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## Globalization and the threat to women' s progress from poor men of the South

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# Globalization and the threat to women's progress from poor men of the South

Charl du Plessis

**Abstract.** Control over economic surplus is the biggest contributor towards women's substantive equality in society. Furthermore, surplus-generating women prioritize spending on family nutrition, health and education, which yields long-term social benefits at macro-level. Globalization's marginalization of poor men in the Global South, from both the formal and informal economies, diminishes men's strategic indispensability in the community and household, and results in resistance to women's increased independence. Men's perceived sense of loss of control acts as trigger for an increase in domestic and social violence towards women, with debilitating impact on the de facto status of women in society, and with that, the beneficial impact that equality of women could have on future generations.

**Key words:** Social stratification, economic surplus, gender, domestic violence, globalization.

*Thinta abafazi, uthinta umbokodo*  
(*You strike the women, you strike the rock*)

– From the anti-Apartheid movement in South Africa

We concern ourselves with the equality of women for normative and instrumental reasons. Normatively, the removal of the inequality of women appeals to our sense of justice, as we care about the positive freedom of women, i.e., the substantive enjoyment of formal rights that women may have gained within their society. Instrumentally, we take an interest in empowered women's contributions to the overall economic development in low-income sections of the global population, where women offer the potential key to poverty eradication. The rock-hard resolve of the women of the global South fosters the belief that it will be these women who will eventually force apart the prison bars of the poverty trap – for themselves, for their households and their communities, and ultimately for their poverty-stricken nations.

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This paper concentrates on the instrumental level – i.e., poverty within nations of the Global South, the substantive enjoyment of equal rights by women within these poor societies, and the importance of women's empowerment for the sake of overall economic development. Suffice to say that the willingness to engage at the instrumental level should automatically signal support for the priority of the normative claims of justice to women. That, however, is a separate debate and a raging battle championed by better scholars than myself. In what follows, I specifically zero in on one impediment to the conversion of women's hard-fought formal rights into the actual experience of full equality, namely the often counter-productive response to women's progress by the poor men of the global South, and especially during periods of transition. It is my contention that progress towards substantive gender equality and substantive development will not materialize if the poor men of the global South cannot find a constructive role as participants in the development process.

My argument commences with an overview of the post-Second World War international development complex. I show how failure in this endeavor results in large-scale differentials in economic power *between* nations and within nations, leading to a general scarcity of resources *within* nations of the South. Next, I consider the effect of this general scarcity of resources on gender equality, by examining three historical determinants of gender stratification within societies, along with their impact on the economic power of women and the correlated equality associated with such economic power. From this line of logic emerges the rationale for a pro-active agenda for normative and substantive equality for women, and I next discuss how certain sub-sets of the overall development community are concurrently promoting women's equality while harnessing the power of women in society to achieve long-term macro-level benefits. I continue by identifying male domestic and community resistance to empowered women as a major impediment to women's progress, and therefore general economic progress, and discuss how our political-economic landscape fuels the fire of this resistance through the double economic marginalization of poor men – in the formal economy and in the informal economy. I conclude that it is necessary to address the potentially destructive role of

these doubly-marginalized men in the Global South if we take women's formal and instrumental equality, as well as poverty alleviation in the South seriously. Neutralizing domestic and community violence against women bolsters the substantive experience by women of their newly-acquired rights, and can help to remove an impediment towards overall economic development.

### **Development failures in reducing poverty in the South**

The equality of women in society cannot be divorced from their relative economic position, so we start our discussion by looking at the disparate wealth distribution *between* nations and at attempts to rectify this situation since the end of the Second World War. Later in this paper, we look at the micro-level economic differentials *within* nations, and how in poorer societies, women's unequal position is affected by the struggle for control over scarce resources.

According to a World Development Report, published by the World Bank for the years 2000-2001 under the title "*Attacking Poverty*," approximately 2.8 billion people currently get by on less than \$2 per day – a greater number than the entire world population in 1950 (Black, 2002: 13). This staggering number is an indictment of efforts over the past fifty years to spread the gains from the world's fastest ever period of economic expansion more evenly across and within nations. During this same half a century, the gap between the GDP of the world's richest and poorest countries has more than doubled from a ratio of 35:1 in 1950 to over 72:1 in 1992 (UNDP Human Development Report 1999). Clearly, the objectives of the early supporters of a Marshall Plan<sup>2</sup> for the whole world have not been met.

