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## THEORISING PATRIARCHY

SYLVIA WALBY

*Abstract* The concept 'patriarchy', while being vital for feminist analysis, has been criticised for not being able to deal with historical and cross-cultural variation in the forms of women's subordination. This paper presents a new way of theorising patriarchy to meet these objections; one which is flexible enough to take account of its various forms, but rigorous enough to be an effective tool for analysis. It leaves behind base-superstructure models of patriarchy in which there is only one base, which have led to many of the rigidities which have been identified, arguing instead for a model of patriarchy as six partially-interdependent structures. The paper concludes with a discussion of the different forms of patriarchy in recent British history.

### *Introduction*

The concept of patriarchy is an essential tool in the analysis of gender relations. However, some of the existing accounts using it have shortcomings. Critics of the approach have suggested that the flaws are irredeemable. This paper is designed to show that this is not the case; that while existing accounts have weaknesses, they are not intrinsic to the concept of patriarchy.

The critics of the concept have focussed upon problems that existing theories of patriarchy have in dealing with historical and cross-cultural variations in gender inequality, and with differences between women, especially in relation to ethnicity and class (Barrett 1980; Beechey 1979; Carby 1982; Coward 1978; Hooks 1984; Molyneux 1979; Rowbotham 1981; Sargent 1981; Segal 1987). As alternatives they offer either to explain gender inequality in terms of capitalism (the conventional Marxist position), or argue that gender inequality is too complex and varied to be traced back to any one structure (socialist feminist historians often argue this (e.g. Rowbotham 1981) as do the post-modernist, post-structuralists (Alcoff 1988)).

In this paper I shall describe the criticisms only briefly, since they are now well known, and focus upon the construction of an adequate theory of patriarchy which takes them into account. I shall argue that patriarchy and capitalism are analytically independent, and support this by pointing to the tensions between the two systems over the exploitation of women's labour. Further, I shall construct a model of patriarchy in terms of several partially interdependent structures, rather than a simple 'base-superstructure' model. I shall specify the structures, then show how they intersect at different periods of recent British history to produce different forms of patriarchy.

First, the concept of patriarchy needs definition.

### *Definition*

The variety of definitions of patriarchy has itself been a source of criticism by those who are not happy with this approach (e.g. Barrett 1980). However, it would be surprising if developing theories of patriarchy did not use the term in slightly

different ways. This is a necessary part of any theoretical development. It is sufficient at this stage for the term to be clearly specified, so that the strengths and weaknesses of different definitions can be properly explored.

Patriarchy as a concept has a history of usage among social scientists, such as Weber (1947), who used it to refer to a system of government in which men ruled societies through their position as heads of households. In this usage the domination of younger men who were not household heads was as important, if not more important than the element of men's domination over women *via* the household.

The meaning of the term has been advanced since Weber, especially by radical feminists, who developed the element of the domination of women by men and who paid less attention to the issue of how men dominated each other, and by dual systems theorists who have sought to develop a concept and theory of patriarchy as a system which exists alongside of capitalism (and sometimes of racism too).

Yet the practice of incorporating the generational element into the definition of patriarchy has been continued by some of the major contemporary writers on this question, most importantly by Hartmann (1979, 1981). I think that the incorporation of a generational element into the definition is a mistake. It implies a theory of gender inequality in which this aspect of men's domination over each other is central to men's domination over women. Yet in practice few contemporary theories of gender inequality establish that this is the case. For instance, while Hartmann uses a definition which incorporates generational hierarchy among men this is not central to her theory of patriarchy, which focuses upon men's organisational ability to expropriate women's labour in paid work, and hence in the household. Thus inclusion of generation in the definition is confusing. It is a contingent element and best omitted.

As a preliminary working definition of patriarchy, before developing the details of its forms, I shall define patriarchy as a system of social structures, and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women.

The use of the term social structure is important here since it clearly implies rejection of both biological determinism, and the notion that every individual man is in a dominant position and every individual woman in a subordinate one.

Patriarchy needs to be conceptualised at different levels of abstraction. At the most abstract level it exists as a system of social relations. In contemporary Britain this exists in articulation with capitalism, and with racism. However, I do not wish to imply that it is homologous in internal structure with capitalism. At the next level down patriarchy is composed of six structures: the patriarchal mode of production, patriarchal relations in paid work, patriarchal relations in the state, male violence, patriarchal relations in sexuality, and patriarchal relations in cultural institutions, such as religion, the media and education. Within each of these structures it is possible to identify sets of patriarchal practices which are less deeply sedimented. Any concrete instance will embody the effects, not only of patriarchal structures, but also those of capitalism and racism.

I shall argue first that patriarchy is not reducible to capitalism, even in a mediated way.

### *Dual Systems Analysis*

Firstly, patriarchy both pre-dates and post-dates capitalism, hence it cannot be considered to be derivative from it. Patriarchal relations exist in feudal societies

(Middleton 1981), and they exist in the so-called socialist countries. The argument in response to this, that gender relations significantly changed with capitalism is no obstacle to my argument. A change in the form of patriarchy is not the same as its creation or demise (cf. Barrett 1980 and Mann 1986).

My analysis is then in terms of dual systems of patriarchy and capitalism, or rather triple systems, since I do not think racism can be derived from capitalism or patriarchy for similar reasons.

Existing dual systems theory considers the articulation of patriarchy and capitalism in quite a variety of ways. They vary, for instance, as to whether they see patriarchy and capitalism as fused into one system of capitalist patriarchy, as does Eisenstein, or whether they are conceptualised as two analytically distinct, if empirically inter-acting systems, as does Hartmann.

