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Structural Adjustment Policies: A Feminist Critique

by Hillary Campbell

Introduction

"It is clear that it is women who, as workers, producers, consumers, wives, and mothers, are the shock absorbers of adjustment efforts at immense cost to their well being" (Sadisavam 1997, 633). Although women have many roles to play in the economic and societal make-up of society, their gender specific roles and impacts are largely ignored or unseen by the international community. Due to this "invisibility," women may often bear the brunt of the burden when developing countries receive financial aid from international institutions due to the "conditionality" of these loans. In this paper, through the use of several feminist theories, I will evaluate and explain the detrimental effects of structural adjustment policies put in place by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in developing countries on women.

Explanation of Structural Adjustment Policies

IMF describes its "core responsibility" as being to "provide loans to countries experiencing balance of payments problems" (IMF.org). In other words, IMF loans money to countries that are in high amounts of debt and find themselves unable to pay. The economies of these countries are weak and unstable. IMF explains the financial assistance helps countries to "rebuild their international reserves, stabilize their currencies, continue paying for imports, and restore conditions for strong economic growth" (IMF.org). The type of loan most likely given to these countries is called the Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility (PRGF) loan, a loan with the written objective of making "poverty reduction . . . central to lending operations in its poorest member countries" (IMF.org). This means that not only does IMF work with the country to stabilize the economy but also attempts to reduce poverty in that country.

It seems like the perfect solution, an international institution lending money to poor countries, while at the same time placing them on an economic regulation program that will get their economy back on track. All that the country needs to do is to follow the structural adjustment policies (SAPs) set by IMF, which are widely used and continually effecting populations worldwide. "In nearly every developing country in the world today, short-term stabilization measures, structural adjustment programs, liberalization efforts, and economic reforms are to be considered, attempted, or adopted" (Biersteker 1990). Because SAPs are so widely accepted as the solution to indebted nations' problems, it is important to understand what they are, what they do, and what effects they have both on the country and international community.

The overall goal of SAPs is to reduce the current account deficit and improve the overall economy of a country. They stem from the idea of the "conditionality" of IMF loans (Balaam and Veseth 2008, 156). In order for IMF to give monetary loans to a country, the government must agree to put in place and implement the policies IMF specified. SAPs "typically mean significant changes in economic policies to ensure that the country's domestic and external deficits are drastically lowered or even eliminated. Failure to meet those conditions results in suspension, renegotiation, or even cancellation of the program" (Kapur 1998, 4). The different policies and regulations specified may vary slightly from case to case, but the overall ideas behind them are the same. The goal is to follow the principles originally stemming from the Washington consensus, liberalization, and privatization (Balaam and Veseth 2008, 156). These principles translate into reducing the state's economic influence and creating circumstances for the private market to flourish.

There are several policies used to increase a country's overall GDP so the country may begin to pay off debts. IMF so delicately calls the benchmarks that must be obtained and followed for funding "performance criteria" (PCs). There are two types of PCs, quantitative and structural. "Quantitative PCs typically refer to macroeconomic policy variables such as monetary and credit aggregates, international reserves, fiscal balances, or external borrowing" (IMF.org). A country must build up its financial reserves by decreasing spending, increasing output, and attracting foreign investment. "Structural PCs are also clearly specified structural measures. . . . These vary widely across programs but could, for example, include measures to improve financial sector operations, reform social security systems, or restructure key sectors such as energy"(IMF.org). Structural reforms are for the government programs that are allowed to stay in place. They must become more efficient, better managed, and cost less money.

The typical components of an SAP include policies that encourage price stability to control inflation and encourage savings, as well as the "macroeconomic policies of fiscal austerity" to cut state spending and subsidies (Balaam and Veseth 2008). IMF does not specify which programs to cut or reduce in funding, however it does require a net decrease in government expenditures. The country's necessary decrease in spending must come from somewhere in the budget. More often than not, countries begin the budget cuts with social programs and subsidies. They typically cut from programs such as health care, welfare programs, social security, education, and agricultural subsidies.

Usually other state programs' budgets such as the military and police force are left unchanged. A decrease in spending could mean everything from decreasing the staff size of a program or cutting funding from the program itself. Either way, these social programs usually take a substantial hit under the conditionality of fiscal austerity.

