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The gender implications of  
neoclassical trade theory:  
Women's economic  
empowerment during  
Taiwan's export-led  
industrialisation

Marie Toulemonde

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Graphics and layout: Francisco Vergara and Paola Fuentes.



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# The gender implications of neoclassical trade theory: Women's economic empowerment during Taiwan's export-led industrialisation

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October 2014

ISSN: 1474-3280

## **Abstract**

In the 1960s, a number of countries that were influenced by neoclassical trade theory moved towards a new strategy of export-led industrialisation. The NTT argued that trade liberalisation would achieve greater gains for women relative to men in terms of reducing wage and employment gaps, ultimately leading to the empowerment of women in society. During the 1960s, Taiwan underwent a first stage of ELI, followed by a second stage in the 1970s. Women were predominantly employed in the export sector, mainly in jobs with low wages and little protection. An empowerment framework has been developed in this paper, measuring the ability of women to make economic decisions and act upon them, as well as their access and control over resources.

Using indicators defined within the framework, the changes

in women's empowerment and gender equality in Taiwan during this time has been assessed.

This paper has found the ELI to have had a limited effect on the empowerment of women as economic actors, as a social group and as household members. Thus, this paper argues that the neo-classical theory of gender equality through free trade is overly reductionist and ultimately misleading. The empowerment of women cannot be achieved through trade openness without measures to ensure women can access and utilize the benefits of trade. A good starting point would be recognizing the importance and economic value of women's work, mainly through improved disaggregated data, and by mainstreaming gender within trade theories and agreements.



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# 1. Introduction

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In the 1950s – 1960s many developing countries initiated an industrialisation process to move away from primary good exports and consumer good imports from industrialised countries on which they depended. At first, many of the countries initiated a strategy to substitute imports. This entailed establishing and promoting industries in an attempt to replace imports from developed countries that could set the terms of trade (Baer, 1972). However, in the 1960s many countries, realising the limits and failures of import-substitution and influenced by the neoclassical trade theory (NTT), moved towards a new strategy of export-led industrialisation (ELI). Countries engaged in this process produced and exported manufactured goods, initially focusing on more basic consumer goods such as textiles and garments (Landsberg, 1979; Toksöz, 2011). This outward looking strategy of promoting exports resulted in a conscious effort by governments to increase export volume through financial and non-financial incentives in order “to generate more foreign exchange and improve the current account of balance of payments” (Todaro and Smith, 2009, p. 822). This contributed to the increase in the amount of goods and services being traded internationally.

The value of low-cost labour rose significantly through the increased openness of countries to world markets and global competition. New jobs were created in the export sector that increasingly took on informal characteristics – no employment benefits or protection, and irregular wages – characteristics that were traditionally associated with jobs undertaken by women. Firms increasingly recognised the value of female labour as women were willing to work at lower wages than men, whilst putting in a higher amount of effort (Caraway, 2006; Özay, 2011; Ozler, 2000). In addition to the economic benefits of female workers, employers also associated women with characteristics such as “docility, discipline, carefulness, tolerance for monotonous work, obedience and patience” (Caraway, 2006, p.31). Women entered this employment either due to filial pressure or out of economic necessity to supplement household income when married (Diamond, 1979). This led to a feminisation of labour, as defined by the quantitative increase of women in the labour force.

In 2011, Taiwan would have ranked fourth globally in terms of gender equality, had the UNDP included Taiwan when ranking countries according to the Gender

Inequality Index (GII) (DGBAS, 2012). The GII is measured using changes in reproductive health, educational attainment and political representation of women, and in the female labour force participation rate (UNDP, 2011). This link between employment, empowerment and gender equality, as illustrated by the last indicator for the GII, is not a recent one. In fact it was the main argument for neoclassical economists when advocating the positive effect of free trade on women’s status in society (Bisnath, 2001; Çağatay, 2005). As mentioned earlier, the influence of the neoclassical economic school of thought has been such that it has shaped, and still shapes, the trade agreements and policies for many countries.

In recent years, the positive link between employment and empowerment for women has been revisited and criticised by feminist economists (Çağatay, 2005; Elson, 1999). Feminist economists accuse the NTT of using a reductionist view of empowerment that does not reflect the reality. They argued that entering paid employment would not necessarily lead to women’s emancipation, as it may not change the division of household work (disproportionately shouldered by women), therefore increasing the time burden faced by them (ibid.). Furthermore, the benefits of paid employment will not always be accessed and controlled by women who may have to hand over their income to their parents or husbands (ibid.). Empirical evidence from countries that followed trade policies based on neoclassical theory has mostly supported the feminist view of trade (Joeques, 1995; Jomo, 2001).

Between the 1960s and mid-1990s, Taiwan followed a policy of trade openness and export promotion through its ELI. Considering their success in terms of the GII, this should support the neoclassical predictions on the positive effects of trade liberalisation on gender equality and women’s empowerment. However, when taking a closer look, the literature and data on Taiwan show that trade liberalisation in Taiwan in the form of ELI has far from improved women’s position relative to men’s. A gender assessment of the neoclassical theory and its effects has therefore become extremely relevant and necessary.

For this reason, the purpose of this working paper will be to assess the extent to which the impact of trade liberalisation on gender equality and women’s

empowerment have fallen short of the neoclassical economists' expectations.

Practically, the methodology employed in this paper will be as follows. In the first chapter, the NTT and its critique by feminist economists will be described. A discussion on empowerment and how to measure it will follow, giving rise to the framework that will be employed in assessing the case of Taiwan's ELI.

The framework is based on existing definitions of empowerment but the indicators have been specifically chosen for their relevance in measuring empowerment within the economic sphere. In the second chapter, a succinct description of the economic and political context of Taiwan before and during its industrialisation process will be given. The ELI process will be defined

as the period between 1960 and 1996. The rationale behind the 1996 cut-off point is as such:

Recently the Taiwanese government has increased its efforts to promote gender equality, therefore keeping the case study before the 1996 elections ensures that these efforts are not mistaken for the effects of free trade. The indicators will then be used to analyse the extent to which export promotion has affected the situation of women relative to men within the economy, the society and the household. In order to do so, the data employed will be taken from the manufacturing sector, as it will have observed the biggest change during industrialisation. When unavailable, data from the industrial sector, which comprises manufacturing, will be used. Finally, the findings from this case study and their implications for theory and policy-making will be assessed.

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## 2. Conceptual and theoretical chapter

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### 2.1. Trade theories

Many trade theories have been formulated since the increase in international trade from the 1950s onward. For the purpose of this paper only two will be discussed: mainstream neoclassical trade theory (NTT) and feminist trade theory (FTT). NTT has been highly influential in shaping policies and trade strategies. When the question of gender and its place in trade arose, the theory was expanded to include predictions of what would happen in developing and developed countries in terms of gender equality. However this theory has been widely criticised by feminist economists, who have themselves developed a trade theory in which gender relations are at the heart. Both will now be described in the context of gender outcomes of trade.

#### Neoclassical trade theory

The NTT is based on the Heckscher-Ohlin-Samuelson model. This relative factor endowment model is an expanded version of Ricardo's comparative advantage theory. The model assesses the effects of trade on national economies and measures the return of trade on the factors of production (Todaro & Smith, 2009). The theory is based on two main propositions that make up the rationale for free trade. First, the production of different goods will use factors of production in different proportions, and second, countries have different initial supplies of these factors, resulting in different factor prices (ibid.). Hence, countries should specialise in production that makes extensive use of their more abundant factors of production. For developing countries, this often means producing goods that require unskilled labour, such as primary commodities and manufactured goods (Özay, 2011).

