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# **How mother's economic activities and empowerment affect early childhood care and education (ECCE) for boys and girls: A theory-guided exploration across history, cultures and societies**

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# HOW MOTHER'S ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES AND EMPOWERMENT AFFECT EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION (ECCE) FOR BOYS AND GIRLS: A Theory-Guided Exploration across History, Cultures and Societies

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## I. INTRODUCTION.

Mao Tse Tung was known to say, “Give me the children before the age of seven.” He was talking about making them into model revolutionary socialists. Although the burgeoning field of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) has no links to Mao or his radicalism, the same principles apply: Working with children 0-7 can profoundly affect their development and destiny. Indeed, empirical research, mostly in advanced industrial countries, finds more and more advantages to ECCE programs for children of pre-primary school age. Concomitantly, the focus of ECCE is expanding to encompass more aspects of children’s well-being and development, and its geographic reach is extending into a growing list of “Majority World” nations. But, I argue, there remain two hitherto ignored blind spots – both linked to gender – that must be taken into account in order for ECCE initiatives to have as beneficial an impact on girls as on boys in the poor developing countries where they are now spreading.

First, some background: ECCE was born in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century in the wealthy industrial countries of the “Minority World.” Originally, its aims were narrow: enriched development for the children of the affluent classes, and protective services for neglected children and those of poor working mothers (Kamerman 2005:9). But in recent years, ECCE has grown more comprehensive in two ways. On the one hand, it has come to incorporate the child’s nutrition, health, survival and cognitive development, as well as education; in fact, this is how “comprehensive ECCE” is defined by the United Nations’ Education for All (EFA) initiatives. On the other hand, more programs are being launched in the world’s generally resource-strapped developing countries. Now, attention to ECCE has grown to the point where it has been chosen as the topic of the UN’s 2007 EFA Global Monitoring Report (EFAREP/BOARD6/6).<sup>1</sup>

But that attention has not, to this point, extended to: (1) the mother’s economic activities and economic empowerment, and (2) the possibility that mother’s economic position affects ECCE in a gender-differentiated way for sons and daughters.

This monograph aims at filling this gap in the approach to ECCE. Specifically, I suggest that the higher a mother’s contribution and control of resources, the more likely that ECCE outcomes will be positive for her daughters as well as her sons, whereas a mother’s low economic position can negatively affect her children’s ECCE, especially the well-being of her daughters.

Furthermore, I propose that we can find patterns that will permit a less “Euro-American-centric” approach to ECCE. Knowing more about mothers’ economic position and power in different types of societies and how these relate to sons and daughters’ welfare and development should help assure more culturally congruent and affordable programs as ECCE “goes global.” Toward that end, this monograph uses a broad cross-historical, cross-cultural and cross-societal approach. I suggest that looking at ECCE in different types of societies through “the lens of gender” also provides a unique value added for the 2007 EFA report. I propose to do this in a theory-guided manner.

But first a cautionary note on the term ECCE: although in the historical, cross-cultural discussions in Chapters II and III it seems more accurate to call it “‘child-rearing,’ or ‘socialization’ for young children 0-6/7,” I continue to use the acronym ECCE for reasons of consistency and brevity.

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<sup>1</sup> As a matter of fact, Goal 1 of the EFA is “expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children.”

## A. Mother's Economic Position and Power as Factors in ECCE

Let me preview my argument and my theories. I begin with the *overarching hypothesis* that two aspects of *mother's economic position* are especially relevant with respect to ECCE: (1) **participation in key productive activities**, and (2) **control of economic resources**, which is my definition of **relative economic empowerment** (compared with counterpart men). These two aspects – work and economic power – are distinct, both theoretically and empirically. Theoretically, I view relative control of economic resources (i.e., economic power) as the main (although not the sole) variable affecting the level of gender equality/inequality in a human group. But I also argue that “mere work” in production, even if these are important productive activities, has no significant impact on gender equality. Consider the difference between those who control the means and fruits of production in a society and groups such as peasants, workers, slaves, etc., who carry out virtually all the main productive activities in the society yet derive few benefits and, typically, get negligible (if any) power from their labor.

In my theory, I also posit that with greater economic power, one gains greater control of a series of “life options” that occur in all human societies. Among these “life options” are relative male/female household power with respect to decision-making and overall leadership. I argue, however, that work in economic activities that does not result in control of economic resources will not enhance one's position vis-à-vis life options, including those within the household/family.<sup>2</sup>

At this point, let me present an abbreviated but more formal version of relevant hypotheses from my two theories. These are drawn from my general theory of gender stratification (e.g., Blumberg 1978, 1984, 1991, 1998, 2001a, 2004a) and my theory of gender and development (e.g., Blumberg 1988, 1989a, 1989b, 1995, 2001b, 2005a). Below, I will adapt them to ECCE concerns where appropriate.

- To reiterate, my central hypothesis is that the single most important – although far from the only – variable affecting the level of gender equality is relative control of economic resources by males vs. females at a variety of “nested” levels ranging from the macro (the state) to the micro (the family).<sup>3</sup>
- Women's work in production is a generally necessary but insufficient precondition to gain control of economic resources and achieve a relatively high level of economic power (Blumberg 1984:55).
- Under certain conditions, “mere work” can be transformed into control of economic resources. Two of the factors that help women translate non-resource-producing work into economic power include:
  1. A high level of what I term “strategic indispensability” (Blumberg 1984:56-62) as a labor force; this is discussed below.
  2. The extent to which the kinship system advantages them:
    - a. The most important advantage is inheritance  $\geq$  that of men;
    - b. The second most important advantage is living near/with female kin.
- Two kinds of asymmetry also affect economic power:
  - One obtains more clout from control of surplus than bare subsistence (because one has more degrees of freedom in allocating surplus; this is one reason why poor women, who often

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<sup>2</sup> Economists Meena Acharya and Lynn Bennett's important random sample survey of eight villages in Nepal (1981, 1982, 1983) found that women's unpaid farm work – even when they provided more than half the productive labor in the family's low resource subsistence farming – brought them no increase in power or “voice and vote” in household decisions. Only those women who earned and controlled income had increased overall power and say in decision-making (most of this income came from trading; hours of housework/child-care proved negatively linked to household clout).

<sup>3</sup> I've found strong support for this in many countries (I've worked in > 40); conversely, in no country have I ever found a case where women who controlled income proved more subjugated than counterpart women who did not. Others' research also provides empirical support for the hypotheses presented here, but space precludes inclusion.

- contribute more of household subsistence than better-off counterparts, get so little leverage from it); and
- Unless cushioned by strong ideological factors, women’s position falls rapidly when their economic power drops; whereas increased power leads to a slower, less linear rise.<sup>4</sup>
- The consequences of greater economic power, once consolidated, include the following dependent variables:
    1. >influence over other types of power (e.g., > political clout; < likelihood of being a victim of domestic violence – although the more a man feels threatened by a rise in a woman’s relative economic power, the more likely a short-term spike in violence);
    2. > self-confidence, and
    3. > control over “life options” – aspects of one’s destiny known to exist in all human societies, including marriage, divorce, sexuality, fertility, freedom of movement, access to education, and household power.
      - Household power, in turn, includes greater say in decisions involving: (i) *domestic well-being* (e.g., when is a toddler sick enough to be taken to the clinic, and how does this differ for sons and daughters); (ii) *economic matters*, and (iii) *fertility control*.
    4. Finally, greater economic power is linked with more say in household/community land use decisions and general influence in community affairs.

One additional hypothesis from my theory of gender and development merits highlighting here because of its obvious ECCE implications:

- Men and women with provider responsibilities tend to spend income differently; specifically, **women tend to spend income under their control more single-mindedly on their children’s human capital – nutrition, education, health and survival** – whereas men’s spending tends to involve a wider array of expenditures, with more devoted to personal consumption.

## B. Organization of the Report

The remainder of this monograph is organized in four more chapters as follows: In *Chapter II*, the longest, I take the reader on an excursion through human evolutionary history from our foraging (hunting-gathering) ancestors to the present day, examining the intersection of gender, family, economy and ECCE in the principal types of societies that comprise the “**historical mainline**” prior to the emergence of industrial societies: (1) **foraging**, and various types of (2) **horticultural** and (3) **agrarian** societies. This approach is derived from the work of Gerhard Lenski (1966, 2005; Nolan and Lenski 2004), although we employ different terminology.<sup>5</sup> In short, Chapter II presents the patterns linking women’s economic activities, power and position in the family/kinship system to ECCE outcomes over the course of human history from foraging to the eve of industrial societies.

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<sup>4</sup> But achievement of economic power is further complicated by societal and cultural factors, including **macro- and micro-level “discount factors”** (Blumberg 1991; Blumberg and Coleman 1989). At the macro level of the state, the discount factors involve the extent to which the political, legal, religious, ideological and economic systems disadvantage women relative to men (the macro-level discount is much smaller in Sweden than, say, Saudi Arabia). At the level of the couple, micro-level discounts can be negative or positive for either partner – subtracting or adding metaphorical pennies’ worth of economic power from/to each dollar brought into the household by the man vs. the woman. Micro-level discount factors include each partner’s relative (a) gender ideology, (b) commitment (the discount is positive for the less committed partner), (c) attractiveness, (d) dependence on the other’s income and (e) bargaining assertiveness. (Note: macro-levels influence micro-levels more than the reverse.)

<sup>5</sup> He calls the types of society “modes of subsistence” and I discuss them as “techno-economic bases.” He also considers three other ecologically specialized “modes of subsistence,” herding, fishing and maritime societies. But treating these societal types is beyond the scope of the present report. I discuss the historical mainline only.

The next two chapters are relatively short in comparison with Chapter I. In *Chapter III*, I bring the discussion of horticultural and agrarian societies into the present day where, as “industrializing horticultural” and “industrializing agrarian” societies (Nolan and Lenski 2004), they comprise the “Majority World.” Nsamenang (n.d.) argues that ECCE programs from the affluent “Minority World” may not be relevant to the situation of poorer “Majority World” countries that have differing problems, traditions and resource constraints. He argues instead for a “science based ECCE founded on research on...local childhoods” in “Majority World” nations. This chapter presents some illustrative data that should be useful toward that end.

*Chapter IV* presents a short overview of extant ECCE efforts and policies in a variety of contexts, including European countries, the U.S., the ex-socialist countries of Europe, and a few examples of ECCE programs and policies in developing countries. The purpose is not a comprehensive effort to “cover the waterfront.” Rather, it is to evaluate some potential models that may or may not be suitable for broad adoption in the poor countries of the developing world. The discussion highlights the difficulties “Majority World” countries might have in using “Minority World” approaches for their own ECCE efforts and looks to see if some local initiatives have fared better than others.

Finally, *Chapter V* draws some conclusions from the preceding chapters. These concern (1) the importance of mothers’ economic empowerment and its impact on ECCE, as well as (2) a discussion of what constitute the most relevant characteristics for designing locally congruent and gender equitable ECCE policies and programs for various “Majority World” settings. These traits are based not only on Chapters I-III but also on the analysis of the different models presented in Chapter IV. Much of the discussion in Chapter V explicates my proposal that ECCE and microfinance efforts be linked in “Majority World” countries. This is apparently a new suggestion. It could simultaneously strengthen a woman’s economic power, and, thereby, her “voice and vote” in household decisions about promoting the comprehensive ECCE of her sons and daughters, while providing her with additional income she, herself, could devote to ECCE outcomes of her girls as well as her boys.

## II. MOTHERS' ECONOMIC POSITION AND ECCE ACROSS TIME, SPACE AND TECHNO-ECONOMIC BASE

### A. Introduction and a Note about the Timeline

One of the big surprises in human history is the very small number of “modes of subsistence,” or, as I term them, “techno-economic bases” that have characterized our past and present on this planet. Defining “techno-economic base” as the predominant way in which a group/society “makes its living” off the Earth, I would agree with Lenski that the “evolutionary mainline” for pre-industrial societies encompasses (1) hunting-gathering (often termed “foraging”), (2) horticultural and (3) agrarian adaptations. My way of dividing sub-types of foraging, horticultural and agrarian societies, however, differs from Lenski, because I attempt to take family and gender into account in my category system.

Foraging, the first category, is not subdivided by Lenski. But I follow Kelly (1995) and Fry (2006) in emphasizing the difference between nomadic hunting-gathering and more complex hunting-gathering. In a nutshell, the nomadic groups are more egalitarian – including gender egalitarian – as well as more peaceful. Overall, foraging has constituted the way our ancestors survived for all but ~1% of the 6-7 million years that hominids have roamed our world. It even accounts for all but a small fraction of how our own type of humans, *homo sapiens sapiens*, has lived since we emerged in Africa ~150,000-200,000 years ago. Felicitously, both archeological evidence and direct observation of the dwindling numbers of foraging bands that survived into the last several centuries tend to converge. The following description is drawn from both sources (see also Blumberg 1978, 1998, 2001a, 2002a and 2004a; Nolan and Lenski 2004). Note that the topic categories I use in my foraging discussion will be repeated for horticultural and agrarian societies.

Note also that most of the historical discussion in Chapter II is written in the “ethnographic present.” This is a convention in much of this sort of writing, especially when focusing on surviving groups studied over the last several centuries (Nolan and Lenski 2004:87). But supporting evidence also comes from the archeological record. Before we look at foragers, let us situate them historically in a four-era timeline encompassing the “evolutionary mainline”:

1. Nolan and Lenski (2004:69) characterize the *hunting and gathering (foraging) era* as stretching from human beginnings to about 10,000 years ago; by this time hoe or digging stick-based *horticultural societies* had become well-established in the Middle East.
2. The *horticultural era* extends from about 10,000 to 5,000 years ago, by which date the *plow*, the distinguishing characteristic of *agrarian societies*, had become well-established in the Middle East (where it was invented between 5,000-6,000 years ago).
3. The *agrarian era* ranges from about 5,000 years ago until around 1800 CE, when England became the world's first *industrial society*, getting less of its living from merely “living off the planet” than from transforming it through fabricating and similar processes.
4. The *industrial era* dates from about 1800, although the Industrial Revolution was in full swing in England by 1750 and some (e.g., Toffler 1990) argue that we already are moving toward a new “*information era*” in the context of today's globalized world.

The remainder of Chapter II deals with the societies of the first three historical eras. Although the story of what happened to horticultural and agrarian based societies in today's world is the focus of Chapter III, I sometimes jump the gun and make a comment in Chapter II about the contemporary situation of a group whose traditional way of life I'm discussing. It is worth noting, too, that most of the data about horticultural and agrarian societies in Chapter II actually were collected during the industrial era from groups still living by horticulture or agriculture.

### B. Our Foraging Heritage through the Lens of Gender and ECCE

Despite the fact that our stereotype about our hominid ancestors tends to focus on “Man the Hunter,” as Lee and DeVore titled their influential 1968 volume, the data they themselves present indicate that in the great majority of foraging groups, **gathering** typically provides 60-80% of the diet, except for bands living in the frozen Arctic where there are no plants to be collected during the long, cold winter (Lee and DeVore 1968; Blumberg 1978:6). The caloric predominance of gathering will prove important in linking gender and ECCE in foraging groups. Here is a summary, written in the “ethnographic present,” of some traits of simple, nomadic foragers<sup>6</sup> that are germane for this report:

- Foragers are overwhelmingly **nomadic** for at least part of the year.
- They live in small bands, averaging 25-50, and survive by “seasonality and scheduling,” moving in a timely manner to where specific seasonal resources may be found.
- Foraging entails different members of the band going off in small groups or individually to seek food, and then returning with most of their bounty to what may be termed the “GHQ” (General Headquarters) – the campsite or shelter where the band happens to be on a given day.
- Exceptions involve communal hunting or gathering for a concentrated resource that is available only occasionally or for a delimited period of time. For example, Turnbull (1962) studied Mbuti pygmies of the Ituri forest in the Congo who hunt elephants communally, using nets.
- **Sharing** is one of the few “cultural universals” found among all known foraging peoples, even under conditions of extreme privation (Turnbull 1972)<sup>7</sup>: the reason is especially compelling for the products of the hunt, which tend to involve fluctuating and sometimes scarce resources. This is precisely the situation that is most likely to generate sharing as a risk-spreading strategy. In fact, the impact of sharing can be described by the formula for the damping of a sine curve (Lombardi 1973) – by sharing when you have surplus, you can draw on others’ surplus to fill in the hole when you fall below the survival line.<sup>8</sup>
- Adding together **nomadism** and **sharing** results in **egalitarianism**, another very prevalent trait among foragers. (If you share what you have when you have extra and you move frequently enough to consider possessions a pain in the neck (and back) rather than desirable objects of accumulation, you end up with a high level of egalitarianism.)

With this basic description, let us turn to how the genders fare. This is done in three topic categories, the *gender division of labor*, the *gender division of resources*, and *gender, family and kinship*.

1. Gender division of labor. Communal endeavors aside, women do most of the gathering and men do most (or, sometimes, all) of the hunting (O’Kelly and Carney 1986). Such a gender division of labor is influenced by the fact that **gathering is more compatible with simultaneous child-care responsibilities** than hunting (in Blumberg 1984 I posit such compatibility as one of two key factors in the gender division of labor). My calculations based on the 1,170-society computer version of Murdock’s *Ethnographic Atlas* (1967) found women to be the primary labor force in 86% of the 85 societies whose main activity was gathering (Blumberg 1984:28). Nevertheless, women and men’s contributions tend to balance out in foragers’ perception. The reason for this is that although gathering is more reliable than hunting, foragers tend to place greater value on the rich calories of animal protein and fat (they usually have words not only for hunger but also for “meatlessness”).

