

Sociology 265H1F

Gender and Society

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Office Hours:

Tues., 3:00-4:00, 725 Spadina, room 382

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Week 6: A Look at Social History, and the Development of our “Gender Order”

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I. Systemic or Institutional/Structural Gender Inequality: Gendered Organizations

**A. In families – a division of work between
women & men**

**B. In workplaces – different jobs
 (“occupational segregation”) and a
 “gender gap” in earnings**

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II. Egalitarian Foraging (hunting & gathering) Societies: the earliest human societies

- A. “Egalitarian”:** the absence of any basis of power by men; neither gender able to impose its will on the other, or enjoy more power or privilege. No leaders, no class divisions.
- B. A “survival strategy”** of co-operation and sharing in small nomadic groups – so dependence on the group, not a person.
- C. Individual autonomy/freedom** – women too

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- D. Women able to combine work and childcare;** a collective sense of responsibility for children.

III. Horticultural Societies (with simple agriculture based on hand tools)

- A. Settlement and the rise of complex kinship groups** – lineages, with leaders
- B. The exchange of women in marriage, and incentives to exert authority and control over them as producers and reproducers:** gender inequality.

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IV. A Note on the Middle Ages in Europe: Patriarchal

- A. Royals and nobility: arranged marriages; wives were legal minors (under husbands' guardianship) and child bearers**
- B. Peasants: producing their daily subsistence; husband & wife doing complementary and essential work.**
- C. Urban Artisans: skilled craftsmen producing a product for market; husband & wife as essential production team.**

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D. A patriarchal society

- (1) Men (only) owned the land or the shop
- (2) Men had an incentive to control their wives, as they were essential workers
- (3) But women were essential partners

V. The Development of Industrial Capitalism (1800s)

- A. The creation of a working class, dependent on waged work, as masses of peasants lost access to and ownership of land. [via increases in rent for land & loss of public lands] – and as artisans lost the ability to sustain or set up their own businesses.**

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B. The destruction of an economy centred on the household and husband-wife production team which produced their livelihood

C. The removal from the household of (much) production for the market – and the eventual movement of men out of the household to work, and loss of an essential productive role for women

(1) Undermining women's economically essential role, increasing their economic dependence on a man.

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(2) Eroding the independence and identity of skilled craftsmen/artisans and male peasants, who became "wage slaves" working for someone else.

D. How women's position in the labour force developed: workplace organization and male workers' campaigns

(1) Assumptions about gender differences were used to organize workplaces: Women were paid lower wages, and given different jobs than men's (not 'skilled').

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- (2) Women thus constituted a competitive threat to men's jobs and wage levels (given employers' aim to reduce labour costs)
- (3) Organized skilled men's campaigns to exclude women workers – “cheap labour” – from “skilled” jobs, resulted in occupational segregation by sex (i.e. different jobs for men and women)
- (4) The campaign for a shorter work week: won via protective legislation for “dependent” children and women

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- (5) The campaign for a “family wage” -- paid to men, large enough to support “dependents,” who were their wives and children. Men as “breadwinners”

VI. The Business and Professional Class, and the Development of Domestic and Gender Ideals

- A. The “Cult of Domesticity” – home as a “haven in a heartless world” (C. Lasch), very different from the (immoral) scary economy

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- B. “Separate Spheres” – women and men as different, suited for different work; women responsible for loving care and morality (virtue) in the home & men suited for the competitive economy**

- C. Motherhood – a changed household context, and an ideology aimed to promote the reproduction of the next generation (of a white elite), but emphasizing the serious responsibilities of mothers**

Maxine Margolis, “Putting Mothers on a Pedestal”