

HOUSEHOLD CHORES DO COUNT!

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ABSTRACT

This paper proposes a methodology for measuring household chores, which play an enormous role in the reproduction of life and in society well-being. These household chores, which comprise daily work performed within a domestic environment, when realized by members of the family, are ignored in economic theory, which neither values them nor accounts for them in Gross Domestic Product measures, as far as they are not associated with an equivalent flow of monetary revenue. A plausible interpretation for this derives from a historical discrimination in many societies against women, to whom performance of household chores has been uniquely assigned. Ignoring household chores reinforces the concept of *invisibility*, which characterizes domestic labor and an inferior role for women in society. Based on usual procedures for estimating goods or services not measured by economic statistics we find that household chores have corresponded on average to 11% of Brazilian GDP during the years of 2001 to 2008.

Key words: household chores, national accounts, invisibility of women's work, domestic services, household services

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1. INTRODUCTION

Since 1975, when United Nations Organization (UNO) established that year as *Women's International Year*, women's condition has undergone deep changes. From Freud's biologizing interpretation that "*anatomy is destiny*" to the idea that "*no one is born a woman, but becomes a woman*", as stated by Simone de Beauvoir (1949), women's movement, both at national and international levels, has engaged in a large amount of struggles to change their millenarian status of subordination.

Woman's role based on biological reproduction, with an emphasis on motherhood and on performing housekeeping activities, set her place in the private domain, contrariwise to that of man, whose assignment was to exert economic power in

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public domain. This dichotomy between both roles, although settled along centuries in its fundamentals, and also consecrated in a relative sexual division of labor, has changed considerably along mankind history.

In last decades, the women's movement rise, calling into question the old stereotypes of their role, has opened new paths and opportunities in society for women to carry out many activities out of home. Access to educational background, which has led to an engagement of a larger contingent of women in labor market,² has favored an increase in their political participation in society. This track record of "feminine advancement" has been measured by social sciences according to social and economic indicators related to their public role that do point to ongoing transformations. Nevertheless, these indicators show nothing about the traditional functions that women have been performing for centuries and remain as their specific task. Although access to education, wage-earning work and social and political participation have been achieved, women still have, like *Janus*, one face turned towards their home and the other to the world outside, in a great effort to survive in a time of breaking a millenarian code.

This change in women's role along the latest decades has found, however, no counterpart in a men's role change. In effect, roles of every social player are performed in an interaction with the other, in a relationship of exchange and reciprocity: if one of them changes, the other has to change too. Women's role, however, has changed without any fundamental change in men's role. In the Brazilian case, this is made worse by huge inequalities among social classes, which have led to the fact that a massive engagement of women in the labor market has been accomplished with no great changes in gender relations. House servants are a true army of poor low-skilled women, the largest lowly-paid contingent of female workers in the country. The permanence of these workers has made possible that rendering of household services by women be non-interrupted and kept laid on female shoulders, even when a mother/wife is absent from home. Many political proposals have been put forward in international forums to ensure equality between women and men in accessing social benefits and public equipment, so as to remove certain services from inside homes and to relieve women

² Poor low-income women have always worked in both domains, private and public: during the 19th century as slaves on farm fields or in towns as street vendors, wet mammies, peddlers for their bosses or owners, or nowadays, as daily house servants. Poor women have always been and continue to be remarkably present in labor world all over our history.

from these duties. All these, however, have mostly remained in a list of good intentions.

The paper briefly discusses at first the meaning of invisibility of women's work when performing activities within family environment; then approaches the methodology of measuring national accounts and ends by putting forward a proposal of inclusion of these activities in GDP accounts. This methodological exercise was, of course, only possible because statistical surveys measuring how populations make use of their time has been carried out in Brazil since 2001. It has become possible, therefore, to analyze economic and social reproduction – from paid work to domestic chores. These surveys have been implemented in some countries of the European Union, the United States, Canada and Brazil (Claudio Dedecca, 2004).

2. INVISIBILITY OF WOMEN'S WORK

The women's movement has since the seventies called into question the scientific paradigms which support the myth of science neutrality and biological deterministic theories that look at feminine condition from a biological and naturalizing point of view (Neuma Aguiar, 1997). Biological sciences are heiresses to an ancient Greek philosophical tradition according to which to be born a woman was a chastisement from the gods and the only destiny for female beings was to procreate. This concept led sciences to be developed on the basis of women's inferiority and to obliterate the fact that women have for centuries gathered learning and expertise in healing and in obstetrics.

