

# MARXISM AND SOCIALIST THEORY

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## FIVE:

### KINSHIP AND HISTORY

Behind us lies the patriarchal system; the private house, with its nullity, its immorality, its hypocrisy, its servility. Before us lies the public world, the professional system, with its possessiveness, its jealousy, its pugnacity, its greed. The one shuts us up like slaves in a harem; the other forces us to circle, like caterpillars head to tail, round and round the mulberry tree, the sacred tree, of property. It is a choice of evils. Each is bad. [And so]...Break the ring, the vicious circle, the dance round and round the mulberry tree, the poison tree of intellectual harlotry.

Virginia Woolf

We are born children but grow up to be adult men or women. This is a biological and social process. Moreover, some of us become husbands, wives, fathers or mothers, uncles, aunts, grandfathers or grandmothers. These changes in our lives are not the same as changes from being twenty to thirty years old and later from being fifty to sixty. Aging is biologically inevitable, but the changes in our kin roles and the associated ways we behave and view ourselves are socially variable. These can differ from society to society, and within any particular society for different groups, and from epoch to epoch. In contrast, aging is inevitable and universal, though its social meaning may alter markedly. This process of young children becoming boys and girls, women and men, and mothers and fathers is socialization. Along with courtship, sexual interaction, nurturance, and child rearing, socialization constitutes the central feature of what we mean by kinship activity. Kinship institutions, therefore, are those conglomerations of social roles most central to accomplishing these same ends.

In this chapter we will discuss gender formation, kinship activity, and the paradigm contemporary kinship institution, the nuclear family. Our aim is to critically evaluate traditional Marxist and feminist theories and present certain socialist feminist ideas that can help people critique "existing socialist" practice and formulate new feminist/socialist alternatives.<sup>1</sup>

### Some Preliminary Comments Concerning A New Theory of Kinship Activity

Kinship activity refers to the transition from the relatively amorphous sexuality of babies, to the more precise and distinct sexual needs and dispositions of women and men. Kinship activity is what determines how children acquire adult demeanor, personality, and capabilities in ways that distinguish between men and women and bear upon processes of socialization and sexual interaction. Examples of kin institutions include different kinds of tribes, clans, nuclear families, extended families, schools, and daycare centers—and, at a still greater distance, the kin-penetrated moments of the institutions of the political, economic, and community spheres.

What enters kin processes is an undifferentiated baby; what leaves is a highly differentiated and socialized adult man or woman. Historically, certain features have appeared universal. Women mother the young and this includes not only giving birth and nurturing them, but also providing emotional sustenance essential to early human development. On the other hand, men will generally fulfill the protecting role. Furthermore, even if they have not carried out most familial tasks, men have almost universally determined the norms of socialization and administered the life of the family. Men most often initiate in sexual matters, garner greater benefits from sexual divisions of labor, and control the bodies of children and women. However abhorrent these features may be, they are empirically undeniable and testify to the overwhelming predominance of patriarchal male dominance to date.

Yet these sexual characteristics are products of human interaction and therefore may be made to disappear in future social formations. In short, though the *existence* of kinship relations is a given in human history—"the existence of *some* web of durable generational-spanning primary group bonds is a matter on which our humanness itself depends"<sup>2</sup>—the forms these relations can take are historically contingent. Though evidence suggests that to date the vast preponderance if not all of these forms have been patriarchal, this does not mean they have all been identical, only that whatever features may have varied, male dominance was universal.

After the obvious critical question—how do we overcome patriarchal divisions in the future?—perhaps the most interesting

question is what are the *differences* between alternative patriarchal kinship networks. For just as the preponderance of human history has involved economies that are class divided and we can nonetheless ask about important differences between these economies, so the fact of the prevalence of patriarchy needn't deter us from asking about *different* patriarchal organizations of kinship. Finding such differences—comparable to the differences between feudal, capitalist, and coordinator class relations—we would be in position to categorize different kinship systems and to appreciate the complexity of their specific internal attributes.

### The Traffic in Women

An attempt to provide concepts suitable to this task is the theory of the "exchange of women," or, as Gayle Rubin says, "the traffic in women." In this view, kinship activity principally involves the exchange of women as gifts and conduits of communication between groups of socially organized males. According to this approach we can distinguish different (patriarchal) kinship systems according to which offspring are socialized into the role of giving women, and which women are given to whom. For example, do fathers, uncles, or grandfathers pass the woman along, and is she passed directly to a future husband or to another "handler" on her way to becoming a mate? By following the "tracks" and treatment of women we might discover how the relations between adults and children and between men and women are organized to facilitate the exchanges.<sup>3</sup>

However, in Rubin's opinion this anthropological orientation lays too much burden on a single feature, the exchange of women, while largely ignoring that conditions of sexual access, status, and identity also flow in the intricate processes of kinship activity, and that they do so as more than mere incidental accompaniments to the "flow" of women. This is not to say that the primary focus on women is unmotivated, for women have generally had the fewest rights in these transactions. Indeed, as Levi Strauss, the originator of the more elaborate analyses along these lines has suggested, in kinship exchange women have been little more than gifts. However, by centering almost exclusively on the primacy of the flow of women rather than also paying central attention to the other phenomena

associated with kinship interaction, this theory sacrifices any claim to generality.

Perhaps most important, this narrow focus may ignore the interpersonal and psychological dynamics by which personality structures, consciousness, and specific skills of socialized women and men are constructed. For even if the idea of women being exchanged could allow us to develop broad categories for distinguishing different kinship networks and even if a full elaboration of the roles defining kinship exchanges could be developed, this still wouldn't explain *how* these systems inculcate their norms in the human center. To understand this it is necessary to refocus the analysis away from the stage of the whole social scheme "down" to the individual stage of people's personal interactions within specific kinship institutions. Furthermore, it is necessary to study this personal level to understand how patriarchal kinship relations might be *changed*. For certainly, to address the consciousness that reproduces patriarchal features, and to uproot it and develop alternatives in its place it will be necessary to understand why patriarchal views are held, why they persist, what needs they address, and what needs they suppress. In short, as Rubin argues, "anthropology and descriptions of kinship systems do not explain the mechanisms by which children are engraved with the conventions of sex and gender. Psychoanalysis, on the other hand, is a theory about the reproduction of kinship. Psychoanalysis describes the residue left within individuals by their confrontation with the rules and regulations of sexuality of the societies to which they are born."<sup>4</sup>

### Psychology and Kinship

Psychology is therefore the conceptual orientation best suited to analysis at the interpersonal level and to a surprising extent, within psychology many feminists are now pointing toward the theories of Freud. For it was Freud who first addressed the question of the transformation of biological sex into social sex. And however sexist his perceptions of these dynamics were, and however uncritical he was of their implications for the subjugation of women, his work is still, in the view of many feminists, the best *starting place* for the creation of new theory relevant to these issues.<sup>5</sup>

In the Freudian view—unamended—the process of sexual differentiation revolves around the Oedipus complex and its Electra counterpart. Traditional theorists interpret these complexes biologically by arguing that they derive from organic differences between little boys and little girls. Other theorists emphasize the *social context* at the time when the child discovers/becomes/or is coerced to acclimate to its own sex.\* It seems to us that the social rather than biological interpretations can be of greater use in developing a theory of the "laws of motion" of socialization and kinship activity.

