

# **SYMPOSIUM: A CELEBRATION OF THE TWENTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF MULIERIS DIGNITATEM, PART I: ARTICLE: THE FEMININE VOCATION AND THE ECONOMY**

Fall, 2009

## **Reporter**

8 Ave Maria L. Rev. 49 \*

**Length:** 22585 words

**Author:** Maria Sophia Aguirre+

+ Dr. Maria Sophia Aguirre, Associate Professor, Department of Economics and Business, The Catholic University of America. I am grateful for the comments received from Helen Alvare, Maggie Datiles, Marta Cruz-Zuniga, and Lucia Silecchia.

## **Text**

---

**[\*49]**

### Introduction

In his apostolic letter *Mulieris Dignitatem*, Pope John Paul II dedicates chapter six to his meditation on "virginity and motherhood as two particular dimensions of the fulfillment of the female personality." <sup>1</sup> These two dimensions, "in the light of the Gospel, ... acquire their full meaning and value in Mary," in whom virginity and motherhood coexist without exclusion or limitations. <sup>2</sup> Thus, Mary "helps everyone - especially women - to see how these two dimensions, these two paths in the vocation of women as persons, explain and complete each other." <sup>3</sup> Both dimensions of the female personality reflect two essential characteristics of women: openness to or capacity for the other and gift of self. This Article analyzes how these two dimensions of the female personality are integrated in economic activity and their relevance for sustainable economic growth.

The vocational dimension is not an economic issue but a reality much greater than the scope of any social science. It is a supernatural reality, albeit with human connotations because the one who receives a vocation is a human person. This Article suggests, however, that the essential characteristics of women reflected in these two vocational dimensions are relevant to the economic process. These characteristics are especially beneficial in the production of both human and social capital in the family and elsewhere. <sup>4</sup> Furthermore, **[\*50]** woman's openness to or

---

<sup>1</sup> Pope John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem* [Apostolic Letter on the Dignity and Vocation of Women] P 17 (1988) [hereinafter *Mulieris Dignitatem*].

<sup>2</sup> Id.

<sup>3</sup> Id.

<sup>4</sup> Human capital is generally understood as the physical and technical efficiency of the population. See Maria Sophia Aguirre, *Determinants of Economic Growth, Population, and Family Wealth: The Case of Guatemala* 79 (2007), available at [http://fadep.org/determinantes/Final\\_Study.pdf](http://fadep.org/determinantes/Final_Study.pdf). For a thorough discussion of the relation between human capital and the family, see Gary S. Becker, *A Treatise on the Family* (enlarged ed. 1991) (1981).

capacity for the other facilitates effective and efficient distribution within the economy.<sup>5</sup> This is specifically evident in work inside the home; it is also necessary for work conducted outside the home.

Motherhood, in the natural order of things, is the fruit of the marriage union of a man and a woman. Parenthood is shared by both the father and the mother. This suggests that men not only have a role as fathers, but a clear and unique vocation as well. Furthermore, it also suggests that a careful consideration of the role of woman in the economy cannot ignore the unique contribution of men. A complete family requires both a father and a mother. Since this Article focuses on the vocation of women, however, a full discussion of the role of men within the economy is beyond its scope. Still, this way of proceeding does not intend to underplay the role and vocation of men.

To address the relationship between women and economics, characteristics of the family and how the economy relates to these characteristics must be considered. A child normally comes into the world within a family, and it is within a family that the child first develops, that is, achieves personal progress and maturity. Even a single woman has a family; she is born into and belongs to one, whether or not she lives with her parents or siblings. In this sense the family is the first and the most fundamental place where economic activity begins and acquires its meaning. The analysis needs to start **[\*51]** here in order to explain how the feminine characteristics previously mentioned fit into economic activity. For a life to be conceived, a mother and a father are needed. To come to term and be born, a child needs the mother's body. Evidence across social science indicates that from an economic point of view, healthy families are important because they directly impact human, moral, and social capital, therefore impacting resource use, economic activity, economic structures, and wealth accumulation - all of which are necessary for sustainable economic growth.<sup>6</sup> Empirical evidence also shows that when the family is disrupted, the individual and social costs are very substantial.<sup>7</sup>

---

Social capital has a variety of definitions. Francis Fukuyama has an especially clear definition, stating that social capital is "an instantiated informal norm that promotes cooperation between two or more individuals. The norms ... can range from a norm of reciprocity between two friends, all the way to complex and elaborately articulated doctrines like Christianity and Confucianism." Francis Fukuyama, *Social Capital and Civil Society* 3 (Int'l Monetary Fund Inst., Working Paper WP/00/74, 2000).

James S. Coleman emphasizes both the interrelation that exists between social and human capital as well as the fundamental role that the family plays on their development. He states, "There is one effect of social capital that is especially important: its effect on the creation of human capital in the next generation. Both social capital in the family and social capital in the community play roles in the creation of human capital in the rising generation." See James S. Coleman, *Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital*, 94 *Am. J. Soc. (Supp.)* S95, S109 (1988).

<sup>5</sup> See *Mulieris Dignitatem*, supra note 1, P 18 (arguing that a mother's experience of pregnancy "gives rise to an attitude towards human beings" that helps the woman to care for the needs of others).

<sup>6</sup> See, e.g., George A. Akerlof et al., *An Analysis of Out-of-Wedlock Childbearing in the United States*, 111 *Q.J. Econ.* 277 (1996); Paul R. Amato & Bruce Keith, *Parental Divorce and the Well-Being of Children: A Meta-Analysis*, 110 *Psychol. Bull.* 26 (1991); William S. Aquilino, *The Life Course of Children Born to Unmarried Mothers: Childhood Living Arrangements and Young Adult Outcomes*, 58 *J. Marriage & Fam.* 293 (1996); Lisa M.C. Bisnaire et al., *Factors Associated with Academic Achievement in Children Following Parental Separation*, 60 *Am. J. Orthopsychiatry* 67 (1990); Douglas B. Downey, *Understanding Academic Achievement Among Children in Stepparents: The Role of Parental Resources, Sex of Stepparent, and Sex of Child*, 73 *Soc. Forces* 875 (1995); Darin R. Featherstone et al., *Differences in School Behavior and Achievement Between Children from Intact, Reconstituted, and Single-Parent Families*, 27 *Adolescence* 1 (1992); Bryan Neighbors et al., *Is Parental Divorce a Critical Stressor for Young Adolescents? Grade Point Average as a Case in Point*, 27 *Adolescence* 639 (1992); Jay D. Teachman et al., *Social Capital and the Generation of Human Capital*, 75 *Soc. Forces* 1343 (1997).

<sup>7</sup> See, e.g., Francis Fukuyama, *The Great Disruption: Human Nature and the Reconstitution of Social Order* 115-20 (1999); Steven L. Nock, *The Social Costs of De-Institutionalizing Marriage*, in *Revitalizing the Institution of Marriage for the Twenty-First Century* 1 (Alan J. Hawkins et al. eds., 2002); Benjamin Scafidi, Institute for American Values et al., *The Taxpayer Costs of Divorce and Unwed Childbearing* 7 (2008); Maria Sophia Aguirre, *Family, Economics, and the Information Society: How Are They Affecting Each Other?*, 28 *Int'l J. Soc. Econ.* 225 (2001).

