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WOMEN'S WORK, WOMEN'S LIVES:  
A COMPARATIVE ECONOMIC PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

This chapter provides a broad overview of women's economic status in all parts of the world, with special emphasis on their position relative to men. Large differences are found among countries and regions in the size of the gender gap with respect to such measures as labor force participation, occupational segregation, earnings, education, and to a some what lesser degree the amount of time spent on housework. Two generalizations, however, hold. Women have not achieved full equality anywhere, but particularly in the advanced industrialized countries for which data on the relevant variables are more readily available, there is evidence of a reduction of gender differences in economic roles and outcomes.

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Other chapters in this book examine the position of women in particular regions and selected countries. This chapter sets the stage by giving an overview of women's economic status throughout all areas of the world, emphasizing general patterns rather than details, breadth rather than depth. The status of women has many varied dimensions, some not directly measurable. We focus on a number of important measurable indicators which reflect primarily women's economic position: labor force participation, occupational distribution, earnings, education and the allocation of time between the labor market and the household. While we do not believe that these indicators summarize all that is of interest regarding women's status in the larger society, we believe progress in the economic sphere is necessary, though not sufficient, for progress in other respects.

In each case, attention is focused on women's status relative to men's so that data are presented, for instance, not merely on women's jobs and wages, but on gender differences in occupations and earnings. This approach implicitly controls for differences across countries that affect both men and women similarly and highlights the more significant gender differences which are apt to affect women's control over their own lives, as well as their influence in the family and the larger community. Large differences are found among countries and regions in the size of the gender gap with respect to these measures. Two generalizations, however, hold. Women have not achieved full equality anywhere, but particularly in the advanced industrialized countries for which data on the relevant variables are more readily available, there is evidence of a reduction of gender differences in economic roles and outcomes.

#### LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION

Women's labor force participation is an important determinant of their economic position, and is therefore examined first. Women who do not work

outside the household benefit from whatever standard of living their families reach, but they cannot expect to achieve status in their own right, and will rarely have their own source of income or enjoy economic independence. As Joeke (1987) observes, "It is increasingly accepted that receipt of direct money earnings does indeed mark an improvement in status... Paid work is perceived to make a higher contribution to the family's channeling of money to the household and so goes along with a larger say in household decisions; also, payment of money can carry conversely a threat of withdrawal of that money, which gives the earner greater bargaining power within the household. Increased status confers better material provision, that is, increased claims on the share of consumer goods within the household, and so the link is established between employment status and economic benefit. Aggregative empirical analysis confirms this, in the shape of the contrast between Africa and Asia, between Southeast Asia and South Asia, and between South and North India, for example, where in each case the relative material position of women is better in the first place than in the second, in association with a higher rate of female participation in the recorded labor force. Numerous case studies also point to the importance of outside employment in improving the treatment that women get in society in general and in the household in particular."<sup>1</sup> Gainful employment may thus be regarded as a step in the direction of equality.

Almost all countries publish data, at least intermittently, on the proportion of women who are economically active. But comparing these statistics can produce misleading results. Published data on labor force participation are influenced by such factors as the age range of the population included, the number of years young people spend in school, the typical retirement age, the

age distribution of the population, and whether workers in subsistence agriculture are included. For comparative purposes, it is therefore advisable to use the ratio of women's to men's labor force participation.<sup>2</sup> Distortions still result, however, because of differences in the treatment of men and women. For example, women working in family enterprises, often classified as "unpaid family workers," have to work more hours in order to be included in the labor force than men who are generally classified as self-employed.<sup>3</sup> Because the countries where female labor force participation is relatively low are also the ones that tend to relegate women to the category of unpaid family worker, rather than classifying them as self-employed, it is entirely possible that differences in women's work between countries are overstated.<sup>4</sup> Nonetheless, there can be little doubt that these are very substantial.

Table 1 shows the data on participation for 1950, 1980, and 1985 to 1987 for countries grouped by region because of generally similar characteristics. The range within each of the groups is also indicated. As measured by the official statistics, labor force participation of women by region varies from less than 10 percent to 90 percent of men's. The evidence is consistent with the proposition that both economic and noneconomic factors help to determine women's role in the labor market.