Eisenstein (1981) considers that the two systems are so closely inter-related and symbiotic that they have become one. She considers that patriarchy provides a system of control and law and order, while capitalism provides a system of economy, in the pursuit of profit.

Other writers keep the systems analytically distinct. These writers themselves differ in their mode of separation of patriarchy and capitalism. Some allocate different levels of the social formation to the different systems, while others do not. For instance, Mitchell (1975) discusses gender in terms of a separation between the two systems, in which the economic level is ordered by capitalist relations, and the level of the unconscious by the law of patriarchy. It is in order to uncover the latter that she engages in her re-evaluation of the work of Freud. She rescues Freud's concept of the unconscious from the fierce criticism of Freud's sexist interpretation of women's sexuality and desires, in order to argue for the significance of the level of the unconscious in understanding the perpetuation of patriarchal ideology, which would ostensibly appear to have no material basis in contemporary capitalist societies.

Hartmann's conception of the relation between capitalism and patriarchy is similar to that of Mitchell in that she does want to maintain the analytic separation of patriarchy and capitalism, while Eisenstein does not. But Hartmann is different in that she wishes to see patriarchal relations crucially operating at the level of the expropriation of women's labour by men, and not at the level of ideology and the unconscious. Hartmann argues that both housework and wage labour are important sites of women's exploitation by men. Within the field of paid work occupational segregation is used by organised men to keep access to the best paid jobs for themselves at the expense of women (Hartmann 1979). Within the household women do more labour than men, even if they also have paid employment (Hartmann 1981). These two forms of expropriation also act to reinforce each other, since women's disadvantaged position in paid work makes them vulnerable in making marriage arrangements, and their position in the family disadvantages them in paid work. While capitalism changes the nature of employment to some extent, Hartmann argues that patriarchy pre-dates capitalism, and this expropriation of women's labour is not new and distinctive to capitalist societies and hence cannot be reduced to it. Hartmann supports her argument with historical examples of how women have been excluded from the better jobs by organised male workers with, in some cases, the support of the state. It is a powerful and important contribution to the theoretical debate on gender relations.

One of the problems with 'dual systems' analyses such as the three discussed here is whether they are able adequately to sustain the duality of capitalism and patriarchy in their analyses. Young (1981) claims that this is an inherently impossible task. Dual systems theorists usually sustain the distinction between capitalism and patriarchy by allocating patriarchy and capitalism to different levels of society (in the way that Mitchell (1975) locates capitalism in the economy and patriarchy in the unconscious). If they do not do this and see patriarchal and capitalist relations in the same site, then, Young argues, they are not able to establish and sustain an analytic distinction between patriarchy and capitalism. If they make this distinction then they are not able to account for patriarchal aspects in that level they have allocated to capital, or capitalist elements in the level allocated to patriarchy. I think that Young has identified a key problem in existing dualist texts, but that she is overstating the strength of her argument when she declares this to be an inherent flaw in any future dualist analysis. The specification of the nature of the separation between patriarchy and capitalism is necessary and achievable.

I would argue that it is inappropriate to allocate different levels of the social formation to the different systems, in the manner of Mitchell for the reasons noted by Young. However, Hartmann's analysis is problematic in that it both underestimates the tension between patriarchy and capitalism, and insufficiently specifies the different structures of patriarchy.

Conflicts over the exploitation of women's labour between patriarchal and capitalist interests is endemic to the history of the interaction between the two systems. Without the notion of the separation of these two systems it would not be possible to understand the changing sexual division of paid work.

Employers seek to employ women, when they are seeking cheap labour, because they are cheaper than men. Husbands have historically resisted this process because it undermines their control over and exploitation of women in the household. This conflict of interest over the exploitation of women's labour has sometimes taken the form of political struggle at the level of the state. For instance, the so-called protective legislation of the nineteenth century sought to limit women's employment in the best paid sectors of work (the mills and the mines were better paid and had shorter hours than agricultural labour, domestic service and housewifery, which were the main alternatives). This century male workers again utilised the state to support their claims to privileged access to paid work in the legislation passed each war-time, at their urging, which gave legal backing to the men's demands that the women war-time workers be thrown out of their jobs at the end of the wars, so that they could be given to men.

The conflict of patriarchal and capitalist interests do not have an inevitable outcome. It has varied according to the localised power of male workers, employers, and women. In engineering the exceptionally strong organisation of the engineering workers led to the exclusion of women to a much greater extent than in cotton textiles, which had a mixed workforce, and clerical work, where women were employed as the majority of the new jobs, apart from the very top level (such as accounting). The variations in the gender composition in these three areas of work cannot be understood without the concept of patriarchy, nor without an understanding of their historically and spatially specific interaction with capitalism. This interaction between patriarchy and capitalism gave rise to specific forms of occupational segregation by sex. While segregation by sex in work is not specific to

the articulation of patriarchy and capitalism, being found in feudalism, and post-capitalist societies, it takes specific forms. It becomes deeply sedimented through a variety of social practices, and indeed so entrenched that it forms a critical part of the patriarchal structures in paid work.

### *Ahistoricism, Universalism and Diversity*

One of the major criticisms of the concept of patriarchy is that it cannot deal with the differences between forms of gender inequality at different times and places, nor with the diversity of the experiences of women. This has been argued particularly in relation to class and to ethnicity.