This model leads to three key implications. First, free trade will increase economic growth by allowing countries to access new resources and markets. The overall gain from free trade will be positive, allowing for the compensation of losers (Çağatay, 2005; Todaro & Smith, 2009). Second, free trade will lead to greater international and national equality due to the equalising effect of international trade on prices of factors of production, known as the factor price equalisation theorem. It argues for the existence of a positive correlation between the price of a good and the price of factors of production required to produce it (Çağatay, 2005; Özay, 2011; Samuelson, 1948). With international trade, the price of goods will equalise through competition, resulting in price equalisa-

tion for factors of production (Samuelson, 1948). Taking the example of developing countries, skilled labour would be of limited supply; therefore the wages paid relative to unskilled labour would be higher. As countries specialise in the production of goods that uses unskilled labour, the demand for this input will increase, bringing wages up until both skilled and unskilled labour receive equal wages (Özay, 2011; Samuelson, 1948;). Finally, countries will capture the full benefits of free trade when adopting an outward looking trade policy such as ELI (Todaro & Smith, 2009).

The NTT was expanded to predict the effects of trade on gender equality, arguing that trade liberalisation would achieve greater gains for women relative to men, mainly in terms of reducing gender wage and employment gaps (Çağatay, 2005). Developing countries were generally more endowed in unskilled labour. Due to the education and employment inequalities between boys and girls, a large share of this unskilled labour tends to be female. Therefore by incentivising developing countries to specialise in (unskilled) labour-intensive production, free trade should promote more gender equality in the economic sphere. This idea was formulated by Becker (1957) in his discrimination theory. He argued that the discrimination of women by employers does not stem from lower female productivity but instead is a result of employers' prejudices (Bhagwati, 2004; Becker, 1957; Black & Brainerd, 2004; Çağatay, 2005; Elson, Grown & Çağatay, 2007; Özay, 2011). This then results in market imperfection as employers must pay a wage premium to satisfy their preferences for male labour, and profits are not maximised (Black et al., 2004; Özay, 2011).

Therefore discriminatory firms would have a cost disadvantage relative to non-discriminatory ones that increases with competition (ibid.). When put in an international trade context, domestic firms that discriminate would be faced with non-discriminatory foreign firms that operate at lower production costs (Black et al., 2004). This would either bankrupt the prejudiced firms, force them to reduce the wage premium or increase their share of female labour (Black et al., 2004; Özay, 2011).

Therefore free trade will simultaneously decrease the wage and employment gender gap by removing market imperfections (Ghiara, 1999).

For mainstream economists this would improve women's economic position to relative to men and free trade would serve as a catalyst for women's empowerment (Bisnath, 2001; Çağatay, 2005)

## Feminist trade theory

A radically opposing trade theory was formulated by feminist economists based on more heterodox approaches to trade, mainly Marxian and post-Keynesian (Elson et al., 2007). The argument is that trade is not based on comparative advantages but absolute advantages that countries have obtained through differences in technology, demand and prices of factors of production (ibid.). This implies that not all countries will have an advantage in their production process and those without one will struggle to be competitive at the international level (Elson et al., 2007; Özay, 2011). The FTT rejects the idea of comparative advantage due to its reliance on hypotheses of perfect competition, full employment and price adjustment (ibid.). These assumptions are deemed unrealistic and constantly violated in actuality (Çağatay, 2005).

The FTT sees four main entry points ignored by the NTT in the heterodox trade theory for gendered analysis (Elson et al., 2007). First, social relations are viewed as having an important effect on economic processes and outcomes (Çağatay, 2005; Özay, 2011). Compared with NTT, feminist economists do not separate the economic from the social sphere, as they deem the economy, the labour market and labour institutions to be bearers of gender due to institutionalised gender norms and stereotypes in society (Elson, 1999; Elson et al., 2007). Feminist economists accuse the NTT as viewing labour as a simple input that enters the production process as opposed to “lived experience in which people’s capacity can be enhanced or depleted” (Elson, 1999, p. 619). Second, the FTT includes the reproductive sphere – household chores, bearing and rearing children – in the productive, paid employment sphere by recognising the importance of women’s unpaid domestic work (Çağatay, 2005; Elson et al., 2007). Third, the prices of factors are not set by a country’s initial endowment but by social and historical processes that have led to differences in technology and productivity, processes that can also explain the disadvantaged position of women in society and in the economy (Elson et al., 2007; Özay, 2011). Finally, the FTT rejects the idea that international trade will benefit all. Instead it argues that trade will further marginalise some countries and people through unemployment, lower wages and fewer decision-making opportunities (Elson et al., 2007). Furthermore, this marginalisation can often be seen as exploitative as these inequalities can be tools for improving the competitiveness of a country (Çağatay, 2005).

## 2.2. Proposition

The NTT argues that the internationalisation and liberalisation of trade would help improve gender equality in developing countries and be a catalyst for women’s empowerment. The example often used to illustrate this

is the ELI strategies of East Asian countries that heavily relied on female labour. However, the FTT has built a case against this theory, based on the idea that the NTT does not use gender as a unit for analysis. Indeed it does not take into account the interaction between the social and economic spheres and labour is treated as an input rather than as individual beings embedded with different social identities. Such a theory is therefore inadequate to predict social outcomes such as changes in gender equality and women’s empowerment. This is illustrated in the discrepancy between the predicted effects and the reality in countries like Taiwan that adopted ELI following trade liberalisation.

## 2.3. Framework

### Gender

Gender is “conceptualised as the social meaning given to biological differences” (Özay, 2011, p.34). It is a social identity such as age or religion that affects every sphere of life – social, economic, political. Like all social identities, gender is embedded with stereotypes and expectations that may differ over time and between societies. The norms and values associated with gender shape the way society sees and interacts with individuals and can lead to the creation and perpetuation of inequalities and injustices. More particularly, at the economic level, it shapes the “bargaining power of women in relation to economic processes of wage/working condition negotiations in the labour market, access to productive resources, the distribution of work, income and wealth” (ibid.). At the household level, it shapes the access and control over resources, the division of labour – productive and reproductive – and the relations between household members. Moser (1989) defines the organisation of household work as shaped by 4 gender roles:

- The reproductive role: tasks associated with domestic chores such as child bearing and rearing. This is essential for maintaining the present and future labour force.
- The productive role: paid work that is directly involved in the economic process.
- The community work: voluntary work that is done at the community level, for example, ensuring the provision of social goods and services.
- The constituency-based politics role: work promoting the interest of the constituency at all political levels.

Traditionally, men are deemed to be responsible for the productive and political role due to the perception of men as authoritative decision-makers and breadwinners (Moser, 1989). Women take on the reproductive role, due to their child-bearing abilities and the voluntary community

role which is viewed as an expansion of the reproductive role (*ibid.*). However women are often pushed to enter the productive sphere out of economic necessity. Due to institutionalised gender roles, women do so often in worse conditions than men – lower wages, worse occupations, lower benefits and protections – and still maintain the full burden of domestic work.

## Empowerment

Neoclassical trade economists argue that entering paid employment would allow women to challenge the power structure and the gender stereotypes in their society (Çağatay, 2005). Paid employment would allow this by “enlarging the choices and productivity levels of individual women” (Bisnath, 2001, p.11). To assess whether the NTT’s predictions were realised, a pertinent definition of empowerment is required which emphasises the idea of greater choices and capabilities. Therefore, this paper will employ Mosedale’s definition of empowerment as described in *Assessing Women’s Empowerment: Towards a Conceptual Framework* (2005). Empowerment is defined as “the process by which women redefine and extend what is possible for them to be and do in situations where they have been restricted, compared to men, from being and doing” (Mosedale, 2005, p.252).

Mosedale’s (2005) definition brings forward three dimensions of empowerment that are recurrently found in the literature. Empowerment implies that women are disempowered relative to men in public and private spheres because of the social identity associated with their gender (*ibid.*). This is explained by the idea of ‘power over’, where one individual, social group or institution can exclude another from the decision making sphere (Kabeer, 2005; Mosedale, 2005). Power over can also result without any actors actively suppressing another’s agency, through norms and stereotypes prevalent in society which shape how individuals are expected to act (Kabeer, 2005). The disempowered group may not even be conscious of being so if these norms have been internalised (Batliwala, 1994; Mosedale, 2005).

