

perspective of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe in *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (New York, 1985).

47. I develop this notion of the "socio-cultural means of interpretation and communication" and the associated conception of autonomy in "toward a Discourse Ethic of Solidarity," *Praxis International* 5, no. 4 (January 1986): 425-29, and in ["Struggle over Needs: Outline of a Socialist-Feminist Critical Theory of Late Capitalist Political Culture," in *Unruly Practices: Power, Discourse, and Gender in Contemporary Social Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 161-187]. Both notions are extensions and modifications of Habermas's conception of "communicative ethics."

48. My own recent work attempts to construct a conceptual framework for a socialist-feminist critical theory of the welfare state that meets these requirements. See "Women, Welfare and the Politics of Need Interpretation" in [*Unruly Practices: Power, Discourse, and Gender in Contemporary Social Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 144-160]. "Toward a Discourse Ethic of Solidarity" (see n. 47 above), and ["Struggle over Needs: Outline of a Socialist-Feminist Critical Theory of Late Capitalist Political Culture," in *Unruly Practices: Power, Discourse, and Gender in Contemporary Social Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 161-187]. Each of these essays draws heavily on those aspects of Habermas's thought that I take to be unambiguously positive and useful, especially his conception of the irreducibly sociocultural, interpretive character of human needs and his contrast between dialogical and monological processes of need interpretation. The present paper, on the other hand, focuses mainly on those aspects of Habermas's thought that I find problematical or unhelpful and so does not convey the full range either of his work or of my views about it. Readers are warned, therefore, against drawing the conclusion that Habermas has little or nothing positive to contribute to a socialist-feminist critical theory of the welfare state. They are urged, rather, to consult the essays cited above for the other side of the story.

The Politics of Socialist Feminism

Alison M. Jaggar

To analyze the contemporary oppression of women in terms of the concept of alienation is to link that oppression inevitably with capitalism. It is to deny that "patriarchy" is an unchanging trans-historical and cross-cultural universal and to assert instead that the subordination of women takes different forms in different historical periods. The alienation of contemporary women is a historically specific product of the capitalist mode of production. It results from such historically specific features of capitalism as the fetishism of commodities, the rise of positive science, and especially the separation of home from workplace, accompanied by the characteristic split between emotion and reason, the personal and the political.

This is not to say, of course, that women's oppression stems from capitalism alone, nor that the abolition of capitalism would eliminate that oppression. The abolition of capitalism would end the specifically capitalist form of women's oppression, but there is no reason to suppose that it could not be succeeded by a new form of "patriarchy" or male dominance and perhaps by new modes of alienation. The socialist feminist analysis of women's oppression shows that women's liberation requires totally new modes of organizing all forms of production and the final abolition of "femininity." Traditional Marxism has taken the abolition of class as its explicit goal, but it has not committed itself to the abolition of gender. Socialist feminism makes an explicit commitment to the abolition of both class and gender.

It is one thing to say that class and gender must be abolished, of course, and quite another to say how that abolition should be achieved. Socialist feminists, like everyone else, offer no guaranteed route to the overthrow of male dominance and capitalism. One thing that they do have, however, is a conception of the material base of society that includes the mode of producing sexuality and children as well as the mode of producing what are ordinarily called goods and services. For this reason, several of their proposals for social change, like many of the proposals of radical feminism, are directed toward the transformation of sexuality and procreation.

1. Reproductive Freedom

Reproductive freedom for women is a central concern for socialist feminism. Basically, it means control over whether and in what circumstances women bear and rear

children. Sometimes this idea is expressed as "reproductive rights" but, for reasons that I shall explain shortly, I think the terminology of rights is misplaced.

In developing their conception of reproductive freedom, socialist feminists do not begin from a vision of some ideal society. Instead, they begin by identifying existing constraints on women's reproductive freedom. In identifying these constraints, they draw from the insights of other groups of feminists. From liberal feminism, they draw a recognition of some of the factors that force women into unwanted motherhood, including the legal and the economic unavailability of contraception and abortion, as well as the lack of opportunities for women to fulfill themselves through venues other than motherhood. From traditional Marxism, socialist feminists draw a recognition of the factors in contemporary society that deprive many poor women of the opportunity to be mothers. These factors include the involuntary sterilization of poor, black, Hispanic, and native American women in the United States, and the lack of economic support for children who are born to such women. Finally, socialist feminists draw from radical feminists the recognition that women are often forced into motherhood by compulsory heterosexuality, that compulsory heterosexuality also deprives many lesbian mothers of custody of their children, and that no woman under patriarchy is really free to raise her child as she wishes.

As long as any of these constraints exist, socialist feminists argue that women lack reproductive freedom. —

Genuine control over one's own reproductive life must mean, among other things, the universal availability of good, safe, cheap birth control; and adequate counseling for all women and men about all currently existing methods. It must mean adequate abortion services and an end to involuntary sterilization. It must mean the availability to all people of good public childcare centers and schools; decent housing, adequate welfare, and wages high enough to support a family; and of quality medical, pre- and post-natal and maternal care. It must also mean freedom of sexual choice, which implies an end to the cultural norms that define women in terms of having children and living with a man; an affirmation of people's right to raise children outside of conventional families; and, in the long run, a transformation of childcare arrangements so that they are shared among women and men. Finally, all these aspects of reproductive freedom must be available to all people—women, minorities, the disabled and handicapped, medicaid and welfare recipients, teenagers, everyone.