Nor have human sciences escaped this approach: they also dealt with women from a limited by social stratification viewpoint, restricted themselves to studies on family, where women were queens. Marriage was looked upon as one of the most honorable careers, which dispensed with any social participation, therefore causing female gender to be ignored as a social player. Family was seen as a structure capable to move through history, linear in its evolution and everlasting as to the composition of its members.

The ideology of feminine nature created a smokescreen that overshadowed women's ways of living; in fact, in academic studies, women turned up and still do only as a statistical category. They are paid lower wages than men, their labor turnover rates are higher, they work preferably in services and in manufacturing women's labor share

is concentrated in some branches. Science must, nevertheless, proceed beyond this point.³

Current studies on the feminine condition in human sciences is, somehow, an aftereffect of the women's movement that along the last thirty years took this shape and engaged into autonomous discussions about itself and its evolution. Theoretically influenced both by Marxist and neoclassical approaches, history, sociology, anthropology, political studies and economics have their paradigms pervaded by the gender issue, with many research and studies developed in order to account for this new reality.

In the academic world most issues refer to the problems of women's work, reproductive health, political participation and family. One of the most recurrent themes is that of invisibility of women's work, for mostly in the field of economics household work is not adequately qualified. This is one of the first matters brought forward by the women's movement to consideration by social scientists and refers to an effort to reinterpret the concepts of domestic work and productive/unproductive work: it does look like an iceberg for the issue of women's inferiority. To the important question of why domestic work is predominantly performed by women, social sciences, and specially, economic theory *per se*, have little or nothing to say and economic analyses have also produced no advancement beyond some vague ideas and prejudices.

This matter remains obscure because from a liberal standpoint – but also from a Marxist one – women's subordination is explained by their exclusion from the mercantile world, this exclusion being due to cultural factors. Marx's insight of human life and social organization is his concept of production: "The production of life, both of one's own by labor or of fresh life by procreation, appears at once as a double relationship, on the one hand as a natural, on the other as a social relationship." (*German ideology*) Ambiguous as it may be, Marx in "*Capital*", his major work, does not refer to the question of family and the reproduction of human beings remains therefore rather cloudy.

Marxist members of the women's movement argue that women in their domestic domain are exploited by their companions, be they workers or capitalists, since household chores are the most common kind of non-paid work. These analyses start

³ On the relationship between science and gender, see Evelyn F. Keller (1985); Sandra Harding (1986); Janet Sayers (1989); Julie Nelson (1992); Lucila Scavone, org. (1996) and Neuma Aguiar (1997).

from Marx's idea that labor is a special commodity the use-value of which is to produce (exchange) value. In the process of (re)production of this special commodity there occurs a second type of exploitation, because domestic work for family's sake, invariably performed by women, is neither paid nor recognized. It is possible to conclude that "exchange" between capital and labor is not a mercantile relation and that it is not possible to explain the emergence of profit and the reproduction of a wage relationship exclusively in the domain of the production and circulation of commodities. There is no equivalence in the "exchange" between capital and labor, but only a condition of equity of juridical status in their contract relation. It is not an exchange relationship between commodity owners but an unequal relationship of power warranted and regulated by the State.⁴

An examination of this question thus demands a non-purely economic analysis of capitalism. At this level of abstraction, labor is blind to gender; since mercantile society is based on intra and inters competition of capitalists and workers, gender, in the same way as race and education, stands out as a factor of cleavage of this competition, operating as an alibi for discrimination. In reality, capital as a whole tries to reproduce the social organism conditions of stability. But the movement is full of contradictions and, as pointed by Michael Kalecki (1979), "capitalists do not act as a class"; when the dynamics of accumulation clashes against preexistent social order, the latter is destroyed by capitalism. High-speed incorporation of women into the labor market in last decades is a good illustration.