#### Ethnicity and racism:

The neglect of ethnic difference in many white feminist writings has come under intense scrutiny and critique in several recent texts (Amos and Parmar 1984; Carby 1982; Davis 1981; Hooks 1982, 1984; Joseph 1981; Lorde 1981; Moraga and Anzaldúa 1981; Parmar 1982). Analyses from the perspective of women of colour have raised a number of important issues for theories of gender relations, including the following three. Firstly, the labour market experience of women of colour is different from that of white women because of racist structures which disadvantage such women in paid work. This means that there are significant differences between women on the basis of ethnicity, which need to be taken into account.

Secondly, ethnic variation and racism mean that the chief sites of oppression of women of colour may be different from those of white women. This is not simply a statement that women of colour face racism which white women do not, but also a suggestion that this may change the basis of gender inequality itself. The best example of this is the debate on the family, which has traditionally been seen by white feminist analysis as a major, if not the major, site of women's oppression by men. Some women of colour, such as Hooks (1984) have argued that since the family is a site of resistance and solidarity against racism for women of colour, it does not hold the central place in accounting for women's subordination that it does for white women. There is here a warning against generalising from the experience of a limited section of women (white) to that of women as a whole.

A third issue is that the intersection of ethnicity and gender may alter ethnic and gender relations. Not only is there the question of recognising ethnic inequality, and the different sites of oppression for women of different ethnicities, but the particular ways in which ethnic and gender relations have inter-acted historically change the forms of ethnic and gender relations.

This critique is not specific to texts which use the concept of patriarchy, but is applied to most white feminist writings, including those of socialist feminists and liberal feminists. It is a serious criticism of existing texts.

However, most of these black feminist writers do not deny that there is inequality between men and women. They are arguing that this takes varied forms, and that racism may be of overriding political concern to women of colour. We need a concept of patriarchy which is flexible enough to capture the variation in women's experience and inequality between women.

### Essentialism, Ahistoricism and Universalism:

A further major criticism, which is specific to the concept of patriarchy is that it cannot capture the historical and cross-cultural variations in the forms of gender inequality (e.g. Barrett 1980). Segal (1987) suggests that writings which deploy the concept of patriarchy are essentialist. Indeed some feminist post-structuralists and post-modernists have attempted to deny the category 'woman' because it is considered to imply a static essentialist conception of gender relations (Coward 1978). The tension between feminist attempts to construct explanations of those oppressions which are shared by women with the theoretical imperatives of the post-modernist and post-structural writings of Foucault and Derrida are explored by Barrett (1987), Fraser and Nicolson (1988) and Alcoff (1988).

I shall deal with the problems raised in three ways. Firstly, I shall show that the problem is overstated, in that writers on patriarchy do recognise this diversity in their empirical work, even if there are problems in the integration of this knowledge into their theoretical schema. Secondly, I shall identify six different patriarchal structures, in an attempt to provide the theoretical tools to overcome the problem. Thirdly, I shall produce an argument as to the different forms that patriarchy has taken in recent British history, to demonstrate the feasibility of historically sensitive analysis.

It is true that many writers on patriarchy have constructed a single major base which does cause some problems for the structure of the argument. For instance, Firestone (1974) takes reproduction as the critical base; Delphy (1984) takes the expropriation of women's labour in the domestic mode of production in the same way; Rich (1980) takes the institution of compulsory heterosexuality; Brownmiller (1976) takes men's violence, especially rape. In fact most aspects of women's oppression by men have been taken as the basis of patriarchy by some writer or other.

This practice of taking one base does tend to produce an ahistoric and universalistic theory of patriarchy. However, despite this, most of the writers listed above do have a firm notion that patriarchy is different across time and space. It is not true to say that they have a static image of patriarchy, while it is true that they do not have the conceptual apparatus to produce a logical explanation of its different forms. For instance, Brownmiller, who sees rape as the foundation of men's oppression of women, is clearly arguing that the rate of rape, which is much higher than is usually recognised, is historically variable, being higher in times of militarisation and especially warfare. She provides empirical evidence to support this view, but fails to provide a clear explanation of this variation. Indeed logically her argument precludes this since she has no theoretical way of explaining changes in her base of patriarchy, given that this has been constructed as the only causal entity in her model and that it has no inner laws of development of its own. This problem is common to the other models of patriarchy which set up a single causal base or entity.

However, while it is fair to criticise these theories of patriarchy for not having a theory of change, it is not appropriate to suggest that they all think that change does not take place (although some do take this position). For instance, Firestone has a well-developed model of change in patriarchy, despite having set up reproduction as its sole basis. She does this by considering both technology and political struggle to be further causal entities, although these are not integrated with her initially stated theoretical position. Firestone argues that changes in technology produce the

capacity for change in the mode of reproduction, in much the same way that Marx argued that changes in the forces of production created the possibility for the emergence of the next mode of production. Firestone argued that women have to seize the means of reproduction in order to achieve this transformation (a part of her argument often glossed over by those who criticise her for naively optimistic technological determinism). This is parallel to Marx's argument that the proletariat has to seize the means of production in order to move to the next mode of production. (Firestone intends the parallels with Marx). Thus in practice Firestone introduces into her argument both technology and political struggle as causal entities. However, she fails to integrate these into her theoretical discussion, leaving it as a loose empirical end. In practice she has a model of change involving three causal entities; in theory she has one. The major logical flaw in her argument is the failure to elevate these empirically based notions of technological change and political struggle into theoretical constructs. It might still be the case that we disagree with her argument, but then she could not be dismissed at such a superficial level of theoretical inadequacy.

