

# Feminism, institutionalism, and institutional feminism

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## Abstract

In this paper, I intend to examine the feminism present in Veblenian American institutionalism, looking for similarities and differences between this theory and the main current forms of feminism. The definition of feminism is not trivial or unanimous and has been the subject of intense debate, especially throughout the 20th century. According to the literature, there are two main waves of the feminist movement, as well as some theoretical forms of it. The analysis of the institutional and feminist theories indicated a certain affinity between institutional feminism and radical and Marxist feminism, even though the first presents serious divergences from both of the latter forms. It is known that the problem of sexual oppression has not emerged recently and that, even considering the many advances that women have achieved, prejudice and discrimination against women are still strongly present in the modern, less violent society of the 21st century. Finally, I show that institutional theory manifests a viable methodological alternative for analyzing oppression against women.

**Keywords:** Thorstein Veblen; habits; oppression; patriarchy; feminism; institutional feminism.

## Resumo

Nesse trabalho, pretende-se fazer um exame do feminismo presente no institucionalismo americano vebleniano, buscando semelhanças e diferenças entre esta teoria e as principais vertentes atuais do movimento feminista. A definição de feminismo não é trivial ou unânime, sendo objeto de intenso debate, principalmente ao longo do século XX. Conforme a literatura, há duas principais ondas do movimento, além de algumas vertentes teóricas sobre o mesmo. A análise das teorias permitiu a percepção de certa afinidade entre o feminismo institucionalista e as vertentes feministas radical e marxista, embora apresente sérias divergências em relação a ambas. Uma das principais conclusões é que o problema de opressão sexual não surgiu recentemente. Mesmo que se considere os diversos avanços que as mulheres alcançaram, o preconceito e a discriminação contra a mulher ainda estão fortemente presente na sociedade moderna e menos violenta do século XXI. Por fim, mostrou-se que a teoria institucional manifesta uma alternativa metodológica viável para a análise dos problemas de opressão contra as mulheres.

**Palavras-chave:** Thorstein Veblen; hábitos; opressão; patriarcado; feminismo; feminismo institucionalista.

**JEL codes:** B15, B54, B55.

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# 1 Introduction

According to Kaaber (2012), economic science advances as a whole by giving relevance to the role of women in economic development, but the current mainstream, by focusing only on experimental results centered mainly on the labor market, runs into the problem of only documenting existing inequalities, doing nothing to understand the origins of these differences — nor correct them (KAABER, 2020). According to Becchio (2019), the economic debate has many intersections with the feminist debate, making it possible for economics and feminism to join forces in order to better understand the origins and the methods of reproduction of oppressions against women. Thus, as Becchio (2020) shows, after many years of attempts and discussions, it can finally be said that there is now a specific active area of economics devoted to studying issues related to gender and the role of women in the economy, and even if there is a portion of the mainstream devoted to studying these problems, this is not necessarily the dominant methodology.

Following this logic, it makes sense to recall the postulates of American institutionalism, led by Veblen (1898), in which institutions are society's expressions of thought, that is, an institution is the collective of individual thoughts, customs, habits, and behavior. These are thoughts and actions that are not intentional, but that due to historical, social, and cultural factors, cause individuals to perpetuate ways of acting that are not contested by society, thus becoming institutionalized behavior. It is assumed that the customs and habits of behavior adopted by individuals carry with them imperceptible actions that, in turn, promote the idea that women are seen exclusively — and even unintentionally — as property, leading to the oppressions they suffer. Thus, it can be deduced that gender oppressive behaviors have been introduced by individuals throughout human history, i.e., gender oppressive behaviors are thought to have become institutions that feed back into inequalities and oppressions against women.

In this light, this paper aims to contribute to the literature that seeks to understand the origin of inequalities against women through the analysis of institutional theory and its intersections with feminist theory, in what can be called "institutional feminism". From this perspective, the following section briefly summarizes the history of the feminist movement and theories. Afterwards, fragments of Thorstein Veblen's institutional theory are exposed, mainly regarding its analyses on the role of women. Section four seeks to connect the two theories presented, creating a link between feminism and institutional theory. Finally, the fifth section brings final remarks and concludes the paper.