Women have never had reproductive freedom in this sense.¹

The socialist feminist conception of reproductive freedom starts from the material conditions of contemporary society, it is not designed to offer a model of reproductive freedom in some ideal society. This is obvious from the fact that the statement above assumes the continuation of the wage system—although in fact it is less obvious that some elements in the above definition are compatible with the continuation of the wage system. Nor does this typical socialist feminist statement of reproductive freedom call, for instance, for the development of the means to make possible parthenogenesis or the fertilization of one ovum by another so that two women could be the biological parents of a child, nor for the option of extra-uterine gestation, so-called test-tube babies. Because of its historical materialist methodology, socialist feminism eschews any final or abstract definition of reproductive freedom and instead is content to allow the notion of reproductive freedom to be defined relative to the material possibilities of a given society. For instance, in a technologically advanced society the unavailability of amniocentesis or of test-tube conception may be

seen as constraints on women's reproductive freedom in a way that their absence cannot be construed to limit the reproductive freedom of women in a less technologically advanced society. The socialist feminist call for reproductive freedom must be interpreted in a historical and materialist way. It functions less as a clearly envisioned end goal than as a heuristic device. As such, it urges us to identify specific restrictions on women's freedom to choose or to refuse motherhood, to understand the material basis of these restrictions, and to seek the real possibility of eliminating them.

Although it starts from existing material conditions, the socialist feminist conception of reproductive freedom does not accept those conditions as unchangeable. For instance, this conception of reproductive freedom is clearly much broader than the liberal "right to choose" contraception and abortion. What it actually calls for is a transformation of the social conditions in which "choices" are made. Construed thus broadly, it becomes obvious that reproductive freedom is incompatible either with the compulsory heterosexuality and mandatory motherhood that have characterized all male-dominated societies or with the economic inequality that necessarily characterizes capitalism. Because it cannot be achieved within the existing social order, reproductive freedom is in fact a revolutionary demand.

Socialist feminists are careful to emphasize that reproductive freedom must be available to all women, but they rarely discuss what reproductive freedom would be for men. As Rosalind Petchesky points out, two reasons exist for the socialist feminist assumption that women rather than men should control reproduction. One is the biological fact, unalterable until the present time, that babies are gestated and born from the bodies of women; the other is the social fact that, in contemporary society as in other known societies, the sexual division of labor assigns women most of the work and responsibility for infant and child welfare.²

When reproductive freedom for women is justified solely by reference to the facts of female biology, rather than including a reference to women's social situation, it tends to emerge in a demand for "reproductive rights." Petchesky criticizes this formula because she believes that

it can be turned back on us to reinforce the view of all reproductive activity as the special, biologically destined province of women. Here it has to be acknowledged that this danger grows out of the concept of "rights" in general, a concept inherently static and abstracted from social conditions. Rights are by definition claims that are staked within a given order of things and relationships. They are demands for access for oneself, or for "no admittance" to others, but they do not challenge the social structure itself, the social relations of production and reproduction. The claim for "abortion rights" seeks access to a necessary service, but by itself it fails to address the existing social relations and sexual divisions around which responsibility for pregnancy and children is assigned. And in real-life struggles, this limitation exacts a price, for it lets men and society neatly off the hook.³

"Reproductive rights" may come to be viewed as ends in themselves, as something belonging permanently to women in virtue of their unalterable biological constitution. A more consistently socialist feminist approach would focus less on biological "givens" and more on the social relations of procreation. Ultimately, socialist feminists are not interested in a mode of society that assigns rights to some individuals in order to protect them from others; they are interested in transforming the mode of procreation.

Apart from the fact that children are born from the bodies of women rather than men, the other ground for asserting that reproductive freedom should belong to women rather than to men is that present day relations of procreation assign most procreative work and responsibility to women. In previous societies, this work and responsibility was usually shared by a group of women but, as we saw in the preceding section, the special conditions of modern capitalism have confined most contemporary mothers in an isolation that is historically unique. It is in part this unique isolation that makes it plausible to interpret reproductive freedom as a "right" of individual women. Part of the socialist feminist conception of reproductive freedom, however, is to challenge the traditional sexual division of labor in procreation so that childcare comes to be shared between women and men. If this goal were achieved, and if the community as a whole came to assume responsibility for the welfare of children (and mothers), then the birth or non-birth of a child would affect that community in a much more direct and immediate way than it does at present. In this case, it would seem reasonable to allow the community as a whole to participate in decisions over whether children were born and how they should be reared. In these changed social circumstances, it would no longer be even plausible to interpret reproductive freedom as a "right" of individual women. Instead, reproductive freedom would be seen clearly to be a social achievement and something to be shared by the entire community, men as well as women.⁴

Under the rubric of reproductive freedom, socialist feminists propose to transform existing arrangements for organizing sexuality and procreation. They believe that their proposals will have far-reaching social consequences. The most obvious, of course, is that women's release from compulsory motherhood will allow them to develop their capacities in many other areas. On a deeper level, many socialist feminist theorists believe that the equal involvement of men in infant and childcare is the key to eliminating the gendered structure of the unconscious mind. Dorothy Dinnerstein, as we have seen, argues that the mother-rearing of children instills an ineradicable (though often unacknowledged) misogyny in both men and women, a misogyny that "conspires to keep history mad."⁵ Nancy Chodorow traces the way in which women's responsibility for early childcare results in the imposition of a different character structure on girls and boys. Boys grow up to be achievement-oriented and emotionally closed to others; girls grow up to be emotionally vulnerable, open to and even dependent on the approval of others. In the end, boys and girls become men and women who repeat the traditional sexual division of labor in childrearing and so perpetuate psychological and social inequality between women and men.⁶ Both for Dinnerstein and for Chodorow, men's full participation in infant and child care is essential to eradicating the deep roots of gender in the unconscious mind.