The application of economic analysis to the study of the family has become a common practice in the last three or more decades.<sup>8</sup> This has attracted special interest to analysis on the decisions process of the economic agent, in this case the woman, as it relates to the family.<sup>9</sup> Gary Becker's groundbreaking work in this area has shaped this development in many ways.<sup>10</sup> In his approach, the Nobel [\*52] Laureate employs a neoclassical framework in his analysis.<sup>11</sup> Thus the starting point of the model is a neoclassical utility function, which contemplates consumption goods that can be obtained in the market as well as goods that cannot be bought in the market but are produced at home or elsewhere.<sup>12</sup> From this perspective, it is often assumed that the economic agent's approach to relationships is strictly utilitarian.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, the household's decision process is typically analyzed from an individualistic point of view, that is, assuming a self-interested and utility-maximizing behavior on the part of the economic agent.<sup>14</sup> Within this framework, the family is studied in relation to relevant economic variables, such as consumption, interest rates, investment, labor markets, human, and social capital. More specifically, using tools from economic analysis, economists have tried to explain the realities of marriage, children, [\*53] divorce, altruistic behavior, allocation of time between work and leisure, the generation of human and social capital, and family dynamics in general.<sup>15</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> See supra notes 6-7 and accompanying text; see infra note 10.

<sup>9</sup> See, e.g., Becker, supra note 4.

<sup>10</sup> Becker's Treatise on the Family compiles several of his seminal papers on the family. See id. Another of his papers relevant to this Article is Gary S. Becker, A Theory of Marriage (pt. 1), 81 J. Pol. Econ. 813 (1973), wherein he compares marriage, the foundation of a family, to a contract. For a detailed economic analysis of this proposal in light of the Catholic Church's understanding of marriage, see Maria Sophia Aguirre, Marriage and the Family in Economic Theory and Policy, [4 Ave Maria L. Rev. 435 \(2006\)](#).

<sup>11</sup> See Becker, supra note 10; Gary S. Becker, A Theory of Marriage (pt. 2), 82 J. Pol. Econ. (Supp.) S11 (1974).

<sup>12</sup> Included among these goods produced at home are children, prestige, social recognition, altruism, and others. See Becker, supra note 10, at 816.

<sup>13</sup> For instance, the rationality assumption of economics assumes "that individuals do not intentionally make decisions that would leave them worse off." Roger LeRoy Miller, Economics Today 6 (Addison-Wesley 10th ed. 1999).

<sup>14</sup> Adam Smith proposes this approach:

Give me that which I want, and you shall have this which you want, is the meaning of every such offer [i.e., of any bargain] ... . It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker, that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest. We address ourselves, not to their humanity but to their self-love [self-interest], and never talk to them of our own necessities but of their advantages.

1 Adam Smith, An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of the Nations 26-27 (R.H. Campbell et al. eds., Liberty Fund 1981) (1776). Jeremy Bentham (one of the founders of utilitarianism), along with his disciple John Stuart Mill, later expanded this view. See Jeremy Bentham, An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation (1789), reprinted in A Fragment on Government and an Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation 113, 126 (Wilfrid Harrison ed., MacMillan 1948) ("By utility is meant that property in any object, whereby it tends to produce benefit, advantage, pleasure, good, or happiness ... or ... to prevent the happening of mischief, pain, evil, or unhappiness to the party whose interest is considered ... ."); John Stuart Mill, Utilitarianism 27 (London, Longmans, Green, Reader & Dyer 4th ed. 1871) ("The great majority of good actions are intended, not for the benefit of the world, but for that of individuals ... and the thoughts of the most virtuous man need not on these occasions travel beyond the particular persons concerned ... .").

Economists define utility as the "numerical ranking of a consumer's preferences among different commodity bundles." Roy J. Ruffin & Paul R. Gregory, Principles of Economics 495 (5th ed. 1993). The units of utility are subjective. Miller, supra note 13, at 415. Consumption choices are determined by many factors, which can be summarized in terms of two concepts: consumption possibilities and preferences. See id. at 414. The key assumption of marginal utility theory is that the household chooses the consumption possibility that maximizes its total utility. Id.

<sup>15</sup> See, e.g., Gary S. Becker, A Theory of Social Interactions, 82 J. Pol. Econ. 1063 (1974); Gary S. Becker & Robert J. Barro, A Reformulation of the Economic Theory of Fertility, 103 Q.J. Econ. 1 (1988); Jimmy M. Sanders & Victor Nee, Immigrant Self-Employment: The Family as Social Capital and the Value of Human Capital, 61 Am. Soc. Rev. 231 (1996).

I argue, however, that because of the intrinsic social dimension of the person, applying a selfish utility-maximization framework to the understanding of the economic dimension of the family is not appropriate.<sup>16</sup> The understanding of the contribution of woman to the economy, in her capacity as an economic agent, is especially relevant to explain why this is the case. The family is the first indispensable feature of society, and the woman's behavior within the family, in her capacity as an economic agent, is crucial to family development.<sup>17</sup>

A relevant point in understanding the remaining analysis undertaken in this Article is to recall this Article does not intend to carry out a theological analysis of the role of the feminine vocation in economic activity. Rather, it intends to provide an economic analysis of characteristics identified by Pope John Paul II as common to the feminine vocations of motherhood and virginity.<sup>18</sup> Human beings have both spiritual and material needs, both of which are necessary for their development as persons.<sup>19</sup> The need to obtain and to consume goods and services explains the reason for economic activity.<sup>20</sup> Analyzing how women act as economic agents in this activity can help us understand their role in the economy. In an effort to provide necessary goods and services, the economic agent needs to be aware of the totality of the person, yet her economic activity most directly pertains to the consumption needs of the human person. This [\*54] understanding, however, does not necessarily produce a materialistic view of the person, but rather acknowledges that the science of economics pertains only to the material subsistence of the person. Furthermore, it acknowledges that - as is the case in any social science - in studying the two dimensions of the feminine personality through the prism of economics, only a partial view of these realities is analyzed.<sup>21</sup>

This Article is structured as follows: Part I discusses the feminine vocation and its characteristics as presented in *Mulieris Dignitatem*; Part II offers a framework for how women and the family fit in economic activity and explains the relevance of the work of the home in this context; Part III presents some empirical evidence that supports the framework and the explanation of the contribution of women to the economic process; and the last section provides concluding comments.

## I. Feminine Vocation and Common Characteristics

In *Mulieris Dignitatem*, Pope John Paul II recalls the fundamental equal dignity as well as the complementarity that exists between the men and women.<sup>22</sup> In this context, he analyzes what is specific to women, including their unique vocation and role in society.<sup>23</sup> A point of departure for this analysis is the understanding of the human

---

<sup>16</sup> Some of the author's views on this point can be found in Aguirre, *supra* note 4; Aguirre, *supra* note 7; and Aguirre, *supra* note 10. Other works that have addressed this issue within different economic contexts include *Rethinking Business Management: Examining the Foundations of Business Education* (Samuel Gregg & James R. Stoner, Jr., eds., 2008), Jennifer Roback Morse, *Love and Economics* 4 (2001), John D. Mueller, *Redeeming Economics: Free Markets and the Human Person* (2007), and Amartya Sen, *On Ethics & Economics* (paperback ed. 1987).

<sup>17</sup> See generally Aguirre, *supra* note 10.

<sup>18</sup> See *Mulieris Dignitatem*, *supra* note 1, PP 18, 20-21.

<sup>19</sup> See Pope Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate* [Encyclical Letter on Integral Human Development in Charity and Truth] P 11 (2009) ("Authentic human development concerns the whole of the person in every single dimension.").

<sup>20</sup> Maria Sophia Aguirre, *The Family and Economic Development: Socioeconomic Relevance and Policy Design*, in 1 *The Family in the New Millennium* 54, 55 (Scott Loveless & Thomas Holman eds., 2007).

<sup>21</sup> The clarification is relevant in light of what Pope John Paul II states:

What the different branches of science have to say ... is important and useful, provided that it is not limited to an exclusively bio-physiological interpretation of women and of motherhood. Such a "restricted" picture would go hand in hand with a materialistic concept of the human being and of the world. In such a case, what is truly essential would unfortunately be lost. Motherhood as a human fact and phenomenon is fully explained on the basis of the truth about the person.

