

with Equal Employment Opportunity laws. Hersch surveys the relevant laws that prohibit employment discrimination. Connecting economics and the legal context, she uses noteworthy cases to illustrate the arguments employed in the courtroom to establish a legal finding of discrimination.

Love, commitment, work. The essays in this book illustrate how economics can lead to a better understanding of the balancing act in women's lives. The authors help beginner readers of economics to understand how economics can be applied to realms outside of the marketplace. The essays also challenge more advanced readers to think critically about how women connect the domain of family and care to the domain of labor market work.

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A Feminist Critique of the Neoclassical Theory of the Family

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Gary Becker's *A Treatise on the Family* (1981) was published about 20 years ago, a culmination of much of his previous work.¹ It has remained the centerpiece of neoclassical economic theory of the family ever since, and Becker has widely, albeit not entirely accurately, been considered "the father" of what is also widely referred to as the "new home economics."² Actually, the honor of pioneering research on and analysis of the household as an economic unit properly belongs mainly to Margaret Reid (1934), who in turn gave a great deal of credit to Hazel Kyrk, her teacher and mentor.³ Interestingly, both Kyrk and Reid were also on the faculty of the University of Chicago, which makes Becker's (and the profession's) failure to acknowledge their work all the more surprising.⁴

Reid was the first to recognize explicitly that the household is the locus of production as well as consumption. She specifically defined housework (that is, those unpaid tasks performed by family members that could be replaced by market goods or services), as productive. Mary Hirschfeld (1994) argues that Reid's work, despite lacking Becker's elegant mathematical models, is far more realistic and, in many respects, considerably more progressive from the feminist point of view. While, like Becker, she assumes rational economic agents and a single family utility function, she follows Charlotte Perkins Gilman (1903) in rejecting the isolation of the domestic sphere from the public sphere of the market and government. Reid even appeals to the state to recognize the economic value of women's role in the home and to find ways of supporting their family responsibilities. Becker, on the other hand, does not appear altogether serious about considering homemaking as real work, given his assertion that married women "work" much less than single women. His description of a very poor society as one "where adult males manage only a few hours of leisure" (Becker 1996: 3) points toward the same conclusion.

Even so, Becker brought economic analysis of the family into the mainstream and developed a model that sheds a good deal of light on the evolution of the family as an economic institution. While objections have been raised to what some perceive to be undue emphasis on the market aspect of marriage⁵ there is no question that economic considerations have always played an important role in this institution. Historically, in many societies dowry or bride price were the norm, and it was common for parents to hire marriage brokers, matchmakers, or place advertisements in newspapers, in order to find suitable partners for their sons and daughters. Acquisition through marriage of parcels of land by peasants, of territories by aristocrats, of guild or union memberships by working men, and of businesses by capitalists has long been common and widely accepted.

It is, however, ironic that the neoclassical theory, which emphasizes the advantages of what is widely regarded as "the traditional family"⁶ came to the fore just at the time when women and men were increasingly opting for alternative arrangements,⁷ often more egalitarian relationships that emphasize sharing rather than specialization. Becker himself acknowledges that there need not be complete specialization. In a family where demand for money income is high, the wife may take a job in addition to fulfilling her household responsibilities. Similarly, he suggests that in case of high demand for household services, the husband may do some housework. Yet, he went so far as to develop a formal theorem that shows it would never be worthwhile for both spouses to share in both types of work. This presumably proves that an egalitarian couple could not maximize their wellbeing. At the same time, there has been a clear, albeit slow trend toward this pattern. For instance, between 1966 and 1999, the labor force participation rate of married women with husbands present in the United States rose from 35.4 percent to 61.6 percent (Francine Blau et al. 2002: 102). Meanwhile, the number of hours employed women spent on housework declined from 24.3 in 1966 hours to 20.8 hours per week in 1994, while their husbands' increased from 6.4 hours to 7.8 hours per week (Blau 1998: 152-3). Thus, to the extent that the purpose of theory is to assist in understanding and interpreting observed events, Becker's theory, whatever its merits in other respects, was rather untimely, and certainly is not helpful in providing guidance towards the future of the family.

