Androcentricity in Economic Research, 
Teaching and Policy Formulations. 
A Case for Gender Mainstreaming. 

by 
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Abstract: Androcentricity, seeing the world from a male perspective, is an obstacle not only to women’s situation but also for economic development and efficient use of resources. This paper argues that androcentricity is more the rule than the exception in economic research, teaching and policy formulations. The text studied are three recent dissertations from the Faculty of Economics and Econometrics of the University of Amsterdam, a much used textbook of Labor Economics and the 150 pages of 4 policy documents from the Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs. The World Bank, the European Union and the Dutch government have all decided to gender mainstream their policies. Therefore economic research needs to be gender mainstreamed in order to supply the necessary information for gender mainstreaming policies.
1. Introduction.

In the fall of 1963, the rector of the Stockholm School of Economics greeted the new economics students, say that they were the cream of Swedish youth. Then the rector said that female students usually did not finish their studies, but married and had children. The rector probably thought that he gave a piece of objective information. What he actually did was giving different messages to the female students about 20% of the student body and the male students. I can still remember the wave of warm enthusiasm, that I felt when I thought that I belonged to the cream of Swedish youth and the cold shower I felt when I understood that female students were not included. Particularly female students who married and had children were not serious students in the rector’s view. I had come to study at the Stockholm School of Economics firmly determined to become an economist, someone who takes her career seriously and expects to be taken seriously.

Two years later, half way through my undergraduate studies, I met my husband whom I was married to for 23 years, until he died in an accident while delta flying. I became pregnant with our oldest son and I had taken the rector’s words seriously. I stopped going to school while my pregnancy was visible, took a temporary job where I did not care what they thought, and I took an exam, when my son was three weeks old. Two years later, I had taken my degree.

The Stockholm School of Economics still in this year of 2000 does not have one single female professor on its staff. Today this is publicly discussed as a disgrace to the school, and the recently appointed new rector of the school has publicly said that he sees it as his duty to do something about it.

I was committed to both motherhood, family and an academic research and teaching career. In 1976, my public defense of my doctoral thesis was attended by both my sons, then 6 and 10 years old and my professors were surprised that I had a family. Today, both my sons are married and have good careers, one in business and the other one in academic research. I have two grandsons and one granddaughter from my oldest son. Both daughters-in-law have careers. One is a graduate engineer, the other one is educated as a nurse, but works for business.
One of the obstacles on the way to a society, that offers both sexes the same opportunities and the same rewards, is the male bias in economic theory and research as in public policies. Lately the political jargon has added the expression ‘Gender Mainstreaming’ to its vocabulary. In this paper the concept of gender mainstreaming is discussed and applied to examples from economic research, teaching and policy texts. Since the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing 1995 the World Banks official policy is to “institutionalize a gender perspective in the design and implementation of projects” (World Bank 2000a).

In May 2000, I was invited by the Ministry of Economic Affairs in The Hague to advise them on how this ministry could ‘gender mainstream’ its policy documents. I think this is a challenging task. Contemplating about it, I feel that much of my own research during three decades can be expressed as contributions to the ‘gender mainstreaming of economics’ or making economics gender aware. Sainsbury (1994) uses the expression ‘gendering the welfare state’. In the same way we may speak about gendering economic theory and research. Much of the feminist criticism against the economics text book literature is about its male bias and its use of examples that interest men more than women. Together with my colleagues Cécile Wetzels and Kea Tijdens, I have studied four policy reports from the Ministry of Economic Affairs of the Netherlands, namely; on 1) general policy towards the business sector (31 comments to add information for gender mainstreaming), 2) the IT-industry (30 comments), 3) the biotechnology industry (no comments) and 4) on cooperative sharing between small business firms of equipment (12 comments). Thinking about the project for the Ministry, made me reflect about the need for gender mainstreaming of economics in general in text books, in economic policies, in economic journalism.

The outline of this paper is as following. Section 2 discusses the language of economists. In section 3 I present some of the results of our study on gender mainstreaming for the Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs. In Section 4 a widely used textbook of Labor Economics (Ehrenberg & Smith, 2000) is evaluated for gender mainstreaming. In Section 5, I argue that goals and evaluations of economic policies and other public policies need to be gender mainstreamed. Section 6 gives an example from my own current research on a contribution to a gendered evaluation of family policies. Section 7 offers conclusions. Since the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing 1995 the World banks official policy is to "institutionalize a
gender perspective in the design and implementation of projects" (World Bank, 2000). The European Union in a new guideline of 1999 requires all member states to mainstream a gender perspective into the whole of their National Action Plans on employment (Rubery et. al 1998). The Dutch government has accepted this guideline.

Further, the Dutch government has obliged each of its ministries to carry out at least three gender mainstreaming projects over the period 1999 to 2002 after which they have to be evaluated and reported upon. (SZW 1999)

The project was commissioned by the section 'Industrie en dienstenbeleid' or I and D. Our report 'Vind de vrouwen’ was presented and discussed on several occasions at the ministry and on October 30, 2000, in the presence of the Minister of Economic Affairs, mrs Annemarie Jorritsma. We thank officials at the Ministry for helpful comments. I particularly liked the comment from one official that: After reading and contemplating about our research this official stated that: We have also made our own suggestions on how the policy documents should have been written in order to gender mainstream had we known what we now know. (comment by the DG Director General of I&D, Mr. van der Harst on October 30, 2000). Further, in a recent issue of the internal EZ journal for the staff of the Ministry our project is described as ‘an eye opener for the Ministery’.