We could draw a distinction between parties who chose to manipulate the international development process for geo-political and other nation-specific gains, and those who may have felt a well-intended optimism that the benefits of industrialization would serve the world's impoverished well. History shows us that neither agenda delivered the desired improvement in living conditions for the poor. In a truncated history of the period between 1945 and the late twentieth century, Maggie Black tells the story of a development agenda setting off to raise the national income of target nations. Major infrastructure projects, commissioned or financed by the World Bank and the IMF, were to accelerate national income. These gains in national income growth were firmly assumed to be on their way into the hands of the poor through the so-called "trickle-down effect" (Black, 2002: 12 – 21). The fallacy of this assumption is borne out empirically by some of the results we referred to above, as well as in a

caustic criticism of the Bretton Woods<sup>3</sup> Institutions raised by Nobel Prize-winning economist, Joseph Stiglitz, who writes: "It is not true that a rising tide lifts all boats. Sometimes, a quickly rising tide, especially when accompanied by a storm, dashes weaker boats against the shore, smashing them to smithereens" (2002: 78). The signs of Stiglitz's trickle-down shipwrecks were clear to see: 80 million people around the world were displaced by large dam projects alone (World Commission on Dams), staggering debt was incurred by the world's poorest nations, bloated local elites were milking much of the benefits of development programs for themselves, and development industry incumbents created a vested interest in development business-as-usual. And amidst all of this, a growing gap developed between the haves and the have-nots across the world.

The signs were on the wall as early as the 1980's. The 1961 founding of OPEC, under the impetus of Venezuela, set the stage for an abundance of petrodollars in a bloated international banking system to follow the first world "oil shock" in 1973-4, when Arab members of OPEC mounted an embargo and the price of oil quadrupled at the well-head. Commodity prices were generally high during the late 1970s, and non-oil producing Third World countries borrowed lavishly to finance prestigious development projects. When, in the 1980s, a credit crunch followed the disastrous fall in global commodity prices<sup>4</sup>, the only source of income for many developing nations, they were suddenly stretched very thin in meeting their debt obligations. In the ten years from 1980 to 1990, developing world debt rose from \$660 billion to \$1,540 billion (Black, 2002). Black refers to this as "a lost decade; a decade of development reversal" (ibid.: 25).

What should have been the clarion call to a serious rethinking of the whole development complex took a less desirous turn. The bargaining power of the developing nations was grossly reduced by their debt burden. The World Bank and IMF, emboldened by the brazen ideology of the Thatcher and Reagan regimes<sup>5</sup>, could engineer an ideological departure from their own Keynesian<sup>6</sup> origins aimed at stabilization, and now used their bargaining power to force-feed debt-ridden nations their new brand of economic salvation – market liberalization and structural adjustments. The net result on the poorest portions within these nations was a further deepening of their poverty, through public sector lay-offs and cut-backs, and through the private commercial and agricultural sectors' demise in the absence of trade protection.

This shift in ideology started with a purge in the early 1980's of World Bank officials such as Robert McNamara and Hollis Chenery, who had directed the Bank's efforts towards the elimination of poverty. This team was replaced by a new President in 1981, William

Clausen, supported by a new chief economist and international trade specialist, Anne Krueger, who saw government as the problem, rather than as part of the solution. The freeing up of markets was to be the magic bullet for the problems of developing countries, and in order to promote this ideology, developing nation governments were now being asked to implement so-called “structural adjustments” to their economies in order to qualify for assistance (Stiglitz, 2002: 13-14). Adjustments were predominantly expected to occur through the downward shift of tariffs and other forms of trade and capital market protection, and governments were further pressured to privatize many of the sectors that were still under their management. Stiglitz describes the net result as having “failed in its mission.” Instead of the Bretton Woods institutions acting as stabilizing institution of last resort, a 1998 World Bank report suggested that structural adjustment programs have led to economic crises in close to a hundred countries. The original mission of the Bretton Wood Institutions, namely to foster stable economies through the provision of funds to countries facing economic downturns, was long forgotten, and with that the hope of poor people for the restoration of full employment (ibid: 15).

The liberalization of trade and capital markets accelerated the forces promoting globalization, which has continued at breath-taking pace since the 1990's. This pace left many a developing nation stranded, facing dramatic shifts in industry composition and with public sector lay-offs, along with a decline in local demand for labor. Very few governments had the appropriate time or resources to ensure sufficient social safety nets to catch the unwilling victims of their governments' surrender to the pressures of the IMF, World Bank and the World Trade Organization (WTO). A hallmark of this period is the continued decline in transportation and communication costs, with a new emphasis on knowledge assets. Where land once represented power and control within pre-industrial economies, and ownership of capital during industrialization, we now witness how knowledge and information, and the education and access to these technologies have become the economic instruments with which the strong and rich could dominate the weak and the undereducated poor across the globe.

A quick snapshot of what has been delivered in the name of development shows that by the late 1990s, approximately \$55 billion dollars of aid were still committed<sup>7</sup> by donor nations annually, HIV/AIDS had claimed over 30 million lives, \$59 million dollars were being spent by poor countries *daily* on the repayment of debt (servicing \$2.5 trillion dollars of debt by 2000), around 1.2 billion people still lived in the direst poverty on less than \$1 a day, and in 70-80 developing countries, the average income per head was lower than 10 or even 30 years ago (Black, 2002).