The Neoclassical Model of the Family

Neoclassical economists use the new home economics model to analyze marriage, births, division of labor in the household, and divorce. In the family, as elsewhere, individuals are presumably rational maximizers. Each spouse specializes in the work s/he does best in order to attain the largest income and hence the greatest amount of satisfaction. A simple example serves to illustrate this point. Assume that the man can earn \$20 an hour or produce a dinner during the same period of time, while the

woman can produce a better dinner, or earn \$15; it is obvious that he should work in the market, and the woman should stay home and cook dinner. Or, assume that both could earn \$15 an hour, but the woman would cook a better dinner; the rational decision still is that she should stay at home.

While Becker claims that his designation of the wage earner as "he" and the homemaker as "she" is purely for convenience, it happens to coincide with the popular view that the man will specialize in market work, the woman in housework. Presumably, since women bear children, they are better suited for raising them, and by extension also better suited to homemaking in general. Obviously this is not a convincing argument. Alternatively, some argue that women devote more time and effort to child rearing because they can only have a relatively small number of children and hence have a greater stake in the quality of children, while men can "father" a very large number. This, of course, ignores that in a monogamous society men are deprived of this opportunity, except if they have multiple sequential marriages and/or children outside of marriage.

At first glance it might appear that a stronger case can be made for the traditional male and female roles on the grounds that men are more productive in the market since, on average, they continue to earn considerably more than women. There is, however, a problem with this argument as well. While many neoclassical economists reject the explanation that women's lower earnings are the result of discrimination, most are not prepared to claim that women are inherently less productive in the labor market than men. Instead, they fall back on the explanation that women acquire less human capital because they expect to spend less time in the labor market, accumulate less labor market experience, and have less energy for work in the labor market because they expend so much effort on housework. Of course, this is a flagrant case of circular reasoning.⁸ For this essentially amounts to arguing that women spend more time in the household because men have a relative advantage in the labor market, and men have a relative advantage in the labor market because women spend more time in the household.

In addition to efficiency, neoclassical economists argue that in the traditional family specialization minimizes competition and conflict between husband and wife, and maximizes mutual dependence. Consequently there is more reason for couples to avoid getting divorced. Becker even goes one step further and argues that when divorce is difficult there is more incentive to "nurture love," so that marriages will actually be better.

Finally, although Becker rejects the assumption of a consensus on preferences within the family,⁹ he too manages to avoid facing the disagreements about allocation of resources that often exist in real families where individuals have different tastes and different preferences. The new home economists avoid such problems by assuming that all decisions are made by the altruistic head of the family (who, once again, is referred to as "he") and that these decisions are accepted by all other family members as in their own best interest.¹⁰

A Feminist Critique

A careful reading of Becker's work rightly elicits admiration for its ambitious scope, for the application of the powerful tools of economic analysis to the family, which provides a number of original useful insights. At the same time, the model invites critical examination of the basic assumptions that underlie the analysis,¹¹ of the concepts used and, most importantly, some of the conclusions reached. Such an examination reveals surprising omissions, oversimplifications, and misunderstandings that inevitably lead to ill-founded conclusions. Yet, these have received remarkably little attention outside of feminist circles.

Feminists have challenged many aspects of Becker's view of the family, none more so than the notion of the altruistic head of the household who ensures that everyone's interests are equally safeguarded. By way of contrast, radical feminists see the family as the true locus of women's oppression (Heidi Hartmann 1981; Nancy Folbre 1994). While recognizing both that there are emotional ties and, to some extent, unified interests within the family, they also see it as the locus of struggle.¹² Further, they do not believe that these problems are merely the result of private decisions of individuals within each family. In this view, when Jane is responsible for taking care of the household and the children, while John "helps her," by clearing the table, taking out the garbage, and putting the children to bed, this is substantially influenced by patriarchal tradition and, in turn, serves to perpetuate this tradition. Hence the slogan "the personal is political."

Before going on to focus on specific aspects of Becker's model of the family, it may be useful to note some of the general flaws in this body of work.

