

# **Liberating Economics**

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## **Feminist Perspectives on Families, Work, and Globalization**

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and  
Susan F. Feiner**

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**To our mothers  
who shared their hope  
that the world could  
be different**

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## Preface and Acknowledgments

As feminists and as economists it is important to begin with context and history—both the personal and the professional. Our vision of economics was shaped by the political and cultural movements of the 1960s and 1970s, including the antiwar movement, the civil rights movement and the women's movement. An important insight of this era is expressed in the slogan "the personal is political." First as graduate students in economics, now as professors in the discipline, we've come to appreciate the relevance of this truth. The decision to study economics, like economics itself, is political. But the politics of economics need not reflect the fear of scarcity or the narcissism of self-interest. Instead, feminist economics rests on a politics of inclusion, the recognition of mutual reciprocities, and social justice.

When we began to study the discipline, no one told us that in its formative years many women wrote and lectured in economics. Here, as in other disciplines, professionalization was accompanied by the exclusion of women. The result was a decidedly androcentric approach, one that accepts male superiority and female subordination as normal and mutually beneficial.

In economics, as in virtually every other academic area, the discovery and recovery of women's contributions to the field did not occur until a critical mass of appropriately credentialed women began to ask new questions and search for their predecessors. In the second half of the twentieth century more and more women earned doctorates in the discipline. This led the premier organization in economics, the American Economic Association, to establish the Committee for the Status of Women in the Economics Profession (CSWEP) in 1971. But in economics, unlike the other social sciences or the humanities, it took another twenty years for a self-consciously feminist community of economists to emerge. It was not until the early 1990s that the International Association for Feminist Economics (IAFFE) was formed and in 1995 the first volume of the IAFFE journal, *Feminist Economics*, was published.



## **Preface and Acknowledgments**

We were motivated to bring the explanatory power of feminist theory to our work as we observed feminist developments in virtually all the disciplines of the social sciences, the humanities, and the sciences. As economists started to view economic theories, institutions, and policies through the lens of gender, they began to question and transform the field. IAFPE provided the intellectual community where this could occur. We have been privileged to be among the founders of this tradition, and we are grateful for the many invaluable conversations, debates, and friendships that brought this new path to economic knowledge into being.

We would like to thank Hollins University, the University of Southern Maine, and the Hawke Institute at the University of South Australia for their support of this project. Through a combination of leaves and visiting appointments we had both the time and the space to work together. Our colleagues in women's studies and economics offered many thoughtful comments on earlier chapter drafts. Thank you. Thanks also to Ellen McCarthy and Raphael Allen, our editors, and to the anonymous readers for their valuable feedback. We also thank our students, whose questions and interests helped us shape our ideas. Special thanks to Jim Kessler for his invaluable and timely assistance with our computers, networks, and file recoveries and also to Kathleen Ingoldsby for her inspired work on the cover art.

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