IMF also encourages privatization of many state industries (Balaam and Veseth 2008). Privatization is considered necessary because the private sector is viewed as more economically efficient than the state. Any state-owned industries, such as coal or steel, must become privatized and handled completely by the free market. Many social programs, such as education and healthcare, may privatize as much as possible so that they may be handled in a way that seems more economically efficient.

Macroeconomic policies of "monetary contraction and devaluation" are also instituted to generate trade, and higher interest rates are instituted to attract investment in the short run (Balaam and Veseth 2008). The country should cater to foreign investors by devaluing their currency and instituting higher interest rates to increase the amount of investment in their country. Usually, this process encourages multinational corporations or foreign-owned businesses to set up in that country because of the new policies. The goal of this process is to increase exports as well as foreign investment.

Microeconomic policy changes include the deregulation of labor markets, financial markets, agricultural prices, and the removal of trade barriers (Sadisavam 1997). An overall policy of liberalization is aimed at using all resources in the most efficient manner to maximize output by reducing state intervention in the economy. State intervention in areas like the labor market is seen as a hindrance to market growth and should therefore be reduced. Examples of state intervention could be wage regulation, working condition requirements, environmental condition requirements, and regulating prices.

The logic of IMF is to reduce the current account deficit short-term; this will be accomplished by increasing exports and reducing imports by financing the capital account and limiting borrowing needs. The hope is that in the long run the changes will stimulate overall economic growth and create a situation for the nation to have the ability to repay old debts and not need assistance in the future (Balaam and Veseth 2008).

Not only does IMF require specific economic criteria to be met, but it also requires specific political criterion be met. The introduction of political conditionality stemmed out of the Cold War and fear of communism. The new "political conditionality" threatened to cut development assistance to countries that failed to show progress in democratization (Kwame 1999). Democratization is viewed as necessary to the country's economy because democracies typically allow for a freer market to buy and sell items with much less state involvement and intervention. Also, communism was considered to be economically inefficient.

Explanation of Feminist Theory

Feminism, known as a critical theory, stresses the importance of rendering women visible to the world scene and addresses the needs and concerns of those women. "Feminism is both an intellectual commitment and a political movement that seeks

justice for women and the end of sexism in all forms" (Haslanger and Tuana 2008). It is focused on gender-based analysis relating to societal norms and relations between men and women. However, there are many different branches and disagreements within feminism. "Feminists disagree about what sexism consists of, and what exactly ought to be done about it; they disagree about what it means to be a woman or a man and what social and political implications gender has or should have" (Haslanger and Tuana 2008). Although feminism is a highly fragmented theory with many different camps, I will attempt to use it in my evaluation.

The branch of feminism I will use in my evaluation is neo-feminism. Neo-feminism focuses on the "study of women's roles in the international political economy" and how they have been "overlooked because women are trivialized" (Balaam and Veseth 2008, 92). This theory discusses how the experiences of women, whether purposely or not, are not viewed as important as those of men. Due to this gender bias, women's issues are ignored or seen as unimportant. Neo-feminists say the trivialization of women's roles stems out of the patriarchy of society and that this male dominance is a key reason why women are not rendered as visible as they should be in order for their issues to be addressed (Aronson 2003). Neo-feminism is important to my evaluation because it gives a theory explaining why the grave issues women face often go ignored or trivialized due to a patriarchal system in which women do not get adequate representation. This understanding will later tie in to my evaluation of IMF-sponsored SAPs.

Neo-feminism is often referred to as having an agenda to end patriarchal domination in society. Maggie Humm defined patriarchal society as:

a system of male authority which oppresses women through its social, political and economic institutions. . . . Patriarchy has power from men's greater access to, and mediation of, the resources and rewards of authority structures inside and outside the home (Humm 1989, 200).

Men control and dominate women through social, economic, and political institutions, because they have more access to resources and authority. Men's and women's unequal access to resources and authority is important to understanding the effects of structural adjustment programs on women.