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<sup>6</sup> Kelly 1995 and Fry 2006 distinguish *nomadic* foraging bands from more *complex*, less egalitarian foragers who had begun to raise some crops, do some herding, hunt from horses, and/or rely on fishing. Most foragers in history seem to have been the more egalitarian and peaceful nomadic type. Fry 2006:103 writes that of 35 contemporary foraging groups in the 186-society Standard Cross-Cultural Sample (Murdock and White 1969), 21 (60%) are nomadic, the type summarized here.

<sup>7</sup> Turnbull also studied the Ik, a foraging group on the Uganda-Kenya-Sudan border, shortly after much of their habitat had been fenced into a national park/reserve, putting it off limits, and just as a devastating drought set in. In the two years of hardship, starvation and death he described, when people were seen to bring food into the camp they still were expected to share it. Although people tried to evade being seen, the norm of sharing remained intact.

<sup>8</sup> When the shortfall is too great to be filled by sharing, foragers had to migrate or die (the Ik, surrounded by farming/herding peoples, lacked a viable migration option).



Furthermore, I propose, though we can't predict the relative equality of a group just by knowing their importance as producers, their status is enhanced if they and their production have **high strategic indispensability** (Blumberg 1984). Women's "strategic indispensability" as a labor force, I posit, is increased by the extent that they and their activities are important to the larger group/economy and not easily replaced – i.e., have "high substitution costs at the margin."<sup>9</sup> This is certainly true for female foragers.

2. Gender division of resources. In terms of my general theory of gender stratification, the pattern of **control of economic resources**, or relative economic power, is even more important than the gender division of labor. Here, foragers tend to have approximate equality. Concerning the means of production, either gender can produce what they need – digging sticks and collecting baskets for gathering, bows and arrows and/or spears for hunting. With respect to the fruits of production, since the products of the hunt are usually less reliable but generally more valued, sharing rules tend to be more strictly delineated and enforced for what has been hunted (by men) than for what has been gathered (by women). So if men gain more prestige from hunting, women gain a little more control of the resources they provide: It tends to even out.

3. Gender, family and kinship. The family/kinship system can range from quite advantageous to very disadvantageous for women in any human group. In the case of foragers, family/kinship patterns mainly range from neutral to quite positive, and serve to further under gird relative gender equality. **Families** tend to be **small and predominantly nuclear** and **kinship** tends to be similar to the system in modern industrial societies – **bilateral**, with mother and father's side kin given equal weight. Bilateral kinship is generally neutral vis-à-vis gender equality, although it can tilt somewhat in either direction (see below).

In summary, simple, nomadic foragers have no major structural factors that work to female disadvantage and it should not surprise us that these societies average closer to what I term the "50-50 line of gender equality" than any of the other major techno-economic bases.

Here I reproduce Figure 1 of Blumberg 2004a:281. It describes the overall patterns of gender stratification in the four techno-economic bases constituting the historical mainline: hunting-gathering (foraging), horticultural, agrarian and industrial. The level of gender stratification, ranging from equality down to extreme patriarchy, is on the y-axis. The x-axis shows the four major techno-economic bases. The figure, while not precise, gives a visual overview of the average and range of gender stratification in each of the four types. Dots represent societies included in the major ethnographic data bases, such as the Ethnographic Atlas (EA, Murdock 1967) and the Standard Cross-Cultural Sample (SCCS, Murdock and White 1969). There is one important caveat, however. Gender stratification never has been coded as a variable for either data base in its entirety. Since, however, this issue has been studied in some of the societies included in the EA and/or SCCS, those findings can serve as a basis of approximation. Accordingly, the figure is merely a rough "guesstimate" of gender stratification in the four major techno-economic bases. There is another caveat as well: the figure may understate the level of gender equality among foragers. Note that the pattern for hunting-gathering includes both simple, *nomadic* foragers, who are quite gender egalitarian (their dots are at or near the "50-50 line" of gender equality), and, farther down the y-axis, the more complex hunter-gatherers. These include Australian Aboriginals, some Arctic peoples, mounted hunters, etc.; these groups tend to be less gender egalitarian. But the figure was drawn before Fry 2006 published his data that 60% (21/35) of foragers in the SCCS are of the simple, nomadic, more gender-egalitarian type. Therefore, the reader should mentally increase the proportion of dots closer to the 50-50 line for foragers: they apparently are more egalitarian than I depicted in 2004.

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**Figure 1 about here**  
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<sup>9</sup> I also hypothesize that a group's strategic indispensability in societies more complex than foraging is further enhanced by its ability to: (a) control technical expertise, (b) work independently of dominant group supervision, (c) organize on its own behalf, and (d) be competed over by more than one group needing its services (Blumberg 1984).

Let us also use Figure 1 to preview horticultural and agrarian societies. Looking at **horticultural** (hoe-based) societies, we see a great deal of variation. Some groups, such as the colonial-era Iroquois (see, e.g., Brown 1975), seem to sit on the “50-50 line.” (Iroquois women controlled the economy “lock, stock and barrel,” and influenced the political and military spheres, which were run by men.) Based on my experience working in over 40 countries, I suggest that the average corresponds to the most common societal type in sub-Saharan Africa: patrilineal/patrilocal groups where women are the main farmers and also have some economic autonomy (raising certain own-account crops; trading in the market on their own account), but are disadvantaged in inheritance patterns (Blumberg 2004b). Toward the high-patriarchy bottom axis, we find a group of societies that I call “warrior complex” (Blumberg 1978) and Divale and Harris (1976) refer to as “male supremacist” (see also Collins 1971 and Collins et al. 1993).

Next, we see that most **agrarian** (plow-based) societies are farther down the y-axis, closer to the bottom with respect to gender equality. But, as discussed below, there are a number of agrarian “outliers” located near the “50-50 line,” almost all of them, I propose, involving local-level groups in Southeast Asia that practice irrigated rice cultivation.

One last point before turning to foragers: research also has linked type of subsistence economy to child socialization patterns since the 1950s (e.g., Barry, Bacon and Child 1957; Barry, Child and Bacon 1959).

#### 4. The ECCE situation among foragers. Here we consider the following variables:

- (a) need for child labor;
- (b) fertility patterns;
- (c) caretaking patterns vis-à-vis children by mothers, fathers, grandmothers, older siblings and other kin;
- (d) socialization patterns for:
  - (i) key values and attributes, (ii) “on the job training” (OJT) for future production, including how these differ by gender, as well as (iii) child training techniques, and
- (e) boy-girl differences – including relative advantage/disadvantage – in the previous variables.

These same variables will be considered for horticultural and agrarian societies, too.

- a. Need for child labor. Without question, children are permitted to enjoy a long childhood and adolescence among foragers, without fixed responsibilities for helping to make a living. This has to do with the remarkable productivity of prime-age adult males and females in such societies, who have been found to produce enough to feed themselves, children and people over 60 (the latter two groups don’t have the obligation to contribute to subsistence except as they may choose). Lee’s famous input-output analysis of the !Kung Bushmen of the Kalahari desert found that the 65% of the population who were prime-age adults worked an average of under 20 hours a week in one of the world’s most desolate habitats to provide for the whole group – both men and women went out about 1-1/2 to 3-1/2 times a week in order to make a living for the band (Lee 1969; Blumberg 1978).
- b. Fertility. Fertility patterns generally work out as a plus for women, who emphatically are not “baby-making machines” among hunters-gatherers.
  - o Foraging women tend to have their babies 4-5 years apart (Whiting 1968:248-249), due to a combination of “passive” and “active” means. Passive means include nursing children on demand until about age 4 and not introducing supplemental foods for most of a baby’s first year, as well as having low body fat ratios from their nutritious but low-fat diets and highly mobile life as gatherers (Kolata 1974; Frisch 1978; Tyson and Perez 1978; Lee 1979; O’Kelly and Carney 1986); active means include infanticide, abortion and use of plants, herbs, etc. with contraceptive properties (Blumberg 1978:8).
  - o In the foragers’ small bands, women’s fertility is patently valuable – children are few (the average woman raises just over two children to maturity; see Birdsell 1968:237; Whiting

1968:248-249). People can see that their old age security rides on women's ability to reproduce successfully and these children surviving to maturity.<sup>10</sup>

c. Caretaking patterns. Several aspects of caretaking bear special mention:

- First, *mothers are not near-exclusive caretakers* of their own infants and young children. Women's productive activities are important but quite flexible. If a woman wants to go farther afield and doesn't want to bring her youngest, still-nursing child, this is not likely to be a problem. Combining the short, flexible workweek and the long average duration of lactation, (1) there are likely to be other women who have chosen to just hang out in camp on any given day, and (2) there's a high probability that one or more of them will be breastfeeding – and quite willing to fill in (i.e., “lend a breast”) if she doesn't make it back before her child starts fussing.
- Second, *grandparents, especially the mother's mother, have been found to contribute to infant/child health and survival* (Angier 2002), and anthropological evidence from contemporary foragers (Australian aboriginals, !Kung Bushmen, etc.) indicates that the demographic pyramid includes a not insignificant proportion of people over 60 in these bands. Consequently, the chances are that there would be a few grandparents, including mothers' mothers, present, even given the small average band size.
- Third, as emerged during the Harvard study of the !Kung Bushmen of the Kalahari desert directed by Richard B. Lee, *fathering behavior, even vis-à-vis very young children, is generally (surprisingly) nurturant and close*. In fact, more involved fathering is associated with the generally flexible gender division of labor found in more gender-egalitarian societies (see, e.g., Coltrane 1988, 1992; Blumberg 2001a, 2002).
- Fourth, *neither female nor male older siblings tend to have any formal responsibilities for looking after younger siblings*. This is part of the pattern of the long, happy childhoods that are found in foraging societies.

d. Socialization patterns. Here we examine three different aspects.

- i. Key values. Because of the centrality of sharing and the importance of avoiding physical conflict within the small band who are trying to live off nature's bounty rather than transform it – i.e., getting by, rather than getting ahead – contemporary foragers have been found to socialize young children for *generosity, cooperation, harmony and avoidance of physical violence within the band*. (Simple, nomadic foragers tend to be generally peaceful, as documented in Fry 2006.) In addition, because there is little or no authority structure, there is little or no socialization to respect or obey authority and conform to rigid group standards. Rather, children, both male and female, are socialized from an early age for *autonomy and independence* (Blumberg 1978, 1998).
- ii. “OJT.” “On-the-job training” is informal and flexible. From early childhood, boys and girls are educated in both male and female tasks, learning by observation and practice on a non-scheduled, voluntary basis (*ibid.*).
- iii. Techniques for training children. Not surprisingly, from infancy, children are socialized via love, not physical punishment; if a small child misbehaves, a prevalent technique is withdrawal of attention (Whiting 1972; Whiting and Whiting 1973; Whiting and Edwards 1988; Blumberg 1978, 1998).

e. Boy-girl differences in ECCE. Children of both sexes are treated in an equally loving manner. There is no evidence that girls are disadvantaged nutritionally, either in total or protein calories. Nor is there evidence of a generalized pattern among foragers of female-targeted

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<sup>10</sup> There is controversy concerning relative death rates in foraging vs. horticultural vs. agrarian societies. Nolan and Lenski (2004:274 cite sources indicating higher death rates in foraging and horticultural societies than in “relatively prosperous agrarian villages.” But reviewing this literature (and controversy) is beyond the scope of this report.

infanticide, unequal health care, or other measures related to well-being and survival. In addition, the small size of the group means that children of both genders and a fairly wide age range typically interact in a single playgroup – i.e., there is little indication of any age- or sex-grading (Draper 1975). While in the ECCE age range, both boys and girls frequently accompany their mother on gathering excursions, often in the company of other adult women and their children. Somewhat older children’s participation in productive activities is usually both optional and based on their own preferences. Given gender division of labor patterns, boys would probably more frequently join the hunt than their female counterparts, once they were old enough to be judged not likely to disrupt or spoil the pursuit of game.

In sum, the ECCE situation among simple, nomadic foragers is just what you’d expect from such an egalitarian, flexible group. Finally, describing the data on hunters and gatherers is, indeed, relevant to contemporary ECCE concerns, since this seems to be the original template for human patterns, and, additionally, accounts for the lion’s share of our history on Earth, both as hominids and as homo sapiens.

### C. Horticultural Societies through the Lens of Gender and ECCE

When and where? Amazingly, after such a long period of foraging, within a period of ~10,000 years, humans began to cultivate on all of the world’s large land masses wherever there was a “suitable cultigen.” Such cultigens have a number of technical characteristics but all are **genetically plastic**, i.e., they mutate easily so that people were able to “massage” them over time into today’s basic staples. As it happened, every large land mass except Australia had at least one such cultigen: consequently, the Aboriginals of Australia remained foragers for all the 40-60,000 years they lived there prior to the coming of the Europeans (Diamond 1997). Cultivation slowly developed on the other large land masses (mostly independently) by ~7-8,000 years ago. The critical period for its emergence may have begun as early as 18,000-20,000 years ago for some isolated examples (in Africa), but it was around 10,000-14,000 years ago that the pace really began to pick up.

Why? One factor is agreed to by virtually all authorities: **population pressure**. This pressure could be either *internal* (e.g., people in a lush valley surrounded by forbidding geographic barriers; Meyers 1971), or *external* (e.g., when Group A is suffering from a local ecological crash and enters the habitat of Group B; Binford 1971)<sup>11</sup>. Why then? Cohen (1975) calculated that it took until 15,000-20,000 years ago for humans to migrate around the globe until they were at roughly **equal pressure on local carrying capacity**. This means that population density was higher in, say, rich river valleys in the sub-tropics than in frozen Arctic tundra, but both were at similar levels of pressure on their local carrying capacity. Per Cohen, from this point on, people in more and more places might have felt a little pressure to increase and stabilize the food supply to feed their (growing) numbers. Other factors for the rise of cultivation are much more controversial (e.g., the “over-hunting/extinction hypothesis”). Further exploring the origins of cultivation exceeds the scope of the report, but a quick look at “how” and “who” is worthwhile.

How? Initially, cultivation was done with a digging stick and then a hoe. Technically, it was **horticulture**, not **agriculture**. The former comes from the Latin word for *garden* and involves small plots; the latter comes from the Latin word for *field* and is done on large expanses of completely cleared land (Lenski 1966). Most horticultural cultivation is not permanent, but, rather, “shifting cultivation” that involves “slash and burn” techniques. At the end of the dry season, people cut down some of the low-growing plants, bushes, etc., typically leaving the high canopy trees; when the cut vegetation dries out, they do a controlled burn. The nutrients remain in the ashes, providing a first year of high yields and almost no weeds. Within several seasons, weeds often have multiplied to the point that people prefer to clear a new plot and start the cycle over. Horticulture is particularly well-suited for tropical soils because the hoe does not penetrate deep into the ground, and most tropical soils are quite thin, as well as acidic, poor and easily leached. To this day, many tropical areas will support only shifting horticultural

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<sup>11</sup> Fry 2006 argues that sharing, not fighting, would be the more typical response of Group A to the arrival of Group B. Australian Aboriginals have been observed permitting even groups with which they don’t have friendly relations to share their habitat, if requested with proper courtesy. After all, their positions might be reversed the next year.

cultivation because their soils are too thin to take the plow. This has been the case in much of sub-Saharan Africa, and this has had a profound, generally negative, impact on its destiny (Lenski 2005).

Who? Here, again, there is consensus among virtually all authorities: it was the gathering of the **women** rather than the hunting of the men that provided the basis for the development of cultivation (see, e.g., Childe 1964:65-66). This is logical: gathering is harvesting; deliberately planting those cultigens is revolutionary in impact but not such a great departure in practice. This is especially so since it is almost certain that our ancestors long have known what every foraging group studied in recent decades has been found to know: that seeds sprout into plants. After all, these people's livelihood is based on knowing the full growing cycles of everything edible or otherwise economically relevant in their habitat. And to the present day, horticulture is a largely female farming system, the reverse of the rain-fed agrarian male farming systems described below.

Where are they now? Whereas foraging bands survive only in the most remote places where no valuable resources (e.g., uranium) have been discovered, horticultural peoples still are found in several principal locations. The biggest concentration is in a number of **sub-Saharan African** countries, as will be discussed in Chapter III. Two other nation-states, New Guinea and Haiti, remain largely horticultural societies (Nolan and Lenski 2004:296). Elsewhere, some horticulturalists survive as part of larger, industrializing agrarian nations, e.g., some hill/forest tribes in Southeast Asia and India, on many Pacific Islands and in the Amazon lowlands.

1. Gender division of labor. In only about a fifth (or less) of the world's horticultural societies included in the main ethnographic data bases are men the primary labor force (Blumberg 1984). Women presumably developed horticultural cultivation and have continued to be important producers in most of the groups that use this techno-economic base. Men's involvement in farming varies, with hunting still remaining important in many groups. But women's importance as farmers seems to have given them **high strategic indispensability**; in addition, their horticulture is relatively **compatible with simultaneous child-care**. Their small garden plots tend to be located close to home so that the youngest child could be taken or left behind with a caretaker (see below) as convenient. So long as plots are not used for too long, when weeds multiply the workload, workdays tend to be neither lengthy nor day-in, day-out, year-round. Also, women's farming rarely involves either intense concentration or other aspects that might put the child in danger. Historically, the bounty produced mostly by female farmers permitted horticultural societies to become semi-sedentary, settling for some years in a given location.<sup>12</sup> This permitted the rise of *villages*, as well as two technologies people knew about but found inconvenient to exploit in the more nomadic foraging milieu: *pottery* and *weaving*. In most groups, these specialties, too, were predominantly on the female side of the division of labor. But I've been arguing that "work is not enough." To what extent were women able to transform their labor into more economic power in the household and beyond?