Not all socialist feminists accept the psychoanalytic theories of Dinnerstein and Chodorow. Some socialist feminists argue that they repeat the errors of Freud in being ahistorical, in falsely universalizing childhood experience, and in ignoring differences of period and of class. Critics who are non-Freudians deny that people's character structures are fixed in childhood with such finality and argue that in fact people may continue to change in fundamental ways throughout their lives. Other critics argue that the problem is not so much that mothers rear children as that they do so in a context of male dominance and compulsory heterosexuality. A male-dominated society is always likely to be misogynistic, no matter who rears the children. It may be that women rear children because they have low status, rather than that they have

low status because they rear children. After all, childcare is a demanding though socially necessary task which provides no material as opposed to emotional return until the child is old enough to work, and often not even then. For this reason, childcare is a task which is likely to be relegated to the less powerful members of the society, while the more powerful devote their energy to increasing their power. Historically, this has certainly held true, and even today much childcare is left to relatively powerless teenage, minority or elderly women.

Rather than focusing on relatively long-term attempts to alter the psychic structure of our daughters (and our sons) by involving men immediately in childrearing, some socialist feminists argue that it is more important to alter the external social structures that channel women into motherhood and childrearing.⁷ The most important single factor contributing to this channeling is probably the sex-segregated job market, which keeps women in low-paid and low-status jobs. In these circumstances, childrearing appears to many women to be the only kind of fulfilling work available to them. In order to take this option, however, a woman is forced economically to find a man who will help support her and her children. Because of men's economic privilege in the market, it is usually impossible for women to support the family while men stay at home with the children. Their economic situation thus tends to push women into childrearing, regardless of whether they have unconscious drives toward mothering.

The socialist feminist conception of reproductive freedom seeks to enlarge women's options so that they are not forced to choose between childlessness and the alienation of contemporary motherhood. It calls for economic security for women, for paid maternity leaves and for the provision of publicly funded and community-controlled childcare. If these were established, women would have the real option of choosing motherhood without being forced to abandon or drastically limit their participation in other kinds of work or to become economically dependent on a man. These changes, particularly the assumption of public responsibility for childcare, would make visible the way in which childrearing is real work and would constitute an enormous step toward eliminating the public/private distinction.

If women were fully active participants in worthwhile work outside the home, enjoying the economic security and self-respect that such participation would bring, it is doubtful that, from the child's point of view, a male presence would be required for successful childrearing. Without the occurrence of these structural changes, several authors have expressed concern that male presence in childrearing could simply deprive women of control over even this aspect of their work.⁸ If these structural changes were to occur, however, women would be in a stronger position to demand that men should share the responsibility for childrearing. In these circumstances, men might even want to do so. In these changed circumstances, too, childcare would be less exhausting and alienated and this is one way in which increased reproductive freedom for women could also result in increased reproductive freedom for men.

Included within the socialist feminist conception of reproductive freedom is a recognition of the necessity for sexual freedom. The statement of reproductive freedom quoted earlier, for example, includes a call for "freedom of sexual choice." The announcement that reproductive freedom includes sexual freedom is not just an arbitrary definition nor is it an opportunistic attempt to cram as many good causes as possible under one slogan. Instead, it is an explicit recognition that there exist not only biological but also social connections between sexuality and procreation. Limi-

tations on women's procreative freedom have been used to control their sexual freedom; for instance, men in early societies used a ban on birth control to force monogamy on women.⁹ Conversely, limitations on women's sexual freedom have been used to control their procreative freedom; most obviously, forced heterosexuality has also forced women into motherhood. These are not the only connections between sexuality and procreation. As we shall see, there are a number of other reasons why sexual freedom for women is not possible without procreative freedom and procreative freedom is not possible without sexual freedom. Consequently, an adequate conception of reproductive freedom must include an ideal of sexual freedom.

Although there are in fact many connections between sexuality and procreation in women's lives, sexual and procreative freedom are possible only if the expressions of women's sexuality are viewed as activities which need not result in procreation. Feminists have not always recognized this: in the 19th century, many American feminists saw non-procreative sex as "a means for men to escape their responsibility to women. They saw contraception as a tool of prostitutes and as a potential tool of men in turning women into prostitutes."¹⁰ In the 20th century attitudes changed, partly because women were in fact achieving a degree of economic independence from men, partly because the pressures to bear large numbers of children were reduced. Increasingly, sexuality itself became a "question" and sexual pleasure began to be acknowledged as a legitimate aspiration of women. In the first part of the 20th century, however, it was men who defined sexual liberation, even for women, and the male definitions were blatantly self-serving. Female sexuality was characterized by Freud as inherently passive, masochistic and narcissistic—a perfect rationale for the sexual objectification of women and for sexual aggression toward them. Heterosexual intercourse was taken as the paradigm of sexual activity, and women were blamed for frigidity if they did not experience orgasm during intercourse.