How do girls become women and mothers? How do boys become men and fathers? How much is the dynamic a function of emotional ties interpreted in light of different sexual anatomy? Or, alternatively, to what degree is gender differentiation a function of power relationships, dependency, and the struggle to fulfill needs and achieve a self-identity in particular hierarchical kin institutions? Whether the traditional focus on emotional ties and physical attributes or the modern approach centering on role structures and institutional relationships offers a more promising start is irrelevant to the abiding need for basic psychological understanding. For in either view, the inculcation of male and female attributes occurs by way of personality development in a social context, and this is preeminently a psychological issue. Moreover, in either view, a critical factor in early sex role differentiation is the almost universal fact that *it is women who "mother."* Women provide nurturance, emotional support, and comfort, and men are largely removed from these types of activity. This affects not only the communication of notions about proper social roles for women and men, but also norms of interpersonal bonding: how little girls and boys will conceive of the proper emotional responses to female and male individuals. As Nancy Chodorow argues, "The sexual and familial division of labor in which women mother and are more involved in interpersonal, affective relationships than men produces in daughters and sons a division of psychological capacities which leads them to reproduce this sexual and familial division of labor."<sup>6</sup>

\*This is only for the traditional Freudian theory. Neo- and post Freudians differ substantially. A forthcoming volume from South End Press on mental illness by Sandy Carter not only clarifies these points, but also provides a powerful study of the interaction between psychological theorizing, the definition of mental health and illness, and the problems of achieving social change in modern social settings.

### Homosexuality

In any case it is important to notice that the patriarchal division of the sexes in child rearing roles (and/or as exchanger or exchanged) necessitates a *clear differentiation of male and female sexuality*. Any breakdown in demarcation of men from women threatens to reveal that what it means to be a "man" or a "woman" is a social outcome and a mutable one at that. This would in turn threaten the legitimacy of what otherwise appears as a natural kinship system. Thus the legitimacy requirements of patriarchal kinship systems provide a sufficient explanation for the predominance of heterosexuality because respect for homosexuality would be subversive of patriarchy. That is, people's biological homosexual dispositions are socially negated in patriarchal societies as an intrinsic part of the kinship activity of socializing boys and girls to fit as "proper men" and "proper women." Bisexuals in such societies have somehow escaped the repression of either side of their sexuality. Homosexuals may have had the heterosexual aspect socially repressed, may have consciously or unconsciously self-repressed their heterosexuality, or may simply have chosen to act on the basis of their homosexual impulse alone. Although this approach does not imply that *all* homosexuality and bisexuality is freer than *all* heterosexuality, nor that *all* non-heterosexuality is indicative of things to come under socialism, it does suggest that at least some homosexuals and bisexuals have a lot to teach the rest of us about what socialist sexuality will be like.

Moreover, this analysis of the link between heterosexuality and the maintenance of patriarchal role definitions for men and women also provides a sound basis for explaining the repression of homosexuals in many past and present societies. The isolation of homosexuals, their degradation, and their reduction to a subhuman status becomes but one more violent means of upholding patriarchy especially when other means to the same end are temporarily inoperative. In the case of anti-capitalist third world revolutions that remain strongly patriarchal, the necessity of opening many "male" roles in the military and economy to women in order to win the struggles against imperialism and underdevelopment is already seriously threatening to the reproduction of a clear division between what is "male" and "female." In this context the presence of even a few men adopting women's personality traits and sexual

preferences—and vice versa—becomes even more threatening to the reproduction of patriarchy than homosexual manifestations under more "regular" patriarchal circumstances. This provides a plausible explanation for reports that homosexuality is a serious crime in some post-capitalist societies, even reportedly punishable by death in China.<sup>7</sup>

In any case, one welcome by-product of our analysis is that interpretations of homosexuality as "biologically unnatural," a "warped outgrowth of restrictive circumstances," or "a bourgeois disease" all become mere ideology. For these demeaning analyses, backed up by pitifully unconvincing evidence, are best explained not as being a serious response to real circumstances, but as being a reflection of the insecurities of their purveyors.\*

Similarly, the requirement of a clear demarcation between "what is a woman" and "what is a man" has implications with regard to parenting. We already brought attention to the feminist claim that the exclusive assignment of women to mothering was a critical factor in the reproduction of patriarchy. By "mothering" we mean a whole constellation of activities including nurturing, dressing, watching-out-for, teaching, disciplining, comforting, cleaning...and more important, a *mindset* that sees these tasks as a priority and is continually alert to their organization and accomplishment. "Fathering," on the other hand, generally involves another constellation of activities with perhaps some overlap but very little as fathering generally requires an average of only a few minutes of primary child care a day—and *almost no primary responsibility* as well as no mindset of attentiveness to childcare tasks. One person *is* a mother, as a being, the other merely acts fatherly, *being* something else which earns money. Indeed, even when the mother works, she is, of course, a working *mother*. The fact of primary intimate relationships for all children forming

\*It is certainly worth noting, as an apparently counter instance of the common presence of homophobia, that the Cheyenne and Lakota "draw no apparent negative connotations from the existence of homosexuals. To the contrary, the Lakota seem to have considered them as *waken* or spiritually powerful and unique." (Private communication from Ward Churchill). If there were no homophobia in these cases, given our analysis of homophobia's roots, this would certainly be consistent with the views of many Native Americans that these tribes were/are not patriarchal.

only with mothers and therefore, in patriarchal societies, only with women, is perhaps the main pillar of the "reproduction of mothering" argument. But less subtly, it is also true that the idea that women are organically and inevitably mothers—or frustrated mothers if childless—while men *choose* to do more or less fathering as they wish, is an immense support for the clear differentiation of gender definitions. Women *are* mothers and men choose what they will, and there appears to be nothing contingent or alterable about this. It seems likely to follow, therefore, that really shared parenting would be doubly subversive of patriarchal kin definitions. It would involve an enactment of intimate relations between children of both sexes and men to parallel those with women, and also a disproof of the notion that sexual divisions of labor are biologically rooted in what it means to be of a particular sex. It also follows, however, that as long as women alone take primary responsibility for affective and thoughtful parenting—mothering—women and men will bear very different proportions of all kinds of "housework" and therefore have different roles throughout society, and also that children will experience this differentiation first-hand at every emotional and perceptual level, thereby helping to ensure its reproduction from generation to generation.<sup>8</sup>

#### Preliminary Lessons

One immediate implication of this general discussion of sexuality, parenting, and kinship is that we need to do our social analyses with tools sensitive to kin. We need to use kin categories, not only class or political categories. For insofar as kinship activity has different requirements for different actors, and insofar as the resulting variations in behavior, position, and power translate into different personality, people occupying different roles in the kinship network will react differently to historical situations, opportunities for change, and organizing efforts. It is important not only that a person is a worker or capitalist, a party member, or non-member, but also that the person is a mother or father, brother or sister, uncle, aunt, wife, husband, homo- or heterosexual.

