

"patriarchy" is no
longer a useful
concept?



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My personal way of defining patriarchy is a society typically dominated and control by men. Patriarchy shows us how our society functions and how it controls women, including all systems, like work place, home, religion etc, where women are formed and developed to the way men want them to be. It is the opposite of matriarchy, meaning women are the head and in control of families.

This quote given by H, Hartman signifies social patriarchy, so it is not naturally suggested but socially. 'I define patriarchy as a set of social relations which has a material base and in which there are hierarchical relations between men, and solidarity among them, which enables them to control women. [p3, H Hartman: (1982), 'What about women? '; 'Gender Inequality in Employment', 551. 04 leatures 11 and 12.]

The way in which society used to be, was that once the content of 'patriarchy' had been established, it was used strongly in every society and in many different ways, creating sexual politics, where men were seen as the dominant sex class and the treatment of women, through this patriarchy system determined their future and success in life. The possibilities for women making choices in every aspect of their own personal life were taken away from them or where very limited because of this patriarchal control that was upon them.

In the past the husband was clearly the principal negotiator, with the marriage license being the only exception, where the women would really be going into a life long commitment of serving her husband as a slave. The females main source of learning were things such as learning to spin, sew

and weave, and maybe a little reading and writing. The main company that was given to them, were other females, and they lived more or less behind closed doors. The women had a separate section in the house that was located away from the other sections so that communications with males or strangers were barred.

While the men when out to work, the women's role was just seen as to be looking after the house and children, and listen to their husbands. 'The separation of home from work led to a sharper separation of male and female spheres. The world of business outside the home became a male sphere and the world of home and children became a women's one. ' [p366, Fulcher & Scott. (1999)Sociology] The husband's leisure and business time were of no business to the wife, domesticity cut women off from business life and public activities in general.

In some society's women were degraded, they were seen as objects used for male needs and a simple tool of breeding children. 'A woman of a particular community, caste or social-economic stratum is raped to 'teach' that section of the society, in other words, to reproduce the hierarchical structure. It was in the mid-1800 when the first signs of the feminist movement came about. In 1961 it was discussed by a man named John Stuart, that the role of women is society during that time, pointing out how the patriarchy placed such an intense limit on what women could do.

A time came out when evidence should the existence of a pre-industrial division of labour between men and women. However this existence contained occupational segregation, where the females worked only in

female jobs and males concentrated in male jobs. 'Middleton (1979) argued that women did carry many different agricultural tasks, but it was the men who did the high status work of ploughing. Job segregation enabled males still to maintain superiority over women, because of the patriarchal relationships in paid work.

The labour market urged lower wages for women, so that it would encourage them to marry and stay financial dependant on their husbands. Women were excluded from better jobs than men, to keep their primary responsibilities as the main caregiver for children and family. However in some areas of the pre-industrial society capable women who entered the labour market were forced into part-time and insecure employments, where they would be excluded from promotion. Once they married they had to leave their job, so their personal status would drop back down into the status level as they were when they started off.

Also the employment of women alarmed men highly as their position of the male role of head of the household became seen as threatened, especially in the twenty century then demands for labour by women became stronger, and women would no longer be ignored. This was when the 'family wage' became known, when the male breadwinner would support his family with his earnings, whilst the women's earning were treated as a additional source of income so that their unpaid domestic work would not be interfered with their paid work.

It was not until the 1980s that these requirements changed, when recruitment practices of certain companies had referred to the Equals

Opportunities Commission. The position of men was altered and the women's position underwent significant changes. More women moved into the labour market and were used less in the homes. With the changing of attitudes towards means of the production, families began to drop away from the ways and ideas of 'male ownership' with society and the changing attitudes of women's role became stronger.