Empowerment is also a process of change, not an end state (Malhotra & Schuler, 2005; Mosedale, 2005). There is no point in time where an individual is fully empowered as it is a relative concept, and an individual may always be disempowered by someone else (*ibid.*). Finally, empowerment relates to agency. Being a process of change, it requires individual or collective action to fuel this change (Kabeer, 2005; Malhotra et al., 2005; Mosedale, 2005).

Empowerment cannot be achieved by a third party. This is the idea of ‘power to’. Women need to be conscious of their disempowered state and actively try to change this through challenging existing power relations

(Kabeer, 2005). This would help empower them, but also other women in the present and future (Mosedale, 2005). Therefore greater gender equality – women having the same opportunities as men in all spheres of life – is necessary but not sufficient for women’s empowerment as it does not always stem from a conscious action to change the power structures of society (Malhotra et al., 2005; Reeves & Baden, 2000).

## Economic empowerment

Empowerment is a multidimensional concept where all aspects of life interact. As this paper is looking at whether ELI had the potential to empower women, it is logical to use economic empowerment (EE) as an entry point for the analysis. EE is the ability to make and act upon economic decisions which will result in sustained living standards and the potential for advancing economically (Golla, Malhotra, Nanda & Mehra, 2011; UNIFEM in Mosedale, 2005). It requires equal access to and control over both the means necessary for these decisions (skills and resources) and the benefits stemming from them (income, social status) (*ibid.*). Therefore resources will be fundamental for EE, not as a source but as a catalyst. These may include monetary ones such as income but also human, economic, political, and social (Golla et al., 2011). A significant underlying aspect of resources is the norms associated with gender such as expectations and roles that will affect an individual’s endowment and employment of these resources (*ibid.*). The control and access over them may also point to those who hold the power within society (Kabeer, 2005; Malhotra et al., 2005).

The importance of EE is two-fold. It is a strong base for gender equality and women’s rights and can serve as a starting point for broader empowerment in other spheres such as social and political (Golla et al., 2011). It is also important for development as it can help the achievement of goals like MDGs and greater social welfare (GenderNet, 2011; Golla et al., 2011).

## Framework and indicators

The way EE is measured depends on how it is defined. Considering Mosedale’s (2005) definition, the success of EE should be measured in three ways: whether women can make their own economic decisions, whether they can act upon them, and whether they can access and control the resources for and from these decisions. Empowerment should prevail at every domain of life, from the macro to the micro level. Measuring EE will be done at three levels: the economy, the society and the household. Looking at the economy will result in using women as economic agents as one unit of analysis, therefore revealing the direct effects of ELI on women’s EE. The

society level will aggregate women as a social group, allowing the analysis of women’s empowerment progress relative not only to men as a social group, but also to institutions such as unions, markets and legal institutions. Finally, the household level emphasises women’s individual agency to change gender relations with the male members of their households (fathers, brothers and husbands) which tends to be of critical importance for women’s empowerment (Adams & Castle, 1994; Desai, 1994; Malhotra, Schuler & Boender, 2002). Table 2.1 shows the indicators that have been chosen to analyse the progress of women’s EE. Being a highly difficult concept to measure, the indicators chosen will act as proxies.

**Woman as economic actor**

Assessing whether women have chosen to enter paid employment or were forced into it will be used to measure women’s agency in making their own decisions. Women’s equal access to employment will be analysed to assess whether women are acting upon these decisions (Malhotra et al., 2002). This includes a decrease in gender employment gaps (more women are employed) and a decrease in gender occupational gaps (women

can reach all levels of the hierarchy, instead of firms and social norms segregating them in certain occupations). More equal access to employment can stem from changes in gender perceptions and can also result from positive action by women towards their own empowerment. Positive action by women can be achieved by increasing their skills and experience – the third measure of women’s access to employment – and by entering labour institutions such as unions to ensure greater gender equality. Finally, a reduction in the gender wage gap will allow greater access to the monetary benefits of paid employment for women.

**Woman as a social group**

There must be a “conscientisation” of the unequal status of women as a social group for them to make their own economic decisions (Battliwala, 1994; Kabeer, 2005). This collective awareness of injustice will be measured by the creation and actions of feminist activism groups. The ability of women to act upon these decisions and their access to and control over resources will be appraised respectively by the change in society’s perception of female employment and the change in society’s perception of equal access and control over resources.

**Table 2.1.** Women's empowerment framework

	Economic actors	Social group	Household
<b>Make own economic decisions</b>	- Choose to enter and leave employment	- Collective awareness of injustice	- Challenge traditional gender roles
<b>Act upon these decisions</b>	- More equal access to employment for women: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Decrease in gender employment gap</i></li> <li>• <i>Decrease in occupational segregation</i></li> <li>• <i>Increased access to skills</i></li> </ul>	- Change in society’s perception of female labour: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Law supporting women in employment</i></li> <li>• <i>Opinions on female employment and wages</i></li> </ul>	- More equal division of reproductive role
<b>Access to and control over resources</b>	- Decrease in gender wage gap	- Change in society’s perception of equal access to and control over resources: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Law supporting equality in resources’ access and control in employment</i></li> <li>• <i>Opinions on equal access and control of resources</i></li> </ul>	- Access and control over household’s resources (including own income)

These two indicators will look at increases in the number of laws supporting women's employment rights for the former and laws supporting equality in the access and control over resources for the latter. It is assumed that the increase in laws protecting women's economic interests and changes in the mentality regarding women's employment is due partly to women actively working for this change, individually or collectively, and demonstrates that women have become a strong lobbying block. The indicators will also take into account the positive change in society's opinions with regards to women's employment and management of resources (Golla et al., 2011).

### Woman within the household

Finally, for women at the household level, the indicator for making their own economic decisions – challenging traditional gender roles – is vital, as these roles prevent women from making economic decisions within the household. To be able to enter and remain in paid employment (act upon their decisions), women must be in part relieved from their domestic work by the male of the household. If paid employment results in time poverty, women cannot be seen as empowered (Fontana, 2007; Kabeer, 2005). Finally the indicator for women's access and control over resources – equal control over the household's resources including their own income – is very straightforward.

Overall, these indicators should show whether women have increased their bargaining power within society and the household through entering paid employment.

### Limits of the framework and how to resolve them

There are four major limits to this framework. First, EE is just one facet of empowerment, and therefore cannot be used as a proxy on its own to assess the progress of women's empowerment. Being economically empowered does not inevitably lead to being socially or politically empowered (Malhotra et al., 2005). Second, looking at women who have entered employment excludes not only men but also women who are unemployed or employed in the informal sector. Finally, the indicators can lead to a reductionist view of empowerment.

The first issue is easily resolved by looking at the impact of EE on other spheres of life - indicators for both the political and social sides have been formulated for this purpose. Starting with social empowerment, increasing women's bargaining power through EE should result in a greater ability to decide how to lead their lives. There-

fore one indicator will be the increase in personal choice: changes in the marriage system and increased control over their sexual lives (seen through sexual health and lower fertility rates) (Malhotra et al., 2002). Furthermore, the EE of women should have changed the expectations of society, and even the expectations of women themselves, on the role of women. Therefore a second indicator will be the increase in educational investment for girls by society and households. In terms of political empowerment, one indicator will be the increase in laws to promote gender equality, reflecting a change in society's perception resulting in women's EE. A second one will be stronger representation of women in government and legislative bodies, demonstrating women actively working for positive change (ibid.).

The second issue can also be solved. First, although it is important not to associate gender solely with women, it is beyond the scope of this working paper to study the interaction between men and women in depth. Therefore the working paper will look at the position of women relative to men, allowing the situation of men to come in the research as a baseline to measure women's empowerment and gender equality. Second, the presence of unemployed women is actually accounted for within this framework as the control group, against which to measure the effects of paid employment on women's empowerment. Finally, due to the lack of data available, the analysis will only look at formal paid employment, therefore excluding women in the informal sector, which can account for a large part of the population. When trying to avoid excluding social groups in the analysis, it is important to try and avoid segregating groups. It should be noted that social groups are not homogenous; differences exist in terms of ethnicity, religion, class and age. However, to disaggregate women by social identities would be beyond the scope of this paper, therefore the analysis has been simplified by viewing women as a homogenous social group. Nonetheless, the different social identities may be mentioned when pertinent to the analysis.