Since the family production of domestic services is a production use-values there is no reference in Karl Marx's *Capital* to the question of family; the reproduction of human beings remains therefore rather cloudy. A reflection on this question implies bringing non mercantile domestic production into the postulates of economic theory. This refers to the reproduction of human beings, i.e. the workers, for the sake of capital. Concealment of household chores as something that escapes the theory scope, because it is not an exchange object, was a subject dealt with by Marxist feminists as responsible for building a split woman's image, a second-rate citizen. Differences between use-value and exchange value or concrete labor and wage labor are not small for them and these categories should definitely be separately treated. All the more so because there is

⁴ See quotations on Marx in the bibliography: Carlo Bennetti and Jean Cartelier (1981); Jean Cartelier (1981); Michel De Vroey (1984); José Machado and Franklin L. P. Serrano (1986) and Francisco R. Lopes and Franklin L. P. Serrano (1987).

no well accomplished study about the issues of reproduction, household work, children socialization and care of the elderly and the sick (typical women's tasks). These tasks, previously organized according to kinship relations and inseparable in what regards gender and class have undergone, in capitalism, a separate treatment and have kept an intimate relationship with the inferior status of woman in present world.

It must be stressed that Marx's theses, compared to other economic streams of thought, had a strong effect on the divulgation of texts on women's subordination and inspired a great quantity of works dealing with the interface of economics with sociology and anthropology. These investigations started from the idea that women's subordination is explained by their exclusion from mercantile world and they explored the effects of industrialization on women's life, with a focus on the production approach, but, according to tradition, leaving aside their reproductive role.⁵

The streams of economic thought, both classical and Marxist, have therefore overlooked gender relations in their interpretations of the concepts of production and reproduction in capitalism.⁶ In Brazil, pioneer works on this issue were those of Heleieth Saffioti (1976) and Eva Blay (1978). The first author brought to her analysis the notion of feminine mystique in parallel with the reserve army of labor. It blends the idea of women's tenderness with the labor reserve resorted to by capitalist system to lower the price of labor, leading to the problematic condition above mentioned. Eva Blay is concerned with the reduction of women's jobs in manufacturing, due to advance of industrialization in peripheral countries and reaches a similar conclusion as Heleieth Saffioti.

Neoclassical approach to household work was revisited in the latest decades mainly by the American economist Gary Becker (1992 Nobel laureate in economics)⁷. For him, a mother as an "economic" agent behaves as from an optimizing starting point, i.e., the concept of an optimizing economic player is based on the assumption of inter capitalist competition as a selection process driving agents (firms) to a search for profit maximization. In the case of consumers, they are individualistic and utilitarian, and women in the exercise of motherhood also behave as such.

⁵ On the subject see also Andrée Michel (1978); Claude Meillassoux (1979); Linda Nicholson (1987) and Fatiha-Hakili Tahahite (1984).

⁶ See Stuart Mill (1985) and Hildete Melo and Valéria Pena (1985).

⁷ See bibliography on Gary Becker in the references. The following paragraphs are based on a text by Hildete Melo in a partnership with Franklin Serrano (1997).

People, however, do not behave as capitalist firms, nor the act of bearing children can be classified as a utilitarian relationship. It is not that mothers are benevolent and altruistic, but a selfish motherly behavior would most probably jeopardize children's survival. It is thus difficult to justify the approach to household chores from an optimization assumption.

There are also problems with the notion of equilibrium used by Becker. In neoclassical theory, the justification for studying positions of equilibrium in the market is based on the idea that, under competition, disequilibrium between supply and demand inevitably causes reactions from profit-seeking firms. These reactions quickly tend to eliminate such discrepancies. Accordingly, although the economy in reality is never in equilibrium, it will always be tending to equilibrium between supply and demand.

Becker undertakes his analyses by using an assumption that domestic work virtual "market" is always in equilibrium, this meaning that any transaction is necessarily an equilibrium transaction between two optimizing agents. This brings his analysis closer to a tautology. If something happens (for instance, if a woman gives birth to a baby), this was necessarily the result of her rational act (and, of course, also of the child's father), in which the utility of having one more child equals the marginal cost of bringing the child up. In addition, since household work (chore) is not accomplished under competition, the main forces that justify the idea that the economy tends at least to equilibrium are absent.

Economic theory, as conceived by classical, Marxist and neoclassical economists and resorting to postulates such as competition, supply, demand, class struggle, etc, concepts used to dissect capitalist market, has, therefore, shown itself inadequate to explain women's status in our society. Another kind of approach is necessary, one that assigns priority to institutions, cultural patterns, strategies of discrimination, psychosocial questions that unveil what feminine really means in our society.

