

III. GIFTS IN THE SHADOW OF EXCHANGE

The Khoekhoe Free Economy

A Model for the Gift

The Khoekhoe are Indigenous South Africans. South Africa, Nairbobi, Southern Angola, Botswana, Zambia, Zimbabwe, and southern Mozambique are historical homes of Indigenous populations. The word “Khoekhoe” means “people of people” as opposed to “animal people” or “clod people,” thus the English translation would be “humans”—we are then South African human beings.

The topic of this paper is the social structure of the historical Khoekhoe as a model for the gift economy. I am writing about the historical Khoekhoe because after 350 years of colonialism, 250 years of slavery, 48 years of apartheid and ten years of structural adjustment, there is not much that has survived.

The foundation of the Khoekhoe free economy is our spirituality. Fundamentally we give because we are given to, and the biggest thing that we were given, of course, is creation. The sign of our creator is the circle, sign of wonders; the open hand, which is obviously a giving hand. Engravings of the circle are one of the most frequently observed in Khoekhoe rock art. What the circle means is blessedness. It symbolizes that the divine is within each of us. When I give, I am giving from the divine in me to the divine in you. We are one creator, one world. The two of us, as aspects of the creator, are sharing in a joint creation.

We give because we are created. We are all aspects of the creator. The Khoekhoe used to think of us as being part of each other, of all being aspects of one creator. The Khoekhoe tradition of rock art and cave drawings is a tradition of story-telling, and storytelling is a gift. The Khoekhoe paint their stories on cave walls and rocks for all the world to see. This is the very opposite of capitalist art. The art on cave walls and rock art are out in the open; they cannot be bought, they are given, there for any passerby to enjoy. One of the most celebrated things in rock art is motherhood, and there are many paintings of mother and child, of a child suckling, which is one huge aspect of gift giving.

Only a mother can suckle her child, but other than that, mothering was not really a gendered act in Khoekhoe society. The broader aspects of mothering, taking care of children, was not considered a gendered task; it was something everybody did. Everyone watched over the children. The Khoekhoe people are non-gendered. If there is task specific to men, you will always see that it is a man in paintings about hunting, and if it is a task specific to women, like suckling,

you will always be able to see a woman. But by far the majority of figures in the art rock are non-gendered, they are just human beings, the Khoekhoe.

One thing the Khoekhoe love to give as well is thanks. With a spirituality based on gifting, when the men used to hunt, they would say, "Give your life that I might live." The taking of a life indiscriminately was just not done. It is probably one of the reasons we were so easily colonized. It took about 150 years for the Khoekhoe to get over killing one colonist. It just wasn't part of our culture. It was only around the mid-nineteenth century that the Khoekhoe began to understand the capitalist idea of taking life, as opposed to sharing life.

In all the stories, and rock paintings, of hunting, when the hunters come home with the meat, thanks are given to the buck that gave its life so that we could live. There would be drumming and dancing, more storytelling, people changing into cats and bucks, dancing in a circle, in a double circle, the celebrated and sacred sign of spirituality.

One of the interesting aspects of the Khoekhoe gift economy is that men and women are separate but equal. While there were things that only the men did, like hunting, and there were other things that only women did, like gathering of plants, and suckling children—different spiritual tasks—this did not transform into any form of gender inequality. The reason for this is quite obvious. It is because the Khoekhoe society did not have private property, and therefore never developed a hierarchical, class society. The means of production were never privatized. The Khoekhoe put it this way: the land cannot be ours, it is God's, it is given to us by God to take care of and pass on to the next generation. It is not something that you actually can give; it is not yours to give in the first place. If you cannot give it, then you cannot sell it, you cannot buy it, you cannot own it.

And to me, this really important when we look at modern-day versions of the gift economy. Not having private property or owning land was a basis for the Khoekhoe gift economy because if I have enough and you have enough, then the gifts take on a social symbolism. I don't need to give you anything to eat, because you have enough to eat. You don't need to give me anything to eat, because I have enough to eat, so we can start thinking of gifts as something that is not necessary, something that we do because we want to, not because we have to, and that's really different from today. Today, I cannot give away my labour. I have to work in order to eat. In the old days, gift giving used to symbolize social exchange. The Khoekhoe consider it very rude to refuse a gift, because what it means is, "I don't want to know you. I don't to accept you as part of my particular social structure." When you give me a gift, it's saying you want to be part of me. Me giving you a gift is saying, "Yes, I like you. Let's be in a community together."

Today I cannot do this. I will pass somebody in the street, a person starving, and it's raining, and I have to give them food. It is not a choice on my part, but an imperative. At some point one might have to stop giving because they ran out of food, and this has a different social meaning in a situation of landlessness and privatized property. In South Africa, the whites used to own 87 percent of the land. Ten years after the implementation of structural adjustment programs,

they still own 85 percent of the land. The politics may have changed, but the economy has not. The power of gifting is thus diminished. It is beautiful when gifting is choice, but not when you are forced to do it. These are the kind of things we grapple with today.

What do we do today to manage to exist, now that we are divorced from the gifting economy on which our society was based? What still survives of the old traditions? The first thing we give each other is respect and recognition. And people in many parts of the world do not do this. We say, "Hello, how are you?" meaning, I see you, I recognize you, and I care how you are. If we are in the rural areas, then people will go on forever, "how's your mother, how's your father, how's your grandmother, how's your uncle, how's your aunt?" We give each other that recognition. When we ask, "how are you?" we speak to the divine in the other person. We care.

We have many rituals around food that have survived quite well, even through the years when we were slaves and we didn't have much food. Still today, the Khoekhoe will never dish out the last portion of food in the pot. They always leave a little bit of food in the pot. And this may seem strange, as many people today do not have enough food. But that remnant in the pot symbolizes leaving some food for God, and if a stranger knocks on the door and needs food, you will be able to feed that stranger. When you share food for the family, and leave some for whoever might need it, a gift giving social system is reinforced. There may be some of our people sleeping on street corners, but they have got certain families that they can regularly go to for food: one on a Monday, another on a Tuesday, and so on. That last portion of food in the pot, the last piece for God, you're giving it to God in this other person.

Sharing food is fundamental. Many people do this all over the world. I am not suggesting it's specific to the Khoekhoe, but just sharing with you how we do things. When you visit a Khoekhoe house, you cannot leave without eating a dish of something. It would be rude to not offer a guest, a visitor, or even a stranger something, even if there is nothing but water in house. Water is also a precious resource. I was brought up this way. When you walk into my house, you will not be able to leave without having had some tea or coffee and something to eat. It was quite surprising to me when I visited in Europe and I discovered that some people do not do this, as we do.

There are also all kinds of ceremonial giving. Giving is a symbol of relatedness. There are many ceremonial gifts around courtship and marriage. To share your *karosse* (shawl) with somebody is a symbol of engagement. You might ask, "are you cold?" and then lay the shawl over the other person's shoulder. You are sharing warmth, but you are also making a statement, "do you want to share my *karosse*?" Gifting between the two families involved in courtship and marriage has survived. In the nineteenth century families would each exchange a cow or a sheep; it was a symbol of the joining of bloodlines. Today we cannot afford cows or sheep. Today we exchange DVDs or TVs. But the symbolism is still there.

Storytelling continues. We will give you poetry at the drop of hat, and in fact

we will continue to read poetry after everybody falls asleep.

Women give a huge amount of free labour. Male responsibility for childrearing remains, in some cases. There should be social recognition of male mothering, though in practice, the more the men are colonized, the less and less they do of it. But if we studied the gift givers, we would see that they are all women. I raise this because Genevieve Vaughan (1997) talks about ways in which the exchange economy still uses the gift economy, and in many ways could not survive without it. If women's free labour is 40 percent of the economy, then it is certain that the market economy could not survive without it.

Also in Africa, it is the women who farm the land. About 66 percent of the food that feeds the continent comes off this land, it comes from women's subsistence farming, yet this food production never makes it into Africa's economic figures. This is because this food is not bought, is not sold, it is given. But we could not survive without this. Women's non-waged labour provides two-thirds of all the food that Africans eat each year. In a way, it leads to greater independence, but in another way, it is a huge subsidy of the globalized capitalist economy. Imagine if African wages went up by two-thirds. It would do all kinds of interesting things to the economy.

We also have a compassion economy. During colonialism and during slavery, we would not have been able to survive without a compassion economy, meaning that when somebody gets into trouble, everybody chips in, we all help. This has been under a lot of strain now because of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. We've seen it breaking down in various parts of the country. This gift, this compassion economy survived slavery, it survived colonialism, but it's not surviving HIV/AIDS.

The compassion economy is about the self. I give because I am human, because I am Khoekhoe, it's not because I want to impress you, it's not because I want you to love me, and I know there may be heaps of psychological studies on the gift demanding attention, but in our culture it's not like that. Giving is about me, it's about who I am. I is the way I was brought up. I do it not for you, but for me, and for the sake of the divine in me.

But gift giving is based on access to land and on a certain level of self-sufficiency. Access to land means I can give. What we are working on inside Africa primarily is simply access to land. Compulsory heterosexuality and the bearing of sons is necessary for African women to have access to land. If you are not married to a man, if you are barren, if you have only given birth to girls, you are barred from accessing land. In Africa, it is not so much that women want to have all these children that they have to look after, so they don't have time to spend on the struggle, it's that they must. If they don't, they, and their children, are not going to eat. So, that's what we're looking at for the next ten years or so, is just getting some of that 85 percent of land back and feeding ourselves.

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Gift Giving Across Borders

I am challenged by the many issues and ideas and conceptions of the gift economy and its concrete expression throughout history and society. For someone like me, whose time is spent in the practical realm of forming social movements (aimed at establishing institutions that support the development of the human potential by protecting, promoting, defending and practicing the principle that all human beings are equal in rights and dignity), reflecting on the different theoretical constructs of how we interpret the practice of a gift economy is an important part of what long-term activists have known as the relationship between theory and practice.

The relationship between theory and practice guides my political work and the work that we do in the formation of these social movements. Theory gives us direction and practice gives us the movement, and it is the learning from theory that enables us to actually move these movements forward in their development in a way that will benefit people, but it is also the practice that *retroalimenta* (in Spanish)—provides feedback—and enhances theoretical development.

In this article, I look at the immigrant rights movement, the human rights movement, and the communities where I do my political work, to try to understand what this theory of a gift economy is in its practical expression. And certainly one of the most important aspects of gift restructuring and integration into the global economy is the human right to mobility. The right to mobility is important because it affects how gift giving is being integrated at the global economic level. Human mobility is about the interdependence of social, economic, and political relationships in the human family. Thus, in its current phase, which is being restructured by economic and political elites worldwide, human mobility conditions the way people live within countries, as well as those that cross borders.

The wealth created millions of people worldwide has enabled, more than ever before in human history, the technology, the communications and the ability to move easily across borders, a historical experience recreated within the configuration of civilizations and countries throughout the globe. But that increased capacity, given the current strategy of economic global development, has made mobility safely and legally across borders a right for only a very few—the global economic and political elite.

This mobility is easily seen when we observe the movement of CEOs (chief

executive officers) of corporations all over the world; the meeting of political elites without any problem, safely and legally, across borders, to also discuss issues of global dominance and exploitation and control; and also the movement of so-called “refugees” such as, for example, the Marcos (Ferdinand and Imelda) of the Philippines, Carlos Salinas de Gortari (ex-President of Mexico), and all others who are considered the “wealthy refugees.” All of these elitist groups move legally and safely across the world without any problems, so that their role is sustained and maintained in the re-creation and construction of this globalization from above.

When we look at the development of immigration policy in nation states throughout the world, and how these define who is allowed to enter, who is allowed to stay, who is allowed to become a member of the nation state, it becomes very clear that immigration policy and border enforcement policy is about the restriction of mobility of the international working poor and the internationally displaced, who are also poor.

Borders, barriers, border agents, and militarized institutional violence to restrict mobility are some of the mechanisms used to reinforce on a global scale the social, political, gender inequalities of the very few against the very many. Institutional violence is necessary to sustain these inequities. Therefore, those that must sustain these inequities, like any other type of human activity, will define the movement across borders without government inspection as a crime. A crime that has no violence and has no victim, but that permits the construction of institutions both internally and externally, which ensure that the strategy of economic development of these elites persist, and that this strategy will continue to produce high profits by maintaining low wages.

It is a mechanism that also assists in the implementation of the structural adjustment policies of a scorched earth policy that results in the creation of havens for speculative capital investment circles, while curtailing investments in social infrastructure and in human development. It is a policy that then forces millions to opt for incorporation into a global labour market, their only option for survival. Thus, the movement of people becomes an important aspect of challenging the very policies that want to restrict its conditions according to plans for increasing profits.

So when communities and families, faced with structural adjustment policies of scarcity, opt to move to another country, the decisions to do so are made by families in consultations to determine who must emigrate and who must stay. These family decisions are made in communities that have a tradition of moving across international borders, and that have established networks to receive the migrants in the destination countries. These networks also help the migrants move across the borders, and the migrants, in turn, help to sustain the families and communities in their countries of origin.

The decision, in that sense, is a decision made by families to regenerate their survival, forming strong emotional bonds that will respond to the needs, fundamental basic needs, to sustain their development as families and as humans. And

yet it is this very act, the act of migrating across international borders, this timeless transnational network that operates in the context of exploitation and policies of plundering countries of origin that actually form the networks of resistance and rebellions to those maintained by the powerful economic elites.

These family networks facilitate migration; the family networks ensure rein-statement of community needs, and family networks allow the instant conveying of resources, information, and even affection. It is interesting to note the growth and the use of, for instance, cell phones in communities of origin and reception. There are even communities that install computers in the community so that families can then see each other from places, for instance, as far as New York, to places in tiny villages in Mexico or in Ecuador.

Thus, in the current global configuration, the movement of people is a strategy of survival, and actually a strategy of “thrival.” And this strategy of thrival is based on an economy of “giving” that sustains economic prosperity and interconnections between people moving North and resources coming from the South in the midst of unbridled free trade policies that threaten the sustainability of communities and economies, and particularly the development of human beings.

Understanding that international migrants invest in their families and community so generously, it became clear that there *is* a gift economy in this project of transnationalization, of movement of communities. And what is this gift? People who live outside their countries of origin are responsible for moving a hundred billion dollars globally every year between the so-called “developed countries” and the developing countries. This is the money sent back home by millions of immigrants worldwide; 30 billion of those dollars go to Latin America, 15 billion, half of that, to Mexico. And then there are also many unrecorded gifts in resources to communities. It is estimated that half of the unreported and the free labour given to development in communities has actually out-edged net, direct foreign investments in countries of origin (“All in the Family” 2004; Orzoco 2003; Suro 2003; Alarcón 2000).

As often proposed to Mexican immigrants, we might as well form a co-op and buy Mexico. So what is the gift? The gift is the at least \$190 sent back to families seven times per year. In some cases it is \$100, and in some cases it is \$300. In some cases immigrants will send back 15 percent of each paycheque, and others will send 50 percent of each paycheque, so the range is 15 to 50 percent of salaries in labour markets of exploitation that go back to sustain the families (“All in the Family” 2004; Suro 2003; “Importance of Remittances to Household Incomes” 1998).

Who are the senders? They tend to be migrants (emigrants), selected and agreed to by the consensus of families, to move out of the country to seek economic opportunity. They are the socially excluded who transform the experience of migration as an experience of liberation for themselves and for their communities. If we look at Latin America, some six million immigrants send money back home on a regular basis. Six million sent 30 billion dollars. Of these, one-half have been in the U.S. for less than ten years. Who are the senders? In a national employment

survey conducted in Mexico, it was discovered that out of 5,896 individuals who migrated to the United States between 1997 and 2002, 70 percent had sent money back home, 89 percent were married, 60 percent were less than 30 year old, 48 percent were of homes that also have other senders of money, and 79 percent of these are people who entered the United States without documents ("All in the Family" 2004; Suro 2003).

Two-thirds of these senders have been in the United States less than ten years, and they send money once a month. When you look at migrants that have been in the United States less than five years, three-fourths send once per month. And when we look at the income range of the senders in the United States, we find that of the people who earn \$50,000 or more a year, nine percent (this is talking about Mexico) send money back home. Of the people who earn \$30,000 to \$50,000 a year, 32 percent send money back home. And of people who earn less than \$30,000, 46 percent send money back home ("All in the Family" 2004; Suro 2003).

So, in effect, 78 percent of the 15 billion dollars sent back to Mexico is sent back by people who earn less than \$50,000 a year, and who send 15 to 50 percent of their paycheque back to relatives in Mexico.

Who receives? In Mexico, it is 18 percent of the adult population. Of those who receive, the majority are women. What impact? How many households? In Mexico, 4.4 percent of the households, or 4.3 million people receive these gifts. Forty percent of those receiving the gifts depend on them to sustain themselves and to not slip into dire poverty. Three to four people per household benefit from receiving and spending. And 73.6 percent of the recipients are under the age of 15 and over the age of 65 ("All in the Family" 2004; Suro 2003; "Importance of Remittances to Household Incomes" 1998).

As a community/family consultation strategy and method of survival, people decide which family, and which family member, migrates, and while the majority are men, 40 percent of those who migrate (emigrate) are women, and they support brothers and sisters, not necessarily just parents. Yet, when we look at who receive, we see that recipients are primarily family households of women, children, and the elderly. In the case of Mexico, these senders probably constitute those who send remittances that, according to many sources, are not really not taken into account by any financial institution, because these gifts are not transferred through banks, but are taken to the communities directly through clubs and their representatives (Orzoco 2003; Alarcón 2000). These tend to be immigrants who have settled longer within the United States, but who sustain a large number of new immigrants every year. The clubs, or hometown associations, are volunteer, structurally organized, collective entities that consult with the community they are from to decide on how to develop projects and mutual obligations for the well-being of the town. Some of these projects are in response to crises, such as a natural disaster, but others are a continual and developed interchange between the hometown and the hometown association, or clubs, in the United States.

And what do they do? They collect money through simple activities, such as

dances and bake sales, very grassroots types of activities, and they invest in the community, but they also send goods. There are certain goods that they will buy in the United States and then transfer to the community. For example, ambulances, medical equipment, school buses and supplies, machinery for the development of the town well, equipment that may lead to the construction of a particular hospital. They invest in social projects, scholarships for students in the town, health clinics, childcare facilities, homes for the elderly. And they even invest in job creation such as supporting vocational schools that permit the youth to acquire skills necessary to operate in the economy.

