



Pontificia Universidad  
**JAVERIANA**  
Bogotá

| VIGILADA MINEDUCACIÓN |

# Session 1: Introduction and Overview Gender Constructs and Feminist Economics

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# Discussion

- Tell us about an experience in teaching, researching, or implementing projects that made you aware of gender issues or concerns.
- Why does gender matter in economics?
- Why does gender matter in economic policymaking?

# Lecture Outline

- I. Gender as a social construct
- II. Economics as a social construct
- III. Development of *Feminist Economics* as a distinct field in the economics discipline

# I. Gender as a Social Construct

- Defines and differentiates the roles, rights, responsibilities and obligations of women and men
- Biological differences between females and males are interpreted by society to create a set of social expectations that:
  - ❖ *define the behaviors that are deemed appropriate for women and men, and*
  - ❖ *determine women's and men's differential access to rights, resources, and power in society.*

# Gender as a Social Construct, cont.

**POWER ISSUE:** Imbalance in power; assigns authority, agency, and decision-making power to men.

**VARIATION:** The nature and degree of these gender differences vary from one society to the next, but they **tend to favor men.**

**PERMEATE ECONOMIC RELATIONS:** Economic institutions, processes, and policies can modify or exacerbate existing gender inequalities.

# Some Manifestations of Gender Power Relations

- Strongly defined gender-based divisions of labor within/outside the home;
- Unequal access to, and control over, property, economic assets and inheritance;
- Unequal participation in political institutions from village to international levels;
- Unequal restrictions on physical mobility, reproduction, and sexuality along with the sanctioned violation of women's and girls' bodily integrity;
- Accepted codes of social conduct that condone and even reward violence against women.

# Gender Relations Permeate Economic Relations and Affect Outcomes

- Economic relationships, transactions and exchange have gender relations inscribed within them.

## SOME EXAMPLES?

- **Example:** Employers may decide against promoting or hiring women for certain jobs based on preconceived notions. For instance, women are more likely than men to leave the labor force to raise children or be unproductive because they give higher priority to household responsibilities.

# Gender in Development Discourses and Policymaking

Evolution of gender concerns in the realm of development discourses, agenda and policymaking (Beneria et al, Chap 1):

- UN World Conferences
- WID Approach
  - UN, CEDAW, and Equity Agenda
- WAD Approach
- GAD Approach