But there is another important step we must take in an expanded socialist-feminist analysis of kinship activity and institu-

tions. We must extend our understanding of the kinship network throughout society, recognizing the kinship "moment" in activity conceptualized primarily as occurring in other spheres. We addressed this idea in general in chapter one. Socialization is not confined to the family (which is most often the central kinship institution), nor even to the family and immediately obvious extensions such as daycare centers, schools, and the T.V. Instead, since people affect their self-development and consciousness by all their activity, there is socialization occurring in all spheres of daily life. That is, each form of human activity has a socialization and/or sexual/procreational moment, and the kinship network, when fully extended, is coextensive with the other networks.

This means: a) kinship relations may vary, perhaps substantially, for different classes, races, or political groups. b) All institutional hierarchies, to be stable, will have to largely accord with the role differentiations between men, women, and children generated in the processes of kin activity. And c) beyond this simple accommodation, activity in other spheres may actively reproduce kinship norms and be reproduced and affected by them as well.

The kinship network is socially embedded. It exists only in context of accompanying economic, political, and community relations. One can't fully understand kinship networks in the abstract; they do not exist in isolation from the rest of society. A typology of kinship networks, like a typology of economic or political networks, has only limited applicability and explanatory power. Though such a typology would be useful to many ends, it could not even explain kinship activity of the most basic sort a) when it occurs in institutions other than those central to the kin network, and b) when the kinship sphere performs political, economic, and community functions as well.

Perhaps the clearest illustration of these points is the family, which, in addition to being the central kinship institution in most known societies, has sometimes been the central economic and community institution as well. Even in capitalism where functional differentiation is exceptionally elaborate, the family remains a very important economic, political, and community institution. The position of individuals in the family can only be understood in light of this fact. Psychological theory focusing on familial roles is necessary, to be sure, but a psychological theory which abstracts

from spheres of social life other than socialization and reproduction will be inadequate. Consider trying to understand the different pressures, possibilities, and responsibilities which attend to being a mother or a father. Without taking into account the different situation of women and men (assuming women "mother" and men "father" in contemporary patriarchal families) in the broader economy and polity, and paying scant attention to the class and race or ethnic affiliations of the people involved, a psychologist will at best gain only a partial insight with very limited explanatory or therapeutic power. Therefore, however sketchy, when Mao Tsetung did a class analysis of his family, it was not in fun.<sup>9</sup> Insofar as the family engages in economic activity, and insofar as all activity that it engages in has an economic moment, there will be economic features and characteristics of family activity and thus family activity will have to at least accommodate to economic class relations. What Mao, and most socialists have been oblivious to, however, is the reverse logic. As the family has an economic aspect—production and consumption occur—so the workplace has a kinship aspect—gender socialization takes place. As one can usefully study the influence of economic requisites within the family, so one should study the impact of kinship requirements in the workplace.<sup>10</sup>

The point is that women of different class, race, and political positions endure different degrees and forms of patriarchal oppression, and men of these different backgrounds enjoy different patriarchal advantages, just as women and men in the *same class* nonetheless occupy somewhat *different* economic positions due to gender effects.

To conclude our overview, despite the need for further analysis of the dynamics of socialization, all socialist feminist theories point to certain general conclusions. 1) An extensive sexual division of activity and especially the fact that women are primary nurturers is critical to the reproduction of patriarchy 2) The existence of patriarchal kinship networks severely restricts human fulfillment and development. In conjunction with other social networks it establishes restrictions which oppress women and children, and men to a lesser extent. 3) The creation of a society in which biological gender differences are not translated into non-biological social role differences requires a revolution in kinship systems. 4) Advance in other spheres is likely to hinge on a kin-revolution as well, for

kinship activity molds the individuals who enter the work place, the polity, and the community, and if these individuals are psychologically maimed upon arrival, the hope for liberatory outcomes in other spheres is utopian. 5) On the other hand, the co-extension of the kinship network with the other major social networks implies that a feminist revolution cannot succeed without revolutionary change in other spheres as well.

### Alternative Theories of the Situation of Women

#### Orthodox Marxism

The orthodox Marxist approach to the "woman question" is relatively straightforward. The class division of labor and the sexual division of labor derived from it are together responsible for the situation of women in different historical formations. The family is a superstructural institution. It is molded by economic requisites including the accumulation process and the reproduction of class relations. In any particular society men and women may certainly experience different social situations and pressures associated with these superstructural phenomena. But these differences are not fundamental to problems of major social change. They do not require a separate analysis to determine their roots as these roots are known to be economic. They do not require a separate non-class defined movement to eliminate their effects. A revolutionary change in the economy will be sufficient for achieving equity between men and women at the superstructural level, and this revolution can only come from the activity of a class defined movement.<sup>11\*</sup>

\*Of course this is an all too brief presentation ignoring many insights and fine distinctions. Still, it is descriptively representative of the more orthodox approaches and their influence on many creative Marxist thinkers. A volume devoted to the intricate relations between Marxist and feminist thought is *Women and Revolution*, edited by Lydia Sargent, South End Press, 1981. It is important to be absolutely clear that until a new socialist theoretical framework is well established the effects of orthodox priorities and habits of thinking will necessarily continue to plague Marxist efforts to

As Batya Weinbaum asserts, "Marxist class analysis abstracts from differences based on sex and age, as if incidental to the economic order, and socialists have no plan to overcome the resulting problems."<sup>12</sup> Or as Heidi Hartmann says, "Most Marxist analyses of women's position take as their question the relationship of women to the economic system, rather than that of women to men, apparently assuming the latter will be explained in their discussion of the former."<sup>13</sup> Explaining how the oppression of women is useful in reproducing capitalism is not the same as explaining the basis of women's oppression, its tenacity, nor the means by which it may be overcome. Analyses of economic relations do not explain foot-binding, rape, chastity belts, nor the full contours of more "normal" family relations and their impact upon women's lives.

In many non-capitalist societies the family was the central institution of the economy, but this does not mean it wasn't also the central institution of the kinship network.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, this duality of function cannot serve as an argument that the contours of sexism are governed solely by economic requisites—it can only serve as evidence that there may be a co-defining relationship between kin and economic arrangements. The original orthodox Marxist thesis that the advent of private property and the ensuing need for fathers to know which children were their own together engendered the birth of patriarchy is the kind of hypothesis that comes from trying to overburden economics with responsibility for extra-economic results.<sup>15</sup> It is not even in accurate historical order, much less logically compelling.<sup>16</sup>

A better basis for a theory of the origins of patriarchy is that in early societies there was a sexual division of labor, the men more often the hunters, the women more frequently gatherers.<sup>17</sup> The biological need for the mother to be within easy reach of young infants could explain the practical origin of such a sexual division of tasks, and the "by-product" implications for the asymmetrical development of the sexes might well have been profound. We are

understand and affect kinship relations. Moreover, insofar as new theory and aims are broached from within a Marxist orientation, however modified as for example in our own work in this volume, they should rightfully remain suspect until proved successful in on-going political experience.

certainly not in agreement with some superficial analyses that suggest the gathering was mindless, stunting women's evolution, while hunting provoked the further genetic or social development of men. But it does seem plausible to us that hunting could have produced personality traits and skills *emphasizing more aggressive facets of human potential*, thus leading to a situation where the hunters—men—could successfully physically coerce the gatherers—women. Certainly gathering required as much ingenuity and creativity as hunting, including the discovery of the single greatest technical innovation in human history to date—the development of agriculture. But insofar as physical prowess and aggressive psychologies conferred great power, the activity of men and women might have been conducive to the social domination of the former by the latter. In any case, regardless of its origin, patriarchy predates the birth of capitalism (just as class divisions predate the specific kinship forms of modern societies), and its causes are social rather than solely biological. But it is patriarchy's reproduction in specific personality types in the human center through their reproduction in specific kinship networks which must concern us now.

