

**Reviews of Shoshana Amyra Grossbard-Shechtman's  
On the Economics of Marriage - A Theory of Marriage, Labor, and  
Divorce**

list of unions by their full name, so the reader is left to guess the union from its initials; and who was the Stockport messenger?

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*On the Economics of Marriage: A Theory of Marriage, Labor, and Divorce.* By GROSSBARD-SHECHTMAN (SHOSHANA). (Boulder, San Francisco, Oxford: Westview Press, 1993. Pp. xv + 349. £34.50 hardback. ISBN 0 8133 8527 X.)

The idea that marriage, or cohabitation, is the outcome of a decision and therefore a proper subject for economic analysis is not new. Tristram Shandy's grandparents had a famous premarital negotiation about the appropriate financial compensation for the deficiency of Shandy Sr. in the nose department, and many a Victorian novel centres on a perceived conflict between love and materialism. Many societies have overt marriage markets, with well-established and elaborate institutional frameworks. Modern western societies are, if anything, the exception in thinking of pure sentiment as an appropriate foundation for the formation of the productive enterprise that is the household.

Given this, it comes as something of a surprise to read on the flycover of this book the remarks of Alan A. Stone, M.D.: 'the idea that the "invisible hand" is present in our bedrooms is both counter-intuitive and morally unattractive'. I would have thought that the pursuit of self-interest is probably at its most virulent in affairs of the heart, and so, apparently does Grossbard-Schechtman, a student and true disciple of Gary Becker. Fortunately, she has succeeded in changing the opinion of Dr Stone, by the force of the evidence put forward in this book.

What is new in Ms Grossbard-Schechtman's work is, of course, the use of the paraphernalia of empirical economics to motivate and enable the interpretation of data on marriage markets. She feels the need to defend the approach at the start of her book, which makes rather a dull start for those of us who are already convinced.

Having passed this initial hurdle the book launches into matters theoretical with an edited version of Grossbard-Schechtman's well-known 1984 paper in this JOURNAL. It is supplemented by a reprint of a previously unpublished paper, which derives a number of further hypotheses from what is essentially the same theoretical framework. The theory focuses on a dual-market model, incorporating markets for both labour and marital partners. The labour market is a vehicle for organising production for the market, while the marriage market is a vehicle for organising household production. At the heart of the argument there is thus an elaboration of Becker's theory of the allocation of time, the central issue being the allocation of time between household and market uses.

The hypotheses formulated in these two chapters form the basis of much of the empirical work reported in the remainder of the book. If a society contains

more marriagable males than females, the marriage market will be tight for males and slack for females. Females may therefore expect to get a better deal in such a society, than they would in one with more females than males. One aspect of a better deal may be freedom from the necessity to participate in the labour market. This kind of hypothesis is examined using both cross-section (inter-city) and time series data. Significant statistical relationships are found.

Individuals with highly-valued personal characteristics may expect to do better in a marriage market than those without, thus earning a differential. If, for instance, a long nose is regarded as desirable in a male partner, a wife might expect to benefit materially in a marriage settlement. According to the theory of this book, this will in turn reduce her propensity to supply labour. Thus we might expect to observe a negative relationship between the length of husbands' noses and wives' labour supply. This kind of prediction is investigated in Chapters 7 and 8. The proxies used for nose length are measures of schooling, income, relative age, and ethnicity. Once again, the data employed yield significant statistical relationships.

The remainder of the book deals with variations in the structure and formality of marital institutions, the relationship between divorce and labour supply, and some rather anodyne pages on the subject of virtue.

While Grossbard-Schechtman (together with some co-authors) has done an enviable amount of imaginative work on the economics of marriage, her book is not one that I would feel happy to recommend to an undergraduate or a layman as a good read. There are many missed opportunities here: not the least of them being the opportunity to rewrite material which has nearly all appeared in print before into a coherent whole. I found it very annoying that almost every chapter started with an exposition of theory that had already been expounded adequately in earlier pages. The empirical results could also have done with a careful reworking. The articles on which the various chapters are based were written over almost two decades during which econometric knowledge and computing power have advanced a long way. So to present qualitative dependent variables modelled with OLS, for example, now looks just sloppy.

Despite these reservations this is a valuable collection, that should be read by researchers in any discipline who are interested in the family, fertility, and related matters. The conversion of Dr Stone is witness to its power.

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*The Welfare Economics of Markets, Voting and Predation.* By USHER (DAN). (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992. Pp. xxi+487. £50.00 hardback. ISBN 0 7190 3433 7.)

The theoretical conclusions of the most abstract forms of welfare economics are based upon exchange between 'pure' economic agents who maximise utility in a world of competitive markets. In so far as these individuals have a dual nature

## Book review

*On the Economics of Marriage: A Theory of Marriage, Labor, and Divorce*, by Shoshana Grossbard-Shechtman. Boulder: Westview Press, 1992. 349 pp. \$48.00 cloth

*On the Economics of Marriage*, by Shoshana Grossbard-Shechtman, brings together treatments of quite disparate topics - from religiosity and virtue to cohabitation and divorce - linked by a common, overarching theory of marriage. The development, explication, and testing of this theory, presented in five separate chapters, forms the heart of the book. I found the theoretical framework offered in this volume both original and powerful, although the tests of the many hypotheses presented were often more illustrative than conclusive. Because of the centrality and importance of the theoretical framework developed, I outline its major points below.

In Grossbard-Shechtman's theoretical framework, marriages are seen as exchanges of *spousal labor*, which she defines as labor that benefits one's (actual or potential) husband or wife. Spousal labor might include doing one's spouse's laundry, talking over a work problem, or remembering a mother-in-law's birthday. These tasks become 'spousal labor' because one does more of them - or does different tasks - than one would for oneself alone. Both men and women 'demand' - that is are willing to 'pay' something for - the time and effort of a spouse, and both men and women can 'supply' time and effort to a spouse. Grossbard-Shechtman terms the rewards that one gets within marriage the quasi-wage for spousal labor, with the level of the rewards set by the market forces of supply and demand. In a particular marriage, if the husband and wife spend the same amount of time and effort doing things that benefit the other they will simply exchange, say, his time in child care for her time in money management. But Grossbard-Shechtman argues that husbands tend to 'demand' more spousal labor than they are willing to 'supply'. This means that the average husband must compensate his wife for the excess spousal labor she supplies, which he does by transferring some of his income to his wife for her own use. Alternatively, he can give her greater stability in the relationship or more power in the home.

Although this gender difference in demand for and supply of spousal labor underlies much of the rest of the volume, Grossbard-Shechtman falls back on 'observed patterns of division of labor', without attempting to explain this differential within her framework. Gender differences in childbearing and female advantage in care for young children seem to provide an obvious starting point from which to incorporate male/female differences in household labor into the theory. However, given the wide applicability of the framework, this is a minor point.

From the notion of exchanges of spousal labor within marriage, Grossbard-Shechtman develops hypotheses about the impact of various personal and marriage-market characteristics on men's and women's supply of labor to the market, incidence of marriage and divorce, fertility, marriage formality and cohabitation, power in the household, dowry and bridewealth, intermarriage, and polygamy. The volume presents detailed theoretical and empirical analyses of many of these hypotheses.