First, indiscriminate citations of sources lend support to the proposed conclusions, without regard to their legitimacy. Thus one may be surprised to find a reference to George Bernard Shaw (a brilliant author who is not, however, noted for his understanding of women), on the subject of women's preferences for husbands (Becker 1981: 48-9). The most flagrant example, however, is the use of a quotation from the Ayatollah Khomeini in support of the contention that favoritism among wives in a polygamous family is not a problem (Becker 1981: 562). Second, sweeping conclusions are drawn in spite of conflicting evidence. One example of this is the assertion that women have always relied on men to provide them and their children with food and shelter.¹³ Third, Becker occasionally "hedges his bets" so that no conceivable outcome would falsify the proposition offered. For example, he argues that both the mating of "likes" and of "unlikes" maximizes aggregate commodity output.

What is a family?

In view of the central role of the family in the new home economics, one would expect that considerable attention would have been devoted to the question of just

what constitutes a family. Actually, there has been practically no discussion of this subject in the mainstream. Most neoclassical economists simply assumed that it is a nuclear family, comprised of a husband, a wife, and usually one or more children or, at times, of a single parent with a child or children.¹⁴ The new home economics virtually ignores unmarried heterosexual couples, gay and lesbian couples, cooperative groups, and even extended families.¹⁵ These households clearly deserve attention; moreover, applying the same model to them would clarify the extent to which the assumptions underlying the model are based on traditional stereotypes. For instance, would anyone really expect many homosexual couples (even those with children) to adopt a division of labor where one partner is the "housewife" while the other one specializes in market work and is the "head of the household," although that would presumably be efficient and maximize household income? For more discussion of comparative advantage and same-sex households, see chapter 5 by Lisa Giddings in this volume.

Polygamous families represent the only exception to this neglect of other family types. Becker (1981) as well as others, such as Shoshana Grossbard-Shechtman (1976) argue that polygamy is good for women because it increases demand for them and hence improves their bargaining position. Barbara Bergmann (1995) asked, if polygamy is so beneficial for women, why is it almost invariably men who advocate it while women oppose it? The answer is that the more favorable terms, where they exist, often benefit fathers or brothers rather than women themselves. Often the girls, who tend to marry at a very young age, do not choose to do so but are rather "given in marriage" by a man in their birth family (Frances Woolley 1996). Thus, it is not surprising that neither women's economic nor their social position is favorable in countries where polygamy is permitted nor, for that matter, in countries where there are more men than women (Marianne Ferber and Helen Berg 1991). This may explain why men generally had to use force or threat of force to establish polygamous societies (William Goode 1974).

Rationality

The most serious problem with the neoclassical model is the crucial assumption that people are rational,¹⁶ without a clear definition of rationality. Essentially Becker's view amounts to assuming that anyone is rational as long as s/he maximizes utility, but utility can be defined as whatever is being maximized. Thus, he says in *Accounting for Tastes* (1996) that he "retains the assumption that individuals behave so as to maximize utility, while extending the definition of individual preferences to include personal habits and addictions, peer pressure, parental influences on the tastes of children, advertising, love and sympathy, and other neglected behavior" (Becker 1996: 4). In other words, people's current preferences are not only influenced by their own past decisions, which people presumably do take into account at all times, but are also influenced by others. At the same time, these admissions do not resolve the fundamental question as to what rationality means.

The following example illustrates this point. It is reasonable, for instance, to assume that people consider the effect current decisions will have on future wellbeing – say that smoking cigarettes now will lead to addiction and ill health later – but that how much this recognition affects their current behavior is largely determined by the extent to which they discount the future. Yet, Becker has nothing to say concerning the rationality of various discount rates. In other words, if some teenagers give virtually no weight to what will happen tomorrow, let alone a year from now or ten years from now, they are perfectly rational, as long as their behavior is consistent with their discount rate.

Specialization

Becker concludes that specialization and exchange result in maximum family wellbeing at a particular point in time. Complete specialization in homemaking, though never universal, was widespread in earlier days, and did make a good deal of sense at one time. When fertility was high and life expectancy short, so that women were pregnant or nursing most of their adult lives, and while most necessities and amenities of life were produced in the household, homemaking was a full-time job for most or all of a woman's life. The situation is very different now. Today, with a life expectancy of about 79 years and the average number of children less than two, the wife who specializes in housework is not likely to maximize her income in the long run, even if she does in the short run. Over the years, her value as a homemaker will decline as her market skills atrophy. Only a very high discount rate of the future can justify such behavior.