As Gayle Rubin argues, "hunger is hunger, but what counts as food is culturally determined and obtained. Every society has some form of organized economic activity. Sex is sex, but what counts as sex is equally culturally determined and obtained. Every society also has a sex/gender system—a set of arrangements by which the biological raw material of human sex and procreation is shaped by human, social intervention and satisfied in a conventional manner, no matter how bizarre some of those conventions may be."<sup>18</sup> The problem with the orthodox Marxist approach is that it is economically reductionist. Instead of recognizing the existence of a kinship sphere that has implications of its own for human development and organization, the orthodox Marxist view seeks to relegate this sphere to a secondary status and derivative position. Orthodox Marxism forgets that the worker came from a particular kind of family, and that the worker sees the world through eyes which first grew accustomed to seeing social relations in that same family.<sup>19</sup>

Zillah Eisenstein offers another critical observation: "The mutual dependence of patriarchy and capitalism not only assumes the malleability of patriarchy to the needs of capitalism [which is

what allows the orthodox analysis to yield many fruitful insights] but assumes the malleability of capitalism to the needs of patriarchy."<sup>20</sup> Therefore by its reductionism, which ignores half of this "dialectic," the orthodox Marxist analysis of the factory as well as the family, is crippled. For within the factory not only are the social relations, the relative wages, and the relative burdens of work determined by class, but they are also determined by the kinship moment of factory activity and the complex accommodation and/or co-reproduction between the economic and kinship spheres. This is overlooked by the orthodox analysis and so the essential failure of orthodox Marxism—economism—even has repercussions on one's ability to analyze the focused economic network as well as rendering one helpless to fully explain the general relations and struggles between men, women, and children.<sup>21</sup>

In addition to these central failures of the orthodox Marxist approach to "the woman question," we find that other Marxist theories which attempt to more concretely address capitalism, the family, and male-female relations are also lacking. For example, in Engels' classic formulation, the oppression of women under capitalism is due to their exclusion from the realm of work and their restrictive handling by husbands concerned about the amenities of passing on property.<sup>22</sup> Those few women who do work are deemed for the most part free from these oppressions.\* But according to orthodox Marxism the dynamics of the capitalist mode of production tend to attract women into the workplace and thereby undermine the basis for any special oppression of women that might have been inherited from pre-capitalist societies. However, since it is evident that capitalism has not eliminated patriarchy, new orthodox theories have had to account for this. The facts that working women in the U.S. today earn about 65 percent of what their male peers earn, that they are clustered in low income and degrading jobs, that there is still such a thing as "women's work," and that working women suffer no less in the family for their involvement in public work, have propelled many Marxists beyond Engels' analysis of the "women question."<sup>23</sup> For obviously working women are oppressed

\*"Then it will be plain that the first condition for the liberation of the wife is to bring the whole female sex back into public industry." Engels, *op. cit.* p. 138-139.

as women *and* as workers. Work is not free of sexism. Capitalism has not ended patriarchy and has in some ways even intensified it. Engels must be surpassed, at least on this question.

### The "Public" Versus "Private" Conceptualization

To overcome these weaknesses the author of one popular Marxist work, Eli Zaretsky, argues that social life under capitalism is divided into a public and a private sphere.<sup>24</sup> The former, the world of wage labor and politics, is largely inhabited by men. The latter, the world of the household, is primarily the domain of women (though it isn't explained *why* women have a monopoly *here*). This split between public and private has occurred because the wage labor force must be procreated, nurtured, and socialized, and for the most part this cannot be done effectively in the profit-oriented public domain. It is therefore relegated to the household where the task may be efficiently accomplished by women. In Zaretsky's view this household work is doubly privatized in that it is separated from wage labor and because each woman must carry out her tasks individually and in isolation from other women. Moreover, since they are primarily caring for and dependent on particular men, women necessarily become more or less beholden to these same men and oriented to their needs. The private is therefore a subservient sphere whose characteristics are derived from the requirements of the public. So, in Zaretsky's theory, yes, there is a sexual division of labor. Yes, women endure a special oppression. And no, capitalism does not have a built in tendency to diminish this oppression.

But at the same time as it yields these truths which Engels' theory had obscured, Zaretsky's approach also has a number of fundamental weaknesses. First, Zaretsky offers no compelling reason why it must be women who are relegated to the "household sphere." Why isn't it men? Or why not men and women equally? Second, the framework excludes analysis of the effects of the patriarchal relations of the private sphere on the structure of relations in the public sphere. Zaretsky's flow of influences all run in the opposite direction, from public to private. So in Zaretsky's scheme, women are actually working for the capitalist, reproducing his labor force. The solution is for women to withhold this labor and enter the public domain instead. Engels is revived at the last



minute, resuscitated by a clever new theoretical twist, and Zaretsky side-steps the central feminist issue of the relations between men and women. For again entry to the workforce is women's critical need. Struggle with men is misguided and patriarchy disappears as the primary opponent. In the end, Zaretsky's contemporary analysis is just an improved application of the more general orthodox theory.

#### "Wages for Housework"

The theory that women in the home work for capitalists and not for their husbands and that this is the crux of their situation is also held by another school of Marxist feminists. But where Zaretsky sees private and public spheres they conceptualize the situation in terms of a "household mode of production" and a "capitalist mode of production" existing simultaneously and in the same social formation.<sup>25</sup> Yet as compared to Zaretsky and Engels, for these Marxist feminists the solution to women's oppression is reversed. For by reproducing the workforce, women in fact create surplus value. They are important to capitalism because of their effect on profits as well as through molding the workforce. So instead of entering the workplace, women should demand recognition and power within their current milieu. "Wages for housework" is the specific demand suggested by one proponent of this analysis, Mariosa Dalla Costa.<sup>26</sup> But despite its sensitivity to the importance of women's work, in addition to confusions about the determination of profits, this view still focuses principally on economic relations and treats the specific kinship relations between women, men, and children only derivatively. Like Zaretsky's approach, Dalla Costa's analysis certainly contributes ideas that can help anyone already sensitive to the dynamics of both capitalist economic relations and the present form of patriarchal kinship relations, especially in seeing how the former sometimes influences the latter and vice versa. But her view cannot substantially help one understand the core causes and dynamics of sexism in modern societies since for the most part these are not even addressed.