*Mulieris Dignitatem*, *supra* note 1, P 18. This approach is consistent with the Pope's warning.

<sup>22</sup> See *id.* PP 6, 21.

being as "a person, a subject who decides for himself," yet one who "cannot fully find himself except through a sincere gift of self." <sup>24</sup> That is, a person is a social, rational animal who is free and requires for his full development not only the use of his rationality, but also relationships with others. This is so because the human being - woman and man - [\*55] was created in the image and likeness of God, <sup>25</sup> who is a communion of three persons in one God. A consequence of this social nature is marriage and the family formed from marriage. In marriage, the decision of the spouses to give themselves as mutual gifts can bring about new life. In this context, motherhood is the consequence of this mutual gift of the spouses and implies a special openness to a new person whom the woman conceives and to whom she gives birth. What is proper of women in this self-gift relationship is conceiving and giving birth. Thus, women are "naturally disposed to motherhood," and "motherhood is linked to the personal structure of the woman and to the personal dimension of the gift." <sup>26</sup> She is the one who conceives and the one who carries and gives birth to the life conceived. <sup>27</sup> Although the Pope points out that "human parenthood is something shared by both the man and the woman" in a complementary manner, he also notes that "motherhood constitutes a special 'part' in this shared parenthood." <sup>28</sup>

Because women carry their child to term within themselves, a unique openness and attention to another person arises within them, which "profoundly marks the woman's personality." <sup>29</sup> In fact, the husband learns, in many ways, his "'fatherhood' from the mother." <sup>30</sup> It is a woman who brings the father into the relationship with the child by "first learning and then teaching others that human relations [consist in being] open to accepting the other person ... who is recognized and loved because of the dignity which comes from being a person and not from other considerations, such as usefulness, strength, intelligence, beauty or health." <sup>31</sup>

When considering virginity, Pope John Paul II notes that in the teachings of Christ, "motherhood is connected with virginity, but [it [\*56] is] also distinct from it." <sup>32</sup> Here virginity is understood as "celibacy for the sake of the Kingdom of heaven." <sup>33</sup> The later "results not only from a free choice ... , but also from a special grace on the part of God." <sup>34</sup> It is a personal call, a call to which a woman freely responds and gives herself as a gift, neither to an idea, nor to an ideology, but to a Person - God. Thus, the free response to a celibate vocation confirms her as a person capable of a self gift, and one who is also open to another. <sup>35</sup> In this sense, one can say that the same natural spousal predisposition of the feminine personality previously mentioned is found in a celibate vocation. Though virginity implies a renunciation of marriage and of giving birth to a child, it is not a renunciation of loving a

<sup>23</sup> See id. PP 17-22 (explaining the vocations of women with regards to motherhood, virginity, the Church, and society).

<sup>24</sup> Id. P 18 (internal quotation marks omitted) (quoting Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes* [Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World] P 24 (1965), reprinted in *The Sixteen Documents of Vatican II* 513, 536 (Nat'l Catholic Welfare Conference trans., 1967)).

<sup>25</sup> Genesis 1:26-27.

<sup>26</sup> *Mulieris Dignitatem*, supra note 1, P 18.

<sup>27</sup> Some married couples, for many different reasons, cannot naturally conceive a child and either decide to adopt children or dedicate themselves to other families' children. What has been said applies to these women as well, as they are still naturally oriented toward motherhood even if, for some reason, they are unable to conceive and give birth. Furthermore, it is the fruit of that mutual self-giving out of love that leads them to bring into their homes children that have been born to other women.

<sup>28</sup> *Mulieris Dignitatem*, supra note 1, P 18.

<sup>29</sup> Id.

<sup>30</sup> Id.

<sup>31</sup> Pope John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae* [Encyclical Letter on the Value and Inviolability of Human Life] P 99 (1995).

<sup>32</sup> *Mulieris Dignitatem*, supra note 1, P 20.

<sup>33</sup> Id. (internal quotation marks omitted); cf. Matthew 19:11-12.

<sup>34</sup> *Mulieris Dignitatem*, supra note 1, P 20.

<sup>35</sup> Id. P 20.

person or of motherhood, which in this case is spiritual and not physical.<sup>36</sup> In virginity, a woman's love for God opens her to all people, rather than to a generational relation. What has been stated thus far suggests that there is a "specific convergence between the virginity of an unmarried woman and the motherhood of the married woman."<sup>37</sup>

Some important distinctions need to be made when considering women who remain celibate. The first distinction is found between consecrated religious and laypeople who also have a vocation to virginity. This distinction lies not in the motivation for the self gift, but in its significance.<sup>38</sup> In both cases, sociologically, the motivation for a celibate vocation is to respond freely and out of love to a call from God to devote oneself directly to his service and his people.<sup>39</sup> Spiritually, the motivation is to freely give oneself directly to God without the means of another human person, as is the case in marriage. Yet for consecrated religious, this celibacy signifies to the faithful a state of perfection that Christ brought to earth, as well as eschatological hope.<sup>40</sup> Two concrete signs of this are the use of habits among religious orders and the public profession of the evangelical **[\*57]** councils.<sup>41</sup> Furthermore, typically the "religious celibate works within a Christian community directed toward God's service. For the layperson, being a sign to others is not the reason for celibacy."<sup>42</sup> Thus, typically a "lay woman who is celibate [by vocation] lives a private life, and she pursues a secular career."<sup>43</sup> Furthermore, colleagues and acquaintances normally are not aware of her state in life, and if they do know, it is typically as a consequence of friendship or other private reasons.<sup>44</sup>

Finally, because it implies a free response to a call from God, virginity for the sake of the Kingdom of God is different from remaining simply unmarried.<sup>45</sup> This is a significant distinction. The former implies a "yes" to a specific vocational call, while the second does not. In the first case, by engaging in the secular reality through her professional work and relationships, a woman realizes a specific call to be self-giving and open to others with an undivided heart.<sup>46</sup> In the second case, a woman also engages in the secular reality through her professional work and relationships, but in doing so, she is neither responding to a specific vocational call nor does she need to do so with an undivided heart.<sup>47</sup> This does not mean that God does not have a plan for her. "He has a plan for all and He calls each to a very personal and non-transferable vocation."<sup>48</sup> In fact, single women, precisely because of their particular circumstance and vocation, can reach and contribute to society through their feminine qualities in

---

<sup>36</sup> Id. P 21.

<sup>37</sup> Id.

<sup>38</sup> Jean De Groot, *Woman in the Divine Economy: From the Church Fathers to St. Josemaria*, 39 *Romana* 274, 284 (2004), available at [http://en.romana.org/art/39\\_8.0\\_1](http://en.romana.org/art/39_8.0_1).

<sup>39</sup> Id.

<sup>40</sup> See Vatican Congregation for Catholic Education, *A Guide to Formation in Priestly Celibacy* (1974), in 4 *Origins* 65, 69 (1974).

<sup>41</sup> Pope John Paul II, *Vita Consecrata* [Apostolic Exhortation on the Consecrated Life and Its Mission in the Church and in the World] PP 15-16, 21, 25, 87-91 (1996).

<sup>42</sup> De Groot, *supra* note 38, at 284.

<sup>43</sup> Id.

<sup>44</sup> Id.

<sup>45</sup> *Mulieris Dignitatem*, *supra* note 1, P 20.

<sup>46</sup> See *id.*

<sup>47</sup> Cf. *id.* ("[Virginity] cannot be compared to remaining simply unmarried or single, because virginity is not restricted to a mere 'no,' but contains a profound 'yes' in the spousal order: the gift of self for love in a total and undivided manner.").