Neo-feminism also claims that women and their issues are objectified or trivialized when integrated into IPE research. In fact, E. Fuat Keyman claimed that women are often viewed in four destructive ways when included in research: as an empirical or cultural object, as a being, as a discursive construct, or as difference (Keyman 1995). Women are often unfairly viewed in research as a cultural or scientific object, a historical being in existence, a subject to be stated and passed over, or a difference from the norm. Keyman claimed that none of the current views of women in research truly grasp the woman as a living, growing, integral contributor to society. Instead, she is seen as an object in research, which misses out on her character and nature. Or she is seen simply as a being that existed in history, which misses out on her growing and changing nature. Or she is seen as a subject to be momentarily discussed and passed over, which misses the integral role she plays in the IPE. Or she is viewed as different

from the norm, which misses the integral role she plays in the shadow of men as the norm (Keyman 1995). He stated:

It is through a relational idea of identity that IPE creates a space for those whose experiences have been marginalized and served simply as an object of theory to act as active subjects of political economic research. Herein lies the significant contribution that the problematic of identity/difference makes to our understanding of international political economy (Keyman 1995, 94).

I will next evaluate structural adjustment policies in terms of neo-feminism. I will focus on how IMF trivializes or ignores women's issues, how the patriarchal domination of society and IMF set women up for greater abuse and neglect when SAPs are instituted, and how the research done on women is often an unfair representation.

The Invisibility of Women at IMF

Women are shockingly underrepresented at IMF. Of the thirty senior officials at IMF, only three are women. Their positions are African department director, external relations department director, and statistics department director. Of the ten managing directors of IMF, not one has ever been a woman. Of the twenty-four-person executive board, only two are women. Of the four-person management team, not one is a woman (IMF.org). IMF does have a diversity statement emphasizing that:

Effective engagement in all member countries—in the context of globalization, the increasing prominence of emerging-market and low-income countries, and the changing role of women in the economy—makes diversity increasingly critical to all activities of the Fund (IMF.org).

Although it has made statements valuing diversity and have set benchmarks for diversity, IMF's 2007 Diversity Report stated, "With the Fund's current recruitment and promotion practices, we will be far from reaching our diversity benchmarks by 2010, let alone in 2008" (Klein 2007). In other words, what IMF says it will do and what it actually does are different. The diversity report outlined the lack of recruitment and promotion practices of women in IMF.

All of these statements and evidence show that although IMF has set goals for having more women, it has not taken the necessary steps to actually achieve the supposed goals. Does this mean it will eventually? Perhaps, but most likely the statements are made simply to pacify women in the international community. This exemplifies the idea in neo-feminism that women are ignored or trivialized. Those women who are at IMF go ignored and are not promoted to senior levels. Those women fighting for gender parity at IMF are trivialized by being given word with little action.

Not only are the women ignored and trivialized, but the lack of women in senior roles also seriously impacts the amount of weight and discussion women's issues have at IMF. Without women on the board to either fight for women's issues being trivialized or bring forward women's issues being ignored, the effect of SAPs on women will continue to go unseen or trivialized.

Invisibility of Women's Issues at IMF

In order to determine whether or not women's issues are being discussed and evaluated by IMF, I looked at IMF's published magazine of journal articles. A search of the *Finance and Development* database brought up 135 articles with the word "women." This may seem like a large number, but compared to the roughly thousand plus articles in the database, it is relatively small. Not only was it a small number, but the majority of the articles with the word "women" were reader commentaries, not actual articles (IMF.org).

In the June 2007 issue entitled *Unleashing the Economic Power of Women*, there were several good articles that discussed women and the economy. One article called "Budgeting with Women in Mind" discussed gender inequality and the importance of gender parity. It explained the importance of incorporating women into macroeconomics and how to address the different needs of women in development planning (Stotsky 2007). Another entitled "Smart Economics" discussed benefits that could arise out of gender parity in society and gender-conscious economic policies (Buvinic and King 2007).

Despite this glimmer of hope that IMF seriously considers women's issues in their publications, none of the articles offer specific evaluation of IMF policies or specific critiques to help IMF be more gender conscious in their policies. This glaring lack of information helps to show that IMF is currently not addressing the issue of structural adjustment programs and the effect that they have on women in developing countries. There is little evidence that any such research has been discussed let alone carried out by IMF.