## 2 Feminist theory and movement

The feminist movement is one that produces its own critical reflection, that is, its own theory. Generally speaking, the genesis of what feminism is centers on women rebelling against their submissive status in society and their fight for more freedom and more inclusive rights. This synchrony between militancy and theory derives mainly from the social type of militant that drove, at least in the first moment, the feminism of the second half of the 20th century: middle-class women, educated mainly in the humanities, especially literary criticism and psychoanalysis (PINTO, 2010). Consequently, there is reasonable consensus on the possibility of understanding the feminist movement in two different ways, the first based on the history of feminism, that is, the action and achievements of the feminist movement, and the second based on the feminist theoretical production in the fields of history, social sciences, literary criticism, and psychoanalysis. By presenting this

dyadic characteristic, both the feminist movement and its theory have overflowed their limits, provoking clashes and rearrangements of various natures that make it difficult for those who seek exact or uniform definitions. However, according to Rampton (2008), this adversity does not prevent some organizing efforts from being undertaken.

According to Delmar (1986), behind these subdivisions, which have unfolded into political, economic, philosophical, and social theories, the discussions are more complicated, since there is a general agreement about the situation in which women find themselves socially that is unaccompanied by a common understanding of why this state of subalternity exists or what can be done about it. According to Zaretsky (1988), this complication has been going on since the 19th century, a period when there was already a major split in the feminist movement between those who based their belief in women's rights on some conception of human rights, as opposed to those who based their argument on private property rights. In general, most feminists converge on how capitalist society has shaped the character of the women's movement in ways that the activists themselves were unaware of (MITCHEL, 1966, 1976; COTT, 1987; GORDON, 1986).

Thus, regarded as the oldest feminist form, having emerged with the French Revolution in the 19th<sup>1</sup> century — more specifically with Mary Wollstonecraft in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), as shown by Delmar (1986) —, liberal feminism is centered on the individual woman and her freedom of choice. The objective of this form is to promote equality between the sexes by institutional means and gradually, i.e., its purpose is not to shake the structures, but to insert women into them, so that men have their role alongside women when fighting for such demands. However, this is also where the main criticism of the liberal form lies, as this form works on an agenda of equal rights without confronting inequalities, labor exploitation, and capitalism itself, and it does not take into consideration that not all women start from the same point in life (MITCHEL, 1966).

From the early criticism of liberal feminism emerged Marxist feminism, which seeks to explain how the oppressions suffered by women stem from capitalism and the existence of private property. As Ehrenreich (1976) argues, this form considers that the oppression of women exists not only because of sexism, but also because of the way the economy is organized in capitalism, reducing women's participation. The main criticism towards this form is based on its overemphasis on the economical condition of women, forgetting that domination and exploitation also have cultural and social origins — factors that, in addition to private property, also play a role in the reproduction of these oppressions. It is from this criticism that the form linked to black feminism arises, which argues that black women are not fully contemplated and represented by the previous forms due to them suffering a double penalty from society given that, besides suffering from sexism, they also suffer from racism. Racism, in turn, is considered one of the most serious social problems, as Baratz and Baratz (1970) have shown. The feminists belonging to this form understand that feminism should pay similar attention to the matter of race, stating that the issues of black women are related to both women's and racial issues and, therefore, just focusing on their existence as women is not enough to guarantee their rights (DAVIS, 1971).

From this context emerges intersectional feminism, which believes that there are other factors besides gender that oppress groups of women that are different from each other. More importantly, feminists associated with this form require that these different demands, from different groups of women, be considered as demands of feminism as a

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<sup>1</sup>There is even some theoretical unanimity in classifying the first wave of the feminist movement as liberally inclined.

whole. As Henning (2015) explains, the central idea of this theory is that there is no universal woman, but rather several different groups of women with specific issues, so that the demands of white women are different from those of black women, which in turn are different from the demands of lesbian women, which are different from the demands of transsexual women and so on, and that all these different types of specific oppressions must be thought by the movement as a whole.