The last issue cannot be escaped as any analysis of empowerment will exclude some of its facets. Furthermore, many authors writing on this subject have raised the issue of context when measuring empowerment, and warned against the imposition of one's own ideas of empowerment (Alsop & Heinsohn, 2005; Malhotra et al., 2002; Mosedale, 2005). However, the term is too multi-dimensional and subjective to fully reduce it to quantifiable measures, making caution necessary when formulating the conclusion to the analysis.

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## 3. Analysis of case study

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### 3.1 Context

#### Primary Import substitution industrialisation, 1950s - early 1960s

Having declared a general state of siege on Taiwan and imposed martial law in 1949, the Chinese nationalist government Kuomintang (KMT) lost the Chinese civil war and migrated entirely to Taiwan (Chu & Lin, 2001). The KMT was known for its authoritarian and oppressive regime which viewed Taiwanese as “second class citizens” (Clark, Lu & Clark, 2009; Chu et al., 2001). To improve the poor economic situation at the time, the KMT initiated a series of economic reforms, aimed at enhancing industrialisation through protectionist measures. This was known as the import substitution industrialisation (ISI) strategy. The currency was overvalued, whilst tariffs, quotas and other trade regulations were imposed on imports, leading to a dramatic drop in their rates (Kuchiki, 2007; Tsiang, 1985). However, with the overvaluation of the currency, export prices soared, therefore reducing their competitiveness in the world market, and resulting in a drop in export rates as well (Scott, 1979).

During the beginning of ISI very few women were directly employed in the labour market. The majority of them worked as unpaid family workers in the agriculture sector: over 75% between 1950 and 1960 (Galenson, 1979). This was in part shaped by the cultural ideology concerning women at the time. These prevailing cultural norms were influenced both by Japanese chauvinism and by Chinese Confucianism ideology which saw women as beneath men, and whose virtue was to obey and serve men in both private and public spheres (Lu, 1991). Although this philosophy endured during the economic structural transformation, women’s role in the economy began to change and become more visible as exports gained in importance.

In the mid-1950s, manufactured goods produced nationally began to saturate the domestic market, making ISI unviable (Clark et al., 2009). Pressured by the US government, and in order to rectify the situation, the KMT implemented more expansionary policies and export promotion measures (Chu et al., 2001). In 1955, a trade liberalisation and exchange rate devaluation policy package was adopted, which entailed a lowering of import quotas and devaluation of the local currency in the private-export sector (Scott, 1979; Tsiang, 1985). This resulted in more competitive Taiwanese exports, leading

to increased export rates of over 30% between 1954 and 1955 (ibid.). A new regulation for Rebate of Taxes on Export Products followed, allowing exporters to purchase their inputs without paying the commodity tax or import duty (Scott, 1979). Other policies and programs were set up by the government such as the Export Loan Program launched in 1957 by the Bank of Taiwan to provide low cost loans to exporters to finance their short-term operating costs (Chou, 1985). The result of this structural transformation in the economy was a GNP growth rate of 7.5%, with imports increasing by 17% and exports by almost 20% (ibid.). By the early 1960s, Taiwan had switched from ISI to an export promoting strategy.

#### Primary export - led industrialisation, 1960s - early 1970s

This new openness to trade led to a restructuring of Taiwan’s economy. Production requiring unskilled labour – light manufacturing industries such as textile and clothing – were favoured due to the cost advantage they had in the world market (Chou, 1985; Tsiang, 1985). Women were seen as a source of docile and productive labour, and neither the employers nor the women themselves deemed independent wages necessary (Diamond, 1979). Therefore these industries increasingly hired women to minimise their labour costs (Arrigo, 1978; Galenson, 1979; Tsiang, 1985). Between 1965 and 1975, the number of women employed in manufacturing tripled, from 209,000 to 648,000 (Galenson, 1979).

The government continued its effort to promote exports by improving the investment climate and helping exporting industries through tax exemptions (Kuchiki, 2007; Liu, 1969). Aware that bureaucratic controls such as registration and export licensing remained the main constraint to exports, the Taiwanese government set up a system of bonded factories in 1965, where bonded processing was exempted from costly bureaucratic regulations and import tariffs (Chou 1985; Kuchiki, 2007). Export Processing Zones (EPZ) were set up at the same time in Kaoshiung, Taichung and Nanzi, to automatically free production from taxes and bureaucratic red tape (Chou, 1985; Kuchiki, 2007; Scott, 1979). Many foreign investors set up manufacturing industries in these zones to fully take advantage of the beneficial environment and the low-cost labour (Kuchiki, 2007). Exports grew by 30% a year and GNP by 10.8%, with the industrial

sector contributing to over half of this growth – mainly through manufacturing (Chou, 1985).

### Secondary ELI with ISI, 1970s-early 1990s

By the 1970s, Taiwan's industrial landscape was composed mainly of small and medium industries. Women were increasingly being employed in the manufacturing sector, especially in EPZ where they composed 85% of the labour force by the mid-1970s (Arrigo, 1978; Galenson, 1979).

The first stage of ELI generated greater prosperity in Taiwan as wages and profits steadily increased. This resulted in higher income and economic well-being, which meant that labour costs could no longer be kept low enough to maintain Taiwan's advantage in labour-intensive productions (Clark et al., 2009). Furthermore, in 1974-5 Taiwan was hit by a recession induced by the 1973 oil crisis, which prompted two main reactions from the government. First, in 1976 the government introduced heavy industrialisation as a substitution for imports and as a mean to maintain Taiwan's global competitiveness (Berik, 2000; Kuchiki, 2007). This heavy industry – metal, petrochemicals, steel – relied mainly on capital and technology rather than labour, and the quality of its products was far superior to previous manufactures in Taiwan (Berik, 2000; Clark et al., 2009; Kuchiki, 2007). This was met with an increase in the technological know-how of industries, promoted by the government through increased investment in research and development as well as technical training and new infrastructure projects (ibid.). Second, the government cut back most of its preferential treatment towards labour-intensive manufacturing in its attempt to promote heavy industry. In addition, industries relying on labour saw their production costs increase with higher wages and the appreciation of the currency. By the mid-1980s most of this sector had little incentive to remain in Taiwan, and relocated to mainland China and Southeast Asian countries with lower labour costs (Berik, 2000; Lu, 2010). This led to the creation of new highly skilled jobs in the high-tech sector, coupled with a disappearance of unskilled labour-intensive jobs in the manufacturing sector (Berik, 2000). Many employers preferred hiring men for these jobs, due to the still persisting gender stereotypes within society. This discrimination led to a steady decline in the share of female workers, but by 1987 an absolute fall in the employment for both men and women was observed (ibid.). Through this, Taiwan's ELI had entered a more mature stage, coupled with the return to import substitution (Berik, 2000; Chou, 1985; Kuchiki, 2007). By the end of 1980s, Taiwan had emerged as a strong player in the high-tech export sector, with electrical and electronics export accounting for the majority of export earnings (Kuchiki, 2007; Berik, 2000). Overall exports grew at an annual rate of 12.3% for manufactures between 1981 and 1993 (Berik, 2000). By the mid-90s,

Taiwan had undergone a transformation from an industrial country to one in the new information age (Clark et al., 2009).

During this time, the KMT's national and international legitimacy was waning as they lost both their seat in the UN council and official recognition to the People's Republic of China (Chu et al., 2001). To regain its legitimacy, the KMT opened up the national elections from 1972 (ibid.). In 1986, it allowed the formation of an opposition party, the Democratic Progressive Party, and in 1987 lifted the martial law (Clark et al., 2009; Chu et al., 2001). By the early 1990s, the country had successfully transitioned to a democracy, evidenced by the first ever democratically elected president in 1996 (ibid.).