How many of these are there? We really do not know. It has been estimated that there are approximately 600 associations in 30 U.S. cities; 218 in Los Angeles alone (Alarcón 2000). Many groups also form state federations. Some of the strongest in different states are La Federación de Clubes del Sur de California (the Federation of Clubs of Southern California), the Federation of Clubs of the State of Michoacan, and the Federation of Clubs of Jalisco.

And how do they collect the resources and the monies to be able to invest in the town? This is done through membership dues, through quotas, through fundraising activities, donations, and sometimes, in the case of the oldest and strongest, like the Federación de Clubes del Sur de California, they even enter into arrangements with local and state governments. Some of the federations have even entered into arrangements with the North American Development (NAD) Bank in order to create pools of resources to increase support for their communities (Orzoco 2003).

For instance, the Federation of Clubes of Zacatecas, in 1995, convinced the governor of the state that if they invested one dollar, the municipal government should invest one dollar and the state government should invest in another dollar. And thus was created the program known as “Dos por Uno” (Two for One). Among the Federation clubs they gathered \$600,000, which they took to Zacatecas, and with the investment of municipal and state governments, were able to fund 56 projects in 34 towns. Four hometown associations of the Mexican state of Michoacan, based in Illinois, also raised \$650,000 for projects in their localities around the same time.

There are concrete examples of this kind of support also being provided by individual clubs. There are 100 families in Anaheim, California that formed a club called El Club Tomás Titián that has organized various health projects in Tomás Titián because there is a sanctuary in the town, El Señor de los Reyes, which many people throughout Mexico visit in the hopes of being healed. The townspeople observed that visitors seeking the spiritual healing of El Señor de los Reyes would often experience a health crisis, and there was no infrastructure in the town to care for the sick. The club, therefore, invested in building a house to serve as a health center that medical schools around Mexico could send student doctors to who could then practice and train in the town. The club bought surgical equipment, and even installed a water pump to assist the clinics of the area.

Another example is Club Pesqueros. One of the inhabitants of Pesqueros died

because there was no ambulance, so the families of Pesqueros, Jalisco in the U.S. joined together and bought the ambulance. Now the club has a fund that provides scholarships for middle and high school students, a strategy they implemented to prevent drop-outs, and to support 57 children with developmental problems. Every year one of their fundraising activities in the United States is to hold a banquet, a *baile* (dance), and a rodeo, where they crown a Reina of the Club Pesqueros (Queen of the Club Pesqueros). This young woman, however, is not the most beautiful young woman, but the one that can raise the most funds for the collective fund that pays for work in the town. I have been thinking of suggesting to the Club Pesqueros that instead of “Queen” they call that young woman “The Goddess of Gift Giving.”

These are examples, then, of community; the poorest of the poor on the international global scales, the most exploited, the women you see cleaning our rooms, the people cutting our lawns, the people working in the restaurants, these are the ones who are gift giving, despite the conditions of exploitation.

What are the impacts? There are impacts within many spheres. First, these remittances are not actually considered to be “good” investments. While remittances might bring 15 billion dollars into the country, it is money that is not invested in productive projects, or capital-generating projects. The money simply supports families. And this goes to the heart of some of the theories put forth in the gift economy of how the sustaining of families and the sustaining of communities, like the infrastructure projects that many of these clubs have undertaken, are not considered valuable from the capitalist point of view, although they are a valuable form of gift giving to the community.

I came across a paper presented by John B. Taylor, the Under Secretary of Treasury for International Affairs at the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta, in which he states: “In my remarks I would like to discuss, number one, why the Bush administration cares so much about remittances.” Why does the Bush administration care so much about remittances? That is, as the capitalist financial establishment and corporations begin to understand the volume of gift giving that is being sent back by individuals and communities, the question becomes, “How do we take advantage of it? How does this gift giving contribute to our own interests and developments?” The Federal Reserve Bank now needs to find ways to facilitate easy wire transfers between immigrant communities and countries of origin, and a way to profit from this.

Immigrant communities, faced with increasing problems around the ability to move across borders because of tougher enforcement measures and the lack of programs to legalize their status in recipient countries, find it much more difficult to transfer money now because it was once done by family members and persons going back to the community. The financial institutions are currently positioning themselves to see which can offer the better program, and at the same time, charge for the transfer of these funds. Even a fee of one percent for the transfer, or a lowering of the cost of transfers that is now in many cases done through Western Union or Moneygram, could actually contribute one more billion dollars

to sustain families in the countries of origin.

The governments have other interests, the Fox administration particularly. It is interesting how the current President of Mexico, Vicente Fox, has begun congratulating the people in the United States for what now has become the largest source of foreign exchange to Mexico, beyond petroleum, beyond tourism, and again, like in other countries, has edged the net direct capitalist contribution and foreign investment in Mexico. The Fox administration has developed several government programs so that these funds are invested in productive projects, which again mean capital-making projects. One of people in Fox's administration recently stated in a public speech, "Our economy is doing great. We have had so much success in oil, in trade, and by the way, in remittances sent by the *paisanos* (countrymen)," as if they had anything to do with earning these funds and/or sending them back.

But certainly the phenomena of remittances is being seen by the capitalist establishment as having become a gold mine, formerly invisible—as is most gift giving—and only recognized by those that receive these remittances and the communities that have had the experience of the projects paid for by the many clubs that exist in the United States. This is the impact of the movement of people, and the sending back home of money, on the global economy. The very small ant-like savings of migrant people have a tremendous aggregate effect upon the economies that are being fed.

It is interesting to note that studies with the sophisticated analysis that economists can now do, have shown that even those micro-gifts that become aggregate sums have a tremendous impact on the well-being of the economies, such as the Mexican economy. For instance, in one study it was shown that the injection of two billion dollars, as a result of remittances, increased the output of production in Mexico by four billion dollars and increased income in Mexico to approximately 2.2 percent of total income, and resulted in the creation of 325,225 potential jobs ("All in the Family" 2004). In other words, there can be one job created for every \$4,400 of the money sent back home by immigrants.

Remittances have a definite impact on economies and well-being, and the capitalists are ready now to capitalize on this. When I look at the issue of gift giving and where progressive movements are in the theoretical development of such experiences, what we see is that the experience of gift giving comes from homes that send, comes from decisions of consensus, comes from decisions in which men and women decide who emigrates and who makes the decisions as how to invest when that money is received. These good people who give have the values associated with a gift economy, which are the values of mothering, nurturing and giving, but their actions are meaningless unless they are infused with the experience of those who are exploited and oppressed, because that is what gives us direction. It is the difference between the mothering and the nurturing described by the Cardinal Ratzinger in Rome (see Paola Melchiori's article in this volume), that characterizes women, and the nurturing and caring that is being done by immigrants all over the world of their families and which is a direct result of the experience of

exploitation and oppression, and how to resist, how to construct communities, how to really live in the practical terms of globalization from below.

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The Gift Economy in the Caribbean

The Gift and The Wind

In the search to redress the deepening of unequal access to economic resources there is a major call for a new politics and new ethics building on our collective responsibilities. Such new ethics would be founded on values that embrace diversities yet reject the deepening fractures of racism, religious intolerance, ethnic violence, and unthinking individualism. Within this search there is a need to find innovative analysis and new methods that de-center neoliberal global capitalism as all encompassing and highlight the many ways we love, live and work together.

[An] important contributions to this search—the gift paradigm—aims to put in place a new theory, vision, and way of life founded on solidarity or *convivencia* (conviviality). This vision aims to transform the current rules of the game, going beyond market economics and rejecting a world where people's time, energy, and hope, and Commons of all kinds, are turned into commodities and sucked into a hugely unfair market system. (Harcourt 2003)¹

In this paper, I would like to put that experience of the gift economy in the Caribbean in the context of the natural disasters—the hurricanes—that each year stalk our islands, placing them in great jeopardy and reminding us of the fragility of material conditions (the market economy) and the importance of relationships (the basis of a gift economy) that endure and enable us to survive the worst of circumstances.

In September 2004, the island of my birth, Grenada, experienced one of the worst hurricanes in recent history. Hurricane Ivan, almost completely destroyed the country: the beautiful capital of St. Georges was devastated; 90 percent of the homes throughout the country lost their roofs; most of the schools and churches were destroyed; and the entire market economy shattered. The main elements of Grenada's economy are tourism, bananas, and nutmeg—all resource-based and particularly susceptible to the destruction wreaked by hurricanes. And this setback was not just for the short run: a nutmeg tree takes thirteen years before it will bear fruit again.

The principles and the values that speak so powerfully to the concept of a gift economy come from our people, a very modern people who emerged after the

Europeans had killed, decimated, and sent into exile the Indigenous people of the Caribbean—the Caribs and the Arawaks—who were inhabiting these islands of the West Indies when Christopher Columbus lost his way and happened upon them.

I'm speaking of the experience of a "creole" people. In the Caribbean we use the term "creole" to describe a people who are not Africans, Asians, or Europeans, but all of those combined, with a bit of mixture from the Middle East, the Lebanese and even from China. I am speaking of the experience of a people who have survived the extreme exploitation of market forces through enslavement, displacement, indenture, and colonialism to create and sustain new families and new communities.

And I am talking about a small island "developing" state where, in a sense, people really had to start all over again. But the only way to understand how we have survived in the Caribbean and how the people of Grenada have survived is to understand our history.

Hurricanes are destructive but they also help to strengthen our sense of solidarity with each other—including with our brothers and sisters in the wider Diaspora that stretches from North America and Europe, from Asia to Africa. For the Caribbean (and for other countries as well) the Diaspora is important because it allows us to reflect on the strength of the relationships of family and friendship that help sustain us in times of crisis.

For people in the Caribbean, part of the creation of new families and new communities after slavery and indenture was the creation of a family that is not just a family based on kinship. In the Caribbean, when we say "family" we go beyond kinship, to include deep and enduring friendships. Women are the center of that sense of family: women establish and maintain the ties that link us to the people of the Diaspora. The people of the Diaspora are extremely important, because although they have physically left the Caribbean to live in North America or Europe, in search of income and a better life, in another sense, emotionally, they never leave. And communications technology allows us to keep in very close contact with each other. There is, therefore, reciprocity between who live in the islands and those who live overseas.

I want to describe some of the ways in which the gift is manifested in the way that we survive. Imagine a young woman leaves the Caribbean in search of work. She goes to North America and maybe she leaves behind her children with her parents. She buys a barrel and she puts that barrel into the center of her room, in Brooklyn, or in Toronto, and every time she shops, or every time there's a sale, she buys things and puts them into that barrel. And when the barrel is full, she sends it back to her home in the Caribbean. This is known as the "barrel trade."

Imagine people who've gone from Jamaica, from Barbados, to Europe, to work in the transportation sector or in the hospitals in England. They send remittances, and these remittances amount to substantial sums of money. Figures really do not capture what those remittances mean to families, and to the economies of our countries, but in the 1950s, when Britain introduced its first *Immigration*

Act, the remittances that were sent from Jamaicans working in Britain to their families in Jamaica in one year were more than the entire Colonial Development and Welfare grant² to the entire region for four years. In short, remittances are not marginal to Caribbean economies; they make a very significant contribution to the economies, and not just to the families who receive them. At that time I was a student at a British university, reading for a degree in economics, and this information left an indelible mark on my thinking about economics.

But there's another kind of gift inherent in the relationship between the Diaspora and our home countries. Caribbean people who have migrated, who send remittances and barrels back to their family and friends in the islands, also go back to the islands, and they receive from the islands the gift of friendship, appreciation, and recognition, which allows them to live and work in what are often very hostile environments in the cities of North America and Europe. So there is that reciprocity: the material gift and the gift of friendship and appreciation that gives people a feeling of connection. And there is also the gift of acceptance and affirmation these Caribbean people receive when they return to their islands.

There are also associations of Caribbean people in the North that collect money within their community to support communities, schools, scholarships, hospitals and clinics, medical equipment, daycare centers, etc. in their home communities.

In the aftermath of hurricanes, the communities of the Diaspora are the first to come to the assistance of their countries. On receiving the news they immediately mobilize to send supplies and money to sustain families and communities, to rebuild homes and to enable children to continue their education.

And it is these gifts that make it possible for us, not just to survive, but to really thrive, and as people experience joy in our lives despite the hardships and the annual ravages of hurricanes and other natural disasters.

However, over the last few years, because of the relentless spread of neoliberal capitalism throughout the world, it has become increasingly difficult for people to survive. Increasingly people have fewer options for survival. There is a sense that as soon as you try to do something to earn a living, it's destroyed. More and more people, especially young people, out of despair and a sense of hopelessness, are resorting to drugs, to money laundering, to all of these criminal activities.

In this context it is more important than ever to recognize and affirm the gift economy. As Wendy Harcourt (2003) puts it:

The insights of Gen Vaughn's work on "the gift paradigm" allow us to move analytically and practically beyond the dominance of neoliberal global capitalism and the hegemony of patriarchal competition and hierarchy. It reverses the apparent given that the logic of the market and competition are the only way to live life "we have to be in it to win it." Instead another paradigm is offered—that of gift giving. It is by freely fulfilling others needs that we sustain and nurture life, and it should be this logic—the logic of gift giving that so many women within capitalist economies and non capitalist

economies practice—rather than the logic of the market and exchange of equivalents that guides our transformative vision for the future.

By making visible the gift paradigm, and valuing it for itself, we can foster economic and social relations based on an other-orientation that aims to satisfy needs, creates bonding and cooperation rather than egoism, isolation, and competition. By recognizing and restoring the gift paradigm in the innumerable places where it has been taken away, we can build on new/old values to bring about the transformations that our world so desperately needs in these days of fracture, fear, and insecurity.

If we do not recognize and affirm the gift economy, it will die. It will get negated, as we are drawn increasingly into the notion that the market is the only thing that contributes to livelihoods and the economy. Indeed, we are drawn increasingly to the idea that we must commodify everything; that everything must have a price.

The gift economy is to be found everywhere. We need to document it in different cultural settings, and to politicize it, to use it as way of understanding what we have and what we must defend against: the spread of the ideology of the market. Ultimately, the gift economy could become a way of countering the spread of globalization, the spread of the idea that only the market is important in people's lives and livelihoods.

The gift economy reminds us of the existence, and the power, of another kind of economy. We need this as we try to imagine a different world. We need this more than ever today because we can easily feel defeated and helpless in the context of neoliberal, capitalist globalization. I am amazed that working-class people, black people, and women in the United States can vote against their interests. The implication is that people lack the analysis to show them the links between all of those forms of oppression and exploitation, indeed, the links between patriarchy and capitalism.

More than ever we need to strengthen that kind of work, not just the documentation, the politicizing, but the analysis that will allow people to see the links between U.S. policy and what happens to people in the rest of the world.

To return to the question of the disaster: Sometimes a crisis can provide a particular kind of opportunity for innovation, creativity, and resilience. We have to see disasters as opportunities to really intensify our efforts at documenting and affirming the gift economy. I have no doubt that in the case of Grenada, Hurricane Ivan was an opportunity to start all over again, to do something differently.

I had already decided that Grenada would be one of the countries where I would do some of that documentation of the gift. The hurricane gives me an opportunity to put that into a completely different context. We are very fortunate, I think, that we actually have the networks, we have the analyses, and we have the technology that makes it possible to link the efforts that are going on in our own country to the efforts that are also going on at the global level. And it is in that sense that I find the optimism to continue.

Born in the Caribbean, Peggy Antrobus has worked for the advancement of women's rights and development, starting with her post as Advisor on Women's Affairs to the government of Jamaica on the eve of the UN Decade for Women (1974). She is a founding member of many feminist organizations including the Caribbean Association for Feminist Research and Action (CAFRA), DAWN, and the International Gender and Trade Network. She was General Coordinator of DAWN from 1991-1996, and currently serves on the Steering Committee of DAWN Caribbean. Her book, The Global Women's Movement: Issues, Strategies and Challenges, was published by Zed Books in 2004.

Notes

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- ¹ Personal communication with Wendy Harcourt, editor of *Development*, the journal of the Society for International Development (SID) following the meeting on the gift economy held at Stone Haven in 2003.
 - ² Colonial Development and Welfare grants were the equivalent of foreign assistance or foreign aid today. They were the sums of money given by the British government to the British colonies in recognition of Britain's responsibility toward its overseas territories.

The Children of the World

A Gift

All mothers and fathers have the right to love and care for their children, and would do well to love the children of others too! This was not possible for my mum and dad in Africa. And not because they did not love me and my brother, Kalif, but because they lived in a world which did not let them be healthy, did not let them live and stay with us. Indeed, they loved us so much that they entrusted us to our new parents so that we could live in safety, love each other and continue loving them. We children want a world where not one more mother has to cry because she cannot feed her children or protect them from people who want to exploit them, a world where children can laugh, sing, and play without suffering famine, violence, exploitation, solitude, war.

In the world today there are more than 600 million poor children, the children of the Third World. But poor children can be found in the rich people's world too.

The children of the Third World are easily exploited and treated badly. They are often forced to work, to go to war, to leave their mothers. In some cases mothers are even forced to sell their children, to get money and maybe be able to provide food to their other children. Such a disaster occurs because of the poverty and exploitation of the people in countries such as Africa, South America, and Asia.

The United Nations was born in 1945 with the aim of ensuring peace, freedom, justice, and respect for human rights. In 1959, the United Nations approved a Declaration of the Rights of Children. Rules were written that had to be followed by the parents of the child and by all other adults. For example: the child has a right to food, to a home, to play and to health care. If in a situation of physical, mental, or social inferiority, the child must receive psychological treatment and education and all the special care required.

Even in developed countries like Italy, there are poor people and poor children who are already working by the age of ten, and sometimes younger. Italy is the country in Europe with the highest number of children who leave school to go to work.

Some poor children don't get affection, attention, and understanding from their parents, either because they don't have parents or because these children were sold, like the hero of a true story that I am about to tell you. This really happened.

There was a twelve-year-old boy by the name of Iqbal who lived in India as a slave in a factory of carpets with many other children. He started working at four years old and stopped when he was ten. Iqbal met a union worker who denounced the exploitation of minors, of children in slavery. Iqbal and the union worker became great friends. Iqbal reported the system of exploitation of minors to the whole world. But because of this, our dear friend Iqbal did not live long. He died early, too early, he was assassinated.

