange, their mystifying inability to avail themselves of new technology. This has the effect, at least within development agencies, of reproducing the habits of thought which may have contributed to the invisibility of women in the first place. As a separate 'problem', women demand a separate solution; it is their 'traditional' behaviour, not men's, which is the focus of policy scrutiny. Seen as separate, not central, women can be 'added-into' the process of development at the margin.

One practical consequence of this is that the WID project of 'penetrating the technical core ' (Staudt 1985: 86) of development policy calculations by quantifying women's economic contribution, has been unsuccessful1. WID research is documented separately from mainstream research and is still considered to have relevance only for women, not for calculations of the GNP, national food production, or the structure of demand and consumption. Quantitative measures of the status of women are added as a residual category in macro-

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level policy analysis. Thus, while it is now obligatory to mention women in all major development reports, that mention takes its place in the 'Social Services' chapters, and in an appended, separate statistical table at the end (World Bank 1990; UNDP 1990).

The point of all this is that feminist knowledge, shaped to fit bureaucratic classification systems for information, fails to translate. Respect for bureaucratic norms of information packaging may succeed in bringing **women** into development, but not their political interests as a gender. What remains are a set of administrable needs, with all the implications of loss of choice and voice involved in bureaucratic processes of determining the needs of an aggregated 'target group'. The enormous variety in the ways gender is experienced should not be seen as a problem of evidence which fails to fit the categories, but a problem which has to do with the nature of the categories themselves.

4 THIRD WORLD WOMEN IN THE WESTERN EYE

I mentioned in the Introduction that the weight given to information depends on the power of the 'informer'. This has given greater authority to the information provided by development economists, and WID researchers working for development agencies. Where the information produced by the WID movement is concerned, it is important not to suppose that this information is itself not unproblematic, that it is self-evidently the expression of the problems, needs and interests of the groups it describes. Critically and damningly for the political claims of feminist research, the body of information and knowledge produced in the WID movement has been shaped by the power dynamics of the North-South system of which it is a part, assigning a highly problematic epistemic superiority to the knowledge Western women produce about women in development. This has been the subject of a strong critique by women in developing countries, who have charged that Western women are guilty of generalizing and extrapolating from their own experiences, and have projected their privileged identity as a referent to the rest of the world in culturally destructive ways.

The fact that much research on gender and women in development occurs in an iterative relationship to the prospects and priorities of the development establishment limits the degree to which it can

engage with or represent the aspirations and perceptions of the women who are its objects. Changes in research methodologies towards more participatory work are, it is hoped, changing this process by opening up possibilities for cross-cultural research partnerships and for the linkage of information production to the interests of indigenous groups of women. But the extent to which information on women in developing contexts reflects power relations of dependence and dominance which transcend national boundaries should not be underestimated, nor should the risks of 'getting it wrong' be ignored.

The extent of the exclusion of the views of indigenous women from information production systems can be seen in the management of WID knowledge in Bangladesh. Bangladesh's aid dependency has been such that what is known, and what is to be done, about women there has been determined by the fact that almost every WID text in Bangladesh has been either directly commissioned by Western donors to inform specific aid programmes, or sponsored by them through Western research institutions (White 1990: 48; Alam and Matin 1984: 3). Most of these texts are published in English by Western presses and are barely available locally. The first consequence of the Western donor monopoly over the production of WID information is that the substance of most studies, and the focus of most WID policy, is restricted to aspects of women's lives which impinge on the realization of these agencies' prior goals, namely, population reduction and increased food production. Most studies, therefore, concentrate on women's fertility and their work, and are oriented to the social engineering project of establishing an inverse causal relationship between the two (cf: Cain and Lieberman 1983; Chaudhury 1983; Mahmud 1988). Also, many observers fixate on the practice of purdah, or female seclusion, as the main feature of women's disadvantage, whereas local scholars argue that poverty and violence are the primary constraining features of local patriarchy amongst poor women (Alam and Matin 1984: 4).

5 CONCLUSION

Feminist research has been politicizing women's experience of development in ways which fundamentally disrupt the interpretive boundaries of the 'domestic' through which women's needs had been supposed to be a matter for private, familial provision, and through which development practice had biologized women to saddle them with repro-

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duction and marginality. This oppositional body of knowledge situates the problem of women's subordination within complex power relationships sustained between women and men by kinship structures, class structures, the state, and sometimes the international economic and political system, all of which put the project of women's liberation in a broader frame than one of mere access to income or other development inputs. The use of this information and knowledge for development policy purposes, however, has tended to result in a set of prescriptions for increasing women's economic productivity at the margins. Focusing on women largely in isolation from their relationships with individual men, their reproductive responsibilities, and their positions in class and other hierarchies, it frames women's experiences of development as a problem to be solved through the (top-down) manipulation of (primarily economic) status-determining factors.

The politics of this interpretive and practical shift are embedded in the ways women's needs for policy are defined, advanced, and institutionalized in bureaucracies where political demands are materialized into policies. This article has argued that the gendered politics and frameworks for information use in development bureaucracies are one of the mechanisms through which this occurs.

In the end, it is a political environment which elicits certain kinds of information upon which to base informed policy-making. The Western WID discourse largely reflects political environments external to developing countries, as well as the political atmosphere internal to the aid community. At play at the broader level are the international relations of dominance and dependence which shape the development field. These can undermine the validity and relevance of WID knowledge for the women it claims to describe and represent. At the organizational level, gender politics come into play, where information about women is resisted by men where it is seen to challenge personal privilege. Also, classification and analysis systems for information which institutionalize masculinist interpretations of the meaning of social and economic behaviour tend to distort the meaning of information about women's experiences of development. If, as I have suggested, the political environment for policy making affects the kind of information which is received by decision-makers and the way it is used, then the project for a more satisfactory translation of feminist knowledge into bureaucratic procedures must involve pursuing gender-equity in organizational environments, and in the ways in which information is collected and knowledge is created.

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