The repercussion of the women's movement has led to the formulation of the concept of gender and the many fields of knowledge have had it incorporated as a network of power relations that men, on one side, and women, on the other, establish between themselves.⁸ As a matter of fact, family should be reconsidered and thought

⁸ See Joan W. Scott (1994).

of, not anymore as a homogeneous group, but as individuals of different sexes in a situation of cohabitation, accomplishing productive and reproductive activities and sharing a project of survival. The problem is that ignorance of the specific contribution of women induces an underestimation to a larger extent of their practice both in the family and in the productive domain, reinforcing the idea of women's underemployment. The invisibility that surrounds the study of gender differences magnifies the reproduction of inequalities when job possibilities and opportunities to be offered to women by the development process are taken into account.

Ester Boserup (1970), in her pioneer work, defined sexual division of labor as a basic element in the division of labor. This author pointed how, at the calculation of national product, production and subsistence services, activities performed by women, as well as their contribution to socioeconomic welfare, are underestimated or are not granted due relevance. The criticism from the women's movement by the end of the seventies helped to enhance the debate on the ways of how to appraise the role of women in both two social dimensions: production and reproduction.

This broader approach makes evident that full participation of women should be promoted by means of eliminating the limitations that marginalize them or make them invisible, be they engaged in household chores or in public and in the so-called productive work. Ann Oakley's work (1974), by making explicit that man's labor is linked to commodity producing labor and woman's labor to housekeeping, concludes that the word housewife could not be a byword for wife and mother, but for non- paid domestic work. This has kindled the fire of women's rebellion to reject the old stereotypes of women's role and to unmask non-paid work.

Since the eighties academic feminism has elaborated a gender category as a tool of analysis of women's work by studying the sexual division of labor and social injustice. When utilizing the concept of gender an idea is incorporated that social relations mean antagonistic and conflictive relations. The utilization of this concept also implies the study of the effects of differences between women's and men's economic and social roles, which paves the way to overcome the depreciation commonly assigned to women's labor. This new outlook on gender is intended to acknowledge which type of specificity and collaboration remains between the roles performed by men and women. What is important, therefore, is to reclaim the diversified range of roles performed by women, looking at them as agents/players and

not exclusively as benefitted individuals in homogeneous interiors of family nuclei or invisible among the whole population.

It is our point of view that the gender outlook makes possible a more enriching appraisal of the extent and quality of changes experienced by women in last decades, account being taken of the whole set of transformations in all economic activities. This acknowledgment should lead to a reassessment of the methodology of national accounts that has up to now overshadowed household chores and therefore largely underrated its huge relevance for society's welfare.

3. WHAT NATIONAL ACCOUNTS MEASURE

The adopted National Accounts System closely follows recommendations by the United Nations (UNO), the International Monetary Fund, the European Communities Commission, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development and the World Bank made explicit in the national accounts handbook, *System of National Accounts 1993*.⁹ These agencies recommend a broader concept of production to be adopted. It is, therefore, considered as productive every socially organized operation aiming at securing goods and services, either tradable in the market or not, provided that it makes use of tradable in the market production factors. These operations should be accomplished by residents in the economic national territory, refer to a certain period of time and be evaluated in country statistics according to basic prices, i.e., they should include production costs and taxes net of subsidies to activities.

Production of goods and services is considered a market production whenever these become tradable at a certain price established by the market. Every production of goods¹⁰ is accepted, by convention, as a mercantile or market production provided that there is always a market for that good, in which a price for it can be reached and, thus, a production value. This comprises all agricultural produce for self-consumption as well as capital goods production on the own account of the producer.

Services,¹¹ on the other hand, are divided into market and non-market ones. Commodity services are those aimed at being produced for sale in the market for a price

⁹ For Brazil, see IBGE (1997, 2007).

¹⁰ Goods are associated to something tangible, being quite frequently called transportable goods.

¹¹ Economic literature does not count yet on a widely accepted common definition of services. Generally speaking, "services" mean activities that are different from manufacturing, agriculture and cattle raising

that rewards factor services used in their creation. It also includes a kind of service the value of which is ascribed by convention, as it will later be seen when dealing with financial institutions, namely, the imputed production of services of financial intermediation.