#### Segmented Labor Markets

The last modern variation on the orthodox Marxist analysis

we'll address focuses on what is called "women's work" and the "women's labor market." Adherents note that the previous approaches ignore that almost 50 percent of women in the United States are employed in the wage labor force at any given time. Why aren't these women markedly different from "isolated housewives" if women's greatest oppression and the major determinant of "female personality traits" is the exclusion of women from the public work force? The point is obviously well-taken. The answer comes in the form of an "epicycle" correction tacked onto Marxist theory. There are jobs which are "women's work" and women workers compete only with one another in a labor market that channels them into these jobs. This powerful idea introduces the possibility that life in the factory doing women's work can reproduce sexism rather than eliminate it. It destroys the notion that women's entry into the workforce guarantees their liberation from specifically female oppressions. Indeed, the process of orthodox Marxists introducing the idea of a sexual division among otherwise united workers, and then of a sexual division of factory labor is similar to the process of radical feminists introducing the idea of a class division among otherwise united women and then of an economic factor in the determination of kinship relations. Each advance is a major improvement, which, if it is to be fully elaborated, undermines the single-realm-is-dominant-approach it is appended to. However, perhaps since this theory threatens to make a shambles of traditional orthodox Marxist economic analysis, it has received little attention from orthodox theorists. Because activists find these ideas useful—especially women activists organizing women workers—while orthodox theorists who have more say over what gets attention in the radical media find the ideas disruptive to their paradigm, the theory tends to blow in the wind.

#### Marxist Strategies

All of these theories with the possible exception of the last, yield similar strategies. There must be a class revolution. Of course it is important that women be involved in fighting for socialism. The rupture of the mode of production will overcome the material basis of sexism by bringing women equal positions in the workforce. This in turn will give women economic independence, opportunity for social advance, and access to culture and skills.

In the course of struggle women may be appealed to by entreaties to their working class interests or by reference to their special oppressions (depending on the variant). However, since there is little focus upon the special relations between men and women, little analysis of kinship structures, little discussion of what constitutes "male approaches to organizing and organizations," and little recognition of the need to develop new approaches to socialization and sexuality as they will exist under socialism, there is usually only opportunistic support for womens' efforts to organize themselves autonomously. For even when forthcoming, this support is only part of a general strategy for recruiting women into "socialist" organizations.<sup>27</sup> In the Bolshevik case, for example, in the early years of their existence there was no emphasis on the need for womens' organizations, but as women became more militant and a potential source of energy it was important both to tap their resources and to prevent their entry into non-Bolshevik inspired organizations. Yet at no time did the resulting womens' organizations constitute really autonomous movements which were self-directed and which took responsibility not only for "the women question" but also for politics in general. And further, whenever womens' movements conflict with male dominated socialist organizations, given an orthodox understanding they must be denounced for splitting the working class and being petty bourgeois or bourgeois. Again using the Bolshevik experience as an example and quoting from Anne Bobroff's study we find that "in late 1913 the Bolsheviks decided to publish as an organ of the Central Committee, a journal *Rabotnitsa*, working women, specifically for working women." The following quotation from an editorial in the first issue is indicative of the "anti-splitting mentality" that surfaces in practice which is guided by narrow class-centered theoretical analyses of the situation of women:

Politically conscious women see that contemporary society is divided into classes.... The bourgeoisie is one, the working class the other. [peasants? coordinators?] Their interests are counterposed. The division into men and women in their eyes has no great significance.... The woman question for working men and women—this question is about how to involve the backward masses of working women in organization, how better to make clear

to them their interests, how to make them comrades in the common struggle quickly. The solidarity between working men and women, the common cause, the common goals, and the common path to those goals. Such is the settlement of the womens' question in the workers' midst....<sup>28</sup>

In this view organizations of women are not meant to improve the quality of the whole socialist left by taking leadership in all aspects of political struggle, nor are they even meant to take leadership around the problem of dealing with oppressive relationships between men and women within society, nor are they even supposed to somehow act as a corrective against sexism within the left—rather, they are nothing but an auxiliary for the "backward" but nonetheless needed masses of women. And remarkably, the sacrifice of feminism isn't even made for workers' gains as touted—for in fact a feminist revolution in kinship would be necessary for a full liberation of workers and even for an economic revolution to successfully put workers in command of the economy—but for gains by a male party bureaucracy and a predominantly male coordinator class and intelligentsia.

Finally, in looking at so-called "socialist" societies through orthodox-tinted theoretical sunglasses, the light falls heavily on women's participation in the workforce but more dimly on equalization of housework and the *qualitative character* of the jobs women hold. What remains in the shadows, however, are the sexual relations of teenagers, who controls childbirth processes, the character of early child-rearing relations, the situation of gays and lesbians, the nature of dominance/submission patterns in dialogue and interaction between men and women, sexual anxiety, the nature of the division of labor in the household, the "traffic in women,"—in short, the kinship sphere and its impact upon daily life possibilities. Yet this kinship sphere is critical, both to the situation of the sexes and for its impact on the definition and reproduction of economic, political, and community activity.

Robin Morgan has recently interviewed four women, all exiles from the Soviet Union and all feminist, regarding the plight of women in "already existing socialist society."<sup>29</sup> Although some of the discussion is vague the overall impressions are stark. Talking about the invasion of Afghanistan one woman says: "We must get

rid of the myth that Afgan women are getting freedom while sitting on Russian tanks. Look at the fate of women in the Soviet Eastern and Southeastern regions. They were 'freed' long ago and got rid of their veils but they work out in the cotton fields 14 hours a day, and then, in the evenings go home to their husbands who have bought them—and if such a woman does get some education by the Soviet government, it means only that her bride price goes up. Carrying the Red Banner is really no different than wearing the veil." And another says, "The Soviet woman is emancipated as far as education itself is concerned. She can get her education but she cannot use it." In general they report a situation in which women are still subordinate, work in jobs that are defined as inferior and accorded less pay and status, still primarily responsible for the home and certainly for child rearing, still subject to severe physical and mental abuse—"One of the most idiotic ways of terror the KGB uses is faking a sexual attack," as Robin Morgan explains, "letting the woman escape at the last minute but leaving her terrorized"—and yet quite fully incorporated into the workforce. Traditional socialist strategy of the Bolshevik kind is, as we have already argued, unsuited to the creation of a socialist economy due to its coordinator orientation and political authoritarianism. At the same time, it is also easy to see that simplistic ideas about an end to patriarchy being possible simply on the basis of changes in women's supposed positions in the economy—stemming in turn from nationalization and the institution of planning—are also flawed. Bolshevik strategy did not yield a feminist society. Similarly, traditional Marxist approaches to understanding modern societies, including those that call themselves socialist, are insufficient to understanding the situation of women or men regarding kinship relations, and thus regarding all sides of social life affected by kinship—to varying degrees, everything. They are likewise insufficient to the task of elaborating a feminist vision for any sphere of social life, and will therefore be unable to win and sustain allegiance of women or men who develop "feminist needs." As Heidi Hartmann asserts: "A struggle aimed only at capitalist relations of oppression will fail, since their underlying supports in patriarchal relations of oppression will be overlooked. And the analysis of patriarchy is essential to a definition of the kind of socialism that would destroy patriarchy, the only kind of socialism useful to women."<sup>30</sup> Given this, what then is

there to say about the various feminist theories which aim to replace the economism and class-centeredness of orthodox Marxism with something more psychologically self-conscious?