2. Gender division of resources. The level of women's relative degree of equality and power seems to depend on the nature of and trends in the kinship and property systems. For the first time, with cultivation, people were able to deliberately accumulate **surplus** for purposes beyond periodic celebrations/festivals and/or winter subsistence in cold climates. A "pyramid of power and inequality" began to emerge in some of these horticultural groups but archeological evidence from a variety of sites on the Eurasian landmass indicates that early horticultural societies more often than not remained largely peaceful and fairly egalitarian, including by gender (Eisler 1987). I have argued that when inequality first began to emerge it did so under conditions of surplus and abundance, not scarcity, and its genesis was in the family/kinship/property system (Blumberg 1978).<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Ultimately, all the nearby plots would have been used up and left to lay fallow and regenerate, causing a "commuting problem" as people had to go farther to reach their gardens. At some point, the village would move unless they had developed some techniques to make cultivation – and hence, settlement – more permanent. One such technique is fertilizing with the manure of domestic animals and this is suspected as the reason some villages in the Middle East and Southwestern Europe were able to establish relatively permanent villages thousands of years ago (Lenski and Lenski 1987:135)

<sup>13</sup> Developing the argument is beyond the scope or space limits of this report.

3. Gender, family and kinship. I have conceptualized “four paths through horticulture” (Blumberg 1978). My approach subdivides horticultural societies differently than Lenski’s schema, which splits them into simple vs. advanced, based on the absence vs. presence of metallurgy. Rather, my categorization starts with the kinship system, which reached its peak of complexity in horticultural societies (*ibid.*). Three of my proposed “four paths” involve the development of varying levels of inequality, as well as some form of unilineal kinship.<sup>14</sup> This means that people choose either a *maternal* or *paternal* ancestor as the founder of their descent group and then trace descent through that person’s gender. In other words, if a female ancestor, descent is *matrilineal*; if a male, it’s *patrilineal*. Two reasons immediately come to mind as to why kinship moved toward greater complexity and unilineal descent:

- With shifting horticulture, every several years or so, people will need a new plot to clear and cultivate. There would not yet be a concept of individual private property but, rather, property that belonged to the group communally. Who is eligible for a new plot, i.e., who is a bona fide member of the group? Bilateral kinship is quite blurry about the outer boundaries of who is vs. is not a relative. But with unilineal kinship, once you choose if it will be extended on the matri or the patri side, you have an easy way of determining who truly belongs and deserves a new plot.
- Moreover, the semi-sedentary nature of horticulture helped bring about the first great population explosion in human history. Whereas highly mobile foragers might kill a baby born “too soon,” while its older sibling was far from being weaned, people who don’t move very often and who have a larger, more assured food supply might let the child live. Over time, this narrows the spacing interval (to an average of 3-4 years) and permits a woman to raise an average of 3-4 children, rather than around 2+. The net result is a larger group that needs more coordination – and kinship is a familiar, initially non-coercive, way of doing so.

It is quite possible that a large proportion of early unilineal kin groups emerging in horticultural societies would have followed the matri-oriented kinship path. After all, women were likely to have been the primary producers in, as well as the initial developers of, horticulture. There is considerable evidence for this “matri path,” as well as legends of peaceful, egalitarian matrifocal eras in many currently patriarchal places, such as China and Japan. A profusion of female religious figurines have been found in many early horticultural sites in diverse parts of the world (ranging from much of Europe (Gimbutas 1989) to the Ecuadorian coast (Gartelmann 1986), indicating, perhaps, goddess worship (Gonsoulin 2005 summarizes a large literature). Others calculate proportions of matrilocality among “incipient horticulturalists” from the data of Murdock’s *Ethnographic Atlas*. My calculations from the 1,170-society version, for example, found about 39% matrilocality among those practicing simple shifting cultivation.

But other developments also were occurring around the same time in history, including periodic desertification (Griffith 2001) and the often-associated invasions of mounted, more warlike herders driven from their homelands by drought. Gimbutas proposes three waves of “Kurgan invaders” who swept down from the north shore of the Black Sea to ravage peaceful, egalitarian “Old Europe” between 4300-2800 BCE (1982, 1989, 1997), although she doesn’t link this to drought. Griffith includes the Kurgans among his numerous and far-flung cases.

Still other groups might have been more interested in maximizing surplus than the typical matri-oriented horticultural group, which would have militated toward patri-oriented unilineal kinship. I argue that there are two main types of these patrilineal/patrilocal systems: the type that became the historical mainline and the variant that resulted in some of the world’s most pronounced gender stratification: “warrior complex” (my term) or “male supremacist complex” societies (Divalde and Harris 1976; Harris 1974, 1977). The “mainline” type of patri-oriented – but non-“warrior complex” – horticultural societies survive primarily in sub-Saharan Africa, as noted above. Specifically, the great majority of horticultural ethnic groups in Africa south of the Sahara are patrilineal/patrilocal and

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<sup>14</sup> The other path, possibly the first chronologically, involves societies that work hard at maintaining egalitarian institutions and practices, such as the Kuikuru of the Amazon Basin studied by Robert Carneiro (1961, 1994): they deliberately under-produced (they could have grown far more abundant quantities of crops) and under-reproduced (they kept their fertility patterns more like foragers).

most of them maintain “female farming” practices. Since this will be the most relevant “path” for ECCE in today’s horticultural groups, let us delve deeper.

- In these patri-oriented mainline groups, women are usually the primary labor force but men are at the top of the corporate kinship system. Many of these men harbor ambitions to rise in the emerging pyramid of power (Blumberg 2004c).
  - What better way than to have a bigger labor force than one’s competitors, i.e., more wives? It is in these groups that we found – and still find – the maximum of what Murdock (1967) terms “**general polygyny**.” This is where more than 20% of unions involve multiple wives, and it is primarily the elites, and kin group leaders, who have a disproportionate number of these extra wives. Not surprisingly, sub-Saharan African countries with patrilineal/patrilocal “female farming” horticultural groups continue to have high prevalence rates for polygyny (United Nations 1987).
  - The other key feature of these societies is that the middle aged men who are the kin group leaders also are in the best position to pay to acquire those extra wives. In fact, these also are societies that had – and still have – the highest incidence of “**brideprice**.” Brideprice is paid by the groom to the wife and her relatives and is found in groups where women are important producers. Clignet (1971) described the impact of polygyny in such societies as “many wives, many powers.” Not only do the leaders of the corporate kin group have more means to pay brideprice, they can use the tantalizing offer of brideprice as bait to lure young followers to their retinue.
  - In short, once a man acquires additional wives, he is well on his way to a leading position in his group. In this manner, the men with plural wives can gain political as well as economic advantage, and without the need to oppress those wives. Since this is a matter of family, they can motivate the wives with visions of raising more surplus, being more generous in any subsequent feasting or gift-giving, and seeing their family gain prestige in the local pecking order: In these groups, generosity is still a key route to prestige and status.

Let us look a bit more at the two other unilineal “paths”: matri-oriented and patri/“warrior complex.”

- The “matri-oriented” path varies in level of gender equality, I argue, based on the extent to which women control the economy, vs. just being the “marker” for reckoning kinship.
  - One of the most famous examples of a thoroughly matri-focused group is the **Iroquois** confederation tribes of colonial times in the U.S. and Canada (Brown 1975). All six tribes that collectively called themselves Iroquois had female inheritance of land rights – the principal asset. Women cultivated, harvested and processed the staple crops but women also stored them. The senior matron of each matrilocal longhouse in which several nuclear families resided controlled access to the stored food. This access was so absolute that if the Council of Matrons decided that a particular military expedition was not advisable, the stored trail food (dried corn and maple syrup, per Brown 1975) remained off-limits and in an age before supermarkets the expedition would likely be aborted. The Council of Matrons also had the right to nominate a man to be chief and recall him if they didn’t approve of his performance, nominating another male in his stead. In short, all the “matri” ducks were lined up in a row in Iroquois society and women’s almost total economic power was sufficient for it to balance out the spheres of male advantage (e.g., military, political) so that the result was approximate equality (50-50).
  - Other matri-oriented groups may not have all the factors lined up on the side advantaging females, with consequently lower levels of gender equality. For example, in some the young couple live with the groom’s maternal uncle and his male kin; in others much of the property is passed from mother’s brother to sister’s son, i.e., inherited by matrilineally related male kin; in still others husbands play a greater role (Schlegel 1972, 1977). In fact, Schlegel’s 1972 data on 66 matrilineal societies showed that in most, a woman was under the control of her husband (the most frequent case) or her brother.

- Importantly, however, in only 14 of Schlegel's 66-society sample were women classified as "autonomous" – dominated by neither husband nor brother. And in 100% of the 14, women had partial or full control of household property (i.e., what I term "economic power"). This proved to be the only 100% relationship in her data.
- Finally, matri-oriented groups also are renowned for internal harmony and peace, even though a number are known as fierce warriors. But all of their wars are external.
- At the opposite end of the spectrum, the "warrior complex" patri-oriented horticultural societies are among the world's most gender-stratified. Many of them have such hostile male-female relations they are characterized as engaging in a "war between the sexes." Geographically, these groups are most prevalent in the New Guinea highlands (e.g., Meggitt 1970) and the Amazon lowlands (e.g., Harner 1975). Their societies are typified by patrilocal residence, patrilineal property control and general polygyny, as in the case of the "mainline" patri-oriented groups. But, in addition, they are characterized by frequent warfare – both internal and external – and female infanticide.
- In fact, both patri-oriented types of horticultural society tend to **fight over women**, since their labor provides the primary route to surplus accumulation and power. Because of general polygyny by the more powerful middle aged men, there are not enough young available women to go around to the young men, who also are often handicapped by lack of sufficient brideprice. But by further distorting the sex ratio through female infanticide, warrior complex groups effectively cut their own throats: warfare over women is exacerbated and there are no cases I'm aware of where such a group evolved to a state-level society. They may be considered an evolutionary dead end. Perhaps the best known such group is the Yanomamo, who live in the lowland jungles of southern Venezuela and northern Brazil (Chagnon 1968, 1992; Blumberg 1978 (this is a group that I have personally studied)).

4. The ECCE situation in horticultural societies. Since the egalitarian path is very rare today, we will look only at the three unilineal types.

a. Need for child labor. Historically, horticultural societies have been intermediate in the demand for child labor as compared to foraging and agrarian techno-economic bases. There are more children so older kids are given more responsibility in caring for younger siblings while their mother works in the plot, trades in the market or is otherwise engaged in productive activities. As we will see in the next chapter, however, demand for child labor rises as environmental degradation of horticultural areas intensifies. And it is intensifying, especially in sub-Saharan Africa. The demand, moreover, has been stronger for girls' labor. Girls are involved in the whole cultivation cycle except for the very first step: clearing the bush and forest for a new plot – a job traditionally done by adolescent and young men. And girls can be a particular help with (now more numerous) younger siblings. Also, even though tending small domestic animals and bringing water and firewood is done by both boys and girls, girls generally do more. All in all, females – girls as well as adult women – tend to put in more labor hours than boys and adult men (Carr and Sandhu 1988; Blumberg 1989a:31-33).

b. Fertility. Long post-partum taboos, which tend to be most prevalent in horticultural societies, especially those that are polygynous and patrilocal, may be at least partly a consequence of women's important role in farming. Spacing in horticultural groups traditionally averaged 3-4 years, and the traditional family size was in about the same range. (As will be discussed in the next chapter about contemporary horticultural societies, Western death control arriving at least a generation before Western birth control has led to a big spurt in the total fertility rate (TFR) that is only now starting to come down among horticultural cultivators, especially in sub-Saharan Africa.) Prior to the recent introduction of modern contraceptive methods, the often long post-partum abstinence period for women assured enough time between births to promote survival of all the children; it also helped preserve a woman's productive capacity<sup>15</sup>: Clearly, an exhausted

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<sup>15</sup> Friedl (1975) proposed that the "spacing of children and the patterns of childrearing are everywhere adjusted to whatever kind of work women do" (1975:8; see also Huber 1991). Nerlove (1974) found that where mothers are highly productive, they take direct action to reduce their childrearing burden. In her sample of 83 pre-industrial societies, where women were important producers they were more likely to introduce supplementary food to their



principal labor force is not in the interests of a polygynous husband. Moreover, he can turn for sex to another co-wife who is not in the post-partum period.

- Furthermore, women in horticultural groups usually maintain knowledge of plants, etc. that have contraceptive or abortive properties, so women in even patri-oriented groups may have possibilities to prevent an ill-timed pregnancy. Naturally, in the matri-oriented groups, especially those where women control the land, women have more say in their own fertility and, perhaps, more of an ethnobotany tradition to help them achieve their fertility preferences with respect to spacing, age of first birth, spacing interval, age of last birth and total fertility.
- c. Caretaking patterns. Women's labor is so important in most horticultural societies that mothers' productivity may be privileged over childrearing tasks (see note 15). Consequently, *these are the groups where "it takes a village" to raise a child.* But not everyone in that village participates equally.
- First, *women* are more involved in caretaking than fathers – the close, nurturant, fathering described for foragers is not a commonplace among horticulturalists, although there is considerable variation on this score.
  - Second, *daughters* are more involved than sons not only in productive labor but also in care of younger siblings/other domestic chores (including bringing firewood and water for domestic and household animal use). This tends to be an obligation, not a choice. But as we saw in foraging, the more gender egalitarian the group, the more flexible the division of labor and the more that men and boys may pitch in when they choose – or are needed. Thus it is among the "warrior complex" groups that we should find the most gender-stereotyped caretaking patterns.
  - One of the interesting ways in which women farmers in polygynous horticultural groups balance their productive and child ECCE obligations is through sharing with *co-wives*. On the one hand, co-wives tend not to share economic endeavors that generate income (men and women in polygynous unions tend to maintain "separate purses" and each co-wife tries to devote her own income to the welfare of her own children; see literature review in Blumberg 1988). On the other hand, co-wives typically do facilitate each other's income generating activities indirectly by providing child-care when an economic activity being carried out by a co-wife is incompatible with the presence of ECCE-age children.
  - Women in matrilocal groups have the best support system, including their own *maternal grandmothers*, whose help has been found to promote infant survival and child well-being (Angier 2002).
- d. Socialization patterns. Here, too, the horticultural "path" affects childrearing practices.
- i. Key values. *Generosity* remains a positive value, as noted above, and children of both genders tend to be socialized to be generous in all types of horticultural groups, even though group-wide sharing has diminished to something that rarely extends beyond the extended family/kin group. In contrast, there is more socialization for *respect for authority*, as well as *obedience to authority* and *conformity* to group standards. For the most part, the more the group stresses conformity and obedience, the less the emphasis on autonomy and independence. Where there is either *internal* or *external warfare*, *boys* are socialized for *aggression*. But in the matrilocal groups, which fight almost exclusively in *external* wars, there is some socialization of males as well as females for the values of group harmony and cooperation, and against physical violence within the group. Socialization for *violence* is most stressed for males in the "warrior complex" groups.

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babies at an earlier age, thus reducing/shortening breastfeeding constraints. Without modern contraceptives, these women would be at high risk for a new pregnancy "too soon;" a long post-partum taboo reduces such pregnancies.

- ii. “O.J.T.” “On the job training” is not yet formal but it tends to be more systematic and less flexible than among foragers. There is much more gender differentiation in the training, however, since in most of these groups, women and men not only do rather different tasks in production, they are not as likely to substitute in the role of the opposite sex. Again, more flexibility is expected among the matri-oriented and less among the patri-oriented “warrior complex” societies. Also, many pre-state horticultural societies are marked by single-sex “age grades” that act as training cohorts in learning the work and culture of their group. These may start as early as ECCE-age play groups and sometimes involve elaborate initiation rituals in adolescence (see also LeVine et al. 1994). In many such groups, the age grades then continue to shape adult life.
- iii. Techniques for training children. For the most part, children are reared with kindness rather than treated punitively. But hard-pressed mothers who bear much of the burden of providing for their families may not be as indulgent or patient with a misbehaving child as a woman not as weighed down with economic responsibilities. Children should help, or, at minimum, not hinder their hardworking mothers, people aver. This often translates to letting boys get away with more, since girls are more involved in activities that help the mother from a younger age.
- e. Boy-girl differences in ECCE. Girls are valued in all these groups (as compared to the situation, discussed below for rain-fed agrarian societies). For this reason, as we shall see in Chapter III, the *sex ratio* usually shows more females than males (102:100 in sub-Saharan Africa, for example, despite the world’s highest maternal mortality rates; Sen 1990, 1992, 1993, 2001; Blumberg and Holian 2004). “Warrior complex” horticultural groups may be exceptions but account for relatively small populations (few, if any, of them in Africa). Since in the African patri-oriented groups that account for the greatest proportion of the population of horticultural societies, brideprice is prevalent, this is another reason to treat girl children well with respect to *nutrition*: they grow up stronger and fetch better brideprices. Nor are girls often raised in near-seclusion in impoverished “ecological niches” where they almost never get to see their surroundings, as occurs in some of the more patriarchal rain-fed agrarian societies, discussed below. But there are other aspects of ECCE where girls and boys are treated differently. *Schooling* is one of them, and as *pre-schools* spread, even in sub-Saharan Africa, there might be a lower willingness to send girls. Their labor is more needed in the garden plot as well as in and around the household compound, and it is very commonly (and correctly) believed that school is a better investment for boys than girls, since boys are more likely to grow up to find modern-sector wage-earning jobs that require educational credentials.