Detrimental Patriarchal Constructs that are Exacerbated by SAPs

"There is a gulf between the rhetoric and reality of the IMF's role, a gulf that has been emerging since the fixed exchange rate system broke down in the early 1970s but which is proving increasingly hazardous" (Minton-Beddoes 1995). IMF may say many things regarding helping the developing countries and the poor within those countries, but actions speak louder than words. Despite having a loan entitled "Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility," little is done to actually alleviate poverty. The only thing focused on is economic growth.

There are many detrimental effects on the poor, particularly on women, due to structural adjustment programs. With the patriarchal society that exists in the world, cultural constructs ensure that women have less access to resources and power than men do. The structural adjustment programs exacerbate women's already unequal access, which further harms women.

Initially, it may appear that SAPs are working. GDP appears to be increasing and debts are being paid off. However, this data is misleading. Structural adjustment programs have been characterized, through growing amounts of evidence, as creating an economic and social environment in which the rich become richer and the poor become poorer.

In fact, recent World Bank evaluations of the results of SAPs acknowledge that while macroeconomic stabilization policies are necessary for growth, they are

not sufficient in reducing poverty or income inequality in all countries (Sadisavam 1997, 632).

Despite the goal of IMF loans being to help poor developing countries grow, the programs do nothing to alleviate poverty.

There is now a . . . growing volume of literature that not only shows how gender bias in neoclassical economic theory renders the effects of SAPs on women invisible, in any standard measure of policy evaluation, but also provides empirical evidence of the heavy transitional costs of adjustment on women (Sadisavam 1997, 632).

Basically, there are two main problems regarding the effects of SAPs on women. First, the effects are largely ignored or unseen by the international community, and second, those effects are empirically supported to be detrimental to women and society.

First, in order to truly grasp the way that structural adjustment programs affect women, it is necessary to evaluate the way that women's labor is viewed and evaluated by IMF developers. Through a neo-feminist perspective, I will look at the labor done by women and how it is trivialized in the international community. Economists focus overwhelmingly on the "productive economy;" in other words, they focus on those aspects of the economy that make profits and cover costs. By viewing the economy in this way, they ignore a huge portion of the economy—the "reproductive economy," which meets the needs of and sustains human life. This sector of the economy is where the majority of women work. The economists assume that the reproductive economy will continue the same way it always has despite a reallocation of resources that occurs during adjustment (Sadisavam 1997, 636). By viewing the economy in this way, women's labor is "invisible" and therefore, "obscures the economic and social costs of structural adjustment on women's work and lives" (Sadisavam 1997, 632).

How much could this oversight of labor actually be? "Women do 70 percent of the world's work but receive only 10 percent of the revenues, and own only 1 percent of the wealth" (Mothering 2003). Women's work, although extremely important, often goes ignored and unpaid. For example, women in Africa produce 78 percent of the food—both meat and agriculture (World Vision 2000). "Eight out of ten working farmers in Africa are women. In Asia, the ratio is six out of ten" (McGovern 2001). However, the majority of these women do not gain cash directly for their work, and their labor is discounted in censuses and statistics (Jacobson 1994). Daily work for women in subsistence economies includes everything from household work such as childcare, cooking, cleaning, gathering water, and fueling the home to working in the barn and field labor. Women have primary responsibility over the care of all the animals including feeding, tending, gathering eggs and milk, and gathering fodder (Chen 1983). Women also have primary responsibility over post-harvest work, as well as helping during pre-harvest and harvesting (Chen 1983).

Also, women generally work more hours a day than men in developing countries. In Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa, women work twelve to thirteen more hours a

week than men (Finance and Development 1992). This translates to twelve to eighteen hours a day for women compared to men's eight to twelve hours of work each day (Jacobson 1994). Not only do women work more hours, they also "spend twice as many hours per week working to support their families" (Jacobsen 1992). Even though women contribute "a lion's share of work," it is viewed as "unproductive in the eyes of government statisticians, economists, development experts, and even their husbands" (Jacobsen 1992).