<sup>48</sup> Josemaria Escriva with Pilar Salcedo, *Women in Social Life and in the Life of the Church*, *Telva Mag.*, Feb. 1, 1968, reprinted in *Conversations with Monsignor Escriva de Balaguer* 136, 169 (Little Hill Press 1993) (1981).

ways that neither married women nor celibate women could or should. This is so because the last two require an undivided heart if they are to be faithful, as these vocations are all-embracing. This in itself naturally limits the proper scope of their interactions with men and the world. Single women, on the other hand, by not having an all-embracing commitment, have a larger scope or reach in [\*58] terms of relations, use of time, professional engagement and career path, as well as contributions to numerous and varied social initiatives.

These distinctions, important as they are, between consecrated religious, lay women celibate "for the Kingdom," and women who are merely unmarried, do not diminish the fact that in acting, these women display the two fundamental characteristics of their personality - a capacity for self-gift, and an openness to others.

Based on what has been said thus far, one can appreciate why Pope John Paul II notes that the "two different paths - the two different vocations of women - [possess] a profound complementarity, and even a profound union within a person's being."<sup>49</sup> In both vocations - marriage and virginity - the same essential characteristics that speak to the ethos of women are present. The manner in which these are manifested, however, are different in certain aspects. An important difference is the manner in which a woman's self gift to the other takes place. While with married women these take place first through her relationship with her husband and then through her relationship with their children, with a celibate woman they do not.<sup>50</sup> Similarly, one can appreciate why, for women, their homes and their families occupy a central role in their lives, even when they have fully developed other professional work outside their homes.<sup>51</sup>

## [\*59]

### II. Women and the Family in Economic Activity

The first characteristic of the family is that it is the primary form of society.<sup>52</sup> A man and a woman first come together in marriage, and children are born from this union. A person is born into a family and develops within that family. Thus,

---

<sup>49</sup> *Mulieris Dignitatem*, supra note 1, P 21.

<sup>50</sup> For a more detailed theological analysis of these differences within the context of the teachings of John Paul II and other writers, see Sr. Mary Prudence Allen, R.S.M., *Catholic Marriage and Feminism*, in *The Church, Marriage, and the Family 5* (Kenneth D. Whitehead ed., 2007).

<sup>51</sup> In addressing this matter of women and their home, St. Josemaria Escriva de Balaguer makes an interesting distinction, relevant for fully understanding the engagement of women in the different professions and their specific contributions to these professions:

The home - whatever its characteristics, because a single woman should also have a home - is a particularly suitable place for the growth of her personality. The attention she gives to her family will always be a woman's greatest dignity. In the care she takes of her husband and children or, to put it in more general terms, in her work of creating a warm and formative atmosphere around her, a woman fulfils the most indispensable part of her mission. And so it follows that she can achieve her personal perfection there.

What I have just said does not go against her participating in other aspects of social life including politics. In these spheres, too, women can offer a valuable personal contribution, without neglecting their special feminine qualities. They will do this to the extent to which they are humanly and professionally equipped. Both family and society clearly need this special contribution, which is in no way secondary to that of men.

Development, maturity, emancipation of women should not mean a pretence of equality, of uniformity with men, a servile imitation of a man's way of doing things. That would not get us anywhere. Women would turn out losers, not because they are better than men or worse, but because they are different.

Escriva, supra note 48, at 137. In the past forty years we have experienced both the great contributions of women as well as the harms that are caused to them, the family, and society when a mistaken understanding of "development, maturity, [and] emancipation" is used in intellectual discussions and in policy design. Id.; see also Edith Stein, *Woman* (Freda Mary Oben trans., ICS Publications 1987) (1959) (exploring generally the great contributions of women to society).

if life develops within the family, then we can say that a second characteristic of the family is that it is a "living being" ... . If it lives, then it has a principal of action and a material substance. The principle of action of the family is love, and the material substance is the economy.<sup>53</sup>

Understood in this way, the family enters the economic sphere to procure goods and services to meet its material needs.<sup>54</sup>

Two important expressions of love are intimacy (the key to a home atmosphere of privacy, respect, trust, and joy) and education. Both of these need to be sustained and nourished, and they require order and harmony in the home. Nature has given the parents the capacity not only to bring life, but also to help each child develop - that is, to help their children transform "capacity" into "actuality" through education. In educating their children and in providing the atmosphere proper for normal child development, the parents express their love for their children. Following Pope John Paul II's understanding of motherhood, we can say that women contribute to motherhood not only by the gift of self, which generates children, but **[\*60]** also through the openness to the other in the other's totality.<sup>55</sup> These two characteristics of women are what make intimacy and education possible in a very fundamental way. Furthermore, these two characteristics help fathers to contribute to the education of their children, as well as to build intimacy in the home. It is the mother who makes possible the consolidation of the father's relationship with her and the child. In this manner, she ensures that the social dimension of her husband and children are actualized, passing from mere potential to actuality. From this point of view, one can say that women complement men by "humanizing."<sup>56</sup> The work women carry out in the home, as well as the role women play in household production and distribution, is an important factor from an economic point of view to ensure this intimacy and education for the children.

The work of the home provides the basic needs of the person where he first comes into the world. This is important because the work of the home creates the necessary environment - order, harmony, and intimacy - for the person to develop in a normal, dignified, and human way. Order here means "not business-like efficiency[,], but serenity, confidence, and attentive love."<sup>57</sup> In this sense, one can say that the work of the home is one more manifestation of the human person's natural dependency, a manifestation of his social nature. The purpose for this work is not to foster individualism but dependency. This work thus builds and protects the family bond.<sup>58</sup> In addition, the work of the home has an educational dimension as well, because through it one attends to the whole person, and thus aims not only at the provision of a life of comfort, but also of a good life. Part of this "good life" is to learn how to serve according to who one is - man or woman.<sup>59</sup> Service, **[\*61]** understood in this manner, fosters solidarity and has a spillover effect in society as it contributes to human and social capital.<sup>60</sup>

<sup>52</sup> See Aristotle, *Politics*, Bk. I, Ch. 2 (B. Jowett trans.), reprinted in 2 *The Complete Works of Aristotle* 1986, 1986-87 (Johnathan Barnes ed., 1984). It is important to note that marriage and the family is not a "religious" concept, but a natural concept present throughout history and across cultures.

<sup>53</sup> Aguirre, *supra* note 7, at 227 (emphasis added).

<sup>54</sup> See *id.*

<sup>55</sup> See *Mulieris Dignitatem*, *supra* note 1, P 18.

<sup>56</sup> See *id.* P 19.

<sup>57</sup> De Groot, *supra* note 38, at 285.

<sup>58</sup> I am indebted to Maria Teresa Russo for pointing this out to me in a conversation.

