

# How (the Meaning of) Gender Matters in Political Economy

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Work cannot be understood without examining how gender is embedded in all social relations.<sup>1</sup>

Our collective fear [is] that the new political economy will fail to adopt a gendered analysis at its core, and will implicitly accept the androcentric bias that has characterized the discipline to date.<sup>2</sup>

What is the state of debate regarding gendered political economy? Answering this question depends on the existence of a debate, who is presumed to be participating and, especially, how we understand ‘gender’. Among self-proclaimed feminist scholars we can readily identify a range of positions on ‘gender and political economy’. While disciplinary locations prompt some of the variation,<sup>3</sup> the most telling differences – or points of debate – reflect varying theoretical (epistemological, methodological) orientations to the study of gender. The range of feminist research constitutes a continuum of overlapping positions that (as clarified below) reflects varying positivist and constructivist (also postmodernist/poststructuralist) orientations. The former mixes feminist and traditional political economy tools to study how men and women – gender understood empirically – are differently affected by, and differently affect, political economy; the latter foregrounds the feminist tool of ‘analytical gender’ to study how masculinity and femininity – gender understood as a meaning system – produce, and are produced by, political economy. Hence, there is a range of positions and, while feminists share a commitment to the centrality of gender, they do debate *how* to study it.

It is more difficult to assess how and to what extent less visibly ‘feminist’ scholars participate in the debate. While we see little evidence that political economy scholars assume the *centrality* of gender, in the last 10 years we do observe more attention to the category of ‘women’ (for example, in labour markets and social movements) and more references to ‘gender’ in a variety of publications. We also observe the inclusion of ‘gender-thematic’ articles in journal special issues,<sup>4</sup> as well as ‘gender’ chapters in edited volumes that are devoted to encompassing topics (e.g. globalisation). In this sense, even scholars who do not self-identify as feminist have increased their awareness of and references to women and/or gender in the context of political economy. This is obviously a welcome development, especially as it is neither an insignificant nor easily won gain.

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It is, however, a surprisingly limited – arguably superficial – engagement from the perspective of feminist claims and achievements. In the past decade feminists have exponentially increased knowledge about women’s and men’s lives and how gender both structures and differentially valorises masculinised and feminised identities, desires, expectations, knowledges, skills, labour, wages, activities and experiences. They have built professional associations, launched feminist journals, published widely, advanced crossdisciplinary scholarship, pioneered theoretical insights and promoted critical and transformative teaching, research and academic activism. In spite of these successes, feminists note continuing resistance to the breadth, depth and specifically *theoretical* implications of feminist political economy scholarship.<sup>5</sup> What explains the vitality, achievements, and sophistication of feminist/gendered political economy and, at the same time, its limited impact on mainstream and even most critical political economy scholars?

Some, perhaps a great deal, of the resistance is presumably due to individual investments and ideological factors that fuel resistance to feminisms in general.<sup>6</sup> However significant these may be, they are difficult to document and relatively unresponsive to critique. What is more productive, and relevant to the ‘state of the debate’, is examining how epistemological differences (among non-feminist as well as feminist scholars) shape one’s understanding of gender and, hence, where one is positioned on the continuum and how one participates in the debate. To anticipate the argument: in so far as positivist/rationalist/modernist commitments continue to dominate in mainstream, critical and even feminist political economy, gender can only be understood empirically and tends to become a synonym for women, who as a category can then be ‘added’ to prevailing analyses. More constructivist or poststructuralist commitments are required for understanding gender analytically (as a signifying code); these remain marginalised in economics, international relations (IR) and international political economy (IPE), with the systemic effect of reducing non-feminist participation in, sustaining resistance to, and obscuring the most significant claims and insights of feminist political economy.

With these points as background, the article first reviews the continuum of feminist positions, indicating the significance of epistemological differences and gesturing toward a literature review of developments in gendering political economy. I argue that the most productive and transformative gendered political economy entails systemic engagement with *analytical* gender and its hierarchical implications (privileging that which is masculinised and devalorising that which is feminised). The next section attempts to demonstrate the value of this orientation (and cites additional literature) by providing a ‘big picture’ overview of gendered global political economy (GPE). The objective is to substantiate theoretical claims and illustrate how gender is central to advancing political economy scholarship.

### **A continuum of (overlapping and ongoing) feminist knowledge-building projects**

Across disciplines, feminist interventions have typically begun by exposing the omission of actual women and their activities, while also documenting how

women and feminised activities are represented as inferior to male-as-norm (androcentric) criteria. In economics and political economy, feminists have exposed how men dominate the practice of and knowledge production about (what men define as) 'economics'; how women's domestic, reproductive and caring labour is deemed marginal to (male-defined) production and analyses of it; how orthodox models and methods presuppose male-dominated activities (paid work, the formal economy) and masculinised characteristics (autonomous, objective, rational, instrumental, competitive). As a corollary, 'women's work' and feminised qualities – in whatever sphere – are devalued: deemed 'economically' irrelevant, characterised as subjective, 'natural' and 'unskilled', and typically unpaid. For most economists, social reproduction through heterosexual families and non-conflictual intra-household dynamics are simply taken for granted; alternative household forms and the rising percentage of female-headed and otherwise 'unconventional' households are rendered deviant or invisible.<sup>7</sup>

Mounting evidence of systematic exclusions prompts a new strategy: correcting androcentric bias by *adding women* and their experiences to existing analytical frameworks. New questions emerge regarding what counts as relevant data (marriage patterns, family budgets), appropriate sources (church records, personal diaries) and germane topics (caring labour, shopping, food preparation, sex work). From this expanded inquiry we learn more about women and everyday life, but also more about *men* and conventional topics. That is, rather than a masculinist focus exclusively on 'the main story' of men's activities, we attend as well to the 'background' story that is rarely visible but which underpins and enables men's activities. Not only do women's lives become more visible, but the *interdependence* of both stories is illuminated, which also improves our understanding of the featured story and its primarily male protagonists. Hence, this 'project' not only adds women, but expands into investigating relationships among women's and men's identities, activities and inequalities of power.

The most extensive and familiar feminist research emerges from noting the omission of women and adding them – as an empirical category – to prevailing narratives. This may seem methodologically simple, but often produces surprising results. Recall how Boserup's 1970 study of the effects of modernisation policies on Third World women undercut claims that development benefited everyone. Subsequent 'women in development' (WID) research documented both how policies and practices marginalised women *and* how their exclusion jeopardised development objectives.<sup>8</sup> Numerous subsequent and ongoing studies demonstrate how a focus on women and gender *improves* our analyses. For example, feminists produce more accurate analyses of intra-household labour and resource allocation; move beyond quantitative growth indicators to improve measurements of human wellbeing; and document the value of 'women's work' and its centrality to 'development', long-term production of social capital and more accurate national accounting. They investigate gender patterns in wages, migration, informalisation, subcontracted 'home-working' and foreign remittances. And Third World women especially demonstrate the importance of local, indigenous and colonised people's agency in identifying problems and negotiating remedies.<sup>9</sup>

Making women empirically visible is thus an *indispensable* project. It inserts actual (embodied) women in our picture of economic reality, exposes how women

and men are differently engaged with and affected by political economy, and reveals women as agents and activists, as well as victims of violence and the poorest of the poor. But adding women to existing paradigms also raises deeper questions by exposing how the conceptual structures themselves presuppose masculine experience and perspective. For example, women/femininity cannot simply be 'added' to constructions that are *constituted* as masculine: reason, economic man, breadwinner, the public sphere. Either women as feminine cannot be added (that is, women must become like men) or the constructions themselves are transformed (namely, adding women as feminine alters their masculine premise and changes their meaning). In this sense, the exclusions are not accidental or coincidental but *required* for the analytical consistency of reigning paradigms.<sup>10</sup>

The implications of this insight move us along the continuum, from more positivist/rationalist epistemological commitments limited to understanding gender empirically to more constructivist and poststructuralist insistence that gender is also analytical. In effect, we move beyond critique to reconstruction of theory, and this has been particularly fertile terrain in the past decade. We also move beyond the dichotomy of men and women to the hierarchy of masculinity over femininity.

Understood analytically, gender is a *governing* code that pervades language and hence systemically shapes how we think, what we presume to 'know', and how such knowledge claims are legitimated. Epistemological and ontological issues are more visible at this 'side' of the continuum because conventional categories and dichotomies are not taken for granted but problematised. Here we find more attention to discourse, subjectivities and culture, and more interrogation of foundational constructs (rationality, work, production, capital, value, development). Consistent with this, there is typically more evidence of theoretical discussion and debate, and more self-consciousness about analytical assumptions and how they frame the questions we ask, the methods we adopt and the politics they entail. At the same time, as a governing code gender systemically shapes what we *value*. In particular, gender privileges (valorises) that which is characterised as masculine – not all men or only men – at the expense of that which is stigmatised (devalorised) as feminine: lacking agency, control, reason, 'skills', culture, and so on. To illustrate how a focus on analytical gender shifts the terms of debate I briefly consider two developments in gendered political economy.