Such an oversight in acknowledging women's labor has a grave impact on women and society when structural adjustment programs are put into place. Women and female-headed households are the most at-risk group for poverty. There are approximately 700 million women living in poverty in developing countries (Buvinic 1997). Women comprise a greater portion than men of those living below the poverty line and those living without the basic essentials. "The number of women in rural communities living below the poverty line rose more than the number of rural men living below the poverty line—increasing by 47 percent for women versus 30 percent for men" (Buvinic 1997). Not only are women more at risk for poverty, but households headed by women are as well. Female-headed households are on the rise across the world. "Data compiled by the Population Council show a rise in female-headed households in eighteen out of twenty six censuses and surveys reviewed globally" (Buvinic 1997).

The International Center for Research on Women reviewed sixty-one headship studies conducted in developing countries over the last decade and in fifty-three of them found greater poverty in female-headed families (Buvinic 1997). By understanding that it is the women who are the majority of the poor and impoverished, we can begin to see the detrimental effect of IMF not focusing on the effect that SAPs have on women. If one of the goals is poverty alleviation and not enough research is done on those who make up the poor harm is likely to follow.

Also, "women's industries" are often unseen when compared to the actual GNP. For example, in India, after the SAPs were instituted, the Indian economy achieved a 1.5 percent growth rate. However, there was a recession in the agricultural and industrial sectors. This recession signified that "millions of workers . . . have been retrenched and have lost the purchasing power to procure the bare necessities of life" (Patel 1994). What is unseen in this picture is not only the poor but the majority of women that work in these two industries. The majority of employed women work in either the agricultural or industrial sector—the recession and loss of buying power hurt women the most. However, it was unseen due to an overall GNP rise.

Evaluation of Structural Adjustment Policies

Next, I will evaluate some of the specific policies used in SAPs to spur growth in the economy. I will evaluate how a patriarchal society creates cultural constructs for women, which greatly exacerbate the effects of structural adjustment programs. I will focus particularly on the privatization of state-owned industries, decreased spending to social programs such as health care and education, decreased agricultural subsi-

dies, effects of an increase in the export driven economy, and the currency devaluation and high interest rates used to encourage foreign investment, and the way they affect women. By looking at these SAP parts and the way they affect women, I will evaluate specific economic policies and their detrimental effects.

One of the most detrimental effects of SAPs on women is the aspect of IMF's conditionality requirement for fiscal austerity. As stated earlier, IMF does not necessarily specify where the budget cuts must come from, just that spending must be decreased. More often than not, countries begin the budget cuts with social programs and subsidies. They typically cut from programs such as health care, welfare programs, social security, education, and agricultural subsidies. Social programs are seen as unnecessary, high cost expenses that must be cut in order for a state to decrease its debts. The ramifications of the loss of social programs are huge and are felt especially by women. Due to the patriarchal societies in which women live, they have less access to public resources, such as health care and education, than men do.

In Tanzania, for example, seventy-one mothers died in the first thirteen weeks of 1988, when economic reforms were in force—four times the maternal death rate of previous years. The deaths were attributed to poor hospital conditions as well as a shortage of blood, drugs, and transport facilities; more tellingly they were an indication of the deteriorating physical conditions in which women carried out their reproductive roles (Sadisavam 1997, 638).

Although the government was responsible for decreasing the health-care budget, IMF ensured that the budget was cut in order to give them funding. It did not matter where the money was cut from as long as there was a decrease in spending. Mothers died because of inadequate health care, which stemmed from a lack of sufficient funding. Those who had access to medical attention were unable to get adequate care to save their lives, and this number does not include the women who were unable to access medical care because of high costs or not being allowed to seek medical care.

A cut in government funds to education has a much greater impact on girls than on boys. This occurs because of the patriarchal cultural constructs already in place regarding female education. The patriarchal society denies access to education for women. In general, women are much less likely to have access to or complete even a basic primary education. "In fourteen of the developing countries with literacy data, only one out of five adult females can read, and in less developed countries only 5 percent of women are literate" (King 1990). Overall literacy statistics show the educational discrepancy between men and women; the literacy rate for the world in 2005 was 18.3 percent illiteracy (13.3 percent male and 23.3 percent female) (Herz and Sperling 2004). This shows that even though there are both men and women who are illiterate, the number of illiterate women is almost double that of men.