The first empirical chapters focus on the impact of sex ratios on marriage, cohabitation, labor supply and divorce through examination of time trends. In the framework, the relative scarcity of one sex increases the quasi-wage for spousal labor commanded by that sex. Thus, the framework suggests that a shortage of potential wives leads to a decline in women's labor supply, because women can 'earn' more at home, whereas a shortage of potential husbands does not. And, since women are more likely than men to prefer formal marriage over cohabitation, because of the assurance it gives of support for children, the more potential husbands available, the higher the incidence of marriage and the lower the incidence of divorce. Conversely, a large number of women per man leads to higher incidence of cohabitation. These are, perhaps, not surprising. But the framework also implies the less intuitively obvious hypotheses that a large number of men leads to relatively more expenditures benefitting the wife, higher alimony payments, and greater power for the wife within the family.

This volume elaborates Becker's well-known theory of marriage but moves well beyond it. The notion of spousal labor and an implicit wage for this labor is original with Grossbard-Shechtman and, in my view, offers an important new perspective on exchanges within marriage and the ways that they shape and condition all aspects of family life, as one might expect, but the impact of these exchanges and the terms of trade for many other aspects of human society. Grossbard-Shechtman has mastered the literature on her topics across a wide range of fields and does an excellent job of stating economic theorems in terms understandable to those in other disciplines. I highly recommend this volume for scholars in any discipline who are interested in the family, gender relations, the division of household labor, labor supply or any related areas.

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*On the Economics of Marriage: A Theory of Marriage, Labor and Divorce*, by Shoshana Grossbard-Shechtman. Boulder: Westview Press, 1993. 349 pp. \$48.00 cloth. ISBN: 0-8133-8527-X.

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*On the Economics of Marriage* is an interesting and readable book that develops a "general theory of marriage" based on rational choice principles. Whether or not one agrees with her arguments and assumptions, Grossbard-Shechtman does an excellent job of deriving (and sometimes testing) the theoretical implications of her approach for the study of marriage, divorce, and labor supply.

The book begins with a discussion of the neoclassical economic analysis of marriage, focusing on Becker's theory of marriage markets. Grossbard-Shechtman extends his approach by developing a theory of the interdependence of marriage markets and labor markets. In her theory, decisions to marry or divorce and decisions about labor supply and consumption are made simultaneously. Furthermore, while Becker assumes that families jointly allocate their resources to maximize household utility, Grossbard-Shechtman assumes that individual household members are separate maximizers.

Specifically, she argues that each household member makes decisions about time allocation in the context of four interrelated markets—markets for male and female labor (labor markets), and markets for male and female spousal labor (marriage markets). Household chores, counseling, childbearing, and child care are all examples of spousal labor. The compensation a spouse receives for spousal labor is determined by an unmeasured quasi-wage, which indicates the value of time in the home. Traditional theories of labor supply argue that characteristics of the household, such as number and ages of children, determine the value of time. Grossbard-Shechtman argues that the value of time is also partially determined in the marriage market by individual characteristics, such as education and age, and by market characteristics, such as the number of men and women.

From her basic theoretical approach, Grossbard-Shechtman generates numerous and diverse hypotheses. She examines variation in patterns of marriage, cohabitation, divorce, labor supply, polygamy, intermarriage, and religiosity. Space limitations permit only brief descriptions of a few examples.

She argues that marriage squeezes caused by changing sex ratios have a variety of consequences. For example, when there is a marriage squeeze for women (as there was in the 1970s), couples are likely to marry at later ages, and rates of cohabitation, divorce, and married women's employment are likely to increase.

She finds support for the hypothesis that the negative income tax (NIT) experiments produced unanticipated changes in income that increased the participants' labor supply and likelihood of divorce. However, she also argues that unanticipated income changes have a much smaller effect if they are experienced by the entire population than by an experimental subsample. Had the NIT moved beyond the experimental stage and become policy, these effects would have been minimized.

Drawing on a theory of compensating differentials, Grossbard-Shechtman claims that husbands who have undesirable characteristics in the marriage market transfer more income to their wives. For example, if a husband is considerably older than his wife, he shares more of his income with her and she is less likely to work, even after controlling for the higher incomes of older husbands. This approach moves beyond simpler theories of mismatches in marriage markets, which argue that undesirable characteristics increase the probability of divorce, but do not consider alternative outcomes.

While Grossbard-Shechtman's theory is more complex and realistic than previous economic theories of marriage, it shares some of their basic weaknesses. It is based on assumptions about essential biological differences between men and women. The theory assumes that wives' productivity derives primarily from their capacity to bear and rear children, while husbands' productivity derives primarily from their capacity for paid work in the labor market. The theory also assumes that women prefer to engage in

household production rather than market labor, and that the value of a wife's spousal labor exceeds that of her husband's. While she acknowledges that some women are more oriented toward a career outside the home, her theory and hypotheses are based on the assumption of a traditional division of household labor. Yet the theoretical and empirical analyses would be more powerful if they attempted to account for nontraditional behavior as well.

Many chapters in the book have previously been published as articles, dating from 1976. That they blend in a readable book is testament to the author's consistent development of a unified theory. However, the chapters are sometimes repetitive or out of date, and cross-references between chapters are occasionally incorrect. A book of this scope also would benefit from a comprehensive concluding chapter.

These are minor complaints, however. The book is worthwhile reading for anyone seeking a better understanding of rational choice theories. The arguments are interesting and sometimes controversial (e.g., she claims there is an association between the rise of feminism and the difficulty of finding a husband during the marriage squeeze of the 1970s). Both supporters and critics of rational choice approaches will find the book stimulating.

*On the economics of marriage: A theory of marriage, labor, and divorce.* By SHOSHANA GROSSBARD-SHECHTMAN. Boulder and Oxford: Westview Press, 1993. Pp. xviii, 349. \$48.00. ISBN 0-8133-8527-X. JEL 93-1402

In this book, Grossbard-Shechtman attempts to integrate labor markets and marriage markets, by modeling the marriage market as a market for spousal labor. The "quasi-wage" for spousal labor determined in the marriage market affects the allocation of time between the labor market, nonmarket work, and leisure. Conversely, labor market developments affect marriage markets. The book includes published and unpublished papers written by the author and her coauthors. In this review, I focus on the papers most closely related to this central theme.

Grossbard-Shechtman first adds to a neoclassical labor supply model the allocation of time to household or spousal labor, the price of which is determined in the marriage market. This leads to predictions for labor supply that do not arise in the neoclassical model. For example, the ratio of marriageable men to marriageable women, and the costs of divorce and remarriage, affect the allocation of time to the labor market. Viewing the marriage market as a market for spousal labor, she also considers how factors that affect the demand for and supply of spousal labor, such as the cost of substitutes for spousal labor, affect marriage behavior.

The author then turns to empirical evidence. The most direct implication of her model for labor supply is that the sex ratio (men/women) should be inversely related to labor force participation of married women. She tests this hypothesis for the U.S. using time-series data and data across cities. She also tests the model's prediction that women with traits valued in the marriage market will receive compensating differentials from their husbands in the form of higher income, implying that they will be less likely to participate in the labor force. She concludes that the model receives considerable support from all three analyses.