## 3.2 Analysis

The purpose of this paper is to assess the validity of the neoclassical trade theory's predictions on women's status relative to men. Using the framework developed in the first chapter, the case study can be analysed to measure the extent to which women have been empowered and gender equality has been improved by greater trade openness. The data employed in this analysis will be taken from the manufacturing sector as it will have observed the biggest change during the ELI. Data from the industrial sector will be used when no disaggregated data from the manufacturing sector exists. This will maintain a certain consistency within the analysis as the industrial sector is comprised of manufacturing, mining, utilities, transport, communication and construction (Galenson, 1979).

### Economic empowerment for women as economic actors.

#### *Making their own economic decisions: Choice over entering the labour market*

The patriarchal norms of Taiwanese society have led parents to associate daughters with liability, as they will traditionally marry out of the family into that of their husbands. They generally move in with their in-laws, and their assets go under their husband's management (Bahramitash, 2000; Diamond, 1979; Greenhalgh, 1985; Parish & Willis, 1993). Parents have consequently pushed their daughters into employment to repay this "debt", by remitting a major share of their income to their family (ibid.). As most girls will eventually marry and as a result often quit their jobs, parents have little incentive to invest in education and skills that would increase the revenue of women in the long term. Instead girls are directed out of education into the type of work that will generate immediate revenue, but hold limited possibility for progression (Greenhalgh, 1985; Parish et al., 1993). Once married, women often only continue to work if

economically necessary, but this choice remains primarily dependent on their husbands. The 'Taiwan Women and Family Study Survey' was conducted in 1989, using interviews of 3,803 women aged 25 to 59 years (NORC, 1989). In this survey, almost 80% of women still wanted to work even if it was not economically necessary. Despite this, when asked whether they would work if they had a child in pre-school, only 1.66% would do so even if it was without their husband's approval and not economically necessary (ibid.). Therefore, very little gain has been made by women in terms of autonomy and choice.

*Acting upon their decisions: More equal access to employment for women.*

*Gender occupational gap*

Due to the lack of disaggregated data existing for the beginning of the observed period in Taiwan (1960-1970), it is difficult to show the changes in the gender occupational gap. However, in all accounts of the ELI

of Taiwan, women's occupations are described as low-skilled, part-time, and unprotected with little or no opportunity for advancement (Berik, 2000; Brooks, 2006; Clark et al., 2009; Diamond, 1973a; Farris, 2004; Galenson, 1979)

The existing data provided in table 3-1 shows that between 1970 and 1996, the occupational gender gap has not narrowed significantly. In fact, in the manufacturing sector, the occupational gap widened: in 1970, 1% of women working in manufacturing were employed in administrative and managerial positions compared to 9.3% of men; in 1996 the difference increased to 1.47% of women compared to 10.54% of men.

*Gender employment gap*

The limited available data paints a relatively negative picture of the gender employment gap during the industrialisation period (see Table 3.2). Women's share of

**Table 3.1.** Occupation in the manufacturing sector by gender between 1970 and 1996

% Of workers in the manufacturing sector employed in each occupation	Administrative and Managerial Workers	Professional and Technical Workers	Production and related workers
1970			
Male	9.3	2.6	74.5
Female	1	0.6	83.3
1980			
Male	2.6	2.4	74.9
Female	0.1	0.6	93.6
1984			
Male	2.5	2.8	75.2
Female	0.2	0.8	82.6
1993			
Male	10.73	16.44	68.68
Female	1.19	11.46	73.02
1994			
Male	10.46	17.87	68.27
Female	1.38	11.25	72.56
1995			
Male	10.32	17.43	68.22
Female	1.32	11.87	70.79
1996			
Male	10.54	18.44	67.01
Female	1.47	11.76	69.43

Source: Calculations by author using data from Cheng & Hsiung, 1994 and DGBAS, 1996

1Note: the percentage of workers does not amount to 100% as other occupations have been omitted.

employment relative to men did increase during Taiwan's industrialisation - by 32.64 percentage points between 1965 and 1996. However, the gender employment gap remains significant: female workers accounted for only 56% of male workers in the industrial sector by 1996. Interpreting this data must be done with care as the gender employment gap does not necessarily illustrate discrimination against women in the labour market. This is due to the existence of voluntary and involuntary unemployment (Lu, 2010). Involuntary unemployment refers to employers' preference for male workers, which results in the exclusion of women who want to work. This is a result of gender stereotypes that associate women with low skills, and also view administrative and business management aptitude as masculine (Farris, 2004).

Furthermore, the second stage of ELI that restructured the economy as mainly capital and technology intensive has caused the disappearance of low-skilled production jobs (Lu, 2010). As seen with the data on gender occu-

pations, an important share of these jobs were held by women; the elimination of these jobs has consequently increased female unemployment (*ibid.*). On the other hand, many women view their work as a transition period between education and marriage, voluntarily quitting their jobs once married with children (Diamond, 1979). This is a reflection of the patriarchal structure of society that has shaped gender roles and influenced women's aspirations to become good wives and mothers, but it should not be seen as discrimination (Diamond, 1979; Lu, 2010).

#### *Access to skills*

Though quantitative data on women's access to skills was unavailable, the literature did provide a fairly good account. As mentioned above parents tended to invest in their sons' skills rather than their daughters', as sons would be the provider of care in parents' old age (Bahramitash, 2000; Greenhalgh, 1985; Parish et al., 1993).

**Table 3.2.** Employment in the industrial sector between 1965 and 1996

Year	Female workers (in thousands)	Male workers (in thousands)	Total workers (in thousands)	Female to male employment (%)
1965	209	904	1,113	23.12
1966	220	830	1,050	26.51
1967	275	932	1,207	29.51
1968	279	987	1,266	28.27
1969	314	1,069	1,383	29.37
1970	364	1,178	1,542	30.90
1971	435	1,250	1,685	34.80
1972	505	1,339	1,844	37.71
1973	638	1,468	2,106	43.46
1974	623	1,562	2,185	39.88
1975	648	1,628	2,276	39.80
1993	1,201	2,016	3,217	59.59
1994	1,218	2,087	3,305	58.34
1995	1,203	2,117	3,320	56.80
1996	1,177	2,111	3,289	55.76

Source: Calculations from author using data from Galenson, 1979 and ILO, n.d.

Therefore girls had limited opportunities to gain more skills by being placed in training programs or apprenticeships. Even those who did have the opportunity were faced with limited scope of “on-the-job training”. Whilst this was available to boys in a multitude of jobs, only a handful of service sector jobs offered this opportunity to women, and only in traditional female jobs, for example, beauticians and seamstresses (Greenhalgh, 1985).

*Access and control over resources: Gender wage gap*

The change in the gender wage gap, seen in table 3-3, does not support Becker’s discrimination theory. Instead

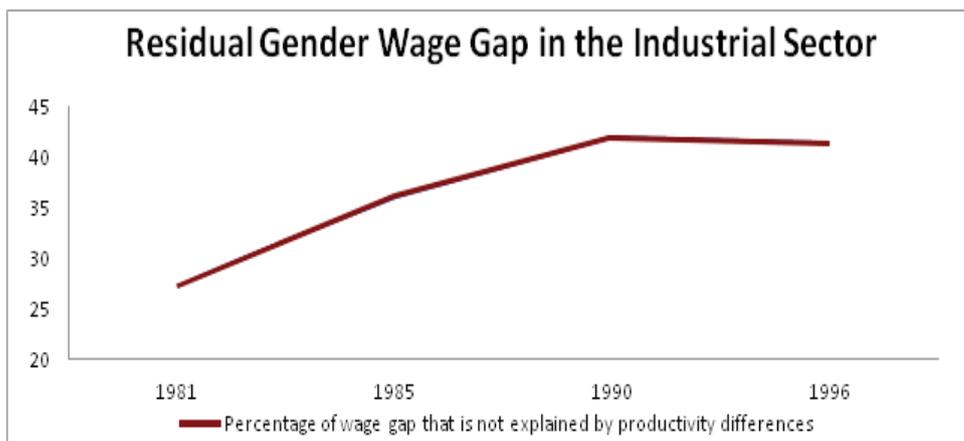
the gap widened dramatically when trade liberalised. Women who were on average earning 82.5% of what men earned in 1953 were suddenly earning only half of men’s wages by 1962. Over the industrialisation process, the gap slowly began to close up, reaching 67.2% in 1995, still lower than before free trade (ibid.). When using data for residual wages – the proportion of wages that cannot be explained by differences in productivity – the situation is worse. Between 1981 and 1996, the residual wage gap was around 37%: 37% of the differences between female and male wages were not explained by differences in productivity but by gender discrimination within the labour market (see Figure