Iqbal threatened the interests of the industrialists who were losing profits because of him. He was shot from a car while he was playing on a bike with his friends. It was on Easter Sunday in 1995. And that was the end of Iqbal's life, the end of a hero who became a martyr.

In today's world, which is the world of globalization, as my mummy says, children are becoming poorer and poorer and exploitation is growing. Even in Italy, and in Bari too, where I live, I see children in my neighbourhood who do not go to school, but spend their day on the streets. Some of them work and some of them just hang around. Isn't there a law, at least in Italy, that says that children must learn to read and write? Aren't there laws that protect children from criminals who also spend their time on the streets? Where is their space to play with other children, that is not on the streets?

If all of us help children and their parents, we wouldn't have people begging. You and I, have we ever asked why children come up to wash our cars when we are on the road? And this is Italy, a rich and first world country, as adults say! Have you ever asked yourself why these children are forced into "jobs" of that kind or why they beg? I can answer all this because there is only one explanation: because some people have lots of money and they spend it only on themselves, for their clothes, for too much food, for cars like limousines or Ferraris. And why are all these things we don't need on the market? I can answer this question too: so that the rich people can buy them, because they think these things are important, and not the children, people, who are in difficulty. The truth is that these things are not worth anything at all, because, as my friend Gen says, they have no value beyond market exchange value!

What can we do for the children? First of all, we must be aware of the problem, know that many children live in poverty, that they are exploited, that they don't go to school, and that they live in danger. We must know the dangers and the violence that threaten them. Many poor children live like slaves, nobody loves them, they don't have food, they don't have a mother, not even a place to sleep. We have to talk about this with our schoolmates, in our families, in our cities, with all the children of the rich countries. We must report these injustices. Internet and the email can help us do that, too. When we recognize the problem, it means that we can make plans and do something to help our friends, close or far away, but always close to our hearts.

There is enough food for everyone on the earth, but children die of famine. Have you ever asked why? I know. Because there are a lot of selfish people who don't think about the children, who don't care if they are healthy or not, whether

they have food or not, whether they go to school or not, whether they are happy or not, whether they can play instead of gathering garbage or living in the sewers. Many people think of money, of making money grow, only for themselves. Many people want power and think only of accumulating material things, of getting richer, and I bet they are not even very happy!

Children can help other children on the planet Earth, for example, by not buying products on the market that are made with child labour. These products are very many.

Luckily, there are some people who care for others and help people, including children, who know how to spend their money for others, showing the way to a better world.

All children want to be loved, protected, and welcomed into the world with joy. All children are a gift.

Bari, 31/5/2004

Translated from Italian by Amelia Rossi-Landi

Assetou Madeleine Auditore (or simply Madou) was born in Yaou, Ivory Coast on 14 December 1993 from parents who had migrated there from Burkina Faso. She now lives and studies in Bari, Italy, where she is currently doing her first year middle school. She takes piano, sax and singing lessons at the Conservatorium Niccolò Piccinni in Bari. She enjoys playing sports, dancing, and good food!

Solidarity Economics

Women's Banking Networks in Senegal

In this paper, I write about the experiences of women in Senegal and the Economy and Solidarity Network. These experiences have to do with banking, in particular women's banking networks, one of the initiatives that women developed to fight the impact of structural adjustment policies on our country, on our lives. This was a terrible experience for people in Senegal and all West Africa because we woke up one morning and the value of our currency had been cut by half, drastically reducing our capacity to purchase or sell products for our subsistence. This devaluation was a very big violence against our people so the women started coming together to see if they could find a way to deal with the impoverishment caused by structural adjustment.

When I learned about women's banking networks they had been in existence for about ten years. I read many evaluation reports on the banking networks written by "experts" and economists from the academe, and sometimes also by feminists, that said the model had to change. These evaluations, by so-called experts, compared the success of women's banking networks to formal banking institutions, using the same indicators to measure "success:" the amount of money in the bank to the amount of money generated by the women in the banking networks. These "experts" all recommended training to improve women's management abilities.

My disagreement with this kind of approach is that, as usual, it prefers to focus on "teaching" women how to do things, rather than attempting to understand the skills these women, who are not part of the dominant economic discourse, bring to the initiative. I decided to see for myself how the networks worked, so I joined a group and went there to learn and to listen the women in these networks. And I am going to share *their* views and *their* way of thinking and *their* way of analyzing the results, because for them, the banking networks have been a great success, not only in their daily lives, but also at the level of community.

These networks are about the mutuality of saving and credit. To be part of the network each woman is required to deposit very small amounts of money with the network. The rule is that the access to the funds must be absolutely open to each woman, even if what they can manage to contribute is only 25 cents of the dollar. This is the first rule. The second rule is that the network is a space for women, by women. No men. I asked them, "Why don't you accept a poor man

or men?” They told me, “Rabia, you are a feminist. We are not feminists but we know that there is a problem of power. If we accept only one man and we are 300 women, all the rules are going to be changed.” They started with 100 women and now these networks have connected over 30,000 women.

The words that they used to evaluate their success did not refer to money. They measured their success in terms of values. They said, “We are not richer, we are not bourgeoisie, we don’t have a lot of money, but we have won our dignity. We have won the right to speak, to participate in decision-making, and we are very proud because our success at the community level is absolutely recognized. We do not accept men inside our space, but we train them and they learn from our experience.” Their analysis of the network’s success thus focused on values such as the dignity they felt operating as a collective that could ensure women’s equitable access to credit. I asked if their success was also due to being able to generate the money needed for the network to extend credit, wondering whether the “banking” networks were actually working or not. They told me, “yes, it works well but it is only about relationships, it is not about money.”

I was surprised by this response because to be able to acquire material things you need to have money. What did they mean about relationships? They told me there is no guarantee of capital accumulation or profit in the network; the success of the network is based only the relationships between the women themselves. “Our success is not only measured by our rate of repayment. We have the highest rate of repayment because of our women’s honour [which in Woluf is *kersa*]. For instance, men do not have *kersa*. If they are in debt, they are not ashamed. That’s why even when they are learning from our experiences, their networks of credit fail.” The women never want to remain in debt to the other women. And thus success comes as a result of the relationships between them, and not in the exchange, or circulation, of money. The starting point is the relationship among the women, which they emphasize with a ceremony dedicated to relationship and friendship.

In the ceremony the women come together and each one will propose to another, and ask, “Would you like to become my friend?” And in Woluf, the word for friend is *xaarit*, which means “you are part of me.” It is a simple ceremony in which they give each other little gifts. If you have nothing that you can give, you can give a piece of wood. The gifts are not given for the value they have, they are given at the symbolic level. So these women mobilized all their knowledge and the experiences they have had to help each other, and what they value is their solidarity. The networks are not based on a market economy model. The women do not try to change the scale of their intervention, they do not want to change the rules they have put in place, they do not want or need to accumulate more money. They simply need enough money to solve the concrete problems of daily life. The women told me they need to have time if they are going to run after more money, and this would mean they would lose their social time for ceremonies, for friendship, and for families. What is also important then is their perception of the value of money.

They said they don't even have a lot of money in the so-called "bank." "The women's bank is poor," they tell me laughing. It is a joke between them. They said that in the Woluf language there is a saying that money that is sleeping, not moving, kept in the bank, is like a dead body. They prefer that the money is circulating and moving, and if the money is shared it will make the relationships grow.

The heart of the economy of women is their social relationship and they don't want to lose the capacity of circulation of the gift. I have learned about the gift economy and gift giving and I talked to the women about this when they spoke about the economy. From this experience I can say that theirs is "an economy for life, an economy of life against the model of the war economy," in which values other than money, such as dignity and solidarity, are primary.

We have to link economy for life with the gift economy and challenge the global market economy, which has forced many countries, like those on the African continent, into debt, so that we must fight for debt relief.

Maybe, instead, it is the world market economy, concentrated in the hands of the white, male, anglo-saxon Protestants, the dominant economy, that has contracted a huge debt vis-a-vis the women of the world, and the African countries. I hope we will change this paradigm.

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Women's Funding Partnerships

In this paper, I offer a few stories of audacity. If we want to feel hopeful about what we can do for the world and for women and through women, we might look back. We have only to look at one moment in history, toward the end of the twentieth century, to see the advances women made, at least in the United States, briefly, during the 1970s.

If someone had told me how much progress we might make simply by advancing women's knowledge, education, and giving women a broader perspective about what needed to happen for the world, giving them certain tools, financial education, philanthropic education, and some analysis, certainly, of their place of privilege in the world, I would have said, "You must be dreaming."

I recognize my place of privilege and want to share with you my journey.

For the past 31 years I have worked full-time as a feminist donor organizer within the context of the social change and women's funding movements. As a young inheritor in 1973, I graduated from a privileged institution, Sarah Lawrence College, with a degree in mythology. This is a study of cultures and of spirits across those cultures. I was a seeker for justice and the promise of democracy during the 1960s' tragedies and multiple slayings of John and Robert Kennedy, Martin Luther King, Malcom X, and many others. I was ignited by these incidents, and fueled by the injustices I had witnessed for African Americans in the civil rights movements, as well in the halls of my own family's residences. I knew nothing about what was going on globally.

Raised mostly by African American caregivers and household workers, I knew what community and family could be. I was determined to change the economic injustice that I discovered existed when I learned what weekly wages these beloved family members received, relative to my golf-playing and charitable parents, who were part of a conspicuous wealth movement in the 1960s and 1970s. At age nine, I learned that most of those who cared for me were being paid \$75 a week, or \$350 a month, plus room and board, relative to the \$10,000 a month in cheques or stocks that my parents received via inheritance, or simply, as wealth holders.

This was a gap in a household partnership that I could not tolerate, and have worked to change ever since. Nelly, my primary caregiver, to her death after 55 years of service to my family, simply said, "Tracy, just love people, and they will

heal over time, and so will you.” Nelly embodied the gift economy and will always be my first role model for giving and sharing. But Nelly also exposed me to the realities of my class and race privilege and its responsibilities, and she was diligent, diligent in her way as a woman with a third-grade education, about being sure that I knew that I would have opportunities with the wealth I had. She said that I should think carefully about how to use any influence as a white inheritor that I would have with people and communities outside the elitism and the illusions of my own class upbringing. I was truly blessed.

I was propelled toward a vision of a just society and fueled by the social and very personal injustices that I had witnessed of people I loved. Nothing has taken me off that track since. I had moved from New York, and various other places that my family had their five homes in, to San Francisco, and was so glad to find a diverse and political community that was ripe for growth. In 1973, San Francisco was burgeoning in its need for women-led projects and institutions, the product mostly of women-only schools, I knew well the benefit of women’s voices and fell quickly into both my own preference for working with and loving women. My feminism was sparked during my own job search in my early 20s and bolstered by the growing visibility of more and more women leaders and artists making their voices heard and perspectives clear.

I can remember thinking that I had found heaven when in 1977 I attended a “Women on Wheels” concert, with women musicians donating their time to advocate prison reform for women prisoners. Given the interplay between the artists, the passion of the music, and the poets in the room, with the hope that was uncorked, and the mission to build a just society, I had found my tribe. I was sure I had fallen into heaven prematurely. It was a time of utopian partnerships. I loved and valued women and had total freedom to do so. How unusual this was!

For 25 years I worked and lived in the idealism of the Bay area, starting with a team of others, all women, women’s building, women’s music, funding cultural projects, local and global women’s foundations, battered women’s shelters, women’s health clinics, children’s impairment programs, women’s leadership efforts, women and people of colour projects, and countless projects that have protected the civil rights of women and the disenfranchised. All in all, I have participated in the emergence of some 400 new projects or organizations led by women, 90 per cent of which stand across the United States and elsewhere. And I have heard annually about at least 500 new projects for over 30 years. This represents more than 15,000 projects that women have birthed, at least in ideas for creating change. And there are millions more.

I bring you optimism. At the age of 35 in 1986, after going on over 350 site visits to explore the viability or health of various projects, or just to learn about the creative capital, the courage capital, and the wisdom capital of the leaders in those organizations, I was inspired to give away my full inheritance, a million dollars, to build a movement of more engaged donors willing to fund similar projects and leaders who were building feminist or social change organizations.

I had a change strategy. I had a theory of change, but it had taken me ten or

twelve years to figure out what that was. It was very clear. We needed more donors and effective leaders who saw social change philanthropy and socially responsible investing as key leverage points in building a world that would work for more people, and who would redistribute their wealth and power and be active partners in that new and more civil society. I had no idea how, but I knew we needed to dismantle patriarchy and we needed to dismantle capitalism.

We needed more women and women leaders who understood how to use their money and their influence, and who could articulate a vision for a more just society and influence people to get there. Clearly women would be the ones to shape and leverage the changes ahead. We looked to the women's spirituality movement for our history, to give us the courage to go forward. We deepened our spiritual practice to tool ourselves.

As I traveled in the service of that mission, I soon saw how many people wanted, in fact, to make a difference, and who were eager and were already on path of at least part of this mission. Little did I know that millions of women were moving simultaneously globally to bolster and propel more change. They are with us now.

We knew in the 1970s that we needed culture and we needed hundreds of women's recordings, theatre, publishing, bookstores, radio programs, community centers, and cafes to assure that we could find each other. We knew we needed a magazine, or a way to communicate with each other on a more regular basis. *Ms.* Magazine was one place to exchange ideas, and when it failed by being too mainstream, we were sure to publish more radical material, or to tune into our favourite public radio stations and hear the voices recorded by Frieda Werden, Dorothy Abbott, Maria Suarez and others who have diligently documented our movement over the years. Worldwide women's voices were coming forth

We had won *Roe vs. Wade* in 1973. We were on a roll to advance the new generation of women who wanted to work, or who needed to work in better-paying jobs. And we knew we needed policy changes. We needed women lawyers, doctors, politicians, and we made sure that they had opportunities. We looked globally at the 1977 Houston International Year of Women; we created a platform, we rolled up our sleeves to join our global sisters. The women's movement felt unstoppable.

Feminist activist, Jo Ruckleshouse, said in 1977, "We are in for a very, very long haul. I'm asking for everything you have to give. We will never give up. You will lose your youth, your sleep, your patience, your sense of humour, and occasionally the understanding and support of people that you love very, very much. In return I have nothing to offer you but your pride in being a woman and all your dreams you've ever had for your daughters and nieces and granddaughters; your future, and the certain knowledge that at the end of your days you will be able to look and say once in your life you gave everything you had for justice, everything."

This was for me, and still is for many of us, a kind of inner refrain that flowed in me like the wave of feminists around me moving women towards our full potential. We knew we needed money for all our efforts and that building women's funds or foundations was the surest way for women and girls to learn and control local

and global financial resources. Albeit that many of these funds had only hundreds of thousands of dollars, we knew over time that they would have multimillions, and we wanted to learn how to fundraise and how to redirect these dollars powerfully. We knew we had to change the body politic to make systems change as well. Funding locally or funding globally women and women's leadership seemed an obvious place to start.

Between 1973 and 1985, some 50 new women's foundations were established, and there are currently over a 125,100 in the United States and 25 emerging internationally. By 2020, I predict we will have a total of 50 women's funds globally. The Global Fund for Women began in 1983 and is now recognized as the premier of these women's funds, and has managed to redistribute some \$25 million from over 10,000 donors to a 181 countries worldwide in only 20 years. Women donors began to convene under the Women Donors Network in 1990, through my organizing, and at the first meeting there was \$2 billion present in the assets, which the 24 women donors present were stewarding. These 24 donors were giving collectively, although not funding the Network altogether, some \$150 million, each a social change philanthropist of some kind.

This was more than all the 85 women's funds at the time were raising and distributing annually. I had the belief that together we could double the dollars and donors who were sparking human generosity, and investing in political leaders, and that with careful shaping we would at least create an alternative to the patriarchy or leverage a crack in its roots through these well-connected women at the top. These women were not just part of the top two per cent of the American population, but at the top one-half percent globally in terms of their income and assets. These women had influence. But did we know how to use it?

What I did not anticipate was the lack of exposure and analysis that many women donors had, and how burdened they would become with the growing needs of their local communities and families. Few of them had ever worked or given internationally. We moved them in funder tours internationally on the subject of sex trafficking, on the subject of international media, on trying to get them to understand and see through the conference at Beijing and other global opportunities. They are still moving out and moving forward.

The more visible these women became, the harder it was for most of them to forge and maintain a giving strategy or their theory of change. Feminism and its theories were not fully understood by this generation, and I was, with a few others, a minority in our more socialist commitment. Each of these women donors, as they become public, were besieged by thousands of requests annually, sending most of them into greater reflection and often retreat into anonymity again. They needed staff, but were by and large ill-equipped to manage, along with children, their enormous responsibilities, and were resistant to their public roles in the face of the demands of their private roles. And yet they found ways to strategize together, and continue to find ways to move their money out.

This group is now made up of a hundred women that contributed over \$12 million to the last political election in an attempt to overthrow the current regime

in America. We take no pride in the fact that we were not successful or that the other side managed to manipulate the final figures.

Women have always been leaders in the gift economy and women donors reject the exchange model of philanthropy, although unfortunately philanthropy has become more of an exchange model as men have gotten more involved. But those who do reject to this exchange model of philanthropy are liberated by the simple joy of giving, of purely giving.

The question is, shall we keep developing alternative communities and economies? How then shall we influence men and boys and others to make systemic change? And what are the leverage points? Women's shelters first appeared with the anti-violence movement of the late '70s. Programs for perpetrators were aimed at violence prevention, but those men who truly stepped up to change the conditions of violence in America are few and far between.

Women have always managed to convene and express their passions for justice. In the nineteenth century, women came forward at the time of the underground railroad when the slaves were moving from the South to the North in the U.S. A white woman would place a quilt upside down on her clothesline to signal that food and water would be waiting in the basement for slaves seeking freedom to the North. This often happened in the face of many of their husbands being part of the KKK, no doubt.

Women have convened in the public sector and helped each other in partnerships and non-hierarchical formats from quilting bees in the nineteenth century to childcare cooperatives, book clubs, sports teams, ladies church groups, business and professional groups, investment groups, micro-loan groups, and then women's foundations. In the twenty-first century, women's giving circles are emerging as the preferred model of women's collectivity. These giving circles are headed by women with shared monies going generally to women serving or women-led community-based organizations. Women give anywhere from \$5 to \$25,000. It is up to them how much they contribute.