With the rise of the contemporary women's liberation movement in the 1960s, feminists began a thoroughgoing critique of the prevailing conception of sexual liberation. They pointed out the coerciveness of heterosexual relations; they identified the alienation in the sexual objectification of women; they exploded the "myth of the vaginal orgasm";¹¹ they demystified the ideology of romantic love; they criticized the emphasis on an exclusively genital conception of sexuality, which ignored the possibilities for a more diffuse sexuality; they showed how dominance and submission were reinforced by being eroticized; above all, they identified the heterosexual norm as a means by which women were divided from each other. Women began to explore and define their own sexual needs, many of them in the context of lesbian relationships. Linda Gordon writes:

The lesbian liberation movement has made possibly the most important contribution to a future sexual liberation. It is not that feminism produced more lesbians. There have always been many lesbians, despite high levels of repression; and most lesbians experience their sexual preference as innate and nonvoluntary. What the women's liberation movement did create was a homosexual liberation movement that politically challenged male supremacy in one of its most deeply institutionalized aspects—the tyranny of heterosexuality. The political power of lesbianism is a power that can be shared by all women who choose to recognize and use it: the power of an alternative, a possibility that makes male sexual tyranny escapable, rejectable—possibly even doomed.¹²

The abolition of compulsory heterosexuality would have an enormous impact on the system of male dominance. One effect might be to disrupt the way in which gender is imposed on the infant psyche, as described by Freud. Gayle Rubin has pointed out that the Freudian account of child development presupposes a norm of heterosexuality as well as a context of male dominance. Without this norm, girls would not have to give up their early attachment to their mothers. "If the pre-Oedipal lesbian were not confronted by the heterosexuality of the mother, she might draw different conclusions about the relative status of her genitals."¹³ The abandonment of compulsory heterosexuality would reshape the sexuality both of girls and of boys and, if psychoanalysis is correct, would have tremendous consequences for the structure of the unconscious and for people's sense of their own gender identity. This speculation suggests a further way in which procreative freedom presupposes, sexual freedom.

Another connection between sexual and procreative freedom lies in women's tendency to become pregnant in order to compensate for unsatisfactory heterosexual relationships.¹⁴ Sometimes, too, women become pregnant in an attempt to try to consolidate a heterosexual relationship.

Women get pregnant "accidentally on purpose" as a way of punishing themselves. But they may also be protecting themselves and punishing men. Nothing illustrates better than reproduction that unless women can be free, men will never be. Pregnancy is woman's burden and her revenge.¹⁵

Thus, the connections between women's sexual and procreative activity are quite complicated, and sexual and procreative freedom for women are inseparable from each other. This is why the socialist feminist conception of reproductive freedom includes both aspects.

Comprehensive as it is, the socialist feminist conception of reproductive freedom is not a self-contained ideal which can be achieved or even understood simply with reference to sexuality and procreation. For instance, as we saw earlier, one of the preconditions of reproductive freedom for women is economic independence from men, without which reproductive freedom would degenerate into sexual and procreative exploitation. Thus, reproductive freedom requires the abolition of male dominance in the "public world." Linda Gordon points out that reproductive freedom also requires the abolition of hereditary class society:

The prohibition on birth control was, as we have seen, related to the defense of class privilege. Today the powers and privileges that can be passed on to succeeding generations through the family are more varied: property, education, confidence, social and political connections. But the essential nature of class divisions is unchanged and depends on the generational passing down of status. Thus in class society children are never individuals and cannot escape the expectations, high or low, attached to their fathers' position. These expectations also distort the reproductive desires and childrearing practices of parents, making it more difficult for them to view their children as individuals.¹⁶

Once again, we see that full reproductive freedom is incompatible with the maintenance of capitalism and male dominance.

Socialist feminists are discovering that "in thought and practice, neat distinctions we once made between sex and class, family and society, reproduction and produc-

tion, even between women and men seem not to fit the social reality with which we are coping."¹⁷ Socialist feminist explorations of reproductive freedom illustrate this well by showing that reproductive freedom for women requires a transformation of what has been called traditionally the mode of production. Equally, however, a feminist transformation of the mode of production cannot be achieved without reproductive freedom for women or a transformation of the mode of procreation. Since one cannot precede the other and since both are dialectically related, both must occur together. Procreation and "production" in the narrow sense are simply two aspects of an integrated capitalist and male-dominant mode of producing and reproducing every aspect of life.

2. Women and Wages

Women have more than one workplace. A woman's place may be in the home when young children need care or when meals need to be prepared, but at other times, as one socialist feminist author put it, "a woman's place is at the typewriter."¹⁸ Women are a steadily increasing proportion of the paid labor force in the United States, with mothers of young children constituting the fastest growing category.¹⁹ Most women in the U.S. will engage in paid labor at some time in their lives. Whether or not it was once true to say that women were oppressed primarily in virtue of their exclusion from public production, it is true no longer.

Within the wage labor force, however, the sexual division of labor is almost as striking as the sexual division of labor between home and outside work. Token women can now be found in almost every category of paid labor, including coal mining, but women cluster predominantly in a relatively few occupations. The largest of these is clerical work: in 1977, more than one-third of all wage-earning women in the United States were clerical workers.²⁰ Clerical workers now constitute 20 percent of the paid labor force in the US and they are 80 percent female.²¹ Women who are not clerical workers tend to work in retail sales or in service occupations such as social work, teaching, or nursing.

The categories of labor where women congregate are both the fastest growing and the lowest paid.²² On average, a woman wage worker earns 59¢ for every dollar earned by a man. Low pay, however, is only one characteristic of women's paid work in contemporary society. Women's paid labor also tends to require from its workers those qualities that contemporary society describes as feminine: submissiveness, toleration of tedium, the ability to communicate and empathize with people, nurturance and sexual attractiveness to men.

The availability of a large "reserve army" of labor, prepared to work for relatively low wages and with relatively few fringe benefits, is obviously advantageous to capital. The existence of such a reserve pool of labor accommodates fluctuations in the demand for labor, exerts a downward pressure on all wages and, through the threat of strikebreaking, increases capitalist control over labor. This functionalist argument has often been used by Marxists to explain the sex-segregation of the wage labor force and it does have considerable explanatory value. What it fails to explain is why women constitute this reserve pool and why "women's work" acquires its specifically "feminine" character.