**Table 3.3.** Gender wage gap in the industrial sector between 1953 and 1996 (expressed as a %)

Year	1953	1954	1955	1956	1957	1958	1959	1960	1961	1962
Female to Male Wage Ratio	82.52	78.96	71.37	67.89	68.19	69.98	69.11	65.03	60.45	50.97
Year	1963	1964	1965	1966	1967	1968	1969	1970	1971	1972
Female to Male Wage Ratio	59.97	57.85	55.61	55.35	52.83	59.04	56.22	61.55	57.23	57.77
Year	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988
Female to Male Wage Ratio	62.00	59.43	60.00	61.05	64.45	64.45	64.73	62.38	60.82	64.25
Year	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995			
Female to Male Wage Ratio	62.10	64.47	62.17	64.93	62.50	59.92	67.52			

Source: Calculation from the author using data from Galenson, 1979 and Baraka, 1999. Industrial sector is comprised of manufacturing, mining, utilities, transport and communication.

**Figure 3.1.** Residual wage gap between 1981 and 1996



Source: Berik, van der Meulen Rodgers, Zveglic, 2003

3.1).

**Economic empowerment for women as a social group. Make own economic decisions:**  
*Collective awareness of injustice*

Collective awareness of injustice is measured through the importance and influence of the feminist movement in Taiwan. This feminist movement was not launched until the 1970s in Taiwan. This was the work of Hsiu-Lien Annette Lu, who after studying in the United States and coming into contact with the ideas of the feminist movement there, published “New Feminism” (Clark et al., 2009). Lu tried to increase people’s awareness on issues such as gender roles and women’s rights, but met with criticism from society and harassment from the KMT (Lu, 1991). The KMT’s opposition stemmed both from their authoritative regime that forbade assemblies of groups and from their official policies that perpetuated patriarchal norms and were in direct contradiction with feminist ideology (ibid.).

Until the martial law was lifted, the movement received only limited support: only one women’s group promoted equality between gender and women’s rights and the only feminist journal appealed to a very small public (Clark et al., 2009). This showed the gap between the intellectual elite that spearheaded the movement – as they had the means to study abroad where they were introduced to feminist ideology – and the working class women whom he institutionalised the gender norms without questioning them (Huang, 1997). In post-martial law Taiwan, the movement was revived as social groups were given more freedom to operate. The number of women’s groups increased considerably and the scope for what they advocated widened from feminist and traditional women’s issues to other social issues including the environment (ibid.).

**Act upon these decisions: Changes in society's perception of female labour.**

*Laws supporting women in the labour market*

Despite women and men having equal constitutional rights since 1947, gender gaps still prevailed at all levels of society (Brooks, 2006). During the entire industrialisation process, the implicit although illegal rule for employing women was “single and no pregnancy” (Gao, 2006; Farris, 2004). It wasn’t until the second half of the industrialisation process that laws were passed to protect and promote women in the labour market. In 1985, the Employment Promotion Measures law was passed to improve employment equality between sexes, by providing vocational training for women and facilities to care for children and the elderly, to decrease women’s time burden (EoN, n.d.). In 1992, the Employment Services Act

was promulgated in an attempt to further ensure equal employment opportunities between men and women (Tompkins, 2011).

*Society's view on women in the labour force*

Some improvements have certainly been made on the way society perceives women in the labour force, but it remains very negative overall. In the 1960s, during industrialisation’s kick-off and despite patriarchal norms, the government encouraged girls to enter the labour force after school. With the emergence of a middle class in the 1970s due to greater economic prosperity, the government changed its rhetoric to once again promote the “virtuous wife” and “good mother” (Farris, 1990; Farris, 2004). In 1985, the Taiwan Social Change Survey asked 4,195 Taiwanese whether they agreed with the statement “families are more harmonious when the husband is in charge of the ‘external’ affairs and his wife takes care of the ‘internal’ affairs” (TSCS, 1985). Overall, 80.6% respondent did agree with these traditional gender norms (ibid.).

By 1996 this number had fallen to a little over half (Tu & Liao, 2005). However, still a majority (91.8% of the men and 90.8% of the women) agreed that women achieved through their husband’s career achievements (ibid.).

The labour market was seen as a masculine sphere, that women should only enter when economically necessary, rather than for personal achievement and satisfaction. The stereotype of males as breadwinners and females as housewives remained very strong throughout the industrialisation process.

**Access and control over resources: Changes in society's support of equal access to and control over resources**

The changes in society’s perception on women and resources have been largely insignificant during Taiwan’s industrialisation. In a 1963 survey, over two-thirds of men agreed that women should get equal pay for equal work, a very positive number for gender equality (Marsh, 2004). Unfortunately, three decades later, no significant changes had been observed in the number of men agreeing with that statement (ibid.).

In terms of laws, the Constitution granted full custody of the children to the husband as well as the right to the property owned by the couple in the case of divorce, until it was judged unconstitutional in 1994 (Huang, 1997). It was not until 1984 that unequal access to income between men and women became illegal, with the 25th article of the Labour Standards Act stating: “An employer shall under no condition discriminate between the sexes in the payment of wages. Workers shall receive equal

wages for equal work of equal efficiency" (LSA, 1984). However, no measures were set up to judge whether the work was of equal efficiency, or to punish employers who did not follow this regulation.

### *Economic empowerment for women within the household. Make own Economic decisions: Changes in gender roles*

The positive change in gender roles that may have occurred at the beginning of the industrialisation when women suddenly gained the right to stay in education and work was paradoxically later diminished because of the positive economic gains from industrialisation. In the 1970s, with the emergence of the middle class, Taiwan saw a return towards traditional gender roles, especially the female ideals of "virtuous wife" and "good mother" (Diamond, 1973a; Diamond, 2004). This was instigated by the media, the government and by women themselves (Diamond, 1973b). Indeed women viewed working as a lower class occupation and necessity, and leisure time was associated with social status and wealth (Diamond, 1973a). Education was no longer seen as a practical skill but as a sign of social status (*ibid.*). The separation of the economic sphere as masculine and reproductive sphere as feminine had been fully re-institutionalised by this middle class. In a 1989 survey, only 9.73% of respondents believed that household work had to be a joint responsibility between husband and wife, and in 1996 most men and women agreed that women naturally took better care of their families than men (NORC, 1989; Tu et al., 2005).

### *Act upon these decisions: More equal division of the reproductive role within the household*

The industrialisation process did lead to changes in the division of housework, despite the persistence of traditional gender roles. In 1973, only 15.2% of working wives had help from their husbands for household chores (Diamond, 1973b). This number jumped to almost 50% by 1989 and in 1996, most men and women agreed that housework should be shared equally when the wife was working (NORC, 1989; Tu et al., 2005). However for those who did not receive any help, few options were available to delegate some of their reproductive responsibilities. The upper class had the possibility of hiring servants and wet nurses, but for the rest the facilities in place were limited: in 1983 only 2.9% of women had access to childcare facilities, increasing only to 5.4% in 1993 (Diamond, 1973a; DGBAS, 2007).