Students of labor supply and the economics of marriage will find this book useful and stimulating. Grossbard-Shechtman presents a number of original insights and hypotheses that should stimulate their own thinking about

these topics. However, with respect to its central theme, the book has three weaknesses.

First, in testing the model's implications for marriage behavior, many of the author's predictions do not rule out other models. For example, she hypothesizes that "The more an individual is close to what is considered an optimal age for marriage in a given society, the more this person is likely to be married" (p. 67), and that "The more important children—in particular, legitimate children—are in a society, the higher the incidence of marriage and the lower the incidence of divorce" (p. 61). Unfortunately, these hypotheses do not appear to be unique to her model. On the other hand, none of the economic variables (wages, income, etc.) have unambiguous predicted effects for marriage behavior (p. 78). For both reasons, it is not clear that the model provides much new insight into marriage markets. Thus, the value of the book to economists is likely to hinge primarily on what integrating marriage markets and labor markets teaches us about labor supply.

The second weakness is that, with respect to the model's implications for labor supply, the author does not explore how the predictions of her model differ from prominent non-neoclassical models that seem closely related to her model. In bargaining models (Manser and Brown 1980), as in her model, women's prospects outside of the current marriage affect the allocation of time. Also, according to the author, variations in sex ratios are driven in large part by cohort size (interacting with a preference of women for marrying slightly older men). This raises the question of how the predictions of her model differ from those of Easterlin (1987) regarding women's employment.

Finally, much of the empirical work is unconvincing. For the most part, this is because the author does not use data that correspond to the constructs of her models. In assessing the effects of sex ratios on the market for spousal labor in the U.S., she looks at effects on labor force participation rather than effects on outcomes in the spousal labor market. Of course, the quasi-wage for spousal labor is unobserved. But data on outcomes in the spousal labor market, such as time-use and the allocation of goods within households (Lazear and Michael 1988; Stafford and Dunçan 1978) would be more convincing. The inadequacy of the data also plagues

the author's tests of the predictions of her model for marriage markets. As an example, one of her more interesting hypotheses is that when substitutes for spousal labor are more costly, there is likely to be more marriage. But she does not assemble data on costs of a variety of spousal labor substitutes. Rather, she cites an increase in monogamous relationships in response to the AIDS epidemic as evidence consistent with this hypothesis (p. 62), although surely this increase could be explained by other "models." A similar problem arises in her empirical study of compensating differentials in marriage markets. One of the key results that she interprets as evidence of compensating differentials is that low occupational status of the woman's father is associated with a higher probability of the woman participating in the labor force. But rather than reflecting a compensating differential for an undesirable trait in the marriage market, low occupational status of the father may simply reflect low wealth.

Other factors also detract from the empirical work. The author's reading of the time-series evidence as supporting her model is difficult to accept. The most direct reading of her graphs is that in the period after 1965, sex ratios were relatively flat, while the proportion never married, median age at marriage, and women's employment rates soared (pp. 94-95), so that the first-order effects are inconsistent with the theory. Also, a negative relationship between the sex ratio and married women's labor force participation may arise from discrimination against women, leading them to be hired more when men are in short supply. The author dismisses this notion, arguing that sex discrimination is stronger against single women. This ignores evidence of explicit discrimination against married women (Goldin 1990).

I hasten to emphasize, however, that these criticisms can be addressed with further theoretical and empirical research. They are intended to highlight directions in which to extend the research agenda, rather than flaws in the agenda. Overall, Grossbard-Shechtman's book points the way towards a variety of interesting questions regarding labor supply, marriage, and gender differences in the home and the market.

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*The origins and evolution of the field of industrial relations in the United States*. By BRUCE E. KAUFMAN. Cornell Studies in Industrial and Labor Relations, no. 25. Ithaca: ILR Press, 1993. Pp. xv, 286. \$40.00, cloth; \$19.95, paper. ISBN 0-87546-192-1, pbk.

JEL 93-0619

This book has three main goals: present an intellectual history of industrial relations in the U.S.; analyze the origins and causes of the controversy concerning the intellectual boundaries of the field of industrial relations (IR); examine the recent decline in the academic status of IR and suggest how to improve its future prospects. Kaufman does an admirable job in realizing these goals. The first is probably of the greatest interest, and the bulk of the book is devoted to it.

This book presents a well-written, thoughtful, and concise review of industrial relations research, as it is broadly defined, during the twentieth century. Kaufman documents how the "labor problem," which included the struggle over control of production and distribution of income, provided the early intellectual justification for the field of industrial relations, which was broadly defined to include scholars from the social sciences, law, and history. Early IR scholars accepted the capitalist system, but they sought to mitigate the unequal outcomes that were viewed as an inevitable part of industrialism. In particular, the presence and persistence of unemployment, which is a central feature of institutional labor markets, generated unequal bargaining power for labor relative to employers. Both government regulation and trade unions were seen as having a role in resolving the labor problem.

## BOOK REVIEWS

*On the Economics of Marriage: A Theory of Marriage, Labor and Divorce*, by Shoshana Grossbard-Shechtman. Boulder, CO, and Oxford, U.K.: Westview Press, 1993. 368 pp. ISBN: 0-8133-8527-X. \$50.50.

Shoshana Grossbard-Shechtman is a Chicago-trained economist who has spent over eighteen years studying the economics of marriage. *On the Economics of Marriage* develops and expands the best of Grossbard-Shechtman's scholarship, from her early research on the economics of polygamy (chapter 11) to her most recent work on spousal help among Israeli managers (chapter 14). Yet the intellectual heart of *On the Economics of Marriage* is Grossbard-Shechtman's theory of the allocation of time in markets for labor and marriage (chapter 3).

Like her mentor, Gary Becker, Grossbard-Shechtman models behavior as the outcome of individual optimization in competitive markets. The allocation of women's and men's time, as well as the distribution of household resources, are determined within a straightforward supply-and-demand framework. Grossbard-Shechtman's model is, however, innovative in that participation in the paid labor force and time spent in "spousal labour" – work that benefits one's spouse – are modeled simultaneously. Specifically, in the model there are four markets: for women's spousal labor, women's paid labor, men's spousal labor, and men's paid labor. Women supply their own spousal labor and labor in the paid labor force, and demand men's spousal labor, while men supply their own paid and spousal labor and demand women's spousal labor. An equilibrium occurs when all four markets clear.

The markets are interconnected in several ways. For example, an increase in the supply of males (e.g., because of immigration) would increase the demand for female spousal labor and the supply of male spousal and paid labor. This would lead, in the first instance, to a decline

in male wages and a rise in the compensation for female spousal labor. These changes would cause further effects: men's lower wages would lower their demands for spousal labor, while the rise in compensation for female spousal labor would cause women to shift out of the paid labor force and into the home. Eventually a new equilibrium would be reached with women working less in the paid labor force and more in the home. Male wages would be lower and female wages higher, with market forces guaranteeing that the compensation for women's spousal labor and the wages for women's paid labor are equal.