The nursing profession provides an excellent example of how work is defined not only by the categories of class and of the mental/manual distinction but also by the

category of gender. Eva Gamarnikow explains that nursing in Britain was established during the 19th century as an occupation for women, and she shows how the assumption that nurses would be female influenced the definition of the work.²³ Nurses were defined as assistants and subordinates of the (male) physician; nursing was seen as less important than medicine, in spite of the fact that patients can be cured by nursing alone but rarely by medical treatment alone; nursing was seen as emotional rather than instrumental and so nurses were defined by their moral qualities (patience, humility, self-abnegation, neatness, cleanliness, punctuality, cheerfulness, kindness, tenderness and honesty) rather than by their professional skills. Around the turn of the century, explicit links were made between nursing and mothering and between nursing and women's domestic work. The good nurse was considered to have the same qualities as a good wife and mother.

The structure of contemporary health care is still defined by gender. A sharp distinction is still made between medicine and nursing, and medicine is still overwhelmingly a male profession while nursing is a female one. More than 92 percent of the physicians in the United States are male, while over 96 percent of the nurses are female. Tim Diamond has shown how traditional sex stereotypes still influence the respective definitions of medicine and nursing: medicine is concerned with curing specific maladies, it transforms sickness, often by "aggressive" means, and it charges for specific units of medical intervention; nursing, by contrast, is concerned with care rather than cure, it provides a service to the whole patient and it does not charge per unit for its services.

The mode of human service for the nurse becomes indistinguishable from that of the wife, the mother or the nun. In the case of health services, the woman's world is, once again the emotive, the man's world, the instrumental: the nursing model is feminine, the medical model is masculine.²⁴

The gendered structure of paid labor is equally obvious in education. In this field, women work mostly with very young children where education, nurturance, and physical care are inseparable, while men work mostly in higher education, dealing with adult students and abstract ideas. Contemporary conceptions of gender also influenced the redefinition of clerical work around the turn of the century. In 1870, men were 97.5 percent of the clerical labor force in the United States,²⁵ and a clerk was often viewed by his employer as "assistant manager, retainer, confidant, management trainee, and prospective son in law."²⁶ With the influx of women into clerical work, however, that work was redefined to fit the prevailing stereotype of femininity. The work became less skilled and more of a personal service. Good clerical workers were no longer required to have business acumen; instead, they were supposed to have the feminine qualities of docility, passivity and manual dexterity. Personal secretaries were supposed to be a cross between wives and mothers.²⁷

An obvious example of the gendered definition of wage labor is the prevalence of physical appearance and sexual attractiveness as formal or informal requirements for women's jobs. Jobs with these requirements include not only prostitution and entertainment but also many service jobs such as being a waitress, stewardess or receptionist and forms of service work. Sexual attractiveness is not related logically to the performance of any of these jobs except prostitution and possibly entertainment (given current ideas about what is entertaining), but that it is an unstated requirement for women's employment is shown by the way in which employment becomes

progressively more difficult for a woman to find as she gets older and becomes, according to conventional definitions, less sexually desirable.²⁸

Even the low pay that women wage workers typically receive may be viewed in fact as a gendered characteristic. Women's low wages used to be justified on the grounds that a man was working to support his family, while a woman was working merely for "pin money." Many feminist authors have pointed out that this is false: millions of women are the sole support of their households, and the wage of many other women is necessary to lift their family income above the poverty level. Although the traditional rationale for women's low pay is less often stated explicitly nowadays, continuing low wages for women actually provide it with some basis in fact. Veronica Beechey has argued that new forms of wage labor are being created specifically for women at ever-lower real wages, often at less than the cost of their own subsistence.²⁹ Women can afford to work at these jobs only because they are part of a family unit whose chief support is the male wage. If Beechey's supposition is correct, the contemporary form of women's wage labor reinforces male dominance in two ways: on the one hand, the definitions of women's work reinforce the ideological perception of women as "naturally" nurturant, subservient and sexy; on the other hand, women's low wages make it very difficult for women, especially for mothers, to survive alone and women are forced into dependence on men. The fact that most women have been forced to form family units then can be used to justify continuing their low pay.

The genderization of wage labor means that women wage workers suffer a special form of alienation. They are not alienated simply as genderless (male!) workers; they are also alienated in ways specific to their sex. In order to earn a living, they are forced to exploit not only their physical strength and skill or their intellectual capacities; they are also forced to exploit their sexuality and their emotions.

Socialist feminist proposals for social change must take into account the special alienation of women outside the home. In developing their conception of free productive activity, it is not enough to talk in general terms about transcending the realm of necessity or about worker control of production. It is also necessary to talk about eliminating sex segregation in production, so that male workers do not end up controlling mining, forestry and the steel industries while female workers end up controlling laundry and food services. Traditional Marxists have always asserted that free productive activity requires the restructuring of the labor process so that it abandons a detailed division of labor and overcomes the distinction between conception and execution, mental and manual labor. Socialist feminists add that work must be redefined so as to eliminate the distinction between "masculine" and "feminine" work as well.

To overcome this distinction would not mean necessarily that all work would assume the characteristics of masculine work under contemporary capitalism, that all work would be impersonal, unemotional and asexual. Free productive labor in fact might be more similar to contemporary feminine work in that workers would be able to express their emotions and their sexuality and would view others as unique individuals. Unlike the contemporary situation for women workers, however, these forms of emotional and sexual expression would be freely chosen rather than coerced and alienated.