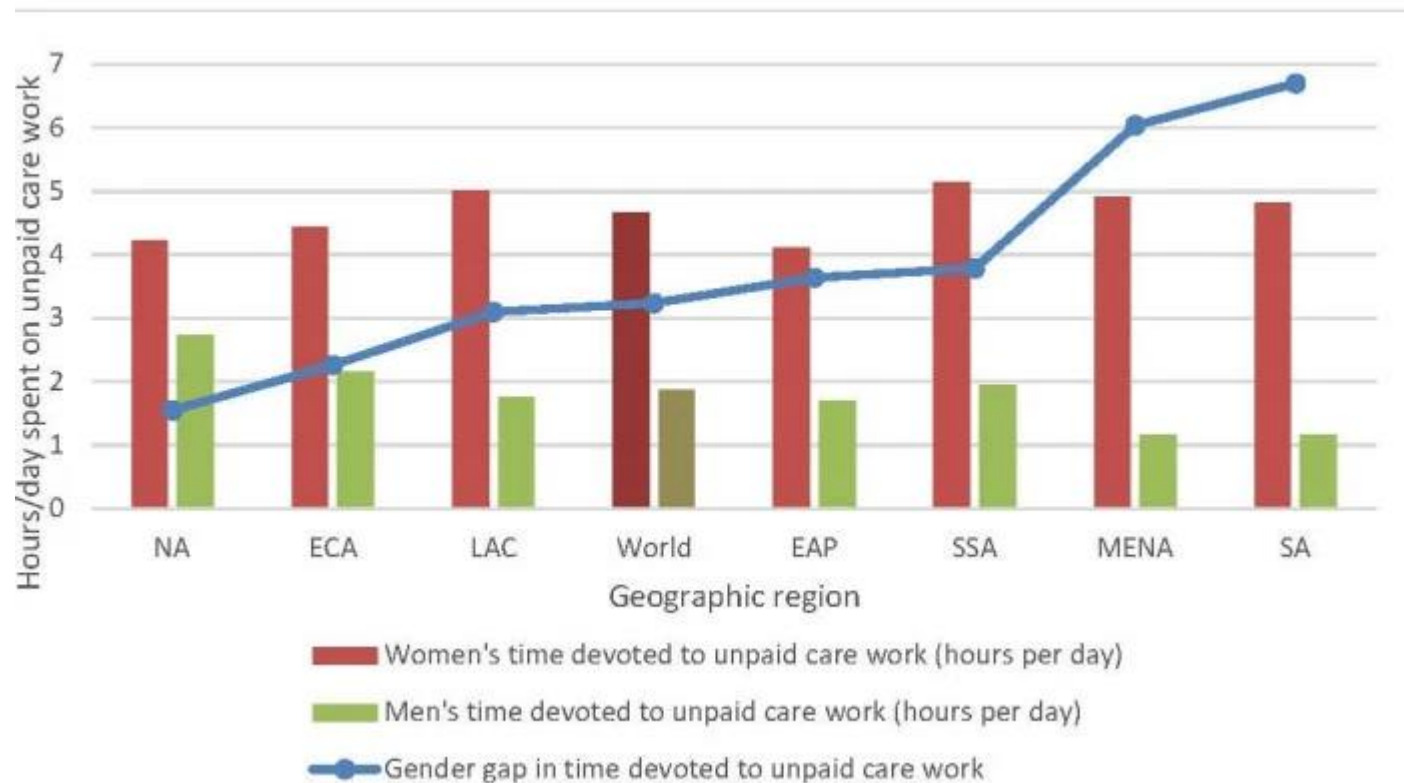


# Some Outcomes

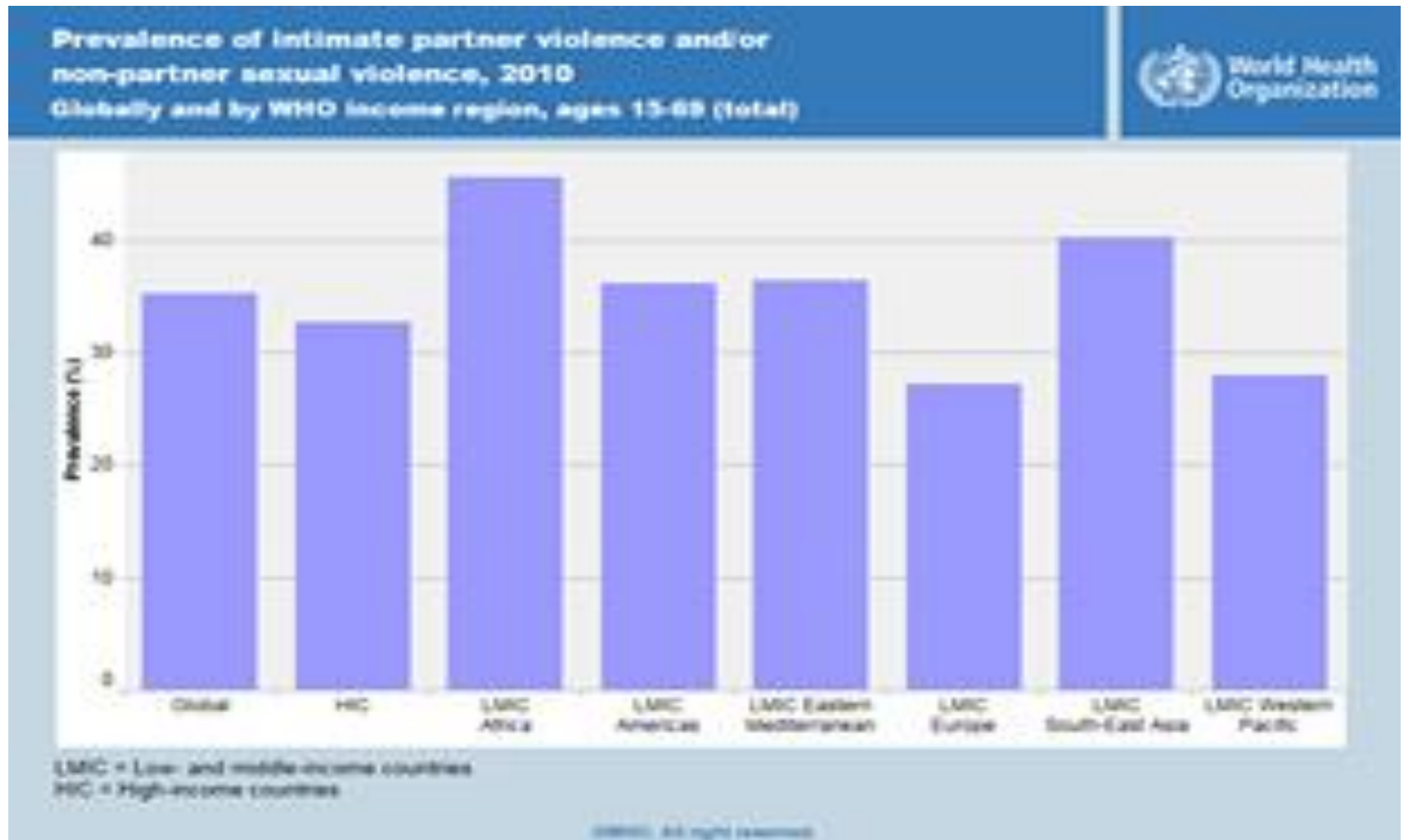
# Recent Trend: Decline in Female Labor Force Participation in Some Regions