Grossbard-Shechtman uses her model to explain the effects of the presence of compensating differentials in marriage, the incidence of cohabitation and divorce, and the relationship between marriage, productivity, and earnings. However, the applications of the model which are the most well known — and among the most controversial — are her analysis of demographic changes in the male-to-female sex ratio, and her study of polygyny.

The rise of the ratio of males to females in many countries — caused by, for example, relative neglect of girl children and selective abortion — is raising major concerns about the effects of these demographic changes on the future position of women. Grossbard-Shechtman is one of the first economists to take seriously the effects of male-female sex ratios. She plausibly links higher male-to-female sex ratios to lower female labor force participation and higher rates of marriage — the analysis is exactly parallel to that in the example given above. More controversially, she links feminism to a shortage of marriageable males:

... 28-year-old women in 1970 faced a more unfavorable market of spousal labour in objective terms than their older sisters faced in 1965. . . . [W]orsening market conditions could have propelled women into organizing in a union-like manner. The tremendous rise in popularity of feminist ideas [in the 1970s] was in part a reflection of the growing frustration among women who were having a difficult time achieving the standard of living their mothers and older sisters had reached in the past [pp. 98–9].

In other words, women became feminists because a shortage of marriageable men led to a decline in women's well-being. Although I have some reservations about this argument, I note that it is successful in countering anti-feminists' assertions that feminism has made women worse off: if Grossbard-Shechtman is right, the direction of causality runs the other way.

Grossbard-Shechtman believes that, just as the "marriage squeeze" in the 1970s made women worse off, a higher male-to-female sex ratio will make women better off. The supply of women's labor will decrease relative to the demand for it, hence the compensation women receive will

rise. There will be "relatively more expenditures benefiting the wife, higher alimony payments, and marital fertility closer to the wife's preference" (p. 90). Many researchers would take a much less optimistic view of the long-term impacts of rising male-to-female sex ratios, arguing for example that a decline in female labor force participation and earnings will worsen women's negotiating position within marriage, and leave older women especially vulnerable to poverty in the event of divorce or widowhood. In some societies, any benefits from a higher male-to-female sex ratio may be reaped by women's fathers or brothers in the form of higher bride prices or lower dowries, rather than by women themselves. Finally, as Grossbard-Shechtman herself predicts, a higher male-to-female sex ratio may lead to a decline in feminism and a corresponding lack of pressure for recognition of women's rights and women's equality.

Another area of concern to many feminists is the position of women under polygyny. Grossbard-Shechtman argues that women are better off under polygyny than under monogamous marriage (p. 232), and presents the following evidence:

Age at marriage can also indicate benefits from marriage. The more one stands to gain, the younger one is likely to enter marriage. . . . Simple comparisons provide evidence for the theory: women marry younger in countries allowing for polygyny. For instance, women's average age at marriage is 13 or 14 among the Hausa and the Kanura of Eastern Nigeria, societies with widespread polygyny [p. 234].

This is hardly strong evidence for the benefits of polygyny. When a girl marries at the age of 13, she will not have much information about the benefits of marriage. The marriage decision is more likely to be made by the girl's parents than the girl herself. In this context, inferring anything about a woman's benefits from marriage from her age at marriage seems dubious at best.

I have problems with some of the research presented in this book. The first is a general problem that I have with almost all marriage market approaches. Grossbard-Shechtman, like Gary Becker, generally assumes that there are no costs of divorce and remarriage (p. 32), hence market conditions are the major determinant of the allocation of resources within marriage. This means, for example, that a decrease in the relative supply of women would be predicted to raise the wages (or power or share of household income) received by all women. If a married woman was offered a lower level of compensation than the going wage for spousal labor, she could just leave her husband for another spouse. Yet divorce is often too costly to be a credible threat. This means that actual levels of spousal labor and wages may differ substantially from those predicted by

the model. In my view, bargaining and noncooperative game-theoretic approaches have a valuable role to play in explaining the allocation of resources within marriage (see, for example, Amartya Sen 1990, Janet Seiz 1991, and Shelly Lundberg and Robert Pollak 1993). To varying degrees these models capture aspects of marriage neglected in the marriage market framework, such as the idiosyncratic nature of the marriage bargain, the importance of bargaining strength or "power" in dividing the gains from marriage, and the role of threat-points — the resources a person commands in the event of noncooperation within marriage — in determining the allocation of resources within marriage.

A second problem I have relates more specifically to Grossbard-Shechtman's research. The great strength of the Chicago school approach to economics is that institutions and even preferences (George Stigler and Gary Becker 1977) are seen as economic structures to be explained, rather than simply taken as given. In light of this, it is disappointing that in her research Grossbard-Shechtman accepts without question so many institutional structures. Her model of marriage assumes that employers cannot substitute female workers for male workers (p. 33). This assumes away one of the most important factors driving the trend in many countries have experienced towards greater equality between women's and men's incomes over the last two decades. Also, only men demand female spousal labor; there is no mention of same-sex couples. Finally, it is taken for granted that women marry men older than themselves, although if this assumption is dropped many of Grossbard-Shechtman's results on sex ratios in chapter 5 do not hold.

Third, Grossbard-Shechtman occasionally uses somewhat casual inference techniques. Chapter 5 is based on a simple visual comparison of trends in sex ratios, age at marriage, and so on over time. Another example can be found in chapter 15, which studies the influence of wives' religiosity on husbands' religious practices. The regressions were based only on men who defined themselves as secular or traditional; men defining themselves as religious were deleted from the sample, raising serious sample selection issues. At the same time, however, it may be worth sacrificing a certain amount of econometric rigor if it makes possible the use of nontraditional data sets and cross-disciplinary research.

Finally, given the international scope of Grossbard-Shechtman's research, many potential readers will wonder to what extent she is successful in avoiding ethnocentrism and imperialism in her work. Grossbard-Shechtman argues that the idea of a marriage market is often more acceptable to people raised in non-Western environments:

Most readers with a Western cultural background will probably experience difficulty in accepting these views [on the effect of

"marriage squeezes"]. However, in countries such as Japan and India marriage market awareness is a fact of life. These countries use a variety of means to promote market clearance, such as go-betweens, newspaper advertising, and local marriage bureaus. Awareness of marriage squeezes, and of marriage market forces in general, may encourage Westerners to move further away from the sixties and seventies, in a direction toward more lasting marriages and a more practical approach to marriage, as is the case in the Far East [p. 101].

Grossbard-Shechtman is correct in recognizing that marriage is often idealized in "Western" countries. Yet while in countries such as India there may be awareness of marriage markets, individual "supply" and "demand" decisions are influenced and constrained by family, community, religious beliefs, and other institutions. It is, therefore, difficult to make inferences about women's well-being by observing women's choices and marriage market outcomes. Grossbard-Shechtman unintentionally avoids this difficulty by simply not discussing issues relating to women's well-being or standard of living. I find this solution profoundly unsatisfying.

*On the Economics of Marriage* explores issues that are of great interest to many feminist economists. At its best, Grossbard-Shechtman's research into these areas is thought-provoking, original, and insightful. She explores controversial topics such as polygyny without prejudice, and is open to the possibility that other social arrangements may be better for women than Western-style marriage. I particularly enjoyed those chapters in which Grossbard-Shechtman uses little-known or under-utilized data sources, working closely with researchers in other disciplines to arrive at original insights into marital institutions.