Non-market services are those supplied free or by a symbolic price to the collectivity (all country, specific groups of people or families, etc). Those collective services are provided by public administration or non-profit private institutions. Both are defined as institutional units whose main goal is to care for families and whose main funding source is compulsory or voluntary transfers of money by means of taxes, donations, contributions, etc.

A share of these collective services supplied by public administrations (national defense, judicial power, etc) is not available in any market, therefore having in no way a price – and thus a production value – defined under any possible assumption. Another share of them, however, such as health and education and part of non-commodity private services can be evaluated by resorting to market prices for similar commodity services. These latter, when meaning market services, however, have a considerable amount of their gross operational surplus in their added value comprising many other remunerations apart from those for labor. Since public administration does not produce any surplus (excepting possible fixed capital depreciation values), and aiming at ensuring homogeneity of concepts, production cost is considered as the production value of non-market services, either public or private. This production value equals then the sum of values of goods used as intermediate consumption for producing non-market service and the remunerations values (gross wages plus payroll charges) plus depreciation (consumption of fixed capital).

Among non-market services, paid household services performed by autonomous workers are included. Their production value is measured by the value of the remunerations of the autonomous workers engaged in this activity. It does leave out, therefore, household work done on one's own account and non- remunerated.

It becomes then clear that national accounts measure all goods and services that involve remuneration of production factors; causing a prevalence of the identity that product equals income. In other words, the utilization of production factors in the

producing activities. In a nutshell, they refer to anything that cannot be stocked by producers . See Hildete Melo *et alii* (1998).

process of production creates an equivalent amount in remunerations corresponding to the contribution of that production factor to the value added to product.

It is necessary to mention here two interesting situations that require adoption of a fictitious procedure in order to act as accurately as possible when measuring production by certain kinds of agents. One situation concerns taking the difference between interests received and interest paid as the production of financial institutions. This is a value actually created in another time of production; truly speaking, this interest difference is rather appropriated than produced by financial institutions.¹²

Another situation refers to imputed rent value of any real estate for one's own use. Houses, farms, industrial plants and facilities produce services of housing and occupancy measured by rent value, whenever rented; when it is the owner who uses them, these same services are evaluated by the rent value of similar rented estates. In other words, the real estate for one's own use is a capital good that produces a service value equivalent to its rent value, be it real or fictitious.

In the case of household work, when performed by third parties, its evaluation criterion is to make it equal to the value paid to these third parties. However, when accomplished by someone within the family, household work is not computed in national accounts. Why, as seen in last paragraph, a labor production factor is not granted the same treatment than a capital production factor? In addition, from a labor market viewpoint, people only engaged in household chores – such as housewives – are not even classified as members of the labor force (AEP – Active Economic Population), but as inactive population. Curiously enough, if they perform any activity in a family business – even without remuneration – these people are then classified as working population.

It is worth noting that *SNA* in its chapter VI (production accounts) raises these questions and justifies why household chores should be excluded from GDP calculations.¹³ It argues, taking as an example the production of agricultural or manufactured goods for own use, that these can alternatively be sold in the market,

¹² This value, whenever paid by a productive activity will be deducted from its intermediate consumption and will not, therefore, be a part of its added value, double counting being thus avoided. The same does not apply when it is paid by families, for in this case it becomes part of their final consumption.

¹³ It is stated in chapter VI, item 6.17 that “the production frontier in the System is more restricted than general production frontier. [...] production accounts are not elaborated for family activities, which produce domestic or personal services for their own final consumption, with the exception of services produced by means of employment of remunerated domestic service personnel”.

whereas services for own use (household chores) do not have this attribute, since they do not reflect the reality of capitalist market. In addition, it sustains the above mentioned imputation of rent values because there is a supposed large difference, among countries, in the proportion of rented and owned real estate.

Even if this proves to be a justifiable reasoning, it can be argued, on the other hand, that there is also a large difference among countries in the availability of commodity auxiliary goods and services that cause a reduction of time wasted in household chores. The value created by these commodity goods and services is computed in the GDP. The result is that in countries, like developing ones, where household chores are more frequent and carried out by the families themselves GDP tends to be reduced or underestimated.

Thus, in case household chores are computed in national accounts, they should be treated as a production of non-market services, produced by families and totally consumed by them. This implies creating a productive activity, “family”, similar in characteristics to the “public administration” activity, the production value of which should be measured in an identical way as that of paid household work.