# Unequal Division of Household Labor: Time Spent in Unpaid Care Work



# Intimate Partner and Non-Partner Sexual Violence Against Women, 2010 (WHO)



# Attitudes towards Violence Against Women

- Graph:

<https://data.oecd.org/inequality/violence-against-women.htm>

- Additional Data (country-level):

[http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/development/data/oecd-international-development-statistics/gender-institutions-and-development-2014\\_data-00728-en](http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/development/data/oecd-international-development-statistics/gender-institutions-and-development-2014_data-00728-en)

Reference: OECD (2018), Violence against women (indicator). doi: 10.1787/f1eb4876-en (Accessed on 10 January 2018)

## II. Economics as a Social Construct

### DISCUSS:

- In what ways is the economics discipline a socially constructed body of knowledge?
- What are some examples of economic concepts, tools, and theories/models?

# Economics as a Social Construct: How do we know what we know?

Economics is based on deeply ingrained practices in “ways of knowing” and of theorizing:

## 1. Quantitative/Mathematical:

Francis Edgeworth (1881) *Mathematical Physics*

“Economic questions are examined with mathematical precisions and exactness.”

## 2. Positivist:

Milton Friedman (1953) *The Methodology of Positive Economics*

*“A theory’s validity should not be judged by the realism of its underlying assumptions but rather by the accuracy of its predictions.” In effect, “theories should be viewed ‘as if’ their assumption were true.”*

## 3. Objectivist/Rational:

Alfred Marshall (1890) *Principles of Economics*

- Belief in “...self-adjusting, self correcting nature of the economic world.”
- Assumes “rational behavior” of market agents.

# Economics as a Social Construct, contd.

- A creation of groups of individuals (predominantly men) reflecting the way they have come to think about economic life (Beneria et al, Chap 2)
- Its development is influenced by the interests and biases of its theorists and dominant thinkers
- It also reflects social construction of “masculinity” and “femininity” (Meagher and Nelson 2004)).