### Radical Feminism

In the radical feminist's perspective one or another theory of kin and gender relations is elevated to being a theory of society in general. As with the orthodox Marxist school, the character of all social relations is seen as the outgrowth of a single primary dynamic, this time born of the kinship rather than the economic sphere of daily life. Kinship relations are basic (one is tempted to say "in the last instance") and others merely derivative. Kinship must be revolutionized as a basis for change in all aspects of life. From one reductionism we move to another. In speaking of the two polar conceptions Zillah Eisenstein says, "One either sees the social relations of production or the social relations of reproduction, domestic or wage labor, the private or the public realms, the family or the economy, ideology or material conditions, the sexual division of labor or capitalist class relations as oppressive."<sup>31</sup> But as Eisenstein argues and as our approach attempts to clarify, this is a false dichotomy. One does not have to accept either one pole or the other.

Shulamith Firestone's work is an excellent example of this inversion from orthodox Marxism to radical feminism.<sup>32</sup> Firestone's approach seeks the *origins* of on-going male/female social polarities almost exclusively in innate male/female biological differences and their social interplay, and tries to explain the current reproduction of patriarchy as well as class in these terms as well. Firestone treats the problem of socialization via the Oedipus dynamic primarily in power terms, which is a definite improvement on the psychologism of those Freudians who ahistorically abstract from social relations and hierarchies of power to analyse the Oedipus Complex only in terms of genetic biological and psychological structures. One might say that where the orthodox Marxists often carry a justifiable concern for "material relations" to the unreasonable lengths of denying the critical importance of biological and ideological relations, many Freudians and radical feminists allow their psychological and biological insights to blind them to the parallel importance of history and

social structure. But what was critical about Firestone's work was her effort to tackle questions of sexuality, psychology and the relations of men and women head on without subordinating them to some other dynamics, while also seeking to preserve a social and historical orientation. In this, her work can be seen as a precursor to the socialist feminist approaches other women would create shortly thereafter.

Another radical feminist approach with closer ties to Marxism has emphasized the concept: "mode of reproduction."<sup>33</sup> The point is to focus on the reproduction of the species as a form of production necessary to society's existence. This is reasonable, but regrettably most attempts to combine the concepts "mode of reproduction" and "mode of production" have led to serious confusion. Radical feminists who use the concepts insist that the "mode of reproduction" must be prior and primary, but Marxist feminists employing the ideas insist just the opposite. The ensuing fruitless debate obscures the fundamental realization that the two spheres are co-extensive and must either accommodate or reproduce one another's structures in any stable social formation. The fact that one sphere might be more important at a certain moment—either for its social impact or for the importance of its agents in bringing about historical change—does not mean there is a generalizable hierarchy of relations between the two spheres. Moreover, labelling the spheres "levels" as the Althusserians do, is also an invitation to reaching this same dead-end, since about levels one habitually almost immediately asks, "which is higher and which lower?" Juliet Mitchell, for example, seems to be following this Althusserian route having now concluded that economic relations are more basic, and kinship relations essentially ideological and therefore, however important at certain times, derivative.<sup>34</sup>

The second problem with the concepts "mode of reproduction" and "mode of production" is that their use masks the extent to which the economy is involved in socialization and reproduction, and the family in production and consumption. In sum, the problem is a familiar one. Theoretical constructs that attempt to introduce an a priori hierarchy between the spheres of social life or that blind users to the functional mixing between institutional networks of the different spheres, are all conceptually debilitating. We end up emphasizing only one dynamic and

ignoring important features of interaction. Although the idea "mode of reproduction" needn't have led users down this path, in context of being employed alongside more traditional Marxist categories, it certainly has.

The concept "patriarchy," as Gayle Rubin points out, also contains a possible trap which helps illustrate another weakness of radical feminism.<sup>35</sup> Using the term patriarchy to refer to kinship networks in particular societies obscures the fact that these networks undergo substantial changes. China was and remains patriarchal, and the same term applies to relations in the United States today. Yet the kinship networks of Mandarin China, Communist China, and the United States today are different from one another in very important ways. If the only name we had for economies was "class system"—if we didn't have the concepts of slavery, feudalism, capitalism, and the coordinator mode of production and consumption—we would have similar problems in our economic analysis. Labelling Mandarin China and Communist China and the United States today simply "class societies" we would lose track of great differences, even while successfully pursuing a worthy effort to emphasize an aspect of continuity that has been historically ever-present, class division. Similarly, confusing patriarchy with what should be a number of terms applicable to *different* kinship networks can cause two kinds of errors. On the one hand, analysts can become cynical about the possibilities of change—male dominance appears permanent. On the other hand, real changes that have occurred may be continually minimized: the eye flies instead only to those features which recur.

Radical feminism's main contribution is to draw attention directly to the relations between men, women, and children. Everything from mannerisms and morality, to forms of language and ways of thinking is scrutinized for "male supremacist" aspects that will render them dysfunctional to the species, albeit temporarily advantageous to men. And then extrapolating to a strategic level, radical feminists add a critical sensitivity to how male supremacy can be embodied in organizational forms, political styles, and social theories, thereby helping to explain how attempts at changing society often fall prey to the inner dynamics of their own sexist modes of behavior. In short, a sexist movement, organization, and conception of social discourse can only give rise to a patriarchal

"socialism," one that women would have little reason to look forward to.

But while these insights of radical feminism must certainly be incorporated in any socialist analysis and strategy that would hope to overcome patriarchy, the weaknesses of radical feminism will also have to be corrected. Radical feminism is largely insensitive to differences in the experience of patriarchy that exist for women of different classes and races, and for that matter to the importance of different class and community effects on men and women, as well.\* Eisenstein pointed out in an earlier quotation that capital conforms to patriarchy and so does patriarchy conform to capital. Since the same holds true for polity and community as well, radical feminists' insensitivity to these other spheres of social life even diminishes their ability to understand the kinship sphere insofar as it necessarily contains economic, political, and community moments. Thus 1) radical feminists mis-specify the complex relations between sexual activity and economic, political and community relations. 2) They often lapse into an ahistorical mode of analysis rendering certain of their judgements about the possibility of social change cynical. And 3) they do not criticize the economism of Marxism *as an economic theory* since they themselves ignore the impact of kinship relations on economic institutions. These weaknesses often cause critics to apply the labels "bourgeois" or "petty bourgeois" and "racist" to feminism and this has roughly the same legitimacy as when feminists label Marxism or nationalism "sexist" and reflects a similar kind of insight.

### Totalist Socialist Feminism

The alternative we prefer is a totalist approach which underestimates neither the importance of economic nor kinship activity. While separating the spheres, this "totalist analysis" does not lose sight of the economic moment of activity in the kinship sphere (nor its political or community moments) nor the kin moment of

\*For further discussion see Gloria Joseph's article, "The Incompatible Menage A Trois: Marxism, Feminism and Racism," in *Women and Revolution*, edited by Lydia Sargent, South End Press, Boston, 1981.

activity in the economic sphere. Our view is quite compatible with the work of many socialist feminists. For example, Nancy Harstock argues, "...we are led to see that each of the interlocking institutions of capitalism, patriarchy, and white supremacy conditions the others, but each can also be understood as a different expression of the same relations."<sup>36</sup> Or as Gayle Rubin asserts:

A full-bodied analysis of women in a single society, or throughout history, must take *everything* into account: the evolution of commodity forms in women, systems of land tenure, political arrangements, subsistence technology, etc. Equally important, economic and political analyses are incomplete if they do not consider women, marriage, and sexuality.<sup>37</sup>

We begin with a commitment to see kinship both in historical evolution and as it relates to other major social activities. Moreover, the analysis must extend to center and boundary, to both the characteristics within people and to role relationships. The concepts we use to forge such an approach are the methodological tools of thinking in terms of process and network, the general social concepts of human center, institutional boundary and core characteristics, and the identification of the four major spheres of social life each penetrated by moments from all others.