Marxism's ultimate solution to worker alienation has always been to overthrow the capitalist mode of production. To alleviate intolerable working conditions in the

short term and as a transitional step on the way to its ultimate goal, Marxism has supported the organization of workers into trades unions. Trades unions allow workers to bargain collectively with their employers and also to exert collective influence in electoral politics. In the United States and in most other capitalist countries, a much higher proportion of male than female workers is unionized. Even where women are union members, most union officials are men, and unions tend to bargain for the issues of wages and working conditions that are of most concern to men. The specific interests of women are not well represented by existing unions.

In the United States, clerical work is the largest category of wage work that remains unorganized into unions.³⁰ It is also, of course, the largest category of women's wage work. Trade union officials have not been eager to "organize" clerical workers, explaining that the workers themselves do not want to be organized. Women clerical workers are said to be committed primarily to their families rather than to their paid jobs and to be too "feminine" to be militant.³¹ In the 1970s, socialist feminists rejected these explanations and have begun to organize women workers, especially women clerical workers. They organize them not as genderless workers, however, but rather as workers who are women.

Some socialist feminist organizing efforts have resulted in the formation of union locals. Others have resulted in the formation of organizations that are not unions but that address the concerns of women office and service workers. "Active groups include Nine-to-Five in Boston; Women Office Workers in New York; Women Employed in Chicago; and Union Wage and Women Organized for Employment in San Francisco."³² Many of the local groups affiliate with a national organizational network, Working Women. "They are hybrid groups, neither pure women's rights nor pure labor rights, but an amalgam of both evidencing women's great need for organizations that will advance their cause as women at work."³³

Working women's organizations concentrate not only on the issues that have preoccupied the male trade union movement; they also focus on issues that are of specific concern to women. These issues include dress codes and expectations by bosses that women will provide "personal services" such as running errands or making coffee. Sexual harassment, of course, is one of the most important issues of concern. Sexual harassment seems to have been a problem for women as long as they have been employed in wage work.³⁴

It is consistent, systematic, and pervasive, not a set of random isolated acts. The license to harass women workers, which many men feel they have, stems from notions that there is a "woman's place" which women in the labor force have left, thus leaving behind their personal integrity. ...

Words, gestures, comments can be used as threats of violence and to express dominance. Harassment often depends on this underlying violence—violence is implied as the ultimate response. Harassment is "little rape", an invasion of a person, by suggestion, by intimidation, by confronting a woman with her helplessness. It is an interaction in which one person purposefully seeks to discomfort another person. This discomfort serves to remind women of their helplessness in the face of male violence. To offer such a model is to suggest that it is not simply an individual interaction but a social one; not an act of deviance but a societally condoned mode of behavior that functions to preserve male dominance in the world of work.³⁵

Today it is used "to control women's access to certain jobs; to limit job success and mobility; and to compensate men for powerlessness in their own lives."³⁶ Lin Farley

cites innumerable examples of women who have been forced out of jobs by sexual harassment.³⁷ A few organizations, such as the Alliance Against Sexual Coercion in Boston, devote themselves entirely to combating this form of women's oppression.

An increasing proportion of the women who work for wages also have children. Because childcare is still predominantly women's work, women wage workers often have to perform two jobs. The stress of coping with the demands of both their paid and their unpaid work has had damaging consequences on women's health.³⁸ Women's entry in large numbers into the wage labor market has shown how 20th-century wage labor is defined implicitly, if not explicitly, as "men's work" insofar as it is structured on the assumption that the wage laborer is a man with a woman at home to do his laundry, cook his meals, rear his children, and provide him with emotional and sexual consolation. Without "wives," women and especially mothers pay enormous costs for their survival in wage labor.

Women wage workers are beginning to refuse to pay those costs. They are demanding the restructuring of non-procreative work so that it is compatible with parenting. Through their organizations, they are beginning to seek out not only the traditional benefits of adequate pay and job security; they are also seeking the provision of day care, paid maternity leaves, the availability of leave to look after sick children, and work hours that correspond to the school day.

Women are concerned not only about the structure of their wage labor; they are also concerned about their wage. Women's work is becoming increasingly "deprofessionalized" and more "proletarianized." That is to say, women wage workers have decreasing control over the conditions of their work, their work is becoming less skilled and their real wages are diminishing. These trends can be seen in education, in nursing and especially in clerical work. As women workers become more proletarianized, they are beginning to develop a more "proletarian" consciousness. In the spring and summer of 1974, nurses in Britain took industrial action for the first time;³⁹ nurses in the United States are also organizing.⁴⁰ Clerical workers are beginning to strike, and teachers' strikes are increasingly frequent. What should be noted is that, even when women strike for pay and not for specifically "women's" demands, their actions still have a different meaning from the same actions taken by male workers. When women workers achieve a living wage, they are not just workers winning a concession from capital: they are also women winning economic independence from men.

Women's experience in wage labor brings out more connections between women's procreative and their non-procreative work. For instance, the assumptions that women are wives and mothers influences definitions of women's work and rationalizes women's low pay. Just as economic independence for women is a precondition of reproductive freedom, so reproductive freedom is a precondition for an end to sexual segregation in other kinds of productive activity and for women's full participation in these.

In the 1970s, some women who defined themselves as socialist feminists began to demand that women should receive wages for that aspect of procreative work that hitherto had received no pay—the work of rearing their own children. The wages for housework movement began in the early 1970s in Italy, where relatively few mothers were employed in wage labor,⁴¹ and spread across Europe to Britain and Canada. It never achieved much of a foothold in the United States, although Wages for Housework groups did spring up in a few U.S. cities. Wages for housework were demanded

as a way of recognizing the value of the work that all women perform and also as a way of ensuring women economic independence from men. In the mid-1970s, the demand was debated frequently by feminists, but in the 1980s the movement seems to be disappearing. This may be because the continuing entry of women into existing forms of wage labor gives relatively fewer women any interest in defining themselves as paid houseworkers. It seems unlikely that pay for housework would be sufficient to raise its status and it would not diminish the isolation of women in the home. Even if the idea has merit in some circumstances as a tactical step toward women's liberation, the provision of wages for housework is incompatible in the long run with the goals of socialist feminism. It would reinforce the sexual division of labor to which feminists object and would extend the capitalist form of exploitation which socialists want to overthrow.