# Economics as a Social Construct, cont.

- Discipline has been dominated by the **neoclassical paradigm**.
- ***Homo Economicus*** (*Rational Economic Man*)
  - Individuality, autonomy
  - Freedom (free will): study of choice
  - Rationality (in decision-making)
- **Marginalist Analysis** (Rational Choice Theory)
  - Weighing marginal benefit vs. marginal cost

# Economics as a Social Construct, cont.

## Basis of Pareto Optimality:

- Interpersonal utility comparisons are impossible
- Exogenous tastes and preferences
- Self-interest and selfishness: primary nature of the “Rational Economic Man”

**Domain:** Market economy

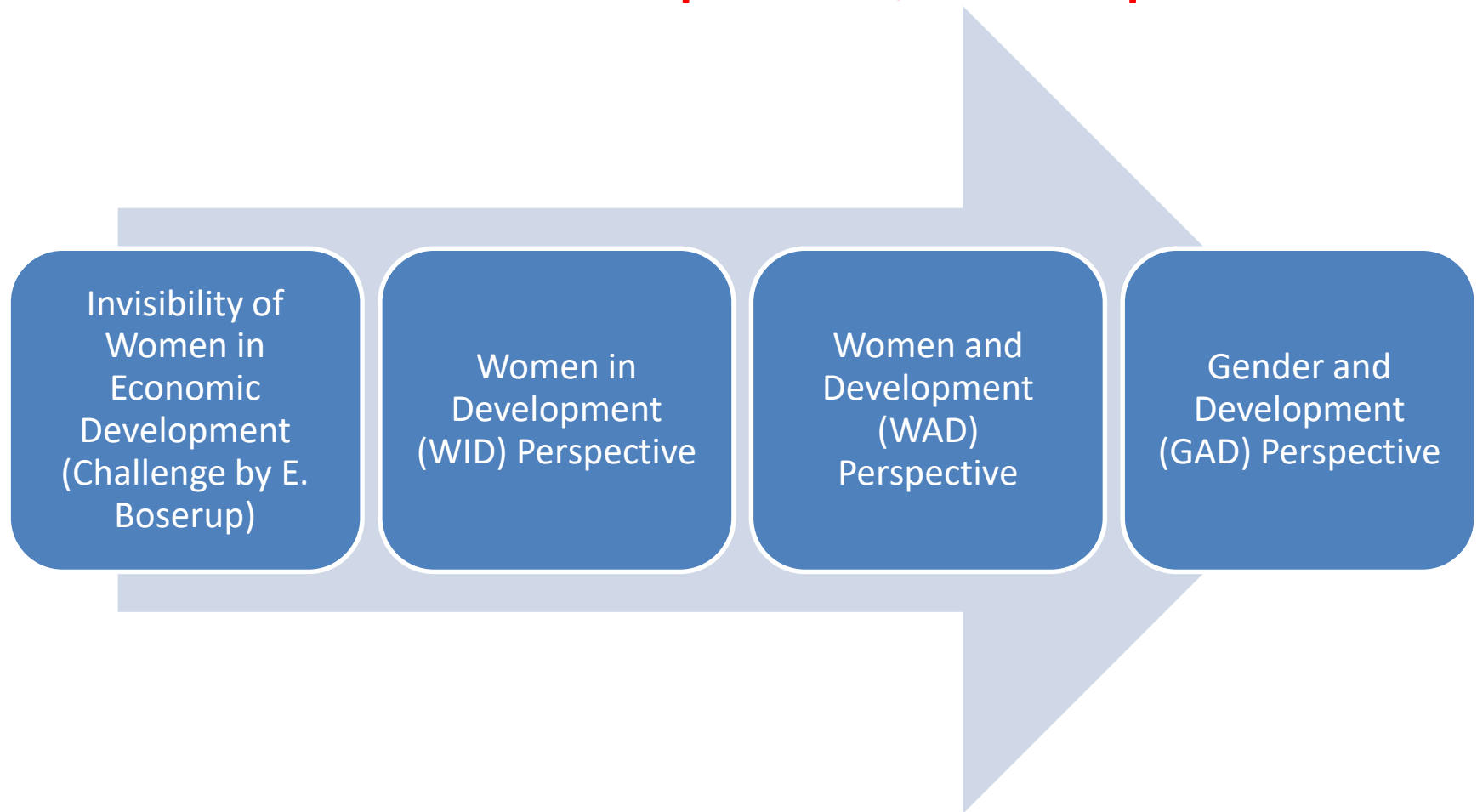
# III. Development of Feminist Economics

- Feminist scholarship has had a profound impact on many disciplines including economics;
- Raises difficult questions that are risky and often ‘irritating’;
- Challenges **definitions**, assumptions, methodologies, interpretation of “stylized facts”;
- Expands the boundaries of knowledge;
- Transforms research questions and the curriculum.