Yet at times Grossbard-Shechtman seems wary of drawing normative conclusions, and she gives less attention than she might to the simple but vital question "how well-off are women under different institutional arrangements?" I would have enjoyed more discussion of issues currently debated by feminist economists, such as women's property rights, the formation of preferences, the division of household income between men and women, issues relevant to same-sex couples, the dynamics of bargaining within marriage, and all the other factors that make the analysis of marriage so difficult and yet so fascinating. Yet to the extent that marriage markets matter, understanding how market forces operate will help feminists to change women's position for the better.

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*Who Pays for the Kids? Gender and the Structures of Constraint*, by Nancy Folbre. London and New York: Routledge, 1994. 348 pp. ISBN: 0-415-07565-3 (pbk). \$18.95.

This is an interesting book, original, useful, sometimes hilarious, sometimes too broad and sweeping, sometimes frustrating, but clearly and forcefully speaking to current debates on social policy and welfare reform. It should be read, for example, by anyone (feminist or not) interested in understanding the wider historical context of the ongoing "Republican revolution" in the United States today. The book's arguments provide a feminist interpretation of the links between economic development, demographic change, and the social factors that have historically had an impact on social welfare in different societies. In the aftermath of the March 1995 World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen, these arguments should inform the debates that will follow at regional, country, and community levels across the globe. The new inequalities generated by profound global economic and social restructuring, by the new emphasis on the wonders of the market, and by more than a decade of structural adjustment in the Third World, have led to the urgent need for rethinking social policy. Although focusing on "who pays for the kids," this book should also be helpful in analyzing other issues of social conflict and collective action.

The book is divided into two parts that are quite distinct. Part I is a three-chapter review of "concepts of social reproduction" which amounts to a critical evaluation of theoretical approaches in economics from a feminist perspective. Part II includes three chapters on "histories of social reproduction" dealing respectively with Northwestern Europe, the United States, and Latin America and the Caribbean. The concluding chapter on the political economy of family policy highlights the practical significance of the book's central argument that "[t]he changing nature of relationships between parents and children, men and women . . . cannot

be explained simply by individual choices or class dynamics, because they reflect many aspects of collective identity and interest" (p. 248). The chapter concludes with a list of suggestions for a social policy addressing the basic needs of individuals, families, and children.

Chapter I critically reviews the established paradigms in economics, particularly neoclassical and Marxian theory. It is both a summary of existing work and an original contribution to the literature. Most readers are likely to enjoy Folbre's critical evaluation of Rational Economic Man (REM) and Woman, Mr. and Mrs. REM for short, and of their recent revisionist incarnations in the form of Imperfectly Rational Somewhat Economic Persons, or IRSEPs. Her refreshing look at the sacred tenets of traditional models recalls Donald McCloskey's humor on the rhetoric of economics. Thus, within the neoclassical framework, Mrs. REM is like Mr. REM in every respect "except for a different set of biological assets," and both "love to calculate, to choose, to buy and sell" (p. 18). In their world, there cannot be any exploitation or oppression except when "some Big Brother, like the state, restricts their choices." Their home life is "[p]retty nice, because both of them want the same things — they (and all the little baby REMs) have a joint utility function" (p. 18). If asked why women do the largest share of housework and child care, even when they have full-time paid jobs, Mr. REM will answer that "women place a greater value on family amenities in general, children in particular" (p. 19). And so on; Folbre's overall critique of the REMs should be quite well known to feminists. It emphasizes the REMs' unrealistic assumptions, their neglect of the processes that determine the initial allocation of resources, and their wrong predictions. The REMs have been in many ways replaced by the neoclassical institutionalist models built by the IRSEPs, which, Folbre argues, are more realistic, although more difficult to apply. The IRSEPs' models tend to undermine "any strong claims about the inherent efficiency of a pure market economy," and they suggest a number of reasons why the market "might be prone to fairly serious malfunctions" and might perpetuate "inequalities based on gender and race." However, Folbre adds, "neoclassical institutionalism doesn't offer many insights into the exercise of power beyond the microeconomic level of the firm or the family" (p. 24).

Folbre is equally humorous when dealing with Marxian theory, in which case the prototype is Mr. Prol, for proletarian. He is a wage-earner and shares his earnings with his family, which provides him "with a haven in an otherwise heartless world" (p. 29). Although Mrs. Prol and the little baby Prols are not mentioned, the working-class family "is united in struggle, all for one, and one for all" (p. 30). Despite capitalist exploitation, Mr. Prol is persuaded that capitalism, by bringing about women's increased participation in the paid labor market, establishes the preconditions for women's liberation à la Friedrich Engels. There are also

**On the Economics of Marriage.**

By Shoshana Grossbard-Shechtman. Boulder: Westview Press, 1993. Pp. xviii, 349, \$48.00.

The institution of marriage captures the attention of economists with increasing frequency these days, many finding common ground in the theory developed in Gary Becker's (1991) *A Treatise on The Family*. Although Grossbard-Shechtman was a student of Becker's and his influence is evident, her treatise stands apart on its own merit as a significant contribution to the economics of marriage literature. This book should attract the intelligent general reader as well as economists.

Unlike other recent work addressing the economics of marriage, Grossbard-Shechtman's central thesis rests on the interaction between traditional labor markets and the market for spousal labor. Spousal labor is defined as any activity benefitting the spouse, ranging from traditional household chores to investing in a spouse's human capital to increase household and career productivity. Applying microeconomic theory (and without bombarding the reader with mathematics), the author argues that labor market conditions affect the value of time in the household and consequently the supply and demand of spousal labor.

The book is organized in six parts. Parts I and II provide an overview of the economic theory of marriage and other explanations of marriage. The general reader will benefit from this overview while readers familiar with the economics of marriage can skim these chapters and turn to part III where the author analyzes the impact of the sex ratio on marriage. The sex ratio is defined as the number of marriageable men divided by the number of marriageable women [p. 106]. Trends in the sex ratio over the century are traced and cross-city comparisons of sex ratios are analyzed. "Marriage squeeze" occurs when members of one sex face a small pool of eligibles for marriage. A high sex ratio indicates a squeeze for men which, according to the author, leads to predictably fewer women in the labor force.

The author traces the women's liberation movement in the 1960s to a corresponding marriage squeeze for women. Concurrent upward trends in divorce and cohabitation appeared in the late 1960s and persisted into the late 1980s. The author also discusses racial variations in the incidence of marriage squeeze. Differences are explained by variations in sex ratios according to race and a generally weaker bargaining position for compensation in the spousal labor market since more black (than white) women work outside the household [p. 100].

Part IV turns to an innovative analysis of compensating differentials in marriage and intermarriage. The author explains, for example, that a Jewish man who prefers a Jewish wife (homogamy) will intermarry when he cannot afford the level of compensation necessary to attract a Jewish wife. As anti-semitism has declined, however, Jewish men who prefer intermarriage (heterogamy) now face a lower level of compensation to secure a non-Jewish spouse. Further, the higher incidence of homogamy among Jews is indicative of a diminution in discrimination.