The model also leads to the conclusion that in order to maximize income at least one partner must specialize completely in either housework or market work. The assumption of fixed proportions production functions guarantees that an additional hour spent on the production of each type of output will be the same, independent of how much of that output each partner has already produced. This is entirely possible, particularly in the case of market work, but is not very likely when it comes to housework, mainly because it includes a great many different types of tasks. Therefore, the husband's first few hours of housework are likely to make a larger net contribution to total output than the wife's last few hours of housework, even if his market wage is higher than hers. Consequently, complete specialization is unlikely. Both casual observation and a large array of data on sharing of housework suggest that this conjecture corresponds to reality. For more discussion on specialization in heterosexual households, see chapter 4 by Leslie Stratton in this volume.

Utility and disutility of work

Even if specialization were to result in maximum income, the family's utility is not necessarily maximized, because the model ignores the utility or disutility associated

with work itself. Nor does it recognize that there is most likely diminishing marginal utility for each type of work. Yet, an individual who enjoys doing a particular type of work will enjoy it less as s/he does increasingly more of it; and if s/he disliked the work to begin with, this dislike will become more intensive. In addition, the partner who specializes in homemaking is at a serious disadvantage because, with the exception of childcare, people tend to prefer all other work to housework (Thomas Juster 1985).¹⁷ One way to alleviate the boredom and isolation of housework would be for the partners to do it together, but the model does not allow for this possibility.

Assortative mating

The disutility for wives associated with specialization would likely be mitigated if men whose skills are highly valued in the labor market were to marry women who have little interest in doing paid work and have few marketable skills. Therefore, the ideal match would presumably be between a highly educated and well-trained man and a woman with the kind of education and background in domestic skills that would make her a good homemaker and a capable hostess. Conversely, a woman who has acquired human capital that is highly rewarded in the labor market would do best to marry a man with no relative advantage in market work who would therefore be expected to do a good deal of housework. Instead, we find that highly educated men and women tend to marry each other. This is, no doubt, in part the result of such young people being more likely to meet each other, but also suggests that men and women are more interested in enjoying the company of individuals with interests, tastes, and concerns similar to their own, rather than merely maximizing economic gains from marriage.

Uses of time

The new home economics model fails to recognize leisure as an alternative to both market work and housework. Reuben Gronau (1977) discussed this subject several decades ago, but focused mainly on the dominance of the substitution effect when a person's own wages increase, resulting in less time spent on leisure, while the income effect will dominate when the partner's earnings increase resulting in more time spent on leisure. There are, however, other issues related to leisure that deserve attention. Most important, partners must not only decide who should do which kind of work, but also how much time each should spend on work, and how much leisure each will have. Assuming that most people enjoy their own leisure more than their partner's, this question is likely to be considerably more contentious, for it inevitably involves interpersonal comparisons of utility. An inveterate optimist might assume that the altruistic head of the household gives due weight to his spouse's desire for leisure. Not everyone is an inveterate optimist, however, and a woman might do better to rely on other means to enhance the chances that her husband will do a larger share of housework.

Altruism

The subject of altruism also deserves more general consideration. The selfless head of the household is introduced as a kind of "*deus ex machina*" in this model who assures the equitable division of both responsibilities and benefits within the family.¹⁸ This was a rather convenient solution for economists who, as Theodore Bergstrom (1996) noted, have often found family relationships an embarrassing nuisance because they are accustomed to modeling society as a set of interactions among self-interested individuals. Instead, as long as the family is dominated by a benevolent dictator, bargaining power is not, of course, an issue.

The question arises, however, whether such dictators, should they exist, are entirely benevolent. Is it reasonable to assume that "rational economic man," so dear to the hearts of neoclassical economists, who is concerned only with maximizing his own utility in his dealings with others, will turn from the selfish Mr. Hyde in the larger world into the benevolent Dr. Jekyll inside the family?¹⁹ In recent years, economists who apparently found this an unlikely scenario, have developed a variety of bargaining models that do not rely on this assumption. Actually, Becker thinks of altruism as not being entirely selfless or devoid of calculations involving the individual's own interests. This is clear when he says "Altruistic parents choose fertility and consumption by maximizing a dynastic utility function. The maximization implies an arbitrage condition for consumption across generations, and equality between the benefit from an extra child and the child-rearing cost" (Becker 1988: 1). Thus there is a substantial literature by economists who find this split personality scenario to be unlikely, and have developed a variety of bargaining models that do not rely on this assumption.²⁰ Cheryl Doss explores the application of bargaining models to the family in chapter 3 in this volume.