These dire conditions had to bubble to the surface eventually, and the UN sponsored a series of conferences during the 1990s, turning a sharp focus towards spending of aid in ways directly conducive to the eradication of poverty and social development. A series of conferences articulated poverty reduction targets, eventually affirmed at the UN Millennium Summit of 2000 as actual goals to be achieved by 2015 (ibid.). The salient targets set were:

- Reducing the number of people living in poverty to half;
- A 75% reduction of maternal mortality;
- A two-third reduction in mortality of children under five;
- A 50% reduction in hunger and malnutrition;
- A reversal in the spread of HIV/AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis and other diseases; and
- Universal primary education, with gender equality.

### **The Feminization of Poverty**

Against this backdrop of growing inequality between nations of the North and the South, resulting in the lingering scarcity of resources *within* nations of the South, we now turn to the distribution of these scarce resources within these poor societies, and in particular, how failed development and the resulting intensification of poverty have affected women in these poor societies. The premise of this section is that economic power, the result of control over surplus, is a major determinant of women's status within society (see, e.g., Blumberg 1984, 1989, 1995), and that the struggle for control takes on a very different meaning for women in the South amidst the general scarcity of necessary and surplus resources.

We live in a world where a father in Afghanistan can sell his 12-year old daughter into marriage for \$80, in order to feed the remainder of his family. Black suggests that one of the most shocking characteristics of the shrinkage of livelihoods is the commodification of women's and girls' nurturing, childbearing and sexual capacities, and we see this in the growing number of young women in West Africa, Burma/Myanmar, Thailand and Eastern Europe being traded into marriage, prostitution or domestic service abroad (Black, 2002). These stark examples are but part of a larger trend that originally saw women only as recipients of welfare and completely ignored for the important role they play both as key providers to the household,<sup>8</sup> and more importantly, as the real decision-makers and influencers in areas such as child health, nutrition, and education (ibid.). Women's movements have gathered pace in dealing with this discrimination against women, advocating for formal equal rights for women, while the development industry has been

directing an increasing portion of their effort towards programs that target women.<sup>9</sup>

It is my contention, however, that the formal rights of women (the result of hard-pitched political and social battles in many countries<sup>10</sup>) will remain moot if not translated into the substantive enjoyment of such rights on a daily basis. The gap between formal and substantive equality cannot be closed only through exogenous governance mechanisms such as constitutions or legal codes and precedents, nor through international treaties and declarations. Equality for women must be embedded in the local structures where women tread their daily paths, and the first step down this road requires recognition of the role that economic power could play in the substantive enjoyment of equality. Nobel Prize laureate, A.K. Sen, writes that "the constitutive role of freedom relates to the importance of substantive freedom in enriching human life." His list of substantive freedoms include elementary capabilities like being able to avoid deprivation (including starvation, undernourishment, escapable morbidity and premature mortality), as well as such freedoms that are associated with being literate and numerate, political participation and uncensored speech (Sen, 1999: 36). At this stage then, we turn our attention to research on gender stratification to seek support for the argument that economic power is the key determinant of the level of women's equality, or substantive freedom. In the consequent section, we will investigate the further claim that women play a more important role in the macro-social development of poor nations than do men.

Lorber writes that "many feminist theories of gender inequality locate women's subordination in their procreative or sexual status as mediated through gendered practices" (1994: 285). She cites Chafetz's distinction between advantages in the productive/public sphere from specialization as the reason why women's reproductive/domestic specialized role becomes a disadvantage (Chafetz, 1984: 118). However, Blumberg (1984) argued that it is not procreation, but women's role as child minders, combined with a lack of control over the surplus they produce that result in gender inequality (Lorber, 1994: 285). This argument for the determination of women's equality is developed by Blumberg through the following points (2003: 10-11):

- The single most important variable affecting the level of gender equality is the relative control of economic resources by males vs. females at a variety of nested levels ranging from the macro (state) to the micro (the couple/family);
- Work in production is seen as a necessary, yet not a sufficient condition to gain control over economic resources;
- The kinship system influences economic power, through inheritance customs or laws, and whether

the society is patrilineal/patrilocal, or matrilineal/matrilocal (i.e., the bride lives with the husband or with her own family);

- The strategic indispensability of the agent's labor within the labor force, e.g., being irreplaceable in a key activity, having the control of technical expertise, organizing capability, or being in demand from more than one group. All of the above may be discounted by macro and micro-societal factors such as political, legal, religious, ideological and economic systems that disadvantage women relative to men; and
- Lastly, the differential effect of control over surplus vs. subsistence resources, as the former increases the degrees of freedom in allocation and leads to greater economic power than the latter.