### *Access and control over resources: Equal access to and control over household's resources*

The expected financial independence of girls through paid employment did not occur as girls had very little control over their own income. Many remitted a very large fraction of their income to their parents, often not to meet the family's basic needs but to improve their social status (Diamond, 1973a). In 1960, daughters living away from the family household remitted almost 40% of their income, and 18 years later this amount was still almost 30% (Greenhalgh, 1985). For those living in the parental household, the contribution could amount up to 80% (Diamond, 1973a). When married, the control over the income was slightly better, although still insufficient: by 1989 only half of the women decided how to use their job revenues by themselves (NORC, 1989).

As a whole, trade liberalisation seems to have had a very limited impact on women's economic empowerment. In terms of women as economic actors, the improvements seem to stem more from the fact that the industrialisation process has made women's economic value more visible (Diamond, 1979). As a social group, women show few signs of having been economically empowered, reflected in the lack of collective action to promote their status and rights. Finally, some positive effects have been observed within the household, but the persistence of the traditional gender roles paint a pessimist picture of women's economic empowerment.

### *Social and political empowerment*

Relative to economic empowerment, women have been more socially and politically empowered during the industrialisation process. The enrolment rate of girls at all ages increased significantly during the industrialisation process (see table 3-4). The change in junior high school enrolment may be explained by the increase of compulsory school years from 6 to 9 years in 1969 (Clark et al., 2009; Greenhalgh, 1985). However, the rest shows a commitment from parents towards their daughters' education. In terms of personal choice, the marriage age increased from 21.65 years to 22.03 between 1988 and 1993 (DGBAS, 1993). Finally, women gained much greater control over their sexual and reproductive lives: in 1965 72.7% of women interviewed in the Taiwan Fertility Survey had never used contraception; the number fell dramatically 21 years later to 19.4% of women (Chow, Hsiao-Chang & Ming-Cheng, 1965; Sun, Ming-Cheng, Mei-Ling & Hui-Sheng, 1986). Indeed the total fertility rate in Taiwan fell from 6.5 children per woman to 1.8 between 1956 and 1990 (Gold, 1996).

Politically women have enjoyed stronger representation.

However this has not resulted in more laws promoting women's rights and gender equality. The constitution ensures that 10% of seats at all legislative assemblies are reserved for women but by the 1980s, women were securing seats well above this quota (Clark et al., 2009; Sun, 2004). Despite this impressive feat, the positions secured by women have been at lower government offices. It wasn't until 1988 that a woman was appointed minister (*ibid.*). Although it has been argued that women's appointments at high levels of government are done for political means to secure female votes, this still demonstrates that women have managed to become a strong

voting bloc (Sun, 2004).

The issue raised in the literature is that if women are indeed represented quantitatively, they are not in a qualitative sense. Indeed, in 1996, the number of bills concerning feminist issues represented 13% of those presented by women and only 1% of those presented by men (Clark et al., 2009).

In sum, the political arena like the economic is still perceived as belonging to men. In a 1994 survey, almost half of the people agreed that men made better political leaders than women (WVS, 2009).

**Table 3.4.** Enrolment rates in Taiwan between 1969 and 1995 (in %)

Year	Primary school (6-11 years)		Junior high school (12-14 years)		Senior high school (15-17 years)		College and above (18-21 years)	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
1969	98	97	54	70	31	43	15	20
1981	99.76	99.76	83.52	85.26	53.17	52.03	10.75	12.15
1985	99.86	99.84	86.86	87.18	62.86	61.8	13.49	14.24
1990	99.89	99.89	90.59	90.05	76.85	69.36	20.44	18.22
1995	99.3	99.9	94.47	93.83	82.65	75.84	29.78	25.88

Source: Clark et al., 2009; Baraka, 1999.

## 4. Conclusion

### 4.1 Implications of the Case of Study

Through this empowerment framework and looking at table 4-1, the conclusion of the analysis of the case study is clear: trade liberalisation in the form of ELI in Taiwan has not been a catalyst for women's empowerment.

The positive changes that have emanated from trade liberalisation, such as the increased economic value of women, rising education levels and enhancing women's participation in the labour force cannot be denied. However the roots of gender discrimination,

such as patriarchal values on the places of women and men within society and the household have persisted despite trade liberalisation (Farris, 2004). It can also be argued that many of the women that have been empowered are those that have had the opportunity to improve their educational attainments and access professional employment at higher positions (Clark et al.,2009; Diamond, 1979). These women often have had the advantage of social status and wealth, therefore many of the positive social changes can be seen to have originated from the upper class and trickled down to the working class (Diamond, 1979). Furthermore, due to the lack

Table 4.1: Women's empowerment assessment

	Economic actors	Social group	Household
Make own economic decisions	Limited choice over entering the labor market	Active feminist movement but did not gain momentum until the late 1980s, reserved to intellectual elite.	Return to traditional gender roles by the end of the industrialization process
Act upon these decisions	Limited change in the access to employment for women: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small decrease in gender employment gap</li> <li>• Small decrease in occupational segregation</li> <li>• No increased access to skills</li> </ul>	Limited change in society's perception of female labour: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Few laws supporting women in employment</li> <li>• Women still viewed as secondary earner, labour market still very masculine</li> </ul>	More equal division of reproductive role
Access to and control over resources	Decrease in gender wage gap	Society does not support equal access to and control over resources	Limited access and control over household's resources (including own income)
Empowerment achieved?	Very limited	Very limited	Limited

of economic empowerment, doubts can be cast upon whether the positive changes in women's social and political empowerment really stem from trade liberalisation. Instead, it can be argued that it is because of their social and political empowerment that women have managed to make some progress in terms of economic empowerment (Diamond, 1979).

## 4.2 Implication of the proposition

As argued by the FTT, the NTT's predictions on the effects of trade liberalisation on women were false: trade liberalisation was not a catalyst for women's empowerment, nor did it reduce gender inequalities. Becker's discrimination theory was refuted empirically - the inequalities in terms of wages did not disappear, and still remained important (Berik, van der Meulen, Ridgers & Zveglic, 2003). Competition did not pressure employers into shedding their discriminatory preferences; instead discrimination was used as a tool by employers who needed low labour costs to ensure their industry's competitiveness (Berik et al., 2003; Çağatay, 2005; Elson et al., 2007).

In sum, the false predictions were a result of the failure of NTT to take into account various key factors of trade. First, the effects of trade liberalisation on gender cannot be generalised; they depend on the social, political and economic context (Çağatay, 2005). Taiwan's patriarchal structure reduced the opportunities for trade to enhance women's empowerment. Second, the neoclassical assumption that entering paid employment is a positive phenomenon for women does not hold. Its effects will be ambiguous, again depending on the context. Even when it shows positive results, it may still mask greater gender inequalities: for example, the increased time burden on women (Çağatay & Ertürk, 2004). The feminisation of labour can also be a temporary phenomenon, and eventually its entire positive impact on gender equality can be reversed, as was observed in Taiwan during its second stage ELI (Berik, 2000; Çağatay, 2005). Finally, the main issue with the NTT's prediction is that it used a very simplistic and reductionist idea of empowerment. Indeed, mainstream economists have assumed the existence of a relationship between paid employment and empowerment which is not necessarily systematic (Diamond, 1979; Farris, 2004; Pearson, 1998). Furthermore, despite preaching empowerment and gender equality, the theory and predictions are based on gendered stereotypes -namely that women's interests are defined as their ability to provide for their household (Pearson, 1998). Little consideration has been given to the idea that women may desire to pursue paid employment to achieve independence and self-fulfilment (ibid.).

## 4.3 Implication for policies and theories

Policies issued from the NTT have been applied in many developing countries, due to the influence of this discourse. Yet, despite increasing recognition of the potential negative impact of trade liberalisation on gender equality, little has been done to solve this when formulating trade policies and agreements (Joekes, 1999; van Staveren, 2007). Therefore, there is a need to reformulate trade policies in a way that does not marginalise women, and instead allows them to capture the benefits of trade.