Alternatives to "traditional" marriage, including cohabitation, divorce, and polygamy are investigated in Part V of the book. In chapter 9 the author addresses cohabitation and marriage formality and derives a marriage opportunity curve and an indifference curve to indicate the level of risk and benefits associated with a particular union [p. 166]. It is likely, according to Grossbard-Shechtman, that as a man's status increases, there are two potential impacts on marriage. First, as income rises there is an increasing risk of dissolution of a marriage along any given marriage opportunity curve so that higher status men may be less likely to marry. On the contrary, such men may demand higher quantities of spousal labor thereby increasing the likelihood of a formal marriage.

The institution of polygamy is explained by the author as a function of the income and education levels of a husband. The higher a man's (market) income, the greater his demand for spousal labor and hence the more likely polygamy will occur, barring any prohibitions. Women are more likely to demand monogamy as their level of education rises since higher levels of productivity and consequently higher market wages are

anticipated for such women. The author claims that where sex ratios are less than one, the prohibition of polygamy is particularly harmful since the demand for spousal labor is already low. Therefore, the lower the sex ratio the more likely polygamy will occur, allowing a previously unmarried female to contribute to total household production in a marriage [p. 220].

In the final part of the book, the author addresses investment in spousal productivity, the contribution of virtue to human capital, a case study among Israeli managers, and the function of religiosity as an investment in human capital. It is claimed herein that married individuals tend toward higher levels of productivity than their single counterparts due to spousal assistance with household tasks, investments in spousal human capital, and the representation of loyalty and commitment that transfers from the marriage to the firm. The author claims that married workers earn higher wages than single workers since the marital bond exudes the quality of virtue, which indicates a lower likelihood of shirking or quitting a job. As a result, firms tend to invest more in married individuals which increases the output of such employees. The author argues for promotion of general standards of virtue on the national level through regulation and education to increase the average level of productivity in society and increase economic growth.

While I doubt Grossbard-Shechtman's analysis will convince policymakers to legalize polygamy or promote virtue as the key to economic growth, the author does offer a well-organized, innovative approach to the interaction of market and spousal labor. The surfeit of hypotheses presented is the primary negative of the book. However, this original explanation of the economics of marriage overshadows any drawbacks and provides plenty for the reader to ponder.

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their own needs." Five of the 15 chapters have never been published in English. Most of the chapters that are based on previously published work have been expanded, rewritten, or translated from Hebrew.

The book is rich in hypotheses—70, numbered for convenience—and imaginative empirical tests. An economist, Grossbard-Shechtman enthusiastically invites scholars from sociology and anthropology to flesh out her general theory of marriage. Since "the exact composition of spousal labor varies . . . from culture to culture," the hypotheses cry out for tests by anthropologists.

Markets for spousal labor (marriage markets) are obtained when the demand for spousal labor, aggregated over individuals, is juxtaposed with the aggregate supply of spousal labor. In the marriage market for women (men), the demand is by men (women) and the supply by women (men). The equilibrium spousal wage rate for men is typically higher than that for women, because the supply of female spousal labor is typically larger for women. This means that in marriage, the husband typically compensates the wife for her services.

Grossbard-Shechtman describes the compensation as mainly nonmonetary. It has two components: a material component consisting of goods and services consumed by the wife, including food and shelter, and a nonmaterial component. Examples of the latter are a husband's help with child care and the relative power of the wife in the marriage. The more value attached to children, the more power women are likely to have in the household.

Given her acknowledged intellectual debt to Gary Becker's *Treatise on the Family* (1981), I find it surprising that Grossbard-Shechtman does not discuss the relationship between her concept of compensation and his concept of altru-

ism. Altruists compensate their beneficiaries. How does one distinguish between altruistic transfers and spousal wages?

Nevertheless, the book is replete with evidence that men compensate women in marriage. For example, logit regressions in chapter 14, "A Study of Spousal Help among Israeli Managers" (written with Dafna Izraeli and Shoshana Neuman), show that compensation is negatively related to age; that is, husbands tend to help their employed-wives when it is most productive to do so. An unpredicted result is that wives of Eastern origin receive more help than wives of Western origin.

This book is must reading for scholars interested in contributing to our understanding of marriage.

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**GROSSBARD-SHECHTMAN, SHOSHANA.** *On the Economics of Marriage: A Theory of Marriage, Labor, and Divorce.* Pp. xv, 349. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1993. \$45.00.

This book collects the fruits of almost twenty years of developing and testing the theoretical implications of an original concept: spousal labor. The concept is defined as "any task people perform for the benefit of a spouse or partner and beyond

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à peu près celles qui acceptaient de faire l'amour avec leur mari même en sachant qu'il se retirerait.

Ces recommandations résident peu connues. Ce n'est qu'à partir de 1830 que certains prêtres refusèrent l'absolution à des hommes pour ce motif. Mais la réforme catholique imposa des normes plus strictes que celles qui avaient prévalu jusqu'à la Renaissance. Le clergé devint le protecteur des femmes contre les agressions sexuelles. Un homme « ayant promis le mariage à une fille, qui est morte enceinte de lui, doit dédommager » celle-ci de la perte de son honneur.

La danse était considérée par le clergé, comme une occasion prochaine du péché de la chair. Au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle, cette répression tourna à l'obsession chez beaucoup de prêtres. Il fallut 25 ans au curé d'Avs pour extirper la danse de sa paroisse. Le clergé se montra également très hostile aux associations de jeunes hommes qui se tenaient dans les cabarets et organisait des réjouissances, qui, comme les charivaris, nous semblent aujourd'hui d'un goût douteux. Au contraire, les confréries offraient aux femmes un lieu de sociabilité fort attrayant. Les réunions étaient toujours présidées par le curé. L'église devint ainsi un territoire féminin où les hommes se sentaient mal à l'aise.

En outre, l'éducation des filles se trouvait entre les mains des congrégations religieuses. La loi Falloux renforça leur prépondérance. En 1863, les sœurs instruisaient les trois quarts des quelque 100 000 filles présentes dans les pensionnats.

Cette féminisation de la religion en France serait à l'origine de la montée de la dévotion à la Vierge au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle. Les prêtres l'encourageaient beaucoup, peut-être parce qu'il s'agissait souvent d'hommes influencés par leur mère. La question de la dévotion mariale est sujette à controverse.

L'influence des femmes sur la religion est plus manifeste dans l'évolution de l'idée de Dieu qui, d'un Dieu terrible, devient un Dieu d'amour. Elle est tout à fait évidente sur l'art du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle (Saint-Sulpice).

J.H.H

GROSSHARD-SCHUCHTMAN (Shoshana). On the Economics of Marriage. A theory of Marriage, Labor and Divorce. Boulder-San Francisco-Oxford, 1993, 349 p.