WID scholarship initially sought more effective inclusion of women in the practices and benefits of development and argued that this would also improve development. But this orientation was gradually challenged as feminists questioned underlying assumptions, registered in a shift from WID and its liberal (and positivist) inclinations to gender and development (GAD), with its more constructivist, critical and structural orientation. It was increasingly clear that 'adding women' left the most significant problems intact. It did not address the denigration of feminised labour, the structural privileging of men and masculinity, the depoliticisation of women's subordination in the family and workplace, or the increasing pressure on women to work a triple shift (in familial, informal and formal activities). In contrast, GAD problematised the meaning and desirability of 'development', interrogated the definition of work and how to 'count it', examined

gender ideologies to explain unemployed men's reluctance to 'help' in the household, challenged constructions of feminism imposed by Western elites and criticised narratives of victimisation for denying agency and resistance. These studies indicate an opening up of questions, an expansion of research foci and a complication of analyses.<sup>11</sup>

At the same time, diversity among women forced feminists to reflect critically (and uncomfortably) on the meaning of feminism, definitions of 'woman', the politics of representation and the dangers of universalising claims. 'Sisterhood' aspirations have always been in tension with differences of ethnicity/race, class, age, physical ability, sexuality and nationality, and especially so in the context of globalisation. Politics and analytics merge here as actual differentiations – including hierarchies – among women contradicted the positivist claim of homogeneous categories (empirical males and females); more complex analyses were required. However one assesses their efforts, I believe that feminists have taken the challenges of theorising 'difference' more seriously, and moved more responsibly to address them, than most oppositional groups. On the one hand, feminisms have transdisciplinary and complex analytical resources for investigating and theorising about identity, difference and historically specific hierarchies of oppression (heterosexism, racism, classism and so on). On the other hand, feminist claims to political relevance and critique have 'forced' them to address embodied differences of power: feminist scholars are expected to 'walk' their (egalitarian) 'talk'. In short, contestations of theory and practice that are specific to recent (especially postcolonial and queer) feminisms have, I believe, generated the most incisive and inclusive analyses of power, privilege and political economy available at this juncture.<sup>12</sup>

### **Prevailing trends and the state of debate**

In the past decade feminists have continued to expose masculinist bias and its effects on the theory/practice of political economy and have vastly increased the evidence corroborating (and complicating) early feminist critiques. They have also expanded from an initial interest in more obviously gender-differentiated effects of microeconomic phenomena to interrogate the less direct effects of macroeconomic policies, including how gender operates even in the abstracted realm of financial markets. Similarly, feminists investigate linkages among sectors and levels of analysis, focus less on national/territorial boundaries and more on transnational/global dynamics, analyse globalisation/neoliberalism as masculinist and racist, and emphasise women's agency and resistance.<sup>13</sup>

As a generalisation regarding theoretical developments, feminist scholars increasingly subscribe to constructivist orientations, where masculinist assumptions are problematised and feminist alternatives explored.<sup>14</sup> Constructivism means different things to different people, especially in different disciplines. Without engaging complex definitional debates, I simply note minimalist claims: constructivism recognises that agent and structure are not categorically separate (as in a positivist binary), but interact to construct social reality. By acknowledging the social construction of agents, identities and ideologies, constructivism opens inquiry to new questions, not least for present purposes, how masculinist

(and other) ideologies shape what we study and how we study it. On the continuum posited here, this goes beyond simply adding women as an empirical category and has the potential for altering existing theoretical frameworks. (Whether and to what extent it does so depends on the particular research issues and epistemological commitments of the researcher.)

In addition, constructivism has two important and overlapping strengths. Analytically, it has the advantage of insisting on the centrality of shared ideas, or intersubjective meaning systems, in constituting social reality; it thus accommodates cultural coding and subjective dimensions that (I argue below) have particular force in today's political economy. Moreover, in contrast to poststructuralism, it has the strategic advantage of making sense to, and being accepted by, a growing audience; it thus reaches across more thematic and disciplinary boundaries and facilitates conversations along and across the continuum of gendered political economy. Constructivism is thus crucial to feminist (and other critical) interventions as it significantly expands the terrain of inquiry and provides an important 'bridge' across epistemological divisions.<sup>15</sup> To address an expanding agenda and critical commitments, feminists draw on a variety of approaches – Marxian, heterodox, institutionalist, neoGramscian, social economics, world systems – and currently favour heterogeneity and pluralism over adherence to any single paradigm.

This suggests perhaps the most significant trend in gendered political economy: away from making feminisms 'fit' orthodox approaches (decreasing dependence on them) to generating unique and unapologetically feminist methodologies and theories. This has been fuelled by an expansive critical literature that rejects 'absolute objectivity', 'decontextualised rationality', rigid boundaries and monological explanations as masculinist and modernist preoccupations, in favour of holistic, historical, 'thicker description' and institutional embeddedness. This maturation in confidence involves moving beyond critical, corrective orientations to production of alternatives, demonstrating their efficacy and benefits, and generating visions of economics that include ethical, more humane concerns. Arguably the most fundamental and widely accepted shift among feminists is the rejection of neoclassical models of abstract rationality and 'choice' in favour of a more relevant and responsible model of 'social provisioning'.<sup>16</sup>

This is not to suggest homogeneity among feminists. For analytical as well as strategic reasons, many feminists are wary of adopting what they understand as 'too' constructivist, and especially poststructuralist/postmodernist, orientations. The argument briefly is this: from more positivist starting points gender remains dichotomised and can only be understood as a homogeneous *empirical* category; women' can (at best) be added as such a category to existing frameworks; this will amend and presumably improve analyses, but (because empirical categories and analytical framing are presumed separable) this addition need not have any theoretical implications. One can 'add women' or refer to gender without disrupting orthodox methods or altering foundational questions. As a corollary, *simply 'adding women' tends to have little impact on the core of mainstream scholarship*, where the gender of bodies, or ratio of male-to-female workers, is presumed not to have *epistemological* consequences. In other words, as long as theories and methods are not deeply affected, it is relatively acceptable and easy enough to

add (empirical) women/gender. This is what many feminist – and apparently an increasing number of non-feminist – scholars are doing.

From more constructivist and especially poststructuralist starting points, gender is understood as a governing code and its inclusion in our analyses necessarily has epistemological/theoretical implications. On this view, gendering political economy *entails* a questioning of orthodox methods and foundational inquiries in so far as these rely on gendered assumptions and biases. This raises the theoretical stakes dramatically: it threatens to be systemically disruptive, which decreases receptivity and increases resistance to more complex understandings of gender. It is important to note that, in the absence of constructivist or poststructuralist insights, the meaning of operational ‘codes’ (gender or otherwise) is neither obvious nor readily comprehended. Hence, the systemic, intellectually *transformative* work of feminists is effectively ‘invisible’ because it exceeds what the mainstream can see or comprehend through positivist/modernist lenses. In this sense, the marginalisation of constructivism and poststructuralism in economics, political economy and IPE significantly limits how gender is understood, and goes some way in explaining both the variation among feminists and the relatively superficial engagement of non-feminists, who cannot (or do not want to) ‘see’ the profound implications of taking gender seriously. In other words, epistemological commitments shape receptivity to feminist work, and especially *which* feminist insights/claims are deemed comprehensible, acceptable and/or compelling.

What does this mean for the state of debate? I have indicated a variety of feminist positions and how these contribute to gendering political economy. Debates among feminists are manifested in differing research priorities and differing practical strategies for promoting feminist political economy. Both are shaped by epistemological and ideological differences. Regarding the former and as indicated by the continuum, feminists disagree on what topics are most important to investigate. For example, sexuality and heterosexism are relatively neglected, in part because their relevance is obscured when gender is understood as a synonym for the unproblematised category of ‘women’.<sup>17</sup> Similarly, resistance, especially to poststructuralist insights, limits feminist political economy engagement with culture, subjectivities, the politics of representation and postcolonial critiques. This is spurred by a widespread (but I believe mistaken) perception that poststructuralism entails elevating symbolic/cultural/literary phenomena *at the expense of* material processes and conditions. This is obviously unacceptable to feminists who study political economy ‘not just to understand the world but to change it’. Feminists are rightly wary of approaches that minimise ‘the material’, and at present the most visible poststructuralist work cultivates this perception; I argue instead that poststructuralism potentially offers the most incisive analyses of culture and materiality as *mutually produced* (co-constituted).<sup>18</sup> Rejecting this approach impedes efforts to address diversity, theorise the interconnectedness of hierarchies, analyse how power operates, pay more attention to subaltern voices/perspectives, and take seriously knowledge/theorising from marginalised locations.