4. THE IMPORTANCE OF HOUSEHOLD CHORES IN BRAZIL

To bring the value of household chores into the GDP account may not be as appealing in developed countries as it should be in Brazil. Nor is that the case in countries where discrimination against women is not as noticeable as in this large South American country. As to the first case, high rates of unemployment prevail in Brazil and less developed countries; associated to low wages, these high unemployment rates cause the voluntary exclusion from labor market of a great number of people in active working age. For these people, the opportunity cost of being paid a remunerated work or of applying oneself to household chores (cooking, cleaning, washing, taking care of children, old and sick people) does not make much difference.

In developed countries, a greater supply of high-skilled jobs tips the scales in an opposite direction. Since to hire workers for household services is rather costly, conveniences have been developed (as far as nurseries, schools, food catering and cleaning are concerned) that enable both husband and wife to engage in paid work out of home and also fulfill household duties.

On the other hand, market production of these services and conveniences contributes to increase GDP in more developed countries, whereas in Brazil and in developing countries they are neither even accounted nor evaluated. In spite of not being taken into account (i.e., measured and valued), services produced by household work are definitely produced and indeed contribute to increase the availability of family services and, thus, to raise family welfare. Their difference, namely between welfare derived from remunerated household work and that involving no payments, is just the capacity to create or not a monetary revenue flow.

Their measurement and evaluation in Brazil and in less developed countries are, therefore, particularly relevant if national accounts actually intend to show current availability of goods and services in the country. It is quite likely that the value of these services is also important in more developed countries, although the amount of time wasted in producing them there is, most probably, smaller. In developed countries their importance stems from the fact that these household works are considerably better paid.

In what regards discrimination against women, it is well known that household chores have been historically assigned to them. Although, at present, discrimination against women does not prevail anymore in developed countries as it did in the past, non-accounting (or non-evaluating) household chores as a constituent part of the national product can still be seen as a reflex of their past lesser role. A more radical look leads to the argument that what remains in terms of discrimination against women, even in developed countries, stems partly from non-accounting (or non-evaluating) household chores in GDP. To point to how much they are worth and to how much women contribute to family and to the nation's welfare may possibly reduce the extent of that discrimination.

5. A METHODOLOGICAL PROPOSAL TO MEASURE HOUSEHOLD CHORES IN BRAZIL

Since 2001 the Brazilian Geographic and Statistics Institute (IBGE) has conducted National Household Sample Surveys (PNAD), investigated the amount of hours spent by the population in accomplishing household chores according to each unit of the Federation and classified them by gender and age group. It was due to the possibilities open by the introduction of this question in the research that the present methodological proposal was made possible.

Household chores are carried out both by women and men, although the amount of time spent by women is much greater than that spent by men.¹⁴ It would be an ideal procedure to identify the different kinds of household chores and the average (hourly) specific remunerations for each of them, according to National Household Sample Surveys (PNAD) and then have them multiplied by the amount of hours recorded for each household task, according to PNAD data.

Evidently, as in any estimate, some problems might come out in this calculation. If, in case of real estate, a hardly successful effort is made to somehow measure services of similar quality, this becomes truly impossible in the case of household work. This comprises services rendered by people with different skills (or no skills at all) and the market accordingly commands different remunerations corresponding to different results. As far as the production of statistics for these non-remunerated services is concerned, these quality differences are not easy to measure in order to allow equivalent values to be established. To attribute an average remuneration for a work hour seems then to be the only possible solution.

Another problem that could arise is that of household tasks using building intermediate goods (such as cement or wall paint, for example), because these goods have been to a large extent already taken into the account of the production of self-employed builders, since do-it yourself building is already measured in national accounts according to the use made of typical building inputs.

All in all, the achieved income (or product) value would be added to the income figure for services – domestic services – and thus added to the country's GDP. This would be a similar procedure to that used to increase the production of some activities not covered by economic statistics, activities that, in Brazil, have amounted to some 13% of Brazilian GDP.

6. USING NATIONAL HOUSEHOLD SAMPLE SURVEYS (PNAD/IBGE)

National Household Sample Surveys (PNAD), conducted by IBGE since 2001, investigates the amount of hours spent by the population in household chores according to each unit of the Federation and classifies them by gender and age group.