A number of models have been developed concerning the relationship between economic development and women's labor force participation. Several of these are discussed elsewhere in this volume. One particularly plausible model suggests that female labor force participation declines in the early stages of economic development, then rises at later stages (Durand, 1975). Relatively high participation by women may occur in pre-industrial economies because of women's participation in family farms and enterprises. With industrialization, the shift of the locus of employment out of the home and into the factory and

Table 1

Ratio of Women's to Men's Labor Force Participation  
by World Region, 1950-1987

	1950	1980			1985 to 1987		
	Mean	Mean	High	Low	Mean	High	Low
I Eastern Europe	65.3	76.3	85.8	59.5	79.7	90.0	60.6
II Caribbean	59.2	73.4	82.8	40.5	69.1	82.9	51.3
III Sub-Saharan Africa**	69.7	67.1	96.7	37.0	--	--	--
IV East Asia	59.6	64.0	89.5	40.1	66.4	89.6	54.6
V Advanced Industrialized nations	37.6	57.2	81.2	39.5	65.3	87.2	44.7
VI Latin America	20.4	30.7	41.0	14.4	46.6	67.5	30.0
VII North Africa, Middle East,** South Central Asia	10.8	13.2	40.1	4.8	--	--	--
I Albania,* Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Germany (D.R.), Hungary, Poland,* Rumania,* USSR,* Yugoslavia							
II Barbados, Haiti, Jamaica, Martinique,* Trinidad and Tobago							
III Angola,* Benin, Botswana, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic,* Chad,* Comoros,* Congo,* Equatorial Guinea,* Ethiopia,* Gabon,* Gambia,* Ghana,* Guinea,* Guinea-Bissau, Ivory Coast,* Kenya,* Lesotho,* Liberia,* Madagascar, Malawi,* Mali,* Mozambique,* Namibia,* Niger,* Nigeria,* Reunion,* Rwanda,* Senegal,* Sierra Leone,* Somalia,* Swaziland,* Tanzania,* Togo,* Uganda,* Upper Volta, Zaire,* Zambia,* Zimbabwe*							
IV Bhutan,* Burma,* Cambodia,* China,* Hong Kong, India,* Indonesia, Korea (North),* Korea (South), Laos,* Malaysia,* Mongolia,* Nepal,* Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka,* Thailand, Vietnam*							
V Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany (F.R.), Iceland,* Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Luxemburg, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, U.K., U.S.A.							
VI Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic,* Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala,* Honduras,* Mexico,* Nicaragua,* Panama, Paraguay,* Peru, Uruguay, Venezuela							

Table 1 (continued)

VII Afghanistan,\* Algeria, Bahrain, Bangladesh,\* Egypt,\* Iran,\* Iraq,\* Jordan,\* Kuwait, Lebanon,\* Libya,\* Morocco,\* Oman,\* Pakistan,\* Qatar,\* Saudi Arabia,\* Sudan,\* Syria,\* Tunisia,\* Turkey, United Arab Emirates,\* Yemen (Arab),\* Yemen (Democratic).\*

Source: 1950, 1980 Economically Active Population: Estimates and Projections 1950-2025, International Labour Office, 1986. 1985 to 1987 ILO Yearbook of Labour Statistics, various issues.

\*Countries not included in 1985 to 1987.

\*\*Category omitted for 1985 to 1987 because of insufficient data.

office tends to be associated with a relative decline in women's participation. However with further development women are increasingly drawn into market employment.

At least two reasons for this positive association between female labor force participation and economic development in later stages may be identified. First, research in the U.S. and elsewhere has shown that an increase in the wages which women can potentially earn in market employment increases the probability that they will enter the labor force.<sup>5</sup> The tendency of women to substitute market work for housework as their own wages rise outweighs the positive income effect on the demand for leisure of their husbands' higher earnings. Thus, the rising real wages of both men and women which occur in the course of economic development tend to induce increasingly more women to work for pay. Rising educational attainment of women and shifts from goods producing to service economies tend to have similar effects because they increase the potential wage women can earn in the market.

Second, female labor force participation has been shown to be negatively related to the number of children present, especially in industrialized countries where paid work is not readily combined with child care.<sup>6</sup> Hence, as birth rates decline in the course of development, female labor force participation tends to increase. A related factor is that the market increasingly provides many of the goods and services that were formerly produced in the home. Both these changes tend to decrease the value of women's time spent in the home and to encourage labor force participation.

The data in Table 1 are broadly consistent with this view of the relationship between economic development and labor force participation. Between 1950 and 1980, the ratio of economically active women to economically active men declined somewhat in Sub-Saharan Africa, composed of countries at a very early



stage of economic development, while it increased to varying degrees in the rest of the world. Particularly large increases occurred in the advanced industrialized nations. While data are considerably more sketchy for the 1980s, it appears that with the exception of the Caribbean countries, the trend toward rising participation has persisted.