Strategically, some feminists advocate relatively more acceptable, ‘doable’ and presumably efficacious reforms from within – or not far outside of – conventional thinking. For example, through a variety of activities – gender mainstreaming,

global networking, women-oriented non-governmental organisations – feminists have expanded their capacity to influence policymaking, inform development strategies, direct research agendas and promote ‘women’s issues’. Feminists utilise Sen’s capabilities approach to enhance awareness of gender, deploy human rights discourse to promote women’s economic rights and advocate microcredit lending to empower poor and especially rural women.<sup>19</sup> While most feminists recognise the need for and support these strategies, some also question their efficacy in terms of securing systemic gains for women and/or transforming structural conditions that reproduce hierarchies not only of gender but class, race, sexuality and nationality. In short, feminists debate familiar trade-offs between ‘safer’, shorter-term and typically localised ‘practical’ gains, and more disruptive, longer-term and systemically transformative strategies. The latter, of course, are perceived as ‘threatening’ to careers as well as to conventional knowledge production and political strategies. Like research priorities, these differences in strategy are shaped by epistemological and ideological commitments. In particular, taking analytical gender seriously exceeds piecemeal reforms (which leave ‘too much in place’) and implies more systemic transformation of subjectivities, analytical frameworks and institutional structures.

In sum, I argue that epistemological differences are key to understanding the state of debate regarding gendered political economy. Among feminists, analytical and strategic considerations shape what is debated. Among non-feminists, participation in the debate is constrained by epistemological (and strategic?) commitments that impede taking analytical gender seriously, and focus instead on ‘adding women/gender’ in relatively safe and acceptable terms, thus obscuring the import and systemic implications of feminist theory. In this sense, feminists have little company in debating gendered political economy; rather, they (like feminists in IR) appear to be forging ahead with their own agendas and debates, but in relative – and presumably regrettable – isolation from mainstream and even critical political economy. The point, again, is not to disparage the increased attention to women/gender, as this is a considerable achievement and an indispensable starting point. But in the face of feminist research and transformative theoretical insights, this limited engagement is problematic. The continued resistance to, or inadequate comprehension of, feminist contributions not only undermines specifically ‘feminist’ objectives. In so far as analytical gender has systemic and epistemological implications, its continued marginalisation is detrimental to advancing political economy knowledge/theory/analysis more generally. In the next section I attempt to substantiate these claims by providing a ‘big picture’ analysis of GPE that takes both empirical and analytical gender seriously.<sup>20</sup>

### **Gendered political economy of globalisation**

Neoliberal policies guiding contemporary globalisation are promoted primarily by geopolitical elites in the interest of powerful states and the inter- and transnational institutions they effectively control. Deregulation has permitted the hypermobility of (‘foot-loose’) capital, induced phenomenal growth in crisis-prone financial markets and increased the power of private capital interests. Liberalisation is selectively implemented: powerful states engage in protectionism, less through



tariffs than rules, regulations and subsidies,<sup>21</sup> while developing countries have limited control over protecting domestic industries, the goods thereby produced and the jobs provided. Privatisation has entailed loss of nationalised industries in developing economies and a decrease in public sector employment and provision of social services worldwide. The results of restructuring are complex, uneven and controversial. While economic growth is the objective and has been realised in some areas and sectors, evidence increasingly suggests expanding inequalities, indeed a polarisation, of resources within and between countries.

Globalisation is a gendered process that reflects both continuity and change. Men, especially those who are economically, ethnically and racially privileged, continue to dominate institutions of authority and power worldwide. And masculinist thinking continues to dominate economic theorising and policy making: top-down, decontextualised (non-holistic), formulaic and over-reliant on growth and quantifiable indicators (rather than provisioning and measures of human wellbeing and sustainability). But globalisation is also disrupting gendered patterns by altering conventional beliefs, roles, livelihoods and political practices worldwide. While some changes are small and incremental, others challenge our deepest assumptions (e.g. male breadwinner roles) and most established institutions (e.g. patriarchal families). Feminists argue that not only are the benefits and costs of globalisation unevenly distributed between men and women, but that masculinist bias in theory/practice exacerbates structural hierarchies of race/ethnicity, class and nation.

With other critical scholars I argue that dominating accounts of GPE perpetuate economic, modernist/positivist and masculinist commitments. In particular, these preclude adequate analyses of two central features of global restructuring. First, today's globalisation is distinguished by its dependence on historically contingent and socially embedded information and communication technologies (ICTs) specific to the late twentieth century. Due to the inherently conceptual/cultural nature of information, not only empirical but analytical challenges are posed by the unprecedented fusion of culture and economy – of virtual and material dimensions – afforded by ICTs. In brief, the symbolic/virtual aspects of today's GPE expose – to a unique extent and in new developments – how conventional (positivist) separations of culture from economy are totally indefensible and how poststructuralist lenses are essential for adequately analysing today's GPE. Second, globalisation and its effects are extremely uneven, manifested starkly in global, intersecting stratifications of ethnicity/race, class, gender and nation. To address these conditions adequately requires critical and especially feminist postcolonial lenses.

Moreover, to investigate the *interconnections* among structural hierarchies I deploy gender analytically, arguing that denigration of the feminine (coded into masculinist/modernist dichotomies as hierarchical) pervades language and culture, with systemic effects on how we 'take for granted' (normalise/depoliticise) the *devaluation* of feminised bodies, identities and activities. This has particular relevance for economics, where assessments of 'value' are key. I argue that *feminisation of identities and practices effectively devalues them* in cultural as well as economic terms. Briefly: the taken-for-granted devaluation of 'women's work' is generalised from women to include feminised 'others': migrants,

marginalised populations, ‘unskilled’ workers, the urban underclass and developing countries. Women and feminised others constitute the vast majority of the world’s population, as well as the vast majority of poor, less skilled, insecure, informalised and flexibilised workers; and the global economy absolutely depends on the work that they do. Yet their work is variously unpaid, underpaid, trivialised, denigrated, obscured and uncounted: it is devalorised. This economic devalorisation is either hardly noticed or deemed ‘acceptable’ because it is consistent with cultural devalorisation of that which is feminised. The key point here is that feminisation devalorises not only women but also racially, culturally and economically marginalised men *and* work that is deemed unskilled, menial and ‘merely’ reproductive.

Moving beyond a narrow definition of economics, I develop an alternative analytical framing of reproductive, productive and virtual economies that shifts how we see the terrain of globalisation and hence how we might interpret, understand and respond to it. I refer not to conventional but Foucauldian economies: as mutually constituted (therefore coexisting and interactive) systemic sites through and across which power operates. These sites involve familiar exchanges, but also include sociocultural processes of subject formation and cultural socialisation that underpin identities and their political effects. The conceptual and cultural dimensions of these sites are understood as inextricable from (mutually constituted by) material effects, social practices and institutional structures. The objectives are to demonstrate the co-constitution of culture and economy, the interaction of identification processes and their politics, and the value of deploying a critical feminist, poststructuralist lens as a means to exposing the operating codes of neoliberal capitalism. Here I review only major trends in each economy, emphasising how they are gendered.

### *The productive economy*

I begin with the familiar ‘productive economy’ (PrE), understood as ‘formal’ – regularised and regulated – economic activities identified with primary, secondary and tertiary production. Globalisation variously complicates these distinctions, especially as ICTs reconfigure each sector. First, the dramatic decline in world prices of and demand for (non-oil) primary products has been devastating to Third World economies where primary production dominates: unemployment problems are exacerbated, ability to attract foreign investment is reduced, and debt dependency may be increased. One effect is viewing (unregulated) labour as a competitive resource and/or encouraging out-migration in search of work.

Second, ‘de-industrialisation’ especially affects advanced industrialised countries and major cities, manifested variously through downsizing, ‘jobless growth’, loss of skilled and often unionised positions, growth in low-wage, semi- and unskilled jobs, and relocation of production to lower wage areas. Job security is additionally eroded for all but elite workers through ‘flexibilisation’: more temporary, part-time, non-unionised jobs with fewer benefits, and more ‘just-in-time’, decentralised and subcontracted production processes. These shifts tend to increase un- and underemployment (especially of men) and coupled with erosion of union power translate into a decline in real incomes and household resources.