¹⁴ As it will be later seen, it is twice as high in almost all age groups.

This same research (PNAD) also investigates the kind of economic activity, the amount of hours worked and the corresponding remuneration of the engaged workers, either formally registered or not or either as employees or employers. Actually, this is the only information available about production for many economic activities and, thanks to it, it has become possible in national accounts to ascribe added values of the many activities normally not recorded in the country's economic statistics or even in administrative records.

It has consequently become possible for the Brazilian national account system by taking PNAD data as a starting point to measure the production of paid domestic workers. What is here proposed is its use also to measure the household chores performed by non paid family members. With this purpose in mind, the average remuneration of paid domestic services, classified according to payment per hour and per state, was multiplied by the amount of hours spent in household chores, according to gender, age group and state.¹⁵

It is worth discussing here a question quite often raised in debates about this matter. Why to ascribe the value received by domestic servants when a similar service is accomplished by people with skills higher than most part of the world of domestic servants? The answer is simple in this case: if a Ph.D. engineer or economist (or any other professional) offered his or her services in the household services market, he or she would be paid the market value assigned to those rendering these services. The remuneration would not be that of his or her professional background, but just that of a house servant.

It should be reminded that PNAD is fielded every month of September, every year, with the exception of census years, which means that data here recorded always refer to September of the reference year. In accordance with IBGE methodology for calculation of national accounts in Brazil, it would be more correct to use in this simulation monthly changes in average income of household services, as recorded by the Monthly Employment Survey (PME/IBGE) and estimate the monthly values of this

¹⁵ An assumption here is that it does not matter the age group: everyone is able to efficiently perform the assigned household services.

income as measured by PNAD. An average annual value for the income of household services would then be reached.¹⁶

7. THE HOUSEHOLD CHORES ACCOUNT: 2001-2008

Resort was made of three methods to proceed with the accounting of household chores in this paper. By the first method, the average income of household work as recorded by PNAD (National Household Survey) in September was considered as an average annual income. The second method used monthly changes of the minimum wage along the year to have the recorded value by PNAD in September changed, on the assumption that wages of household work follow changes in the (legal) minimum wage. For the third method the methodology of Brazilian national accounts was utilized, so that the September wage recorded by PNAD changed every month following the monthly change in household work income, as recorded by PME (Employment Monthly Survey). This is equal to assume that wages of household work move in an identical way as the average wage of household work in the six metropolitan regions covered by PME.

Some of the results by method #3 are not presented, due to lack of PME information for all years. It should be stressed, however, as it can be noted, that the results for years 2002 and 2003, for which there were data available, draw near those by method #1. Data used are shown in a Statistical Annex that can be requested by readers to the authors of the paper and refer to period 2001-2008. In the Annex it is possible to find GDP values at current prices, monthly minimum wages and the calculations of value for household chores, as well as the amount of time spent in their accomplishment by population according to gender.

As seen in Table 1, below, the share of household chores in each year GDP is quite similar, whatever the year, coming to an average 11.3% when calculations are made using the September values or an average 10.4%, when using the PME annual change for the two years for which this information is available. Since previous PME series were not available and a new series started in March 2002, minimum wage changes were alternatively used to indicate monthly changes in average remuneration

¹⁶ This is the methodology used by the National Accounts of Brazil, as was made clear by Heloísa Valverde Filgueiras, economist at IBGE National Accounts Department. It is worth stressing here that while PNAD is extended to the country as a whole, the Monthly Employment Survey (PME) covers only six metropolitan regions in Brazil.

for year 2001. In comparison with the result of other methodologies, the share of household chores here is a little lower, reaching an average 10.1%. Nevertheless, results are quite similar whatever the method used.

Since the results reached from PNAD September values do not substantially differ from those of the methodology adopted by national accounts for the years in which there are no results for both, and since only results for the five years with the PNAD September values can be produced, the results below listed refer to method #1 which adopts PNAD September value as an annual average.

In terms of value, in case household chores were taken into the GDP account in Brazil, this would mean to add some R\$ 298 billion in 2008. GDP in 2008 would then reach R\$ 3, 200 billion and not only R\$ 2,900 billion as has been published by IBGE.