Logically, any theory which attempts to grasp the variety in the forms of patriarchy across time and space must have more than one causal structure. However, few feminist theorists have attempted to work on the project of specifying these.

Foord and Gregson (1986) provide one of the few attempts at the specification of the structures of patriarchy within an explicit realist framework. They specify four forms of relations which are a necessary part of patriarchy because they 'require an internal relation between both men and women' (Foord and Gregson 1986:202). The first two are transhistorical; the latter two historically and spatially specific. They are: biological reproduction, heterosexuality, marriage, and the nuclear family. The basis for the selection of these four is existing theoretical and historical work.

However, there are problems with the choice and characterisation of these four. The absence of patriarchal relations in paid work, in the state and in male violence is odd given the range of work which has argued for their importance in an analysis of gender relations (Cockburn 1983; Hartmann 1979; Eisenstein 1979; Hanmer 1978; Brownmiller 1976). This absence is not justified. Further, there is a question as to whether the first two are usefully characterised as universal practices: not all people biologically reproduce (priests, nuns, the young, the sterile); not all engage in heterosexual relations. They may be universal as institutions, but they have varying places in a patriarchal system. The argument for the selection of these four forms of relations is not particularly well developed in their short article. So it usefully raises the question as to the identification of the structures of patriarchy, but does not provide a sufficient answer.

While few have explicitly argued about key structures of patriarchy within a realist framework, many have argued about the relative importance of different aspects of gender relations within looser meta-theoretical settings. I would suggest that particularly important debates have taken place around the following axes: materialist *versus* idealist (Barrett 1980; Delphy 1977; Mitchell 1975); the significance of the family (Barrett and McIntosh 1985; Hartmann 1979; Hooks 1984; Humphries 1977; Lasch 1978; Morgan 1975); the significance and place of sexuality (Dworkin 1981; Humphries 1981; MacKinnon 1982; Mitchell 1975; Rich 1980; Vance 1984); the significance and place of men's violence (Brownmiller 1976;



Campbell 1987; Dobash and Dobash 1980; Hanmer 1978; Hooks 1984; Wilson 1983); the significance of politics and the state (Adams and Winstonn 1980; Chafetz and Dworkin 1986; Eisenstein 1984; Petchesky 1986; Spender 1983). I shall consider these in discussing the identification of key patriarchal structures.

### *Structures*

I think that there are six main patriarchal structures which together constitute a system of patriarchy. These are: a patriarchal mode of production in which women's labour is expropriated by their husbands; patriarchal relations within waged labour; the patriarchal state; male violence; patriarchal relations in sexuality; and patriarchal culture.

These are defined in terms of the social relations in each structure. They are not identified in terms of spatially located sites. For instance, the concept of 'household' has a similar place in this schema to that of 'workplace' in Marxist analysis: it is merely a concrete place, not a high level theoretical concept. Each structure is composed of sub-structures and practices. For instance, the differentiation of full-time and part-time work in the labour market is one of the patriarchal practices which constitutes the structure of patriarchal relations in employment.

There are then three main levels of abstraction. The most abstract is that of the system of patriarchy. The next most, the six patriarchal structures. The next, patriarchal practices.

The six structures are derived both theoretically and empirically as will be shown below (a fuller account will be found in Walby 1989). They represent the most significant constellations of social relations which structure gender relations. Six is the smallest number of structures which can adequately grasp the varied forms of women's oppression in the period and place under consideration.

These are valid for Britain over the last couple of centuries, and for most industrialised nations. They may be more generally applicable than this, though I am not claiming that they are necessarily universal through time and space. However, I am arguing that they do have a considerable, even though temporary, duration through time and space. In other times and places the major forms of sedimentation of gender relations in social structures may vary. For instance, patriarchal relations in waged labour cannot exist in societies in which there is no waged labour, although in most societies a distinction between household labour and more 'public' labour is usually valid.

I do not think these *caveats* weaken the power of the concept of patriarchy. On the contrary they are necessary to avoid the problems of formalism and structuralism. Only if societies had the attributes of closed systems would it be appropriate to specify universally valid structures. Since they are clearly open rather than closed systems (Bhaskar 1979; Sayer 1984) structures cannot be specified once for all time. Any attempt at theorising must balance between on the one hand reducing the complexity of the world to a limited number of elements to produce analytic power, while on the other, not to over-simplify in order to be able to capture the specifics of the situation.

I am using a concept of social structure which has similarities to that of Giddens (1984), in the sense of institutionalised features of society which stretch across time

and space, which involve the dual aspects of reflexive human action and of their continuity over and above the individuals involved in any one instant. Differences between my account and Giddens are that I do not emphasise the role of language to the same extent, and that I consider structure to be less individually constituted than Giddens' view of it as 'memory traces'.

### *The Patriarchal Mode of Production*

The patriarchal mode of production is one of two patriarchal structures operating at the economic level. Women's labour is expropriated by their husbands within the marriage and household relationship. The defining feature is the relations of production under which the work is performed rather than the tasks which constitute the work (see Delphy 1984). The work performed by the woman may range from cooking and cleaning for the husband to caring for their children. Women, as housewives, perform this work for husbands (and, in certain circumstances, as daughters for fathers). In these relations of production the housewife is engaged in labour for her husband who expropriates it. She is not rewarded with money, for this labour, merely her maintenance (sometimes). Rather it is part of the marriage relations between a husband and wife. The product of the wife's labour is labour power: that of herself, her husband and her children. The husband is able to expropriate the wife's labour because he has possession of the labour power which she had produced. He has effective possession of the fruits of her labour. He is able to sell this labour power as if it were his own. (See Walby 1986 for a fuller account of this.)