Radical feminism, in turn, can be considered an exponent of the movement's third wave, in addition to being the post-structuralist form responsible for bringing back the debate about the phrase coined by Simone de Beauvoir: "one is not born, but rather *becomes*, a woman". According to Lerner (1986), the term "radical" is related to its meaning of "concerning or belonging to the root or origin", and its use is justified by the perception that many of the oppressions suffered by women transcend historical, cultural, and social issues in such a way that precisely due to — and by — being born women, having a female biology, women are dominated by men due to their reproductive apparatus and reproductive capacity. Accordingly, all females form a single sexual class, systematically exploited and oppressed through the gender socialization they receive from birth. Hence, the liberation of women will only be possible through the abolition of gender and all forms of exploitation related to it, as well as of the patriarchal system that feeds and reproduces oppression. Radical feminists argue that the radical form should thus be considered not a "type" of feminism, but the only purely feminist theory by virtue of it being the only one not to second-guess female oppression and to centralize patriarchy as an oppressive structure. It is therefore much criticized, even by the other forms. The main criticism it receives lies on the fact that it is an academic theory that has little or no dialogue with women who are oppressed in reality, and that its theory is relatively hostile to transsexual women and to men who wish to act in the fight for gender equality.

Based on these subdivisions, one can see that, as argued by Costa (2013), feminist theory is not unison and, conversely, is far from being a consensus in academia and society. Therefore, what is proposed in this paper is the possibility of understanding the problem of oppressions against women from the institutional approach of Thorstein Veblen, a famous North-American economist.

### 3 Thorstein Veblen's institutional theory

In 1899, Thorstein Veblen, considered the father of institutional economics, published his main book, *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, an immediate publishing success. In contemporary times, as Trigg (2001) shows, even if Veblen's fame has waned, the intellectual vigor and timeliness of his greatest work persists, since it was through him that the concepts of leisure and conspicuous consumption spread and became part of the vocabulary of the social sciences.

Veblen's (1899) main ideas lie in the argument that if there is a category of individuals who can purposefully give up useful work, their wealth and leisure would not be desired for themselves because the main purpose would be to flaunt a lifestyle. Following this reasoning, accumulation would derive less and less from material need and more and more from the pursuit of an honorable position in society. The leisure classes have their activities focused on tasks that conspicuously show society that they are not engaged in productive work; consequently, the definition of conspicuous leisure can be understood as the time spent on activities that are not aimed at production, diverging from unemployment.

Veblen, however, does not limit himself to describing the lifestyle of the leisure classes.

From a research agenda that took on a character that Hall and Luz (2020) have called “an awkward puzzle that needs to be solved,” he realizes that these principles have been present throughout the history of societies, changing only in form. In the author’s perception, at the beginning of human evolution, two instincts were formed: the predatory and the efficient work instincts, which developed from stages of civilization understood as savage stage, barbaric stage, and civilized stage.

At the first stage of human history, Veblen (1898) states that human instincts were already more or less well-established. According to the author, in the period he calls peaceful savagery, the main characteristic was the individuals’ peaceful and solidary temperament. Economic conduct was basically dominated by the most primitive agricultural crops, as well as animal husbandry. In this scenario, peace was an essential condition and, given the custom of mutual solidarity between individuals, there was no concept of private property. An essential aspect of this period was that human groups were isolated and small, with no need for relevant economic exchanges between groups, so that survival was maintained through the non-specialization of activities. Veblen argues that the non-division of labor stemmed both from the collective aspect of life, since supplies were produced by the whole community, as well as from the individual point of view, since, due to low labor productivity and population density, tasks required efforts from the entire group. For Veblen, this was a period in human history that presented intense contrasts when compared to what would follow in later periods, when humanity’s production surplus became significant.