TABLE 1 – ANNUAL INCOME FROM HOUSEHOLD CHORES AND ITS SHARE IN GDP ACCORDING TO METHODS USED – BRAZIL – 2001-2008

YEARS	2001		2002		2003		2004	
METHODS	ANNUAL INCOME R\$ MILLION	% OF GDP	ANNUAL INCOME R\$ MILLION	% OF GDP	ANNUAL INCOME R\$ MILLION	% OF GDP	ANNUAL INCOME R\$ MILLION	% OF GDP

METHOD # 1	148,653	11.4	170,238	11.5	200,283	11.8	204,791	10.5
METHOD #2	131,692	10.1	153,215	10.4	177,174	10.4	184,191	9.5
METHOD #3	-	-	167,710	11.3	199,812	11.8	-	-
GDP								
R\$ MILLION	1,302,136	-	1,477,822	-	1,699,948	-	1,941,498	-

YEARS	2005		2006		2007		2008	
METHODS	ANNUAL	% OF	ANNUAL	% OF	ANNUAL	% OF	ANNUAL	% OF
	INCOME	GDP	INCOME	GDP	INCOME	GDP	INCOME	GDP
	R\$ MILLION		R\$ MILLION		R\$ MILLION		R\$ MILLION	
METHOD # 1	235,350	11.0	269,642	11.4	319,965	12.3	297,857	10.3
METHOD #2	207,591	9.7	240,011	10.1	289,523	11.1	271,080	9.4
METHOD #3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
GDP								
R\$ MILLION	2,147,239	-	2,369,797	-	2,597,611	-	2,889,719	-

Source: The authors, based on PNAD (Households National Survey) /IBGE (Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics), data from 2001 to 2008 and on IBGE national accounts.

Notes: 1) Annual income and GDP values in millions of current Reais for the corresponding year.

2) Method # 1 – September weekly income earned by people employed in household chores multiplied by 52 weeks.

3) Method # 2 - September weekly income earned by people employed in household chores, divided by September minimum wage and multiplied by the sum of the minimum wages for each month in the corresponding year.

4) Method #3 – Calculation of annual income earned by people employed in household chores based on changes in monthly average income of people engaged in household services according to the PME (Employment Monthly Survey)/IBGE.

Having in mind the amount of hours spent by women in household chores, which averages twice the same amount by men, and also the number of women engaged in this function – an average 2.2 times the number of men – it is possible to conclude that added value from household chores by women averages 82%, while the remaining 18% are added by men. In 2008, the value of those 82% added by women engaged in household chores would have reached R\$ 244 billion.

An last but not least, it is useful to call attention to the fact that the GDP share created by household chores is almost the same in value as the GDP of the state of Rio de Janeiro, the state with the second highest GDP in Brazil.

8. CONCLUSIONS

This paper has tried to show something that most people pretend to ignore: the value of household chores made by men and women of the family in our life and wellbeing. This discrimination appears intentional in economic theory: services created by the accomplishment of household chores are not taken into the countries' GDP account, which means that there is no value ascribed to them and no social acknowledgement either. This is probably due to the historic discrimination against women, to whom mostly household chores in all societies were assigned. To ignore it only makes the concept of invisibility of women's work stronger and more deeply rooted.

By utilizing common procedures of estimating goods and services non-measured by economic statistics, and for this using demographic statistics and social statistics derived from National Household Sample Surveys (PNAD), conducted by the Brazilian Geographic and Statistics Institute (IBGE), and technical methods similar to those used in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) accounting, it is possible to conclude that household chores are activities amounting to some 11.3% of Brazil's GDP, which corresponds to a value of R\$ 298 billion in 2008. This means that Brazil's GDP would increase by this amount if the society were to recognize and take into national accounts those tasks so deeply linked to life's reproduction. In addition, it has been showed that 82% of that work was done by women; in monetary terms, women produced around R\$ 244 billion.

It should be made clear that this value is small due to the extremely low wages paid by Brazilian economy. Remunerated household service is actually one of the activities with the worst wages in the economy, which brings a great effect upon this measurement.¹⁷ Surely, the participation of this kind of service is quite different in European countries or in the United States, where wage disparities are not so remarkable. In those countries, remunerations are higher but, on the other hand, the amount of time spent and of people engaged in household chores is considerably lower. Families there have access to many goods and auxiliary services that make up for household chores; these goods and services are commodities and are as such being already measured in GDP figures.

¹⁷ See Hildete Melo *et alii* (2002).

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