The policy documents of the Ministry, that we studied were written in a way that we are used to. I am convinced that we could have picked any document on economic policy in any country and we would have found gender blind descriptions of the world: the students, labour supply, the consumer, the entrepreneur without any reflections about gender composition. Economic policy documents in turn are based on economic research and economic research enters economic text books, which in turn influences applied economics. Therefore, gender mainstreaming tools can fruitfully be applied to economic theory and research as well as to economic text books, and economic policies in general.

The outline of the paper is as follows. In Section 2 the tool of gender mainstreaming is discussed by examples from the World Bank and the European Union documents. In section 3 some examples of androcentricity in three recent dissertations from the Department of Economics of the University of Amsterdam are discussed. In section 4 a similar analysis is done comparing the
first and the seventh editions of Ehrenberg and Smith (1982 and 2000) Modern Labor Economics. In section 5 a discussions on gendering of goals and evaluations of economic policies follows. Section 6 reports on our analysis of policy documents of the Dutch ministry of Economic Affairs and section 7 offers conclusions.

2. A discussion of Gender Mainstreaming.

The European Union issued a document known as the mainstreaming communication to the council of ministers in 1996. This document (CEC 1996) is known under the name of ‘The Mainstreaming Communication.’ The 1996 Mainstreaming Communication argues for incorporating equal opportunity to all EU policies and activities (Rees, 1998). Theresa Rees (1998) contributes a discussion of the development on thinking about equality between women and men in the European Union. In her view there is a development over time from thinking about equal treatment, to positive action and to mainstreaming. The idea of equal treatment traces its roots to Mary Wolstonecraft 1792 and yet women have until recently been treated very differently from men also in legislation. Suffice to mention that Dutch women were forbidden to be teachers if they married all the way until 1957 that they had to have their husband's consent to take a job until 1973 and that they got legal protection against dismissal because of marriage pregnancy or childbirth as late as 1973, which is a contrast to Sweden, where such legislation was passed in 1939. (Kessel, Kuperus and Pott-Buter, 1986; Gustafsson 1994). But equal treatment is only a necessary but not a sufficient condition to ensure equal outcomes. In order to illustrate how equal treatment does not lead to equal outcomes Rees (1998 p.26) describes a cartoon where a number of creatures are lining up for an equal treatment test. They will all be required to climb up a tree to find out who is the best one among a cat, a monkey, an elephant, a sea-lion, a snake, a frog, a bird, and a gold-fish.

The disappointment with unequal outcomes in spite of equal treatment led to policies of positive action in order to create conditions more likely to result in equality of outcome. Such actions involve e.g. management courses directed particularly to women and may include elements such as 'develop your killer instinct', 'make yourself heard in meetings' 'coping with the office Romeo'. (Rees 1998 p.35) However, positive action programs are ad hoc and they fail to acknowledge the impact of hierarchies such as patriarchal ordening through the gender contract.
Also, they are associated with an idea of deficit and a reallocation of resources or privileges from men to women. Gender mainstreaming is a totally different concept. It involves questioning the nature of organizations and the power relations within it. Mainstreaming as stated in the Mainstreaming Communication or CEC 1996 aims to promote equal opportunity into the preparation, implementation and monitoring of all EU and member states activities. The first stage in the mainstreaming agenda is to recognize that, what is taken as the norm is not necessarily gender neutral. (Rees p. 189) The essence of the mainstreaming approach is to seek to identify these hidden, unrecognized and unremarked ways in which systems and structures are biased in favor of men. The first step in gender mainstreaming is collecting information about gender gaps. This means that statistics should always be collected by gender and presented broken down by gender when relevant. In Sweden in 1983 actions taken by a female statistician employed by ‘Statistics Sweden’ led to an adoption of policies of ensuring that statistics on individuals was always collected and broken down by gender. Such statistical gender information is necessary in order to identify a gender gap. The European Union in a guideline from 1999 requires all Member States to gender Mainstream their National Action Plans on Employment. A study by Jill Rubery (et. al. 1998) was commissioned by the EU to provide guidance in this work.

“Gender mainstreaming must be considered both as a long term objective and a process, a permanent part of policy formation and its implementation. It is a process in changing policy agendas and implementation procedures to promote gender equality and a process of continual auditing and analysis of the impact of policies to identify ways in which gender inequalities may be generated and reproduced within society. The understanding of the concept must develop with its implementation. The collection and analysis of examples of gender mainstreaming can thus be considered as an exercise in this learning process.”

Policy makers are unlikely to be able to deliver effective policy or to predict its impact unless they are aware of the gendered nature of labour markets, labour market institutions and labour market norms. Moreover, policy makers, by not taking a gender mainstreaming approach, run the risk of developing or perpetuating inefficient policies and practices (Rubery et. al. 1998).
The transformation of society into the dual earner family in European Member States calls for a better coordination of employment policy, social policy and welfare provisions. The shared worker - carer role remains largely a 'woman-only' practice but in Norway and Sweden where fathers have been allotted their own quotas in parental leave schemes their take up of leave has increased. Welfare provisions need to be individual and not discourage labour force participation, which is the case when benefits are household based and income means tested. Rubery et. al. (1998, p. 44) note that statistical discrimination based on gender should be made illegal since sex discrimination legislation focuses on the right of the individuals to be judged according to their personal attributes and not on those ascribed to them by virtue of their gender.