Following the course of human history, at a certain historical moment, humanity started to live beyond just subsistence. From then on, productivity gains gradually began to occur, which led to productive surpluses. As a result, habits based on the predatory instinct began to emerge, that is, the possession of surplus goods began to exist for the first time. Since everything was consumed before, some destination should be given to the leftovers of the production process in the new scenario of abundance. Initially, the surplus remained in the possession of the community, but human predatory inclination would have generated the possibility of a new destination for it. As a group no longer needed to have its entire community dedicated to subsistence labor, a space opened up for the division of tasks and better allocation of resources and productive forces. In this way, some individuals, driven by the predatory tendency, started to dedicate themselves to war and to the capture of surpluses from other groups, and it is from this moment on that, according to Veblen, private property emerged. In the article “The Beginnings of Ownership”, from 1898, Veblen argues that the first individual ownership would have been that of captive women, that is, women prisoners captured in wars. He claimed this from the observation that, in the earliest times, the possession of material goods, especially that of surplus supplies and work tools, could not initiate an institution so different from those to which the — at the time — current habits of thought were used to. However, individuals outside the community could be objects capable of being transformed into property. Thus, because they were less predatory in inclination — considering the possibility of revolt at capture —, because their tasks were seen as negligible, and because they served as trophies for the most capable warriors, women became the preferred captive goods. Gradually, the search for advantages by one group at the cost of another began to be adapted by people, that is, what was a habit among different and rival groups began to take hold in the individual sphere.

For Veblen (1898), it is at this point in human history that the leisure class emerged, the class that would dedicate their lives to wars, or sports, the government, and religion.

Consequently, this transformation led to the emergence of the patriarchal regime, a stage that the author calls barbarism, which is based, to this day, on emulation — that is, on the fierce comparison between individuals. It is in the stage of barbarism that the author emphasizes that, with the help of technical tools, the social division of labor between the sexes began to gradually develop, according to their respective economic activities. Men had the honor of defending the tribe, conquering enemies, and robbing their property, all of which were understood as depredation and exploitation activities, while women had the burden of carrying out the common work of domestic activities. Worthy, respectable, and special employment involved male strength, while humiliating, undignified, and lackluster employment required female diligence.

From this division derives the concept of ostentatious consumption as a demonstration of status, a social proof of one's power and wealth. In this scenario, if there are joint similarities between predatory culture and the institution of property, there are elements of a culture of property, which Veblen called pecuniary culture. This means that, with the improvement of technical tools, there came freedom from subsistence life and the existence of a well-defined leisure class, in which economic status is demonstrated by pecuniary expenditure, became feasible. The adaptation of individuals to the differentiated status and creeds between men and classes, in terms of pecuniary culture, would take the form of uses, products, economic occupations, services, and owned goods. Individuals, compared in regard to their ability to inflict losses on their enemies, became increasingly courted in terms of possession of war trophies and characteristics of the activities with which they occupied their time, as well as the possession and consumption of goods that would indicate wealth. At the end of barbarism, a society based on the envious comparison of personal properties was established.

In pecuniary culture, what Veblen (1898) calls vicarious leisure takes place. This term designates the work of individuals who would assist in the leisure of others, the ones who genuinely belonged to the leisure class. This institution would have started through the leisure conferred upon the wife of the man of the leisure class. The man, in the position of husband, by allowing the woman to abstain from productive work and, later on, even from domestic work, created the founding habit of the class dedicated to vicarious leisure — ostentatious leisure. In other words, the husband would devote himself to work with great diligence not to enjoy wealth or a good life, but so that his wife could provide him, in the proper way, with the degree of vicarious leisure demanded from the society of the time. Vicarious leisure, that is, consumption aimed at demonstrating social status, includes activities related to luxurious parties, expensive sports, long trips, and fashion.