Thus far the structure of housework has been specified theoretically. There are three stages to my claim: firstly, that the domestic division of labour is a major form of differentiation of men and women; secondly, that this has significant effects on other aspects of social relations; thirdly, that this in itself is a form of significant inequality. Time budget studies and other studies of the domestic division of labour demonstrate the unequal amounts of housework and indeed total labour time performed by the spouses (Cowan 1983; Gershuny 1983, 1987; Oakley 1974; Vanek 1980). Other studies of the unequal division of household resources show that women have a lesser share in the consumption of household goods than do men, ranging from food, to leisure time (Deem 1986; Delphy 1984; Pahl 1983).

One objection to my construction of the patriarchal mode of production as a structure is that, while the domestic division of labour is uneven, it is not to women's disadvantage (Hooks 1984; Humphries 1977). Humphries and Hooks argue that the family is not oppressive to women of the most subordinate groups, the working class for Humphries, and people of colour, for Hooks, because it is part of an alliance of the oppressed group against the superordinate group, the bourgeoisie for Humphries and whites, for Hooks. Humphries argues that the family enables the working class to provide humane support for those of its members who are unable to obtain a wage, such as the old and the sick, and that in enabling the working class as a whole to control the supply of labour it acts to prevent the reduction of the living standard of the working class family. Hooks argues that for those women for whom waged labour is boring, badly paid work in alienating conditions, as is the case for most women of colour, the option of domestic work, especially with children, is

preferential because it is more interesting and less alienating. Further the family has been an important basis for the mobilisation against racism.

My argument is not that women think marriage and the domestic division of labour is disadvantageous to them, or even that for individual women marriage is not advantageous in comparison with other existing options. On the contrary, women marry because they think they will benefit, and for many, though not all, this is almost certainly the case. Marriage is often the lesser of the evils in the limited options open to most women. Further, Hooks is right to point out the different place of the family in the lives of black women compared with white women. However, these points are not inconsistent with my argument on the level of the objective differences in the amounts of labour performed by husband and wife in which the wife does more than the husband. Nor is this point contested by these writers. Their argument is firstly, that women choose this way of life (with which I do not disagree). And secondly, that this means that the family is in the interests of women, with which I do disagree. Their argument at this stage depends upon the identification of the class and ethnic exploitation of women as of greater significance than their oppression as women. Even if this point were to be granted, it does not mean that husbands do not expropriate their wives' labour as well.

In specifying the patriarchal mode of production as a structure, there is an issue as to whether to identify reproduction as a structure independent from 'production', and what the relationship between them is. The term 'reproduction' is often used to cover several different concepts and they can be misleadingly conflated. In particular the social process of the creation of the next generation of human beings is often conflated with the social re-creation of the social system and/or with the biological processes of fertility. The commonest use of the term in relation to gender is that of the social reproduction of labour power. To this usage I have the greatest objection: at a logical level there is little work which is not concerned with the reproduction of labour power, hence it does not discriminate; processes varying from building motor cars to factory production of bread are concerned with this (see Delphy 1984 for a full account of these problems). Further the same task may be performed in the household at some historical moments and not at others. The tendency to conflate reproduction with housework is thus a problem.

The question which concerns me here is whether fertility and reproduction constitute a separate structure or whether these aspects of gender relations are an effect of other structures. There are significant levels of their determination which are outside the domestic sphere, such as the state's intervention on issues such as abortion and contraception (Gordon 1977; Luker 1984; Petchesky 1986), sexual practice (Gordon 1979; Luker 1978), and the domestic division of labour, and of the women's access to paid work (Gittins 1982). I think this makes reproduction not a structure, since the causal powers lie with other entities.

### *Patriarchal Relations in Paid Work*

Patriarchal relations in paid work form the second of the patriarchal structures at the economic level. The key feature of patriarchal relations in paid work is that of

closure of access by men against women. This involves the exclusion of women from paid work or the segregation of women within it. This leads to the devaluation of women's work and low wages for women, which itself becomes a social fact with determinate effects, not only on women's paid work, but in other areas including the domestic sphere and other aspects of gender relations. The social relations are between the excluder and devaluer, men, on the one hand, and the excluded and devalued, women, on the other. This is the critical aspect of the relation; its concrete realisation will also depend on capitalist and racist forces.

There is an identifiable structure of patriarchal relations in paid work. Women's position in paid labour cannot be reduced to either or both of capital and the family, as both Marxist feminists such as Beechey (1977, 1978) and neo-classical economists such as Mincer (1962, 1966) have argued.

Within the sphere of paid work the most important concrete aspect of patriarchal relations in industrialised countries today is that of occupational segregation. A century ago the practice of total exclusion of women from large areas of the better paid employment was at least as important, but there has been a significant diminution of such bans in recent decades (see Walby 1986). Also the practice of paying women less on the overt grounds that they were women was once a highly significant form of patriarchal practice; with the passing of equal pay legislation in most of the Western world in the last decade or two, this is no longer routinely done in an open fashion, but proceeds as an indirect consequence of occupational segregation.