There are now hundreds of these in the United States and there will be thousand of them. We must claim and shape them as the evolution of feminism and as ways, just like the twelve-step programs and the women's spirituality circles, that demonstrate the power and collectivity of collaboration, and we must teach and partner with these women to learn more about how to be effective social change activists.

I have been thrilled at the women's giving circles, but I also wanted women to give up control of the decision-making by giving to community-based foundations. The politically powerful model is a community-based model in which donors pool and collectivise their activism with grassroots activists, creating better decision-making, so that the donors wouldn't be the only one making decisions, but rather arrive at decisions through a more community-based process. The more decisions are made with community-based activists at the table, the more we can understand what needs to change. Either way, women learn and understand the power of sharing and engagement. The lessons of giving up class-based control

may, for many, take a lifetime. Nonetheless, the gift of the women's funding movement has been a significant move for the democratization of philanthropy. We knew that 70 per cent of women now fill the public sector. They are only 30 per cent of people working in the non-profit sector, the remaining percentage are men. We must expect no less of the women in non-profit sector than to create radical and dramatic change. The best way to do this is to counterbalance that which goes on in government with that which goes on certainly in business. We must deepen and diversify in order to make that critical change.

If someone had told me that my sense of abundance and hope would come from giving all that I inherited and by stepping up to give over 50 per cent of what I earned, I would say "You've got to be kidding."

I know well that mistakes in judgment come with fatigue. I spent half my time working with donors and the other half listening to those needing resources to see how I might best connect them. I know too that making and being called to make so many decisions involves the exploration and challenges of expressing power. Coming from a place of privilege, we were trained to lead and to dominate. When I have fallen short of my own potential as a leader, or better yet as a partner, I have taken spiritual guidance from others who are trying to make similar changes. Our shared difficulty as products of patriarchy with respect to power and domination is natural. We who do want to be seen as dominators, or matriarchs, suffer at times by not having the skillfulness or consciousness needed to broadly redistribute power resources by holding on to our own and others' developing wisdom.

But no one can say that we have not experimented or done everything possible to try to bring justice and feminine values to the table. True audacity is in our midst.

The key is now how to make visible the stories and dreams and work that is going on for countless others. This will take a revolution in the media and our use of it. We need more daring and caring women donors to advance all that had been laid. Younger women demand our politicization and speaking up. We have found our voices, but we are still learning to use our passion and our leadership and our voices effectively. An amazing infrastructure has been put in place in only 30 years. I'm the first to admit that feminist values have been cloaked or dropped during the past 15 years of this revolution. It was intentional. We had a choice to expand the movement and then politicize it, or face the limitations the feminist movement had in the mid- to late-1980s. We chose to expand the movement, and are now busy working very hard to politicize it. Perhaps we made the wrong choice.

Given the fierce present now and the hesitations of so many, I completely agree that we must bring back, front and center, a vision of a just society, and how best to get there. Many agree that women are the guides to lead us to survival. I also agree that language, how we express ourselves, and vision must be inspiring and ignite again the passion and hopes of all citizens. Our time to save the planets is sadly short.

The future of humanity does depend on this strategy and how we unfold it. In the end I do not know if prayer or activism will save the world. I know I am called with you to do both. It is very hard to face the fact that after 30 years of full-time work in this area, the richest 20 per cent have more income, 75 times that of the poorest 20 per cent of the world, 30 times as much as in 1960, and that half the world's population lives on less than \$2 a day. But that is where we are, and we must continue to educate and effect the radical change needed to bring capitalism and the patriarchy to its conscience, if not its knees.

Recently in Scotland for a visit to see the physical presence of the Divine Feminine with Margy Adam and other feminist activists, about the time of the Iraqi prison abuses, I was given a message there, as spirits are keen to do. It was a message about the gift economy, not tied up in the complexities of matriarchy or patriarchy, capitalism or socialism. It was simply this: "The world speeds up, but you must infuse your actions with the wisdom, the spirit and hope in the honour practices of Indigenous peoples everywhere. Women and caring men must counterbalance and stop the exponential destruction being perpetrated with their exponential and effective good. Step up and step out, make the dreamers and the dream makers more visible, make your vision for a just society a reality, and get out of the fog."

And so my journey for justice continues. Transformation is a gift delivered through faith and feminism and action. We are on path. Let us simply invite and engage the millions who seek our sharing, our sustainable ways, and our affirming bridge-building to another way, a joyous, giving way.

Our task is not impossible, it is about taking what we have done and becoming more effective spokespeople for the clear changes needed. We shall go forth. We shall inspire others with the tenacity and solidarity of our movement. In the end, as Jeanette Armstrong (see her article in this volume) has said, "giving is the only way to be fully human."

Tracy Gary transforms communities as a donor activist, philanthropic and legacy advisor, and nonprofit entrepreneur. She has been on over 30 boards of directors and has help to start 19 nonprofits and foundations including Resourceful Women and Changemakers. Her latest adventure is Inspired Legacies, which helps to catalyze billions of dollars of the public good through linking of powerful dreamers, dreammakers, and advisors. Tracy is the co-author of Inspired Philanthropy: Your Step by Step Guide to Creating a Giving and Legacy Plan (Jossey Bass, 2007) with new worksheets for those planning their lifetime legacies. She credits the leadership of the women's movement and mentors like Gen Vaughan for their inspiration of her feminist philanthropy and commitment to the women's funding movement.

Gift Giving and New Communication Technologies

The use of new communication technologies has become a growing need for thousands and thousands of people worldwide. The expansion of these technologies into the multiple activities in daily life and the undeniable way in which they make our lives easier, has created this need. However, the satisfaction of this need is a reality only for those who, in making use of the instruments of the market economy, can afford to buy them. It is no secret that it is the poor, especially women, the poorest of the poor, who are at a disadvantage in the increasingly globalized market of new communication technologies.

The possibilities that are opened with the use of new communication technologies are many. Among the most important is the communication process. Another is the capability of interacting with other people from around the world, and expanding our knowledge base. Third, is the way in which new communication technologies facilitate the process of production of knowledge itself.

But global corporations produce this technology and these technologies are located in the developed countries. They are framed in the neoliberal economic model, and thus are designed to further develop capital and capitalism, whose aim is the production and sale of commercial goods.

These corporations are not concerned with the fact that the majority of the population, for example the so-called “Third World,” cannot afford the price of their products. And they are not interested in developing forms of uses based on solidarity and cooperation among people that would satisfy the needs of those who have less opportunities and less access to these technologies.

Gift giving is an alternative paradigm that seeks precisely the opposite of corporate globalization. Currently, there are many social movements that are struggling to revert the corporate neoliberal reality by using and developing new communication technologies, that are freely shared to challenge the market paradigm. The gift economy is being applied practically in the use and sharing of these free technologies.

The ways that women are using and sharing new communication technologies are very different from those of corporatization and commercialization. These women’s political objectives are focused on sharing information, interacting among like-minded people and building movements for social change within a human

rights framework. In the words of Nedelka Lacayo of the Honduran Black Women's Network who participated in a Feminist International Radio Endeavour (FIRE) training workshop: "A web page is not an end in itself. It is an instrument for our objectives, which go beyond instruments themselves, because they are political. The Internet is a multiplier of our political actions. It is also a means to create and recreate our own knowledge. The Internet, especially for us black women, has to allow us to speak with our own voices, to share our experiences and voices or perspectives, instead of waiting for others to do so for us".

Three examples of gift giving in new communication technologies are the open source movement, the community radio movement in Latin America, and third, the experience of FIRE in sharing communication technologies benefiting women.

Open Source Software and Freeware

Open source software (OSS) is software for which the source code is freely and publicly available, though the specific licensing agreements vary as to what one is allowed to do with that code. The free software movement stems from an ethical and political stance that advocates freedom from corporate control, and aims to disseminate information freely, giving the gift of knowledge.

The concept of open source software has become a true technological—and political—revolution. The premise is very simple: computer programmers create and share these software programs at no cost to others, who in turn are able to add or change the characteristics and codes of the programs according to their own needs, and share them further with the user community around the world. Thus, the open source programs are constantly evolving through an open and shared development process.

Open source technology is considered to be more stable, secure, and creative than its commercial counterparts. Open source software is not only much more cost-effective but it distributes technical power democratically. While many leaders of the open source community reside in the U.S., the power that comes with the use of open source technology is very well distributed internationally. In fact, the most famous open source programmer is from Finland, Linus Torvalds.

People in the South who have been utilizing open source software benefit in many ways. Firstly, the actual cost of open source software is usually zero or very inexpensive. Hundreds of billions of dollars can be saved yearly by using open source software. Secondly, the implementation of open source projects does not require in-depth knowledge. Technicians in the developing world are no longer reduced to following instructions handed down to them by global corporations, they can work shoulder to shoulder with their peers in the open source community. Thirdly, the majority of money that is spent on implementing software projects stays in the community and is not concentrated in the hands of a few. Fourth, with local technologists implementing the solutions, these solutions are far more in-tune to local needs than are their foreign corporations. The users of this technology no longer must adapt their organizations to fit software designed

for others; they can have solutions that are appropriate for them and which thus greatly increases the effectiveness of the technology (FIRE and Nomadic Solutions 2003: 10).

Due to the fact that knowledge and brainpower are the true movers of open source technology, there are great opportunities for women with basic Internet access, while learning, to be able to adjust software programs to meet their own needs and strategies for action.

New technologies and new movements have emerged in this context. They struggle to keep the structure and flow of information open, despite corporate efforts to revert this gift giving trend. The open source movement and the free software movement are part of the social movements that have been able to become global, precisely because of their use of open source software and free access to the Internet.

Open source software is one of the ways gift giving can be evidenced in the use of communication technology, as a common wealth rather than a commercial product. Thus, gift giving on the Internet is democratizing and signals a paradigm shift in market economics.

Community Radio in Latin América

In Latin América, community radio was conceived as a means of communication whose goals was not to achieve profits. Community radio is a form of media with scarce economic resources and, in most cases, is restricted by legislation that not only impedes the sale of publicity, but also limits the scope of its range to one kilometer around, which is the case in Brasil.

But community radio benefits communities, vindicating the human right to freedom of expression, and promoting the ownership of media in the hands of communities of people, rather than in the hands of of entrepreneurs and/or corporations, which is the case in most countries.

What differentiates community radio from commercial radio is not only the popular nature that characterizes one, versus the commercial motivation of the other, but rather the logic of sharing communication as a human right and not as a commercial product which aims to generate profits.

Community radio is incorporating new technologies in its work, not only in terms of basic digital equipment, like tape recorders, but also by using the computer as an instrument of communication, using email to disseminate information, and as a system for the automization of radio programming. Many use open source technology to do this.

Many experiences in community radio in Central América show gift giving in the form of volunteer work, and the sharing of the microphone with people in the communities who do not expect anything in return. Community radio stations satisfy the communication needs of their audiences, without seeking profits, but rather for the sake of growing and sharing, not gaining, which in essence is gift giving.

FIRE: Open Source Technology and Radio in the Hands of women

One example of gift giving through community radio, among thousands worldwide, is FIRE, or, Feminist International Radio Endeavour, which exists because of its use of free or open source technology.

In November 2003 in Costa Rica, FIRE held a training workshop to share the gift of communication. An Internet server called Apache, using Linux, an open source operating system, was created during the workshop entitled "Internet Technologies for Our Political Action." The server had two functions: to share a non-corporate Internet operating system with the 32 workshop participants from throughout the Latin American and Caribbean region, and to offer these same participants a local server to use for practice during the workshop.

On this experimental server, each participant had their own website, access to e-mail, and a link to the internal server network for the workshop, all free and in a form created and designed for the event itself and the participants. The participants were also able to use a free version of File Transfer Protocol (FTP) to create and modify their websites. By adding their own presence in the Internet, every user in the workshop contributed to the collective knowledge accessible to those already online, another dimension of gift giving.

As a result of the training workshop, female activists from 15 grassroots organizations were able to design and POST web pages for their organizations. The "first time" each of them opened a Pandora's box: a new window to the world that taught them that the Internet is a tool, not only for gathering information, but for making their own voices heard worldwide.

Surrounded by a circle of 24 computers in the conference room of the Comfort Inn Hotel in Santa Ana, Honduran Nedelka Lacayo clutched the computer keyboard as her new "key" to the worldwide web. "I even learned how to put my own voice in the page. Come and see.... Come and hear, as you open the page, I welcome people to the site of my organization. It almost like magic!" exclaimed Nedelka.

As Katerina Anfossi (2003), Co-Director of FIRE, explained in a panel presentation during the training workshop:

FIRE among others, is addressing the digital divide, both because it is an international channel of communications based in the Global South, but also because it is in the hands of women. FIRE is working to ensure that women are given access to new technologies and that their voices are heard in the world's media. Only by creating international communications venues, appropriating new media venues for diverse voices and connecting multiple voices, strategies and technologies, will a truly democratic media become a reality.

FIRE's experimental open source server during the workshop served to showcase that women's ownership of computer servers is possible and furthermore,

it can make the use of the Internet much less expensive and accessible to more women.

These three experiences: one, the movement of free open source technology; two, the gift of community radios; and three, initiatives like FIRE to empower women through community radio, have a lot in common. They show us that technology as such is not an end in itself, but rather an instrument through which we can broadcast and disseminate thoughts, ideas, experiences, and most of all, make the voices of women, and marginalized communities, be heard.

Free and democratic access to new communication technologies is a human right we should promote constantly, instead of the corporate agenda that deepens the digital divide, the breach between rich and poor, and between men and women. One way to further these efforts is to articulate different initiatives to strengthen the search for new paradigms. Voices cannot be bought or sold when in the hands of those who believe that another world is possible.

Andrea Alvarado Vargas is a Costarican journalist, radio producer and audio technician. She has worked as a trainer in radio production, digital edition, and new technologies courses for some years for different social communication organizations. She is an advocate for non-profit communication and communication rights and a feminist activist. She has a strong relationship with community radios in Central America, and is part of strengthening projects for these radios. She works as a producer for Radio Internacional Feminista/FIRE.

María Suarez Toro is a Puertorican and Costarican feminist, women's human rights activist, and communicator. She has been co founder, co director and now producer of Feminist International Radio Endeavour (FIRE) since its birth in 1991. She has also worked as a human rights activist in the Central American Human Rights Commission in the past and also in adult literacy in the region.

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Trapped by Patriarchy

Can I Forgive Men?

Genevieve Vaughan (1997) writes:

The logic of unilateral gift giving is the logic of transmission, and in satisfying the needs of the other, it gives value to the other by implication.

The receiver often emulates the giver, giving in h/er turn, but this does not cancel the gift. Rather it enhances it, and passes it on.

Let us look at predatory behaviour as an aberration and at gift givers not primarily as victims but as positive agents who are momentarily trapped and exploited by a system based on a false and illusory gender construction, which takes their gifts.

I am trapped. Here is why and how.

Part 1: Mother

I was a young student at that time. I went to visit my mother for the weekend as I did every other weekend since my father passed away. We sat to the Sabbath dinner. My mother lit the candles and served the Jewish food that I like so much and she cooked so well. Then she said something. I really don't remember what exactly she said to me but I clearly recall how furious I became. I was so angry with her that I could not control my mouth. I said many vicious and ugly words to her. I insulted her. She turned silent, just looking at me.

We finished our Sabbath dinner silently. After a while we went to bed. I was lying in my bed but could not fall asleep. I was still furious at her. I sensed that she couldn't fall asleep as well. Slowly I began feeling sorry. After a while I got up, went to her bedroom door and said, "I am sorry, mother." She said, "I forgive you."

Forgiveness is the best gift my mother could give me. Her forgiveness is a way of embracing me, of accepting what I am unconditionally; it is compassionate, loving, and inclusive.

Part 2: Daughter

When my daughter turned 17 she got her first call to the Israeli army. We both looked at the letter not knowing what to do. Throughout the years my daughter spent much time in antiwar demonstrations, in the feminist and civil rights movements; she joined me in my struggle against militarism. And now, this letter.

We had many talks about this letter. I told her unequivocally that I wanted her to refuse, not to join the army. She understood why. Like me she was against occupation, war, militarism, and violence. But she also had her reasons to join the army. We had numerous discussions. One day she asked me, “what will you do if I decide to join the army?”

I said, “it will be a terrible moment for me. I will be sad.”

“You know,” I said to her, “when my friend’s son decided to go to the army, she decided not to support him in any way because supporting him is supporting the army so she decided not to visit him on the base like parents do and not to wash his clothes.”

“Will you do the same?” my daughter asked me.

“No,” I said. “I will support you because I accept you the way you are even if I disagree with you.” I emulated my mother. I circulated the gift of forgiving.

Part 3: Politics

I sit in my home at the outskirts of West-Jerusalem reading the titles of the papers to be delivered at the Las Vegas conference on the gift economy. Some of them are: *Solidarity Economics; The Gift Giving Philosophy of Open Source Technology; Women’s Gifting Relations and Community Work: Toward a New Public Policy Framework and a New Knowledge Paradigm; Enabling the Gift Logic of Indigenous Philosophies; Gift Giving Across Borders; Ecospiritual and Activist Movements Reviving the Gift Imaginary; Epistemology and the Gift; Women’s Giving: A New Frame for Feminist Policy Demands.*

I read these titles and others like them and feel the hopes and desires they express. I see women giving everywhere. But I look around me and see the Apartheid Wall being built not far from my safe home. I see the many murdered and wounded Palestinians in Gaza. I hear the warmongers shouting in the streets of Jerusalem. I hear the cries of the traded, raped, and beaten women behind the walls of the homes and the brothels and I wonder: can I, as a feminist, forgive men for the many harms they have inflicted on women? Can I, as an Israeli, be forgiven by the Palestinians for years of occupation and exploitation? Can I forgive and be forgiven?

Fury made me a feminist. This fury has slowly accumulated over the years. I was not aware of the way it accumulated, growing more and more, until one day, when the conditions had ripened, it erupted, and it erupted with a big cry and a lot of joy—a cry against men that treated us, women, so viciously and a joy celebrating the pain that turned into protest and the sisters that I found.

The fury has been translated into demonstrations, politics, organizing, research, teaching, and words. It burst like a dam unblocked: tales of oppression, cases of offences, experiences of rape, reports of evils, exploitations, trampled dignity.