The break-down of statistics by gender which is needed to identify gender gaps could potentially induce more statistical discrimination Rubery et.al. observes. This is exactly the reason why salary statistics in Sweden were not broken down by sex in the 1970s. In an article in the Journal of Statistics Sweden in 1975 (Gustafsson, 1975), I argued for a gendered presentation of salary statistics. The argument that was raised against this idea, was that there should be no gender differences in salaries therefore statistics should not be broken down by gender. As noted above since 1983, statistics Sweden presents all statistics on individuals broken down by gender. In my view access to information is better than lack of information. It is the lack of information that results in unintentional discrimination of women.

Ruberty et. al (1998) proceeds to discuss European employment policies. In a document on the Common European Employment Policy four pillars are named: 1. improving employability; 2. developing entrepreneurship; 3. encouraging adaptability of business and their employees, and 4. strengthening equal opportunity policies for women and men. Each member state will adopt a gender mainstreaming approach in implementing the Guidelines of all four pillars. In order to meaningfully evaluate progress on this approach Member States will need to provide adequate data collection systems and procedures (Rubery et. al. p. 75).

The conclusion from the fact that EU member states have adopted the EU policies on gender mainstreaming must mean that economic research within all member states from now on must be gender mainstreamed. Below I will show how by a sample of recent economic research that three are apparent deficiencies in this respect. Not only the EU but also the World Bank since the Beijing Meeting of 1995 practices gender mainstreaming in all its activities. Before the Beijing
1995 meeting it was customary to carry out projects in the areas of water supply, energy, transportation, community development and legal reform without considerations of potentially different impacts on women and men because of differences in ascribed gender roles and implicit gender contracts which, results in gendered distribution of work.

Since 1995 the proportion of World Bank projects designed with consideration of gender issues has increased from about 20% to about 40% (World Bank 2000 a). A project on water supply in Morocco illustrates the gains of gender mainstreaming. In Morocco literacy of women is only half the rate of literacy among men 27.7% in 1992, (UNDP 1995 p. 52) and the literacy rate among adult women was only 30%.

It is the task of women and girls to provide the household with drink water. This work is very time consuming. Sometimes drinkable water has to be collected as far away as 5 kilometres. Despite this men did not see water supply as an urgent development program. They were not involved. The water was supplied to them in their household. Villages in Morocco were monitored on girls' school attendance after modern water pipes had been installed. One village showed a doubling of school attendance by girls, one year after the village had gotten modern water supply (The World Bank, 2000 a). The World Bank publishes a policy research report on "Engendering Development Through Gender Equality in Rights, Resources, and Voice. At this writing the full report is not yet published but a summary report is (World Bank 2000 b). In this report research about the inter relatedness of gender equality with economic development is evaluated. There is overwhelming evidence that failure to improve the situation of women delays development. The idea that women's right is a luxury good, that can only be considered when household incomes have reached a certain level is again and again refuted as a false view of reality. It has long been known that when women have gotten access to education fertility has fallen, children have become healthier, child mortality has decreased, nutrition has improved due to women's better knowledge, and the result is healthier adults ready to invest in their human capital and the development of their economy. These effects are not produced in areas where only males have access to education. Further gains for economic growth will result by reduction of household chores (World Bank 2000 b, p. 15). Economic growth is accompanied by an expansion of investments in infrastructure – for safe water, roads, transport and fuel. The development of economic infrastructure significantly reduces females time on domestic chores, with potential
benefits in their health, participation in income-generating activities, and school attendance of girls.


Economics uses aggregates to abstract from details and to enable making generalizations. Therefore, many words that are used in common language like productive or efficient have a precisely defined meaning in economic texts. Words like labor supply, labor demand, the unemployment rate, the consumer, are useful concepts describing aggregate behavior. These words are all gender neutral. But society is gendered and using gender neutral concepts means working with gender blind concepts which often implies that important information necessary to enhance economic efficiency is not supplied.

In Table 1 some commonly used expressions of economics are listed together with the meaning of the concept if gendered. All the concepts in the left column are meant to be gender neutral. This gender neutrality is often androcentric. In the early 1980s a male colleague of mine revealed his androcentricity by writing in a paper on labor supply ‘if the individual has a wife then his taxes will be different and his labor supply will change’. Because I and some other female economists found this example so flagrant and because we happily exploited if, it was changed before publication. However, ‘the individual and his wife’ goes much deeper. Kuiper (2000) shows that ‘pure theory of labor supply’ assumes a married man with spouse present in his prime years aged 25 to 55, and of ethnic majority. All other people then become deviations and cases where the ‘pure theory’ has to be modified.

In the 1970s and early 1980s it was customary in economic research to write articles based on statistical samples of only men and refer to the results as being of general applicability. An article with the heading ‘The Union Non-Union Wage Differential’ (reference) would report in a footnote that women were excluded from the sample. This practice has fortunately been
abandoned in research articles in labor and population economics which are the fields that I follow. Nowadays if an article is only about men it is usually made clear already in the title.

Almost all the economic concepts of Table 1 have been criticized by feminist economists. The definitions of labor supply and unemployment have been criticized because in order to be counted as unemployed you have to be actively searching for jobs. It has been argued that many women belong to the hidden reserve or discouraged workers because they do not search for jobs although they would like to have a job if they could find one which they could fit into their other duties and if they can find high quality affordable daycare for their children. (For a recent German dissertation see Elke Holst, 2000). In the current situation of excess demand for labor the interest of firms and governments for the hidden labor reserve increases. In the Netherlands today (heard on NOS radio news 15/9, 2000) the estimated shortage of computer specialists or IT personnel is estimated to be 12000. In Germany in the year of 1999 some 4000 people from India and some 2000 from Pakistan received green cards to work as IT specialists in Germany. (Humboldt University, Demographic News, August 2000). Simultaneously, there is an underrepresentation of women in the IT sector in the Netherlands. (Digitale Delta p. 38)

It has become common among economists to control for gender differences in their statistical analyses by entering a gender dummy, which is a variable that takes the value one if the person is female and zero for a male or the reverse. Last year, I was on the dissertation committees of three dissertations about the education system and its effect on the labor market for the Netherlands (Webbink, 1999), Portugal (Vieira 1999) and Sri Lanka (Ranasinghe 1999). All three promovendi were men and all of them used gender dummies and found negative results and were content with that. None of them made any attempt to explain why the education system resulted in a smaller pay off for women than for men, although we know that the education system is of fundamental importance for equal opportunity of women on the labor market. The three dissertations, all of which were otherwise of good quality, form a very clear example of the lack of gender mainstreaming in economic research.