In sum, children – especially girls – do more in both production and ECCE-related tasks in horticultural than in foraging societies. And they are trained for this. One outcome can be a significant gender gap in education in contemporary groups (see the next chapter). But, even in fairly patriarchal groups in terms of the kinship/property system, this does not mean girls are less valued, or fed, or nursed when sick, than boys. Girls’ childhood productivity and promise of future brideprice assures them a viable and reasonably equal standard of care, even if there is not complete equality in all aspects of comprehensive ECCE.

#### D. Agrarian Societies through the Lens of Gender and ECCE

The big difference between horticultural and agrarian cultivation is that the latter involves the *plow*, and permits *permanent cultivation*. The plow was invented somewhere in the Middle East between 5,000-6,000 years ago and diffused along the vast East-West axis of the Eurasian landmass and adjacent North Africa; it was brought to the Americas by European conquerors and colonists (Diamond 1997).

The plow requires deep soils; it brings up nutrients to the surface and breaks up weeds. Typically, agrarian systems involve monocrop cultivation on large fields and some animal husbandry; the manure from the animals provides fertilizer. The combination of nutrients brought up from below and fertilizer applied to the surface is what enables farmers to cultivate the same plot year after year. This, in turn, permits permanent settlement, more surplus, private property in land and more inequality.

Before proceeding, however, it is important to re-emphasize that sub-Saharan Africa and most of the other tropical areas that did not make the transition from horticulture to agriculture really had no choice: they had “poor geographic luck” (*ibid.* 1997) in two senses. First, their soils tend to be too shallow to take the plow. Second, almost all the world’s domesticatable animals, including the most important (bovines, sheep, goats, camels, horses, etc.) evolved on the Eurasian landmass. And while animals can be imported (although cattle can’t be brought to tsetse fly areas in Africa), deep soils cannot.

The following discussion of agrarian societies is based on Blumberg 2004a, in which I propose a different schema for analyzing agrarian societies than that of Lenski (1966, 2005). He divides agrarian societies into simple vs. advanced types, based on the technological criterion of absence vs. presence of iron. I propose to divide agrarian societies into three types, in order to better take gender into account.

First, in order to account for the gender division of labor, I begin with a different technological criterion, “dry” vs. “wet,” i.e., **rain-fed agriculture vs. irrigated rice cultivation**. This split also **divides agrarian societies into those with low vs. high female importance in production**. Rain-fed agriculture is a largely male farming system (Boserup 1970) with low labor elasticity,<sup>16</sup> whereas wet-rice agriculture is so labor-intensive and labor-elastic that “everyone works” – men, women, boys, girls and domestic animals suitable for pulling the plow and/or transporting harvested crops. But this still doesn’t tell us about **gender stratification**. To do that, we need a second criterion.

The second criterion **subdivides irrigated rice societies based on the nature of their kinship system**, specifically, the extent to which it is disadvantageous to women, vs. neutral or favorable. The second criterion divides wet-rice societies into (a) those that are quite patriarchal and give women low economic power and a subordinate position, vs. (b) those, all located in Southeast Asia, that have bilateral or matri-centered kinship systems in which women can achieve equal – or better-than-equal – economic power and a much more equal overall position, especially in the household. My reclassification aims at accounting for the “agrarian exceptions” – Southeast Asian irrigated rice societies that are much more gender egalitarian than the average agrarian society. In short, this second division provides a proxy for the gender division of resources. Now, on to the three gender categories:

1. Gender division of labor. Women in **dry agrarian** systems may work very hard but this is mostly invisible work; they tend not to be heavily involved in the main activities of the cultivation cycle, except at peak periods (although they usually are important in post-harvest processing and storage). They do far more domestic labor than in the average horticultural society because they tend to have more closely spaced pregnancies (see below), and more responsibilities for not only housework and child-care but also for tending small domestic animals, perhaps keeping a kitchen garden, and bringing firewood as well as water for human and sometimes animal use. In the average, quite patriarchal, dry agrarian society, this work is not considered productive, but just another part of the taken-for-granted female domestic role.

Moreover, the main production activities in rain-fed farming are done in often-distant large fields and use of the plow requires considerable upper-body strength, of which women, biologically, have one-third to

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<sup>16</sup> If one man and a mule can plow the “north 40” by themselves, one cannot put 100 people to work on this land at the same level of technology without most of them starving. This is because dry agrarian is less labor-elastic, and uses less labor per unit of ground area (e.g., hectare) than either wet rice or horticulture.

one-half less than men. Consequently, **fieldwork in rain-fed agrarian societies is less compatible with simultaneous child-rearing** than either foraging or horticulture. **Women's strategic indispensability also is lower for the productive activities that they do undertake.** For one thing, they are easily replaced at the margin by the typically large surplus population of the desperate and the un-free (serfs, slaves, lower castes) that characterize most dry agrarian societies except briefly after great disasters (Lenski 1966:281). Even many men cannot find agricultural work.

In contrast, in **irrigated-rice agrarian** societies, large, dense populations can be supported as long as they are increased gradually. Wet rice is so labor-elastic that you can obtain higher yields by introducing more and more labor; up to a very high density, the new persons' hands will produce more rice than their mouths will eat. And, as noted, in such a farming system, **everyone works**. Even in wet rice systems with high patriarchy, the economic contributions of women and girls are recognized, if grudgingly. Their **strategic indispensability** is far higher than in dry agrarian and there is more concern to help women overcome any **incompatibility with simultaneous child-care** that might hinder their productivity.

2. The gender division of resources. But as my gender stratification theory argues, work per se is not enough for females to gain equality. That, I posit, requires economic power. Unfortunately, there are no direct measures of economic power disaggregated by gender in the major computerized ethnographic data bases, the EA and the SCCS. Two aspects of the kinship system, however, provide us with a fair proxy for female economic power: inheritance and marital residence patterns.

- Most of the **rain-fed agrarian and patri-oriented wet rice societies' kinship systems are patriarchal to varying degrees**, and this is borne out by looking at patterns on the two proxy variables, *inheritance* and *marital residence*: Women are disadvantaged in *inheritance* in most of both types of patri-oriented agrarian societies. This may be true even among those patri-oriented groups that have bilateral kinship systems that actually permit women to inherit key productive resources, such as land.<sup>17</sup> In addition, *marital residence* is often with/near husband's male kin, with even many bilateral groups leaning toward this pattern.
- But there is wide variation in the extent to which the kinship systems of wet rice societies advantage males vs. females. So I next **divide irrigated agrarian societies into those with (1) "male advantage" (patri-oriented) kinship systems vs. (2) those that are neutral to positive for women.**
- Rice-growing areas of southern China, Japan, Korea and India (except for Kerala) overwhelmingly fall into the **"male advantage"** pattern, giving most or all inheritance to males and favoring patrilocal marital residence.
- Conversely, with few exceptions, Southeast Asian wet rice peoples have **matri-focal kinship** patterns, even where kinship is formally bilateral. Women may inherit half or more of rice land in such systems – and they long have gained additional income and economic autonomy through own-account trade in lively local markets. Residence is more likely to be near or with the bride's female kin than the groom's male kin, which buttresses women's position by providing allies and various forms of support. The results in these "agrarian exceptions" can be local-level gender equality/near-equality, even in some of the Muslim societies falling into this category. For example, Islam reached Indonesia, the world's most populous Muslim country, some 700 years ago but it was introduced by traders, not by conquest. Although they brought the Koran, these traders never brought *shar'ia*. So the original kinship, property and customary law system (known as *adat*) remained. Even now, the people of rural Java and the Minangkabau of Western Sumatra – all Muslims – show this pattern, as do the Muslim Negeri Sembilan in (Muslim-majority) Malaysia (Gonsoulin 2005; Schwede 1991; Blumberg 2004a). But there is an important caveat about these Southeast Asian groups: this local level equality/near-equality does not extend to two institutions originating outside the village level: local representatives/agencies of the larger government and/or prevailing world religions. Both are more patriarchal than other aspects of local life.

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<sup>17</sup> In Blumberg 2004a, I discuss such a case (Reiter 1975), a study of a southern France rain-fed agrarian farming village: women might inherit land but almost invariably turned over control of that land to their husbands. Another example is the common practice of women in Muslim rain-fed agrarian societies where *shar'ia* gives them only half-share inheritance: many women turn over their share, especially of land in rural areas, to their brothers, in an implicit bargain for future (crisis) aid.

3. Gender, family and kinship. This category already has been discussed for all three types of agrarian societies. But let us look at one additional aspect. As we saw concerning horticultural societies, above, in the groups where marital residence is patrilocal (the young couple lives with or near the groom's male kin), women are so highly valued as producers that the husband and his family/kin group pay brideprice to the bride and her family. Conversely, in **rain-fed agrarian societies**, even though marital residence is also predominantly patrilocal, marriage is most frequently accompanied by the payment of **dowry**. This is paid by the bride's family to the groom and his relatives, and may be seen as the price her family pays to unload a female viewed as an economic burden/expense. This tends to be associated with much younger age of marriage for females and a skewed sex ratio (see below), as families find ways to raise fewer daughters: not only are they perceived as non-productive, their marriage expenses can drain a family. Turning to **irrigated rice societies**, among the more egalitarian **Southeast Asian groups**, usually there is **neither dowry, nor brideprice**, since the bride usually stays in her own home village. Among the more numerous **patri-oriented wet rice peoples**, marital payment customs vary and **sometimes include dowry** (e.g., in Bangladesh, dowry is entrenched and in the wet rice regions of India, dowry has been spreading south and growing; see next chapter).

4. The ECCE situation among the three types of agrarian societies. We can see that the economic position and power of the mother has great consequences for her sons and daughters' ECCE.

- a. Need for child labor. This is high in all three types, even (surprisingly) in the dry agrarian societies. The utility of child labor is quite apparent in wet rice but needs explication for rain-fed agrarian groups. Here, it is the fact that most of these groups are so stratified that the great majority of peasants till their land only at the pleasure of a small landed elite to whom they must pay rent or face eviction (this often amounts to "social death" in village society). In traditional rain-fed agrarian societies, the rent often averages half the crop (Lenski 1966). The labor of children, especially sons, can make all the difference between making the rent or not. Since women among such groups tend to have low economic power and, hence, little say about fertility, even if they objected to frequent childbearing they would have little "voice and vote" in the matter. This brings us to the next topic.
- b. Fertility. Spacing between births tends to be much narrower. The interval established by the World Health Organization (from research in Guatemala) averaged 24-27 months for a population of women in a rain-fed agrarian society who breastfeed for some 6-12 months but do not use modern contraceptive methods. In traditional rain-fed agrarian societies, this did not lead to explosive population growth rates because the death rate approached the birth rate (in part due to the poor living conditions of the peasants, the vast majority of the population; see Lenski 1966; Nolan and Lenski 2004). But when Western "death control" (vaccinations, antibiotics, DDT, etc.) is introduced prior to Western "birth control" (modern methods), the result can be a period of near-exponential population growth. This, of course, happened in recent decades, although in the last few years, fertility rates have turned down in most parts of the "Majority World." (This is especially so in parts of Asia. To date, in 14 Asian nations, fertility has dropped below "zero populations growth" replacement levels, ~2.1 children per woman; Blumberg in press).
- c. Caretaking patterns. Here are a few of the most salient:
  - First, *in none of the three types of agrarian societies are mothers commonly the near-exclusive caretakers* of their own children. In **rain-fed agrarian groups**, women frequently reside with their in-laws; other women in the patrilocal household (but less often the mother-in-law, to whom the young mother owes deference and service) help out as available, with older female children helping care for their younger siblings. In the more **patriarchal irrigated rice societies**, caretaker patterns tend to be similar to rain-fed groups but with more cooperative arrangements, especially for peak periods – after all, everyone's survival depends on the women being able to carry out their parts of the complex, labor-intensive wet rice cycle. Finally, in the **Southeast Asian irrigated rice societies**, female kin are typically the main helpers, followed by older siblings (especially during peak periods of female production, such as rice transplanting). While girls may be more likely than boys to care for younger siblings, the demands of the rice cycle typically trump gender and boys help out where needed.

- Second, *grandmothers help but maternal grandmothers help more in the Southeast Asian wet rice groups; paternal grandmothers in the other two types of agrarian society may sometimes help, depending on need for women's labor*. This implies that women in the patri-oriented wet rice groups can count on somewhat more help than those in patri-oriented rain-fed groups. Maternal grandmothers provide a stronger survival advantage than paternal ones (Angier 2002), so we would expect less infant and young child morbidity and mortality in the Southeast Asian irrigated rice groups, once level of development/GDP per capita is controlled.
  - Third, with respect to *fathering*, we find the same line-up of the three types of agrarian societies. Fathers are closer and more nurturant in the Southeast Asian wet rice societies, and generally most distant and coolest in the rain-fed groups.
  - Fourth, childhood can be very short in agrarian societies, with children being put to work from age 6 or 7. Again, the same pattern as in fathering tends to prevail, with girls and boys having somewhat looser responsibilities for taking care of younger siblings among Southeast Asian wet rice peoples. But in both types of wet rice society, during peak periods, everyone is expected to do his/her part, children not excepted. Nonetheless, it is in rain-fed agrarian societies that the burden seems to fall most heavily on girls. These are the societies where both gender division of labor and gender stratification patterns tend to be the most rigid and patriarchal.
- d. Socialization patterns. The usual line-up prevails, with some surprises. Here are the details:
- i. Key values. In comparison with, especially, foraging groups, all three types of agrarian society tend to emphasize socializing children for *conformity and obedience*. They are raised to *respect authority*, including family elders, and *conform to standards and customs* – including those involving *gender traits*. Girls are supposed to be particularly dutiful, especially in the two patri-oriented types. In these groups, females also are supposed to be very demure, self-effacing and subservient. Warfare is generally more prevalent (and the two patri-oriented agrarian societies tend to engage in it more frequently than their Southeast Asian counterparts, although most of them, too, are not strangers to cycles of war and conquest). And boys are socialized in suitably aggressive behavior in those groups where fighting is done by the common people (vs. hired mercenaries or special military castes, as among the Japanese samurai). Socialization for group-wide generosity is no longer a big concern, especially among the patri-oriented groups.
  - ii. “OJT.” What is striking is how young serious OJT training begins. But it varies from highly to only slightly gender-differentiated, with the usual sequence of the Southeast Asian wet rice groups at the less gender-stratified and gender-differentiated end (see below) and the rain-fed agrarian peoples at the more gender-differentiated, as well as more rigid, hierarchical and patriarchal end.
  - iii. Techniques for training children. Here, both the Southeast Asian wet rice producers and some of the East Asian, patri-oriented irrigated rice societies (e.g., China) have traditions of indulging children below around age 7, i.e., the whole ECCE age range. The remaining patri-oriented wet rice societies look more like their rain-fed counterparts in pushing children into responsibility via punishment-centered means from an early age. As a matter of fact, Europeans, until the last several centuries, probably were the harshest and most punitive of any of the agrarian societies (Coltrane and Collins

2001; Aries 1962). They saw their tiny offspring as miniature adults and aimed to “beat the Devil out of them.”

- f. Boy-girls differences in ECCE. If we look at major differences in life chances, including the right to survive, rain-fed agrarian societies present the most extreme picture, and one that is the most negative for girls throughout the ECCE age range. Girls and boys have different play groups and activities; in fact, however, girls may have little experience with play groups, since females are kept closer to home and put to grueling work at a younger age than their brothers. But this is one end of a continuum that ends in death for far more girls than boys – in those rain-fed societies where females are held to be of little economic value.
- *Gender and survival*: Female infanticide long has been common in rain-fed agrarian societies (e.g., the notorious signs along riverbanks and lakeshores in northern China stating that “girl babies may not be drowned here”). In the next chapter, we examine these types of society in the contemporary era and see that the problem has been getting worse, with sex ratios becoming more and more skewed against females. Both in traditional and contemporary contexts, however, the same factors seem to be involved in the “worst case scenario” for female survival: (1) low economic value as adults (Rosenzweig and Schultz (1982) found that they could explain much of the differences in female infant mortality rates in the various districts of India by looking at the average wage (real or shadow) of adult females in that district and there is no indication that this pattern has changed), (2) low economic value as children, other than as assistants to their low-status mothers in housework and child-care, and (3) high – and rising – dowry and wedding expenses (Blumberg and Holian 2004; this is further discussed below).
  - *Gender and ECCE development*. Even where girls survive in rain-fed agrarian groups, however, their life chances may be severely compromised, and their own cognitive and physical development may suffer greatly (Blumberg and Maryanski 2001/2005). Specifically, where girls are devalued because they are seen as an economic burden rather than asset, parents may not provide equal nutrition, with the lack of protein calories a particularly pernicious problem. This is because severe malnutrition and poor diet before age 2 acts to lop off the top end of an IQ distribution, skewing it sharply to the left: under these circumstances, the average intelligence of girls so treated is compromised (*ibid.*). Just as bad, girls may not be given the kinds of experiences, excursions, playthings, etc. that enrich the “ecological niche” of their brothers. Being raised in a poor “ecological niche” inhibits one’s life chances (sociobiologists might describe it as compromised phenotypic expression of the genotype). Then, once past ECCE age, if girls are not sent to school at the same rate as their brothers, or are withdrawn earlier, the damage is compounded to the point where ignorant girls taking care of younger siblings are less able to give them proper hygiene and rich information, thereby contributing to poor health and educational outcomes of their younger brothers as well as sisters.

In sum, there’s a vast gap between Southeast Asian wet rice groups and high-patriarchy rain-fed societies, where boy-girl differences in ECCE development can be a matter of life and death.