In a careful application of her theory of gender stratification to agrarian societies, Blumberg draws our attention to the difference in gender equality within the "male farming" model of rain-fed agriculture and the "everybody works" model of irrigated rice – a highly labor intensive crop. She goes on to challenge the assertion of conventional theories that "labor only" determines equality, by showing that although there is a higher relative estimation of women's labor in the wet rice economies, where every new person added to the paddy can produce more than what can be consumed up to very high limit, it does not automatically equate to an increase of equality for women in all wet rice economies. Blumberg insists that there is more to gender equality than mere contribution of labor. Kinship systems, played out in terms of variance in inheritance and residence systems across different wet-rice agrarian societies, play an important role in determining women's control over surplus resources and add an important dimension over and above the "labor-only" approach.

In summary then, Blumberg convincingly argues that it is necessary for women to gain effective control over surplus economic resources within a society in order to approach any level of equality in society. However, such control is not sufficient, and must be bolstered by social and kinship arrangements, notably inheritance and post-marital residence.

Blumberg's theory of gender stratification crystallizes the problems we may encounter when the women's equality agenda focuses on formal rights and labor market entry only. Even when the critical goal is the empowerment of women in their production and retention of control over economic surplus, the impact of surrounding social and kinship arrangements must be considered. For this reason, I argue for the importance of recognizing the role played by the "other half" of the household – the male spouses of poor women. They too are the carriers, and quite often the enforcers, of traditional values and systems. Without a

corresponding shift in their acceptance of the empowerment of women, they may continue to smother equality communally under the blanket of tradition, or domestically, by insisting that formal rights get checked at the village gate or at the front door of each home.

Stubborn cultural resistance to women's empowerment does not only affect the individual women in their search for justice and progress. The positive role that women could play in the overall development of society as important decision-makers in areas affecting future generations may also be seriously undermined. In the next section then, we consider the valuable contribution of women in the macro-social environment, to offer further reason for the substantive empowerment of women.

### **Macro-Level Gains from Women's Agency**

A.K. Sen, Nobel Prize laureate and progressive economist, describes women as the dynamic promoters of social transformations that can alter the lives of both women and men, as children and as adults (1999: 187 - 191).<sup>11</sup> In Sen's opinion, nothing is as important in the political economy of development as an adequate recognition of the political, economic and social participation and leadership of women, and he argues for women's treatment as "agents," rather than "patients" (ibid: 203). By "agency" Sen means someone who acts and brings about change on the basis of personal values and objectives, independent of whether we also judge their actions by some external criteria. Women's equality is derived from the delivery/claiming of free agency – the ability to judge, decide and act on own volition. This emphasis on women as free agents is slowly sinking in as conventional wisdom and development aid has started shifting more focus to gender specific programs, emphasizing women. For example, in the years since the launch of pioneering micro-credit programs, such as those of the Grameen Bank of Mohamed Yunus, or the programs started by Esther Ocloo in Ghana and Ela Bhatt in India, three-quarters of the over 31 million people who have received micro-loans in more than 40 countries are women (Black, 2002: 66, citing papers by WorldWatch Institute at the 2002 NGO Microcredit Summit). But it is important to understand how exactly women play this crucial role in development. What does it mean to be a free agent and dynamic promoter, and how does this differ between men and women?

It is my contention that the importance of women's agency in the macro-social development of a nation is located in their role as decision-makers in those important areas that directly affect the capabilities of future generations. These capabilities are aptly

captured in the UN's Human Development Index (HDI) and represent "the real wealth of a nation and its people."<sup>12</sup> Empowered women have shown that they will make choices that positively influence the foundations of the next generation – through favoring spending on education, nutrition and health, compared to the male proclivity to spend disposable income on beer, tobacco, paid female companionship or other "social personae necessities"<sup>13</sup>. The HDI is a composite index of three indices: a long and healthy life, as measured by life expectancy at birth; knowledge as measured by the adult literacy rate and combined primary, secondary and tertiary gross enrolment ratios, and a decent standard of living measured by GDP per capita in terms of purchasing power parity (PPP) in US dollars. The knowledge index gives a two-third weight to adult literacy and a one-third weight to combined enrolment rates. To obtain the HDI value, the arithmetic mean of the aforementioned three indices is calculated. The decisions that women make concerning their families and themselves directly influence this rather complex set of metrics.

In the previous section, we argued that control over surplus economic resources is the method by which women may gain better opportunity to make these decisions from an equal power base. That was the power equalizer argument. In this section, we now consider equalized power in action – i.e., what Engle calls the mechanisms through which maternal work for earnings positively aids children's well-being (in Blumberg et al., 1995: 156). Engle's Central American case studies concern themselves mostly with women's income and the effect on children's nutrition. Although nutrition is only one domain where women make their influence on the macro-social environment<sup>14</sup> felt, we may take Engle's conclusions about the importance of women's earnings for children's nutrition as both illustrative and as representative of mechanisms at play in other important domains such as health and education.