Segregation takes several forms, vertical and horizontal (see Hakim 1979), and that between full-timers and part-timers (see Robinson and Wallace 1984). Women and men are segregated into occupations at different steps in the vertical hierarchy, and side ways from each other in the form of horizontal segregation. Since wages are attached to jobs, this provides the possibility for differential wage rates being paid. Women's jobs are usually graded as less skilled than those of men, even if there is little technical support for such an evaluation (Phillips and Taylor 1980; Treiman 1979). The differentiation between full- and part-time makes significant differences to the amount of legal protection given to employees (Hakim 1987). Further, most part-time jobs are at the bottom of the jobs hierarchy (Dex 1987; Martin and Roberts 1984).

I want to argue that changes in patriarchal domination in paid work are one of two processes which are key to understanding changes in women's oppression in Britain over the last two centuries and that changes here have had significant causal impacts upon other structures.

This structure cannot be understood outside the inter-relationship with capitalist relations of production. Where patriarchy is in articulation with other modes of production these relations will be different. For instance, the market in labour structures women's access to paid employment. Where the market is less developed, as in state socialism in Eastern Europe, or peripheral, such as under Feudalism, other modes of regulation take priority. However, the differences between these and capitalism should not be over-stated, since the argument about labour market structures in contemporary society is precisely that they do not work in a free, perfectly competitive manner, but are deeply structured by institutionalised power. Occupational segregation by sex appears to be a feature of the organisation of labour not only in capitalist countries, but in feudal and state socialist ones as well.

*Patriarchal State*

The state is another patriarchal structure. Its impact on gender relations is not a consequence of it also being a capitalist state (*cf.* McIntosh 1978), but of the patriarchal nature of the state. Women are excluded from access to state resources and power as part of a patriarchal system. This is only partly due to women being relatively excluded from a direct presence in the state, but also, more significantly, as a result of their lack of power within the gendered political forces brought to bear on the state. Patriarchal closure against women in the key decisional arenas of the state can be found in a variety of constituent practices. Denial of the vote until sixty years ago was overt, while today more indirect forms of exclusion result in women making up only six per cent of the Members of Parliament. More importantly, women do not have as much power to bring to bear on the state as men. Similar considerations apply to the various branches of the state, such as the judiciary, police and legal system, where not only are women not represented as well as men in the decision-making positions, but they do not have as much power to bring to bear on the resolution of issues in their favour.

The argument that the state is a patriarchal structure does not imply that the state is a monolith. Indeed there are frequently conflicts between different branches of the state over different patriarchal strategies, and between the representation of patriarchal and capitalist interests. For instance, there have been conflicts over the regulation of women's paid work (Witz 1986), and over whether women should be called into the workforce to make munitions in the Second World War or left at home in a traditional patriarchal setting (Summerfield 1984).

The patriarchal relations in the state have a series of significant effects on gender relations. For instance, it shapes the rules on divorce and marriage (see Leonard 1978; Weitzman 1986); fertility, by legalising or criminalising abortion (Petchesky 1986), contraception (Gordon 1979) and the new reproductive technologies (Arditter *et al.* 1984); wage discrimination (Snell 1979); sexuality, by court rulings on the custody of the children of lesbian mothers (Hanscombe and Forster 1982), on male homosexuality (Plummer 1981), on prostitution (Walkowitz 1980), and on pornography (Dworkin 1981; Vance 1984); male violence, by court practice in cases of rape and battering (Pahl 1985), and by its policy on housing priorities for battered women (Binney, Harkel and Nixon 1981); and on belief systems by, for instance, setting the parameters within which religions may operate (Ruether 1974).

*Male Violence*

Male violence often appears to be a random individual phenomenon, sometimes thought of as a result of psychological derangement in a few men (e.g. West, Roy and Nichols 1978). In reality it has a social structural nature. Its patterning cannot be understood in terms of individual psychologies. Men use violence as a form of power over women. Not all men actively need to use this potential power for it to have an impact on most women. It has a regular social form and, as a result of women's well-founded expectations of its routine nature, has consequences for women's actions. It is constituted as a set of various practices including: rape, wife-beating, father/daughter incest, flashing, sexual harassment at work, sexual assault.

It is significant in shaping women's actions, and therefore may be considered to have causal power. It is common, and cannot be written off as exceptional (Hanmer and Saunders 1984; MacKinnon 1987; Sedley and Benn 1982). It is not the result of a few deranged men (Amir 1971), nor confined to a violent sub-culture, but is related to normal patterns of male behaviour (Jackson 1978). It is routine in the forms that it takes, between men and women. The availability of violence to men as a resource in dominance over women is structured by the lack of state intervention to stop this (Hanmer and Saunders 1984); unless the violence is 'extreme' and in 'inappropriate' circumstances, for instance on a strange woman in a public place, it is tolerated and condoned by the patriarchal state. This form of force is further organised by a discourse which legitimates certain forms of violence against women in specific contexts (Jackson 1978).

Most women significantly alter their conduct and patterns of movement as a consequence of fear of male violence (Brownmiller 1976; Hanmer and Saunders 1984; Stanko 1985). For a significant number of instances it is designed to alter women's actions in a systematic and routine way both in a domestic setting (Dobash and Dobash 1980) and the paid workplace (MacKinnon 1979). It has routine effects.

It is historically variable and not a biological constant (Brownmiller 1976; Morrell 1981; Shorter 1977). Male violence interacts with other patriarchal structures, having a variable historical significance. Brownmiller is able to demonstrate a link between an increase in militarization of society and an increase in the rate of rape.