But to tackle one final question: is there more gender differentiation in the division of labor in agrarian societies than in foraging and horticultural ones? Again, this depends on the two factors that have been most important in sorting out the three types of agrarian societies: whether it is wet or dry cultivation and, if wet rice, whether it is gender-egalitarian or not.

The evidence is that there is more cooperative labor in wet rice, with less rigidly sex-bound knowledge about the production process, than in rain-fed agriculture and, perhaps, than in either foraging or horticulture. The most dramatic evidence comes from some of the most gender-egalitarian Southeast Asian groups.

- Whereas foraging and the most matri-oriented horticultural groups (e.g., the Iroquois) have substantial differentiation in what men and women do in production, this is not the case among two Western Bontoc (Igorot) subgroups in the Philippines. The Tanulong and Fedilizan peoples of Luzon are more technologically advanced than the Iroquois, raising irrigated rice in elaborate terraces. Bacdayan (1977) describes women as having equal status in these groups, and also notes that: “Their way of life involves intense cooperation and interchangeability of tasks in production and a strong orientation to the nuclear family” (Blumberg 1984:27). An astonishing 81% of all tasks may be done by either sex. In contrast, in Murdock and Provost’s (1973) study of 186 pre-industrial societies, they found a worldwide average of only 16% gender interchangeability of tasks.

In summary, in Chapter II we saw that **a woman’s relative economic power has a great and gendered effect on ECCE outcomes of her sons and daughters**. This leads to a preliminary hypothesis for ECCE in “Majority World” societies: **the greater women’s relative economic power and the level of gender equality among adults, the more likely that boys and girls will benefit equally from ECCE**.

Where girls are important in production but live in a patriarchal society, they may get accommodation and care that assures their productivity. This, however, does not necessarily assure full equality in ECCE. Once again, while important, it appears that “work is not enough.” But if a mother earns and controls her own income, she can use it to enhance her say in household decisions about ECCE, and she also can supplement any household expenditure on sons and daughters’ ECCE with her own resources. Furthermore, the evidence also indicates that income-controlling mothers in societies that are patriarchal to varying degrees (from Chile to Bangladesh) tend to be more even-handed in feeding and schooling their daughters and sons (Blumberg et al. 1992; Blumberg 1993).



### III. THE CONTEMPORARY SITUATION: ECCE IN INDUSTRIALIZING HORTICULTURAL AND INDUSTRIALIZING AGRARIAN SOCIETIES

One of the more intriguing and useful concepts from Lenski's work (e.g., Lenski and Lenski 1987; Nolan and Lenski 2004) is that of "industrializing horticultural" (IH) and "industrializing agrarian" (IA) societies. Together they comprise the "Majority World." Indeed, a majority of the world's population lives in Industrializing Agrarian societies: China and India alone account for nearly 40% of the people on Earth.

There are many differences between the 32 IH societies and the 40 IA societies enumerated by Nolan and Lenski (2004:295-296)<sup>18</sup> that affect their development prospects as well as the position of their women and what happens to their children with respect to ECCE:

- With respect to median size, IH societies average 10 million population vs. 21 million for IA societies (China and India, with close to 2.5 billion between them, overshadow the others, which is why we have to use a median, rather than a mean, for average size).
- Today, IH societies at the nation-state level are found only in sub-Saharan Africa (the overwhelming majority), New Guinea and Haiti (see note 18), and less than 10% of world population lives in them. (Almost all other remaining horticultural peoples live within "industrializing agrarian" nations, e.g., the tribes of the Amazon lowlands in various South American countries; the surviving hill tribes and lowland forest tribes of Southeast Asia and India).
- GDP/population is only \$500 for IH, vs. \$3,056 for IA (and \$32,127 for advanced industrial societies (AI); *ibid.*:297).
- GDP/capita from 1961-2001 grew a mere 0.4% per annum in IH, vs. 2.1% in IA (and 2.6% for AI societies; *ibid.*:298).
- The median Human Development Index is only 0.36 for IH vs. 0.72 for IA (*ibid.*:310).
- Average annual percentage rate of population growth from 1961-2001 was 2.6 in IH, vs. 2.1 in IA (and only 0.6 in AI; *ibid.*). Sadly, there's an inverse relationship between population growth rates and national income growth (Hess 1988 has strong evidence).
- Politically, many IH societies were pre-state before colonialism drew national boundaries that jumbled together unrelated ethnic groups/tribes in some countries, while elsewhere dividing other tribes among two or more of these created entities. So the post-colonial heritage in many IH countries is internal divisions rooted in tribal loyalties and a history of colonial "divide and conquer" policies that led to unequal development and power. Meanwhile, one of the biggest hindrances to development in many IA nations is the kind of exploitive governing class they inherited from the past (Nolan and Lenski 2004:305).
- In general, IH nations have lower rates than IA nations of many other variables associated with development: urbanization, proportions of people in large cities, and literacy as well as education (with an overall larger gender gap, despite a lot of geographic variation in IA nations, e.g., the gender gap in education has all but vanished in Latin America but remains large in South Asia).
- Finally, we can't ignore the fact that HIV/AIDS emerged in IH sub-Saharan Africa and continues to hit it hardest, lowering life expectancies, creating millions of orphans, and

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<sup>18</sup> The 32 IH societies listed by Nolan and Lenski include: Angola, Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Cote d'Ivoire, Gabon, Ghana, Guinea, Haiti, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Papua New Guinea, Republic of the Congo (Zaire), Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe. They don't explain why other nations are excluded (e.g., Guinea-Bissau and the Gambia, just to name the countries between Senegal and Guinea). They list 40 IA societies: Afghanistan, Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Cambodia, Chile, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, India, Indonesia, Jamaica, (North) Korea, (South) Korea, Laos, Malaysia, Mexico, Morocco, Nepal, Nicaragua, Pakistan, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Syria, Thailand, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Uruguay and Venezuela.

striking more women than men – and at younger ages, when they are more likely to have ECCE-age children (Blumberg 2005a).

#### A. Updating the Economic Position and Power of Women and ECCE Patterns in IH and IA Societies

One trend is unmistakable: worldwide, a higher proportion of men and women are earning cash income (vs. subsistence-and-barter-only regimens), but the proportion of income-earning women is rising more dramatically (Blumberg 1995). A big question is whether these women are controlling much or all of the income they are earning. Related to this is whether the income is barely enough (or not enough) for subsistence, or is sufficient to permit some surplus. The latter brings more leverage, I posit.

Another unmistakable world trend is that these women tend to devote a higher proportion of income that they do control to their children's well-being, including all the ECCE-related outcomes discussed above (Blumberg 1988; 2005a).

- Furthermore, as noted above, women who earn and control income tend to be more even-handed than male counterparts in spending it on the well-being of their daughters as well as their sons (Blumberg et al. 1992). The clearest case involves comparing male-headed vs. female-headed households; this is because it is assumed that a woman head of household has the major say in controlling and allocating that household's income. The empirical data indicate that bias favoring male children is, indeed, lower or absent in female-headed households (Blumberg et al. 1992; Blumberg 1993).
- Numerous studies have shown that with increased income under their control, women's "voice and vote" in household decisions rises (Blumstein and Schwartz 1983, 1991; Coltrane and Collins 2001), although not as fast or as linearly as it falls when their income plummets (Blumberg 1994).
- This means, as mentioned above, that women who control income have the equivalent of two ways of promoting their children's welfare: (a) through their stronger say in household domestic well-being decisions, and (b) through their own earnings.
- So, ceteris paribus, such income-controlling women in the "Majority World" should be in a better position to promote their children's ECCE – right? Actually, it depends. Let us dig more deeply into the specifics.

#### B. The Rural Situation, Gender and ECCE: Updating Horticultural and Agrarian Farming Systems

Development trends seem to be militating toward a widespread "feminization of farming" in both IH and IA societies, including rain-fed farming in Latin America. But this is low resource farming, for the most part. The literature on this topic is large so this report will present a brief overview of trends in IH and IA societies, and then discuss a few important problems that have ramifications for ECCE.

1. IH. More generally, men tend to concentrate more on cash crops, with women, especially in Africa, focusing more on food crops. In sub-Saharan Africa, Saito and Weidemann (1990) estimate that women grow up to 80% or more of locally produced food crops, probably an even higher proportion than that found by Baumann (1928) or Boserup (1970).

The problems of women farmers in Africa are too great to be dealt with in this report. One is that women receive only a negligible percentage of agricultural extension, credit, inputs and other aid, despite their continuing status as primary farmers (Blumberg 1992; Blumberg and Okoro 1992). Another even more serious difficulty lies in simultaneous crises in land and labor.

- Here, the following factors are involved: (1) rising population pressure (see below); (2) out-migration of adolescent and young males who have been the principal clearers of new plots, and (3) precarious women's land rights in patrilineal/patrilocal groups that disadvantage women in inheritance and even in obtaining use rights to new plots (Blumberg 2004b).
- As it turns out, horticulture is the techno-economic base that is most vulnerable to environmental degradation when subject to population pressure.

- Today most of the world's remaining horticulture is carried out on poor tropical soils too thin to take the plow.
- Additionally, trying to cultivate a plot for too many seasons before letting it lie fallow to regenerate is a sure route to declines in ecology as well as yields.
  - Why might a **plot be used too long**? This may be (1) because of population pressure, or (2) because there is no young male labor force to clear a new plot, and/or (3) because the woman cultivator is from a patrilineal/patrilocal ethnic group where she neither owns land nor can easily acquire "use rights" to farm new plots (perhaps because there's no longer enough for the men).
  - Regardless of cause, the result tends to be **rapid environmental degradation**. Nutrients in the soil go down, yields drop, what is grown is less nutritious, and weeds multiply explosively.
- In order to stay ahead of the weeds, make a living and feed her family, a woman low resource farmer (with little or no fertilizer, extension assistance, credit, etc.) may turn increasingly to her **children's labor, especially her daughters'**. As seen above, girls help in production, including weeding, and in bringing water and firewood – which become increasingly problematic as environmental degradation/deforestation makes water scarce in the dry season and firewood increasingly scarce all year round. The net result is that African women farmers may want – and need – more children than do their husbands. And they have such urgent need for their girls' labor that they may keep them away from school (or ECCE programs, if available in their areas).
- The results are a continuing high fertility rate that further exacerbates environmental degradation, a continuing gender gap in ECCE and post-ECCE age education, stultified development and worsening food security and well-being for all concerned.

The situation with respect to the gender division of resources also is problematic. The lack of secure land rights in the predominantly patrilineal systems is part of the problem (a number of countries have passed land laws but so far none have reconciled customary law and women's new rights to land, so that they are not yet implemented (Blumberg 2004b)). Women also have been increasing their participation in the informal sector, including trading in local markets. But as more women pour into these low return trading ventures, competition drops returns still further (Robertson 1995). Also, whereas West African market women have dominated local markets for centuries (e.g., Sudarkasa 1973), this is not the case in some other parts of Africa, e.g., East Africa, where men may be the principal sellers of crops grown by women, taking the largest (to overwhelming) share of the profits in the process.

- Here is an example from Malawi in 2004: I interviewed women in Mulanje district from the matrilineal Chichewa ethnic group who clearly had a respected position in their kin group and access to resources, including land. They farmed, worked in aquaculture (the reason I was interviewing them), and lived matrilocally. But they were illiterate and had no traditions as market sellers. So their husbands took their crops and other products to market. The husbands did this, they said, because they told their wives that their illiteracy made them too easy to cheat. But, the women complained, the husbands kept most of the money (Blumberg 2004c, 2005b). This is another case showing that even assets are not enough, if the woman does not control them.

Further complicating the picture vis-à-vis ECCE is the impact of economic crisis in general and Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) in particular. Heavily indebted countries in Africa and Latin America have been prodded by the International Monetary Fund and/or the World Bank into austerity programs known as SAPs (the articles in Blumberg et al. 1995 present a panorama of gendered effects of these SAPs in a wide variety of developing countries). Almost invariably, the SAPs include cuts in the "social budget" of education, health, youth services, etc. and elimination of food subsidies. Frequently, they also impose user fees for previously free public services (from clinics to schools to water). Women have increased their own burdens to make up for shortfalls but programs linked to "comprehensive ECCE" have suffered disproportionately. If food and health care for small children suddenly cost more, and mothers' income does not keep pace, then their offspring's levels of nutrition and health care are negatively affected.

Finally, in Africa, we can't ignore the impact of HIV/AIDS. There are millions of AIDS orphans, a good number of them HIV-infected. But, increasingly, it is their mothers who are getting sick and dying.

According to a November 2004 UNAIDS report:

- Sub-Saharan Africa has 25.4 million HIV-positive people, 64% of the worldwide total. But it has fully 76% of all women with the virus.
- Moreover, 75% of all sub-Saharan African 15-to-24-year-olds living with HIV are female (Reaney 2004:10A)
- Although female infection rates are lower in older age cohorts, there are so many young women with HIV that the proportion of infected adults in the region who are female is 56.9%. This is the highest proportion female of any region in the world (Ross 2004:A3).

Despite all the problems delineated above, the overarching trend is that more and more rural women in IH societies are earning income. To the extent that they do earn and control money, some of the benefits of that economic power might accrue to themselves and their children's ECCE outcomes. These outcomes would be more positive if more of those women earned surplus income, not merely subsistence income.

**2. IA:** The basic patterns concerning both gender and ECCE described in Chapter II continue to affect the position of women and access to comprehensive ECCE by their sons and daughters. But there are some important changes involving contemporary rain-fed agrarian groups that merit discussion. One involves the "feminization of agriculture" in much of Latin America (Blumberg 1990). Another involves the shrinking proportions of girls in parts of Asia.

- The **feminization of agriculture** that has been widely noted in Latin America is due, in large part, to differential migration patterns. Whereas the migration stream from the countryside to Latin American cities tends to have a female majority, seasonal and international migration streams differ. Both disproportionately involve men. Seasonal migration by men takes place in the agricultural off-season but in many instances, women are left to handle increasing proportions of the cultivation cycle. If men are close enough to return frequently, women tend to remain in a serf-like position – working in production, but not controlling the major agricultural decisions or reaping the rewards. Where the men stay away longer, women may gain autonomy along with a higher share of the farm work. In those instances involving international migration, the stays usually are considerably longer, and absent husbands often send remittances. The husband may earmark the money for particular projects, e.g., painting the house, putting in a cement floor, children's school expenses, etc. But the woman generally has a more managerial role in all this and in some cases may use some of the money for entrepreneurial ventures on- or off-farm. In both cases, more money generated by the husband is coming into the household. But in the international (non-permanent) migration case, women seem to have a greater level of control. Accordingly, one might hypothesize ECCE outcomes that are more favorable to children's well-being in the cross-border "circular migration" scenario.
- The **growing sex gap in survival** is a problem in a number of Asian countries, and it is worst in the rain-fed agrarian rural areas and in some urban contexts. What unites the areas where females are systematically eliminated from the demographic pyramid is that these are places where females offer low economic benefits vs. high economic costs (Blumberg and Holian 2004).
  - To understand the abnormally low proportions of girls, it is important to consider this link between women's economic position and ECCE: **the impact of mother's income for child survival has been found to be up to almost 20 times as large** as father's income (research in Brazil by Thomas 1990, 1997; see also King and Mason 2001:81).
  - In the areas of Asia with the worst sex ratios, we tend to find the following five traits: (1) in rural areas, the farming system is predominantly rain-fed agriculture (with varying amounts of herding in drier areas), (2) female productivity in key rural productive activities is low, (3) women earn little of their own in either rural or urban areas, and (4) kinship is marked by patrilocal exogamy as well as discrimination against women in inheritance (this is the case in parts of South Asia – e.g., northern India and Pakistan – as

- well as in much of the Middle East/Western Asia). In addition, in most of these places, (5) **dowry** and/or high wedding expenses are also increasing in prevalence and amount.<sup>19</sup>
- Lamentably, sex ratios are worsening in many female deficit areas. Partly this is due to the spread of cheap ultrasound and abortions; these increase female feticide. Government policies may also contribute, as in the case of China. Its subsidized health services declined around the time the one child policy was adopted in 1979: the proportion of girls began dropping the very next year.
  - Other methods also are used to accomplish what Harriss-White terms “gender cleansing” (1999). In some places, female infanticide is more prevalent; in others, it is “selective child-rearing,” where ECCE-age girls are given less and less nutritious calories and less and less timely healthcare. But the results are the same: “missing females.”
  - Biologically, about 95 girls are born for every 100 boys (Sen 2001); the sex ratio soon evens out if there is no sex-selectivity because boy babies have higher death rates. (In industrial societies, the overall sex ratio is about 105-106 women per 100 men, due to women’s greater longevity.)
  - Let us focus on India, where in 2001 there were 92.7 girls 0-6 (i.e., ECCE age), vs. 94.5 in 1991 (Sen 2001). Northern India long has had what Alexander (2000:150) has termed “fatal daughter syndrome.” It has been worst among the propertied in areas of low female economic value in the division of labor and high dowry (Miller 1981). Rosenzweig and Schultz (1982) found a strong inverse relationship between the economic value of adult females and female infant mortality. The relationship was even stronger where females lived outside the village of their birth (Kishor 1993, i.e., patrilocal exogamy). Meanwhile, in the prosperous high-patriarchy Northern Indian states of Haryana, Punjab and Gujerat, sex-selective abortion has surged (Arnold, Kishor and Roy 2002), adding to a sharp rise in the proportion of boys among children 0-7 between 1991-2001: from 107.8 to 113.0 in Gujerat, from 113.8 to 122.0 in Haryana and from 114.3 to 126.1 in Punjab.
  - Without question, there’s not much an ECCE program can do if a disproportionate share of its potential female beneficiaries don’t live to receive the help! Can ECCE make a difference or is it an inadequate vehicle for that purpose? We’ll consider this in the final chapter, when ECCE and the well-being of girl children in comparison with boy children is considered in conjunction with what may be the largest and most successful type of development assistance that puts income directly in the hands of poor women from “Majority World” countries: microfinance.