<sup>59</sup> The relational and functional dimensions that are present in the family cannot be separated. Everyone serves in the family, but man primarily serves by protecting and woman by taking care of the family members. What has been said above does not mean that the work of the home is the exclusive competence of the woman, but that if men do carry it out, he does so from his role of protection. Man might do some of this work of attending to these basic needs, but the reasons would be different. He serves in a different way. When this is not well understood, serious problems can develop, such as a fifty-fifty mentality which ends in destroyed families, problems with man's identity, etc. Research carried out on the medical science regarding brain



To meet the family needs for material subsistence, economic activity is required not only at the domestic or home level, but also, for the sake of efficiency, beyond it. This means that the ability to foresee both the needs of families and the optimal allocation of the inputs of production to satisfy those needs constitutes an important characteristic of a well-functioning economy. "Many goods cannot be adequately produced through the work of an isolated [household]; they require the cooperation of many people in working towards a common goal."<sup>61</sup> The market only reflects the culmination of the activity of many people who use their creativity and give without knowing exactly what they will receive in an effort to satisfy people's needs.<sup>62</sup> In doing so, they contribute to progress.<sup>63</sup>

For a well-functioning economy, three fundamental activities are required: production, exchange, and consumption.<sup>64</sup> Table 1 summarizes the interplay of the family with these three fundamental economic activities.<sup>65</sup>

For production, we need to use resources, which in economics are typically described as labor, capital, land, and entrepreneurship.<sup>66</sup> **[\*62]** Families, by themselves or through associations and institutions, provide these resources necessary for production. This reality reflects the dynamic existing in a healthy society between the basic unit of society (the family) and higher levels of associations and institutions.<sup>67</sup> The latter play a subsidiary role to the former. At the same time, the family, by its openness to higher levels of associations, informs them by transmitting the values, culture, and expertise embodied in its members. It is here that the importance of human capital is felt, for it affects both the quality of the labor force and the way resources are used to meet people's needs.<sup>68</sup> Human capital affects economic growth, both directly through productivity and indirectly through factors of production - mainly technology and innovation.<sup>69</sup> Exchange needs to occur in order to receive income for what

development support this thesis. See generally Natalia Lopez Moratalla, *Cuestiones acerca de la EVOLUCION humana* (2008); Natalia Lopez Moratalla, *Cerebro de mujer y cerebro de varon* (2007).

<sup>60</sup> Spillovers or spillover effects occur when the work of one party indirectly benefits others in the economy. See Andrew B. Abel & Ben S. Bernanke, *Macroeconomics* 212 (3d ed. 1998).

<sup>61</sup> See Pope John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus* [Encyclical Letter on the Hundredth Anniversary of *Rerum Novarum*] P 32 (1991). When the common goal is present, "spending leads either to consumerism or to controlled and planned economies." Aguirre, *supra* note 7, at 227.

<sup>62</sup> Alejandro Llano, *La nueva sensibilidad* 160 (1988).

<sup>63</sup> Alejandro Llano further explains how creativity corresponds with the market: "The market only represents a culmination, a mechanical conclusion of a living drama, which is personified by entrepreneurial creativity. Entrepreneurs contribute to the process not knowing exactly what they will receive in exchange. In doing so, they lead their business toward an unknown future." *Id.* ("El mercado solo proporciona la culminacion rutinaria, el desenlace mecanico de un drama vivencial, protagonizado por la creatividad de los empresarios, que dan sin saber lo que van a recibir a cambio, que lanzan empresas a un futuro siempre desconocido.")

<sup>64</sup> See Aguirre, *supra* note 20, at 55.

<sup>65</sup> See generally *id.* at 54-80.

<sup>66</sup> In economics, land means all natural resources, while labor includes the time and effort that people devote to producing goods and services. This includes both physical and mental effort. The quality of this work depends on human capital, as the latter is embodied in people, and the more skills they have, the better able they will be to carry out their work. Capital includes tools, instruments, machines, buildings, and other constructions that businesses use to produce goods and services. It does not include financial capital (money, stocks, bonds, or any other type of financial instruments). Finally, entrepreneurship is the human resource that organizes all the other resources. It is the resource that coordinates the ideas generated about how and what to produce, makes business decisions, and bears the risks that arise from these decisions. Clearly, this resource also includes human capital. For a more detailed explanation, see Ruffin & Gregory, *supra* note 14, at 32-45.

<sup>67</sup> For a more detailed analysis of these relationships, see Fukuyama, *supra* note 7; Akerlof et al., *supra* note 6; Coleman, *supra* note 4; Nock, *supra* note 7; and Teachman et al., *supra* note 6.

<sup>68</sup> For a discussion about the impact of human capital, see David W. Grissmer et al., *Student Achievement and the Changing American Family* (1994); Amato & Keith, *supra* note 6; and Featherstone et al., *supra* note 6. Regarding the use of resources, see Aguirre, *supra* note 7; Bisnaire et al., *supra* note 6; and Nock, *supra* note 7.

has been produced. This exchange takes place in a market. <sup>70</sup> For the market to be viable, basic economic, institutional, and structural conditions need to be in place - such as openness, transparency, respect for the rule of law, and private property. <sup>71</sup> Other fundamental characteristics such as trust, communication, [\*63] order, and political stability are also necessary for a successful market place. <sup>72</sup> This is why human, moral, and social capital are critical to a well-functioning economy. Those producing make decisions about all aspects of production, including how much to produce, when, and how. <sup>73</sup>

Table 1 <sup>74</sup>

## How Does the Family Fit in the Economy?

Basic Activities	Means Used	Role of the Family	Purpose
Production	Resources and Optimization	Human Capital	Basic Needs
Exchange	Market	Human, Moral, Social Capital	Income and Profit
Consumption	Buying Power and Distribution	Appropriate Distribution	Well-Being (Welfare)

The third fundamental activity of an economy is consumption. However, in order to consume, one first must obtain goods and services. Before obtaining goods and services, one needs buying power and distribution power, which one acquires through income [\*64] and redistributed profits.<sup>75</sup> Redistribution is influenced by history, luck, and natural endowments, as well as by every economic agent's behavior, including how they vote.<sup>76</sup> The influence

<sup>69</sup> For empirical evidence of this, see Stephen Knack & Philip Keefer, Does Social Capital Have an Economic Payoff? A Cross-Country Investigation, 112 Q.J. Econ. 1251 (1997).

<sup>70</sup> Here, the market is understood as any arrangement that enables buyers and sellers to get information and to do business with each other. See Ruffin & Gregory, supra note 14, at 46.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. Sebnem Kalemli-Ozcan et al., Mortality Decline, Human Capital Investment, and Economic Growth, 62 J. Dev. Econ. 1 (2000) (discussing the relationship between declining mortality, increased schooling, and increased consumption); Paul F. Whiteley, Economic Growth and Social Capital, 48 Pol. Stud. 442, 443-44 (2000) (finding the impact of social capital on economic growth is at least as strong as that of human capital or education); Jess Benhabib & Mark M. Spiegel, The Role of Human Capital and Political Instability in Economic Development (C.V. Starr Center for Applied Econ., Research Report No. 92-24, 1992), available at <http://econ.as.nyu.edu/docs/IO/9391/RR92-24.pdf> (discussing the effects of political instability in economic growth); Paul Frijters et al., Contacts, Social Capital and Market Institution - A Theory of Development 33 (Dept. of Econ., Univ. of Vienna, Working Paper No. 0311, 2003), available at <http://homepage.univie.ac.at/Papers.Econ/RePEc/vie/viennp/vie0311.pdf> (concluding that political interference in the economy retards technological advancement).

<sup>72</sup> See Bernardo Kliksberg, The Role of Social and Cultural Capital in the Development Process (Tanya Huntington & Tamara Riquelme-Manzoni eds., Maria Boszco trans., Latin Am. Studies Center, Univ. of Md., Issues in Culture, Democracy and Development Series No. 3, 2000), available at <http://www.lasc.umd.edu/Publications/WorkingPapers/IssuesCulture/issues%20in%20culture%203.pdf>; Fukuyama, supra note 4.

<sup>73</sup> Production generally stops if there is no profit or income and then is typically taken over by corrupted individuals or institutions. Recession, capital flight, black markets, and other types of disruptions in the economy are typical features of political and economic instability in developing countries. For a more detailed analysis of these issues, see Jakob Svensson, Eight Questions About Corruption, 19 J. Econ. Persp. 19 (2005).

<sup>74</sup> Aguirre, supra note 20, at 56 tbl.4.1.