In an article published in 1894 named “The Economic Theory of Woman's Dress”, Veblen differentiates between dressing — the practice of dressing with the intention of adorning oneself and presenting oneself before others —, and clothing — the practice of covering oneself with the purpose of feeling comfortable. The main difference between the two categories is that many of the clothes that would be worn for one reason would not be worn for the other. According to the author, covering oneself for protection came first, and dressing with the intention of adorning oneself, charged with an economic connotation, appeared later. In the latter category, clothing is not only or primarily an instrument of protection, but an indicator of the owner's wealth. In this context, to the extent that wealth is an indicator of status, clothing also becomes a sign of respectability; the one that most resembles the advertisements is the most desired and respected one.

In this way, it is observed that the woman, always seen as an individual of lower status since the rise of barbarism — and even still, since patriarchy continues to exist in

a modern and peaceful society —, would not enjoy leisure for her own emulative benefit, but rather to demonstrate her husband’s ability to pay for her abstention from work. Thus, even in societies with less violent and more modern institutions, the role of women continues to be that of an extension of another, somebody dedicated only to ostentation and non-productive tasks, a parameter of wealth and respect for the surname she carries. For Veblen, unlike many economists before him and even of his time, women were not only not invisible in the analysis of human history, but they were themselves an object of analysis, as shown by Veblen’s several succeeding studies on their role.

## 4 Institutional feminism

It is in this area that the discussion on institutional feminism can be introduced as, since the publication of the *Theory of the Leisure Class*, the role of women for Veblen has been the subject of several studies, such as in Miller (1972), who organizes the feminist ideas of Veblen and criticizes neoclassical economics for failing to consider and offer ways to understand the situation of women in the economy. According to Miller, it was in fact Veblen who introduced an evolutionary and institutional approach as a way to deal with these deficiencies found in neoclassical theory. Moreover, the author pointed out how Veblen’s analysis of the role of women in society was quite comparable, in a surprising number of essential details, to the approaches of feminist discussions contemporary to his time — which, it should be noted, are still current. However, Miller (1972) highlights that Veblen’s analyses (1894; 1898) must be considered within the broader context of his criticism towards the body of the economic thought of the time; for the author, Veblen’s refusal to accept the traditional view of the role and function of women is largely due to his refusal to accept the assumptions of the economic orthodoxy of his time.

In nearly 50 years after the publication of Miller’s article, institutional economists have continued to explore the role of women for Veblen. In this sphere, there are efforts in research towards identifying similarities and divergences between feminist theory and the institutional approach, as well as towards investigating the application of institutional feminism to the analysis of the oppressions suffered by women in society. It is the case of Moreira et al. (2020), who investigate inequalities in the Brazilian labor market from a Veblenian institutional perspective. There are also economists from this school who are concerned with analyzing the role of women for Veblen and for the economy, finding new reasons to criticize mainstream economics due to it ignoring feminist discussions and women’s contributions to the advances in economic theory. This is the narrative argued by Greenwood (1984), who exposes how neoclassical economic theory neglects the important contributions of women to economics<sup>2</sup>. Furthermore, this author also recognizes and praises Veblen for his efforts in understanding the economic behavior that considers women as active agents in society. Accordingly, Gilman (1999) attributes to Veblen the role of indicating and challenging — in the late 19th century, when the discussions on feminism and sexual discrimination were still incipient and frowned upon — the socially constructed sexual inequality that turned women into a servant class throughout human history.

The relationship between institutional theory and feminism is also considered by Waller and Jennings (1990; 1999; 2005), who move beyond the acknowledgment of Veblen

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<sup>2</sup>There is a great amount of discussion about the fact that Joan Robinson was not awarded the Nobel Prize in economics precisely because she was a woman.

and the critique of the mainstream. They argue that, within the discipline of economics, only recently has Institutional Economics began to regain interest in understanding the status of women in the economy and in society. In these works, the authors return to the point of Veblen's efforts, which was that women emerge as one of the first forms of private property. To this end, they expose how the methodologies of feminist theory and institutional theory converge on important topics, such as the emphasis on cultural and social factors as indispensable to the analysis of the reproduction of the oppressions against women carried out throughout human history. According to these authors, this methodological convergence between the theories is a necessary and sufficient element for the creation of an "institutional feminism", which sets out to investigate gender problems from a feminist perspective, with joint methods that navigate between feminist theory and institutional economic theory.