### C. A Glance at the Urban Situation involving Gender and ECCE in IH and IA Societies.

Since the thrust of this report has been on two types of cultivation systems, horticultural and agrarian, it is beyond its mandate to thoroughly extend the analysis to urban areas. Be that as it may, it should be noted that many of the patterns discussed here for these societies have a history of thousands of years and are deeply embedded in their societies’ cultures. Recent expansion of these societies’ urban population has moved hundreds of millions of rural people to a new milieu, but one that is not yet divorced from their long rural past as horticultural or agrarian people. To a varying but significant extent, the patterns highlighted in this monograph continue to have salience for many migrants to the fast-growing cities. The extent to which the patterns continue to be shared in rural and urban milieus of “Majority World” countries should be part of the scientific research into “local childhoods” that has been suggested as a necessary intermediate step before launching ECCE programs in poor countries (Nsamenang n.d.).

Many of the same trends discussed above have been found in the fast-growing urban and peri-urban populations of IH and IA societies. On the positive side, increasing proportions of urban women now are earning income and, over time, rising income tends to result in a better position for the woman and better support for her children’s ECCE. With high education, an urban woman in these countries can get a modern sector job that helps her to promote her children’s ECCE with paid programs, where these are

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<sup>19</sup> And dowry also is spreading geographically (e.g., into southern India’s rice growing states) as well as down the class and caste ladder.

available. Also, if parents in urban “female deficit” areas expect that their daughters will earn income before marriage, *ceteris paribus*, they may allow more of them to live. As discussed below, however, there might be other factors, ranging from religious rites that must be performed by sons to rising marriage expenses (dowry and/or weddings), that outweigh a few years of income contributed by a still-unmarried daughter. So there is no guarantee that the sex ratio will improve, as further discussed below.

Worldwide, most urban women in the IH and the poorer IA countries don’t work in the modern formal sector. Rather, they struggle to survive in the informal sector of the local economy. Petty trade, domestic service, food service, personal/beauty services, prostitution, and similar pursuits are far more prevalent ways whereby urban women earn money than formal sector jobs. This is especially the case since Structural Adjustment Programs spread widely throughout the “Majority World.” As noted, the “social ministries” have experienced the deepest cuts and it is their employees who suffered the highest rates of being made redundant. In most countries, these also have been the ministries with the highest proportion of female employees; often, government employment has accounted for the largest share of formal sector jobs for women. Once sacked, many of them also end up in the informal sector. The phenomenon of increasing competition in rural informal sector trade already has been mentioned above with reference to sub-Saharan Africa. SAPs have contributed to a similar situation in many urban areas of Africa and Latin America in recent years as well (see articles in Blumberg et al. 1995).

Even more negatively, urban areas in the most patriarchal of the traditionally agrarian societies seem to have even more extreme sex ratios than in rural areas. With more prosperity, there is more access to ultrasounds and sex-selective abortion. And it is in the urban areas that dowry and wedding expenses have been rising the fastest, with often disastrous consequences for females.<sup>20</sup> The sex ratio in prosperous, highly urbanized Singapore and South Korea are 92 and 88 baby girls born per 100 males, respectively, a clear indicator of female feticide (Blumberg and Holian 2004). The problem is not going away, then, with either urbanization or prosperity.

Rising female rates of labor force participation should help somewhat, but cultural/religious factors also are involved. When a well-off urban but patriarchal nation drops below replacement level fertility (~2.1 children per woman), there is even more pressure to make sure that the “priceless child” (Zelizer 1984) include at least one boy. If only males can carry out certain rites involving family and religion, the push toward a more skewed sex ratio is even further intensified. So long as there are more gender-egalitarian but poorer countries in the same general culture area that can be a source of brides for the surplus of young men (e.g., Mongolia and Vietnam for South Korea), there is little incentive for parents to change their sex selection preferences in fertility. Of course, governments may find it a good idea in the not-too-distant future to encourage a more equal sex ratio: many Asian countries (especially in East Asia) have dipped below replacement fertility already. This soon causes problems: an aging, shrinking population with a high dependency ratio can threaten economic growth. And since a country’s fertility is affected by the number and proportion of fertile reproductive age women it has, rather than their male counterparts, governments might respond with various initiatives that would encourage the birth and survival of girl babies. Some of these initiatives might also promote additional and more gender-egalitarian ECCE.

Meanwhile, other aspects of globalization have been providing new sources of paid employment for “Majority World” women, especially urban ones. Export processing manufacturing, especially that done in Export Processing Zones (EPZs) are disproportionately employing young women, mostly single, but others married with at least one young child. These jobs are generally low-paid (although they may pay more than comparable work in nationally-owned firms producing for domestic consumption). In some countries, e.g., Taiwan and Singapore, young women are expected to turn over at least half of their pay to their parents (Greenhalgh 1985; Salaff 1981). But this is not always the case, as studies in, e.g., Java, Indonesia (Wolf 1991) and Guatemala City (Kusterer 1981; Blumberg 1994) have documented. Continuing globalization will create both new opportunities and new dislocations worldwide, but there is

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<sup>20</sup> In recent years, for example, a nasty problem has arisen in India with “dowry deaths.” These most frequently occur after marriage, where a groom’s family becomes dissatisfied with the agreed-upon dowry and demands more, without success. Dousing the woman’s sari in cooking oil or kerosene and setting her afire has been the most common method (sometimes, it is called “bride burning”). Of course, it is illegal. But lagging prosecutions and convictions of those accused of this crime have galvanized Indian feminists’ campaigns to combat the problem.

no expectation that these will reverse the trend of more “Majority World” women earning and controlling at least some income. In turn, this should lead to them having more say about – and additional means to support – their children’s ECCE, given women’s spending priorities.

Their countries, however, may not create ECCE programs most suited to the needs of their own citizens and children, rural or urban. This is because so many of the extant initiatives in “Majority World” countries are being funded by “Minority World” international NGOs (INGOs), bilateral aid programs (e.g., those of the Nordic countries and Netherlands) or other large-scale donors. And what they are exporting tends to be based on their own situations – and their own budgets and level of GDP/capita. Consequently, these programs need to be supplemented by those based on empirical research on the local situations of ECCE-age children. This research should examine mothers’ economic position (and the nature of the underlying, albeit evolving, techno-economic base), extant child-rearing and socialization patterns, and the links between these factors.

Today, we cannot and should not try to blindly replicate some of the “learning-by-doing” child-rearing efforts of, say, a traditional patri-oriented horticultural group, let alone those of a foraging band. Instead, one road to better ECCE efforts and outcomes in the “Majority World” may come from looking at the programs found in the wealthy advanced industrial countries and combing them for elements that do correspond to “local childhoods” as well as the economic situations of local mothers.

Accordingly, Chapter IV presents a quick look at the ECCE initiatives currently being undertaken in Europe and the United States, with a few examples of recent programs undertaken in IH and IA societies.

#### IV. A BRIEF LOOK AT ECCE EFFORTS IN THE “MINORITY WORLD” AND BEYOND

The European model. Organized ECCE efforts originated in Europe. This short chapter begins with an overview drawn primarily from Kamerman’s work (2005). Her main focus is on ECCE in the wealthy European and Anglo countries in the 1960-1990 period. But she also sketches in some recent efforts in Africa, Asia and Latin America – where, she observes, “access is very limited” (2005:1).

She also summarizes the pre-1960 situation as follows:

The roots of ECEC [her term for ECCE] policies and programs in the European countries can be found in two mid-19<sup>th</sup> century developments: (1) protective services for neglected children and the children of poor working mothers; and (2) preschool education focused on enhancing or enriching the development of middle class children. Subsequently, during and after World War II, a third component began to shape these policies, namely that of responding to the needs of the growing numbers of women in the labor force, who wanted decent quality and affordable care for their children. And fourth, more recently, preparing young children for school has been an added factor (Kamerman 2005:9).

These programs were described by a UNESCO 1961 report, based on a survey of 65 mostly industrial countries, as “expensive to establish and operate” (*ibid.*:3). This makes them problematic for nearly-broke “Majority World” nations. Consider Sweden’s ECCE efforts and just how much they must cost:

In 1985 the Parliament passed a law stating that by 1991 all children aged 18 months to 6 years would have the right to a place in public child care and by 1995 a subsequent law required the municipalities to provide places for children aged 1-12 (*ibid.*:8).

She also notes that wherever ECCE programs in these countries were made free or very low cost to parents, as well as voluntary, they met with enormous parental enthusiasm (*ibid.*:10). No doubt, but, again, how feasible is it to expect governments in poor countries to be able to mount such efforts?

Nevertheless, we now know that ECCE is definitely worth it in terms of child outcomes: In recent years, research has been carried out documenting the positive consequences of good ECCE programs – but, again, the research is from the European and Anglo-American countries (Kamerman et al. 2003). How can such benefits be captured by the “have-nots”?

Part of the reason for high costs is that ECCE programs are part and parcel of paid maternity (and sometimes paternity) leave policies in wealthy countries; they also may be part of anti-poverty efforts aimed at children. Let us look at each in turn.

First, concerning the costly ECCE/parental leave efforts, Kamerman notes that among OECD nations, only the U.S. and Australia “have no paid, universal, non-means-tested leave” (*ibid.*:11). Clearly, going this route would exceed the financial capacity of almost all “Majority World” countries. In many of these, there are policies on the books about extremely liberal benefits for formal sector workers. But very few workers – especially female workers – qualify. To focus ECCE resources on this relatively tiny and privileged subgroup would further tilt the programs toward the comparatively affluent urban minority.

Second, with respect to ECCE/anti-poverty programs, Coltrane and Coltrane compile a table (2001:169, Table 6.1) from a number of sources for the following “Minority World” countries: the U.S., Australia, Canada, Ireland, Israel, United Kingdom, Italy, Germany, France, Netherlands, Norway, Luxembourg, Belgium, Denmark, Switzerland, Sweden and Finland. They present three statistics: (1) the percent of children in poverty before assistance, (2) the percent remaining in poverty after assistance, and (3) the percent of children lifted out of poverty by government programs. The percentage of children living in poverty ranges from 5.1% for Switzerland to 25.9% for the U.S. and 29.6% for the U.K. After assistance, the percentages of kids remaining in poverty range from 2.5% in Finland and 2.7% in Sweden to 21.5% in the U.S. (the U.K. figure goes down to 9.9%). Overall, the percentage of children lifted out of poverty by



public sector programs ranges from 17% in the U.S. and Italy (which has a much lower “before” rate than the U.S., 11.5%; this goes down to 9.6% “after”) to 86% in Sweden. (These results tie in with the much more private-sector nature of ECCE/daycare in the U.S, discussed below.)

The conclusion must be that these European efforts are out of synch as a potential model for “Majority World” ECCE efforts, primarily for reasons of cost and coverage. What about the situation in the U.S. – does its private-sector focused ECCE efforts point to a more appropriate model for the developing world?

The United States (de facto) model. Surely there is a great need for ECCE in the United States. First, consider its female labor force participation statistics. In 1998, for example, 63% of married women with pre-school children – as well as 61% of mothers of children under one year old and almost 80% of wives with school-age children – were in the paid labor force.

But who cares for these children? In the U.S., less than a third of pre-school age children are cared for in a licensed, organized venue (mostly private sector non-profits); fathers, by contrast, care for 20% of those ECCE-age children while their mothers work (Coltrane and Collins 2001:424-425; the remainder is cared for by other individuals, relatives or non-relatives). Nor surprisingly, also in 1998, a Harris Poll random sample survey found that “nine of 10 American adults reported that finding affordable quality child-care was difficult” (*ibid.*:426). In another poll, 86% agreed with the statement that child-care should be available to all low-income families so that parents can work (Kellogg Foundation 1999). Among developed industrial countries, the U.S. is at one end of the continuum of public vs. private solutions to ECCE, with most costs borne by parents rather than government. Translating this approach to the “Majority World” would mean that parents much poorer than the average in the U.S. would have to shoulder costs and burdens that 90% of Americans found difficult. Clearly, this is not a model either.

There is evidence that well-off countries – even the U.S. – expand ECCE programs to accommodate women workers who have **high strategic indispensability** at a given point in time. Kamerman cites the fact that in the U.S., it was during war times – the Civil War, World War I and World War II – that day nurseries flourished, only to decline again at war’s end (Kamerman 2005: 8-9). Nothing quite comparable currently seems to be occurring in “Majority World” countries, even those involved in conflicts, which would require them to promote child-care for a group of women who are indispensable for economic development. No model here either.

The formerly socialist countries of Europe. Before turning to possible models from developing countries, let us consider the example of the (formerly) socialist countries. ECCE, unfortunately, has been on a bit of a roller coaster in the ex-socialist countries. Pre-1989, they were characterized by high levels of female labor force participation as well as (1) high levels of coverage of children 3-primary school age, and (2) long maternity leaves to accommodate the under 3’s. Immediately post-1989, these countries went through an initial dumping of such programs on the grounds that (1) the new capitalist governments could no longer afford them, and (2) they made female labor so much more expensive than male that firms now forced to respond to the “bottom line” could not justify keeping reproductive age female employees.

According to Kamerman (*ibid.*:14), many of these countries are gradually restoring some of their ECCE benefits as their economies improve but things still are a far cry from the heyday of socialism. Parental and relatives’ care might be one substitute for nursery care but for countries with the typically high female labor force participation of the ex-socialist ones, finding parents or relatives who are not otherwise occupied and free to provide care for ECCE-age children may not be an easy task. Still, some attention should be paid to the programs that are being resurrected or new ones being launched. Are there any creative, more affordable solutions than the high cost public sector European approaches, or the high cost private sector/individual system now extant in the United States?

Under socialism, women overwhelmingly worked in the formal sector, including in public sector employment. As the ex-socialist nations’ economies privatize, their “second economies” (i.e., informal sector) have come out of the shadows. Is another possibility for ECCE/daycare emerging in such places – programs that are entrepreneurial, as opposed to the previous state-funded efforts? One might expect new types of enterprises to emerge in the dynamic areas of transition economies where the informal sector

picks up the slack for activities that (1) were formerly supplied/supported by the public sector, and (2) for which demand continues to exist. Research to identify and analyze any promising candidates might prove useful in moving toward a better model for poorer nations and people.

The “Majority World” – varied approaches in search of a model. Realistically, with money the missing ingredient in public sector ECCE programs in poor countries, some forms of private programs will remain the chief delivery vehicle. There are some important variations in private programs, however, some of which show more promise than others. Not all extant private efforts are aimed at those who are urban and comfortably situated.

- On the one hand, there are charity-oriented efforts (many of them funded by religious groups, especially conservative ones), and a number of grant programs from international donors, including some INGOs (International Non-Governmental Organizations).
- On the other hand, there are community-level, self-organized, self-help efforts started by local women themselves.
- Charity and grant programs are not likely to have the coverage and sustainability that would be needed for a comprehensive ECCE effort in poorer countries. What about the female-organized local programs?

Women doing it themselves: some drawbacks, but a possible model? Women-created and run ECCE programs sprang up all over Latin America in the wake of the debt crisis and SAPs in the 1980s and 1990s. They have been most prevalent where women have turned to the informal sector for income they need to make ends meet. By definition, working hours are more flexible in the informal sector. In fact, such community-based, women-run ECCE groups offer two desirable characteristics for struggling “Majority World” countries: (1) they are cheap, since the mothers themselves provide the services, and (2) they are more likely to be compatible with the exigencies of informal sector employment, the primary source of income generation for poor women in these countries. Might there be a way to further stabilize and enrich such programs at low cost? This is an avenue worth exploring in countries where adopting the sort of high-cost program described above for Sweden is not even a remote possibility over the short term.

Another advantage of working with community-based, women-run groups is that they are likely to be less skewed toward boys than more expensive programs or those run by some of the charity/grant donors, including conservative religious groups. One problem with women’s self-created ECCE groups is that it is harder to organize such programs in rural areas of low to moderate population density (vs. urban areas or even the high-density villages of 1,000 or more found in some Asian industrializing wet rice agrarian societies, such as Bangladesh). This affects rural Latin America and, especially, sub-Saharan Africa.

Solving the gender gap in ECCE and education in Africa requires additional effort because so many of the mothers of young children must be economically active<sup>21</sup> (as we saw in the previous discussion of horticultural and industrializing horticultural societies), and have no choice but to rely on their older daughters to care for younger children, even if this means depriving them of schooling. What is urgently needed is an inexpensive and convenient place where younger boys and girls can be looked after (and, hopefully, provided with broad ECCE services) so that their older sisters can go to school.

Lokshin et al. (2000) found that as mother’s wages rise, the effect on boys’ enrollment is positive but negative for girls, because their labor is used to substitute for the mother’s now-more-valuable time. Similarly, increasing the cost of paid child-care has a worse impact on older girls because hard-pressed working mothers might cut costs by enlisting their older daughters, negatively affecting their schooling, rather than leaving the labor force themselves.