Engle studied data sets from Nicaragua and Guatemala to test psychological theories that suggest that women are more attached to their children than men because they spend more time caring for them. Engle argues that this greater responsiveness is due to cultural norms that ascribe responsibility for child nutrition to the mother, more so than innate psychological predisposition (in Blumberg et al., 1995: 156). Engle tested the impact of women's employment on the anthropometrical status of children, as expressed by height/age and weight/age ratios – a proxy for the quality of nutrition they received. The results suggested that maternal income can be important for nutritional status during early ages. When we extrapolate these results into other domains of life quality and capabilities, as expressed by the UN HDI,

the real macro-social impact of women's control over surplus resources, along with their ability to act on behalf of the family's well-being, shows itself. Women spend sooner on family well-being than men, and independently of whether this higher level of care is a psychological disposition, as argued by some, or a cultural artifact, as argued by Engle, there can be no doubt that a shift towards an emphasis on women in development programs is logically sound.

Thus far, we have argued that the formal rights of women are important per se. Furthermore, that formal rights have no meaning when the substantive enjoyment of such rights does not follow. It has been shown that control over economic surplus, along with cultural artifacts like kinship arrangements in the areas of inheritance and residence are the variables that most effect women's equality. It has also been argued that the international development complex has progressively shifted more of its efforts towards women's programs, for at least three instrumental reasons: (1) for the direct empowerment of women; (2) for the long-term gains from empowered women's influence on the next generation; and (3) for better results, which influence donor expectations. We now turn to the role of men in poor societies, to suggest that at least the first two of these three instrumental objectives are placed under duress when men turn violent in their opposition to progress made by women. Blumberg's 1978 empirical study in 61 preindustrial societies of the relationship between women having well-established control of economic resources and husbands beating their wives showed a negative correlation of -0.6, from which we deduce that where women have consolidated economic control over significant economic resources, men are less likely to beat them (1978). Data from further studies during 1988 and 1989 suggested that where women's economic power is in a state of transition, and especially if women's control over economic resources were rising while men's were falling, there is a higher incidence of physical violence – "the male trump card" (Blumberg 1988; Blumberg and Coleman 1989).

### **The Double Marginalization of Poor Men in the Global South**

The main argument of this paper is that despite progress on formal women's rights, the substantive enjoyment of such rights often remains under violent threat from the male counterparts – the poor men of the South. Our discussion of the failures of development aid implies that the poor of either gender are increasingly marginalized within society, scrambling for the same declining pile of resources. Our reference to the growing importance of women in

grassroots macro-social development programs introduces gender variation in the struggle for scarce resources within poor communities and begs the uneasy question: While we focus on macro-social gains and development through women, what is happening economically to the poor men of the South? I am of the view that the poor men of the South are doubly marginalized: firstly, from the formal economy due to the forces of globalization (read "structural adjustments") and its displacement of unskilled labor, and secondly, from the informal economy by neglect, due to a growing emphasis on women's programs in this area, as argued earlier in this paper.<sup>16</sup> The latter phenomenon is perfectly understandable. After decades of development failure and a growing focus on program effectiveness and austerity, the development industry needs to invest their resources and efforts in programs where positive results are more predictable and donors can see tangible results. In the fight for available development aid, women's programs measure up better and therefore deserve their support, yet at the detriment of more challenging agendas like dealing with the doubly marginalized men of the South. In this transition, the poor men of the global South are gradually left out of the equation, yet remain a significant force in the realization of women's substantive rights. The threat to the substantive enjoyment of women's rights is very real, which suggests that intervention with poor male groups becomes important.

### **Equality in Action: The Ability to Decide and to Execute**

*In virtually all societies, women are subjected to inequalities, discrimination, and violence. While causes, circumstances, and consequences vary from one country to another and culture to culture, laws, stereotypes, and traditions greatly affect women as a group in all spheres of life, public and private.*

- UNIFEM (United Nations Development Fund for Women) website

It may seem paradoxical to make the case for women's rights through demanding a renewed focus on the poor male population, until we consider the debilitating effect that the perpetuation of domestic violence against women by this very constituency may have on the substantive enjoyment of the equality of women. I have argued that the substantive enjoyment of equality is as important as the formal equality under rights regimes, and have found further support for this argument by showing the overall macro-social impact that the substantive agency of women may have on the development

agenda. Removal of one major impediment to the closing of the gap between formal and substantive equality, namely domestic violence, is therefore seen as an important goal, and hence the counterintuitive advocacy for deeper consideration of the relative position of poor men.

What then is the cause of the often violent response of poor men to the empowerment of women in their communities? My main argument in this section is that as the poor men of the South are progressively shunted out of the formal economy by the forces of globalization, and as they are progressively shut out from the informal sector by the international development complex, they experience a sense of loss of control over their environment. Their response to this is to try and re-assert their control in an area where they still feel they can dominate, namely the domestic environment. The more patriarchal the social arrangement, the more is the empowerment of women experienced as a perceived threat to male authority and sense of control, and this exacerbates a desperate response by these men – resorting to domestic violence.