Government policies also appear to play a role. For instance, when there is a progressive tax system, women married to men with high incomes have more incentive to enter the labor market when husband and wife are taxed as individuals, so that the tax rate of each is not influenced by the earnings of the other, than when they are taxed as a couple. As another example, when child care is subsidized by the government, mothers of young children are more likely to seek employment. Such features of government policy most likely contribute to the exceptionally high ratio of female to male labor force participation in Sweden. In 1985, the ratio was 87.2 percent in Sweden compared to an average of 65.8 percent for the advanced industrialized countries.

The implication of such analyses is that the allocation of women's time between home work and market work is a rational response to economic conditions. This is not, however, the whole story. To the extent that education and fertility are themselves influenced by labor force participation, they do not really provide an independent explanation; to the extent that they are independent and influence labor force participation, the issue remains why they, as well as government policies differ as much as they do across countries. No such problems arise with respect to wage rates as explanatory variables, for they are presumably determined by economic conditions, including the stage of economic development. The influence of wage rates on labor force participation, however, varies considerably among countries (Mincer, 1986). Similarly, there are very substantial variations in women's labor

force participation among countries with economies at a roughly similar stage of economic development. For example, the ratio of female to male participation is considerably higher in the Caribbean (69.1 percent) and East Asian (66.4 percent) countries than in Latin America (46.6 percent) despite roughly similar levels of development. As another example, the participation ratio is higher in Eastern Europe (79.7 percent) than in the advanced industrialized nations (65.3 percent), although their level of development is on average lower. Finally, there are the Group VII countries, comprised of North Africa, the Middle East, and South Central Asia, which have an average participation ratio (13.2 percent in 1980) far below that of any of the others.

Some of these differences may be related to the nature of economic development. This might explain, for example, the high ratio of labor force participation of women to men in the Caribbean (69.1 percent) where tourism is a major industry, and the low participation ratio in such countries as Iran (11.9 percent) and Kuwait (33.6 percent), whose economies are dominated by oil production. However, it is also extremely likely that noneconomic factors like ideology and religion exert a considerable influence on women's labor force status (Blau and Ferber, 1986).<sup>7</sup>

Universalistic egalitarian standards, such as are professed in socialist countries, generally appear to be positively related to women's role in the labor market. Thus, a more equal distribution of income (Semyonov, 1980) and a larger share of resources allocated to social welfare (Weiss, Ramirez and Tracy, 1976) have been found to be associated with higher labor force participation of women, as, for example, in the Scandinavian countries. Similarly, Marxist ideology, which strongly advocates women's entry into the work force, surely helps to explain the high participation ratios that have existed in Eastern Europe.

On the other hand, Group VII with an average participation ratio of only 13.2 percent, consists entirely of Moslem countries which have emphasized women's roles as wives and mothers to the virtual exclusion of activities outside the home. Similarly, Catholicism is the prevalent faith in Latin America where the participation ratio is also relatively low (46.6 percent). For the most part, women are also less likely to be employed in the Catholic countries of Southern Europe than in the Protestant countries of Western Europe. The unweighted average of the ratio of women's to men's labor force participation in the eight countries where 80 percent or more of the population is Catholic is 57.6; in the seven countries where 80 percent or more are Protestant, it is 72.2.

#### OCCUPATIONAL SEGREGATION

Women's economic status is undoubtedly influenced not only by their labor force participation per se, but also by their occupations, and how much they are paid, two facets which are not unrelated. It is again women's occupational distribution compared to that of men that is of interest. Table 2 shows the extent of occupational segregation by sex,<sup>8</sup> measured by an index which equals the percentage of women (men) who would have to change jobs in order for the distribution of men and women by occupational category to be the same. The index is computed across the seven broad occupational categories for which data are available. These categories include: professional, technical and kindred workers; administrative, executive, and managerial workers; clerical workers; sales workers; farmers, fishermen, loggers and related workers; craftsmen, production process workers and laborers (n.e.c.); service, sports, and recreation workers.