Interdependence

As already mentioned, specialization is often considered desirable not only because it is thought to be efficient, but also because it is believed to result in interdependence and hence would presumably reduce the divorce rate. In truth, however, specialization does not so much lead to interdependence as it makes the full-time homemaker dependent on the wage earner. If a couple divorced, the non-employed wife could not expect to be able to earn an adequate income, nor can she count on finding another wage earner to support her. This is all the more true if she is middle aged or older, because most men consider such women less attractive than younger ones, perhaps in part because they are no longer able to bear children. Men, on the other hand, are considerably more likely to remarry quickly than are women, and even among those who do not, all but the very poor can afford to hire some help to replace the services of the homemaker. Nor are older men at a special disadvantage. The great majority can still father children, their earnings are often at a peak, and furthermore, in that age group women substantially outnumber men. Thus, men are far less likely to face

serious problems in case of dissolution of the marriage, and consequently have substantially more bargaining power if they are willing to use it as a threat. Generous alimony awards and strict enforcement of payments would tend to level the playing field, but neither of these appears to be common. The fact that even so many housewives seek a divorce is evidence that they prefer a divorce on unfavorable terms to what they apparently consider an unsatisfactory marriage. It would, therefore, clearly be preferable to reduce the divorce rate by finding ways to make marriages better, rather than by making divorce more difficult.²¹

Policy Implications

Why, after all these years – Becker's first paper on marriage appeared in 1973 – does his work on the family continue to inspire such strong feelings, positive and negative? On the one side are his disciples who admire his originality, his competence, and his success in applying economic analysis to new areas of human behavior.²² On the other side are the critics who are chagrined that Becker uses his considerable talents and ingenuity to demonstrate that the traditional family, a flawed institution at best, and one that is clearly not well suited to present day conditions, is efficient and serves everyone's best interests. Passion was added to the debate because, although both sides have produced a voluminous literature ever since Becker first published *A Theory of the Allocation of Time* (1965), for the most part neither Becker himself, nor his disciples have as much as acknowledged the questions and objections raised by feminist economists.²³ Nor have the new home economists taken much notice as to what extent the real world increasingly deviates from their models. Thus for instance, although women, who are (or plan to be) full-time homemakers all their married lives while they and their children are supported and protected by the benevolent head of the family, have virtually become an endangered species, they continue to populate the neoclassical literature. Inevitably, this leaves the critics thoroughly frustrated.²⁴

The main reason for this frustration, however, is that the views of the two groups differ radically concerning policies. As Bergmann (1995: 141) pointed out, Becker's "kind of theorizing leads, as does almost all neoclassical theory, to a conclusion that the institutions depicted are benign, and that government intervention would be useless at best and probably harmful." In other words, while feminists see the traditional family as a major obstacle in the way of movement toward greater gender equality, members of the Becker school continue to see its preservation not as the problem but as the solution. As long as this is the case, the clash between these two groups is inevitable. The remainder of this chapter outlines some of the major policy reforms advocated by feminist economists.

1. All public support for the needy should go to individual adults,²⁵ not families. This will not only result in a considerably different distribution of resources within

families,²⁶ but will also obviate problems concerning inequities between people who live in families, as opposed to those who live in households that are not recognized as families.