Regarding this association, Jennings (1992; 1993; 1998) argues that both theories, feminist and institutional, share the understanding of the relevance of culture and the influence of habits and patterns on the construction processes of what is socially accepted at a given time. According to the author, research based on the study of these processes allow feminists and institutional economists to come together in order to understand their origins and criticize the distinction between the public and private spheres, as well as the understanding of how women have been seen, throughout human history, as non-productive people. Therefore, Jeannings (1993) defines how both theories, by understanding that the origins of the devaluations against women are linked to the beginning of the distinction between the public and private spheres, challenge the foundations of the *laissez-faire*. Adding to this shared ground, both theories recognize power as a central force in the economy, causing power relations, in addition to the institutions and myths that sustain and perpetuate them, to become an important focus in a critical analysis of oppressions. In this case, it is worth returning to the consonances exposed by Mitchel (1966; 1976), Cott (1987), and Gordon (1986) when criticizing the directions that feminist theory was taking in the second half of the 20th century. As previously discussed, the shared ground between feminist and institutional theory refers to how the capitalist economic model, based on the existence and defense of private property, has shaped the character of the women's movement in different ways. Thus, Jeannings (1998) demonstrates how institutional methodology offers an alternative to the scarcity framework that defines the economic mainstream and, by understanding oppressions against women from a cumulative historical process perspective, reveals the role of the mainstream in justifying and perpetuating oppressions against women. More recently, Hall and Luz (2020) have gone beyond the comparison between feminist and institutional theories and have analyzed Veblen's contributions to feminism through the lens of the history of economic thought. According to these authors, based on Veblen's works from 1894 to 1899, he can be seen as an early exponent of radical feminism since he also considered that, in the sense of solving the problem at its origin, only radical changes in society's behavioral habits could end the oppressions against women. However, because of the authors' own choice of perspective, little attention has been given to the history of the feminist movement and its different forms. Veblen may thus have had ideas that might not be restricted to radical feminism.

For radical feminism, the origin of discrimination against women is the fact that women are born women. What brings institutional feminism closer to the radical form is the shared thought that new institutions will be built only through incremental or abrupt changes, as evidenced by Veblen (1898). With the help of the institutional theory's

method, this means saying that actions aimed at mitigating gender discrimination established today, with the purpose of changing patterns of behavior that would cease sexual oppression, make up a cycle that will undergo the transformation of new habits. These habits will then become recurrent actions, which will make them legitimate and will enable them to, only in the future, develop new institutions with views on gender less harmful to women. However, a crucial divergence between the two forms lies in the fact that the institutional theory considers the mere existence of private property to condition women to oppression. In other words, while the institutional theory, due to its economic bias, conditions the existence of private property to the existence of discrimination against women, radical feminism does not put so much effort into the susceptibility of women to be seen as property of others, directing its attention to biological determinism as the root of oppressions against women instead.

As a result of this divergence, the comparison between institutional feminism and Marxist feminism, both derived from economic theories, becomes appropriate. For the Marxist form, according to Pinto (1985), the existence of private property by itself is understood as a reproducing agent of prejudice and discrimination against women, similar to what the institutional form defends. However, what differentiates the first theory from the second, besides methodological and theoretical differences between the thoughts of Marx and Veblen, is that Marxist theory places little emphasis on the role of women in society compared to the institutional theory, which devotes considerable effort to show that by being seen as a woman, one receives the label of submissive or property of others. That is, the theories converge in believing that the existence of private property conditions the existence of oppressions against women, but diverge in explaining how this happens. Moreover, although it is beyond the scope of this paper, there are crucial differences between the economic theories of Marx and Veblen that are worth noting, especially regarding their understanding and explanation of modern capitalism and the central concepts of their work, such as capital, labor, leisure, among others.