The never ending stream of narratives, incidents, experiences that women began to tell has turned into a demand for men to take responsibility, to recognize the evils they have done, to confess the truth—so as to bring about reconciliation, exactly as the Germans did after the Shoah, as the Africaners did after the Apartheid, as the African Americans demanded of the Yankees: the Truth and Reconciliation Committee in South Africa, the reparations the Germans paid the Jews, the lands given back to the Aborigines in Australia.

In the same way I demand the three Rs from men: Reflexivity, Responsibility and Reparation. But I wonder: perhaps there is an alternative way like my mother taught me, like I am teaching my daughter. Can I give and forgive? Can I forgive the harm done to us, to me? Can I give my forgiveness on a silver plate without asking for truth and responsibility?

I have my doubts: will men understand my forgiveness? Won't they see me like one who compromises, swallowing her pride, giving up, afraid? Will they see it as another of their victories?

On the other hand, these are the excuses Israeli military men are raising against the withdrawal from Gaza and any talks with Palestinians. I know better: forgiving is power. Forcefulness is weakness. If so, does forgiving have a political meaning? Does it promote our struggle to transform the world, to shatter patriarchy, to construct a new world? Does my personal forgiveness, even when some other women join me, rock the ship of patriarchy and construct a new world?

I am not sure yet and therefore I am afraid to forgive.

Add to all this the context in which I live: Jewish tradition insists on remembering Amaleck—the ancient people that defeated Israelites thousands years ago. Muslim tradition puts revenge and honour up on the private and public agenda of every believer. And Israeli modern culture is dominated by the Culture of the *Freiher*. *Freiher* is a vulgarism meaning “sucker.” The culture of *freiher* defies a person that is ready to give way, to be used, to forgive. Such a person is viewed as one that does not care for his honour or power. For example: you are a *freiher* if you yield to other drivers. And especially, you are a *freiher* if you talk with “terrorists,” if you let your wife dominate you. In a culture of the *freiher* you do not take responsibility for your mistakes, you do not share your ideas lest they be stolen, you are never weak lest you are exploited. So you learn to manipulate, to lie, to exploit people, to hide your feelings.

In a culture of the *freiher*, in the region and religion ruled by honour and unforgetting, how can I forgive and be forgiven? The issue is how my words, my deeds, my text, will be read, accepted, interpreted. It is an issue of intertextuality, My desire to forgive and be forgiven does not stand by itself, as an autonomous text, but is positioned in the context of other meaning constructing practices, in this case, the culture of the *freiher* and the practices of honour and unforgetting. My forgiving maintains links with other ideological and cultural systems loaded with

their own codes and voices. The context of the culture of the freier of honour and unforgetting creates a new intertextuality that may distort my forgiveness and make it meaningless.

It is an issue of working and talking within one paradigm and being read and interpreted within a different paradigm. How will my forgiveness be understood by the culture I am living in? Will it make a difference?

I look up to my mother. She forgave me. She taught me the power of motherly forgiveness. I forgave my daughter. But still I am not sure about men. I guess my fury stands in the way, as does the culture I am living in. Being a radical feminist, I am often ahead of my sisters. I am often trying to touch the stars, to reach to my vision. Being a radical feminist I want men to take responsibility. So I am still torn between my fury and my vision, between my motherhood and my womanly experience. I feel I am stuck. I am trapped by patriarchy.

For over 30 years, Erella Shadmi has been a radical feminist, lesbian, peace and anti-racist activist in Israel. She is the co-founder of Kol HaIsha, the Jerusalem women's center, and of the Fifth Mother, a women's peace movement. She is one of the first Ashkenazi Israelis (Jews of western origin) to speak out against the oppression of Mizrahi Israelis (Jews from Arab countries). Dr. Shadmi is the Head of the Women's and Gender Program at Beit Berl College. She is also a criminologist who has published numerous critical analyses of Israeli police. Her book, Contemplating Women: Women and Feminism in Israel, is forthcoming.

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Women's Community Gifting

A Feminist Key to an Alternative Paradigm

This paper explores the connections between the theoretical and empirical understanding of women's community work that I have developed over thirty years of feminist research, analysis and activism and the other scholarly literature, especially Genevieve Vaughan's thinking about the gift paradigm. It is written with a growing conviction that a radically different world is necessary and that feminist insights hold a key to a viable alternative.

I was on my way to a meeting to commemorate the twenty-fifth anniversary of an historic event in Canada.¹ An emergency gathering of Canadian women on Valentine's Day weekend in 1981 had successfully led to women's inclusion in the 1982 constitutional guarantees of the new Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.² In 2006, we were going to Ottawa to reflect on what might be called women's community work or women's community gifting. As my husband drove me to the plane for this second Valentine's Day meeting in the nation's capital, he exclaimed, "Someone should send the Canadian government a bill for your valuable contribution!"

This statement clearly shows that he recognizes the value of women's local and global community work, the mainly unpaid contribution of women to improving their surrounding communities (locally to globally), making them more liveable, equitable, and just, and, in this case, contributing to political change in Canada at the constitutional level. But should we be sending a bill for our unpaid work? Is it in women's interest—and society's public interest—to commodify women's community work and reduce it to monetary value?

Even if I agreed with my husband that sending the government a bill would make an important political point, what would be on the invoice? What would we count and on what basis would we make each of the economic calculations? Would we count only our transportation costs? All our "out of pocket" expenses? Our time there? Our time preparing and afterwards—and whose time and at what price? Would we count only the 1,400 women who jammed into the room on Parliament Hill in 1981? What about all those many women who contributed to the "Butterfly Coalition" that did the organising and local community work across the country which was essential to our success? Do we reimburse and count (as valuable economic activity) only those who bought the butterflies to display

on lawns and windows? What about the time involved in mounting them into some form of display, planning that display, and what about those who made their own butterflies and spread the word to others? And what about the many hours doing the analysis, communicating with other women, and lobbying the politicians and other decision-makers? And how much of that? How would we calculate a value of this work: on the basis of what monetary principles and with what calculation of interest? And so far we have only included the time of the meeting until the present. But the event would not have been successful without the many meetings around kitchen tables, park playgrounds, office cafeterias and at women's caucuses, groups, and other gathering places leading to 1981! And what about all the other unpaid work of women that has such social and public benefit? Should not women's helping, caring, and problem-solving work in communities also be counted? If we are serious about an economic reckoning, in addition to the women's community work, should we not also calculate other unpaid women's work in families? And why does work necessary to sustain life, such as mothering and women's community work, not count as valuable in today's "work world," while work associated with premature death, such as weaponry and militarism, has value in the market economy?

In this paper I will outline the intellectual stages through which I came to recognise women's gift-giving community work, to question the translation of this work into the dominant monetary measures, and both the difficulties and need to develop an alternative feminist approach and paradigm. Here I will be using a scholarly approach that is, at the same time, socio-historical, experiential, and analytic. Its multi-levelled and holistic feminist social analysis draws from: (1) my own retrospective reflection as a feminist sociologist within the academy, working in professional associations at the local, regional, national, and international levels; (2) the inductive tradition of participant observation and of C. Wright Mills' (1961) "sociological imagination," combining history and biography; (3) the results of praxis as what might now be called, a feminist action researcher for social change within the academy; and (4) the results of praxis as a community-based feminist and activist on issues related to progressive social change for "community development" based on principles of equality, social justice, environmental and economic justice, and peace. It also draws analytically from the sociology of knowledge.

I began my work in this area with a new empirical focus on women without any adequate concepts or assumptions. Theories imported from "male-stream thinking" could lead to publications but not to recognizing or valuing women and women's contributions. New insights led first to the questioning of old assumptions and to the discovery of women. Then it led to more complex understanding of the mechanisms of patriarchal syndromes within scholarship and to a deeper recognition of women. Eventually it also led to participating in, and working to rebuild from within, a feminist movement that is advocating radical social transformation and a feminist scholarly and societal paradigm shift. Along the way, this journey brought me to an appreciation of women, community activism, and women's politics, of

the women's movement and feminist movement, of alternative ideas about wealth and, most importantly here, of women's community work. Drawing on ideas of Genevieve Vaughan's theorising of the gift economy, what I have call women's community work becomes "women's community gifting," a type of activity which is outside of the paradigm of exchange and monetary calculations.

In addition to the idea of Women's Community Work, the paper uses two other major concepts, feminism and paradigm, which are now present in most textbooks such as W. Lawrence Neuman (2006). Feminism has many definitions, and I use a concept of feminism which is holistic, multi-faceted, change-oriented and transformative. It includes: (1) a focus on the diversity of women's experiences across the globe and across patriarchally-constructed differences; (2) a critique of patriarchy in all its layers and manifestations and the need for fundamental change; (3) an articulation of the collective vision and principles to which we aspire; and (4) the affirmation of a strong and diverse women's movement to lead our societies and cultures into change beyond the patriarchal paradigm which exploits and enslaves all living things (see Sen and Grown, 1987; Miles, 1996; Christiansen-Ruffman, 1998; Antrobus, 2004).

The concept of a paradigm is associated with Thomas Kuhn (1962), and W. Lawrence Neuman (2006) defines a paradigm as "a general organizing framework for theory and research that includes basic assumptions, key issues, models of quality research and methods for seeking answers" (81). Other scholars of the sociology of knowledge have also written about radical shifts in the zeitgeist or paradigms of global cultures over time and space as well as on interrelationships between scholarly and societal paradigms, despite allegedly naive notions of "objectivity" that some scientists still claim.³ The journey I describe indicates clearly that the dominant paradigms in scholarship and social life do not recognize or value women's community work. Many of the characteristics of paradigm challenge are reminiscent of descriptions by Thomas Kuhn (1962) in his classic book, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. A feminist paradigm would eliminate the existing patricentric syndrome and its patriarchal assumptions of knowledge and its values of hierarchy, dominance, and competition. Feminist values would replace the ancient patriarchal values based on tribalism, violence, and control, replacing them with a worldview which honours, respects, and protects all life, especially biodiversity and social diversity on this planet. A paradigm change would not occur if men were simply replaced by women in the current system. A changed paradigm would transform ideas and assumptions of hierarchy and of "power over" into circles and spirals that convey "power with" and "power to."

This paper identifies some of the difficulties of seeing through and beyond existing paradigms and assumptions. It draws on my research and scholarly writing on women and community in the 1970s and 1980s in the light of new conceptual distinctions Genevieve Vaughan (1997, 2004) offers in her work on gift giving, or community gifting according to need, not exchange. Her ideas are based on a theory developed from her perspective as a mother. A women's focus

and knowledge is now in danger of being buried again by the misogyny and new forms of patriarchy which is part of militarism, religious fundamentalism, post-modernist “meism,” and neo-liberal globalization, with its individualism and economic fundamentalism. At this critical juncture of the future of the earth’s living beings and of humanity, it has been reassuring to realize that the future may be in our midst. Vaughan helped me to understand that features of the transformed alternative futures that I had been struggling to imagine are, in fact, here “in the now.” Vaughan’s recognition of the powerful, extensive contemporary presence of a gifting paradigm and my own long knowledge and appreciation of the importance of what I now call women’s community “gifting” enhances the possibilities of radically different paradigmatic possibilities.

“What’s Important About Women?” Discovering Women in Community Work

Initially I had problems even seeing women’s community work, even though it interested me. My focus was “citizen participation,” and I was interested in conceiving of women as citizens. This desire to “discover,” “see,” or “conceive” of women was a characteristic of the times.⁴ Women were absent in scholarly knowledge and in higher education; it was not exceptional that there were no women in Sociology on the graduate faculty at Columbia University when I was doing my Ph.D. As a young researcher in the early 1970s, I was living in Canada and studying citizen participation in Halifax, Nova Scotia while also working on my Ph.D. dissertation on newcomers in that provincial capital. For a paper presentation in March 1972, I asked a women colleague, Patricia Loiselle (now Connelly), to work with me because she had a different sociological training. It was an unsuccessful attempt to find something interesting for a paper on women relevant to my research on citizen participation. The sociological literature forced me—and us—into what I considered to be the boring scholarship of counting people to find “who participates.” Comparing women to men using male standards did not allow us to see anything of interest to women, and patriarchal culture at that time had made women’s culture invisible. We wrote the paper, but it was not a satisfying intellectual experience.

Two years later, Pat Connelly and I wrote a paper completely and explicitly focused on women. It was a huge improvement because we addressed women’s actions and women’s perceptions of women’s liberation. In the paper we combined the scholarship of two well-known sociologists, applying C. Wright Mills’ (1961) conceptualization, “private troubles and public issues,” to our data and creating a sociological typology reminiscent of the style of Robert Merton (1957). Even in that paper, which was entirely focused on women and based on qualitative interviews with women, however, we were conceptually crossing the theoretical approaches of two male theorists and not fully embracing alternative assumptions in a way that would lead us (and others) to build an alternative feminist scholarship.

In 1975, as part of a government-sponsored initiative for International Women’s

Year, I led a team of five women from my university. We conducted research and wrote a report entitled *Women's Concerns about the Quality of Life in Halifax* (Christiansen-Ruffman, Hafter, Chao, Katz and Ralston 1975). The study used a multi-method research approach, and in retrospect, I am impressed with the data and presence of women in that study. At the time, and with a few exceptions, however, it still did not foster an appreciation or help me to see women's community work in Halifax in a full and conceptually different way. I was still influenced by society's and scholarship's patricentric focus—which did not allow us to conceive of women as fully autonomous individuals but always within the shadow of men's priorities. What I noticed women doing did not seem to be interesting or important or on the “public” agenda. The possible exception was, interestingly, the case of women who were fighting for the protection of their neighbourhoods against the development industry at that time. In one of the only quotes from a male in that report, the developer attributes power to these community activist housewives and to the presence of children, not as priorities but as functional. He is quoted as saying:

The majority of these groups and the people involved in them are decent, honest and well meaning people. They are concerned first with their own homes, their property values and they are concerned with their community and the quality of life in the area. The problem that we as developers face is that laced through these well meaning honest citizens there are ... the punks and the maoists and the members of the New Left, the bleeding hearts and the radicals, the malcontents who operate in whipping up the pressure groups. Sometimes the groups are led by housewives who are looking for a cause and using community involvement as their main social activity to release their frustration. And you know what they say—you learn the wrath of a women's scorn—and I can tell you, you get three or four of these ladies from a neighbourhood and they will effectively organise, sign petitions, whip up the school children, berate the newspapers with letters and they do a very effective job. And this is their life. They are imbued with a cause! They think they mean well; they have a tremendous power and they are very much a cause or a cost factor in the development process. (Christiansen-Ruffman *et al.* 1975: 35)

My Ph.D. education as a sociologist at Columbia University, an institution which claimed to be the greatest university anywhere for sociologists, had not taught me to see the world fully, to recognize women, to value women and to value myself and my ideas. I realized even at the time that it was not only the result of that particular university but of the patriarchal nature of knowledge. It was a systemic fault. It took a few years and experiences with Labrador women, however, for me to recognize a major reason why I could not even begin to “make sense” of women's community work: women were present in scholarly thinking only insofar as they were functional to men. Scholarly training had socialized me into this colonised thinking.

**“If It Weren’t for the Women, There would be No Community...”
Recognizing Women’s Community Work**

I could not escape seeing women in Labrador communities when I went there as part of a several year research evaluation study of the Community Employment Strategy (CES) with a consulting firm. At first, however, the women there appeared to be the stereotypical “traditional” women, uninvolved in the “important” politics of life. They stayed at the back of the hall in the kitchen rather than at the meeting—or sat on one side of the room, apart from the men. In my “modern” but misogynist “sophistication,” on my first trip to Labrador, I assumed that the men in Labrador were the important ones and discounted the women. After more research in these communities, however, I had to reassess this initial perception. I returned again after CES was finished in order to learn more.

The women of Labrador taught me to see and to appreciate women’s community work. They taught me to see that women were, in fact, creating the community. “If it weren’t for the women, there would no community,” they confidently told me. And I realized that they were correct about their important role, despite the “gloss of patriarchy” on the “surfaces” of Labrador cultures. Years later I read a description which conveys the strength of women’s community work by Janice Lawrence of Bridgetown, Nova Scotia, a self-declared “farmer, farm worker, farm wife, farm mother, agricultural activist and community builder.” She is quoted by Jo Leath (2001) as comparing “the contribution of rural women to thread in a quilt; present in every inch of the greater community and strong enough to hold it all together”(2).

In 1979, the community strength of Labrador women led me to respond to a call for papers for the annual meeting of the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women (CRIAOW) in Edmonton (see Christiansen-Ruffman 1980) on women as persons. Implicitly thinking of women in Labrador, I defined “personhood” as the extent to which an individual’s contribution to the community is recognized by that community as important. The personhood of women was analyzed along three dimensions: the extent to which women’s activities contribute necessary resources to the community and to the family unit; the extent to which women exercise control over resources in the household and community, and the extent to which women are respected in the household and community. Using these dimensions, I found that many women in rural Labrador had more personhood at this time than women in urban Halifax.⁵ This finding challenged a number of assumptions which were (and remain) deeply embedded in contemporary societies and in scholarship. The paper brought together evidence to contradict the following three propositions:

- 1) Women in rural areas, often called “traditional women” and characterized by relatively rigid sex role segregation, are relatively deprived of personhood compared to their more sophisticated urban counterparts.
- 2) Progress toward personhood is gradually being made as communities

become more urban and industrialized.

3) Women in rural communities and generally in Atlantic Canada are conservative and are not innovative or politically active in community life.

All three of these propositions were not supported. Each of them was found to be misleading in the context of Atlantic Canada even though it was based on popular conceptions and scholarship. The evidence challenged taken-for-granted assumptions in North American scholarship and life at that time, especially about stereotypical women as well as the currently present belief in linearity and unilinear "progress."⁶

The insights from Labrador women and from the community women in Nova Scotia started me on a whole new course of unlearning and learning, both as a scholar and as a person. This educational process really began after I had a Ph.D! At the time, it was easier to see myself as a sociologist than as a woman, despite the women's movement, because of the levels of societal hatred of women, or misogyny, which I had absorbed. I gradually realized how colonized many of us were—at some level not even recognizing ourselves as women, even as we were engaged in the women's movement. I cast my lot with women once I recognized that there was nothing that I could conceive of doing at the time that would change the fact that I am a woman and would be treated as such. I reasoned that, given the current state of discrimination against women, my only hope was to be part of those making changes with other women. As a social being, I realized that I had to work with others to create alternatives for ourselves, to reformulate our social relationships as more equitable and respectful, and to work for a more equitable, just, environmentally friendly and peaceful new world.