We do not yet have the capacity to distinguish one patriarchy from another, as we distinguish, for example, one class system from another. But because of greater familiarity, we do have further insights into the workings of the particular patriarchal kinship system operative in the U.S. today. The sexism that exists as a core characteristic here is not confined to the realms of sexuality and socialization. Sexism has its roots in these areas, to be sure, but sexism in our society pervades all that is "male" and "female." In the kinship process which takes children and creates modern men and women in the U.S., it is not only the orientation of the sexes to one another and to their offspring which is narrowed. Rather, a male and female "mode" are produced, which in turn govern how men and women perceive and interact with the world, the character and extent to which we relate to our own emotions and thought processes, and even our carriage, gait, and language. What it is to be a man is different from what it is to be a woman, and both are

skewed away from what it should/could be to be human. There is not, however, a simple symmetry—you go your way and I'll go mine, both the same distance off the main track. Instead sexism skews male and female development asymmetrically so that "male" dominates "female."

This means that as a core characteristic sexism is not confined to the family. Our analysis also suggests that sexism is co-defining with other core characteristics in our society and thus centrally active in all major social spheres. In the economy we see social roles which are kin defined as well as class defined. Men and women have different tasks. The work day is a very different thing for each. Yes, there is women's work and men's work, but this is no longer understood as only a designation of jobs that preserves a power hierarchy created in an external kinship sphere. Instead, the differences in work, pay, and more especially *in expected behavior and workday attitudes* all tend to reproduce male and female attributes and are part of what defines the male and female modes that pervade our society.<sup>38</sup> There is reciprocal causation. And a similar analysis can be made of the co-definitional presence of a kinship moment with community and political relations. For example, one need only think about the dynamic interrelation between white supremacy and male supremacy involved in the sexual relations and norms which hold between Blacks and whites. White women are not to be looked at by Black men—lynching was at one time the penalty for real or imagined transgressions—while Black women are legitimate objects of lust and rape for white men. The underlying dynamic between fears of other communities and fears of sexual impropriety and impurity is obviously quite strong through history.<sup>39</sup> In general, the male supremacist product of kinship activity peculiar to our society is part of a totality of relations including racism, classism, and authoritarianism, and to be fully understood it must be analysed in this totality.

Sexism does not affect women of different races or classes identically, even if it does affect *all* women. And regrettably, a sensitivity to sexual oppression no more insures an anti-racist sensitivity than a sensitivity to race or class oppression, for example, necessarily assure an anti-sexist sensitivity. Indeed, quite the contrary. It seems to us that in our society, using an orientation that *does see* one or more spheres as primary, *neglecting* one or more as

well, almost insures objectively oppressive results. Feminists and socialist feminists, for example, use the word "women" in a way which really connotes "white women," much as Marxists use "worker" in a way which connotes "white male worker." So, to understand kinship phenomena in full requires a totalist theoretical framework lest we not only fail to perceive intimate ties between kinship and other activities, but also the different meaning of sexism for different men and women, implicitly (or explicitly) being racist or classist in the process.

The family is the central institution in the U.S. kinship network. Sexism is produced first in the family by the interaction of actors with unequal power facing different constraints and each seeking security, a positive self-image and various other fulfillments. And while the need to investigate male-female and parent-child emotional, sexual, and power relations to determine how familial psychological processes produce sexist outcomes is apparent, we must also develop a full understanding of the political, economic, and community moments of familial activity if we are to gain a full picture. How do the non-kin moments constrain and mold the operation of kinship activity in the family and visa-versa? How is the sexual maturation of people of different classes and races different, and how is it the same?

Certainly the socialization processes in bourgeois or working class families and in black or white families, are different. Sex role differentiation is necessarily communicated in all cases, but its specific features, and therefore the effects upon men, women, and children of different backgrounds, certainly varies. And this goes beyond the important matters of access to birth control and frequency and type of female labor outside the home and its impact on home life. We refer to the full implications of "producing a Black" or "producing a worker" as compared to "producing a white" or "producing a capitalist," and the effects these differences necessarily have on early socialization, the roles of the parents, and the general content of familial interactions.

In other words, kin activity in the United States not only pushes outward to effect relations in other spheres but also reproduces the features of other spheres within the day-to-day production of male and female adults in socialization. Thus economic requisites ensure that children discover within the family the "rights of property

holders' and "the value of a dollar." The dynamics of upbringing teach acquisitiveness and a work and consumption ethic suitable to capitalist work and market conditions. The relations between families with different class allegiance as competing antagonists with different power in the market place powerfully molds family activity.

Similarly, the family must respect the community divisions which exist within society at large. Community hierarchies and norms operative without, must also be recreated within. The Black or white child must grow up to fit his/her community. The cultural aspects of kinship vary in accord.

The family is also a "production unit" for authoritarian/submissive personalities. The kind of personalities and consciousness necessary for acceptance of racial, class, and political hierarchical relations are neither innate nor easily produced in the human species. They are a product of long periods of special kinds of socialization necessarily starting in the family.<sup>39</sup> The father is usually the first authority figure we are taught to respect, fear, and obey. He is the first of many patriarchs—the teacher, the boss, the "man" (meaning both white-man and police-man)—who we will obey. The mother is usually the first servant we will disdain. Thus the essential features of authoritarianism—respect for authority and power and willingness to obey orders from above, combined with disdain for subordinates and insistence on obedience from below—are all built into and first encountered in the essential structure of patriarchal familial relations. Of course the authoritarian patterns and lessons must be—and are—different for young boys and girls, Blacks and whites, members of different religious and ethnic communities, and for children from the working, coordinator, and capitalist classes. But authoritarian characteristics must be indelibly stamped in all, which is precisely the result of an early socialization geared toward molding a child to fit given social roles, rather than freeing a child to become what he or she will; a socialization in which the use and threat of both physical and psychological coercion is ever present; in short, a socialization that is preeminently a manipulative affair.

The individual as produced in the family, and it is different for families whose parents are of different status in various social hierarchies, is generally eminently qualified to enter modern life as a "productive and accommodating" participant. There are contradic-

tions, as we will discuss below, to be sure, but to the extent that the family and kinship network as a whole operate "successfully" they produce fragmented men and women, each partially "de-sexed" and also inclined to be workers, coordinators, or capitalists, members of different cultural communities, and people with authoritarian personalities and consciousnesses. Likewise, though we can't possibly address the actual dynamics here, the diverse types of *non-nuclear family* one can find in the U.S. (when they function within the general bounds of system reproduction) also produce people to fit. In short, in its usual operation the kinship network as a whole generally reproduces the core social differentiations and hierarchies—in consciousness and in material relations—characteristic of all the central spheres of social life.