Based on what was presented, the efforts employed by the institutional theory towards understanding oppressions against women in their origin can be observed, responding to one of the main criticisms of feminist theory to the main current forms of feminism. Therefore, institutional feminism can be considered a new form of the feminist movement that has much to add to feminist theory since it overcomes some limitations of other forms and, although bearing close similarities to the radical and Marxist forms, presents characteristics of its own.

## 5 Closing remarks

This paper sought to analyze the contributions of Thorstein Veblen's institutional theory to the feminist movement, comparing it with some current forms of the movement in order to find similarities and divergences between Veblen's ideas and the feminist forms.

From the perspective of the institutional theory, it was possible to observe that oppressions against women have been socially naturalized and institutionalized behaviors since barbarism, when, according to Veblen, patriarchy first emerged. Within this scenario, it was possible to conclude that this patriarchal system was built from the habits and behavior of individuals who identified women as the weaker sex compared to men. Women were considered dependent on men, expressed as war trophies, and responsible for domestic activities, their only use believed to be showing off the wealth of the surname they carried — a behavior that continued to be reproduced even in more modern and less

violent periods. Overall, the account on institutional theory showed that Veblen identified that oppressions against women can be understood as a cumulative historical process of habit and behavior transformation.

As the development of Veblen's ideas was explored, an element of resistance that has the nature of making it impossible to achieve widespread acceptance of actions aimed at promoting gender equality in contemporary society was found. According to Veblen, this non-acceptance stems from the cumulative character of individuals' discriminatory thinking habits, which then become ingrained and difficult to change. Thus, in order to achieve the goal of becoming a society free from oppressions against women, in addition to an abrupt change in the habits and behavior of individuals, the abolition of private property is necessary, since its mere existence, according to the cumulative historical process characteristic of institutional theory, conditions the existence of negative consequences for women.

Based on the acknowledgement of some of the main contributions of institutional feminism to economics and to an institutional analysis of society from a feminist perspective, the forms of feminism exposed in the first section of this paper that are the most aligned with institutional feminism are the radical and Marxist forms, even though there are vehement differences among them. From these findings, it is possible to ascertain that institutional feminism presents an alternative method of analysis to that of radical feminism, as well as a more comprehensive theory with which to investigate the origin of discrimination against women than the one offered by Marxist feminism, leading institutional feminism to be considered an autonomous form of feminism regarding the understanding of the oppressions suffered by women. Thus, in order to develop a better understanding of institutional feminism and how it can join the other forms of feminism to better understand the feminist movement, it is necessary to consider the gaps in institutional feminist theory.

As is the case with Marxist feminism, the main gap in the literature that seeks to theorize institutional feminism is that it expresses little or nothing in relation to discrimination based on race, sexual orientation, and other variants among different groups of women. Due to its nature, institutional feminism focuses only on the economic issue. In order to achieve greater understanding and acceptance within the feminist field, it must direct its efforts toward dialoguing with the other oppressions that affect women, such as the aforementioned ones. The methodological strength of institutional feminist theory could also contribute to the theoretical foundation of other feminist forms, including the liberal, black, and intersectional forms, generating gains for all and, even more, for the movement as a whole. Last but not least, when investigating the existing institutional literature, it was noticed that, although there are some exceptions, the subject of feminism in Veblen is more often than not neglected by institutional economists themselves. There is a vast field of research possibilities on institutional feminism due to the lack of analysis using institutional economics' own methods on the oppressions suffered by women.

This opens up new perspectives for research on oppressions against women. It is known that the sexual problem is not a recent one, and despite the various advances that women have achieved — mainly due to the liberal and radical forms of feminism, as pointed out by Gandhi (2014) —, oppressions are far from over; feminist theories that set out to understand these penalties to women are still very much needed. In this context, the approach of institutional economics provides sufficient elements for future research aimed at identifying the origins and methods of propagation of behaviors that, when intensely and culturally repeated, are legitimized by society as a whole, resulting in institutions

that are unfavorable to women. Thus, within an institutional feminist research project, future studies may focus on better understanding how contemporary institutions help to propagate sexist and patriarchal habits.

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