In one chapter Ranasinghe (1999 p. 128-), analyzes school enrollment in Sri Lanka. His focus is on enrollment in different geographical areas trying to find out where there are disadvantaged groups. He controls for quality of the school in different ways. All his regressions both on school
enrollment and on the length of schooling show a statistical significant result to the determinant of males. Apparently Ranasinghe found this to be unexpected and did not know how he should deal with it. There is nowhere in the whole chapter one single word about this result. In Sri Lanka free education exists for primary, secondary and tertiary school levels since 1945. Students have free text books up to grade 10 since 1980, free school midday meals since 1989 and two free uniforms per year since 1993.

Jayaweera (1999) reports some of the information necessary to interpret the result of Ranasinghe. Jayaweera (1999, p. 175) notes that gender differences in access to education have virtually been eliminated but the experiences of girls and women are often affected by their location in the social structure. Ranasinghe (1999, p…) notes that the school system of Sri Lanka too much induces students to learn texts by heart and too little induces them to think in terms of problem solving. Jayaweera p. 177 gives an explanation why this outcome has occurred. There is a centrally determined curriculum for grades one to eleven with textbooks and teacher guidelines, which stifles teacher initiative and student creativity.

Unlike, what labour economists believe based on the human capital theory, there is for women in Sri Lanka not a positive relationship between education and employment. Instead, unemployment among women is of double digit magnitude and twice as high as for males for all educational groups. Employment has increased among women regardless of education with a tendency for larger increases among less educated groups rather than among the high educated groups because of multinational companies taking advantage of inexpensive South Asian female labor. Different from what is common in western societies unemployment in Sri Lanka increases with the level of education.

Jayaweera questions whether education has improved the lives of women. She notes that both at home and in school girls are expected to be positive, modest and obedient and that domestic violence and sexual abuse occur irrespective of the educational levels of family members.

Seeing Ranasinghe's results which, are left without comments, one would have thought that the men are disadvantaged but a more likely interpretation is that the opportunity cost of time is higher for men because they can get relatively high paying jobs not available to women without those extra years of education. A number of research results collected by the World Bank shows that similar results on gender differences in school enrollment in Latin America show males to be
at a disadvantage and the explanation given is that boys have labour market alternatives which increases their opportunity cost of time of remaining in school.

The Portuguese school system and labour market behaves according to expectations of the androcentric view. Vieira has access to a big data set including 50,000 individuals, which allows him to analyze for example inter industry wage differentials and over and under education. All these analyses include a gender dummy. His wage regressions show negative significant results for women of the order of 20 per cent no matter how many other variables are controlled for. Vieira comments on the negative result for females in one sentence p. 58, 'With respect to gender, female workers earn less than their male counterparts'. Vieiras results show, that women more often have more education than required for a job, and for men it is the other way around. They get the good jobs also without adequate education. With an androcentric point of view the world is alright and no further comment is given.

Webbink (1999) analyzing the choice between higher vocational education (hoger beroeps-onderwijs HBO in Dutch) and university studies (wetenschappelijk onderwijs WO in Dutch) finds that (p. 73) 'students with lower social background, female students and older students are more likely to choose for higher vocational training. This is another variation of the 'individual and his wife'. The normal male, normal aged student who chooses for the university is contrasted to those deviant cases including women of all kinds.

One of my previous Ph.D. students told me that her male Ph.D. student colleagues called her the “Gender dummy”. They thought that they were funny but it was not at all appreciated by my student. This is a typical androcentric joke which works to perpetuate male dominance.

From statistical analysis you can draw conclusions only on the basis of what you have been able to measure. The interpretation of the unexplained no unmeasured part of analysis if often described in gender biased terms. One example is the interpretation of the unexplained gender wage differential. One branch of economic research measures to what extent the gender wage differential depends on differences in productivity between individuals (for recent examples covering several countries se Gustafsson and Meulders, eds. 2000). The interpretation of the remaining wage differential holding productivity constant then consists of the unobserved productivity difference plus effects of discrimination against women. The androcentric view
describes the unexplained gender wage differential as consisting entirely of unobserved productivity differences. The androcentric view prevents scholars from drawing relevant conclusions and sometimes as has been evident from the examples given above even prevents them from making any comment at all on their findings. Introducing a gender dummy is a step in the right direction but passing by the results with absolute silence comes very close to an attitude of introducing a variable only because it is available. Data without a theory is not research in the same way as an amount of bricks is not a house.


A modern text book of Labour Economics (Ehrenberg & Smith, 7th ed. 2000), illustrates economic reasoning by references to professional sports like baseball, which is likely to interest men more than women. I have no knowledge of baseball, and I skip sports news in papers and on TV because I find that other time uses have higher priority. But the Ehrenburg and Smith text book often refers to the worker as she, has extensive chapters on the household production theory and separates labour market phenomena according to gender. In this respect the Ehrenberg & Smith book is better than many other texts. A recent Dutch text book Somers and Van Sinderen (2nd ed. 1997) discusses labour supply, employment and unemployment without making any split according to gender or even ever using the words men and women. This is how it used to be in economic research articles published in international referenced journals in the 1970s and early 1980s.