Flexibilisation tends to increase the power and autonomy of management and be attractive to those with highly valued skills. Some find that flexible arrangements better suit their life conditions. Mothers and single parents may prefer flexible arrangements, although this must be assessed in the context of childcare availability and limited access to better-paying and more secure employment opportunities. Specific trade-offs depend on specific contexts, but a general point remains: in the absence of regulatory frameworks that protect workers' rights and generate *living* wages, flexibilisation translates into greater insecurity of employment and income for the majority of the world's workers.<sup>22</sup>

Third, employment shifts from manufacturing to information-based services as technologies transform the nature of work worldwide. Income polarisation is exacerbated in so far as service jobs tend to be either skilled and high-waged (professional-managerial jobs; for which read 'masculinised') or semi-, unskilled and poorly paid (personal, cleaning, retail and clerical services; for which read: 'feminised'). Hence, this shift also favours countries with developed technology infrastructures and relatively skilled workers.<sup>23</sup>

The fourth trend is *feminisation* of employment, understood simultaneously as a material, embodied transformation of labour markets (increasing proportion of women), a conceptual characterisation of deteriorated and devaloured labour conditions (less desirable, meaningful, safe or secure), and a reconfiguration of worker identities (feminised managers, female breadwinners). Women's formal employment has been increasing worldwide, while male participation has been falling (this indicates less an empowerment of women than a deterioration in working conditions for men). As jobs require few skills, and flexibilisation becomes the norm, the most desirable workers are those who are perceived to be undemanding (unorganised), docile but reliable, available for part-time and temporary work, and willing to accept low wages. Gender stereotypes depict women as especially suitable for these jobs and gender inequalities render women especially desperate for access to income. In short, as more jobs become casual, irregular, flexible and precarious, more women – and feminised men – are doing them.

Fifth, globalisation increases flows of people: to urban areas, export-processing zones, seasonal agricultural sites and tourism locales. Migrations are shaped by colonial histories, geopolitics, immigration policies, capital flows, labour markets, cultural stereotypes, skill attributions, kinship networks and identity markers. Given the nature of 'unskilled' jobs most frequently available (cleaning, harvesting, domestic service, sex work), migrant worker populations are especially marked by gender and race/ethnicity. Being on the move – for work, recreation or escape – affects personal and collective identities and cultural reproduction. Not least, traditional family forms and divisions of labour are disrupted, destabilising men's and women's identities and gender relations more generally. Shifting identities have complex effects at numerous 'levels', whether expressed in anti-immigrant racism, nationalist state-building, ethnocultural diasporas, ethnic cleansing or patriarchal religious fundamentalisms.<sup>24</sup>

Sixth, feminists have generated extensive research on structural adjustment policies, documenting not only their gender-differentiated effects but also gender, class and racial/ethnic biases in policy making. Privatisation has patterned effects in so far as reductions in public spending have generalisable consequences.

When social services are cut, women are disproportionately affected because they are more likely to depend on secure government jobs and on public resources in support of reproductive labour. When public provisioning declines, women are culturally expected to fill the gap, in spite of fewer available resources, more demands on their time and minimal increases in men's caring labour. Effects include more women working a 'triple shift', the feminisation of poverty worldwide, and both short- and long-term deterioration in female health and human capital development.

Trade liberalisation is associated with increases in women's labour force participation worldwide, with complicated gender effects. In general, elite, educated and highly skilled women benefit from the 'feminisation of employment' and employment in any capacity arguably benefits women in terms of access to income and the personal and economic empowerment this affords.<sup>25</sup> Women, however, continue to earn 30–40 per cent less than men, and the majority of women are entering the workforce under adverse structural conditions. Work in export-processing zones is tedious yet demanding, and sometimes hazardous, with negative effects on women's health and long-term working capacity. When new technologies are implemented it is also typically men – not women – who are retained or rehired as machine operators.<sup>26</sup>

The uneven and gendered effects of these trends are most visible in relation to production processes and working conditions. For the majority of families worldwide, one-third of which are female-headed, restructuring has meant declining household income, reduced access to safe and secure employment, and decreased provision of publicly funded social services. Global poverty is increasingly feminised and is especially stark among female-headed households and elderly women. In developed economies reduction of social services disproportionately hurts women, the urban underclass and immigrant families. Structural adjustment programmes imposed on developing countries exacerbate women's poverty by promoting outward-oriented growth, rather than meeting domestic subsistence needs. They reduce public subsidies that lower prices of basic goods, spur urbanisation and labour migration that increases the number of female-headed households, aggravate un- and underemployment of men that reduces household income, and disrupt traditional social forms of support for women.

These conditions force people to pursue 'survival strategies' and seek income however they can. The global trend is towards the un- and underemployment of men, increasing employment of women as cheaper workers, and a phenomenal growth of 'informal' work in the home, community and shadow economy and in criminal activities. Feminists argue that these trends not only differentially affect women, men and feminised 'others', but they are also shaped by masculinist ways of thinking in regard to how 'work' and 'economics' are defined, who should do what kinds of work, and how different activities are *valued*.

### *The reproductive economy*

Conventional – and continuing – neglect of the 'reproductive economy' (RE) *exemplifies* masculinist and modernist bias in political economy. This neglect continues due to masculinising the (valorised) public sphere of power and formal

(paid) work, and feminising the (marginalised) family/private sphere of emotional maintenance, leisure and caring (unpaid) labour. Here I focus on three reasons for taking the RE seriously: the significance of subject formation and socialisation, the devalorisation of 'women's work' and the increasing role of informalisation in the GPE.

Socialisation presumably teaches us how to become individuals/subjects/agents according to the codes of a particular cultural environment. Subject formation begins in the context of family life, and the language, cultural rules, and ideologies we acritically imbibe in childhood are especially influential. This is where we first observe and internalise gender differences, their respective identities and divisions of labour. Moreover, gender acculturation is inextricable from beliefs about race/ethnicity, age, class, religion and other axes of 'difference'.

Feminists have long argued that subject formation matters *structurally* for economic relations. It produces individuals who are then able to 'work' and this unpaid reproductive labour saves capital the costs of producing key inputs. It also instils attitudes, identities and belief systems that enable societies to function. Capitalism, for instance, requires not only that 'workers' accept and perform their role in 'production', but that individuals more generally accept hierarchical divisions of labour and their corollary: differential valorisation of who does what kind of work.

Socialisation and the caring labour required to sustain family relations are stereotyped as 'women's work' worldwide. Yet, in spite of romanticised motherhood and a glut of pro-family rhetoric, neoliberal globalisation reduces the emotional, cultural and material resources necessary for the wellbeing of most women and families. Similarly, the ideology of patriarchal states, religions and nuclear families that locates women in the home (as loyal dependents and loving service providers) is today contradicted by two realities: many women wish to work outside of the home, whilst for many other women, economic realities (and consumerist ideologies) compel them to seek formal employment. As already noted, when household resources decline, masculinist ideologies hold women disproportionately responsible for family survival. Women everywhere are increasing the time they spend on reproductive labour, in ensuring food availability and health maintenance for the family, in providing emotional support and taking responsibility for young, ill and elderly dependents. Mothers often curtail their own consumption and healthcare in favour of serving family needs, and daughters (more often than sons) forfeit educational opportunities when extra labour is needed at home. The effects are not limited to women because the increased burdens they bear are inevitably translated into costs to their families, and hence to societies more generally.<sup>27</sup> As a survival strategy, women especially rely on informal work to ensure their own and their family's wellbeing.

Informal activities are not unique to, but have nonetheless greatly expanded in, the context of neoliberal restructuring.<sup>28</sup> Increasing un- and underemployment, flexibilisation and erosion or prohibition of union power has meant declining real incomes and decreased job security worldwide. Deregulation and privatisation undercut welfare provisioning, state employment and collective supports for family wellbeing. People are thus 'pushed' to engage in informal activities as a strategy for securing income however they can. Informalisation has a variety of

direct and indirect effects on labour relations. In general, it decreases the structural power of workers, reaps higher profits for capital, depresses formal wages, disciplines all workers and, through the isolation of informalised labour, impedes collective resistance. Women, the poor, migrants and recent immigrants are the prototypical (feminised) workers of the informal economy;<sup>29</sup> in the context of increasing flexibilisation, the devalued conditions which informalisation demands are arguably the future for all but elite workers worldwide.

Informalisation tends to be polarised between a small, highly skilled group able to take advantage of and prosper from deregulation and flexibilisation, and the majority of the world's workers who participate less out of choice than necessity due to worsening conditions in the formal economy. Among those with less choice women are the majority, as informal work constitutes a survival strategy for sustaining households. Insecure and risky work in domestic services and the sex industry are often the primary options. This reflects not only dire economic needs, but also masculinist thinking that identifies domestic labour as women's work and objectifies female bodies as sources of pleasure for men. Masculinist institutions collude in promoting economic policies (tourism as a development plan, remittances as a foreign currency source) that 'push' women into precarious informal work.<sup>30</sup>

Informalisation is heterogeneous and controversial. Some individuals prosper by engaging in entrepreneurial activities afforded by a less regulated environment. This is especially evident in micro-enterprises (favoured by neoliberals) where innovation may breed success and multiplying effects; in tax evasion and international pricing schemes that favour larger operations; in developing countries where informal activities are crucial for income generation; and in criminal activities that are 'big business' worldwide (for example, traffic in drugs, arms and the bodies of sex workers and illegal immigrants).<sup>31</sup> In sum, informalisation is key to the current GPE, yet is relatively undertheorised. Due to its unprecedented and explosive growth, the unregulated and often semi- or illegal nature of its activities, its feminisation and effects on conditions of labour, it poses fundamental challenges for adequately analysing the GPE.