It is indeed this demand for the abolition of the wage system that most sharply distinguishes socialist feminists from liberal and radical feminists. Most of the specific issues around which socialist feminists organize are supported by feminists who are not socialists, but socialist feminism explains these issues in terms of exploitation and alienation, thus showing how male dominance cannot be eliminated without the abolition of capitalism.

3. Women and Organizational Independence

In 1865, Marx wrote:

Trades Unions work well as centres of resistance against the encroachments of capital. They fail partially from an injudicious use of their power. They fail generally from limiting themselves to a guerilla war against the effects of the existing system, instead of simultaneously trying to change it, instead of using their organized force as a lever for the final emancipation of the working class, that is to say, the ultimate abolition of the wages system.⁴²

Trade union consciousness is not revolutionary consciousness, as Marx well knew. The most that wage working women's organizations can hope to achieve is to modify contemporary wage labor so as to enable women to juggle two jobs. The goal of socialist feminism, however, is not for women to be able to juggle two jobs. It is to overthrow the whole social order of what some call "capitalist patriarchy" in which women suffer alienation in every aspect of their lives. The traditional Marxist strategy for revolution is to form a Leninist vanguard party. The socialist feminist strategy is to support some "mixed" socialist organizations, but also to form independent women's groups and ultimately an independent women's movement committed with equal dedication to the destruction of capitalism and the destruction of male dominance. The women's movement will join in coalitions with other revolutionary movements, but it will not give up its organizational independence.

Independent women's organizations are obviously a form of separatism: they do not accept male members, and they refuse permanent organizational links with "mixed" organizations. They are not separatist, however, in the radical feminist sense of requiring their members to have as little contact with men as possible outside the organization. Nor are they separatist in the sense that their ultimate goal is a "matriarchy," a "lesbian nation" or a society in which men and women are separated formally from each other. On the contrary, their goal is a society in which maleness

and femaleness are socially irrelevant, in which men and women, as we know them, will no longer exist. Organizational independence for socialist feminists is thus a form of tactical separatism, a step on the way to an ultimate goal of complete integration between the sexes.

The need for independent women's organizations springs from the basic socialist feminist understanding of society as male-dominated. On this analysis, the interests of men are in some ways opposed to those of women, even though certain groups of men share a number of interests with certain groups of women. Men have an interest in maintaining their dominant position: in earning more than women, in having sexual power over women and in keeping the larger share of leisure time which results from their relative freedom from housework. Women have an immediate interest in getting rid of those male privileges and they need separate organizations to fight for this interest.

Some feminists deny the need for independent women's organizations. It is common for both liberals and Marxists to assert that the enemy that that women face as women is not men but the system of sexism. Traditional Marxists believe that, if women came to see men as their enemy, then they would not perceive the interests that women share with men as members of the working class. To state that women's enemy is the system rather than men themselves, however, is to ignore the question of who perpetuates that system and in whose interest it operates. Both men and women in fact help to perpetuate the system of male dominance (just as workers as well as capitalists help to perpetuate the capitalist system), but women's objective interests as women also encourage them to resist that system in many ways. Men, too, may sometimes resist the system of male dominance, but, because that system provides them with privileges, they are much less likely to resist it. Radical feminists perceive that the system of male dominance is enforced primarily by men, and so they draw the unambiguous conclusion that it is men who are the enemy for women.

In an obvious sense, men are the enemy for women, just as colonizers are enemy for the colonized and capitalists are the enemy for workers. In saying that men are the enemy for women, however, it is important to remember two things. One is that the enmity between women and men is part of a specific system of social relations which defines what it is to be a man and a woman; consequently, change in that system could eliminate the enmity between female and male persons. The enmity is not necessarily permanent. The other point to remember is that there are many other divisions in society as well as the division between the sexes: differences of nationality, race, age, ability, religion and class. Because these other divisions cut across sex lines, there are respects in which women have shared interests with men and in which men are not the enemy. For instance, colonized women have interests in common with colonized men, differently abled women have interests in common with differently abled men, girls have interests in common with boys, etc. In the same way, the working class of a colonized nation will cooperate with that nation's upper class in resisting colonization and, in the context of a struggle for national liberation, will not regard it as the enemy.

Radical feminists view men as "the main enemy"⁴³ of women because they claim that the subordination of women by men was the first form of oppression and that it remains causally basic to all other forms. Traditional Marxists, by contrast, view capitalists as the main enemy because they believe that this contemporary form of class oppression is now the main support of all other forms of oppression. Many tradi-

tional Marxists borrow Maoist terminology and justify their claim that capitalists are the man enemy by asserting that class (traditionally construed) is the "principal contradiction" in society today. Their arguments for this view are theoretical and tend to the conclusion that revolutionary activity should always focus on class struggle as traditionally understood. Hartmann and Markusen have pointed out that these sorts of Marxist arguments in fact misinterpret the notion of "principal contradiction." As developed by Mao, the notion was strategically rather than theoretically determined; it was designed to identify the focus of revolutionary activity in specific periods rather than in all situations.⁴⁴ Socialist feminists avoid not only the language of "primary" or "principal" contradiction but in general are suspicious of attempts to assert that either class or gender is causally basic to the other. They see the various systems of oppression as connected inseparably with each other and believe that it is mistaken to try to identify a single group as being permanently "the main enemy."