Conventionally, the state is seen to have a monopoly of legitimate coercion in a given territory (Weber 1947). In the instance of men's violence to women, this causes an interesting dilemma. Since this violence is condoned by the state in practice (since it does not move against any but the most blatant and severe instances), it may be considered to be legitimated by the state. Yet, according to Weber's definition of the state, legitimate coercion is its monopoly. Does this make violent men part of the state apparatus? Yet to do this runs counter to the usual sociological conception of the state as a centralised agency. Thus we have to abandon either the notion that the state has a monopoly over legitimate coercion, or the notion that the state is a centralised agency. I think the latter is more important to the concept of the state, so I propose to abandon the notion that the state has a monopoly of legitimate coercion in a given territory.

### *Patriarchal relations in sexuality*

Sexuality is also an important patriarchal structure. The key set of patriarchal practices here is especially that of heterosexuality: both its compulsory nature and its internal structure such as the double standard. Thus it is a structure both in the sense of the primacy given to this form of sexual practice as distinct from lesbianism and homosexuality, and in the sense of the unequal relations within this sexual practice. Its major causal significance is in orienting women towards marriage as a desirable

goal, and, in the twentieth century, to the stigmatizing of close female friendships through their sexualisation and simultaneous negative evaluation of that imputed sexuality.

Sexuality is a set of social practices, and cannot be reduced to the psychological or biological levels (Foucault 1981; Rich 1980; Jackson 1978). It is historically and cross-culturally variable in its forms (Oakley 1972; Faderman 1981; Foucault 1981). It has effects upon other aspects of gender relations. The extent of these effects is subject to some controversy.

I want to argue that sexuality is more important in constructing social relations than is customary in social theory, but less important than that accorded it by many radical feminist writers. Much radical feminist theory gives an important place to sexuality. It is given more significance than is to be found in most other feminist tendencies; some of which have nothing at all to say on this subject. This is true from the work of Millett (1977) in the early period of second-wave feminism, to more recent radical feminist theorists such as MacKinnon (1982).

MacKinnon suggests that sexuality is to feminism what labour is to Marxism (MacKinnon 1982:2); central and of overwhelming significance. MacKinnon sees male control of women as taking place through sexuality. It is *via* sexuality that men are able to objectify and dominate women. MacKinnon does not merely argue that the sexual is a most important level of women's subordination, she argues that is it through the sexual that women are constructed as women and men as men. Sexuality is the way in which genders are socially identified and constructed. Hence she interdefines sexuality and gender; there is no separation between these two concepts in her analysis. We can no longer ask how important is sexuality for men's subordination of women, since these concepts are conflated.

This is a mistake because it prevents us from being able to identify the causal power of sexuality. This is historically and spatially specific. Millett's analysis of sexuality in her critique of the literary work of D.H. Lawrence, Henry Miller and Normal Mailer shows that these writers were part of a sexual counter-revolution, to push back the advances which women had won during first-wave feminism. The terrain of this patriarchal counter-offensive was that of sexuality. So Millett gives us a historically specific account of sexuality, suggesting that its form and expression are not universal constants, but rather the product of specific historical conjunctures.

During the nineteenth century 'respectable' women were excluded from sexual practices with people other than their life-long husbands. Today, serial monogamy, *via* marriage or co-habiting is condoned and non-marital sexual contacts are not as prohibited. However, these are forms of sexual contact in which men are dominant in terms of defining the nature of the sexual practices and the social arrangements in which they are embedded. While the first mode opens up an independent space for non-married women to be personally autonomous from men, the second stigmatises all women who are not engaged in heterosexual practice, whether or not. That is, the form of sexuality changes significantly.

Some feminists have argued that sexuality is more important today in the subordination of women, as a consequence. That is, the relative significance of this structure has increased. It must be treated independently for this question to be explored. I think they overstate the increase in overall control, while they are right to point to important changes in the form of control over sexual practices.

Sexuality needs to be identified separately, not conflated into gender itself. Its historically variable significance for women's subordination means that it needs to be specified as a separate structure. Hence I am arguing that sexuality is a separate structure and should not be conflated into other aspects of women's subordination.

### *Patriarchal Culture*

Patriarchal culture is a structure which is composed of a relatively diverse set of patriarchal practices. They are important in shaping gendered subjectivity, in the distinction of the genders at an experiential level. Patriarchal culture is best analysed as a set of discourses which are institutionally-rooted, rather than as ideology which is either free-floating or economically-determined.

There is more than one discourse on femininity and on masculinity. They vary by age, class and ethnicity in particular. For instance Coward (1978) traces several within different women's magazines, contrasting *Cosmopolitan* with *Woman's Own*. But they have in common the differentiation of masculinity from femininity.

Religions have historically been very important patriarchal discourses, laying down correct forms of conduct for men and for women. The policing of these conducts has been variable, from burning women who assumed too much power as 'witches' at the stake, to the inducement of guilt about extra-marital sex in confessionals.

The educational system has been important in both differentiating men and women and providing men with more credentials. The forms of closure against women are usually more subtle because of the explicit discourse of 'meritous achievement'.

Discourses on femininity and masculinity are institutionalised in all sites of social life, not only in those institutions such as religions, media and education, which have cultural production as a central goal. For instance, masculine identity is importantly bound up with notions of work. Only certain forms of work will provide its practitioners with a reinforcement of their masculinity. This is well illustrated in Cockburn's (1983) account of men's struggle to maintain old forms of labour process in the print industry, where the new forms of typesetting *via* keyboarding threatened not only their jobs and rates of pay, but their sense of their masculinity.