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<sup>21</sup> Some recent studies in the long debate on whether maternal employment negatively affects children include Fong and Lokshin 2000, who found that lower cost child-care increased Romanian mothers’ employment, thus reducing poverty, and Baum 2003, who found that the negative effects of U.S. mothers of children < 3 months returning to work partly offset by the positive effects of increased family income)

So the key variable for ECCE programs wherever mothers must remain economically active, with child-care and ECCE having to work around this fact, is low-cost. But, I argue, it is just as important that such programs do not exacerbate the gender gap in education, particularly with respect to older daughters.

An additional problem with even smoothly functioning women-organized initiatives is that if they focus exclusively on ECCE, they may be good for the children but they don't, in and of themselves, solve the problem that almost universally emerges in interviews with poor women in developing countries: their need for more – and self-controlled – income. This is not a criticism of the women's programs; rather it is an observation that the ideal ECCE program, based on all the material presented to this point, is one that economically empowers the mother while providing ECCE services to her sons and daughters. Are there any such models? In other words, are there low-cost approaches that go beyond the Latin American community-based, informal sector women-run ECCE initiatives and also try to enhance the mother's economic situation so that she can better help her children with comprehensive ECCE?<sup>22</sup>

The “let a hundred flowers bloom” approach. First, it would be useful to look for innovative approaches emerging from the grass roots, whether for ECCE alone, or for ECCE combined with income-generation for the mother. One obvious candidate is microfinance, which will be the main vehicle proposed in the concluding chapter. Other possibilities are far less visible. Perhaps donors might run **contests** in various poor countries to identify any innovative new programs that might be addressing ECCE in a way that is more locally appropriate than the expensive European-American-Anglo model. In short, one of the first types of research about “local childhoods” (as mentioned above) might be a search for previously unheralded local models of child-care, more comprehensive ECCE programs, and, perhaps, those that attempt to promote the mother's economic empowerment. Such models might be more in tune with the schedules, resources and resource needs of local mothers than those imported from the “Minority World.”

Second, Kamerman describes two approaches from developing countries that bear mentioning in this context:

- She describes (2005:21) how **Vietnam** moved from a system whereby grandparents and other elder relatives cared for 87% of children under 3 in the home to one where out-of-home care is now provided for over half of the 3-6 year olds. What is not clear is whether the 0-3 children still are being cared for by elderly kin and how much the 3-6 year old care costs, and how these costs are divided between the government and the parents.
- She also describes another low-cost model used in **India** (*ibid.*:24):  
The focal point for the delivery of services is the *anganwadi* (courtyard garden), a term borrowed from the simple child care centre which could be run in the courtyard of any village home. The *anganwadi worker*, the key worker and first paraprofessional in the child care service, is usually a local woman. She is considered a community worker earning a small honorarium for the services she renders to the community. The cost of the...program averages \$10-\$22 per child a year.

This particular initiative has been evaluated and has been found to have a positive impact on the survival, growth and development (including psycho-social development) of both boys and girls. Such programs also were found to indirectly enhance enrollment and retention rates of girls in primary schools by providing a substitute care facility for younger siblings (*ibid.*:25). How replicable is this approach, especially in those poor countries where, as in India, there are gender gaps favoring boys in both education and survival itself? The fact that the evaluation mentioned benefits for both sexes – as well as low cost – makes this a type of program that merits further evaluation and analysis for its potential as a model. In the conclusions, Chapter V, an attempt will be made to incorporate the *anganwadi* approach into a proposed model that combines microfinance and ECCE components.

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<sup>22</sup> One model for ECCE that is inadequate for contemporary “Majority World” societies is the one we have seen in the historical discussion, above, where women just take their small children (0-3) with them to the fields or the market or wherever this is not incompatible with the nature of their work. Kamerman describes this as the way that mothers in present-day rural Cambodia (presumably, in irrigated rice areas) deal with child-care needs (2005:20).

New ideas (such as this Indian low-cost approach that targets ECCE-age girls and boys, while indirectly helping their older sisters to stay in school) are urgently needed, as Kamerman's Figure 8b (2005:49) makes clear. The only gender-disaggregated table in her report measures "new entrants in primary grade 1 who have experienced some form of ECCE program by gender (2000)." What is discernible from the table is that the countries with the highest – and most gender-egalitarian – enrollment rates are those with high female labor force participation (e.g., Mauritius and the Seychelles in Africa; Caribbean countries), or significant wealth (e.g., Brunei with its oil, Macao with its gambling revenues). Receiving high levels of assistance from international donors and NGOs (e.g., the Palestinian Authority) resulted in more enrollment than might be expected otherwise, but with a notable male advantage. For countries with anemic rates of GDP growth or fewer donors, the solutions still remain elusive.

This short, cursory look at programs in affluent countries and a few cutting edge initiatives in poorer nations has found no "magic bullet" that could be broadly applicable to the "Majority World." But it does appear that community-based efforts that build on the organizing and involvement of the mothers themselves offer the potential for the most affordable and gender-egalitarian ECCE in contemporary developing societies. One possible "next step" could be a search to identify innovative and low-cost approaches in poorer and/or ex-socialist or countries that are not predicated on an older daughter's educational disadvantage. Another is to elicit innovative new solutions by means of contests, grants, etc., using the "let a hundred flowers bloom" model for developing viable new strategies for an emerging issue or problem. A third step is to simultaneously try to help the child while increasing the mother's income.

Let us turn now to the final chapter, which, following some conclusions, presents my proposed microfinance-ECCE model that is aimed at that third step. My proposal flows from the issues identified in the preceding sections of the report but it goes beyond the sorts of programs examined to this point: I put forth some ideas for an ECCE that is (1) locally adapted, (2) low-cost, (3) doesn't hurt and, in the best case, actually helps older daughters, and (4) is linked to mothers' economic activities, and helps their economic empowerment as well, by being run in conjunction with a viable microfinance program.

## V. NOW WHAT? CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS THAT TAKE FEMALE ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT INTO ACCOUNT IN PROMOTING ECCE IN THE “MAJORITY WORLD”

### A. Some Conclusions and Recommendations, and a Proposal

From the cross-historical, cross-societal materials in Chapters I-III, one ECCE-related conclusion stands out: *with greater economic empowerment, mothers are generally able to foster better child welfare and “comprehensive ECCE” for both their daughters and their sons.* The major exception encountered involves some African women farmers keeping older daughters home from school to help with the farming, as well as with sibling care and provision of water and wood. Therefore, the main “lesson learned” from this vis-à-vis ECCE should be to try to combine initiatives that generate income under female control with those encompassing “comprehensive ECCE.” The corresponding **recommendation (1)** is: *provide programs that improve the economic empowerment/income of mothers in order to promote the welfare and “comprehensive ECCE” of their sons and daughters.*

The second conclusion concerns the characteristics that seem most desirable in ECCE efforts aimed at low- income, vulnerable people in poor nations. Based on all the materials in the preceding chapters, ECCE efforts in developing countries need to be designed to:

- Be congruent with local childhoods and cultures;
- Be affordable for poor families as well as poor countries;
- Take the economic position and power of the mother into account, and, where possible, enhance it;
- Be as beneficial for pre-primary age girls as boys, and
- Not have a negative impact on the schooling and life chances of their older sisters – given that Lokshin et al. (2000) found that rising mother’s income, as well as costs of child-care, had a negative impact on their education.

The **recommendation (2)** that flows from this reinforces the previous recommendation in a very specific and concrete way. It has three parts: *(a) boost women’s incomes and economic empowerment through microfinance – small loans and, sometimes, related services (such as savings, training, networking, etc.); (b) integrate ECCE activities aimed at both girls and boys into the regularly scheduled meetings and activities that are part of the most common – and successful – microfinance models, and (c) supplement the ECCE provided in conjunction with microfinance meetings with one or both of the lowest cost options considered above: the Indian anganwadi system or the women’s self-organized ECCE programs found mostly in Latin America.*

Before discussing the world of microfinance and how it could be wed to the world of ECCE, a third finding must be noted: in certain countries with (a) patriarchal traditions in kinship, property and culture, where (b) adult women are of low economic productivity and do not earn and control any significant income, and/or dowry/wedding expenses are high and rising, then (c) the sex ratio is likely to be distorted, with sizeable proportions of females eliminated as fetuses, infants or toddlers. Parents not committed to raising a daughter to adulthood are not likely to invest in her ECCE, comprehensive or otherwise.

This leads to a challenge, rather than a simple recommendation. Can a program tying together microfinance – that increases income under female control – with ECCE result in a reduction in the disincentives for raising girls, and, thereby, promote a more balanced sex ratio? In other words, can a combined microfinance-comprehensive ECCE initiative ultimately reduce the incidence of “fatal daughter syndrome”? This sounds like a tall order but it will be briefly considered.

Principally, however, I propose that pilot efforts be launched that merge the worlds of microfinance and ECCE. To my knowledge, this has not been done before among mainstream microfinance programs.<sup>23</sup> Recently, however, even some fairly orthodox, “best practices” microfinance institutions (these terms are

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<sup>23</sup> I, personally, never have encountered such a combination of efforts in any of the 15 countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America where I have researched microfinance programs.

discussed below) have been adding “social” components, such as life insurance that pays off the loan (e.g., in a number of high HIV/AIDS African countries), and health plans or even on-site health clinics (e.g., Ecuador’s FED, as described in Blumberg 2001b). Previously, such efforts might have been criticized as violating the “minimalist” (loans only) approach to microcredit followed by most “best practices” microfinance entities. But now, as discussed below, the new report by the Microcredit Summit Campaign (Daley-Harris 2005) advocates adding selected social components.

The microcredit side of the joint effort, ideally, would enhance income under female control. In turn, based on the argument and data presented in this monograph, such increased income should (1) empower mothers’ “voice and vote” in household decisions about spending on children’s “comprehensive ECCE,” and (2) enable them to spend their own income on this as well. The evidence discussed above also indicates that when women spend income they control, the result is greater gender equity in ECCE spending and outcomes.

### B. The Marriage of Microfinance and ECCE: A Match Made in Heaven?

Linking ECCE to microfinance could be a “win-win” scenario for all concerned. Microfinance, as indicated above, involves giving small loans to microentrepreneurs, sometimes in conjunction with other services (e.g., savings, training, networking and peer support). It is arguably the most successful – and fastest growing – form of development assistance to have emerged in the last half century or so. The latest available data, from the Microcredit Summit Campaign (Daley-Harris 2005:1), are as follows:

3,164 microcredit institutions [reached] 92,270,289 clients, 66,614,871 of whom were among the poorest when they took their first loan. Of these poorest clients, 83.5%, or 55,622,406 million, are women... Assuming five persons per family, the 66.6 million poorest clients reached by the end of 2004 affected some 333 million family members.

A variety of studies (e.g., Daley-Harris 2005; Khandker 2005) indicate that a series of microcredit loans over several years has led many clients out of poverty.<sup>24</sup> Most of these programs put money directly into the hands of poor women. Their better economic situation also has permitted many more female clients to better feed, educate and improve the health of their children even if they continue to be counted among the poor. This is what I term the “synergy bonus” of putting income under female control (Blumberg 1989a): women tend to do at least as well as their male counterparts on the economic activities that are the focus of assistance (for example, they almost universally have a better loan repayment record than counterpart men (Blumberg 2001b)). But in addition, as a “synergy bonus,” they do far better than men at devoting income they don’t plow back into the economic activity in question into their children’s human capital development: nutrition, education, health and survival.

Bono, the lead singer of U2 makes an even stronger claim:

You know that mantra, “Give a man a fish; he’ll eat for a day. Teach a man to fish, he’ll eat for a lifetime?” It’s missing something: microfinance is the fishing rod, the boat, the net, etc. Cash and dignity, side by side... Maybe the mantra should be: “Give a man a fish; he’ll eat for a day. Give a woman microcredit, she, her husband, her children and her extended family will eat for a lifetime” (Daley-Harris 2005:31).

In terms of my general theory of gender stratification, the benefits to the woman go beyond making a better living to gaining self-confidence and empowerment in many spheres of life, and the potential benefits to her daughters and sons extend from higher survival rates of the girls to the greater well-being of both sexes and on to the enhanced wealth and well-being of her nation (Blumberg 1989a).

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<sup>24</sup> Khandker’s 14-year study (2005) of 3 MFIs in Bangladesh (Grameen Bank, BRAC and RD-12) found that poverty in all villages studied decreased over 20% for those who, in 1998/1999 had been clients since 1991/92. Over half this drop proved directly attributable to microfinance and the impact was greater on “extreme poverty” than “moderate poverty.” Khandker concluded that microfinance accounted for 40% of the total reduction in “moderate poverty” in rural Bangladesh (see also Daley-Harris 2005:12-13).

Before further specifying the link I am proposing between microfinance and ECCE, an overview of the rise of the “microfinance movement” is in order.

### C. The Evolutionary History of the “Microfinance Movement”

To summarize the story, modern microcredit programs have, in the last couple of decades, all but eliminated the previous type of credit programs, which involved subsidized loans, and now have become one of the largest and, arguably, most successful type of development assistance in the post-World War II period.

Subsidized credit sounds like such a wonderful idea: offering loans at below-market rates to poor people, because “they can’t afford to pay the high rates the banks charge.” Unfortunately, it never worked out in practice. By 1971, Dale Adams of Ohio State University demonstrated that such projects invariably fail (see also Adams 1984). There are at least three reasons why.

*First*, subsidized credit is actually giving away money at below its cost – rather like handing out \$20 bills for \$10. Even if the official target group involves the poor, these subsidized credit projects “trickle up”: most of their loans go to the well-off and the well-connected. (Sometimes, the beneficiaries are the best-off members of the target group but in many other instances, the beneficiaries are well above the stratum of society the loans were supposed to benefit.) The rest of the loans go to legitimate members of the target group because there have to be some “poster children” who can be trotted out for the donors when they come to assess the project.

*Second*, some of the powerful and privileged recipients decide to test their theory that a program offering money below its cost is really a charity, and delay or withhold payments to see what will happen. If no burly enforcers show up with baseball bats or equivalent, they tell their friends who also have loans and before long the repayment rate has plummeted. Soon most payments come from the poor “poster children” who tend to fear authority and also don’t want to ruin what may have been the first aid they’ve ever gotten.

*Third*, the donors discover that the loan fund has decapitalized. Typically, they replenish it at least once. But after several replenishments, the reality of a dismal repayment rate leads them to conclude that their money is going down a rat hole. They cancel the project and subsidized credit has logged another failure.

Although ACCION International, a not-for-profit INGO working in Latin America, began to make some “micro” loans in 1973 (Economist 2005:4), Mohammad Yunus of Bangladesh is generally credited with initiating the modern approach to microcredit that, within a couple of decades, replaced most subsidized credit. In 1976, when he was a professor at Chittagong University, he borrowed money to lend to poor villagers in Bangladesh in order to test his conviction that such people really were credit-worthy. His gamble paid off: All the money was repaid and by the early 1980s, the institution he founded, the Grameen Bank,<sup>25</sup> had been chartered by the Government of Bangladesh. By August 2005, the Grameen Bank had reached five million clients, affecting 25 million people. There were Grameen Banks in over half the villages of Bangladesh but the proportion of borrowers had evolved from 64% men to 96% women. This came about because of two factors. On the one hand, Yunus discovered that women tended to be better than men clients about repaying their loans – and on time. On the other hand, he learned that women clients used any new income not plowed back into the microenterprise for the well-being of their family, especially their children’s nutrition, education and health. Grameen runs a claimed repayment rate of around 98%; in fact, the modern “best practices” (these are discussed below) microfinance institutions typically have repayment rates above 95%.

What is the Grameen model? Yunus pioneered the idea of the “solidarity group,” usually five people, who mutually guarantee each other’s loans. This reduces transaction costs because the vetting of potential loan

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<sup>25</sup> Grameen means “village.”

recipients is done by fellow group members rather than loan officers. The loans were very small and intended as short-term working capital. Every week, the clients of about 6-8 solidarity groups meet in a “center,” to publicly make their loan payments. They also recite the “16 Decisions,” in which they promise to educate their children, not pay or receive “the evil of dowry,” etc. The Grameen model has proven particularly well-suited for the large (with populations of around 1,000), villages of a wet rice agrarian economy.<sup>26</sup>

In 1983, one of the key figures in ACCION, Jeffrey Ashe, visited Grameen and decided the model could be adapted to the situation of the Latin American urban informal sector with which ACCION worked. Since ACCION had no government backing, it had to pay stricter attention to the bottom line and quickly moved to charge enough to cover operating costs. Its early experiences also involved high repayment rates (generally higher for women clients) and high demand for loans, despite their non-subsidized rates of interest. In reality, ACCION was competing with local moneylenders, who charged exorbitant rates of interest in comparison. ACCION soon was working with a number of affiliates in a variety of Latin American countries. It promoted individual as well as solidarity group loans.

Since then, other INGOs and local institutions have pioneered variations of these two basic models: some of the better-known names include FINCA, Catholic Relief Services, Women’s World Banking and Pride Africa. Pre-existing government programs in Indonesia also have been pursuing a model similar to the emerging “best practices” microfinance model (Otero and Rhyne 1994). Daley-Harris (2005:27) cites Michael Chu, a past president of ACCION about one of the most startling accomplishments of “best practices” programs:

The confirmation that microenterprise credit can be managed to achieve economic viability is an accomplishment of revolutionary proportions. This permits an activity motivated by social impact to break free of the structural paradox of most humanitarian efforts, in which the cost of reaching every additional person brings the program closer to its economic limits. Successful microfinance, on the contrary, becomes more self-sufficient with scale.