### *The virtual economy*

Globalisation is especially visible in flows of symbols, information and communication through electronic and wireless transmissions that defy territorial constraints. It is not only the new scale and velocity of these transmissions but the different (symbolic, non-material, virtual) *nature* of these processes that we must address, as intangible symbols contravene familiar notions of time and space as well as conventional analyses of material goods. The unprecedented fusion of symbols/culture and commodities/economy in today's GPE requires an understanding of 'culture' and 'economy' as co-constituted. Given the newness of these developments, specifying a 'virtual economy' (VE) is a first step. I identify three (interactive) modes of this economy – financial, informational, cultural – and review them briefly here with a focus on how they are gendered.

Since the 1970s floating exchange rates, reduced capital controls, offshore transactions, desegmentation, new financial instruments, securitisation and the

rise of institutional investors have interacted to amplify the speed, scale and complexity of global financial transactions. (Male-dominated) powerful states have been complicit in, and (masculinist?) technologies have been decisive for, enabling the mobility of capital and its enhanced power. The key result is an 'enormous mass of "world money" . . . [that] is not being created by economic activity like investment, production, consumption, or trade . . . It is virtual [symbolic] rather than real [commodity] money.'<sup>32</sup> The point is not that this 'delinking' (of symbolic from commodity money) insulates the real economy from global finance; rather, prices 'set' in the virtual economy (e.g. through interest and exchange rates) have decisive (and gendered) effects throughout the socio-economic order. For example, investment strategies shift toward short-term horizons and away from infrastructural and arguably more socially-beneficial endeavours; production shifts toward flexibilisation, with its problematic job insecurities; and labour markets are polarised between high-tech, highly skilled masculinised jobs and devalorised, feminised services. In global financial markets, what does distinguish symbolic from commodity money is the extent to which its symbolic/informational content (e.g. stock market values and forecasts) is a function less of 'objective' indicators than processes of *interpretation* that involve subjective ideas, identities and expectations. Financial crises and stock market scandals reveal the extent to which (primarily male) agents in this rarefied environment rely on guesswork, trust in their colleagues' opinions, and purely subjective assessments as they 'play' casino capitalism. Moreover, feminists have documented the role of masculine identities among power wielders, as a shift from more state-centric 'Chatham House Man' to market-centred 'Davos Man' and as shaping the subjectivities of financial traders.<sup>33</sup>

Effects of global finance are multiple. The allure of financial trading exacerbates the devalorisation of manufacturing and encourages short-term over long-term investments in industry, infrastructure and human capital. The expansion, complexity and non-transparency of global financial transactions makes money laundering easier, which enhances opportunities for illicit financial trading as well as organised crime (including the gendered practices of trade in women, guns and drugs) and decreases tax contributions that underpin public welfare. Access to credit becomes decisive for individuals and states, and is deeply structured by familiar hierarchies. Increasing urgency in regard to 'managing money' and investment strategies shifts status and decision-making power within households, businesses, governments and global institutions. These changes disrupt conventional identities, functions and sites of authority, especially as pursuit of profits displaces provisioning needs and governments compete for private global capital at the expense of public welfare.

Moreover, the instability of financial markets increases *risks that are socialised* (hurting public welfare) and, when crises ensue, women suffer disproportionately. Two entwined issues emerge: first, women and gender-sensitive analyses are absent – or at best marginalised – in the decision-making processes and analytical assessments of the financial order. Women are underrepresented in the institutions of global finance, a model of elite agency and (instrumental) economic 'efficiency' is deemed common sense, and the masculinism of financial players and their practices is obscured. Second, these exclusions and blinders filter what elite analysts

are able – or willing – to ‘see’. In particular, they obscure the gendered costs of crises: loss of secure jobs and earning capacity due to women’s concentration in precarious forms of employment; lengthened work hours for women as they ‘cushion’ the impact of household income; decreased participation of girls in education and deteriorating health conditions for women; increased child labour and women’s licit and illicit informal activities; and increased acts of violence against women.<sup>34</sup>

These costs not only disproportionately hurt women in the immediacy and aftermath of crises, but have important long-term effects. On the one hand, girls and women are less able to participate as full members of society and have fewer skills required for safe and secure income-generation, whilst the intensification of women’s work with fewer resources imperils social reproduction more generally. On the other hand, entire societies are affected as deteriorating conditions of social reproduction, health and education have long-term consequences for collective wellbeing and national competitiveness in the new world economy.

The informational mode of the virtual economy features the exchange of knowledge, information or ‘intellectual capital’. While all processes involve information/knowledge, information here *is* the commodity: ideas, codes, concepts, knowledge are what is being exchanged. This commodification poses questions poorly addressed in conventional analyses. In particular, the informational economy has unique characteristics: its self-transforming feedback loop, the imperative of accelerating innovation, defiance of exclusive possession, capacity to increase in value through use and intrinsic dissolution of cultural-economic distinctions. Hence, the informational economy *necessarily* involves a transformation not only of goods, but also of (gendered) thinking, knowledge and cultural codes.

Computer-based digitisation enables the conversion (reduction) of information, images, literature, music and even human experience into a binary code of 1s and 0s available to anyone with the relevant ‘reading’ capacity (conceptual and technological, access to which is gendered). These many and diverse phenomena are reduced to a common, universal code and circulated ‘virtually’ around the world, without the constraints of time and space. Digitisation also effectively ‘objectifies’ these diverse phenomena, rendering them objects/commodities that are tradeable.

Economic and political developments are simultaneously embedded in, affected by and profoundly shape sociocultural beliefs and practices. Not all information/knowledge is deemed worthy of digitisation or incorporation in networks of communication, and the selection processes at work are pervasively gendered. Media conglomerates – dominated by elite men and the corporate, consumerist interests they serve – determine the content of what is transmitted. The news industry focuses on traditionally male-defined activities: war, power politics, financial markets and ‘objective’ indicators of economic trends. Women are relatively invisible in these accounts, except as victims or those who deviate from gender expectations. The significance of media domination and its effects cannot be overstated, for it ultimately shapes what most of us know about ‘reality’ *and* our subjective interpretation of reality is shaped by the cultural codings of global media. News reporters, politicians and advertisers know that the media powerfully shape what we have knowledge of, believe in, hope for and work toward; they create and direct consumer desire, as well as social consciousness and political



understanding. More generally, the politics of knowledge/information include whose questions are pursued, whose concerns are silenced, whose health needs are prioritised, whose methods are authorised, whose paradigm is presumed, whose project is funded, whose findings are publicised, whose intellectual property is protected. All of these are deeply structured by gender, as well as racial, economic and national hierarchies.

The conceptual and ideological commitments of digitisation and the informational economy are inextricable from the embodied practices of this economy. Whose history, stories, lives, language, music, dreams, beliefs and culture are documented, much less celebrated? Who is accorded credibility and authority: as religious leader, economic expert, marketing genius, financial guru, scientific expert, objective journalist, leading scholar, technological wizard, 'average American', 'good mother', 'man on the street'? Who is empowered to speak on behalf of their identity group, who on behalf of 'others'? Who benefits and how from English as the global lingua franca? Who determines what information is publicised – witnessed, replicated, published, disseminated, broadcast? Again, gender features prominently in these questions, and the politics they reveal. In sum, like money, information is not neutral. It carries, conveys and confers power in multiple ways, with diverse effects. Adequate analysis of these developments requires taking the politics of cultural coding seriously and taking seriously the gender of cultural coding.

The third mode of the virtual economy features the exchange of aesthetic or cultural symbols, treated here as heightened consumerism. The consumer economy/society involves the creation of a 'social imaginary' of particular tastes and desires, and the extensive commodification of tastes, pleasure and leisure. Aesthetics figure prominently here as, first, the value-added component of goods is less a function of information/knowledge and more a production of ephemeral, ever-changing tastes, desires, fashion and style, and, second, *this* production is increasingly key to surplus accumulation. In an important sense, capital focuses less on producing consumer goods than on producing both consumer *subjectivities* and a totalising 'market culture' that sustain consumption. Consumerism also involves a *political economy of signs* in the explicit sense of the *power* of symbols, signs and codes to determine meaning and hence value. The basic argument is that commodities do not have value in and of themselves, but only as a function of the social codes/context (including material conditions) within which they have significance. The significance of (gendered) cultural coding is amplified as consumerism deepens the commodification of the lifeworld. For example, adoptable children, sexualised bodies and sensual pleasures are for sale, based on gendered assumptions regarding the 'need to mother', the male 'sex drive', and whose pleasures are prioritised.