We find support for the “sense of control” argument in the work of Umberson et al., who studied the effect of violence on both perpetrators and victims. “Personal control” refers to “the belief that one’s own intentions and behaviors can impose control over one’s environment” (Umberson, et al., 1993). Theory and research in the field of psychosocial epidemiology has established a causal link between the social structure and the emotional states of individuals (House, Umberson and Landis, 1988). Poverty, as one example of social-structural factors, was clearly shown to cause psychological distress, as it diminishes one’s actual opportunities to control the environment through the restriction of choice in living conditions (Umberson et al, 1998: 443). The authors surmise that the literature on domestic violence focuses almost exclusively on either the victims or on the perpetrators of domestic violence, yet seems to converge on one important aspect – this sense of control. However, the perpetrators of domestic violence are motivated by a sense of loss of control over their environment, such as unemployment or work strain (Umberson et al., 1998: 443). This loss of control acts as a triggering mechanism that can result in violent episodes that may enhance the perception of personal control, while the same violence undermines the feelings of control experienced by the victims (Umberson et al., 1998: 443).

Campbell provided qualitative evidence in 1993 that men and women experience violence differently, with women experiencing violence as negative and associating it with a loss of control, while men viewed violence as an instrument with which to reclaim control (Cited in Umberson et al., 1998: 445). Campbell’s view

corresponds with feminist critiques against the “psychological distress as trigger of violence” notion proffered so far. Feminist theorists have argued that male perpetrators are often more deliberate and calculated in the instrumental use of violence, and that they may plan the time, place and target of their violence (Ptacek, 1998, cited in Umberson et al. 1998: 444). Gondolf (1985) and Stets (1998) both suggested that the sense of control is central to masculine identity, and perhaps to an extreme degree in certain men (cited in Umberson et al., 1998: 445).

Feminist theorists contend that social structures of gender and power are important in shaping domestic violence and control. Kirkwood describes how men have many more personal resources with which to enact control (1993). Apart from sheer physical power (as suggested by Blumberg 1988, and Johnson 1995), the management of family resources may lead to deliberate economic deprivation, and the hierarchies of Western culture, where men are granted greater control over money, supports men’s abuse of women (Umberson et al., 1998: 445). In her study of neighborhood context and its influence on family violence, Miles-Doan (citing Dobash & Dobash, as well as Millet), suggests that the foundation of patriarchy is the private and interpersonal power by which men dominate women in the family and that violence against women is seen as one of several ways in which men maintain control over women in patriarchal societies (1998: 624). Her research does show strong ethnographic evidence that apart from the effect of socially constructed kinship systems, a neighborhood effect that is associated with the concentration of poverty is observable, and that these factors accentuate violent behaviors and their ramifications (Miles-Doan, 1998: 640).

My argument that double marginalization leads to domestic violence has a further useful historical analogy within the South African Apartheid experience. Black men were doubly excluded from the higher economic spheres on both the basis of race, and through the denial of education. Domestic violence has been a common feature of South African poor township life for many years, and has been studied quite extensively. Vogelman and Eagle, researchers at the Center for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation in Johannesburg, conclude that “frustration engendered in the public domain is expressed more safely in the private domain with women the most accessible target against which to direct this frustration. Women are therefore subjected to dual oppression; indirectly they are subjected to men’s anger in relation to their race and class oppression, and directly they become the focus of such anger due to patriarchal structures” (1991). The authors argue that violence against women cannot be divorced from the broad social context, and any truly effective

strategy to overcome such violence needs to address complementary forms of oppression. The two major social contextual contributors are firstly, traditional gender roles within a patriarchal society, where fathers were seen as the ultimate authority in the family, and secondly, high unemployment, particularly among unskilled sectors of the population, where the emasculation of unemployment (given the expectation of men as principal breadwinners in patriarchal societies) is also likely to result in assertions of power in relation to women (Vogelman & Eagle, 1991). In this respect, the South African researchers seem to side with those feminist theorists who consider the social structures and hierarchies as paramount in the definition and enactment of gender roles. Umberson et al. concede that personal psychological responses and social context are not necessarily mutually exclusive, and we will rest the case on perpetrator violence at this stage (1998: 444). Suffice to say that there is an unquestionable link between poverty, unemployment and adverse living conditions on the one hand, and the propensity for violence by male domestic partners in patriarchal societies on the other hand.

The next question that begs an answer is how domestic violence impacts on women's substantive empowerment? Why should violence at home deprive them of the potential to gain control of economic surplus, or prevent them from making wise decisions about the nutrition, health or education of their children? I understand the substantive equality of women to consist of at least two parts: the power to choose and the power to execute the desired choice. If domestic violence undermines substantive equality, we must search out the links between violence and choice, and between violence and action.