Papers published in major economic journals in the 1970s and early 1980s often only in a footnote mentioned that women were excluded from the statistical sample and treated the results as being general. This unsatisfactory practice has fortunately now been abandoned with new generations of economic researchers. There is less awareness of national biases in publications of economic research. Articles published in international journals to a large extent study only the United States, without this being stated in the title of the article as would be more appropriate. The reason it is important to state already in the title which country is being treated is that institutional settings, development level and cultural characteristics between countries may make a big difference.
The Ehrenberg & Smith, 7th ed. (2000) book has a separate chapter on ‘Gender, Race and Ethnicity in the Labor Market’. This is not the case in the first edition of this textbook Ehrenberg & Smith (1982). This textbook of Labor Economics is continually improved upon by the authors who update statistical information and add new research results between editions. For me as a feminist, as a Swede, as a European and as a labor economist this textbook is very useful. The part of the book, which I find least useful are the sports examples, the focus on the American labor market, and the review questions. The focus on the American labor market is explicit in the 7th edition to a much greater extent than in the first edition. Table heads indicate ‘Men and Women on the US Labor Market.’ Also, examples from European and Japanese labor markets are inserted here and there in the later edition, which increases the value of this textbook. Each chapter ends with review questions, which are meant to help students understand the theories explained in the text. In my view these review questions and answers are both androcentric and American biased and need to be reviewed in order to come up to the standards of the main text.

Economic theory changes slowly. One characteristic of economic theory is that it is cumulative. What is being proposed today as a novel theory of labor supply for example, builds on existing achieved knowledge. It does not happen that an economic theory of the 19th century, like the labor value theory, which only looks at the supply price, is rivaling modern wage theory, which explains price as the intersection of demand and supply price. This is much in the same way as nobody today would say that the sun circles around the earth rather than the earth circles around the sun. There is a justified resistance towards new theories in economics, which of course also affects feminist economic theories. Some theories inspired by feminist critique, have made it into mainstream economic theory, and are included in the Ehrenberg and Smith book. This is particularly true for the household production theory but also for the theory of bargaining over intra household resource allocations. Recently, I edited together with Daniele Meulders a book with the title: Gender and the labor Market. Econometric Evidence of Obstacles to Achieving Gender Equality. This book is a selection of papers presented to the Applied Econometrics Association Meeting of 1998 and it is published by MacMillan. The fact that econometricians interested in gender issues fill a whole conference, and that the Applied Econometrics Association sponsors the publication of a book on gender is a big step forward. How different
from back in 1971, when I started my dissertation work, and I was told that I should use scientific words, rather than using words like ‘women and men’ that were seen as not scientific. The appropriate scientific words were worker, employee, employer and labour supply. Studying the difference between male and female wages was not scientific, at least it was not economics, maybe it was sociology, I was told by my colleague Ph.D. students who were all men. My professors were macroeconomists and if studying the labour market they were interested in the labour share in the economy and were studying the aggregate wage rate.

Comparing the first edition of Ehrenberg & Smith (1982) to the seventh edition (2000) makes clear that economic theory changes as a result of feminist critique and research and a better gender awareness among male as well as female economists. In labor economics, we do not any more have to ask: ‘Where are the women?’ However, other subdisciplines like financial economics, macroeconomic and business cycles, international trade much more suffer from the gender neutral language, which often conceals androcentricity. Labor economics has a larger share of female economists than other subdisciplines.

I am convinced that androcentricity in economic research conceals that the world in fact is gendered. Why do financial analysis not study portfolio choice by men and women separately? Why does consumption analysis not analyze differences between male and female consumers? I was recently at a conference in Ann Arbor where 4 empirical papers on consumption were presented by male researchers. One of them ‘distinguished male’ and female consumption behaviour but the other three did not (Japelli and Pistafiori; 2000; Battistino, Miniaci and Weber; 2000).

It is easier to see the need of gendering economies when concepts that refer to individuals are discussed than for some other concepts. But it does not mean that those other concepts are without a gender connotation. Which gender has economic research, the seaport of Rotterdam, technological progress, childcare, nursing homes? It is not difficult to arrange those concepts according to gender, whether the majority of people involved are men or women.

5. Gendering Goals and Evaluations of Family Policies.
Sherwin Rosen (1995) claims that at least half of the cost of Swedish family policies constitute, a ‘dead weight loss’. This means that the beneficial results would have come about without this government expenditure. What Rosen regards as beneficial effects is very limited, namely only increased employment of women in the private sector of Sweden and only in the short run. The fact that a large share of Swedish women are employed in the public sector, he comments on in the following way (Rosen 1995 p.4): “If Swedish women take care of each others’ parents in exchange for taking care of each others’ children, how much additional real output comes of it?” Gustafsson, Kenjoh and Wetzels (2000) show that mothers of children under 12 years old work in the public sector in other European countries as well. The proportion of all employed women with children under 12 who work in public administration and other non-profit services is in Britain 46.2 per cent (1997) for Germany 49.0 per cent (1996) for the Netherlands 66.9 (1996) and for Sweden 50.4 (1996). Rosen's comment on Sweden would then be still more applicable to the Netherlands. But the whole idea, that it should not be profitable with a division of work in the personal care sector is absurd. It is also absurd to think that all women through their whole life are either mothers of small children or potential care givers to elderly care needing parents.