### *Forms of Patriarchy*

Patriarchy can take different forms; it is not a universalistic notion, despite the arguments of critics. The different forms are dependent upon the interaction of patriarchal structures set out earlier. In different times and places some of the structures are more important than others. The elimination of any one patriarchal structure does not lead to the demise of the system as a whole. Logically there could be many forms, since I have identified six structures of patriarchy, and two other major systems with which it has been in articulation. I am going to suggest that in recent Western history there have been two major forms of patriarchy, one of which can be usefully subdivided into two.



The two main types are those of public and private patriarchy. Private patriarchy is based upon the relative exclusion of women from arenas of social life apart from the household, with a patriarch appropriating women's services individually and directly in the apparently private sphere of the home. Public patriarchy does not exclude women from certain sites, but rather subordinates women in all of them. In this form the appropriation of women takes place more collectively than individually.

The notion that there are two major forms of patriarchy is introduced in the work of Dworkin (1983) and Brown (1981) although they identify the structures of patriarchy somewhat differently from the way that I have done. Dworkin emphasises the sexual dimension in the differentiation of the two forms of patriarchy, while Brown is concerned only with labour. I think that the distinction between private and public forms of patriarchy does grasp important differences in form, but Dworkin and Brown's accounts are limited by their restriction to limited arenas. When all six patriarchal structures are included the account is more satisfactory.

There has been a movement towards the private form, and then a movement away to the public form in Britain over the last two centuries. The eighteenth and most of the nineteenth century saw a movement towards a more intense private form. This reached its height in the middle of the nineteenth century in the middle classes. There was an intensification in the domestic ideology, and the extent to which middle class women were excluded from the public sphere (Davidoff and Hall 1987; Gilman 1966; Pinchbeck 1981; Schreiner 1981; Tilly and Scott 1978). Women, especially married women and middle class women, rarely worked in public, only in their own households. There were strong sanctions against non-marital sexuality for such women. Women were excluded from the public sphere of the state, lacking citizenship rights such as suffrage and, if married, the ability to own property. Husbands' violence against wives was condoned. Cultural institutions, such as the church, supported the notion that a woman's place was in the home. While there were some limits and contradictions to this, for instance, it was applied to middle class women to a much greater extent than working class women, they do not undermine the general case.

The form of patriarchy which is prevalent in Britain today is of a more public kind. Women are not excluded from the public sphere to the same extent. However, having entered the public sphere, women are subordinated there. Most women of all social classes engage in paid work, but there is a considerable wages gap between men and women, and extensive occupational segregation. The sanctions on non-marital sexuality are, while still present to a greater degree for women than men, much less severe. At the same time the circulation of sadistic pornographic images has increased. Marriages can be ended by divorce, and increasingly are. While this frees women from marriages which are especially oppressive they still remain responsible for childcare after divorce, thus continuing the demands upon their labour started in marriage. This is now done under circumstances of increased poverty. Women also have citizenship rights which are formally the same as those of men. However, women are only a tiny proportion of the elected representatives and a tiny proportion of the political agenda is around women's concerns. Violence against wives, while tolerated, is not quite as legitimate as it once was, since it can now be used as grounds for divorce, and minimal welfare provision is available to

those who flee; however, few legal penalties await the vast majority of men who are violent against women. Cultural institutions increasingly allow women's active participation, but usually in a subordinated way.

In order to grasp the major differences in the forms of patriarchy between different countries of the industrialised world it is further necessary to divide the public form of patriarchy into two: one based on the market and the other on the state as the basis of bringing women into the public sphere. At one end of the continuum we have the countries of Eastern Europe where the state has played a major role in this; at the other we have the U.S.A. in which the market has played an equivalent role. In the middle we have the countries of Western Europe in which the state, in its capacity especially as a welfare state, has been of intermediate significance. The development of the typology from a duality to a triple is based on the introduction of the level of the state as a new element. In Eastern Europe, and to a lesser extent in Western Europe, the state has taken on some of the tasks which were previously performed by women privately in the household and organised them collectively (even if they are still largely performed by women). This is the case for care of children, the sick and the old. (Further discussion of the different forms of patriarchy can be found in Walby 1989).

### *Conclusion*

Accounts of gender inequality have swung between broad explanations of universal features of patriarchy and detailed localised descriptions of specific instances. The desire to produce a powerful theory has been tempered by the problems of catching the specificity of women's experiences. I have argued that the extent of the caution about developing large scale theories of patriarchy, whether based on a Marxist-feminist, black feminist, or post-structuralist, post-modernist position, is misplaced. Criticisms of the concept of 'patriarchy' for being necessarily ahistoric and falsely universalistic have been argued to be unfounded when the concept is developed. The problem is restricted to those texts which theorise patriarchy as having one causal base. When this is replaced by a model in which there are six component structures the problem is alleviated. The six were identified as the patriarchal mode of production, patriarchal relations in waged labour, the patriarchal state, male violence, patriarchal sexuality, and patriarchal culture. These together formed the system of patriarchy.

The complexity of the theorisation of patriarchy developed here, in particular the six structures, means that it is unlikely that simple laws of its development or of a necessary relationship with capitalism or racism could ever be produced. However, I have suggested that we can identify certain historically specific forms of patriarchy, dependent upon the relations between its structures. The major forms identified here were the private and the public, with the latter differentiated into markets and state based sub-types. In each of these forms the same six structures exist, but have different levels of importance in the subordination of women. Further, I have suggested that there is likely to be tension between patriarchy and capitalism over the exploitation of women's labour (see Walby 1986 for a fuller account of this).

We need a set of theoretical tools to deal with the continuities as well as historically and cross-culturally variable forms of gender inequality. A more flexible concept of patriarchy is the means to do this.

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