Consider how economics and culture are fused through shopping malls, theme parks, marinas, arts centres, museums, sports complexes and entertainment areas that are designed to foster consumption and have us think of it as culture. These 'cultural industries' serve to legitimate consumerism and increase subjective internalisation of capitalist ideology. On the one hand, individuals are encouraged to identify cultural gratification with consumption, rather than other perhaps more meaningful and less profit-oriented activities (e.g. critical reflection,

spiritual/moral development, building egalitarian and sustainable communities). On the other hand, even political activities shift to market-based expressions: identity-based groups become particular targets of marketing and use consumption as an identity 'marker', whilst political action is increasingly consumer-based as people 'vote' through what they do or do not buy.

As a status indicator, consumption assumes greater significance as consumer goods are made available, consumption becomes a 'way of life', and market-created codes determine what is 'worth' consuming. The politics of advertising – who decides what we 'want' and with what effects – is explicitly about using cultural codes to manipulate consciousness. Gender and the reproductive economy figure prominently here, as gendered stereotypes and divisions of labour continue to identify women/housewives as the key consumers whose primary motivation for consumption is presumably to please men and improve family life. This raises a number of issues: advertising is disproportionately targeted at women (and tends to depend on and reproduce heterosexist stereotypes); constructions of 'femininity' are arguably more dependent on market/consumer ideologies and the aesthetics they promote than are constructions of 'masculinity'.<sup>35</sup> women must learn and use particular (but typically unacknowledged) skills as informed and competent consumers; women/housewives exercise varying forms of power as consumers, especially within the household but also as investment decision makers; masculinist paradigms tend to neglect consumption 'work' (and skills); and masculinist and productivist paradigms have been slow to recognise the economic role of consumption in today's economy.

Similarly, arts and entertainment are increasingly less an expression of local cultures and spontaneous creativity than big business on a global scale where selling sex and sensationalism is a lucrative strategy. Popular music and videos feature perennial themes of love sought, gained and lost, while sexual themes are increasingly more explicit, graphic and violent. Women's bodies continue to be objectified, and their sexual interests either trivialised or exaggerated into *causes* of male desperation, perversion and destruction. Similarly, women rarely appear as strong, independent or competent, except as adjuncts of male exploits, a challenge to be overcome, or a caution against 'excessive' female power. Feminisms are rarely depicted positively, but denigrated as disruptive, 'anti-family', irrational or, at best, 'too idealistic'. Negative representations in 'popular culture' not only undercut the political efficacy of feminist activism, but also undermine the acceptability and credibility of feminist interventions in all spheres, including the academy and its knowledge production.

While affluent consumption is the privilege of only a small percentage of the world's population, it shapes the desires, choices and valorisation of those without affluence.<sup>36</sup> The political economy of consumption involves consumerism as an *ideology* (fuelled by pervasive advertising and global media that propel even the poorest to desire consumer goods as an expression of self-worth), as well as the more familiar power-laden practices of consumption. Whose needs, desires, and interests are served? Whose bodies and environments are devalorised in pursuit of consumerism and the neoliberal commitment to growth (rather than redistribution) that fuels it? Finally, consumerism requires purchasing power, increasingly sought through access to credit. As already noted, patterns regarding who has it,

how much they have, and how they use it correspond tellingly to class, race/ethnicity, gender and geopolitical stratifications.

## Conclusion

My review of feminist political economy positions has indicated the breadth and depth of scholarship in the past decade. The issues that feminists debate reflect differing empirical/substantive priorities, ideological preferences and, especially, epistemological orientations. In particular, feminists are differentiated by how they understand and deploy gender: as an empirical category that tends to become a synonym for 'women' (in relation to 'men') or as an analytical category that pervades meaning systems more generally. The former is an indispensable starting point and continually generates a wealth of research for gendering political economy. In so far as empirical gender is compatible with orthodox methods, it is more acceptable and credible, which affords important strategic advantages.

By comparison, analytical gender entails a theoretical shift toward more constructivist and poststructuralist orientations, which (variously) accord a constitutive (not exclusive!) role to intersubjective meaning systems. This too has generated rich resources for gendering political economy; it expands and deepens our inquiry, but also complicates it. In so far as gender operates as a governing code, criticising it disrupts foundational assumptions, orthodox methodologies and theoretical frameworks. This renders it less accessible and/or acceptable, and fuels resistance to these orientations and what are perceived to be their political implications. I argue, however, that, unless we shift our epistemological orientation, feminism's most trenchant and transformative insights remain effectively invisible: neither accurately understood nor analytically comprehended. 'Adding women/gender' is essential, but an *exclusive* focus on doing so misses too much and denies us crucial – not coincidental – resources for analysing political economy.

My 'rewriting' of neoliberal globalisation provided an example of taking analytical gender seriously, showing how this adds to, reconfigures and transforms a 'big picture' analysis of today's GPE. In abbreviated fashion I attempted to demonstrate the interdependence of the three (Foucauldian) economies: the co-constitution of culture and economy; the interaction of subjectivities, ideologies and practices; and the value of feminist and poststructuralist orientations. The overview also exposed how the *cultural code* of feminisation naturalises the *economic (material) devaluation* of feminised work – work that is done both by women *and* men who are culturally, racially and economically marginalised. This advances the project of gendering political economy and improves our analysis of the GPE.

Understanding 'feminisation as denigration' exemplifies the transformative potential of studying gender analytically. On the one hand, we are no longer just referring to embodied individuals but to gender coding of constructs, categories, subjectivities, objects, activities and institutionalised practices. Romanticism notwithstanding, the more any one of these is feminised, the more likely that its devaluation is assumed or 'explained'. On the other hand, we are not simply talking about male-female relations or promoting the status of 'women'. We

are, first, addressing the exploitation of *all* whose identities, labour and livelihoods are devalued by being feminised and, second, advancing the critical project of theorising how hierarchies of race/ethnicity, gender, class and nation *intersect*. For scholars committed to new political economy and concerned with oppressive structural arrangements, these contributions alone warrant more serious engagement with gender. More generally, then, I argue that feminist work is not a digression from nor supplement to conventional accounts; rather, it is an *essential orientation* for advancing our theory *and* practice of political economy.

## Notes

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1. Torry D. Dickinson & Robert K. Schaeffer, *Fast Forward: Work, Gender, and Protest in a Changing World* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2001), p. 23.
2. Joanne Cook & Jennifer Roberts, 'Towards a gendered political economy', in: Joanne Cook, Jennifer Roberts & Georgina Waylen (eds), *Towards a Gendered Political Economy* (Macmillan, 2000), p. 3.
3. Pertinent clarifications: I view 'feminist political economy' as a blend of feminist work primarily but not exclusively in economics, development studies, political economy, international relations and international political economy. My treatment here of political economy and 'new political economy' is very much shaped by my specialisation in international relations (IR) theory, my research on globalisation, and my belief that today's political economy is significantly *global* political economy. References in this article focus on feminist publications since 1995; for earlier work, see 'gender' articles in *New Political Economy*, especially Georgina Waylen, 'Gender, Feminism and Political Economy', *New Political Economy*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (1997), pp. 205–20, and note 8. I prefer 'global political economy' (GPE) to international political economy (IPE) in so far as it emphasises transnational dynamics and transdisciplinary analysis. In this study I characterise scholarship on gender as 'feminist' and do not engage recent claims that gender can or should be studied apolitically. I recognise that phenomena characterised as 'economic' are favoured here at the expense of more 'politically' oriented analyses; a substantial and expanding literature – especially in feminist IR – addresses the latter. For accessibility, I deploy conventional (though problematic) references to 'advanced industrialised countries', 'developing countries', 'Third World' and so on. Finally, slashes between words indicate similarity rather than contrast.
4. *Review of Radical Political Economics* has had seven such issues; see especially 'Feminist Political Economy', Vol. 33, No. 4 (2001).
5. V. Spike Peterson, 'On the Cut(ting) Edge', in: Frank P. Harvey & Michael Brecher (eds), *Critical Perspectives in International Studies: Millennial Reflections on International Studies* (University of Michigan Press, 2002), pp. 148–63; Marianne A. Ferber & Julie A. Nelson (eds), *Beyond Economic Man: Feminist Theory and Economics* (University of Chicago Press, 1993); and, especially, Gabrielle Meagher & Julie A. Nelson, 'Survey Article: Feminism in the Dismal Science', *The Journal of Political Philosophy*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (2004), pp. 102–26, and Georgina Waylen, 'You Still Don't Understand: Why Troubled Engagements Continue Between Feminists and (Critical) IPE', *Review of International Studies* (forthcoming).
6. Feminist interventions raise not only political/public, but personal/private issues that are 'disturbing' (from religious beliefs and sexual relations to who cleans the toilet and how value and power are masculinised). To the considerable extent that the implications are experienced as personally threatening, they generate defensiveness and resistance that shape receptivity to feminist critiques.
7. Important overviews and coverage of early critiques include: Diane Elson (ed.), *Male Bias in the Development Process* (Manchester University Press, 1991); Antonella Picchio, *Social Reproduction* (Cambridge University Press, 1992); Michèle A. Pujol, *Feminism and Anti-feminism in Early Economic Thought* (Edward Elgar, 1992); Ferber & Nelson, *Beyond Economic Man*; Isabella Bakker (ed.), *The Strategic Silence: Gender and Economic Policy* (Zed, 1994); Nancy Folbre, *Who Pays for the Kids?* (Routledge, 1994); Edith Kuiper & Jolande Sap (eds), *Out of the Margin: Feminist Perspectives on Economics* (Routledge, 1995); Julie A. Nelson, *Feminism, Objectivity and Economics* (Routledge, 1996); Ellen Mutari, Heather Boushey & William Fraher IV (eds), *Gender and Political Economy: Incorporating Diversity into Theory and Policy*