Table 2

Occupational Segregation by Major Occupational Category by World Region, 1980s

I	<u>Eastern Europe</u>		V (continued)	
	Hungary (1980)	34.3	Israel (1987)	31.8
			Japan (1987)	22.2
II	<u>Caribbean</u>		Luxembourg (1986)	48.9
	Bahamas (1986)	41.0	Netherlands (1987)	38.0
	Barbados (1987)	33.4	New Zealand (1981)	41.9
	Bermuda (1987)	41.7	Norway (1987)	47.2
			Portugal (1987)	27.4
III	<u>Sub-Saharan Africa</u>		Spain (1987)	36.8
	Ghana (1970)	12.2	Sweden (1984)	41.8
			U.K. (1986)	44.4
			U.S. (1987)	36.6
IV	<u>East Asia</u>		VI <u>Latin America</u>	
	Hong Kong (1987)	19.3	Chile (1987)	47.8
	Indonesia (1987)	13.0	Colombia (1987)	42.3
	Korea, Rep. (1987)	17.8	Costa Rica (1987)	42.2
	Malaysia (1986)	16.0	El Salvador (1980)	40.9
	Philippines (1987)	29.9	Panama (1987)	53.3
	Singapore (1987)	29.6	Peru (1987)	30.2
	Sri Lanka (1981)	14.4	Puerto Rico (1987)	35.0
	Thailand (1986)	10.0	Uruguay (1987)	26.1
			Venezuela (1987)	48.7
V	<u>Advanced Industrialized Countries</u>		VII <u>North Africa, Middle East, South Central Asia</u>	
	Australia (1986)	31.9	Bahrain (1982)	57.8
	Austria (1987)	46.6	Bangladesh (1974)	11.4
	Belgium (1981)	39.2	Egypt (1987)	24.5
	Canada (1987)	41.0	Kuwait (1981)	66.0
	Denmark (1986)	42.0	Syria (1984)	34.8
	Finland (1987)	43.8	United Arab Emirates (1975)	64.4
	France (1982)	38.3		
	Germany, F.R. (1985)	36.9		
	Greece (1987)	25.8		
	Ireland (1987)	42.0		

Source: Calculated from data from ILO Statistical Yearbook, various issues. The index is defined as follows (Duncan and Duncan, 1955):

$$S = \frac{1}{2} \sum_i |M_i - F_i|$$

where  $M_i$  = the percentage of males in the labor force employed in occupation  $i$ , and  $F_i$  = the percentage of females in the labor force employed in occupation  $i$ .

The degree of segregation varies a good deal, but is substantial in the great majority of countries. U.S. studies suggest that the extent of measured occupational segregation is greater when a more detailed occupational breakdown is used (e.g., Beller 1984; Baron and Bielby, 1984). Thus, the highly aggregated nature of the occupational classification scheme used in Table 2 would tend to understate the magnitude of segregation. A particular problem is that the category "farmers, fishermen, loggers and related workers" continues to comprise a very large proportion of the economically active men and women in many developing countries. For instance, the percent of the labor force in this sector is 71 percent in Bangladesh, 64 percent in Thailand, 56 percent in Indonesia, and 54 percent in Ghana. As a result, the index of occupational segregation is very low in these countries, ranging from 10 percent in Thailand to 14 percent in Sri Lanka. At the same time agricultural work encompasses many different kinds of tasks. The data do not show to what extent there is gender differentiation among these tasks.

It is also interesting to examine two of the advanced industrialized economies with very low segregation indexes. In Japan 10 percent of economically active women, as compared to 7 percent of men, are in agriculture. In Portugal this is true for 27 percent of women and 18 percent of men. It may be because of this tradition of participation in physical work in the farm sector that women in these countries constitute a relatively large minority among production workers. In Japan 26 percent of women and 42 percent of men, and in Portugal 21 percent of women and 43 percent of men are in the production sector, as compared to 41 percent of men and only 11 percent of women in the U.S.

Among the four countries with unusually high indexes of occupational segregation, the three Middle Eastern countries of Bahrain, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates have highly unusual economies, with virtually no agricultural sectors, and heavy concentration in the oil industry where virtually no women are employed. The situation in the fourth country, Panama, is rather different. The high degree of segregation there is due to the low representation of women both among agricultural and production workers, the two categories that make up 65 percent of male workers.

Basically, we know little about what causes the wide variations in occupational segregation shown in Table 2. The data show no clear tendency for segregation to be smaller in the countries where women's labor force participation is greater, though it would be reasonable to expect male and female occupational distributions to be more similar in countries where their patterns of labor force participation are more alike. For example, among advanced industrialized countries, the segregation ratio is relatively high in the Scandinavian countries, where the participation ratio is 81.6 percent in Denmark, 83.8 percent in Finland and 87.2 percent in Sweden, but is equally high in countries with considerably lower participation ratios, such as Austria with 60.7 percent, the U.K. with 58.7 percent, and Ireland with 44.7 percent. Similarly, among developing countries occupational segregation is very low both in Thailand where the ratio of women's to men's labor force participation is 89.6 percent and in Indonesia, where it is 54.6 percent.