Given all of these statistics, an overall budget decrease in education forces many schools to shut down. A decrease in the number of schools decreases the already slim availability of schools for women. The privatization of schools leads to higher costs of schooling as well. In the patriarchal society, families are much less likely to educate their girls if the costs are higher due to privatization and lack of funds. Though the

increased cost of school and decreased availability cannot be directly tied to SAPs, they occur due to the required fiscal austerity. A decrease in the amount of funding for education will put an even greater economic burden on those families hoping to send their girls to school, and without government aid, a greater proportion will be unable to afford the cost of getting an education. Families would rather opt to keep their girls at home in order to help on the farm or send them to a factory to earn money, rather than spend money on education.

Another SAP requirement is for a country to increase its exports. In a developing country, this usually means that agricultural exports must increase. This leads to an increase in cash crops, crops that are grown primarily to sell to foreign countries for cash back to the farmer. Cash crops are grown in the place of subsistence crops, crops grown to sustain the family that grows it. The promotion of cash crops over subsistence crops has many ramifications: women's workload doubles, food and income for women and families decreases, malnutrition increases, and women's land ownership decreases. Although IMF does not force the government to have the people engage in cash crops, a country must increase its exports. Developing countries have little to offer the world beyond agricultural products. The ramifications of cash crops may be linked to SAPs because of the required increase in outgoing trade.

First, cash crops double the workload burden of women. Women must bear full responsibility for food crops and also help their husbands with cash-crop cultivation without getting any share of the income (Sadisavam 1997). Women must now farm two farms at once instead of just the single subsistence farm she once had to cultivate. This double workday takes considerable tolls on the health and well being of the mother as well as the family. She may not have time to prepare clean drinking water, get enough fuel for the house, take her children to get medical care, or do many other necessary things. The farm must take precedence over other responsibilities which often leads to serious consequences, such as death or disease.

Cash crops also decrease the amount food and income for women and their families as a whole. For example, in Ghana, due to an increase in the number of cash crops and an increase in the amount of land used to grow cash crops, Ghanaian women are left with smaller holdings and poorer soil, without the ability to practice crop rotation. "As a result, soil becomes eroded and less fertile. Food production declines and malnutrition deepens" (Jacobsen 1992). Men use more land for cash crops, and there is less land leftover for women to farm to feed their families. Not only is there less land available, but they can only use the least productive and least fertile land. The cash crop promoters say that instead of the women having to farm food, the men will have enough money to buy food for the family. Unfortunately, this is not the reality of the situation. "In Africa, according to a World Bank report, it is not uncommon for children's nutrition to deteriorate while wrist watches, radios, and bicycles are acquired by the adult male household members" (Jacobsen 1992). Men are buying extravagant items for themselves instead of spending money buying food for their wives and children. This is a ramification of SAPs because of the requirement to increase foreign exports. Although IMF does not force men to buy fancy things

for themselves rather than food for their family, it is the reality of what men do with their export money. The link between required increased trade and cash crops is real. Therefore, the link between the results of cash crops can, indirectly, be linked to SAPs.

As hinted above, malnutrition becomes rampant when cash crops begin to take over a country. Malnutrition takes the greatest toll on the women. Due to the patriarchal society, women regularly eat last—after all the men in the family—and do not get enough food to sustain their basic nutritional needs. If there is less food, the men receive the same amount of food, while the women receive even less (Jacobsen 1992). Also, women regularly give their male babies more food than their female babies because men are considered to be more valuable than women. “There is a consistent pattern—where rates of malnutrition are high, gender discrimination is prevalent” (Sethuraman and Duvvery 2007). In fact, due to chronic malnutrition in children, up to 50 percent of girls are stunted (Gall 2002).

Perhaps the most worrying part of increased female malnutrition due to cash crops is that it is cyclical in nature. Malnourished girls become malnourished adolescents who then marry early, have children early, and have low-birth-weight babies who then become malnourished children and adolescents (Sethuraman and Duvvery 2007). The cycle of malnourishment is extremely dangerous and detrimental to the health of women and their children. Due in part to SAPs and cash crops, female malnutrition is not going away; increases in the downward trend of malnourishment is falling at less than 1 percent a year (Sethuraman and Duvvery 2007).