Further, Rosen (1995) does not take account of the beneficial effects of family policies such as a higher fertility rate, lower age of the mother at first birth, improved child development, improved equal opportunity on the labor market for women in comparison to men. Further, Rosen's static model disregards the future of women to the labor market that result from a successful combination of work and family when the children are young. His model and his comments disregard investments in human capital that working women can do and housewives can not. He has been criticized for his method (Aslaksen, Koren and Stokstad, 2000); (Gustafsson 1997 in Swedish).

My current research agenda focusses on family policies in the four countries I presently study the most – Britain, Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden. Economic policies often have different effects on men and women. Particularly this is true of the construction of the tax system. A large amount of studies revealing the negative marginal tax effects of family income based taxation as against individual income based taxation has changed the tax systems in many countries. My own
contribution to this literature (Gustafsson 1992) compares the labor supply effects for married women of a simulated change of the Swedish tax system to the German family based system and vice versa. I found that in 1984, German married women, would have increased labor force participation from 50 to 60 per cent, if they had been confronted with the Swedish tax system, and Swedish women would have decreased their labor force participation from 80 to 60 per cent if confronted with the German tax system. This result would probably be similar if some one repeated the study today, because the features of the respective tax system, that produces this result, have not changed.

My work can be seen as evaluating family policies by comparing the effects of these on mothers’ employment and on fertility. I am in the position to be able to read policy documents in original language in all the four countries I study, having spent extended time periods in each country except for Britain. Broadly speaking one can say that Sweden encourages full time employment as the normal activity for mothers, with exceptions for the home period during the paid parental leave 12-15 months of the child’s first year and 30 hours work week until the child is 8 years old. Germany encourages mothers to be full time home caring at least until the child is 3 years old and many obstacles rise for mothers who want to perform paid work, also after the child starts school. A recent change in the Germany family leave legislation to be in effect from January 2001, allows the father and the mother to share the parental leave, to defer the third year and use it in packages until the child is 8 years old. Further parents can choose to get 900 DM per month during one year rather than 600 DM during two years if their income is small enough to make their eligible for support. The German system does not replace earnings like the Swedish parental leave system, where the parental leave benefit is 75 per cent of earnings before birth of the first child during 10 months for either parent with an additional father's month where his earnings are replaced by 90% and a mothers’ month where her earnings are replaced by 90%.

The German benefits come as a flat rate, with an upper family income level of 100 000 DM the first 6 months and a considerably lower family income of 35 000? from the 7th month onwards. The Netherlands had the most restrictive and discriminatory policies against married women’s work until the 1970’s, emphasizing the mothers’ place at home until about 1990. Since about 1990 Dutch mothers and fathers are encouraged to work part time to make room for daytime home care. The goals of Britain’s policies, I have so far interpreted as 'laissez faire’ and delegating the family to the private domain, something which has possibly changed in the near
past. The parental leave period in Britain have been increased to 40 weeks, i.e. 10 months, for a woman, who has been employed with a given employee for at least a year, but the parental leave is usually not paid except for the initial 16 weeks, that are nowadays required by compliance to EU rulings.

In my view family policies have an effect both on women’s work behavior in the short run and in the longer run and on young couples’ willingness to start parenthood.

After I was appointed professor of economics at the University of Amsterdam in 1989, I have witnessed a radical switch in Dutch family policies from the late 1980s into the 1990s. The Dutch political view in the 1980s was that a mother belongs at home with her children, and if married women would start looking for jobs, this could only increase unemployment. Now, the view of the Dutch government, is that family and work can be done simultaneously. Part time work is considered a good option, leaving room for day time home care of children part of the week. This has made the Netherlands the first part time economy, according to some observers (Visser 1999). In Sweden, I noticed this summer of the year 2000, that many times in the evening TV news, the hard questions from the reporters were commented on by women. It is not remarkable to find now and then a female expert on television, but a whole regular television evening news with only women is something, I have not yet seen in the Netherlands. Although the Netherlands has prominent female politicians, among whom four female ministers (eleven ministers are male), most responsible officials are men. In Sweden, out of 20 ministers in the current Swedish government 11 are women and 9 are men.

The goals of public policies are usually not expressed in gendered form. Mostly, the goals are expressed in gender neutral forms, like increasing competitive power of the labor force, keep inflation down at a certain level, decrease the waiting lists for health care, stop criminal behavior. Such goals of course are competing with each other for public attention and government subsidies. We seldom see an account of to what extent different policy measures benefit women or men young or old, the ethnic majority or ethnic minorities.


Given androcentrity and/or gender blindness in economic research and economic textbooks it is not surprising if one finds similar results where economic research is applied. I am convinced that
the sample of policy documents that we analyzed from the Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs are typical and documents from any Ministry in the Netherlands or any other country would benefit from a similar analysis as the one we carried out for the Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs (Gustafsson, Wetzel's and Tijdens, 2000).

When analyzing policy documents in gender mainstreaming one should look for the following three points.

1. gender-neutrality writing, although the reality is not gender neutral.
2. gender blind writing, i.e. writing with men as the norm, so that women do not feel addressed.
3. gender gaps should be addressed by policies so that if one knows that women are at a disadvantage, special measures should be taken to close this gap.