While occupational structure plays a part in determining the extent of occupational segregation, there are also considerable variations in the representation of women in the same occupation, and they are not necessarily explained by differences in technology. For instance, the agricultural sector is heavily mechanized in both North America and Eastern Europe, yet women

constitute a far larger proportion of agricultural workers in the latter. Similarly, although agriculture is relatively primitive in both Sub-Saharan Africa and in some of the Latin American countries, women are heavily represented in agriculture in the former, and virtually excluded from it in the latter. Further, there is a very large representation of women among clerical workers in most developed countries, while they are a small minority in many developing countries. Neither economic factors alone, nor inherent differences between women and men can explain these incongruities. Again, traditions, norms, and even religious beliefs appear to play a part.

What is the likely future of occupational segregation? There is, on the one hand, evidence of some decline over the last 15 to 20 years in the U.S. and other industrialized countries (Beller, 1984; Blau and Hendricks, 1979; Blau, 1988; OECD, 1985). On the other hand, some occupations which have experienced a rapid influx of women are now in danger of becoming segregated anew as they are turning increasingly female (Reskin and Hartmann, 1986; Strober, 1984). Overall, it appears that a reversal of recent downward trends seems unlikely, but so does acceleration of the slow decline.

#### THE EARNINGS GAP

How much women earn compared to men is one of the main determinants of their status. Unfortunately, obtaining comparable information for men's and women's earnings for different countries presents a number of difficulties. Among those nations that provide any earnings data, some apply to workers in all non-agricultural sectors, others apply to manufacturing only, and they variously provide hourly, daily, weekly or monthly wages. Beyond that, especially for some of the developing countries, the ratio of women's to men's wages varies so erratically over time, that one must discount the reliability of the information.<sup>9</sup>

There are, however, a number of advanced industrialized nations that have published reliable hourly earnings for male and female workers in manufacturing for several decades. These data, shown in Table 3, provide comparisons for 16 countries for 1950, 1978 and 1987. Though in each instance men earn more than women, the earnings gap is far from uniform even among this relatively homogeneous set of countries. But they do have one thing in common: between 1950 and 1987 the ratio of women's to men's wages rose in every instance for which the data are available albeit by no means to the same extent. Estimates for the U.S. go back only to 1955, but they show no sign of progress prior to the late 1970s or early 1980s (Blau and Ferber, 1986). Thus, the U.S. along with Greece, is an exception among these countries, where most of the change took place before 1978.

The timing of the decline of the earnings gap in the U.S.--which did not occur until the late 1970s or early 1980s--has led Smith and Ward (1984) to argue that it did not reflect the impact of the government's anti-discrimination efforts initiated some 10 to 15 years earlier. The implication of this line of argument is that government interference is neither necessary nor desirable. The facts are, however, open to the alternative interpretation that it was in part earlier legislation that encouraged and enabled women to improve their position in the labor market. Further, a number of studies of some of the countries where the earnings gap closed considerably more rapidly, including the United Kingdom and Australia, conclude that government policies were clearly instrumental in bringing about this improvement in women's wages (Chiplin, Curran and Parsley, 1980; Gregory, Daly and Ho, 1986; Kessler, 1983; Sullerot, 1975; Vansgnes, 1971; Zabalza and Tzannatos, 1985).



Table 3

Ratio of Women's to Men's Hourly Earnings  
in Manufacturing, 1950-1987

	1950	1978	1987
Australia	.66	.80	.80
Belgium	.60	.71	.74
Denmark	.64 <sup>a</sup>	.86	.84
Finland	.65	.75	.77
France	n.a.	.77	.79
Germany (F.R.)	.64	.73	.73
Greece	.65 <sup>b</sup>	.69	.78
Ireland	.58	.64	.67
Luxemburg	.55 <sup>c</sup>	.60	.61
Netherlands	.61	.76	.79 <sup>e</sup>
New Zealand	.63 <sup>a</sup>	.73	.72
Norway	.66	.80	.84
Sweden	.70	.89	.90
Switzerland	.65	.66	.67
United Kingdom	.60	.69	.68 <sup>d</sup>
U.S.A.	n.a.	.61	.71 <sup>d</sup>

<sup>a</sup>1953, <sup>b</sup>1961, <sup>c</sup>1966, <sup>d</sup>1983, <sup>e</sup>1986

Source: 1950, 1987 International Labour Yearbook of Labour Statistics, various issues. U.S.A. data are for weekly wages adjusted for hours (O'Neill, 1983). 1978, OECD Employment Outlook, September 1988.