Chaque individu offre sa force de travail sur le marché de l'emploi mais intervient également, en tant que membre (actuel ou potentiel) d'un couple, sur le marché du travail domestique en offrant sa participation aux tâches domestiques et en demandant, en retour, la participation du conjoint à ces mêmes tâches. Dans ce cadre, chacun recherche la meilleure combinaison possible entre le temps consacré au travail rémunéré, au travail domestique, aux loisirs, et les biens et services qu'il peut obtenir sur le marché. Partant de ce schéma devenu classique de l'analyse micro-économique, l'idée centrale de l'auteur est que l'offre de travail rémunéré, d'une part, l'offre et la demande de travail domestique, d'autre part, sont interdépendantes. Par exemple, le temps offert par un individu sur le marché du travail rémunéré dépendra - revenus non salariaux mis à part - du salaire qu'on lui propose (W) mais également de la rémunération (W\*) qu'il perçoit pour son travail domestique, ainsi que de celle qu'il doit à son conjoint (Wj\*) pour sa participation aux tâches domestiques. Dans des conditions de parfaite concurrence, les comportements des individus, associés à ceux des employeurs (demande de travail rémunéré), aboutissent à un équilibre entre les différents éléments en jeu, qui déterminent W et W\*, ainsi que le niveau d'emploi.

La situation de parfaite concurrence suppose que chaque individu puisse négocier librement son offre de travail domestique. Sur ce point essentiel, l'auteur estime qu'il n'y a pas de différence de nature entre le marché traditionnel du travail et le marché du travail domestique. En voulant, sans doute, anticiper les réactions que cette vision du mariage peut provoquer chez certains lecteurs, l'auteur indique qu'elle n'est pas plus étrange que celle que beaucoup d'économistes appliquent, par exemple, à la prise de décisions au sein des entreprises. Personnellement, nous ne prétendons pas que les postulats et les hypothèses des modèles utilisés dans ces théories décrivent la réalité. De même, le but ici n'est pas de décrire une institution aussi complexe que le mariage, mais de produire un ensemble d'hypothèses que l'on puisse tester. On ne peut que souscrire à ce propos général, mais la question est de savoir si, dans le cas du mariage (légal ou de fait), les conditions de base qui permettent le raisonnement en termes de marché sont remplies. Ainsi, la liberté de négociation des acteurs sur le marché suppose une mise en concurrence de l'offre ou de la demande. Or, si l'on peut imaginer qu'un certain choix du partenaire est possible avant le mariage, cette condition est plus difficilement garantie après. Leur lien compte de cette objection, en introduisant dans le modèle le coût du divorce comme variable exogène, mais cette opération d'adaptation à la spécificité de l'institution matrimoniale s'avère, comme on le verra, malaisée et peu convaincante. Quoiqu'il en soit, l'obstacle peut être provisoirement surmonté, en supposant que le coût du divorce (et du remariage) est nul ou du moins supportable pour l'intéressé, ce qui lui confère une certaine capacité de négociation, à l'instar de celle qu'il a sur le marché du travail.

L'interaction entre les deux marchés prônée par l'auteur conduit à une première différence importante par rapport aux modèles micro-économiques traditionnels. D'après des derniers, la valeur du temps alloué aux tâches domestiques dépend uniquement des caractéristiques du ménage ; si la femme exerce une activité extérieure rémunérée, la valeur de son temps domestique est égale à celle de son travail rémunéré ; dans le cas contraire, elle est supérieure (on se place ici dans le cas où c'est la femme qui a en charge la plus grande partie du travail domestique, cas le plus répandu dans nos sociétés). D'après le modèle de l'auteur, si la femme peut librement partager son temps entre travail domestique et travail extérieur, ce qui suppose une divisibilité parfaite du temps et un coût nul du divorce, alors Wj\* (ensemble des compensations matérielles perçues par la femme pour son travail au foyer) dépend des conditions du marché du travail domestique, et non pas du fait qu'elle exerce ou non une activité extérieure rémunérée. Par ailleurs, W\* a une influence négative sur l'offre féminine de travail à l'extérieur. Plus il est élevé, moins l'épouse aura tendance à vouloir exercer une activité extérieure rémunérée.

L'offre de travail à l'extérieur est également influencée par le rapport entre les effectifs masculins et féminins (H/F), suite à l'effet que ce rapport exerce sur Wj\*. Ainsi, dans le cas d'une immigration masculine provoquant une augmentation de H/F, il y aura une demande accrue de travail domestique féminin, accompagnée d'une hausse de Wj\* ; une baisse du salaire masculin sur le marché (Wh), ainsi que de la valeur de leur travail domestique (Wj\*). A son tour, la baisse de Wh aura un effet dépressif sur la demande masculine de travail domestique féminin. Enfin, la hausse de Wj\* entraînera une diminution de l'offre de travail féminin sur le marché traditionnel, et cela d'autant plus que la baisse des salaires masculins incitera les employeurs à remplacer les femmes par des hommes et abaisser ainsi la demande de travail féminin. La réduction simultanée de l'offre et de la demande conduit directement à une diminution de l'emploi féminin. Plus généralement, l'auteur émet

l'hypothèse que le rapport de masculinité H/F est inversement proportionnel au taux d'activité féminine (p. 106).

Ceci n'est qu'un exemple des nombreuses hypothèses que l'auteur extrait de son modèle et dont il donne une vue générale dans le chapitre 4. Dans les chapitres suivants (5 à 15), l'auteur passe en revue, de façon détaillée, certaines de ces hypothèses, en les testant sur des données provenant notamment d'enquêtes et de recensements. Il s'agit, dans la plupart des cas, d'études déjà publiées par l'auteur, seul ou en collaboration. Chacun des chapitres constitue un ensemble relativement autonome qui peut être lu séparément. Les variables indépendantes considérées pour à tour sont nombreuses (rapport des effectifs masculins aux effectifs féminins, salaire et revenu féminins, valeur des enfants, productivité du travail domestique, revenu masculin, hétérogénéité des individus qui composent le ménage...), ainsi que les variables dépendantes sur lesquelles elles sont censées exercer des effets (activité féminine, fréquence du mariage, du divorce ou des unions consensuelles, répartition du pouvoir au sein du couple, dot, mariages mixtes, existence et fréquence de la polygamie...). Après avoir prouvé le lien positif ou négatif entre les variables dépendante et indépendante principales, l'auteur explicite les variables indépendantes secondaires qui peuvent renforcer ou atténuer l'effet principal et teste les hypothèses au moyen de l'analyse de régression, de préférence.

