



Eleonora Masini on the empowerment of women

Wendell Bell

Department of Sociology, Yale University, P.O. Box 208265, New Haven, CT 06520-8265, USA

Available online 18 April 2006

Abstract

Eleonora Barbieri Masini's lifetime contributions as visionary sociologist and pioneering futurist are well known. Less well known, perhaps, are her roles as *vital catalyst* in organizing comparative research on the role and status of women and as *activist leader* in efforts to end the exploitation and subordination of women and to create a future world of equality, freedom, and social justice. In this article, examples of Masini's work on—and for—the empowerment of women are given.

© 2006 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

My mother used to tell me, 'Every problem is an opportunity'. It is an aphorism that has helped me cope with many of the inevitable disappointments and disasters that, from time to time, we all confront. Until recently, however, it never occurred to me that the main 'problem' my mother faced was me. My mother, then a young, divorced, and displaced woman in the middle of an economic depression, must have been searching in her needy and demanding son for some hopeful signs of opportunity.

This belated revelation struck me recently reading the work of Eleonora Barbieri Masini on the changing role and status of women and on women's efforts to achieve freedom, equality, and social justice.

Let's face it: women usually get the short end of the stick. Biology traps them in their reproductive role, while men can sow their seeds and sometimes move on. Months of pregnancy burden them. The risks of childbirth endanger their lives. Nature, society, and culture conspire to thrust the tasks of childcare upon them, feeding, clothing, and protecting their young children. Custom chains them to household tasks, such as preparing food and cleaning, and expects them to shoulder the burdens of caring for the sick and the

E-mail address: wendell.bell@yale.edu.

elderly. Economic change and development, at least in the short run, may add to their burdens as they accept paid jobs in the labor force, which for poor women in developing areas usually means very low wages. Finally, tradition, especially in developing areas, forces women into subservience to men who make many of the decisions that shape their lives.

These are some of the issues with which Eleonora Barbieri Masini's work deals. She has what can rightly be called 'a passionate commitment' to understand and improve the lives of women. Toward these ends, she has organized empirical social research by women about women in many countries throughout the world. Fully engaging the future, she has promoted social action by encouraging cooperative efforts among international groups of women to bring an end to the exploitation and subordination of women and to work for a future of women's freedom and well-being. And for all humanity, she encourages women to work for a future world of ecological balance, peace, friendship, love, and solidarity among people [1].

In this article, I discuss a few of Masini's contributions to the study of the changing role and status of women as well as some of her efforts to help women take control of their own futures.

2. Women, households and change

2.1. Purposes

One example of Masini's work is *Women, Households and Change* [2], which she co-edited with Susan Stratigos. It reports a series of cross-national empirical studies focused on socio-economic development and women's lives. It is innovative in looking at the relationships between societal and individual change over time, showing not only how women are affected by social changes, but also how women themselves act to shape change.

Masini served as coordinator of the project, which was sponsored by the United Nations University, from 1981 to 1992. As such, she played a key role in planning the project, guiding it through various phases, and, finally, co-editing a book reporting the results of the research. Data were collected by households in Colombia, Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Sri Lanka, China, and Kenya, mostly from women but also to a lesser extent from men, within the context of the relevant macro historical events in each country.

In Colombia, e.g., the macro context was the demographic transition, the transformation from high to low birth and death rates and a dramatic increase in life expectancies. In Sri Lanka, four macro changes were explored: (1) an irrigation and power project that impacted a village, (2) a model village development scheme, (3) new jobs in the Free Trade or Export Processing Zone, and (4) the migration of Sri Lankan women to West Asia for employment. Also, to take a final example, in Brazil and Argentina the researchers focused on technological change among female textile workers.

The methods included the life-course approach with comparisons of women of different age cohorts as well as detailed time budgets to chart the micro changes in women's daily lives. With a focus on the household, the researchers, additionally, collected data on relationships, the division of responsibilities, education, health, and socio-economic status within the context of the macro changes that were affecting the women's lives.

متن کامل مقاله

دریافت فوری ←

ISIArticles

مرجع مقالات تخصصی ایران

- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه تمام متن مقالات انگلیسی
- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه ترجمه شده مقالات
- ✓ پذیرش سفارش ترجمه تخصصی
- ✓ امکان جستجو در آرشیو جامعی از صدها موضوع و هزاران مقاله
- ✓ امکان دانلود رایگان ۲ صفحه اول هر مقاله
- ✓ امکان پرداخت اینترنتی با کلیه کارت های عضو شتاب
- ✓ دانلود فوری مقاله پس از پرداخت آنلاین
- ✓ پشتیبانی کامل خرید با بهره مندی از سیستم هوشمند رهگیری سفارشات