EDUCATION

Women's labor force participation, occupations and earnings are all expected to be related to their level of education. There are a number of determinants of cross-country differences in educational levels. Since more highly educated women tend to get better jobs, earn more, and are less prone to be unemployed, women who plan to be in the labor force have more incentive to acquire education. Thus, the ratio of girls to boys in secondary schools would be expected to vary by labor force participation. In the more affluent countries, however, education at the primary and secondary levels is often universally available and compulsory. In such instances there is likely to be little gender difference in educational attainment at these levels regardless of women's work roles.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, in the U.S., girls were traditionally more likely to complete high school than boys,<sup>11</sup> probably because their opportunity cost of attending school was lower due to their lower potential market wages, though this gender difference has narrowed, as labor market options for individuals without a high school diploma have greatly diminished. There may, of course, be differences by gender in field of specialization, related to the substantial differences in occupations discussed earlier.<sup>12</sup>

As can be seen in Table 4, there are large variations in the ratios of boys to girls in secondary school both within and across regions. Our discussion above suggests that some of this variation is related to level of income. That this is the case may be seen in the top panel of Table 5, where countries are grouped by level of per capita Gross National Product (GNP).<sup>13</sup> While 94 percent of countries with per capita GNP of \$10,000 or more had a ratio of girls to boys in secondary school of 90 percent or more, this was true of only 34 percent of countries with per capita GNP below \$2,000. Similarly, while none of the high income countries had a ratio below 70 percent,

Table 4

Ratio Girls to Boys in Secondary School by World Region, 1980s

	<u>Mean</u>	<u>High</u>	<u>Low</u>
I. Eastern Europe	103	127	92
II. Caribbean	100	105	92
III. Sub-Saharan Africa	68	118	37
IV. East Asia	85	108	43
V. Advanced Industrialized Countries	100	105	93
VI. Latin America	100	107	86
VII. North Africa, Middle East, South Central Asia	78	120	50

Table 5

Ratio Girls to Boys in Secondary School by Per Capita GNP and Religion

<u>Ratio of Girls to Boys</u>	<u>GNP</u>	
	\$10,000 or more (%)	Less than \$2,000 (%)
100 or more	62.5	21.6
90-99	31.2	12.2
80-89	6.2	10.8
70-79	0.0	14.9
60-69	0.0	16.2
59 or less	0.0	24.3
	(n=16)	(n=74)

  

<u>Ratio of Girls to Boys</u>	<u>Religion</u> (GNP less than \$2,000)			
	<u>Animist</u> (%)	<u>Christian</u> (%)	<u>Moslem</u> (%)	<u>Other</u> (%)
100 or more	0.0	46.4	0.0	30.0
90-99	0.0	17.9	5.3	30.0
80-89	23.5	7.1	5.3	10.0
70-79	11.8	10.7	31.6	10.0
60-69	23.5	10.7	15.8	10.0
59 or less	41.2	17.1	42.1	10.0
	(n=17)	(n=28)	(n=19)	(n=10)

Data on GNP from U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency World Military Expenditures and Arms Transfers, 1988; data on education from United Nations Statistical Yearbook, 1988; data on religion from G. K. Hale, World in Figures, 1988.

this was true of 41 percent of the low income countries. There is, however, also considerable variation among low income countries. As the bottom panel of Table 5 shows, among these countries gender differences in education, like those in labor force participation, appear to be related to religion, and tend to be largest in Moslem and Animist countries. While the ratio of girls to boys in secondary school was 90 percent or more in 64 percent of the Christian countries and 60 percent of the other countries, this was the case in only 5 percent of the Moslem countries and none of the Animist countries.

#### HOUSEWORK

So far, we have discussed work that is included in official labor force statistics. This is generally work done for pay or profit, but most countries also include subsistence farming. Housework, however, is excluded, even though it provides goods and services that greatly add to the comforts of life and are often crucial to its very maintenance. Some information is available that shows women tend to do most of the housework, and that the total amount of time expended on it is considerable.

Table 6 shows the pattern of time spent on housework and on market work by men and women in eight industrialized countries in various years for which data are available. The pattern is broadly similar across countries. Men spend considerably more time on market work and women spend far more on housework, while the total amount of time spent on both together is roughly comparable. Unfortunately, these data are not available separately by women's employment status. However, data from the U.S. suggest that while employed women spend less time on housework than women who do not work outside the home they continue to do the bulk of the housework and to spend a considerable amount of time on household tasks. At the same time, husband's time spent in housework does not vary by the work status of the wife. To the extent that

Table 6

Time Spent on Housework and Market Work  
(Hours per Week)