Pour illustrer cette démarche reprenons la question du taux de masculinité aux âges du mariage et l'hypothèse qui le relie négativement à l'emploi féminin (chapitre 6). D'après le modèle, ce lien va être modulé par plusieurs facteurs. En premier lieu, les conséquences de la variation de H/F seront plus accusées pour les femmes mariées que pour les femmes non mariées. En effet, le choix entre travail domestique et travail rémunéré n'existe pas pour ces dernières, ce qui les rend moins sensibles aux modifications du marché du travail. Un faible niveau éducatif rendra, au contraire, les femmes plus sensibles à l'effet négatif de H/F sur l'emploi car, ayant peu de chances de trouver un travail bien rémunéré, elles auront tendance à profiter des nouvelles conditions favorables au travail domestique pour éviter d'avoir à chercher du travail à l'extérieur. Quant à la durée du mariage, elle est censée atténuer, voire inverser, l'effet négatif de H/F. En effet, plus le mariage est ancien plus les investissements matériels et affectifs de la femme dans le couple sont grands et les coûts d'une rupture élevés. Dans ces conditions, la part de  $W^*$  dépendante des conditions du marché se réduit, en affaiblissant ainsi l'effet négatif de H/F. Les données utilisées pour tester ces hypothèses sont *transversales*, comme pour la plupart des autres sujets examinés dans l'ouvrage, et *agrégées*, l'unité d'observation étant la ville. Il s'agit, dans une première analyse, de 67 villes observées en 1930, et, dans une seconde, de 65 villes observées en 1980. Les variables indépendantes diffèrent légèrement d'un cas à l'autre, en raison des indicateurs disponibles. Une analyse de régression permet à l'auteur de tester le degré d'association de chacune des variables avec le niveau d'emploi féminin. En l'occurrence, les liens se révèlent pour la plupart significatifs, dans le sens indiqué par l'auteur, notamment en ce qui concerne l'hypothèse principale (association négative entre H/F et emploi des femmes mariées).

Comme pour la plupart des autres études présentées, le lecteur est invité à se poser plusieurs questions. En premier lieu, l'application de la méthode de régression à ce type de données (agrégées et transversales) permet certes de déceler des associations entre variables difficilement imputables au hasard mais elle ne garantit pas que le sens du lien soit celui préconisé dans le modèle, même si dans certains cas, par exemple, celui qui vient d'être exposé, la logique ou le simple

bon sens indiquent qu'il ne peut pas en être autrement. L'emploi d'observations longitudinales, permettant de suivre chronologiquement l'ordre d'apparition des événements, aiderait sans doute à décider du sens de la relation dans de nombreux cas. Se pose également la question de la nature causale du lien observé. Le postulat implicite de la régression est que les variables qui restent au dehors de l'analyse n'entraînent aucun lien avec la variable indépendante étudiée ou du moins que leurs effets s'annulent mutuellement. C'est seulement à cette condition que l'on peut attribuer un rôle causal à la variable indépendante. Or, cette prémisses n'est pas remplie dans les conditions d'observation qui sont, en général, celles des sciences sociales. On peut uniquement rejeter une par une les variables alternatives, sans être certain de les avoir toutes examinées.

Le chapitre où l'auteur analyse le divorce et ses rapports avec l'offre de travail des femmes mariées illustre bien cette dernière difficulté. Selon le modèle général, un couple est en équilibre lorsque l'offre de travail domestique de chacun des époux correspond à la demande de l'autre. Dès qu'il y a un excès d'offre ou de demande, le risque de divorce apparaît. Le principal moyen de réduire une demande ou une offre excessive de travail domestique est l'ajustement par l'offre de travail à l'extérieur. Par ailleurs, le coût du divorce est un facteur important susceptible de réduire le risque de rupture. En se plaçant dans le cas où c'est la femme qui est victime du déséquilibre ci-dessus, il s'ensuit que l'offre de travail rémunéré des femmes mariées est plus faible quand le coût du divorce est élevé que lorsque ce dernier est faible car, dans le premier cas, la femme cherchera à éviter la rupture en offrant un surcroît de travail domestique, au détriment de l'offre de travail rémunéré. L'auteur, reconnaissant que le coût matériel et affectif du divorce est difficile à mesurer directement, estime que la fréquence des ruptures observées est un bon indicateur. D'où l'hypothèse que l'offre de travail des femmes mariées avec une fréquence de divorce élevée — divorce peu coûteux — sera plus grande que celles des femmes avec une fréquence de divorce faible (hypothèse 33, p. 187). Or, on doit pouvoir trouver une relation entre offre de travail et fréquence du divorce sans faire appel au lien de causalité invoqué par l'auteur. Il suffit simplement d'invoquer qu'un facteur sous-jacent, le statut social de la femme par exemple, peut à la fois déterminer, dans une société, la fréquence du divorce et l'offre de travail féminin.

Cet exemple illustre également combien l'intégration dans le modèle de certaines variables traditionnellement négligées par l'analyse micro-économique peut souvent se révéler fictive. Le passage de la variable « coût du divorce » à l'indicateur « fréquence du divorce » équivalait en fait à évacuer la variable en question.

Mais ce n'est pas le moindre mérite de l'auteur que d'avoir tenté cet élargissement de la micro-économie domestique classique à des variables de nature non économique. Même si les « nouvelles » variables restent le plus souvent réfractaires à une analyse en termes de marché concurrentiel ou de calculs coût-bénéfice, leur prise en considération dans un cadre conceptuel précis, et non dépourvu d'une certaine capacité de vérification, est stimulante. Elle peut conduire à mieux préciser les différences de niveau et les frontières mais aussi les articulations éventuellement possibles entre le paradigme micro-économique et les concepts utilisés dans d'autres disciplines qui étudient également le mariage et la famille.

F. M.-P.

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# I. A. F. F. E.

## NEWSLETTER

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### Book Reviews

*On the Economics of Marriage: A Theory of Marriage, Labor, and Divorce.* Shoshana Grossbard-Shechtman. Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1993. \$50.50 cloth.

This book is an impressive intellectual endeavor that generates a large set of testable hypotheses concerning marriage, divorce, and labor supply patterns. The author employs a model in which marriages are implicit contracts governing exchanges of "spousal labor," with unpaid work performed for the benefit of one's spouse. The markets for male and female spousal labor are linked to markets for male and female paid labor, so the equilibrium conditions in all four markets are interdependent and lead to market-clearing quasi-wages in the spousal labor markets.

A market model of marriage will be neither foreign nor unacceptable for the majority of persons reading this review. However, various assumptions underlying this particular model need to be examined as to their generality for explaining cross-cultural variations, for although the author purposely presents her model as a series of comparative statics exercises, perhaps the most interesting question to answer about marriage patterns is why societies have such different ones. In particular, the model

is predicated on the belief that individual men and women enter into marriages as rational individual utility-maximizers. Yet it appears from reports on many societies where dowries and bride payments exist that the persons reaping rewards from arranged marriages are members of the families rather than the bride and groom themselves. Additionally, while the sex ratio is taken as a determining factor of marriage and labor force participation patterns, the sex ratio cannot be treated as exogenous, given the possibilities of selective abortion, infanticide, and disparate treatment of young women and men; causality may instead run in the opposite direction (c.f., Ferber and Berg's paper in *Review of Social Economics*, 1991).

Feminist economists might also want to incorporate other factors which Grossbard-Shechtman treats as exogenous variables in a more general model of human attachments. In particular I note the assumption that "women value the commitment inherent in a formal marriage more than men do" (p. 68). Domestic violence is mentioned only in passing rather than incorporated into the model as either a cause or effect of marriage market outcomes. The public or club good nature of much household production (e.g., childraising) is not formally incorporated. Also missing is a discussion of homosexuality, bisexuality, and the possible endogeneity of sexual preferences and the acceptability of same-sex formalized unions.

However, this book is a solid starting point for thinking about how to create a more general model and serves as a very useful reference for theoretical and empirical work on marriage markets.

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