Society needed women to work as men could not fill all the vacancies and they needed women to do the jobs that men would not. More opportunities for young children to go to school were given. 'Private housekeeping is transformed into a social industry. The care and education of the children became a public affair; society looks after all children alike, whether they are legitimate or not'. [p170, Jodi Dean. (1997) *Feminism and the New Democracy*] Changes in women's employment have had consequences that we still do not know what will happen in a situation involving children, marriages and other important factors in one's individual life.

Countries that have high birth rates now have low birth rates, due to women working. Dramatic changes have also taken place, such as divorce rates rising and single mothers increasing. Organizations themselves are re-thinking employing different work time and working practice; because number of paid work and taking care of unpaid domestic and family work has increased as men have to also help now. Females that were before at home looking after husband's mother refuse to do this now. The late twenty century patterns was going to work, leaving work on the first child, then gradually coming back to work.

These females were married, where as mentioned before that in the early days, that if women worked, they had to leave the employment completely when they got married. Now there are more women in the labour force than men. Women's economic behaviour is the same as men, but still do different jobs on a lower level. Patriarchy was also found in adopting the name of their husbands after marriage, but more women are choosing to keep their maiden and have a choice of titles e. g. Ms, Miss and Mrs, so that they can retain their own identity.

Also another element that changed in society which is widely appreciated now is the fact that women were able to vote which began after the First World War, which was still based on age. However the question still remains that is patriarchy still useful? I would personally argue that yes it is. One has to understand it with other concepts, with the way of how the concept of patriarchy is used. I would personally argue that some concepts of patriarchy has fad away from today society's, but overall it has not lessened, but is now being used under different forms.

One form of patriarchy that can be seen as a useful concept, is entertainment given by women. Women are appreciated on their glamour. In the media women such as the 'Spice Girls' are a role model in society because of glamour. Naked women are commonly shown e. g. in the Sun Newspaper, on page three, where as men nudity is more under the covers. This is seen as useful, as it can be forfilling entertainment for men, and women' role models are being used to put across message, such as Spice Girls putting forward the message of 'girl power'.

It can also still be useful in a relationship as men still oppress women, maybe it is something that males inherent, that men can use to impress women, such as paying when going out, walking the lady home etc. I would say it's main usefulness still lies within the family, as the family and religion are the source of many of our beliefs. Families and religion can be the most powerful sets of shaping one's personality and future. This is important as it is given to us from our primary experiences of family life.

It is believed that for a family to work it needs to be organized within a set of rules and beliefs. These still mainly come from the main positional power, which is mainly the role of the father. The rules and beliefs are expected to be practiced in order to keep a family together. 'The key to survival and success for the children in the family system, or the underlying incentives and rewards, is to please the father or, in its modern form, please the parents, and obtaining their attention and/or approval. In some religions and cultures it is seen as a useful concept, for example Islam, because some elements are practice to protect women and their dignity. Their rules come from the Holy Qur'an, which Muslims obey by not only because they have to, but also because they believe it has been given to them to help guide them and protect them from the dangers of life, one example, adultery.

However some may not see it as useful, as facts have shown that the top politicians and scientists are men. Work hours still have had seen to be problems for women. In Britain inequality is illegal but still is happening in other parts of the country, and men still oppress women. Sometimes society promotes sex- stereotyped roles themselves when it is unnecessary, for example in some cultures there is more of a celebration when a baby boy is

born, or when children are a bit older society places them into their sex roles, e. . to praise them we say things like " that's pretty for a good girl" or to a boy it is said " you do that like a girl", or " boys don't cry". We are teaching girls to be feminine, and boys are taught to be masculine, by being tough and insensitive. My conclusion to this essay from reviewing the facts I have gained, is that patriarchy is seen more as useful concept in society today despite the negative elements.

I would personally say that women today still depend on certain patriarchal concepts to enable them to gain security within their lives, however this is not true for everyone. During this essay I have covered a range of topics to with patriarchy. In my essay I have concentrated on four aspects, I have defined the term 'patriarchy'; I have talked about how society was how society has changed, and discussed if patriarchy still is a useful concept. I have produced this with relevant evidence in a form of quotes.