A good starting point is the framework developed by UNCTAD in 2009 to mainstream gender within trade policies. It ensures that "(a) skill acquisition (education); (b) non-discriminatory labour markets; and (c) equal access and control over resources, including land titling" are considered when formulating trade policies (UNCTAD, 2009, p.16). The framework then provides three entry points to ensure all workers, including women, can equally benefit from trade. First, there is a need to allow the labour force to gain the skills required by growing industries through adequate education and training policies. Women are often segregated into low-paid positions and exploited due to their lack of skills (Bisnath, 2001). Second, trade policies must ensure the viability of small enterprises through trade expansion, as many of these enterprises are run by women, who often have inferior access to market information (UNCTAD, 2009). Finally, trade agreements must include gendered considerations and a gendered impact assessment must be made beforehand (ibid.).

However, in order to fully mainstream gender within policies, two key elements will be fundamental. First, this issue needs "greater intellectual recognition, political space and commitment in multilateral organisations as well as within governments" (Çağatay & Ertürk, 2004, p.36). Second, in order to formulate gender-conscious policies, the gender dimension must be mainstreamed within the theories of trade themselves. The entry point for engendering trade theories is the data that informs them - it must be disaggregated by sex, to ensure the impact of trade on both men and women is adequately measured (Chant, 2006). Women's "invisible work" - such as reproductive, voluntary and informal work - must be accounted for within this data. This work is essential for future production as it reproduces and maintains the labour force, and acknowledging the extent of this work will ensure trade theories consider the time burden women may face when entering the productive sphere (Benería, 1995; Elson, 2002; Fontana, 2007; Himmelweit, 2002). Furthermore, theories must account for social identities as they can shape power relations within

the economic sphere, and recognise that all institutions such as households, markets and labour organisations, are bearers of gender. For example, using the household as a unit of analysis masks the asymmetrical power relations between female and male members, which may be exacerbated through increases in trade (Elson, 2002; Himmelweit, 2002).

Despite the conclusions of this case study, this working paper does not advocate that paid employment is systematically negative for women, instead it argues that paid employment may be necessary but in no way sufficient for women's empowerment. This paper does not criticise international trade either, instead it is meant as a critique of the policies and theories that have shaped trade at the national and global level. These policies and

theories have been formulated and implemented on the false assumption that they were gender neutral, an argument refuted through the case of Taiwan's ELL. Indeed, it is a common misconception to take economics as not directly affecting or affected by individual's social identities, such as gender but also class and age. Furthermore, the social norms and stereotypes prevalent in a society will affect the outcomes of trade policies and agreements, both economic and social, again shown in the case of Taiwan. Taking this into account when formulating new trade theories (and macroeconomic theories in general) is fundamental to ensure policies will not have adverse effects on certain social groups. In sum, economics cannot be taken as an independent field - the social relations, cultural norms, and power structures of a society are always embedded in it.

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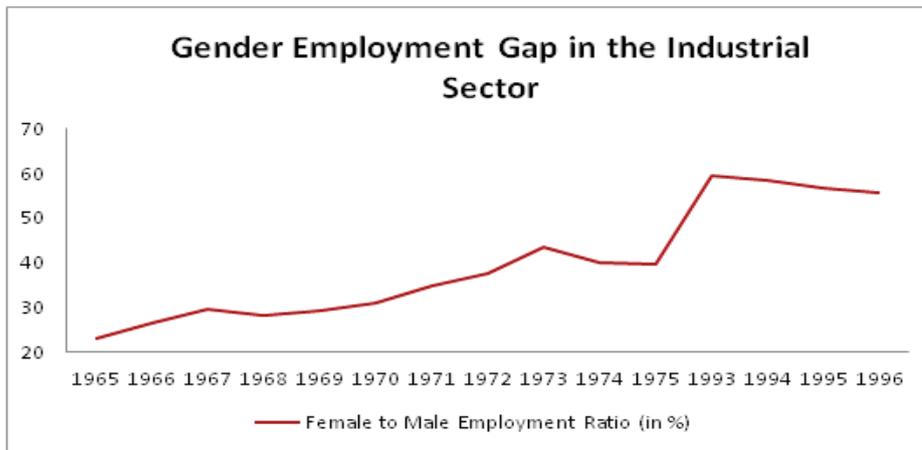
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## Appendices

**Appendix 1.** Gender employment gap in the industrial sector between 1965 and 1996



Source: Calculations from author using data from Galenson, 1979 and ILO Industrial sector is comprised of manufacturing, mining, utilities, transport and communication.

**Appendix 2.** Trend in the gender wage gap in the industrial sector<sup>1</sup> between 1953 and 1995



Source: Calculation from the author using data from Galenson, 1979 and Baraka, 1999.  
<sup>1</sup>Industrial sector is comprised of manufacturing, mining, utilities, transport and communication.

## Appendix 3. Surveys on economic empowerment

<b>To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "families are more harmonious when the husband is in charge of the "external" affairs and the wife takes care of the "internal" affairs"? (1985)</b>		
<b>Answer</b>	<b>total (women and men)</b>	<b>%</b>
Agree	3383	80.6
Disagree	599	14.3
No comment or don't understand	213	5.1
<b>Can you use your income as you wish? (1989)</b>		
<b>Answer</b>	<b>Total (all working women)</b>	<b>%</b>
Decide by yourself exclusively	1272 women	49.11
Decide by yourself, partially	1009 women	38.96
Decide by others	151 women	5.83
Don't know	158 women	6.1
<b>Should a woman with preschool children work and make money? (1989)</b>		
<b>Answer</b>	<b>Total (all women)</b>	<b>%</b>
Unacceptable even for economic necessity	752 women	19.77
Acceptable only when economically necessary	1517 women	39.89
Acceptable when economically unnecessary, if you want and husband approves	1316 women	34.60
Acceptable even if economically unnecessary and husband opposes, as long as you want to	63 women	1.66
Don't know	155 women	4.07
<b>Would you want to work even if it was not economically necessary? (1989)</b>		
<b>Answer</b>	<b>Total (all women)</b>	<b>%</b>
Yes	2050	79.21
No	415	16.04
Don't know	124	4.79
<b>What is your opinion on household chores/childcare? (1989)</b>		
<b>Answer</b>	<b>Total (all women)</b>	<b>%</b>
It is glorious, fulfilling, satisfying work	633	16.64
It is women's nature-given responsibility	2450	64.42
It is the husband and wife's joint responsibility	370	9.73
It is a burden and unfair to women	242	6.36
Don't know	108	2.85
<b>Does your husband help with household chores? (1989)</b>		
<b>Answer</b>	<b>Total (all working women)</b>	<b>%</b>
Some	1156	49.96
Very much	426	18.41
None	732	31.63%

Do you agree with the statement: "husbands should work outside the home, and wives should maintain the home"?				
(1996)				
Answer	Total		%	
	Female	Male	Female	Male
Agree	715	803	52.3	56.0
Disagree	651	632	47.7	44.0

Do you agree with the statement: "a woman achieves through her husband's career achievements"?				
(1996)				
Answer	Total		%	
	Female	Male	Female	Male
Agree	1,240	1,317	90.8	91.8
Disagree	126	118	9.2	8.2

Do you agree with the statement: "women naturally take much better care of families than men do"?				
(1996)				
Answer	Total		%	
	Female	Male	Female	Male
Agree	1,071	1,177	78.4	82.0
Disagree	295	258	21.6	18.0

Do you agree with the statement: "husbands should share housework when their wives have a job"?				
(1996)				
Answer	Total		%	
	Female	Male	Female	Male
Agree	1,329	1,394	97.3	97.1
Disagree	37	41	2.7	2.9



## DPU WORKING PAPER NO. 169

The Development Planning Unit, University College London (UCL), is an international centre specialising in academic teaching, research, training and consultancy in the field of urban and regional development, with a focus on policy, planning, management and design. It is concerned with understanding the multi-faceted and uneven process of contemporary urbanisation, and strengthening more socially just and innovative approaches to policy, planning, management and design, especially in the contexts of Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East as well as countries in transition.

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