Another worrying part of cash cropping is that it decreases the possibility of a woman owning farmland. Nearly all land is taken up by the government or private enterprises and sold to men for cash cropping. Very rarely will land be sold to a woman for cash cropping, let alone subsistence farming (Jacobsen 1992). In fact, “Despite World Food Program findings that women produce 90 percent of all food consumed in the homes of the Third World, they own only 1 percent of the farmland” (McGovern 2001). Cash cropping decreases the already low possibility for women to own land, which has many social and economic impacts.

Finally, SAPs encourage governments to allow currency devaluation and increased interest rates in order to promote foreign investment. In order to increase foreign currency, governments respond to the needs of the multinational corporation’s (MNC) need for cheap labor. Also, a deregulation of the market allows foreign companies to pay what they want or have whatever working conditions they want. The combination of these two consequences creates a dangerous exploitative environment for women in the workplace. Due to the patriarchal society, “Women are rigorously socialized to work uncomplainingly, under patriarchal control, at any allotted task however dull, laborious, physically harmful or badly paid it may be” (Patel 1994). In India, for example, “96 percent of the female workforce is in the decentralized sector which has a high degree of labor redundancy and obsolescence. These women have less control over their work and have no chances for upward mobility” (Patel 1994). This is a breeding ground for MNCs to exploit the cheap, uncomplaining labor of women.

However, despite such exploitation, the plight of women goes unnoticed. The focus lies on an increase in foreign investment and exports. Although SAPs are not responsible for MNCs exploiting women, they create further problems by forcing and encouraging the entrance of the foreign companies and investment into these developing countries' economies.

Evaluation of the Feminist Explanation

Through testing the neo-feminist theory, I have shown some of the inadvertent effects of SAPs on women due to patriarchy and the trivialization of women. Although I could not prove that my effects were directly due to SAPs, I could show a strong link between SAP requirements, government actions, and the effect on women. My theories get to the root of the problems of SAPs by looking at how patriarchal societies enact the policies. Although it is the government that ultimately decides how to carry out the conditionality requirements, the requirements themselves are what cause governments to make the choices that they do. The economic choices made, as shown above, often have detrimental effects on women. I have also shown how the ramifications of SAPs are largely unseen and un-researched by IMF due to a lack of senior women in the program and little desire to research the impacts on women.

Another theory that is popularly used to explain the effects of structural adjustment programs is structuralism, a theory promoted by Joseph E. Stiglitz. He explained some of the same ideas I put forward but applied them broadly to all poor (Stiglitz 2006). This can be helpful because of his broader view; however, it misses the underlying discrimination of women. It does not see that women are the majority of the impoverished and why this is. It does not see that poor men and rich men alike exploit women for both their productive and reproductive labor. It leaves many of the questions unanswered by leaving the focus off of women. Therefore, although structuralism is another alternative to explaining my economic phenomenon, I think it is gender bias that harms our full understanding of the situation.

Conclusion

In conclusion, IMF's structural adjustment programs indirectly cause a severe impact on women due to patriarchy of society and the invisibility of women at IMF. Although IMF does not specify how their conditions should be carried out, governments have little choice. They must cut funding to important programs such as health care and education; they must increase cash crops; they must draw in foreign companies and investors. IMF does not force these specific actions, but it does require improvements in fiscal austerity and increases in exports and investment opportunities for different countries. The issue is that the government does not have a lot of choice in what they can do to enact these conditions. Therefore, the ramifications of decreased public funding, cash crops, and foreign exploitation can be linked to SAPs.

Throughout this paper, I have shown the disparate impact of SAPs on women and the unacceptable "feminization of poverty" in many countries in economic transition. I have shown that the disproportionate cost of SAPs borne by women violates their most basic human rights to development guaranteed by both international and national trea-

ties (Sadasivam 1997, 643). Not only is the SAP's impact on women clear, but IMF is doing nothing to change their attitude toward women besides publishing a few journal articles. Without more senior women and increased research the SAP's impact on women, nothing is likely to change. Due to such overwhelming costs, it is necessary to see that development that comes with such a price is surely unsustainable.

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