- (M. E. Sharpe, 1997); Jean Gardiner, *Gender, Care and Economics* (Macmillan, 1997); Cook, Roberts & Waylen, *Towards a Gendered Political Economy*; and Lourdes Benería, Maria Floro, Caren Grown & Martha MacDonald (eds), special issue on 'Globalization', *Feminist Economics*, Vol. 6, No. 3 (2000).
8. Post-1995 histories of the women/gender and development literatures include Joya Misra, 'Gender and the world-system: engaging the feminist literature on development', in: Thomas Hall (ed.), *A World-systems Reader: New Perspectives on Gender, Urbanism, Cultures, Indigenous Peoples, and Ecology* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2000), pp. 105–27; Shirin M. Rai, *Gender and the Political Economy of Development* (Polity, 2002); and Lourdes Benería, *Gender, Development and Globalization: Economics as if People Mattered* (Routledge 2003).
  9. Esther Boserup, *Women's Role in Economic Development* (St. Martin's Press, 1970); Nilufer Çağatay, Diane Elson & Caren Grown (eds), special issue on 'Gender, Adjustment and Macroeconomics', *World Development*, Vol. 23, No. 11 (1995); Kathleen Cloud & Nancy Garrett, 'A Modest Proposal for Inclusion of Women's Household Human Capital Production in Analysis of Structural Transformation', *Feminist Economics*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (1997), pp. 151–77; Saskia Sassen, *Globalization and its Discontents* (New Press, 1998) and 'Women's Burden: Counter-geographies of Globalization and the Feminization of Survival', *Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 53, No. 2 (2000), pp. 503–24; Elisabeth Prügl, *The Global Construction of Gender: Home-Based Work in the Political Economy of the 20th Century* (Columbia University Press, 1999); Marilyn Waring, *Counting for Nothing: What Men Value and What Women are Worth*, second edition (University of Toronto Press, 1999); Rhacel Salazar Parreñas, *Servants of Globalization: Women, Migration and Domestic Work* (Stanford University Press, 2001); Deborah M. Figart, Ellen Mutari & Marilyn Power, *Living Wages, Equal Wages: Gender and Labour Market Policies in the United States* (Routledge, 2002); Caren Grown, Diane Elson & Nilufer Çağatay (eds), special issue on 'Growth, Trade, Finance, and Gender Inequality', *World Development*, Vol. 28, No. 7 (2000); Rita Mae Kelly, Jane H. Bayes, Mary E. Hawkesworth & Brigitte Young (eds), *Gender, Globalization, & Democratization* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2001); Susan Himmelweit, 'Making Visible the Hidden Economy: The Case for Gender-impact Analysis of Economic Policy', *Feminist Economics*, Vol. 8, No.1 (2002), pp. 49–70; and Chandra Talpade Mohanty, *Feminism Without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity* (Duke University Press, 2003).
  10. For example, in a comprehensive study, Hewitson persuasively argues that 'neoclassical economics produces femininity as that which must be excluded for it to operate'. Gillian J. Hewitson, *Feminist Economics: Interrogating the Masculinity of Rational Economic Man* (Edward Elgar, 1999), p. 22.
  11. For recent examples, see Cecile Jackson (ed.), *Men at Work: Labour, Masculinities, Development* (Frank Cass, 2001); Frances Cleaver (ed.), *Masculinities Matter! Men, Gender and Development* (Zed, 2002); Rai, *Gender and the Political Economy of Development*; Benería, *Gender, Development and Globalization*; and Suzanne Bergeron, *Fragments of Development: Nation, Gender and the Space of Modernity* (University of Michigan Press, 2004).
  12. Jacqui M. Alexander & Chandra T. Mohanty (eds), *Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures* (Routledge, 1997); Uma Narayan & Sandra Harding (eds), *Decentering the Center: Philosophy for a Multicultural, Postcolonial, and Feminist World* (Indiana University Press, 2000); Rose Brewer, Cecilia Conrad & Mary C. King, 'The Complexities and Potential of Theorizing Gender, Caste, Race, and Class', *Feminist Economics*, Vol. 8, No. 2 (2002), pp. 3–17; Geeta Chowdhry & Sheila Nair (eds), *Power, Postcolonialism and International Relations: Reading Race, Gender and Class* (Routledge, 2002); and Mohanty, *Feminism Without Borders*.
  13. Çağatay *et al.*, 'Gender, Adjustment and Macroeconomics'; J. K. Gibson-Graham, *The End of Capitalism (As We Knew It): A Feminist Critique of Political Economy* (Blackwell, 1996); Zillah R. Eisenstein, *Global Obscenities: Patriarchy, Capitalism, and the Lure of Cyberfantasy* (New York Press, 1998) and *Against Empire: Feminisms, Racisms, and the West* (Zed, 2004); Grown *et al.*, 'Growth, Trade, Finance, and Gender Inequality'; Marianne H. Marchand & Anne Sisson Runyan (eds), *Gender and Global Restructuring: Sightings, Sites and Resistances* (Routledge, 2000); Veronika Bennholdt-Thomsen, Nicholas G. Faraclas & Claudia von Werlhoff (eds), *There is an Alternative: Subsistence and Worldwide Resistance to Corporate Globalization* (Zed, 2001); Dickinson & Schaeffer, *Fast Forward*; Suzanne Bergeron, 'Political Economy Discourses of Globalization and Feminist Politics', *Signs*, Vol. 26, No. 4 (2001), pp. 983–1006; Kelly *et al.*, *Gender, Globalization, & Democratization*; Sheila Rowbotham & Stephanie Linkogle (eds), *Women Resist Globalization: Mobilizing for Livelihood and Rights* (Zed, 2001); Nancy Naples & Manisha Desai (eds), *Women's Activism and Globalization: Linking Local Struggles and Transnational Politics* (Routledge, 2002); Martha Gutierrez (ed.), *Macro-Economics: Making Gender Matter – Concepts*,