With these tools we set out to analyse four documents of Dutch economic policies. The analysis particularly concentrated on two documents because they were larger than the other two. One of the documents is a general agenda for Dutch economic policies towards the promotion of Dutch manufacturing industry and services. This document is called the “Industry Letter”. The other document analyzed attempts to promote the transfer of Dutch Business into the Information Technology era. This second document carries the inventive title ‘The Dutch Delta’. Delta refers to the fact that the Netherlands is situated at the deltas of two big European rivers namely the Rhein and the Maas (Meuse in French). Reading these two documents it became immediately clear that all policy proposals are written in gender neutral terms: the entrepreneur, the students of information technology, etc. It became clear that both documents are written in a way, that one does not know, where the women are. Our reading of the documents therefore results in a long list of information that needs to be added as a first step before any further gender mainstreaming work can be done. We therefore summarize our findings in one expression: ‘Find the women!’

Policy documents in the future must in every instance where it is relevant give statistics broken down on males and females. (Compare Rubery et.al, 1998 and Rees, 1998. After reading 150 pages of policy documents we found only one page, namely page 41 of the policy document.

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1 The Dutch acronym is ICT for Information and Communication Technology, which differs from the internationally adopted acronym IT, but it is synonymous.
“Digitale Delta”, that fulfills the requirements of gender mainstreaming. The passage that makes this page a model that we wish to see in all policy documents in the future reads in translation.

‘The use of internet is still different between different population groups. The median internet user is a man aged 25 to 50 with an income exceeding the typical income. But internet use increases also for people with lower incomes (by 21 per cent the previous half year) and the relation between men and women with access to internet has become more equal. The number of women has increased by 61 per cent last half year to 25.3 per cent, while the number of men increased by 18 per cent to 36.7 per cent.

The purpose of the general policy for the manufacturing industry and the service sector spelled out in the Industry Letter is: ‘To Make Room for Industrial Renewal.’ The Industry Letter wants to create a good environment by offering good social policies, tax system, a flexible labor market and market solutions for business. Therefore the Industry Letter enumerates a number of basic principles like: creating a good environment for entrepreneurship, policies should be noninterventionist, promote free competition take advantage of external effects. Policies should be dynamic and flexible and be evaluated regularly. In addition, they should be general and they should not have specific solutions per industry branch. The Industry Letter argues, that the importance of manufacturing industry in the Netherlands is often underestimated because there are few people employed which in turn is an effect of the fact that worker productivity is so high. Also, the Netherlands has a comparative advantage in trade and distribution, which derives from its location on the mouths of big European rivers the Rhein and the Maas (Meuse in French). Therefore trade and distribution has contributed and contributes a larger share of the national product than in neighbouring countries, about 60 per cent of Gross National Product according to Figure 2 page 16 of the Industry Letter. The Industry Letter argues that knowledge and technology is important in the near future. Firms should form clusters for cooperation and think about positioning themselves in comparison to competitors. The Industry Letter expresses concern that the Netherlands can not offer enough qualified personnel to attract international business and that the share of new products in Dutch industry is smaller than in the average of the EU. Next, the Industry Letter goes on to list an agenda for improving the industrial entrepreneurial climate. This agenda consists of the following five policy headings: mobilize
general knowledge, 2) improve climate for techno starters, 3) strengthen innovation by cluster policies, 4) remove obstacles for qualified personnel, 5) reform tax and financial incentives.

The whole of this story, covering about 50 pages is written without ever mentioning the words women or men. Our work on the document therefore has been to suggest addition of information on the distribution of women and men. For example, when discussing how to remove obstacles for qualified people, things can go very wrong if women do not feel addressed by the policies, and if policy makers think of qualified personnel as being comprised entirely by men. In the Industry Letter the supply of qualified personnel in the Netherlands is suggested to be increased by the following policy measures.

1) increase the number of students in technical universities and decrease drop out rates;
2) schooling initiatives from the market sector to be transferred to other sectors;
3) information about supply and demand of labor for sectors and regions should be collected and distributed to interested parties;
4) there should be an employability agenda.

When discussing these points it could have been highly relevant by point 1 to mention the proportion of male and female technology students and suggest measures to close the gender gap among technology students. By the second point one course is mentioned namely a course on ‘machine metal working’. Nothing is said about the gender composition of this course and there is no attempt to give another example, which attracts a larger share of women. That is what we would have requested from a gender mainstreamed document. By the first point it could have been relevant not only to organize supply of information according to regions and sections but also to request that gender information should be broken down by gender. By the fourth point there should have been a discussion on how employability can look different from a female perspective than from a male perspective. Dutch economic development today is dependent on activating its labour resources. This is to a large extent synonymous with mobilizing mother,s early retirees, and re-entering women who spent time at home caring for young children. In Table 3 the example of genderizing one particular page of the text of the Industry Letter is given. This page discusses points 1 to 4 above and in Table 3, I have translated a number of sentences as they
are written in the Industry Letter in the left column, with our suggested additions or rewriting in the right column. This page is especially focussed on personnel issues, but there is no reference to the fact that we live in a gendered society.

[Table 3]

How does for example the course on metal and machine working score in terms of involving the female potential labor force? This lack of awareness of the gendered society is dominant throughout the Industry Letter. One would have thought, that it would be easier to recall, that the society consists of men and women, when discussing personnel and training issues than it is, when discussing issues about imperfect competition for example. But not even when discussing personnel issues, this has been done.

We have in Gustafsson, Wetzels and Tijdens (2000) given a number of suggestions. The most important advice about gender mainstreaming is that genderizing policy documents is not a task of a special 'emancipation official' as has been the case in the past. Such an emancipation officer has often been a young female, recently employed and with a marginalized position in the organization. Rather, gender mainstreaming is the task of everyone. All policy documents whatever their topic should 1. give statistics broken down in gender, 2. analyze gender gaps and 3. suggest policies on how to close gender gaps. All policy documents should be written with these points in mind and policies should be regularly monitored on their success in closing gender gaps. Because economic policies are inspired by economic research there is of course a task for economic research in supplying policy makers with gender aware research.