<sup>75</sup> There are three ways for this transfer to take place: voluntary payments (which include gifts), theft, and government-disbursed taxes and benefits.

exercised by each economic agent demonstrates the need for a fair and equitable distribution system, enabling people to obtain the goods and services, as well as buying power, to meet the needs of the family. Production and spending are instrumental in providing the family with the material means for both subsistence and development, but it is the need to distribute these goods and services that causes the economy to go beyond the needs of the individual.<sup>77</sup> It is within the family that the needs of goods and services are most fundamentally felt and met.

Distribution within the family is usually carried out through women. Women, because of openness to the others - one of the characteristics mentioned by Pope John Paul II as essential in *Mulieris Dignitatem* - have the capacity to distribute goods in a just manner, that is, according to the specific needs of each member of the family.<sup>78</sup> Once again, the importance of the work of the home and of the role of the woman is seen. She builds human and social capital not only by ensuring the delivery of goods and services in an efficient way, but also by taking into account the particular needs of the persons who are served. This last point echoes, within the economic reality, what Pope John Paul II refers to as service as a living sign when speaking of the family as a community of persons.<sup>79</sup> In distribution, the principal of action and a material substance of the family come together; for distribution to be efficient, it requires both love - person centeredness and education - and material means of satisfying given needs.

The human person is limited, and so are the resources available. Families meet their needs within a budget constraint - and this [\*65] requires making choices. At the same time, for these choices to meet the needs of the persons involved in their totality, it must take into account their individual good and the good of the family as a whole. Comfort cannot be the sole rule of distribution for the educational dimension - the good life must also be taken into account. In fact, sacrifice and service, which are needed for distribution to take place given the limited human condition, are manifestations of the gift of self and of the openness to the other, which the woman lives and fosters in others.<sup>80</sup> In doing so, they also protect the family bond.

Yet, the specific contribution of women to the economy is not reduced to the scope of the home. Her specific contribution in the home spills over into the rest of the economy through its impact on human and social capital, as well as through efficient distribution. Moreover, she directly contributes, with her qualities, to the professional fields in which she engages and in the public arena. The interplay between the work of the home and the work outside the home, however, manifests different characteristics for women than for men. Men also have to balance work and home, but it is for women that family and the home are central.<sup>81</sup> The legal, economic, and organizational

<sup>76</sup> For an illustration and discussion of how choices affect economic growth, see Gary S. Becker, Kevin M. Murphy & Robert Tamura, *Human Capital, Fertility, and Economic Growth*, in Gary S. Becker, *Human Capital* 323 (3d ed. 1993) (1964). For a discussion of luck and history and their relation to economic growth, see William Easterly et al., *Good Policy or Good Luck? Country Growth Performance and Temporary Shocks* (Nat'l Bureau of Econ. Research, Working Paper No. 4474, 1993).

<sup>77</sup> In the moment the economic agent distributes what is produced, he necessarily engages other individuals and their needs.

<sup>78</sup> *Mulieris Dignitatem*, supra note 1, P 18.

<sup>79</sup> See Karol Wojtyla, *The Family as a Community of Persons*, in *Person and Community: Selected Essays* 219-62 (Andrew N. Woznicki ed., Theresa Sandok trans., Catholic Thought from Lublin No. 4, 1993); see also Pope John Paul II, *Gratissimam Sane* [Letter to Families] (1994), in 23 *Origins* 637 (1994).

<sup>80</sup> A mother sacrificing for her child is a common experience in every day life, exemplified by the celebration of Mother's Day across many cultures.

<sup>81</sup> De Groot clarifies this centrality:

The role of Mary in the divine economy and her consequent status as exemplar of the lay mentality show why domestic labor is so important. It is the work that Mary did in welcoming Christ and preparing his ministry. In domestic labor - ordering and maintaining a home, cleaning, preparing meals, and ministering to the weary, sick or discouraged - the worker serves others, who are Christ, in an immediate and vital way.

De Groot, supra note 38, at 285.

conditions of a well-functioning economy must take this into consideration as well. <sup>82</sup> If not, every member of the family suffers, not only women, and the efficiency of the economic activity within the household is reduced. <sup>83</sup>

Due to woman's essential characteristics, she contributes to the economic process by building human and social capital, as well as by ensuring an efficient distribution throughout the household. In this sense, one can say that she contributes in a fundamental way to the [\*66] efficiency and effectiveness of the economic activity. <sup>84</sup> As a result of the intrinsic social dimension of the person, economic studies embracing the assumption that self-interests alone motivate an economic agent's decisions fall short of capturing the reality of the economy. Empirical evidence found within the next section provides further support for the arguments presented thus far.

### III. Tangible Effects of Feminine Vocation on the Economy

In addition to the previously mentioned evidence for the importance of family stability and structure to the normal development of a person, <sup>85</sup> there is empirical evidence indicating that the environment of the home, which is supported by the work involved in building and maintaining it, plays an important role in the economy as well. <sup>86</sup> A good home environment plays a part in the normal physical and psychological development of children, in their academic performance, in their sociability, in their health, and in the prevention of teen substance abuse, violence, and pregnancies. <sup>87</sup> Children in households where there are high relational levels and low levels of tension or stress among family members, where parents reinforce their children's character, and where there is a level of high trust between parents and children, have a significantly higher [\*67] probability of normal development and are at half of the risk of the average teen for substance abuse. <sup>88</sup> All these are important elements of human, social, and moral capital, and these are all necessary elements of a sustainable economic growth process.

Today, many women face the need to balance work in and outside the home due to need, choice, or both. Empirical evidence shows that although the presence of women in the workplace has changed women's role in household management to some extent, wives have retained primary responsibility for the home - specifically food shopping and meal preparations. <sup>89</sup> Family dinners, therefore, can be used as a proxy for the relevance of women's

<sup>82</sup> The scope of this Article does not allow for a further development of this issue, which is something that must be better understood within the economic profession. To do this, a personal perspective such as the one suggested in this Article needs to be more formally introduced.

<sup>83</sup> Signs of these effects are the breakdown of the family and the increase in welfare costs attached to the breakdown. For a more detailed development of this, see Fukuyama, *supra* note 7.

<sup>84</sup> This is an important idea when thinking about income distribution theory and policy as well as sustainable real economic development. For a detailed analysis of this position, see Aguirre, *supra* note 10, and Aguirre, *supra* note 20.

<sup>85</sup> See *supra* notes 4-6 and accompanying text.

<sup>86</sup> See, e.g., John F. Sandberg & Sandra L. Hofferth, RSC Research Report: Changes in Children's Time with Parents, U.S. 1981-1997 (Pop. Studies Center, Univ. of Mich., Research Report No. 01-475); cf. Am. Psychol. Ass'n Pres. Task Force on Violence and the Family, *Violence and the Family* 21-27 (1991) (showing that violence in a family increases the likelihood a child will later engage in violent or abusive behavior); Bisnaire et al., *supra* note 6 (showing that a child's academic performance declines following parental separation); Shanta R. Dube et al., *Childhood Abuse, Neglect, and Household Dysfunction and the Risk of Illicit Drug Use: The Adverse Childhood Experiences Study*, 111 *Pediatrics* 564 (2003) (showing how adverse childhood experiences increase the likelihood of illicit drug use); E. Mavis Hetherington, *Presidential Address, Coping with Family Transitions: Winners, Losers, and Survivors*, 60 *Child Dev.* 1, 10 (1989) (discussing the human effects of divorce and remarriage); William H. Jeynes, *The Effects of Recent Parental Divorce on Their Children's Consumption of Marijuana and Cocaine*, 35 *J. Divorce & Remarriage* 43 (2001) (demonstrating that children from a divorced home are more susceptible to cocaine use than marijuana use); Marieke Zwaanswijk et al., *Factors Associated with Adolescent Mental Health Service Need and Utilization*, 42 *J. Am. Acad. Child Adolescent Psychiatry* 692 (2003) (showing that in single-parent households or where there have been changes in family composition, parents are more likely to refer their children to psychiatrists).