		<u>Total Work</u>		<u>Housework</u>		<u>Market Work</u>	
		Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Denmark	1964	45.4	43.4	3.7	30.1	41.7	13.3
	1987	46.2	43.9	12.8	23.1	33.4	20.8
Finland	1979	57.8	61.1	13.8	28.6	44.0	32.5
Hungary	1977	63.7	68.9	12.9	33.8	50.8	35.1
Japan	1965	60.5	64.7	2.8	31.5	57.7	33.2
	1985	55.5	55.6	3.5	31.0	52.0	24.6
Norway	1971	53.2	54.6	15.4	41.3	37.8	13.3
	1980	51.0	50.6	16.8	33.0	34.2	17.6
Sweden	1984	57.9	55.5	18.1	31.8	39.8	23.7
U.S.	1965	63.1	60.9	11.5	41.8	51.6	18.9
	1981	57.8	54.4	13.8	30.5	44.0	23.9
USSR*	1965	64.4	75.3	9.8	31.5	54.6	43.8
	1985	65.7	66.3	11.9	27.0	53.8	39.3

\*Pskov

Adapted from F. Thomas Juster and Frank P. Stafford, "The Allocation of Time: Empirical Findings, Behavioral Models, and Problems of Measurement," Working Paper, Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan, February 1990.

this pattern is generalizable, and anecdotal evidence strongly suggests that this is the case, it is reasonable to assume that the disparity in men's and women's time spent in housework revealed in the aggregate figures prevails, although to a lesser extent, for families with employed wives. This is of concern because the additional time and energy that women spend at home is likely to inhibit their progress in the labor market, particularly if they accommodate household demands by working part-time.

There are, however, considerable cross-country differences in the ratio of men's to women's hours of housework ranging, for the most recent year, from 11.3 percent for Japan to 56.9 percent for Sweden. Swedish men spend nearly 15 hours more per week on housework than do Japanese men while average hours of housework are similar for women in the two countries. In addition, in each of the five countries where data are also available for a year 10 to 20 years earlier--Denmark, Japan, Norway, the U.S., and the USSR--the amount of time men spent on housework increased to some extent over the period while their time spent in market work decreased. With the exception of Japan, the opposite trends prevailed for women.

These findings of cross-country variations and intertemporal trends suggest that the allocation of housework between men and women is to some extent responsive to changes in women's labor force roles, as well as to government policies.<sup>14</sup> In most of the countries for which data are available, there appears to be some movement, albeit to varying degrees, toward greater equality in the household, corresponding to the gradual increase in women's opportunities in the workplace.<sup>15</sup> Only as this movement continues will women be able to more fully take advantage of these opportunities.

Information for developing nations is considerably more sparse, with perhaps the best source being various essays in Goldschmidt-Clermont (1987),

though even here data are provided for only five countries,<sup>16</sup> and these are mainly based on small local or regional surveys. The number of hours per week that women spend on domestic work ranges from 18.9 in Cameroon to 49.0 in Mexico. The figures for men once again are considerably lower, varying from 1.4 in Cameroon to 18.9 in Mexico. Overall, there seems to be no reason to doubt that throughout the world women do the bulk of housework. On the other hand, it is also the case that women's labor force participation everywhere tends to be lower than men's.

#### SPECIAL PROBLEMS OF WOMEN IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

Just as girls constitute a smaller proportion of students in secondary schools in countries with a lower level of income, a number of studies in developing countries where women have low status show that girls receive particularly inadequate care and nutrition (Ravindran, 1986; Waldron, 1986; Weinberger and Heligman, 1987). These are only two illustrations which indicate that women tend to be better off at a higher level of per capita income, whether or not they have achieved a high degree of equality with men, and tend to be doubly disadvantaged in poor countries when they are also the objects of sex discrimination. Thus, the issue of equality is not merely an indulgence of middle class women in affluent societies, but can be a matter of great urgency for poor women in developing countries as well. At the same time, the wasted potential of women who are not given the opportunity to develop and fully use their productive capacity is a particularly serious loss in these nations.

A recent study (Ferber and Berg, 1987) of 144 countries confirmed earlier research that showed a positive relation between women's labor force participation and the ratio of women to men in the population. Unlike other authors who have emphasized that it is a surplus of women as compared to men



that causes them to seek employment (Guttentag and Secord, 1983; Grossbard-Shechtman, 1985; Ward and Pampel, 1985), this paper points out that women, when they are in the main "only" wives and mothers, and not seen as economically active, are so short-changed in the allocation of resources that their chances for survival are reduced. To the extent that these conclusions are correct, they suggest that women's economic status is likely to be better when they are employed than when they are full-time homemakers.