Umberson et al. offer an explanation that ties in both the lack of choice and the lack of action, by emphasizing that the consequences of domestic violence manifest in more than just physical injury. They cite Stark and Flitcraft's 1991 study that showed how, apart from physical injury, other consequences arise from domestic violence – psychological and emotional distress, suicide and substance abuse (Umberson et al., 1998: 442). So here, once again, we see the sense of control argument, yet when looking at it from the victim perspective, we see how it is experienced as a sense of loss. Victims of domestic violence experience a diminishing sense of control that leads to powerlessness and helplessness – psychological conditions that would render pro-active choice and action-orientation impossible. Lenore Walker (1984) contends that women who are repeatedly victimized by domestic violence learn that they cannot predict the outcome of their behavior – a process she calls “learned helplessness” (Umberson et al., 1998: 443).

When we now consider the physical and psychological effects of domestic violence on poor women, we can only imagine the insurmountable obstacles faced by such victims in trying just to generate some surplus resources, let alone trying to maintain some element of control over it. Given the dimensions of physical injury and superior male strength, it is quite possible that real surplus, in the form of money or other goods, will simply be forcibly annexed by violent male partners in strong patriarchal societies. Even where women may be able to hide such resources from their male counterparts, the psychological effects described above may make it extremely difficult to act positively in a manner consistent with full equality. How does the battered mother who hid income to send her daughter to school confront the father with the daughter's absence from home or the fields during certain times of day?

In summary, I believe sufficient evidence has been presented to support my argument that domestic violence poses a real threat to women's substantive enjoyment of their formal equal rights in society and that this phenomenon warrants sufficient inclusion in any agenda concerned with either women's rights or general socio-economic development.

That raises our final question – what is it that we could do to deal with this problem of marginalized men in the poor South and the often violent reaction to the empowerment of women in their communities? I see only two possible approaches. Firstly, the primary constraint shown early in this paper was one of general scarcity of resources. This would have me suggest that better economic conditions for men could result in better economic and social status conditions for their female partners. However, I am not hopeful that the immense problems of unemployment amidst tectonic shifts in global trade are anywhere near to being resolved, and we may have to turn elsewhere. Alternatively, all three studies cited in this section make repeated mention of the social construction of power and gender roles, and I would venture that our better option may be an active attempt at reconstructing perceptions about gender roles within poor patriarchal societies. Let's call this form of education a cultural intervention, and think of it as an attempt to find alternative ways for poor men to re-assert their own sense of identity or authority. Public works projects within the local community comes to mind as one possibility. Experience has shown that cultural interventions can succeed, as in the case with HIV/AIDS training in different parts of the world.<sup>17</sup> It is incumbent upon us to seek out better solutions for delivering this message, the failure of which will mean another generation of children suffering quietly along with

their mothers, and with the latter now in even more distress. Having seen the possibilities offered by formal rights to equality, the pain of being withheld from its substantive enjoyment can only increase exponentially.

## Conclusion

The argument for the substantive enjoyment of women's equality follows firstly from its formal formulation, i.e., that we consider it just and fair that women should be equal. Secondly, from empowered women's proven ability to positively influence the capabilities of future generations when they earn and gain control over surplus economic resources. Our optimism for the progress made towards both formal and substantive rights for women is tempered by the realization that the poor men of the global South often pose a significant threat to women's substantive enjoyment of equality through the use of domestic violence, and the more so during periods of transition. I am less optimistic about the possibility that general resource scarcity in the poorest nations of the global South could be sufficiently alleviated soon enough to neutralize tension between the too small number of newly empowered women and their male kin. What remains as an only alternative is the direct intervention in cultural artifacts that entrench those male behavioral patterns and expectations which result in domestic violence. Blumberg's general theory of gender stratification reminded us how significantly these socio-cultural arrangements influence equality, and the Umberson and Miles-Doan studies of domestic violence also emphasized the influence of social context. I am encouraged that this evidence of contextual influence offers the hope that something could be done about changing male resistance to women's progress. Future research will focus on an attempt to generalize from the early successes of male cultural interventions deployed, such as in the battle against HIV/AIDS in Uganda, as well as in the area of community and domestic violence, where the South African case may offer useful examples. A related question that begs an answer is why the development industry has achieved significantly better results with women's groups, especially in the area of microfinance, and why these programs seem to under perform when working with men. These future efforts are geared towards an answer to the meta-question: How do we improve women's equality through finding an appropriate and constructive space within the development agenda for the poor men of the Global South?

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1 Given the critiques against "international development policies," an apt description for the collection of nations targeted for economic and social progress has varied since the inception of the "development" idea. Most axis descriptors are value-laden, e.g., rich/poor, or developed/developing, and since the end of the Cold War, the "Third World" epithet has been falling into disuse. The preferred terminology today is to speak of North/South nations, which, despite the presence of some desperately poor nations above the Equator, reflects the relative economic and social advantage enjoyed by nations to the North (Black, 2002: 15).