# What is Feminist Economics?

- **Gender** as a central category of economic analysis;
- Recognizes power relations embedded in social and economic relations;
- Like other economic traditions, feminist economics explores value, distribution and growth/accumulation
- It views **reproduction** (not only **production**) as a central aspect of provisioning activities
- Emphasis is on **human well-being**, provisioning of human life (central measure of economic success)

# Context: Evolution of Gender Analysis in Economic Development, 1970-present



# Key Factors

- Fieldwork and experiential knowledge (anthropologists, sociologists, development practitioners, e.g. USAID);
- Focus on population control: link between women's work, education, and fertility;
- Shift in identity of women from mothers/wives to economic agents (workers, educators, etc.);
- Shift in economic development thinking;
- Ester Boserup's book: *Women's Role in Economic Development*.

# Key Factors (cont'd)

- UN agencies/institutions: CEDAW, Women's International Conferences (1975, '80, '85, '95);
- 1995 Beijing Platform for Action;
- Women's movements worldwide;
- Research on various forms of gender inequalities;
- Research on the link between production (market economy) and reproduction (household economy).

# Feminist Economists Draw from Many Traditions

- Neoclassical Economics
- Heterodox Economics, Keynesian and Post Keynesian, Institutionalism, Structuralist, Marxist, Post-modern
- Other disciplines: Anthropology, Psychology, Sociology, law, etc.



# Contrasting Neoclassical & Feminist Economics

## Neoclassical Economics

- Quantitative
- Positivist
- Objectivist

## Feminist Economics

- Methodological pluralism
- Context matters – institutions, norms, history are fundamental
- Values and ethics are explicit.

Reference: Beneria et al (2016)

# Challenging Underlying Assumptions of Neoclassical Economics

- Gendered social norms (vs. individual choice)
- Connected individuals (vs. autonomous individual)
- Cooperation (vs. competition)
- Altruism (vs. self-interest)
- Pattern of exclusions (unpaid work, gender dimensions)
- Rejects distinction between positive and normative analysis (economics is not value-free)

# Development of a Broader Concept of the Economy

- Notion of the economy: wide range of activities engaged by people for the provisioning of human life.
- Makes use of paid and unpaid labor in:
  - Production of goods and services for the market;
  - Production of *g* and *s* for own (household) use and consumption (e.g. household work);
  - Production of *g* and *s* for someone else's use and consumption (e.g. volunteer work);
  - Production of goods and services for the public (e.g. public sector).

# Feminist Economics, cont.

- Construction of alternative models of the households, markets, and the macroeconomy;
- Use of gender lens in exploring labor, credit markets, poverty, etc.

# Development of Alternative Household Models

## Bargaining Models:

### A. Cooperative Bargaining Models

### B. Non-Cooperative Bargaining Models

- Pareto vs. non-Pareto optimal outcomes;
- Possibility of multiple equilibria;
- Co-existence of cooperative and conflicting decision-making;
- Role of social norms and gender-based perceptions.

# New Methods and Measures

- ❑ Gender equality (or inequality) indicators;
- ❑ Gender-sensitive collection methods e.g. include women's responses to surveys;
- ❑ Sex-disaggregation of data e.g. asset ownership, etc.
- ❑ Collection of data on unpaid work;
- ❑ Importance of qualitative methodologies
  - Identities, and experiences of women and men as social groups.
  - Issues of interdependence, tradition, social norms.
- ❑ New measures of well-being e.g. time poverty, etc.

# Economics as a social science discipline...Changing steadily and surely

- Re-examination of what economics is about.
- Attention to the different experiences of men and women in households, agriculture, education, credit markets, labor markets, etc.
- Analysis of the different impacts of economic policies and development strategies on women and men.
- Recognition of gender analysis as important in understanding economic processes and outcomes.