At the time it is not surprising that I was having trouble focusing on women. Women were absent, ignored, or disparaged in both scholarly and everyday life. As I discovered women, I also discovered more fully women's absence in the scholarly literature and in policy. I found, for example, that in Charest's (1973) discussions of development policy in a rural area of Quebec near Labrador, women were so non-existent that only a mention of birth rate and one sentence on inheritance even implies their presence. Yet in small communities adjacent to those studied by Charest, I could not ignore the central role being played by women in the community as well as in its "development."

The almost unconscious treatment of women as invisible by Charest contrasts with that of many anthropologists who did see "sex roles" or what we now call "gender" and characterised these communities as male dominant. The sociologist Ralph Matthews (1976) also saw the communities in this way and used a series of arguments to explain why he did not include any women in his survey sample of rural Newfoundland communities which had resisted resettlement. A woman in Labrador was so incensed with this treatment of Labrador women that she pulled me away from a dinner table when she discovered that I was a sociologist; she wanted to expose me immediately to his discriminatory and invalid reasoning (see my later detailed analysis Christiansen-Ruffman 1985). Matthews (1976)

had omitted all women from his sample because he claimed that women were not community leaders in Newfoundland/Labrador or heads of households. Yet, in one of the three communities he studied as case studies, he documents the importance of a particular woman community leader in preventing the relocation of this community.

In the mid-1970s the male standpoint was completely dominant, creating knowledge that was elitist and oppressive to the community and to women. Scholarly paradigms did not allow us to see the world of women or women's culture in its deeper, more complete ways. Women scholars began to understand the ways in which that knowledge needed to change in order for us to begin to look at each other and think with each other, together. We began to interrogate and question the assumptions on which knowledge was constructed within the existing paradigm. Most importantly, we began to see glimpses of alternatives in women's cultures. Interactions between individual academics, especially those influenced by women's movements, allowed for this challenge of patriarchal paradigms and the development of research agenda that was by women, for women, about women, and with women. In Canada a great deal of this thinking led to and then was facilitated by the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women (CRIA/W) which held annual conferences starting (unofficially) in 1976 with a Halifax conference and which was committed to bridging the academic/activist/community divides.

Women's Politics and Women's Community Work: Trying to Understand a Third Part of the Puzzle⁷

In the 1980s, as I worked with other feminist scholars and community activists to discover a world where women's culture and values were central and to reconceive of politics and cultures through women's eyes, I began to see women's community work as a third part of the puzzle. Scholars had used dichotomies for many years to identify production versus reproduction, wage labour versus domestic labour, public versus private, and work versus leisure. These dichotomous analytic concepts, however, ignored, undervalued, and rendered as virtually invisible the important features of community life which many women understood in Labrador and Nova Scotian fishing and farming communities, namely women's public unpaid work. More importantly, through reading and talking with other women, I discovered that this feature of life was not limited to these geographic areas but present in most parts of the world.

It was startling to find these common features of women's cultures because they were identified neither in the relevant scholarly literature nor in public discourse, especially in the urban communities I knew. In the 1980s I embarked on a lengthy search of scholarly literatures in an attempt to discover women's politics and women's community work in both its empirical treatment and its scholarly conceptualization. Leslie Brown and I wrote a paper (Brown and Christiansen-Ruffman 1985) after a thorough search for accounts of women's community work,

caring work, volunteer work and political work (broadly conceived). Surprisingly, one of the most complete accounts was not recent but Mary Ritter Beard's 1915 study, *Women's Work in Municipalities*. This book describes in detail women's activities which changed social life in such areas as education, public health, corrections, civic improvement and racial assimilation. Subsequently the book's conceptualization of women's work in municipalities has been rendered invisible, both empirically and conceptually. As Marilyn Gittell and Teresa Shtob (1980) describe, historical writers of the Progressive Era tend to ignore women's work contributions or include it in with reform work in general. Nevertheless, scattered references to women's community work remain. For example, Susan Mann Trofimenkoff (1984) has discussed the role of women in organizing and providing volunteer relief for the victims of the Halifax explosion in 1917, and Leo Johnson (1974) describes the role of aristocratic women as (volunteer) managers of the welfare system of Ontario in the early 1800s.

Another independently developing literature relevant to women's community work (including women's networking activities) is the still growing body of scholarship on women as caregivers. As Hilary Graham (1983) writes:

caring is thus experienced as an unspecific and unspecifiable kind of labour, the contours of which shift constantly. Since it aims, like so much women's work, 'to make cohesive what is often fragmentary and disintegrating', it is only visible when it is not done.... A conception of caring-as-women's-work clearly advances our thinking in a number of ways. We can appreciate its economic and ideological nature, as a labour which, although essential for survival, is invisible, devalued and privatised. (26-7)

Leslie Brown and I saw this burgeoning literature as interesting for several reasons. Some of this literature recognizes that it is often inappropriate to treat caring as a commodity on the same conceptual level as shopping, cooking, working and cleaning. Secondly, the idea and praxis of caring does not easily lend itself to a dichotomous conceptualization, but more easily to a continuum—caring has public as well as private components. Thirdly, the literature on caregivers calls our attention to some of the overriding similarities of caregiving within communities, mediating between communities and family, and within the family itself. It also focuses our attention on women as nodal points in family and community.

If we extend the idea of women as caregivers to women's community work, this highlights the work women do such as writing letters/sending gifts to absent family and friends, organizing annual neighbourhood or block parties (while trying to achieve the "right" mix of people), caring for an elderly or incapacitated friend, taking a casserole to a bereaved acquaintance, getting "the girls" together to smooth over conflicts between husbands or children or workers, acting as the family's delegate to the school, the local church, the public library or recreational centre, the doctor or school counsellor. Clearly these activities require conceptualization and, we would argue, must be seen as part of women's work and as incorporating

a community work component. The reflections of an Italian community worker, recorded by David Kertzer (1982), remind us that these discoveries, while “new” to the academic literature, are incorporated into the strategies of many women activists. This Italian woman stresses the importance of a locally based women’s group which “... keeps the women a little organised, a little prepared for certain activities, as long as they aren’t directed to just one single party” (57). That she feels these networks are effective is clear as she asserts, “There isn’t much prejudice around here against the immigrants, because we have always conducted local educational campaigns” (58).

Although Brown and Christiansen-Ruffman (1985) discovered evidence of women’s community work described by scholars in many places over time, this 1984-5 review of the literature also confirmed that key dimensions of women’s work have been and remain invisible to both the public and the scholarly community. We found that women’s community work was sometimes invisible by definition, sometimes by implication, and other times semi-visible and not conceived as work. When women’s work was included, it tended to be undervalued, subordinated, or functional to male work. Brown and I also found episodic, often idiosyncratic statements about particular examples of women’s community work, often described as volunteer activities or the work of “housewives.” For example, Meg Luxton (1980) writes, “Housewives have always been active in their communities demanding a whole range of things that make life easier and better—schools, hospitals, paved roads and street lighting, parks and recreation centres. Periodically they organize around issues that are of specific interest to women” (212-213). She points out that such activities change the relations of women to their work and their families. Luxton does not, however, analyze these activities as aspects of women’s work itself. Conceptually women’s community work remains invisible in spite of the acknowledgement of its empirical presence. Indeed, the scholarly literature at this time was characterized by loose theoretical concepts which uneasily embrace some aspects of this work while omitting others. This lack of theorizing about women’s unpaid community work probably accounts for the fact that empirical studies collect data on women’s community work but then ignore the data in analysis. For example, Richard Berk and Sarah Fenstermaker Berk (1979) collected time budget data on visiting, church involvements, neighbouring and volunteer work which were unanalyzed although data on time driving to and from work were included in the analysis.

This examination of women’s community work enabled Leslie Brown and me to search the literature for new empirical examples and to describe features of this work. Though occasionally present, these descriptive accounts were rarely highlighted or analyzed. Neither the longer term focus on women’s volunteer work nor the more recent feminist focus on caring work nor the other sub-types of community work have developed their own theoretical traditions with their own conceptual questions. This is not surprising because these features of women’s community work are not consistent with the dominant paradigms. Although this detailed review of the literature needs updating, my on-going reading suggests that

the theoretical invisibility of women community work remains. Indeed, a recent survey of the social capital literature confirms this (Bezanson 2006).⁸

In the 1985 paper, Brown and I argued that the sociology of work literature and our understanding of women's community work could benefit from starting with a conceptualization of work as the expenditure of energy. Such a suggestion is reminiscent of physics. A sociological definition of energy expenditure however, would not only focus on physical energy but also on mental energy, social energy and emotional energy and the activities produced. Work would be conceived as the expenditure of social, emotional, mental and physical energy relevant to responsibilities, obligations or values. Interestingly, such a sociological definition of the potential energy and social energy underpinning the concept of work is not inconsistent with the Webster dictionary definition of work as an "activity in which one exerts strength or faculties to do or perform something"; It "may imply activity of body or mind ... or it may apply to the effort or to what is produced by that effort"; it "may apply to any purposeful activity whether remunerative or not."

Community Work: Toward Alternative Interpretations

Brown and Christiansen-Ruffman (1985) concluded that the proposed all-embracing, non-institutionalized definition of work was important but not the full theoretical story. In the process of discovery and definition of women's community work, we had also come to a fuller understanding of the fact that women's community work does not fit comfortably into existing theoretical assumptions. Unanswered questions emerged. We encountered difficulties incorporating processes such as networking, mediating, caring, and transforming into a neat set of categories. Could we really draw boundaries between paid, domestic, and community work? We found that components of women's community work are related to other types of women's paid and unpaid work. Figure 1 of the paper pictured women's community work at the core of and interlocking with other types of women's work: community-building/ change work, liaison/ mediating; maintaining household; individual care/ nurturing; reproduction/ socialization; production for use/ subsistence; production for exchange/ formal economy; production for exchange/ informal economy; volunteering (social, service, political organizations). We were also led to question the extent to which volunteer work still has the characteristics of women's community work or has it been transformed? Moreover, we confronted the problem that in showing women's community work to be valuable, there is a tendency to conceptually harness and change apparent caring work into the service of contemporary patricentric institutions.

To fully incorporate women, we had to start from different assumptions.⁹ Therefore, we concluded our extensive review of the literature by raising theoretical questions and suggesting the need to develop a whole new puzzle, solidly grounded in women's work experience.

The alternative, transformed conceptualization of women's community work

cuts across, permeates throughout and in fact is at the core of the work women do on the job, in the home, and in the community. In this transformed conceptualization, women's community work (public, unpaid work) is networking or the production and reproduction of community. Women's community-building work takes place in the family, in the kinship group, in the neighbourhood, in the work place, and in various arenas within the larger society. The building and nurturing of networks, associations, and interpersonal relationships is, we argue, as much a work activity as the activities or transactions (social and economic consequences) made possible by these processes. Women expend energy, which must be replenished, in carrying out this work. This work does take time, although it is difficult to locate in time-budget analysis.

The 1985 paper focuses on a specific example of women's creative community work in bringing a feminist lecture series to Halifax. The women involved were all university professors and membership on this committee as active community participants was also part of their paid work. The series had previously featured mainly male speakers on topics such as "The Crisis of Modern Man as Seen by Some Contemporary French Writers" and "Man/Animal Communication: Pitfalls and Opportunities." In 1984 the series was entitled "Feminist Visions" and featured Marge Piercy, Sheila Rowbotham and Mary Daly. A capacity audience of over 1,000 people attended each session and the series was one of the most popular in the eleven-year history of the lecture series. The work of the all-woman committee was positively recognized by some members of the university community and by the feminist community, but the usual dinner of thanks to the organizers of the series never materialized. Moreover, such work is not really "counted" in university promotion, pay, or reward structures.

The feminist and social process that led to the success was not rewarded although it took effort and energy to realize and had a number of positive implications for the university and beyond. The proposal was a collective effort among women faculty and had to be of a high quality to be selected in competition with other proposals. Unlike other years, the feminist organizers paid creative attention to lectures as a learning process and held pre-lecture sessions to introduce the speaker's ideas so that audience members would be more knowledgeable and would gain more from the series.

In planning these sessions and later in organizing small seminars with the invited speakers or in sharing time with them over meals, the committee involved not only their own members but those from other universities in Nova Scotia and from the non-university community in Atlantic Canada. Institutional barriers between universities and elitist barriers between the university and "non-university community" were minimized. The needs and interests of the diverse women's community were melded with those of the speakers. For example, in the case of the feminist separatist, Mary Daly, a special time was set aside for her to meet with the Nova Scotia lesbian community. Also the typical "by-invitation-only" reception was replaced by a general invitation to the audience to join in refreshments in the art gallery, in the same building as the lecture hall.

The work of the university feminists in this case shows clearly that feminist work, like women's work is not "just a job" but an effort which creates results by mobilizing, enhancing and renewing networks, and by maximizing community involvement. It requires considerable energy expenditure on work which has been invisible. This example of women's community work cuts across institutional boundaries and permeates women's paid work activities.

Women's community work is also embedded in the "private" work of women. Whether picking up litter and child-minding during a picnic, helping children to meet friends and learn to play with others, caring for her family's nutritional needs, mediating between family and friend's institutions such as school, we see the thread of community work. In fact, women's community may be conceived as being at the core of all women's work activities as they are conceived along a public to private continuum which challenges those very concepts and rigid boundaries created by male institutional imaginaries, dichotomies and hierarchies.

Rather than organize our thinking in dualisms and dichotomies of "public" and "private" work of women, we saw women's valuable community-building and maintaining work as embedded in the relationships and activities of living. The new puzzle illustrated women's way of "making a living" in relation to others. Through caring, provisioning, sheltering, socialization, network building and maintaining, communication and organizing, women create communities necessary to sustain social life.

Moreover, women's community work contributions with their emphasis on mutual caring and the building of community are a reflection and expression of women's culture as it has developed historically. The type of work that is women's work cannot be reduced to commodities because the process and product cannot be separated as they are within the more institutionalized, patriarchal social arrangements. As many studies have shown, and as Myra Marx Ferec (1985) emphasizes, women "stubbornly" tend to doubt that the demands of the market place should take priority in determining where one lives, how one arranges one's schedule, and the extent of non-paid commitments in one's life. Women's relationships are an inseparable part of mutually contingent and inter-related life processes. Moreover, women are nodal points in family, neighbourhood, and community networks that take many forms among the diverse cultures of the world. Even within similar cultures, there is a wide diversity of ways in which women engage with their surroundings and these life processes.

Wealth: A Fuller Meaning¹⁰

What is wealth? How does one value life or women's community work which might be considered invaluable? How does one appreciate something that is pervasive, invisible and that we hardly understand? Rachel Kahn-Hut, Arlene Kaplan Daniels, and Richard Colvard (1982), in an introduction to a section of their edited book, *Women and Work: Problems and Perspectives*, focus on "Invisible Work: Unacknowledged Contributions" and point out:

... the actual importance of much of the work women do, not only in maintaining a family and a home but also in establishing community life, facilitating interaction within and between families and throughout communities, has still not even been systematically studied. In our society, for example, the work of volunteers is given lip service as honorific, but little attention is really paid to how the society would function in its absence. Women assume most of the responsibility for providing linkages between home and school.... Women raise money for the church, welfare, the elderly, and for children's activities, and provide staffing. But the value of that work in our cash-nexus economy and the worth of those who do it are left ambiguous. Like other currently conventional forms of women's work, such as writing family letters, it may be praised but it seldom has exchange value in market terms. (97)

The above quote is interesting here because it suggests two analytic ways to assess the value of women's community work. The most usual way to assess wealth is to translate women's community work into the dominant monied system of evaluation, as my husband had also suggested. Although the calculation requires arbitrary and problematic assumptions as the opening of this essay suggests, for some analytic and political purposes, and with the caveats mentioned above, we may want to highlight the positive economic potential of women's community work. In the example of the lecture series, one might wish to calculate what the university would have had to pay for the public relations benefits and community understanding which was generated by that series: how much high-priced public relations staff time? How many management consultants would generate the same result? Note, however, that such a question leads to another—how does one measure the wealth generation of an increased social vitality, of a more informed citizenry, or higher trust levels, and what are the costs of a society focused only on control rather than empowering each other? Have we not outlived the usefulness of the monied economy as the indicator of wealth in life?

These issues are urgent for everyone in society to consider now. As the world has adopted more economically fundamentalist values and as women themselves are more likely to apply economic reasoning as they move more fully into the paid labour force and mainstream institutions and into exchange-based negotiations with others in their lives, will the rich and varied aspects of women's work be lost? If it is, what are the consequences for everyone in the society and all of life? Is the measure of wealth, based solely on the value of monetized exchange, even valid? Is not the idea of exchange itself a big part of the problem? Must community work be reduced to market criteria (and according to whose criteria?) to be valuable? What about substantive, quality of life criteria? Perhaps the dystopias of writers such as George Orwell are, as much as anything, worlds in which women's work is no longer done.

The second way of assessing the value of women's community work is by the removal design. Effectively, by asking how society would function in the absence of the work of volunteers in the quote above, Kahn-Hut, Daniels and Colvard

(1982) are suggesting this analytic device. If we take away all of women's community work, as well as all of the unpaid work women do, how would the society function? When women get angry enough, it might be an interesting experiment to start with a series of rotating "strikes"—or to start first with-holding women's work for a minute, then for two, then for four, and continue at an accelerating rate. Beginning with an hour or a day, of course, would have a much more immediate impact. In the interim, we could begin to think into the future and to use the removal design to "think through" what communities would be like without women's unpaid work and to suggest changes. In such an exercise which was focused also on policies to eliminate poverty and the production of a special issue of *Canadian Woman Studies/les cahiers de la femme* (Armstrong *et al.* 2004) on Benefiting Women? Women's Labour Rights, Canadian feminist thinkers/activists produced the "Pictou Statement" which is a feminist argument for the need for a Guaranteed Living Income.¹¹

Both of these approaches for assessing value show significant differences between what women and some men value through their community work and what is valued by the existing patriarchal paradigm with its measure of money. For a feminist alternative perspective and as the author of a paper re-examining wealth presented in 1985 (Christiansen-Ruffman 1987), I turned to the humanities and literature on the one hand, and to women's organizations on the other hand, to gain insight into conceptualizations of wealth from the standpoint of women. Women's negative attitude to the patriarchal concept of wealth—as money accompanied by greed, corruption, and human slavery—is contained in a brief section of a poem by Peggy Antrobus (1983), a feminist from the Caribbean:

Wealth has always been our greatest enemy;
The price of skin,
The currency of betrayal of our kin.