### Kinship Change

However, as mentioned above the kinship sphere does not develop without "internal" contradiction, and other spheres can also create considerable disruption of kin relations. Divorce rates surpassing marriage rates, children from "broken homes" outnumbering children from "stable families" in average classrooms, and majorities of new wives experiencing pre-marital intercourse are neither unknown phenomena among segments of U.S. society nor insignificant ripples in kinship activity. And the reasons for the crisis that has been brewing in U.S. kinship relations are to be found both within the "internal" dynamics of kinship activity, and also in disruptive pressures from external other spheres. Advances in knowledge about psychology, sexuality, and birth control techniques, for example, and the spread of that knowledge to large numbers of women, men, and adolescents, bears a major responsibility for the "crisis of the American family." These changes might usefully be thought of by socialist feminists as developments of *kinship knowledge* that disrupt the established "social relations of kinship" leading to intensified gender struggles, in much the same way orthodox Marxists see the development of new economic knowledge as sometimes disruptive enough of established social relations of production to intensify class struggles. In part, therefore, the crisis is a result of the *internal dynamics* of kinship activity "throwing up" obstacles to the reproduction of its own previous patterns: princi-

pally the changed consciousness and hopes of women. But this is not to say that the crisis has not also been fueled from "without." The pressure since World War II to rush greater numbers of women into the wage labor force and the commercialization of housework and health care that came about principally from competitive dynamics within the economic sphere are only two examples of changes within an external sphere, the economy, that have had a profound impact on kin relations.<sup>40</sup> Another more voluntarist influence was the emergence of the civil rights movement in the community sphere, challenging not only community norms around race, but also the very ideas of dominance and submission in a way that "percolated" across spheres to help catalyze the early development of women's consciousness and the formation of the women's movement of the 1960s.<sup>41</sup>

The idea is that contradictions within a kinship institution like the family, or between it and developments occurring in some other sphere of daily life can lead in diverse directions. After a time of disruption, there can be a return to old forms, an evolutionary reformist alteration which causes certain changes but leaves defining relations intact, or in some instances a revolutionary alteration which redefines basic contours of institutional and consciousness relations. A powerful understanding of the emergence of the women's movement (and of the new right) as well as insights into the different meaning of kinship relations for different classes, ethnic groups, and races would, for example, depend upon recognitions of these kinds of contradictions and dynamics.

Many socialist feminists and radical feminists have already gone far toward building an analysis of the reproductive and disruptive forces impacting on the U.S. kinship sphere. We suggest that a totalist framework that neither subordinates kinship dynamics to others nor neglects the impact of economic, political, and community forces on the kinship sphere, offers a comfortable and suggestive environment for furthering this path breaking work already initiated by feminist activists and scholars. Moreover, such a framework may serve to break down barriers to the use of insightful concepts developed by modern feminists in the work of analysts focusing instead first on the economy, polity, or community.

Less ambitiously, if we have said enough to undermine the notions a) that socialists need concern themselves only with "mate-

rial economic relations" in faith that kinship alterations are secondary, and b) that as a part of a "superstructure" kinship relations will automatically follow socialist transformations in the economy, then we have accomplished our priority purpose. For we will have communicated that the fact of the penetration of kinship norms into all spheres of daily life belies these orthodox myths. Certainly, the same old family will tend to reproduce "familiar adults," and certainly these familiar adults will not fit comfortably into dramatically altered economic, political, or community structures unless those changed structures have only replaced old forms of subservience with new ones. Certainly the economy can as easily be constrained (or forced to change) by dormancy (or alterations) in kinship relations, as kinship relations can be constrained (or forced to change) by dormancy (or alterations) in economic relations.

Therefore the strategic implications of our approach to analyzing kinship relations are significant. As one pillar upon which patriarchal, racist, capitalist society rests, as one core characteristic that penetrates all spheres of social life, male supremacy is one of the features that must be eliminated by any revolution that truly seeks to enrich human possibilities. This can be effectively accomplished only if it is taken as a conscious programmatic priority. Furthermore, sexism must be overcome as a necessary condition of revolutionizing other spheres of life activity. And finally, in developing organizations and elaborating organizational techniques, it is necessary to fight against the reproduction of "male" and "female" modes and their hierarchical relations to one another. "Male linear thinking" and "female intuition" must not continue to be divorced from one another, much less segregated by sex and fixed in a hierarchy.

This implies an additional critique of the traditional democratic centralist approach to organization and of the vanguard approach to relations of organizers to "organized."<sup>43</sup> For these approaches are impregnated with male norms—objectivity to the exclusion of intuition and emotion, single-minded focus versus totalism, and an ends versus means rather than holistic mentality. Therefore, even if it has sometimes attenuated extreme manifestations of woman-hating, traditional democratic centralist organizing has nonetheless contributed to the reproduction of male supremacy, rather than to its overthrow. The very notion of the "vanguard" is



antithetical to the possibility of women organizing with real autonomy and power over the direction of the whole movement.<sup>44</sup> We are not suggesting that men and women face the sky, proclaim themselves degenderized, and thereby begin functioning as perfect socialists and feminists in all ways. This is impossible. It may take generations to completely undo all the negative effects of historic kinship divisions on men and women. But this is no excuse for continuing to actively reproduce the oppressive and debilitating status quo. What is required is a practice which poses organizational norms and techniques that *counter sexist modes of conduct, rather than ones which reinforce them*. Women have already argued quite convincingly the need for autonomy of their organizations, for the importance of intuition in analysis, for the need to overcome "male rationality," macho-behavioral norms, and hierarchy.<sup>45</sup> We suggest that these ends can only be achieved if autonomous women's movements form part of a larger all-sided socialist movement, and if women participate fully at the total level while they also *lead* in the definition and development of programs addressing the creation of socialist kinship relations. The aim must be solidarity *and* particularity, collectivity *and* autonomy, complementarity within a framework of totality. Most existing theory and practice, especially that which yielded those societies which now call themselves "socialist," could not be further from these goals.

As a result we must embark on a program of critique of "socialist" kinship experiences, and also formulate a new kinship vision of our own suited to the potentials and realities of modern kinship requirements. These are tasks to be undertaken in the companion volume of this study, *Socialism Today and Tomorrow*. We will show how the Soviet, Chinese, and Cuban experiences embody patriarchal failings to different degrees and in different ways, and how their history simultaneously bears out our theoretical expectations and also teaches many lessons relevant to social change under modern conditions. We will also use our general theory to address questions of what kinship relations might or could be like under a new form of socialism in our own hopefully not too distant future. We will speak to questions of family organization, communal living, sexual preference, sexuality in general, socialization, schooling, and of course the changes in the roles of men and women regarding child rearing and other aspects of

kinship activity. We will also enumerate the impacts these changes can be reasonably expected to have on the quality of socialist daily life and even hypothesize about some of the more subtle alterations of personality and desire which might accompany a socialist transformation of kinship relations. Last, we will discuss the interrelations between kinship and the three other primary spheres of social life arguing how it is that transformations in those spheres both foster and are fostered by kinship alterations. Now, however, the next step is to address an area which socialist theory has been most lax in attending, despite obvious historical evidence of its centrality: the dynamics of community definition and struggle.