<sup>87</sup> See *supra* notes 4-6, 86 and accompanying text.

<sup>88</sup> Nat'l Ctr. on Addiction & Substance Abuse at Colum. U., *The Importance of Family Dinners II* 9 (2005) [hereinafter *Importance of Family Dinners*].

contribution to the economy specifically through the work of the home.<sup>90</sup> As the previous section argued, the contribution of women to the economy is especially evident in the execution of the work of the home. This is so because of the impact on human and social capital as well as the impact on distribution. First, we will focus on the impact on human and social capital.

Studies show regular family dinners have a positive impact on the development of children and teenagers.<sup>91</sup> These studies gathered data from a back-to-school survey showing the attitudes of teens and those of their parents.<sup>92</sup> The fact that the survey refers to "parents" underlines the fact that both the mother and the father are necessary in such an important aspect of family life.<sup>93</sup> Random samples included a diverse selection of teenage students, ages fifteen to seventeen, that represented no particular ethnicity, racial background, or income level.<sup>94</sup> The sample represents the forty-eight continental states in proportion to their population and includes 1000 teenagers and 829 [\*68] parents.<sup>95</sup> The margin of sampling error is +/- 3.1% at a 95% confidence interval level.<sup>96</sup>

The findings indicate that frequent family dinners strengthen family relations, increase academic performance, and help prevent substance abuse.<sup>97</sup> Eating family dinners together is also associated with less aggression overall, as well as less delinquency in youth from single-parent families.<sup>98</sup> Figures 1 through 3 present some of these results by comparing data of households where family dinners are frequent (five to seven times a week) versus sporadic (zero to two times a week).

Figure 1<sup>99</sup>

Family Relationships and Their Relation to the Frequency of Family Dinners (% of Teenagers)

[SEE FIGURE 1 IN ORIGINAL]

[\*69]

Figure 2<sup>100</sup>

<sup>89</sup> See Rosemary Polegato & Judith L. Zaichkowsky, *Family Food Shopping: Strategies Used by Husbands and Wives*, 28 *J. Consumer Aff.* 278, 285 (1994). For empirical evidence of hours married women work versus the percentage of work they do in the home, see Arne L. Kalleberg & Rachel A. Rosenfeld, *Work in the Family and in the Labor Market: A Cross-National, Reciprocal Analysis*, 52 *J. Marriage & Fam.* 331 (1990).

<sup>90</sup> See Maria Sophia Aguirre, *Comidas Familiares, Dietas, y Distribucion de Alimentos: Plantando las Semillas del Crecimiento Economico*, 11 *Hospitalidad ESDAI* 81 (2007) (Mex.) (studying the connection between family dinners and the process of economic growth).

<sup>91</sup> Importance of Family Dinners, *supra* note 88; see also Dianne Neumark-Sztainer, "I'm Like, So Fat!": Helping Your Teen Make Healthy Choices About Eating and Exercise in a Weight-Obsessed World 187-88 (2005).

<sup>92</sup> See Importance of Family Dinners, *supra* note 88, app. A, at 13-14.

<sup>93</sup> See *id.* passim (using the term of "parents" or "family" throughout the report).

<sup>94</sup> *Id.* app. A, at 13.

<sup>95</sup> *Id.* at 13-14.

<sup>96</sup> *Id.* at 14. This means that if all the teenagers in the country between the ages of twelve and seventeen were interviewed for this survey, the results would vary by no more than +/- 3.1% from what was found in this survey nineteen times out of twenty. *Id.*

<sup>97</sup> See *id.* at 3, 8, 11; see also Mary Story & Dianne Neumark-Sztainer, *A Perspective on Family Meals: Do They Matter?*, 40 *Nutrition Today* 261, 265 (2005).

<sup>98</sup> K.W. Griffen et al., *Parenting Practices as Predictors of Substance Abuse Use, Delinquency, and Aggression Among Urban Minority Youth: Moderating Effects of Family Structure and Gender*, 14 *Psychol. Addictive Behaviors* 174 (2000).

<sup>99</sup> Importance of Family Dinners, *supra* note 88, at 8 figs.4.B & 4.C, 9 fig.4.E. For purposes of this paper, all three figures have been combined into one.

Academic Performance and Its Relation to the Frequency of Family Dinners (% of Teenagers Obtaining Mostly A or B Grades in School)

[SEE FIGURE 2 IN ORIGINAL]

Figure 3 <sup>101</sup>

Substance Abuse in Relation to Frequency of Family Dinners (% of Teenagers Who Have Tried Controlled Substances)

[SEE FIGURE 3 IN ORIGINAL]

**[\*70]** Clearly, family relations are greatly enhanced when family dinners are frequent, and this is important for human capital. Also, academic performance increases by 38% when family dinners are frequent. <sup>102</sup> Finally, disruptive social behavior significantly declines when family dinners are frequent. <sup>103</sup>

More specifically, polling figures indicate that in households where there are more frequent family dinners, children are 41% more likely to speak with their parents about a problem, and 43% more children believe their parents are helping them to develop good character. <sup>104</sup> By contrast, the likelihood of tension among family members is 2.7 times higher in families where family dinners are infrequent. <sup>105</sup> In addition, the study indicates that teenagers whose families have less than two family dinners per week are two and a half times more likely to smoke cigarettes, one and half times more likely to drink alcohol, and three times more likely to try marijuana. <sup>106</sup> Moreover, infrequent family dinners increase the risk of teenagers relating to other children who use drugs by 169% (35% versus 13%). <sup>107</sup>

More importantly for the topic developed in this Article, the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse further indicates that family dinners are a necessary but not a dispositive condition for success. <sup>108</sup> The Center's study shows that the quality of the time spent together and the family structure in these households are important as well. <sup>109</sup> This could be interpreted as capturing the difference previously noted between simply providing the goods and services, and providing these goods and services with an openness to a specific other, that is, taking the whole person being served into consideration.

**[\*71]**

Figure 4 <sup>110</sup>

Quality of Family Dinners in Relation to Frequency of Family Dinners (% of Teenagers)

---

<sup>100</sup> Id. at 11 fig.5.A.

<sup>101</sup> Id. at 4 figs.2.B & 2.C.

<sup>102</sup> See supra Figure 2.

<sup>103</sup> See supra Figure 3.

<sup>104</sup> See supra Figure 1.

<sup>105</sup> See supra Figure 1.

<sup>106</sup> See Importance of Family Dinners, supra note 88, at 3-4.

<sup>107</sup> Id. at 4.

<sup>108</sup> Id. at 9 (identifying four characteristics necessary for strong family relationships: frequent family dinners, low levels of tension or family stress, parents taking pride in their teen, and a parent in whom the teen can confide).

<sup>109</sup> See infra Figure 4.

<sup>110</sup> Importance of Family Dinners, supra note 88, at 5 fig.3.A, 6 figs.3.B & 3.C.