- Policies and Institutional Change in Developing Countries* (Zed, 2003); and Valentine M. Moghadam, *Globalizing Women: Transnational Feminist Networks* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005).
14. Drucilla K. Barker & Edith Kuiper (eds), *Toward a Feminist Philosophy of Economics* (Routledge, 2003).
  15. As it is typically deployed, however, constructivists (on my reading) fail to address adequately the relationship between language, power and knowledge. In particular, they resist poststructuralist claims that the *meaning* of all words, 'things' and subjectivities is produced through/by discursive practices that are embedded in relations of power; that language produces power by constituting the codes of meaning that govern how we think, communicate and generate knowledge claims – indeed, how we understand 'reality'. Operations of power are not extricable from the power coded into our meaning systems and their social, 'material' effects. Hence, knowledge projects that presume analytical adequacy and political relevance must address the power that inheres in governing codes, which requires, I believe, the adoption of poststructuralist/postmodernist insights. For elaboration, see V. Spike Peterson, 'Transgressing Boundaries: Theories of Knowledge, Gender, and International Relations', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, Vol. 21, No. 2 (1992), pp. 183–206, and *A Critical Rewriting of Global Political Economy: Integrating Reproductive, Productive, and Virtual Economies* (Routledge, 2003); for a succinct defence of poststructuralism against its most frequent criticisms, see Hewitson, *Feminist Economics*; and for discussion of poststructuralism/postmodernism in economics, see Gibson-Graham, *The End of Capitalism*; Carole Biewener, 'A Postmodern Encounter', *Socialist Review*, Vol. 27, Nos. 1 & 2 (1999), pp. 71–96; Stephen Cullenberg, Jack Amariglio & David F. Ruccio (eds), *Postmodernism, Economics and Knowledge* (Routledge, 2001); Nitasha Kaul, 'The anxious identities we inhabit', in: D. Barker & E. Kuiper (eds), *Toward a Feminist Philosophy of Economics* (Routledge, 2003), pp. 194–210; and Eiman O. Zein-Elabdin & S. Charusheela (eds), *Postcolonialism Meets Economics* (Routledge, 2004).
  16. Ferber & Nelson, *Beyond Economic Man*; Marilyn Power, 'Social Provisioning as a Starting Point for Feminist Economics', *Feminist Economics*, Vol. 10, No. 3 (2004), pp. 3–20; and Drucilla K. Barker & Susan F. Feiner, *Liberating Economics: Feminist Perspectives on Families, Work, and Globalization* (University of Michigan Press, 2004).
  17. On sexualities, see M. V. Lee Badgett, 'Gender, Sexuality, and Sexual Orientation: All in the Feminist Family?', *Feminist Economics*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (1995), pp. 121–40; and Rosemary Hennessey, *Profit and Pleasure: Sexual Identities in Late Capitalism* (Routledge, 2000).
  18. Poststructuralism is particularly associated with cultural studies, where cultural and literary phenomena are, appropriately, the central focus. Early poststructuralist theory necessarily highlighted discourse and culture to criticise and counteract orthodox understandings of 'reality' as pre-discursive, or independent of intersubjective meaning systems. But poststructuralism/postmodernism explicitly rejects conventional dichotomies and categorical separations in favour of relational/contextual analysis that exposes how cultural codes produce, and are produced by, material 'reality'. Moreover (see note 15), it affords critiques of how power operates that would advance the project of 'not just understanding the world but changing it.'
  19. On Sen and economic rights respectively, see Bina Agarwal, Jane Humphries & Ingrid Robeyns (eds), special issue on 'Amartya Sen's Work and Ideas: A Gender Perspective', *Feminist Economics*, Vol. 9, No. 2/3 (2003); and Laura Parisi, *Gendered Disjunctures: Globalization and Women's Rights*, dissertation, University of Arizona, 2004. Microcredit loan programmes get mixed feminist reviews; see, for example, Anne Marie Goetz & Rina Sen Gupta, 'Who Takes the Credit? Gender, Power, and Control over Loan Use in Rural Credit Programs in Bangladesh', *World Development*, Vol. 24, No. 1 (1996), pp. 45–64; S. Charusheela, 'On History, Love, and Politics', *Rethinking Marxism*, Vol. 12, No. 4 (2000), pp. 45–61; Winifred Poster & Zakia Salime, 'The limits of microcredit', in: Nancy A. Naples & Manisha Desai (eds), *Women's Activism and Globalization* (Routledge, 2002), pp. 189–219; and Suzanne Bergeron, 'Challenging the World Bank's narrative of inclusion', in: Amitava Kumar (ed.), *World Bank Literature* (University of Minnesota Press, 2003), pp. 157–71.
  20. For reasons of space, in this section I cite only key references not already identified herein; for elaboration of argumentation and extensive citations, see Peterson, *A Critical Rewriting of Global Political Economy*; and 'Getting real: the necessity of critical poststructuralism in Global Political Economy', in: Marieke de Goede (ed.), *International Political Economy and Poststructural Politics* (Palgrave, forthcoming).
  21. Peter Drucker, 'Trading Places', *The National Interest* (Spring 2005), p. 103.
  22. Guy Standing, *Global Labour Flexibility: Seeking Distributive Justice* (Macmillan, 1999); and Christa Wichterich, *The Globalized Woman: Reports from a Future of Inequality* (Zed, 2000).
  23. Manuel Castells, *The Information Age, Volume 1, The Rise of the Network Society*, second edition (Blackwell, 2000).

24. Avtar Brah, *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contested Identities* (Routledge, 1996); Manuel Castells, *The Information Age, Volume 2, The Power of Identity* (Blackwell, 1997); and Sassen, *Globalization and its Discontents* and 'Women's Burden'.
25. See, respectively, S. Charusheela, 'Empowering work? Bargaining models reconsidered', in: Drucilla K. Barker & Edith Kuiper (eds), *Toward a Feminist Philosophy of Economics* (Routledge, 2003), pp. 287–303; and Naila Kabeer, 'Globalization, Labor Standards, and Women's Rights: Dilemmas of Collective (In)action in an Independent World', *Feminist Economics*, Vol. 10, No. 1 (2004), pp. 3–36, for problematising 'Western' claims that 'work is empowering' or that enforcing global labour standards serves the interests of export workers in poor countries.
26. Wichterich, *The Globalized Woman*.
27. On erosion of women's wellbeing and social capital through 'overworking' women, see David H. Ciscel & Julia A. Heath, 'To Market, To Market: Imperial Capitalism's Destruction of Social Capital and the Family', *Review of Radical Political Economics*, Vol. 33, No. 4 (2001), pp. 401–14; and Martha MacDonald, Shelley Phipps & Lynn Lethbridge, 'Mothers' Milk and Measures of Economic Output', *Feminist Economics*, Vol. 11, No. 1 (2005), pp. 63–94. For the most comprehensive analysis of the crisis of social reproduction, see Isabella Bakker & Stephen Gill (eds), *Power, Production and Social Reproduction: Human In/security in the Global Political Economy* (Palgrave, 2003).
28. Debates on how to theorise, define, measure and evaluate informalisation are addressed in Peterson, *A Critical Rewriting of Global Political Economy*, ch. 4. The underground economy has been estimated to be worth US\$9 trillion (*The Economist*, 28 August 1999, p. 59); the value of 'housework' to be US\$10–15 trillion (Mary Ann Tetreault & Ronnie D. Lipschutz, *Global Politics as if People Mattered* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2005), p. 25).
29. *The World's Women 2000: Trends and Statistics* (United Nations, 2000), pp. 120–7.
30. Jean, Pyle, 'Critical globalization studies and gender', in: Richard P. Appelbaum & William I. Robinson (eds), *Critical Globalization Studies* (Routledge, 2005), pp. 249–58.
31. A variety of sources provide the following estimates (in US dollars, per year) – of 'white collar crime' in the US: \$200 billion; of profits from trafficking migrants: \$3.5 billion; of money laundering: as much as \$2.8 trillion; of tax revenue lost to the US by hiding assets offshore: \$70 billion; of tax evasion costs to the US government: \$195 billion. See Peterson, *A Critical Rewriting of Global Political Economy*, pp. 196, 201.
32. Peter Drucker, 'The Global Economy and the Nation-State', *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 76, No. 5 (1997), p. 162.
33. Lourdes Benería, 'Globalization, Gender and the Davos Man', *Feminist Economics*, Vol. 5, No. 3 (1999), pp. 61–83; Charlotte Hooper, *Manly States: Masculinities, International Relations, and Gender Politics* (Columbia University Press, 2001); and Stacey Mayhall, *Riding the Bull/Wrestling the Bear*, dissertation, York University, 2002.
34. These claims are variously documented in Nahid Aslanbeigui & Gale Summerfield, 'The Asian Crisis, Gender, and the International Financial Architecture', *Feminist Economics*, Vol. 6, No. 3 (2000), pp. 81–104; Nahid Aslanbeigui & Gale Summerfield, 'Risk, Gender and the International Financial Architecture', *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (2001), pp. 7–26; Grown *et al.*, 'Growth, Trade, Finance, and Gender Inequality'; Thanh-Dam Truong, 'The Underbelly of the Tiger: Gender and the Demystification of the Asian Miracle', *Review of International Political Economy*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (1999), pp. 133–65; Robert O'Brien, Anne Marie Goetz, Jan Aart Scholte & Marc Williams, *Contesting Global Governance: Multilateral Economic Institutions and Global Social Movements* (Cambridge University Press, 2000); Ajit Singh & Ann Zammit, 'International Capital Flows: Identifying the Gender Dimension', *World Development*, Vol. 28, No. 7 (2000), pp. 1249–68; Mario Floro & Gary Dymksi, 'Financial Crisis, Gender, and Power: An Analytical Framework', *World Development*, Vol. 28, No. 7 (2000), pp. 1269–83; and Irene Van Staveren, 'Global Finance and Gender', in: Jan Aart Scholte & Albrecht Schnabel (eds), *Civil Society and Global Finance* (Routledge, 2002), pp. 228–46.
35. Women are the primary consumers of goods and services designed to 'improve' individual appearance: from cosmetics, hairstyles and clothes to dieting programmes and surgical procedures. This reflects the tremendous pressure on girls and women to appear aesthetically and sexually attractive as a measure of their social/economic value, and subjects them disproportionately to the disciplining effects of marketisation and resource depletion on 'unnecessary' expenditures.
36. For example, consumerism's commodification of culture has effects worldwide on how people think (due to the global, though always locally-mediated, exposure to advertising and marketing messages), what resources they have (due to naturalising the ideology of elite consumption), and what work they do (due to production processes driven by Northern consumption).