2. Tax inequities between one-earner and two-earner couples should be remedied. At present, families with a full-time homemaker have a substantial advantage as compared to those where both spouses are employed, because they need not pay taxes on the real income produced at home. Such preferential treatment not only fails to satisfy the generally accepted norms of "horizontal equity," but also provides a substantial incentive to keep the secondary wage earner, usually the wife, out of the labor market. This is especially true if her potential earnings are rather low, but are nonetheless taxed at the marginal rate that applies to the husband's earnings. Yet, this issue has received virtually no attention. It is admittedly difficult to determine the value of home production,²⁷ but the main reason for not even trying to solve this problem most likely is the continued high regard many people have for the traditional family.²⁸

3. The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), a refundable tax credit based on household earnings, mainly intended to benefit low-income families, raises similar issues. In 2000, a family with two children and earnings of less than \$9,720, was subsidized at the rate of 40 percent, but the subsidy declined with rising income, and was fully phased out at \$31,152. This program has been widely acclaimed as helping the poor, presumably without reducing their incentive to work in the labor market. Yet, it causes some secondary earners to leave the labor force because the additional earnings often place the family's income in the range where the credit is gradually phased out. This problem also would be remedied if refunds were based on individual rather than family earnings.

4. Except for leaves of very limited duration for childbirth, both parents should be entitled to all other leaves for infant and childcare. Further, in order to provide maximum incentive for the father to take his share, the time he is entitled to should not be transferable. To the extent that this works and also creates stronger attachments between fathers and their children, this approach might even have effects well beyond the duration of the leave.

5. Subsidized childcare for low-income families, perhaps with fees on a sliding scale, depending on the number of children and on the parents' income, would be a way to make more and better childcare available, most notably for children with parents who can not afford adequate care under present conditions. This would be of far more help to two-earner couples with low incomes than tax deductions, which are most helpful to couples in higher tax brackets. For a further discussion of the effects of childcare subsidies, see chapter 8 in this volume by Jean Kimmel.

These policies, in addition to the advantages already mentioned, would officially endorse the egalitarian view that fathers can and should take on their share of domestic responsibilities, and would amount to putting an official stamp of approval of both

parents working for pay. Because this would be an important step toward breaking the hold of the patriarchal traditions, many neoclassical economists oppose, and most feminists support these policies. As long as these ideological differences remain, Beckerians are likely to continue developing their models, whether they are relevant to the real world or not, and feminist economists will continue to attack them, whether or not mainstream economists pay any attention to them.

NOTES

- 1 This critique of Becker's model of the family draws heavily on Ferber and Birnbaum (1977).
- 2 His earlier work on allocation of time (Becker 1965) and on marriage (Becker 1973 and 1974) laid the groundwork. A later "enlarged edition" of the Treatise, published in 1991, includes some discussion of more recent contributions by other scholars as well as responses to some criticisms of his work. The fundamental approach, however, has remained the same.
- 3 Kyrk also studied the family in a broader context, but her own work largely focused on consumption (see Kyrk 1923, 1953).
- 4 This is in sharp contrast to the fact that both Milton Friedman and Franco Modigliani (the latter in his Nobel address) acknowledged Reid's contribution to their life cycle model and permanent income hypothesis.
- 5 Non-economists, particularly, are often taken aback by the term "marriage market." On the other hand it may be the close analogy with the market economy that has made this model so attractive to many economists.
- 6 In fact, the male breadwinner, female homemaker family came into existence relatively late in history, and was never universal in all societies, or among all classes in any society.
- 7 Humphries (1999: 516) puts it more strongly than that: "in the late twentieth century [the traditional family] is more than creaking. It is falling off its hinges! Increasingly, those activities that the family traditionally coordinated take place outside it."
- 8 This was pointed out many years ago by Sawhill (1977) and her view has never been adequately refuted.
- 9 The consensus model was proposed earlier by Samuelson 1956.
- 10 Just in case there is someone in the family who is selfish and fails to act in everyone's best interest, Becker introduces the "rotten kid theorem." This demonstrates that the altruist can adjust transfers of income to other family members so as to remove all incentives for even the "rotten kid" to behave selfishly.
- 11 Friedman (1953) argued that it does not matter if assumptions are unrealistic, as long as they generate satisfactory predictions, but as Kuhn (1970) pointed out, this is not convincing when the same results may be consistent with more than one theoretical construction. Further, Solow (1956) suggested that when theoretical results are directly derived from a crucial assumption, that assumption should be reasonably realistic.
- 12 Interestingly, Marxian economists, who share few other views with members of the neoclassical school, have few differences with them concerning the family, which they also see as an almost wholly cooperative unit.