[SEE FIGURE 4 IN ORIGINAL]

In the previous section, it was also suggested that women have an important role in the distribution of goods and services within the economy and that the work of the home was relevant to efficient distribution.<sup>111</sup> Because of her characteristics, the woman is more efficient in making these distributions; this is especially evident within the family.<sup>112</sup> Professors Chang and Wen, in their article entitled *Communal Dining and the Chinese Famine of 1958-1961*, present evidence of a connection between the elimination of family dinners in China and the famine that followed, during which thirty million people died in three years.<sup>113</sup> The famine occurred in years where the production exceeded the consumption needs, and it was caused by waste and poor distribution.<sup>114</sup>

The influence of women and the family on distribution within the economy, however, goes beyond consumption needs. Family structure is closely connected to higher levels of wealth, including house [\*72] ownership and savings, higher levels of education, and higher levels of school attendance.<sup>115</sup> Marriage among other types of family structure consistently performs best after controlling for all other family characteristics.<sup>116</sup> This evidence is found across countries independent of the degree of development or the structure of the economy.<sup>117</sup> Furthermore, the lower the income of families, the more a family benefits from marriage and the more women add to the efficiency in the use of the scarcely available resources.<sup>118</sup> These results, once again, are after having controlled for other family characteristics. Figures 5 through 8 present some of this evidence.

On average, married couples in the United States have a net wealth 253% higher than single parents and 333% higher than cohabiting couples.<sup>119</sup> The same pattern is found in Canada for net wealth as well as housing, where wealth for married couples is 155% higher than cohabiting couples and 250% higher than single parents.<sup>120</sup> This is interesting, as these two countries, although both developed, have different economic structures. While the former is an open-market economy, the second is a socialized-market economy. This becomes even more evident when compared to Guatemala, a country where almost 60% of the population lives in poverty and the average level of education of the population is third grade.<sup>121</sup>

Figure 7 presents the percentage of families in Guatemala who own a house and those who hold savings - both proxies of wealth - by family structure.<sup>122</sup> In both cases, married couples performed significantly better than any other type of family structure.<sup>123</sup> When analyzed, controlling for other family characteristics, the pattern remains the same.<sup>124</sup>

---

<sup>111</sup> See *supra* notes 78-80 and accompanying text.

<sup>112</sup> See *supra* notes 78-80, 84 and accompanying text.

<sup>113</sup> See Gene Hsin Chang & Guanzhong James Wen, *Communal Dining and the Chinese Famine of 1958-1961*, 46 *Econ. Develop. & Cultural Change* 1 (1997).

<sup>114</sup> *Id.* at 6 tbl.1, 7-29.

<sup>115</sup> See, e.g., Aguirre, *supra* note 4, at 49-54.

<sup>116</sup> See *id.*

<sup>117</sup> See Maria Sophia Aguirre, *Criecimiento Economico y Estructura Familiar* [Presentation on Economic Growth and Family Structure Before the Faculty of the University of Desarrollo], slide 23 (Aug. 21, 2008) (on file with the Ave Maria Law Review).

<sup>118</sup> Aguirre, *supra* note 4, at 49.

<sup>119</sup> See *infra* Figure 5.

<sup>120</sup> See *infra* Figure 6.

<sup>121</sup> Aguirre, *supra* note 4, at 20, 29.

<sup>122</sup> See *infra* Figure 7.

<sup>123</sup> See *infra* Figure 7.

**[\*73]**Figure 5 <sup>125</sup>

Average Net Worth in the United States per Education Level and Marriage Structure (U.S. Dollars, 2004)

[SEE FIGURE 5 IN ORIGINAL]

Figure 6 <sup>126</sup>

Average Net Worth and Housing in Canada per Marriage Structure (Canadian Dollars, 1997)

[SEE FIGURE 6 IN ORIGINAL]

**[\*74]**Figure 7 <sup>127</sup>

Percentage of Head of Households in Guatemala that Report Owning Property and Holding Savings

[SEE FIGURE 7 IN ORIGINAL]

The same patterns are found when looking to the impact of women and family on education. For the sake of brevity, only the results for education in Guatemala are presented, as it captures the most extreme case of the three countries mentioned above. Once again, the best performance corresponds to families where parents are married. At all levels of education, the data indicates that children from married couples perform best. <sup>128</sup>

Figure 8 <sup>129</sup>

Level of Education Achieved by Children per Family Structure in GuatemalaA

[SEE FIGURE 8 IN ORIGINAL]

**[\*75]** In summary, the evidence presented in this section underlines the importance of the contribution of women to a well-functioning economy. This is so both because of the relevance of the work of the home for human, social, as well as moral capital and because of the positive effect that women have on the distribution within the economy.

## Conclusion

Economic activity is the result of many economic actors that interact with each other as well as with resources and constraints. This Article aims at understanding, in the context of Pope John Paul II's *Mulieris Dignitatem*, how the vocation of women relates to this economic activity. In doing so, it does not intend to underestimate the importance of men in the economic activity as a whole or in the family more specifically. The latter analysis simply goes beyond the scope of this study. This Article argues that what is relevant for the economy is not the two vocational dimensions addressed by the Pope, motherhood and virginity. These do not belong to the realm of economics, as they correspond to a specific call from God. Rather, two female characteristics that are common to the two vocational dimensions of women are relevant for the economic process. These are self-gift and openness to the other. These characteristics allow women to be more effective and efficient in the production of human and social

<sup>124</sup> Aguirre, *supra* note 4, at 53-54.

<sup>125</sup> See Aguirre, *supra* note 117, slide 18.

<sup>126</sup> *Id.* slide 20.

<sup>127</sup> Aguirre, *supra* note 4, at 50 fig.10.

<sup>128</sup> See *infra* Figure 8.

<sup>129</sup> See Aguirre, *supra* note 4, at 55-56.



capital as well as in the function of distribution within the economy. Women's self-gift brings about the birth of new life, which is a condition sine qua non for the existence of labor and human capital. In addition, it also allows for the sacrifice required in the context of choices when the distribution of goods and services produced by the economy takes place within a family. In fact, sacrifice and service, which are needed for distribution to take place, are manifestations of the gift of self and the openness to the other that a woman lives and fosters in others. In doing so, she also protects the family bond. Furthermore, it is her openness to the others that ensures, albeit within constraints, that the goods and services being distributed in a family meet the needs of each member, while taking into account the needs of the others within the family and beyond.

Woman, because of her characteristics, has the capacity to contribute to human and social capital in a unique way. In addition, she can distribute goods in a just manner according to the specific [\*76] needs of each member of the family. This is an important idea when studying income distribution theory and policy as well as sustainable real economic development.<sup>130</sup> The home is where these fundamental contributions to the economy become especially evident and relevant. Due to the fact that women's contributions to the economy, more often than not, are also present in other realms, it is important to consider how both the work of the home and outside the home can complement each other rather than mutually compete.

Within this context, if the private sector and governments want to facilitate women's contribution to the economy, three issues need to be addressed: the work hours of men and women, after-school activities, and long commutes. In the area of work and school activities, the structure itself seems to be in need of revision. Long working hours and short school hours, combined with a myriad of extracurricular activities, do not facilitate women's contribution to the home, as it diminishes the time available for family life.<sup>131</sup> An important change in this paradigm is required if these policies are to address family needs effectively. Government and private-sector policies, in order to be effective, must address these needs as a unit rather than addressing the needs of each of its members independently. Human beings by nature are social, and the manner in which all, but especially women, engage in economic activity clearly reflects this sociability.

Yet in the process of these activities, women's contribution is not limited to the provision of goods, for it also includes fundamental services, such as strengthening the family bond, education or fostering a good life, and openness to the other through self-service and sacrifice - thus providing an expression of love. This contribution has spillover effects that go beyond the family home, whether the woman works full time at home or combines this professional work with other professional activities.

AVE MARIA LAW REVIEW  
Copyright (c) 2009 Ave Maria Law Review  
Ave Maria Law Review

---

End of Document

---

<sup>130</sup> Aguirre, *supra* note 7, at 228.

<sup>131</sup> Some of the skills that these extracurricular activities develop can also be acquired at home. This Article does not propose eliminating extracurricular activities that may contribute to human capital formation, but it suggests the need of some balance so as not to be an obstacle to parents spending time with their children at home.