In theory, a well-run microfinance institution (MFI) that carefully calculates the interest rate it needs to keep itself in business can cover its operating costs in 3-5 years and be fully profitable, covering the full costs of capital, in 5-7 years. Successful MFIs have spawned competition from private sector banks in a number of countries (mostly in Latin America) and virtually all the major international donors have microfinance programs. Meanwhile, some of the early pioneers are evolving into full-fledged banks so that they don’t lose their best clients as their businesses expand and so that they have the legal right to mobilize savings from their clients. We now know that at any given moment, there are more poor people with a small amount of money they’d like to save if they could find a safe place for it than there are poor people who want and need microcredit loans. Thus, being transformed into an institution that is allowed to handle savings can greatly increase the reach – and rate of portfolio growth – of an MFI.

As “best practices” evolved, they came to include computerized management information systems (MIS) that provide up-to-date information about the state of the overall portfolio and that of each loan officer, often disaggregated by both gender and type of business (production, services, commerce) of each client. In addition, it was learned that loan officers (1) assigned geographically, who (2) received a good proportion of their compensation in the form of a bonus for maintaining a portfolio arrears rate below a target figure (typically 5% or less) while serving at least the minimum target of new clients per month would soon get to know their territories and aggressively seek out the best risks. This has led to considerable “feminization” of microcredit.

For example, a 1999 evaluation by the UN’s Food and Agriculture Organization microcredit operations in the Philippines revealed that MFIs that followed “best practices,” as measured by having computerized

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<sup>26</sup> Yunus describes his strategy as “...whatever banks did, I did the opposite. If banks lent to the rich, I lent to the poor. If banks lent to men, I lent to women. If banks made large loans, I made small ones. If banks required collateral, my loans were collateral free. If banks required a lot of paperwork, my loans were illiterate friendly. If you had to go to the bank, my bank went to the village. Yes, that was my strategy. Whatever banks did, I did the opposite” (Daley-Harris 2005:7).



MIS, averaged about 70% female clients; MFIs that did not have computerized MIS had less than half women clients (Roberts 1999). Other studies have found women clients to be almost universally better at repayment and not diverting loans than male counterparts (Blumberg 2001b). Therefore, some MFIs, especially in Africa, choose not to work with male clients, although this can create a backlash by resentful men (Blumberg 2004c). As a consequence of these emerging trends, the number (and proportion) of women MFI clients have soared. Among the 3,164 microcredit institutions reporting to the Microcredit Summit Campaign, the number of very poor women reached has risen from 10.3 million at the end of 1999 to 55.6 million at the end of 2004, a 440% increase (Daley-Harris 2005:25). In contrast, most subsidized credit (where repayment rates never were given the importance typical of MFIs), went to men.

Initially, “best practices” tended to emphasize “minimalist” programs: just the loans and nothing else. Other entities also provided training, networking and other services but MFIs trying to follow best practices tried to avoid such programs or, at least, keep the accounting separate. This was to be able to report a low arrears rate that satisfied their donors. But as microfinance has expanded to about 100 million clients and counting (*ibid.*), there have been some additional components added in a number of places. As noted, life insurance began to be offered, especially in high HIV/AIDS areas of Africa. Typically, any charges would be amortized with the loan. Other additions have involved health, since illness is a major cause of arrears and defaults.

Now, the Microcredit Summit Campaign is calling for even more flexibility and innovative thinking, so that instead of a rigid “best practices” model, there should be a focus on “sound practices” that are appropriate for different objectives in different contexts (*ibid.*:9)

Part of this evolutionary thinking is that “microfinance is an incomplete solution for many poor people and that its impact can be magnified if used in combination with complimentary strategies” (*ibid.*:8). The complimentary strategy proposed in the 2005 Microcredit Summit Campaign report involves health education. Their “four core themes” include helping clients’ families.<sup>27</sup> Why couldn’t such a “complimentary strategy” involve ECCE as the second element? Here is a proposed approach combining the two.

#### D. Adding ECCE to a Grameen Model Microfinance Program: A Pilot Experiment

The basic idea. Most of the Grameen model programs still revolve around solidarity groups and weekly meetings. A number of them already use the approximately two hours during which clients from some 6-8 solidarity groups make their payments to present useful programs (e.g., health education, family planning) for the members. There is no reason that women could not bring their ECCE-age child (or children) to the meeting and have them be exposed to ECCE activities. Women would be asked to bring their youngest, regardless of gender.

A few older daughters also would be encouraged to come, as well, in order to help care for the youngest while more enriched activities could be directed to slightly older children. The timing of the meetings would have to be arranged so that it would not interfere with school attendance for the older daughters. Small incentives related to education could be offered to the participating older daughters (e.g., notebooks or other school supplies, perhaps even textbooks) and they and their mothers would receive certificates suitable for framing (easily produced on any computer these days) recognizing their support of ECCE. The older daughters themselves might be grouped in a sort of “junior solidarity group” modeled on Junior Achievement or other income-generating programs for older children and teens. There would be two conditions for their membership: (1) their mothers would have to pledge to keep them in school, and (2) their fathers (if present) would be encouraged to pledge their support, too. For very poor families, incentives can be modest indeed to have an impact.

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<sup>27</sup> These core themes are: (1) reaching the poorest, (2) reaching and empowering women, (3) building financially self-sufficient institutions, and (4) ensuring a positive, measurable impact on the lives of clients and their families.

The idea would be to run a pilot program that could be polished by trial and error and then extended to culturally similar places that use the same Grameen model. At the start, information could be collected about the women clients' educational practices and plans vis-à-vis both their daughters and sons, and their ideas concerning comprehensive ECCE for their younger children. Once a viable pilot program is up and running, say, after six months, they could be queried again.

How to measure results. It is suggested that a rapid appraisal methodology (RAM) be employed for both the baseline and the subsequent rounds. While this methodology includes data gathered via individual "key informant" interviews, it also uses an eclectic variety of additional methods, such as focus groups, observation, and even small surveys – although these are rarely used at the beginning of an exploratory research project because of the difficulty in knowing the issues and the possible alternatives for closed-end questions at this stage. Instead, the various rapid appraisal methodologies all share one commonality: the use of "triangulation" for establishing validity. Triangulation involves a tightly honed list of variables and issues; for each, a minimum of two data sources are gathered, preferably via two different data collection techniques (Blumberg 2002b).

Building on the basic model. Once the mothers – and fathers – were on board with respect to ECCE being presented at the weekly meetings, where services would be free, there might be a concomitant push to organize one or both of the following supplementary approaches:

- An *angunwadi* arrangement in a centrally located and appropriate home, where the woman in charge would get a small stipend, as in the Indian version discussed above;
- A self-organized group similar to those created by poor Latin American mothers working – or hoping to work – in the informal sector.

Considering that purdah still is very widespread in Bangladesh, the remarkable coverage achieved by microfinance programs (with Grameen Bank, alone, operating in more than half the country's villages) is an even more impressive achievement. It also means that the husbands of those women have acquiesced at least to the point of permitting their wives to break purdah for, at minimum, the weekly meeting. This bodes well for adding an ECCE component to those meetings, because both women clients and their husbands already have demonstrated a willingness to try new things that they see as helping the family. Impact evaluations have gone beyond the economic performance of women loan recipients to show that they tend to expand their horizons not only with respect to business and business networking but also with respect to their own personal behavior and their aspirations and practices vis-à-vis their own children.

- For example, some rather dramatic changes in **fertility** intentions and behavior have been documented among clients of another large microfinance program in Bangladesh, BRAC. Jeffrey Sachs (2005:13-14) was astonished to find that the average fertility was between one and two children and that all the women he visited intended to have no more than two children; a generation ago, the norm had been 6-7 children. Women clients taking control over their own fertility has been a common theme in impact studies, even though sometimes the women in question may have to use subterfuge. Consider what happened in the following, involving clients of ADEMI, an ACCION affiliate in the Dominican Republic (Blumberg 2001b:287):

I had just interviewed a male client who ran a microenterprise producing men's pants from a shed attached to the rear of their very humble house; his wife was present. She had her own loan from ADEMI so we walked several blocks down an unpaved, rutted street toward her tiny shop selling miscellaneous items (*tienda de fantasías*) on the main street of their barrio. En route, I asked her about her husband's comments that they were trying to have a child. This was a recent union and she already had three children (the youngest 9 years old). During her husband's interview, when he said this, she responded, "We'll see; we'll see." Now she told me, "Let him keep hoping. I once even told him I thought I was pregnant and then that it was a false alarm. He doesn't know it, but after we got together I had myself sterilized (*ya me operaron*). I have my business to run!"

- Since a commitment to **educating their children** is one of the "16 Decisions" Grameen clients recite each week, they presumably would be quite supportive not only of the ECCE program run

in conjunction with the two-hour weekly meeting, but also of additional efforts that would expose their pre-school children to enrichment activities. This is especially likely to be the case, since their children's attendance would give them an additional respite from child-care that could be beneficial for their business ventures. Several ways of paying for an additional *auganwadi*-type effort could be offered as options: (1) adding the modest cost to their latest loan and having the amount amortized with the loan, as is the procedure in most life insurance and health schemes that have been added to existing "best practices" microfinance programs; (2) having the woman pay for it from her own (expanded) earnings; (3) taking turns helping care for the children in the *auganwadi*, and getting an agreed upon credit on their own child(ren)'s attendance for each hour worked. If there are enough women, this need not be so time-consuming that husbands would object (especially in situations of *purdah*, as in Bangladesh).

- In any event, husbands would have to be brought on board for any commitment that keeps their wives and young children out of the home for more than the time for the weekly meeting – which they already have chosen to support so that their wives can get those small albeit much-valued loans.
- If donors, the government, or, in the case of Bangladesh (as a possible pilot case), the Grameen Bank could be persuaded of the low costs and potentially high return of linking ECCE with microfinance, some support might be forthcoming to help the program in its formative stages.
- The potential "spread effect" of such an approach could be enormous: as the 2005 Microcredit Summit Campaign report makes plain, there is a growing feeling among member institutions that a broader approach to microfinance is needed to more suitably help really poor clients. If a major MFI such as Grameen could be convinced to support a microfinance-ECCE pilot effort and a preliminary results-oriented evaluation showed it was having a positive impact, then many of the more than 3,000 microfinance institutions that participate under the Microcredit Summit umbrella might follow suit.

More food for thought: potential impact of the microfinance-ECCE model. Survival is one of the components of "comprehensive ECCE." Bangladesh has, perhaps, the highest microcredit coverage rates. Might this be a factor in its overtaking India in reducing rates of child mortality, despite its lower level of income and far lower growth (Daley-Harris 2005:13)? The UNDP's Human Development Report 2005 discusses Bangladesh's moderate growth vs. rapid human development and cites four factors, the fourth being "virtuous cycles and female agency." Specifically, improved access to health and education for women, allied with expanded opportunities for employment and access to microcredit, has expanded choice and empowered women, who are demanding greater control over fertility and birth spacing, education for their daughters, and access to services. It appears that there already is a basis for a microfinance-ECCE connection that would make ECCE more gender equitable in various ways.

Might this virtuous circle extend to **increased survival rates for females** in those countries where, as Sen stated in 1990, "100 million women are missing"? Recall that Rosenzweig and Schultz (1982), in their regression analysis of Indian data at the district level, found that the economic value (real or shadow wages) of adult females explained much of the district differences in female infant mortality rates. If more mothers are economically empowered via microcredit, might that power also translate into a more balanced sex ratio? There are intriguing clues that this might be the case.

First, Kishor (1993) describes higher rates of girls' survival in parts of India where women have high labor force participation (her study is a refinement of Rosenzweig and Schultz 1982). She speculates that "perhaps women's economic participation increases the survival of girls not by increasing the economic gain to parents, but by changing women's perceptions of self-worth and the worth of their female children" (*ibid.*:262).

Second, Arnold, Kishor and Roy (2002) found much greater sex-selective abortion of females in Indian states (e.g., Gujerat, Haryana and Punjab) where son preference is greatest. These are Northern states where female labor force participation is low and women traditionally had low participation in rain fed agriculture, dowry is entrenched and the amounts are rising steeply, and the kinship system is highly disadvantageous to women (e.g., in terms of lack of inheritance as well as the custom of "patrilocal exogamy" where it is the bride who must leave her place of birth at marriage).

Third, as noted above, in Brazil, the impact of mothers' income on child survival was found to be almost twenty times as large as that of fathers (Thomas 1990, 1997; King and Mason 2001:81). Brazil doesn't have a "sex ratio problem." But Kishor (1993) suggests that income-controlling women who live in patriarchal areas of "female deficit countries" such as India might promote survival of their daughters as well as sons. This is in line with other research showing income-controlling women to be more even-handed with their daughters and sons. All this remains speculative, but sex ratio data should be tracked in any linked ECCE-microfinance program.

#### E. Conclusions – and a Final Summary of the Proposal.

In conclusion, it may not be necessary to copy inappropriate and excessively expensive models of ECCE (good and not-so-good) from the "Minority World." We have reviewed historical patterns involving the impact of women's economic activities and empowerment on the overall well-being and development of their children 0-7 and found valuable clues for how to design locally appropriate, low cost approaches in poor countries.

But, in addition, we may have found a potentially better way to proceed, by following the advice of the American song that urges: "hitch your wagon to a star." Microfinance is growing at a rapid pace and already reaches some 100,000,000 clients, the majority of them really poor women in developing countries. It directly enhances women's economic empowerment, thereby increasing their ability to act proactively to improve the "comprehensive ECCE" of both their daughters and sons. The "microfinance movement" is becoming increasingly receptive to adding "social components" to the basic "loans only" model that dominates "best practices" approaches.

Based on all the above, this monograph has proposed a pilot program that adds an ECCE component to microfinance institutions. Since, fortuitously, MFIs have begun incorporating social programs (e.g., insurance schemes, health benefits) to better serve their microcredit clients, there is reason to believe that there will be openness to the suggested addition of ECCE, too.

The proposed pilot program may be most suitable for programs using a Grameen model – or any other, such as "village banking" (used by FINCA, Catholic Relief Services and others) that also have weekly meetings lasting two hours or so, to which clients could take ECCE-age children for special enrichment efforts. Another part of the proposal is to integrate older daughters and perhaps provide them with economic benefits for their participation, so that mothers (and, hopefully, fathers) would pledge not to pull them out of school to take care of younger, ECCE-age siblings. All this could be supplemented with more ECCE care in locally organized efforts, using the Indian *anganwadi* approach, or the women's self-organized ECCE model that was developed, and has been most widely used, in Latin America.

The bottom line is that economically empowered mothers are in a better position to promote "comprehensive ECCE for all their children, regardless of gender. So, in an effort to promote more relevant, suitable and economical ECCE in the "Majority World, why not hitch the "ECCE wagon" to the rising star of microfinance?

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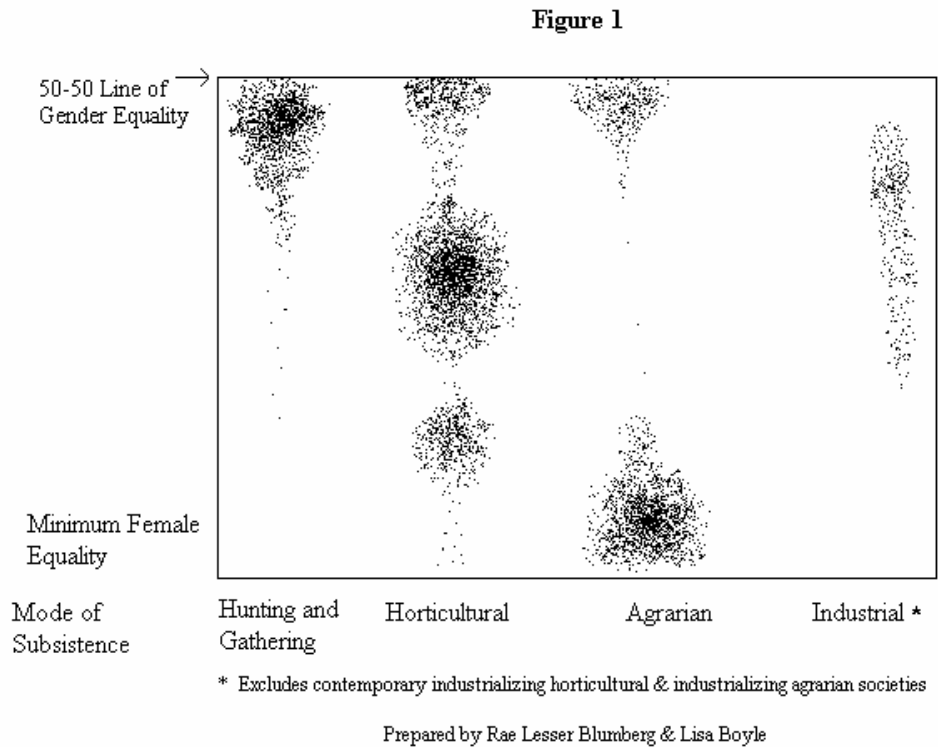
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**FIGURE 1**



**Table 1**

**Comparing Lenski and Blumberg's Classifications of Agrarian Societies**

<u>Author</u>	<u>Criterion</u>	<u>Author</u>	<u>Criterion</u>
Lenski :	Iron	Blumberg:	Irrigation
Simple ag.	-	"Dry" = 1	-
Advanced ag.	+	"Wet"	+
		Then, subdivide "wet" based on kinship criterion:	
		Patri/male advantage	= 2
		No patri/male advantage	= 3

- 1=Dry (rainfed) agrarian
- 2=Wet (irrigated rice) agrarian with male advantage (patri-oriented)
- 3= Wet (irrigated rice) agrarian with no male advantage (bilateral/matri-oriented)