#### CONCLUSIONS

This chapter has provided a broad overview of women's economic status, examining specifically such important issues as labor force participation, occupational segregation, earnings, education, and the amount of time spent on housework. The picture that emerges is complex. There are large differences among countries and regions which make generalizations difficult. Nonetheless, two conclusions are warranted. Nowhere have women achieved equality with men, but particularly in the advanced industrialized countries where data on the relevant variables are more readily available, there is evidence of a reduction in gender differences in economic roles and outcomes. It is quite likely that these changes will continue and possibly accelerate over time as alterations in women's, and to a lesser extent in men's work and family roles reinforce each other. Nonetheless, there is also reason for concern both with the slow pace of change, and how far it has everywhere fallen short of the ultimate goal of equality.

It appears that it is basic attitudes about gender roles and especially about the roles of men and women in the family that are most deep-seated and difficult to change. Economic conditions and laws, where appropriately enforced, have increased women's opportunities in the labor market, improved their access to education, and reduced the earnings gap. The division of

household responsibilities and resources within the household, on the other hand, is not as readily amenable to change. As long as women, but not men, have "household responsibilities," whether or not they are also wage earners, the goal of equality for women in the economy as well as in the home is likely to remain elusive.

FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Research in the U.S. has also confirmed the relevance of labor force participation for women's position in the family. "Married women's employment status...appears to have consistent effects on women's status and influence on family decision making. The independent financial base provided by employment provides women with an increased sense of competence, gives women more power within the marriage, and increases her influence in decision making... Couples in which both husband and wife work are more likely to share decisions about major purchases and child rearing" (Nieva, 1985, p. 164).

<sup>2</sup>This is preferable to using the proportion of the labor force that is female, because it is not influenced by the sex ratio of the population.

<sup>3</sup>It has been suggested that persons producing goods and services for use within their own household should also be included in the labor force (Beneria, 1981). A case can be made, of course, that providing goods and services directly is no less productive than earning money in order to purchase commodities. However, as is suggested in our discussion above, labor force participation as conventionally defined confers greater relative status on women because this enables them to gain control over money. It is precisely this enhancement of relative status which we wish to measure. Hence the conventional definition is most appropriate for our purposes.

<sup>4</sup>It may well be that women's participation in all types of family enterprises tends to be especially understated in societies where any role other than that of wife and mother is frowned upon. However, Gunar Myrdal (1968) observed that in Moslem countries, such as Pakistan, where measured female participation is very low, women also play a less active role outside the home, even in agricultural work. Similarly, Youssef (1971) suggested that

women tend to avoid activities to which a stigma is attached. In Sub-Saharan African countries, on the other hand, where measured participation is higher, women do a very large share of farm work (Boserup, 1970).

<sup>5</sup>For the most recent and comprehensive studies see those in Layard and Mincer (1985).

<sup>6</sup>There is far less evidence of such conflict for developing countries. See, for instance, Behrman and Wolfe (1984); Concepcion (1974); Kelley and de Silva (1980).

<sup>7</sup>See also Ferber and Berg (1987).

<sup>8</sup>It is unfortunate that among the Eastern European countries the relevant data are available only for Hungary.

<sup>9</sup>For instance, the ratio is 82.4 in 1976, 96.9 in 1977 and 86.9 in 1978 for Burma; 63.1 in 1977 and 91.7 in 1978 for Egypt; and 77.4 in 1976 and 55.6 in 1977 in Kenya (International Labour Organization Yearbook, various issues).

<sup>10</sup>Provision of education for girls when female labor force participation is low is often rationalized as good preparation for their roles as wives and mothers.

<sup>11</sup>In 1900, only two-thirds as many boys as girls graduated from high school (Blau and Ferber, 1986).

<sup>12</sup>These points are illustrated by a recent OECD (1985) study which found that in the advanced industrialized countries covered in the study there has been very marked and near-universal growth of female enrollments in higher education, but that in many countries rigid division by gender in terms of field of specialization continues to be apparent (p. 10). In some countries, however, such as the U.S., there has recently been a significant influx of young women into career-oriented fields, presumably as their labor force attachment has increased.

<sup>13</sup>Gross National Product (GNP) is the market value of the total annual output of final goods and services produced by the residents of a country.

<sup>14</sup>For example, Juster and Stafford (1990) suggest that tax policies, specifically individual vs. joint taxation of married couple earnings, may explain cross-country differences in trends.

<sup>15</sup>Juster and Stafford (1990) provide additional data on changes from the 1970s to the 1980s for Canada, Holland, Japan, Norway, the U.K. and the U.S. (Table 5, p. 38). With the exception of Holland and Japan, women's time spent on housework decreased while men's time increased during this period.

<sup>16</sup>They are Bangladesh, Cameroon, Mexico, Nepal, and Venezuela.

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