2 Black (2002: 15) attributes part of the early inspiration for international development aid to the success of the US's Marshall Plan in creating the economic regeneration of Europe after the Second World War. US Pres. Harry Truman, in his inaugural address of 20 January 1949, trumpeted that the benefits of scientific advance and industrial progress should be made available to what he called "underdeveloped" areas. Black suggests that the underlying purpose was the consolidation of US influence in places that might otherwise have come under the influence of the opposite power block in the Cold War.

3 This refers to the IMF and World Bank, which both originated in World War II as a result of the UN Monetary and Financial Conference at Bretton Woods, New Hampshire, in July 1944, as part of a concerted effort to finance the rebuilding of Europe after the devastation of World War II. The correct name for the World Bank is The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (Stiglitz, 2002: 11).

4 Non-oil producing developing countries lost \$290 billion between 1980 and 1991 due to lower export prices for commodities like copper, tin, sugar, coffee and tea (Black, 2002: 25).

5 The Reagan-Thatcher years shepherded in "the new orthodoxy of market supremacy, reduction of government and attacks on the welfare state, especially the provision of health, education, water, energy and transport by the exclusive agency of government. Lambasted for domestic purposes, the use of public funds for investment in other countries' social and economic infrastructure was way out of line" (Black, 2002: 25).

6 The founding purpose of the IMF was to ensure global economic stability. The prescriptions for stability proposed by British economist, John Maynard Keynes, were based on an understanding that economic downturns were caused by the lack of aggregate demand, and that government policies could help to stimulate this demand through monetary policies or fiscal policies, i.e., increasing Government expenditure or cutting taxes (Stiglitz, 2002). The ideological shift of the 1980s was away from Keynesian principles of Government policy driving up aggregate demand, towards the liberalization of capital and trade markets, with an antithetical emphasis on austerity that often stifled growth in domestic markets (ibid.).

7 Commitment does not automatically imply transfer. About one third of aid comes in the form of "technical cooperation," what Black calls a euphemism for highly paid experts whose skills recipient countries lack. Even seemingly enlightened donors like Sweden and Denmark still insist that a proportion of their aid budgets be spent on their own products. According to an independent review published by Earthscan in 1997-98, the US proportion is as high as 70 percent (Black, 2002: 30-43).

8 In some countries, over 90 percent of women in the workforce outside of agriculture remain in the informal sector, not as a deliberate choice, but because the petty trading and manufacturing in this sector are the only options available to them to get a foothold in growing cash economies (Black, 2002: 80).

9 Blumberg mentions that the best-know microfinance program in the world, Bangladesh's Grameen Development Bank's clients have shifted from 64% male in the early 1980s to at least 95% female in recent years (Blumberg: 2001).

10 Black describes as one of the more important advances in the formal recognition of women's rights the 1993 UN Conference on Human Rights in Vienna, where the human rights of women and children were affirmed as an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of universal human rights. It was a long struggle to finally get this explicit international commitment to directly address the unacceptability of any form of abuse or discrimination on the basis of gender - albeit rape, girl infanticide, female genital mutilation, or trafficking of girls (2002: 125). This 1993 Conference was the culmination of years of work, starting back in 1979 with the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW Convention).

11 Sen traces the idea of women as "free agents", rather than just the objects of welfarist hand-outs, to the 1792 classic by Mary Wollstonecraft, "A Vindication of the Rights of Women" (1999: 189).

12 These were the words of a previous Minister of Finance for Pakistan, Mahbub ul Haq, when in 1990, he persuaded the UNDP to start publishing the first Human Development reports (Black, 2002: 83).

13 Engle used data from a larger Guatemalan set of 294 children to illustrate the influence of paternal contribution to the family relative to the maternal, specifically in the area of nutrition. It was shown that in order to increase a child's height for age by half a standard deviation, it would take an increase of \$11.40 per mother per month, while a similar change would require a monthly increase of \$166 for the father (In Engle, 1995: 175). See also Blumberg 1988, 1989, who argues that women with provider responsibilities who tend to spend more income under their control on children's nutrition, education, and health than their male counterparts, offer a kind of "bonus for development."

14 Technically speaking, family nutrition is a micro-social affair. However, given my argument that this type of family spending may be interpreted as an investment in the capabilities of a nation's future generations, I will stick with the use of "macro-social."

15 This statement follows from the fact that men traditionally dominated the labor market at the expense of women, and that then it stands to reason that the lay-offs from structural adjustment programs affect men more than women.

16 It is important to note that programs involving men still get the lion's share of formal development aid. Also, that in most parts of the world, men has been active participants in the informal sector. When I refer to "a growing emphasis on women's programs," I refer only to development intervention in the informal sector, i.e., active attempts to stimulate economic activity at lower levels of the economy, which target women rather than men.

17 The dramatic decline in HIV/AIDS prevalence in Uganda through high intensity community education serves as a positive example of the potential for achieving real results.