6. Conclusions.

Androcentricity, seeing the world from a male perspective, is an obstacle not only to women's situation, but also for economic development and efficient use of resources. This paper uses examples from three dissertations from the Department of Economics of the University of Amsterdam a much used Labor Economics text book and recent policy documents from the Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs, that androcentricity is more the rule than the exception.
In this paper I have argued for gender mainstreaming of economic research, economic policy and policy evaluation. Many improvements have occurred in economic research since the 1970s when the lack of gender awareness was first noticed. This can be seen by comparing the first and seventh editions of the Ehrenberg and Smith labour Economics text book. However, much needs to be done. In my own fields population economics, labor economics and microeconometrics of household panel data. Increasingly the gender composition and gender aware analyses are carried out much thanks to the increasing proportion of female researchers these fields, However, fields like the study of consumption patterns, financial portofolio choices or savings patterns seldom break down analyses on gender. This lack of gender awareness translates to applied research of ministeries as shown by our examples from the Dutch ministry of Economic Affairs.

It is the task of everyone who is active in a field to gender mainstream economic theory and economic research, unravel the goals for economic policies for their gender compositions, and design and carry out research projects to evaluate policies according to their effects for women and men separately. The very nature of mainstreaming means that the idea of delegating such work to marginalized emancipation officials. Similarly, delegating research that distinguishes effects between men and women should not be the task only for a small and vulnerable number of feminist professors. Gender mainstreaming means that all economic research should take account of gender aspects. It is the task of us all male and female researchers and policy makers. In this paper I have indicated how such work can be done.
References.


Digitale Delta, 1999, Nederland on Line, Ministry for Economic Affairs, the Hague, the Netherlands.


Gustafsson, Siv, 1975, En annorlunda presentation av stats tjänstemannastatistik. (A Different Presentation of the Government Salary Statistics, Statistisk Tidskrift nr. 4.


Table 1. Examples of the language of economics.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Economic concept</th>
<th>Meaning of the concept if gendered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>A woman or a man</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘The individual and his wife’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labor supply</td>
<td>Women and men who have paid jobs or are looking for paid jobs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labor demand</td>
<td>Women and men who have paid jobs plus unfilled vacant jobs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment rate</td>
<td>Women and men looking for paid jobs divided by total number of women and men in the entire population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consumer</td>
<td>Women and men buying things and services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worker</td>
<td>A woman or a man who performs a paid job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self employed</td>
<td>A woman or a man who has started her or his own business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human capital</td>
<td>Knowledge possessed by women plus knowledge possessed by men acquired by schooling and on the job training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender dummy</td>
<td>A variable that takes the value 1 if female and 0 if male. Result in many economic texts: “we find a negative estimate for the gender dummy as expected”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unexplained gender wage differential</td>
<td>Discrimination against women or unobserved productivity differences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theory of labor supply</td>
<td>Choice between labor and leisure Or Choice between market work, household work and leisure</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There must be innovative thinking in recruiting, selection and training of personnel and optimal use of available labor supply also of people currently not in the labor force.

The Ministry of Economic Affairs will make firms aware of the fact that many women with a good education are currently not in the labor force because of lack of daycare for children and other obstacles for them to supply labor. One group firms might offer special training to are reentering women who have spent some years as full time home makers and now want to work if there is an opportunity. Further the Netherlands has unusually many people in the age group of 55-64 who have left the labor force. Some of these might be willing to reenter if they get good conditions.

There must be cooperation between government, employees and labor unions to . increase participation of young men and young women in higher education and decrease the drop out rates for both female and male students.
. retraining of the current labor force
. increase participation of young men and young women in technical education particularly among women. The proportion of women among technical students is x%. The dropout rate for male and female students are respectively y% and w%

The suggestion to retrain the current labor force is particularly important for increasing the level of knowledge about information technology in the existing labor force.

A good example of an improved education effort is an initiative taken by the employers and labor union together in order to increase the attraction of ‘metal and machine work’ in school. The results are successful; enrollment has increased and dropout rates have decreased.

At this moment the ministers of Economic...
Affairs, Social Affairs, Education, Culture and Research, work together with employers, organizations and labor unions to construct the ‘Employability Agenda’ where broad employment opportunities for the potential and actual labor force is aspired.

The employability concept will cover policy measures to involve more Dutch women in the labor force, which should be possible considering the fact that the Netherlands has an internationally low labor force participation for women.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Goals of Family Policies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>Since 1970s policies to promote combination of work and family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>. separate income taxation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>. subsidized public day care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>. paid parental leaves 15 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>. full day school w. hot meal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>. support to families with children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>. child benefits until age 16; no tax credits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>. low fertility causes ageing population problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>Policies to encourage mothers to stay home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>. joint income taxation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>. part day kindergarten</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>. unpaid parental leaves 3 years (10 months 600 DM/M)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>. school ends at 1 PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>. promote fertility by tax credits to families with children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>. low fertility causes ageing population problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>Until 1990 policies for mothers to stay home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Since 1990 policies to promote part time work and part time home care of children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>. daycare expands waiting lists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>. paid full time leave 16 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>. part time leave 6 months paid in government sector and some other cbas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>. childcare centers private entrepreneurs money from government firms and parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom:</td>
<td>Until recently a laissez faire regime. Families are private and government policies should not interfere.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>. 40 weeks parental leave, low replacement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>. the market should supply daycare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>. low fertility causes ageing population problems</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>