An alternative feminist vision of wealth, one to which Antrobus would subscribe rather than critique, is contained in a play, *Ngaahika Ndeenda* (I will marry when I want) from Kenya:¹²

Development will come from our unity.
Unity is our strength and our wealth.
A day will surely come when
If a bean falls to the ground
It'll be split equally among us.
(Thiong'o 1982: 130)

This second, broad definition conceives of wealth as multi-dimensional. It is not limited to economic wealth, commoditized wealth, and monetary wealth. Instead, wealth encompasses all that is valuable.

My examination of women's "development" projects locally and around the

globe in the early 1980s indicates a broad variety of types of projects: In Canada there were information generating projects (for example, providing health information and/or women's rights information in Toronto); change-oriented projects (for example, successfully advocating for the participation of women in planning a Halifax maternity hospital and preventing its effective demise); income-generating projects (for example, craft production, and building and operating a museum in southern Labrador); and service-oriented projects (for example, women's initiation of a transit system, a battered women's shelter, and a women's drop-in centre in Whitehorse, Yukon). These projects all create wealth from the perspective of the community and the women who undertook them, even though only one of these ways of wealth-generation is consistent with economically fundamentalist approaches which have spread like cancer since the 1980s.¹³

An examination of almost any project in slightly more detail indicates the multifaceted nature of most women's projects. For example, the mainly service-oriented project in Whitehorse produced several forms of wealth in the community as women identified their problems of isolation and planned a local transit system to serve their needs. The project provided not only a much needed community service but also employment opportunities for women. Moreover, workers' "shifts" were especially designed to minimize conflicts with family responsibilities and thus contributed a new cultural definition of job possibilities. Bus schedules and routes were geared to the needs of women and families. In this instance, wealth was created in the community not only by the service, subsequently taken over by the municipality, but also by networks and organizations including a Status of Women group, a Women's Centre and, in conjunction with other networks and organizations, a Transition Home for Women in need of temporary shelter. These, in turn, acted to increase options for women and to make the community a wealthier place, both at the time and for subsequent generations. In the course of establishing these services, women as individuals gained training, education, skills, insights and ideas, self-confidence, human energy, and increased their human individual resources as well. The community acquired material wealth through new resources such as childcare, transit, and shared labour as well as income and jobs. At many levels, and in mutually generating ways, this community-oriented project provided a full array of gifting activities and generated a wealth of social and cultural resources such as feelings of belonging, caring, networking; education and alternative ideas about of paid-work time and ways in which the community is organized. It also served to develop consciousness of women within individuals, families and communities.

A second project illustration comes from Jamaica and Honor Ford-Smith's (1980) description of the feminist popular theatre group of women from the ghetto of Kingston. Eleven women employed as street cleaners by the government came together to form *Sistren*. They used "drama as a means to explore and analyze the events and forces which make up their lives; and later, through theatre, share this experience with other groups" (19). The work in building networks, linkages, understanding of common everyday oppressions and problems of everyday life has added wealth

to these women and to the working class community of women and has helped pressure for change. As Ford-Smith points out, "By confronting what has been considered taboo, indecent or irrelevant we have begun to make a recorded refusal of the ways in which our lives are thwarted and restricted" (14). Such individual and collective analysis and its subsequent public presentation and discussion add social and cultural wealth; they are important prerequisites if the world is to embark on alternative courses of development. See also Ford-Smith (1986).

Challenges to the Patriarchal Wealth Paradigm

Major challenges to patriarchal scholarship and policy and to its reflections in contemporary societies are raised by taking seriously women's projects which create wealth (see Christiansen-Ruffman 1987). The main challenge is that the formal institution of the economy is built on assumptions that discriminate profoundly against women. What is termed "women's unpaid work" in the monetary economy, by definition, has no value, and this lack of value is socialized into gendered roles and into individual self-esteem and shapes social interaction. The current concept of "rational man" acting in his own self-interests is antithetical to women's community work as well as to mothering. This profound exploitation of women was described in a marvellous article by Claudia von Werlhof (1984), who argues that the housewife rather than the free wage earner is prototypical of capitalist exploitation. She points out that 80 percent to 90 percent of the world's population resembles the housewife more than the proletarian. She also gives great importance to a study of housework, claiming that "if we have understood housework, then we have understood everything.... Women are always 'the ones below'. But only from below, hence at the bottom of the cask, can the whole be seen as the whole. Nothing is more important—actually nothing is more vitally necessary—than to support this tendency of analysis 'from below'" (131).

Maria Mies (1998) describes "the Iceberg Economy." The part that the world sees and economists study is above the water. The remaining 90 percent of the economy, contributed largely by women and subsistence communities, is invisible. Genevieve Vaughan (1997) articulates the ways in which the gift economy supports the mainstream economy and, indeed, how that mainstream monied economy is parasitic on the gift.

Women's community work and mothering challenge the validity of money as a measure of wealth. Moreover, the negative implications of simply extending the existing monetary measures of value to include the informal, (mainly) invisible creation and distribution of goods and services as practiced by women are amply illustrated in Arlie Hochschild's work *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling* (1983). She demonstrates the dangers of making feelings part of what an employer purchases as part of labour power. Instead, feminist scholars would argue the need for other, women-centred conceptual bases. A focus on women's community work may facilitate this development, and to the extent that it does, therein lies the theoretical and societal importance of women's community

work. This type of analysis also helps to question contemporary ways in which women's community work is hindered, changed, co-opted, made impossible or invisibilised by large institutionalised structures aimed at controlling life, including patriarchal capitalism or bureaucratized socialism.

Women's full inclusion in contemporary calculations of wealth violates too many of the patricentric assumptions implicit in scholarship and policy.¹⁴ For example, neither economists nor time budget scholars who calculate women's unpaid work activities use assumptions which treat seriously the 24 hours a day and 365 days a year responsibility of mothers for children. Discussions of this problem with economists, even those who are women and identify as feminists, usually end with their saying something like: "But if you did that, the numbers would not work"; "It would mess things up!" or "Our methodologies [for time budget studies] have gotten better [because women are more apt to multi-task]: we now count three simultaneous activities." It has become clear that the assumptions of contemporary economics and of scholarship and policy do not work for women. It is time for feminists to articulate what different assumptions are necessary and to develop further the feminist alternative.

Implications for a Feminist Conception of Wealth¹⁵

Analysis of women's culture, women's organizations and women's activities indicates that women's conception of wealth is fundamentally different from the usual patricentric and monied concept of wealth. Components of women's material wealth, social and cultural wealth, and human resource wealth cannot simply be added to economic wealth as easily handled minor and superficial additions. The multifaceted components comprising women's concept of wealth radically affect the assumptions embedded in the existing patriarchal concept and transform the concept itself in a number of fundamental ways. Qualitatively, it becomes a different concept, because it is multifaceted rather than one-dimensional and it is people-centred and relational.

The patriarchally-based monetary concept of wealth rests on assumptions that everything important may be translated into an impersonal and amoral means of exchange (called money), that everything may be reduced to one dimension, the so-called "bottom line," that everything that matters may be placed along a scale of value, that the more money that one has, the more wealthy one is, and that people have an insatiable desire for money.

Women's projects and thinking about wealth reflect a culture in which wealth is determined according to human-oriented assumptions. The many different components of wealth are not reducible to a common denominator and do not operate on the patriarchal principles of reductionism, insatiability, commodification, and unilinear thinking. The calculus that women routinely use takes into account the innate value of human beings and is not oriented toward insatiable accumulation. From woman's point of view, for example, having 10 or 100 or 1,000 times the amount of necessary food is not an indicator of wealth and, in

fact, overabundance itself would create further costs and a further burden of labour. Parts of women's wealth calculus, therefore, do not follow the traditional arithmetic rules. Moreover, bottom lines change based on circumstances and are relational rather than absolute. At the present time, wealth for women might be conceived not as presence of commodities but as the absence of the forms of oppression: poverty, hunger, unfilled basic needs, and scarcity. Wealth, for example, might be considered absence of the threats of violence to women and men, children and seniors, and the ability of all peoples to develop their human potential.

The concept of human potential that is central to women's concept of wealth is almost totally absent from traditional concepts of wealth and standards of living. As the economist Raymond W. Goldsmith (1968) points out concerning the GNP, human resources "are omitted because human beings are not considered part of the national wealth unless they can be appropriated. Where slavery exists, the market value of slaves, which in part reflects their training, constitutes a separate category of national wealth" (52). It is perhaps symptomatic of patriarchy that the concept of standard of living is based on an assumption which only includes human potential if it is enslaved.

Women's concept of wealth is also distinguished by its collective and relational orientation. Women engage in the creation and definition of the moral order and hence are oriented to and help to create the collectivity. This orientation to the collectivity involves a commitment of caring and responsibility for others, of making qualitative distinctions, and of contextualising. Women expend energy by networking and creating spiritual, social, and cultural resources; hence, the calculus of women's wealth creation is more likely to involve sharing and maximizing the payoff and potential for all.

Patriarchal concepts are unable to comprehend and fully embrace women's community work because it is not commodified. As Brown and Christiansen-Ruffman (1985) have argued, the products of women's community work cannot be separated as they might be within the more institutionalized patriarchal social arrangements. A key feature is that of the network relations themselves. In essence, women's community work is networking or the production and reproduction of community, and women's community work produces wealth through which women and others are empowered. Unlike exploitative concepts of wealth, where profit is gained by exploiting the labour of others rather than working together for the collective good, all parties gain: the calculus is very different.

Superficially, both the GNP and standard of living are also used as measures of the collectivity or the group. However, as is indicated by an example from Paul A. Samuelson and Anthony Scott (1980), two housewives could add \$10,000 to the GNP by exchanging jobs and each paying \$5,000 for the other's labour. As this example shows, the traditional concept of wealth is not based on activities within a collectivity. Instead, it is based on artificially formulated monetary principles and an aggregated self-interested individualism. Concepts such as the GNP in fact mask the collective good and principles of equity by aggregating individuals. Because of such assumptions, what looks like development may be an illusion and in fact

hide collective deterioration. For example, Sylvia Hale (1985) makes reference to an observation by Irene Tinker about India that “the introduction of grinding mills and oil presses have [sic] been estimated to have raised the national income by nine times the value of jobs lost, but this new technology benefited directly only the large farmers, and the owners of the rice mills. Women, meanwhile, lost their jobs as millers, and could not afford the new rice” (qtd. in Hale 1985: 25). Poverty increased even though “wealth” (measured in patriarchal ways) increased. The averaging feature of the GNP and the current practices of development do not focus attention on increasing inequalities. They mask individual exploitation and the absolute and relative decreases in the poor’s standard of living and ability to participate actively in creating a new social order. They are unable to tap the collectivity, the collective good, or the benefit of equal sharing.

The patriarchal concept of wealth is unable to comprehend the collective value of resources. For example, as Goldsmith (1968) points out “natural resources ... are excluded [from calculations of national wealth] insofar as they cannot be separately appropriated or sold, as is the case with sunshine and precipitation” (52). During the 1970s the environmental movement focused attention on the wealth of having access to clean air, sunshine, and pure rather than polluted acid rain. Women’s concept of wealth is associated with safe and uncontaminated collective environment.

Women’s concept of wealth also considers as extremely valuable the public services and community infrastructure which help both to ease women’s burdens and to enrich women’s lives. In fact, social and community infrastructure tends to be doubly utilized by women both in their own well-being and in their caring for others. To the extent that women do a good job caring, the need for infrastructural support becomes even more invisible to the male decision-makers. Recently throughout the world, governments have been cutting back on social services. As DAWN (1985) points out, “Reduced access to human services such as health, literacy, transport etc. affect women in two ways, first by reducing women’s own access to these services, and second, by their having to fill the gap of providing them to others (e.g., children, the aged, infirm or unemployed) because of their traditional roles” (9).

Neo-Patriarchal Attack on Women’s Community Work

The period of Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) in countries of the economic South and of “restructuring” and “privatization” in countries of the economic North have been difficult for women because it has resulted in reduced human services. The policies cut back on public and social institutions and focus increasingly on economic growth and trade. The scholarly literature on the impact on women of these policies shows that SAPs have “sapped” women’s energies and added an increasing burden to the community work needed for family survival¹⁶ (see Antrobus *et al.* 2002). While political leaders of western countries such as Canada’s conservative Prime Minister Mulroney were interviewed and jubilantly

described the withdrawal of food subsidies in countries of the economic South and former Soviet Union, women's interests everywhere were being harmed by these neo-patriarchal policies which made women's lives around the world so much more difficult.

In Canada, and especially in Nova Scotia, these neo-conservative/ neo-reform/ neo-liberal policies are dismantling the welfare state, undermining rural livelihoods and restructuring the political, economic, and social fabric of Canada. For several years the governmental "spin" took the rhetorical form of an urgent need to tackle the debt and deficit. This governmental "spin" was aided by an increasingly concentrated corporate media and had the effect of dismissing other competing values such as equality, the environment, and socio-economic justice.¹⁷ Values of individualism, competitiveness, greed, and other economic values trumped others. Words associated with political rights such as "citizen" became "customer" and "consumer." Women were dismissed as "special interest groups" while the powerful corporate special interest groups and the government increasingly led by public relations interests were able to "spin" their issues without being challenged or identified as the real beneficiaries of these changed values.

The restructuring throughout this period has not been all spin, and it has been accelerating for some time.¹⁸ The mid-1990s saw massive cutbacks in social programming and a down-sized Canadian government, creating crises in social programs which some Canadians fear was a deliberate way of privatizing these services. Unemployment Insurance, a government supported program to provide a safety net to workers, was also massively cut back and restructured at exactly the time when workers needed support. Higher education was also under siege, and when monies were given back to higher education several years later, the nature of the funding was entirely different; it focused on scholarships for individuals rather than funding for the university system.

Feminist research in Nova Scotia during the 1990s on women in fishing communities and the work of Nova Scotia Women's FishNet provided insights into the ways that the strong social fabric which had supported fishing communities for centuries was being ripped apart by a series of government policies and an environmental crisis of fish stock depletion (see Catano *et al.* 2004; Christiansen-Ruffman 2004, 2002, 1995). The policies were favourable to large corporations and not to small owner-operated boats. Corporate interests and government attempted to implement policies such as individual transferable quotas (ITQs) that were known elsewhere to have shifted fish from being part of "the Commons." Moreover, the policy approach of the government to conservation of the cod stocks was to prohibit the inshore fishers from their livelihood and even from catching fish such as cod for their own subsistence. On the other hand, the large and increasingly concentrated corporate fishery, which used more environmentally-destructive technologies and fished further offshore, continued to catch cod as part of a "by-catch" when they were licensed to catch other new species. Fresh cod continued to be sold in the supermarkets despite the "cod moratorium."

The particular policy choices being implemented were quite literally making

people sick, breaking morale because they were considered unfair, and also devastating the social relationships among women and within families and communities. The networks on which women's community work had been created and sustained were being torn apart, sometimes with the help of government policies and corporate manipulations; a way to create dissent and to split apart families and communities was to offer "deals" of licenses or fish quota to specific individuals or corporations if they agreed to new policies or favoured conditions. Other times networks were torn apart because of the power of the economy and the lack of alternatives: community members were forced to close their store because of lower revenues, compelled to leave for work elsewhere, or did not have enough gas money to drive an elderly person to the store for groceries or to the doctors or to pay for a school trip. At the same time that fishing communities were in crisis, the provincial government was cutting back on social programs and was closing down rural health and education facilities, substantially interrupting the networks and support systems on which rural peoples had been relying. The shadow of the economy was so strong that all of the webs and networks supporting the well-being of community members and community wealth were being silently destroyed, without raising a policy alarm. Chains of events hit simultaneously and seriously affected well-being in coastal communities. Rural communities were especially hard hit with loss of both public and private services for transportation, health, and education. Women's community work was out of favour, unappreciated and undersupplied at the same time as it was even more desperately needed. Neo-liberal corporate/ neoconservative/ neo-reform agenda brought values associated with rampant consumerism to communities with essentially no money, further depressing community members who could no longer participate in social life, and introducing significant class differentials into relatively equalitarian communities. Moreover, this new agenda imposed an economically fundamentalist value system that intensified an already dominant economic agenda and further marginalized the region and rendered women's community work even more invisible.

As a feminist sociologist, I was particularly dismayed by the overlapping and destructive social processes which I feared might have long-term consequences. I still hope I was not witnessing the social creation of profound impoverishment, a form of destruction of the social viability of these communities that could have negative consequences on future generations. Although these communities were previously on the margins and certainly not rich in monetary terms, they were socially, individually and morally strong, vibrant and more independent before the restructuring. They were very far from the profound, dysfunctional impoverishment which I had experienced in parts of Appalachia in the United States and in some inner city ghettos.

The ingredients of this new impoverishment included the destruction of the social support systems of these communities. Moreover, independent individuals were being deskilled and demoralized. These individuals included not only the men and women who caught fish in boats on the sea but also the "women who were the captains of the shore crew." They had managed the small family business

by handling repairs and buying new equipment, keeping the books, monitoring the boat for safety, and knowing the rules and regulations from government agencies. The restructuring of the fisheries deskilled these women of the shore crew who no longer could keep up with the rapidly changing rules and regulations. They were robbed of their self-esteem at the same time as the government policies robbed their families and communities of their ways of making a living. They were robbed of compensation for being put out of work because in many cases their work on the shore crew was not recognized as “work,” even for women who put bait on many hooks of the “trawl.” Not only were they not eligible for financial compensation, but they were not eligible for training programs and some jobs. At the same time as fishing families were told that they could no longer continue to do the only work they knew, the downloading of governmental responsibility onto individuals and user pay mentality was abolishing their social entitlements. It was also eliminating the public and community institutions on which women relied as part of their community work. I think it took less than six months before the media began to blame the “lazy” fishers—who had just been banned by government regulations from using their boats.¹⁹ Surprisingly, these processes of community destruction and social devastation remain largely unnamed.