- 13 Even a casual review of the relevant anthropological literature leaves no doubt that in many societies women produced much or most food and clothing, and participated in providing shelter for themselves and their families.
- 14 This assumption is not entirely realistic in economically advanced countries, but less so in many developing countries, most notably Africa, where kinship structures and household forms are particularly diverse (Blumberg 1986).
- 15 An exception to this is when Becker (1981) claims that because [men's and women's] time is complementary in sexual enjoyment and the production of children households with men and women are more efficient than those with only one sex, and that this is the reason why there is less sexual division of labor in homosexual households. As Badgett (1995), however, points out, not only can sexual pleasure be produced by individuals of the same sex, but lesbians can produce children by obtaining sperm. Further, homosexual relationships are more efficient for couples who do not want any children and, arguably, for those who want only one or two.
- 16 This is, of course, an assumption shared by neoclassical economics in general, but it is perhaps particularly inappropriate in this context. For instance, Becker even assumes that the number of children couples have to be the result of rational decisions, in spite of overwhelming evidence of large numbers of unplanned pregnancies.
- 17 This is not surprising in light of the fact that Bird and Ross (1993) found that unpaid domestic work is more routine, provides less intrinsic gratification and fewer extrinsic rewards, than paid work.
- 18 Interestingly, here again, no question is raised as to just who is included in that "family." Is it only the head's wife and their children? Or does it include members of his birth family, grandparents, uncles and aunts? And what about his wife's family? Further, do most people not have some friends who are closer to them than many of their relatives? Merely asking these questions is sufficient to make clear that this is by no means a simple issue.
- 19 In fact, there is considerable evidence that it is the wives rather than husbands who most often are the altruists. For instance, they tend to spend a larger share of their income on their children's nutrition and education than their husbands do (Blumberg 1988; Lundberg and Pollak 1996; and Thomas 1990). Also, Kumar (1977) specifically found that in Kerala, India, a child's nutritional level was correlated positively with the mother's but not with the father's income. In addition, Sen (1992; 1993) showed that women and men do not have the same access to health care and nutritious food within families. During famines in India women had to become sicker before they were taken to the hospital and they were more likely to die after being taken there. Women were also given less adequate supplies of food.
- 20 For an excellent review of this literature see Lundberg and Pollak (1996).
- 21 It is possible that the recent modest decline in the divorce rate is the result of the growing number of more egalitarian marriages being more satisfactory, or at least that husbands are more likely to be resigned to such arrangements.
- 22 It has, however, also been suggested that some of Becker's admirers may be attracted by "his validation of sexist assumptions and... the pro-market anti-interventionist flavor of many of his conclusions" (Woolley 1996: 117).
- 23 For example, in the nineteen pages of bibliography in Becker's *Treatise* (1981), there is not a single reference to a scholar who has been critical of the author's work. A relatively recent

- exception to this is that in his Nobel lecture (1993: 297) he claimed that "Contrary to allegations in many attacks on the economic approach to the gender division of labor (see, for example Boserup 1987), this analysis does not try to weight the relative importance of biology and discrimination." Actually, Becker is right about that. The problem is not that Becker has tried to determine the relative importance of biology and discrimination, but rather that he simply ignored discrimination as a cause of the domestic division of labor.
- 24 In addition, as Woolley (1996) points out, Becker and his followers have made gratuitously offensive and needlessly provocative statements. Two of the examples she provides are sufficient to illustrate her point. Girls who are oriented toward market work rather than housework are described as "deviant" (Becker 1991: 40). Also, we are told that "the average divorced person can be presumed to be more quarrelsome and in other ways less pleasant than the average person remaining married" (Becker 1981: 339).
- 25 Support for children would go to their adult guardians.
- 26 As already noted, there is evidence that who within the family receives welfare payments makes a considerable difference (Lundberg and Pollak 1996).
- 27 Both the opportunity cost and the market cost approach present problems; nonetheless in recent years a growing number of countries are providing estimates of the value of home production in their data on national product. Further, it is surely reasonable to assume that almost any estimate would be more accurate than, in effect, assuming that it has no value.
- 28 Interestingly, the higher taxes two individuals with relatively equal earnings have to pay when they are married rather than single, a burden that falls most heavily on high income couples, has received a great deal of attention. As of the beginning of the year 2001, Congress was hard at work trying to remedy this situation.

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