From Women's Community Work to Community Gifting

For many years, women's groups and feminist scholars have been expressing the need for new paradigms and alternatives.²⁰ While neo-patriarchal forces in the last decade in Canada and globally have sapped energy from women and women's movements, they also have made it even clearer that alternatives are urgently needed. The neo-liberal policies are clearly unsustainable for both the planet and its human societies, encouraging destructive behaviours, exacerbating gaps between rich and poor within and between countries, diminishing social and bio-diversity, and threatening the ecosystem. The “Wise Women's Workshop” in Norway in 2001 was a response to the growing urgency about both the neo-patriarchal resurgence and the need to think together with other feminist scholars (see Linda Christiansen-Ruffman, Paola Melchiori and Berit Ås, 2006). We attempted to understand the times and to envisage alternatives. In lengthy discussions about alternative economies, I was introduced to the work of Genevieve Vaughan, the implications of the exchange basis of the economy, and especially the false dichotomy of equal and unequal exchanges that masked the problematic nature of exchange itself. It is a tremendous intellectual shift to recognize that difference.

Discussions at the “Wise Women's Workshop” and subsequent meetings made clearer and more realistic the possibilities of putting forward alternatives based on women's current ways of living in a gifting way. Therefore, rather than envisioning a future without a past or present, we could build upon existing hidden women's cultures and economies which bring forward matriarchal cultures from the past into the present. It was liberating and comforting to envision alternatives and inspiration in our own lives and those living on the margins of the contemporary

madness. We discussed rural women's community work in different cultures, Indigenous survival cultures, and the ways in which Aboriginal peoples have lived in contingent inter-relationship with the natural world, respecting nature and its gifts. It is a major achievement to figure out that women's peaceful, caring ways of being in this world, rather than some other magic, invented solution, is a major key to thinking into the future.

To celebrate new insights, emphasize the idea of process, and suggest a new paradigm, I decided to change the name of the central concept from women's community work to women's community gifting. The idea of gifting better represents the visionary and alternative assumptions at the core of women's community activities. It may well be that that women's community work might be its name, bound within strictures of the old paradigm and gifting might be a way to release the creativity of women's community work in the new paradigm. I look forward to "thinking into this concept" in the future and have just started to do so in this paper. I invite others to participate in thinking through the alternative assumptions and conceptualisations which may be useful in further specifying the shape of the new gifting paradigm.

Conclusion

The escalating impoverishment of individual lives and threats to life itself, which are results of new forms of patriarchy, needs to be assessed. This patriarchal world is based on an outmoded system of elitist and abstracted logic. Its measures are false and no longer valid. Money is misleading as a measure of wealth and development. Militarization as a measure of security is not only wrong but dangerous. Patriarchal thinking that leaves human beings, life, and relationships simply as abstract categories to be controlled or ignored is inadequate for a civilized world. Our scholarship needs revamping. Our religious systems, which breed violence and hatred, guilt and sacrifice, are logically based in slavery rather than liberation of spirit and potential. These outmoded patriarchal ideas and myths have taken us and our societies beyond their "limits to growth." We have become lost in Orwellian double speak, or "spin." In this world where the measures of wealth, security and well-being have been increasingly translated into their antitheses, it is time for a radical change. A radical transformation is possible only if we recognize that the old patriarchal paradigm has outlived its years and that we must live into a new approach and paradigm.

This paper has analyzed the history of the emergence of the idea of women's community work as a feminist alternative paradigm. The emergence of any new paradigm, according to Kuhn (1962) has always met with resistance. Thus, perhaps we should not be surprised at the more recent reinvisibilization of women's community work; deepening shadows have again been cast upon it by new forms of patriarchy that have been escalating over the last fifteen years. But I detect a shift. During the period of new forms of patriarchy and patriarchal intensification, surprisingly, the patriarchal inroads were not taken seriously. Perhaps because they

did not appear to be gendered. This is now changed. The old paradigm is so full of holes and inconsistencies that its failures to explain and come up with solutions can no longer be ignored. More and more individuals, including Canadians such as Stephen Lewis and James Robert Brown (2001) are vocally recognizing the importance of women's leadership. Lewis noticed the important women's community work of the grandmothers in Africa when he was the United Nations Envoy for HIV/AIDS in Africa until 2007. Brown credits feminist scholarly leadership in shifts towards a new scientific paradigm.

This analysis of women's community gifting shows both the necessity and the potential of a feminist and women-centred approach to create a more humane world for all living beings. It also directs us to the alternative assumptions on which we might recognize wealth and value. The grandmothers of this world still know the importance of women's community work, and we could learn by listening to their wisdom of living life. The young women have declared "the women are angry campaign and will not accept cutbacks and push-backs."²¹ Personally, I can think of no better alternative to seeking solutions to world problems than listening to the wisdom of women who are trying to work with non-patriarchal assumptions. What if each of us, in our own spheres, takes up this approach and learns to live with and into these different assumptions? Applying women's community gifting to everyday relations with each other and with the world is probably the best way of creating that radically different world, a world full of new possibilities and hope for all.

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Notes

¹ This paper incorporates a comment from Alan Ruffman about women's valuable work of constitution building into a paper, co-presented at the November, 2004

Las Vegas conference with Angela Miles. The paper was called “Women’s Giving: A New Frame for Feminist Policy Demands” and the conference, “A Radically Different Worldview is Possible: The Gift Economy Inside and Outside Patriarchal Capitalism,” was organized by Genevieve Vaughan. Thanks go to Gen for bringing together such interesting feminist thinkers from all over the world, for her feminist generosity and for her fresh and sophisticated feminist intellectual insights. Special thanks also go to Angela Miles, Azza Anis, Luciana Ricciutelli and Genevieve Vaughan for their help with the writing of this paper.

- 2 In 1981 the Prime Minister of Canada was intent on repatriating Canada’s Constitution from Great Britain and including a Charter of Rights and Freedoms in it. A conference had been planned by the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women to focus on Women and the Constitution. When that conference was abruptly cancelled by the (male) Minister for the Status of Women, the head of the Advisory Council resigned publicly, creating a focus for intense women’s activism, including a hurriedly organized Valentine’s Day conference, which led to the insertion of women’s equality rights into the Constitution. See Penney Kome (1983) for a detailed account of the activities, especially as they relate to Ottawa.

Despite the Constitutional victory, feminists recognized that the work was not over. See the results of the Wilson Task Force in the 1990s for an accounting of discrimination against women within the legal profession and the articles in Faraday, Denike and Stephenson (2006) for the ways in which Canadian women, especially those associated with the legal profession, have worked within and outside the Supreme Court at Making Equality Rights Real: Securing Substantive Equality Under the Charter (to use their book’s title).

- 3 See Jill Vickers (1989) and Margaret Benston (1989) for a critique of objectivity as it was naively practiced in positivism. Their accounts do not make the naive assumption that certain elements of both are not possible in scholarship. Moreover, Benston also makes a useful distinction between what she calls “objectivity” and “pseudo-objectivity.”

- 4 This desire to “discover,” “see,” or “conceive” of women was partly influenced by my personal biography and partly by the growing women’s movement during my graduate student days (see Christiansen-Ruffman 1998; Christiansen-Ruffman, Melchiori and Ås 2006).

- 5 Methods employed in this research were participant observation and interviews. In Labrador I used the same or similar questions, research instruments and sampling techniques as used in the 1975 Halifax study to allow for comparison. The paper’s conclusion mentions a suggested historical process and required strategy: “the decreasing personhood which accompanies increases in societal scale and the development of capitalism has given rise to conditions which so undermine the status of women that concerted efforts are needed to institutionalize personhood in society.”

- 6 A retrospective analysis of the Labrador case study illustrates the tremendous power of societal assumptions, namely ethnocentrism, sexism and unilinearity. Even though I organized courses explicitly to challenge ethnocentric attitudes, had conducted research in Africa with a women professor and studied anthropology, nevertheless, this case study illustrates that as a researcher and a young feminist scholar in the mid 1970s, to some extent I shared the taken-for-granted ethnocentric view of progress, especially as a “modern” woman in my first meetings with the stereotypically “traditional” women in Labrador. The comparative research perspective led to the framing of my 1979 paper and allowed me to challenge the dominant social science (and societal) view of linearity.

- 7 The paper, "Women's Community Work: A Third Part of the Puzzle," was written with Leslie Brown from Mount Saint Vincent University. She was also a member of the executive of the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women in Nova Scotia (CRIA-W-NS) and an expert on cooperatives. After presentation at the conference "Women and the Invisible Economy" at Simone de Beauvoir Institute of Concordia University February 21-23, 1985, it was revised for publication in a book of selected papers from the conference, edited by Suzanne Peters, the conference organizer. Like many feminist books and other work outside of paradigms, this book was widely circulated but never published. (See Spender 1981b and Morgan cited in Christiansen-Ruffman 1985 for an analysis of the difficulties faced by feminist scholars from the gatekeepers of publishing who tend to support existing, mainstream paradigms.) In this section and the next, I draw heavily on the argument and quote the 1985 paper extensively (but not formally as I would a publication). The reader should therefore consider much of these two sections as being co-written with Leslie Brown although I am responsible for its current framing.
- 8 As suggested previously, however, feminist empirical recognition of women's unpaid work does not necessarily lead to a search for an alternative paradigm. Bezanson (2006) is arguing for "applications of a social reproduction perspective to social capital-based policy" (438).
- 9 Feminist ideas of starting from different assumptions and developing new paradigms were part of the feminist intellectual climate at that time. The spirit was evident, for example, in the title of Dale Spender (1981a)'s edited book, *Men's Studies Modified*. Scholarship, policy, and everyday life were all considered deeply problematic, and feminist scholars repeatedly tried to peel back the layers of patriarchy and to discover patriarchal mechanisms. In the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s, conferences of the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women (CRIA-W) could be counted upon for new insights into the nature of patriarchal knowledge, and in 1984 I presented a paper concerned about the extent to which we were doing a critique and the limited scope for going beyond what I called the inherited biases within feminism, explicitly the patricentric syndrome and the dichotomous either/or syndrome (see Christiansen-Ruffman 1989). In the early 1990s I also added the abstraction syndrome, the tendency of patricentric thought to focus and embellish the most abstract and generalizable ideas without respect to context. While such an assumption might work better in natural sciences than in social sciences, over time the decontextualisation of abstractions has also been challenged in the so-called natural "scientific" world, thanks to theories of relativity and "chaos."
- 10 This initial quote and some of the arguments in this section are also contained in the 1985 paper with Brown on women's community work. This section, however, draws most heavily from a paper which I wrote and presented to the Association for Women in Development (AWID) meetings in April 1985. It rethinks wealth from a feminist point of view and was greeted with considerable excitement (see Christiansen-Ruffman 1987). In that paper I question some of the assumptions underlying the monetary system and "development" which have been brought to public attention by Marilyn Waring (1988). Thinking through that paper helped to convince me that it is not useful, in the long run, to translate women's work into a crumbling, exploitative, controlling and unsustainable monetary system. The intensified individualism and economic fundamentalism since then as well as critiques of the money system (see Kennedy 1995) and exchange (see Vaughan 1997, 2004) have supported that decision and brought me back to that paper. In many ways my paper on wealth is an example of what I have called "autonomous feminist theorizing" (see Christiansen-Ruffman 1989), using "women's common sense,"

different assumptions and definitions, feminist analysis and grounded theory to think the world afresh.

- 11 See, also, Angela Miles's article in this volume, and in particular, page 371 for the text of the statement.
- 12 As Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1982) points out, the play describes "the double oppression of women. As suppliers of labor in colonies and neo-colonies, they are exploited; and as women they suffer under the weight of male prejudices in both feudalism and imperialism." He also points to "the need to look for both causes and solutions in the social system of how wealth is produced, controlled and shared out" (119). The play was put on by the people's theatre at Kamiriithu Community Education and Cultural Centre, Limuru, Kenya, but it was stopped by Kenyan authorities after ten performances. A second play by the Kamiriithu Theatre was denied a license because the government claimed that, "women were being misled into cultural activities that had nothing to do with development" (Thiong'o 1982: 128). The theatre was seen as teaching politics under the cover of culture. Application for a licence was a procedure introduced in British colonies as a method of vetting and censoring natural cultural expression (Thiong'o 1982: 124). The potential importance of this type of activity for women and development is perhaps underscored by patriarchy's violent response, which, in this case, involved the physical destruction of the theatre building.
- 13 Unlike Buvinic (1984), this analysis of development projects does not consider them "misbehaving" when they deal with items related to women's community welfare.
- 14 One important bias implicit in much of patricentric thinking is the institutional bias. In my case, it became especially apparent through a feminist study of politics. I eventually developed an alternative, non-institutional women's definition of politics. Its broad, non-institutionalized conception of politics (including a dichotomy broad versus narrow and a discussion of a closeted women's political culture) was required to explain the empirical facts that women were political actors even when they were not part of male-defined political institutions. These insights eventually became part of an analysis of women's community work. Once one began to see women's politics, patricentric views and interpretations appeared particularly biased. See, for example, Christiansen-Ruffman's (1982) critique. As Leslie Brown and I began to explore women's community work, we encountered a similar institutionalized definition. The definition of work needs to be taken out of its institutional context for work, not only for women but for everyone in this new century. Indeed all concepts need to be de-institutionalized and reconceptualized to rid them of their antiquated patriarchal bases at the same time as the antiquated and biased assumptions on which all disciplines rest need to be reconceived.
- 15 A version of this entire section was previously entitled "Implications for a Conception of Wealth" in the Michigan Working Paper (Christiansen-Ruffman 1987).
- 16 A comprehensive review of the literature on SAPS and restructuring policies and their general effects on women was conducted with Srabani Maitra for (Christiansen-Ruffman 2001). It found that the overwhelming majority of the studies found negative impacts. The few articles that mentioned some positive benefits tended to focus on the positive benefit to women from women's movement mobilizations in protest to the policies.
- 17 See Christiansen-Ruffman (1995) for a description of these processes. Although I did not use the word "spin" for the onset of the economic fundamentalism which pervaded public discourse over a decade ago, the concept of spin helps to "make (sociological) sense" of the processes involved at that time (*Spin Cycles*, "Sunday Morning (third hour)," February 2007, Canadian Broadcasting System).
- 18 There is considerable debate about restructuring and globalization: whether or not they

are new and when the processes began. Generally I agree with Antrobus (2004) that 1980 marks an important date with the emergence of conservative governments in Britain and the United States and the so-called "Washington Consensus," a shift in macro-economic development policies which introduced Structural Adjustment Policies. In Canada, even before that period, some serious cutbacks to social programs began in the mid- to late-1970s with the introduction of food banks as "a temporary measure" because interest rates were in the double digits and accelerating inflation was feared. This threat to human entitlements in Canada has intensified with more recent financial and socio-structural cutbacks such as the repeal of the Canada Assistance Plan. The Canada Social Transfer currently has no standards or guarantees for human entitlements. Major shifts in Canada's macro-economic policies began in the late 1980s with the Free Trade agreements, and in 1995 with the cutbacks to social programs. The website of the Feminist Alliance for International Action (FAFIA) hosts an interesting economic analysis of these cutbacks by Armine Yalnizian (2005). Of particular interest is the argument that the cutbacks in social programs were not necessary and that the debt and deficit would have been reduced in a few years because of falling interest rates and debt financing. See also FAFIA's presentation to the United Nations Committee reviewing Canada's compliance with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and its focus on the ways in which women's lives were worsened by these government policies which created poverty.

¹⁹ As I write this, another example of policies that violate Canada's social and economic obligations to fishing families is on the news. Earlier this year, the union of a fish plant went on strike, then the plant owners decided to close the plant for good. The workers now seem to have been abandoned with no legal recourse and no clear source of funds to sustain themselves in this crisis. Instead of acting like a safety net, the federal government announced it would take the case of court, continuing the limbo into which these children, women and men are being pushed. A gifting community approach would first support those individuals in need and then work out later how the bill is to be paid among various levels of government and other institutions.

²⁰ Ideas of transformational changes such as Thomas Kuhn's (1962) idea of a scholarly paradigm shift and the vision of radical feminist alternatives have captured the analytic attention of many feminist scholars. They have often started from different interests and such diverse fields as development (e.g., Jain 1983; DAWN 1985; Sen and Grown 1987); feminist methodologies (e.g., Mies 1983; Maguire 1987; Smith, 1987; Benston 1989); the environment (e.g., Mies and Shiva, 1993); human rights (e.g., Kumar, 1998); mothering (e.g., O'Brien 1981; Vaughan 1997); politics (eg., Miles 1996; Ricciutelli, Miles and McFadden 2004); and peace (e.g., Franklin 2006). They all share a vision of an alternative social world and their work is based on assumptions which share many values associated with women's community gifting. Patricia Madoo Lengermann and Gillian Niebrugge (c1998/2007) in an analysis of fifteen women founders in sociology and social theory from 1830 to 1930 argue that these women founders were not invisible in their times but were actively written out of North American sociological history (especially pp. 1-21). They also found a remarkable similarity among all of these fifteen women theorists: "[T]he women founders created a range of theories. But those theories all share a moral commitment to the idea that sociology should and could work for the alleviation of socially produced human pain. The ethical duty of the sociologist is to seek sound scientific knowledge, to refuse to make that knowledge an end in itself, to speak for the disempowered, and to advocate social reform.... [I]n key respects the sociology of the women founders is guided by

rules similar to those of contemporary feminist scholarship that theory and research should be empirically grounded and empowering of the disempowered, that the correct relationship between researcher and subject is one of mutuality of recognition, that the social theorist should reflexively monitor herself as a socially located actor, and that social analysis should build from situated accounts to a general and critical theory of society” (Lengermann and Niebrugge 2007: 19). The characteristics of these early thinkers as analyzed have a striking similarity to those scholars I used as examples above. Further research will examine the extent to which they share similar foundational assumptions with each other and with women’s community gifting.

- ²¹ The campaign, created by young women, is at www.thewomenareangry.org. It was established in response to measures taken by a “new” (minority) conservative government in Canada. Although Canada ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1981, in Fall, 2006 it banned the words “equality,” “advocacy,” and “research” from the mandate of Status of Women Canada and made cuts to staff and budget. The government’s tactics have motivated women’s actions and a renewed women’s movement may be emerging in Canada, which is also part of women’s community work. See Temma Kaplan (1982), Peggy Antrobus (2004), and Luciana Ricciutelli, Angela Miles and Margaret H. McFadden (2004) and the many other books and articles on the change-making community gifting of women’s movements around the world. This change-making work is important not only for women but for the society and community as a whole.

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