We claim that in the current situation it is entirely in keeping with Marxist and Maoist tradition to see capitalist patriarchy at the root of the principal contradiction, to label the enemy as such, and to build a strategy that insists on the duality (and with racism and ageism, the multiple aspects) of the principal contradiction. We see the insistence on "class first" as an antifeminist practice, not a proworking class practice.⁴⁵

Traditional Marxists argue that it is divisive to speak of men as the enemy, that it diverts the working class from its primary struggle against capitalism. They fear that if women join independent women's organizations rather than the "vanguard party," they will lose their revolutionary perspective, will mistake symptoms for causes and will focus on reforms for women rather than on the transformation of the system as a whole. These fears reveal distrust of women's revolutionary commitment and a belief that women cannot maintain their socialist vision without men to hold it continually before their eyes. They seem to overlook the fact that women, just as much as men, are members of the working class.

The organizations advocated by socialist feminists, however, are socialist as well as feminist. They are not dedicated simply to winning reforms for women or to integrating women into the capitalist system. Nor, on the other hand, are they dedicated simply to overthrowing the capitalist system and replacing it with a dictatorship of the male proletariat. They are concerned with the ways in which even working-class men perpetuate male dominance: through their resistance to affirmative action, through rape, through woman beating, through sexual harassment, through refusal to take an equal share of household responsibility—and through sexism in their revolutionary organizations. In order to combat male dominance, women must form their own independent organizations.

To say that socialist feminist women should form their own independent organizations is not to preclude them from also joining "mixed left" groups, not to deny that women's organizations should work with the mixed left. But independent women's organizations are necessary to ensure that women's voices are heard, both individually and collectively.

Working class women and men must be allied in their struggle against the ruling class, but this alliance must be among equals: women should not be subordinate to men in a "revolutionary" movement. Equality of women and men requires a direct struggle against patriarchy and an autonomous power base for working class women. It is not

enough for the Party to organize women: women must become "subjects" of history, able to act in their own behalf.⁴⁶

Ann Foreman agrees.

In short, the organized presence of women could prevent the traditional exclusion of women in both its crude and more sophisticated forms. And by asserting the right of women to define their own identity within political structures, the self-organization of women strikes at the heart of the feminine attitude of alterity on which this exclusion rests. Ultimately, then, autonomy provides a political and not simply an organisational link between the feminist and the working class struggle.⁴⁷

Only the organizational independence of women can ensure that women's concerns are addressed and that women escape from their traditional role of "wives to the revolution."

4. Beginning at Start: Strategies for Social Transformation

Social feminist strategies for ending oppression seek to combine the traditional Marxist emphasis on changing the material conditions of life with the 20th-century emphasis on the importance of changing ideas and feelings. The special socialist feminist conception of human nature provides the basis for a distinctively socialist feminist approach to each of these aspects of human life.

All those who struggle against oppression must try to discover the underlying causes of that oppression and to separate these causes from the more superficial symptoms. Within the Marxist tradition, the distinction between the symptoms of a certain form of oppression and its underlying causes is formulated in terms of "base" and "superstructure." The "material base" of a certain form of oppression is taken to be those social relations which fundamentally sustain that form of oppression and which therefore must be transformed in order to eliminate that form of oppression. In investigating the fundamental causes of women's oppression, socialist feminists have developed a conception of material base as that set of social relations which structures the production and reproduction of the necessities of daily life, the production of people, including the production of sexuality, as well as the production of goods and services. On the socialist feminist view, these relations are simultaneously capitalist and male-dominant, and both aspects must be changed to liberate women.

The inclusiveness of the socialist feminist conception of the material base of women's oppression has implications for the socialist feminist conception of revolutionary strategy. Most obviously, the enlarged conception of the material base means that many more forms of political activity than previously thought can now be described as challenges to the basic system of social relations. For example, even when working women's organizations do not bring directly into question the capitalist mode of production, they do begin to challenge the gendered definition of women's work. Similarly, campaigns for various aspects of reproductive freedom, such as campaigns for free abortion, against rape and sexual harassment, and for free and community-controlled childcare all challenge existing male-dominant and capitalist relations of procreation and sexuality.

In addition to making direct challenges to the prevailing male dominant and capitalist mode of production, it is necessary also to challenge the system of ideas that justify and reinforce this mode of production. In the 20th century, even those politi-

cal theorists who aspire to a materialist method have placed considerable emphasis on the importance of "consciousness" in explaining historical change—or the absence of change. These theorists have not denied the materialist insight that consciousness is determined in some ultimate sense by the material conditions of daily life, but they recognize that systems of ideas may establish considerable autonomy from the existing historical circumstances and may also have considerable causal influence on those circumstances. This recognition has been made by influential tendencies within the Marxist tradition whose theorists, as we have seen, have elaborated the notions of ideology, false consciousness and hegemony and have made a number of attempts to graft some form of Freudian psychology onto Marxist political economy. The same recognition has also been made by radical feminism, which has contributed the technique of consciousness raising to political practice and has emphasized "cultural" critique and re-creation. Socialist feminism is firmly in this 20th-century tradition and so claims that an effective revolutionary strategy must include techniques for demystifying the prevailing male-dominant and capitalist ideology and for developing alternative forms of consciousness, that is alternative ways of perceiving reality and alternative attitudes toward it.

A vital part of organizing for social change is the creation of a sense of political unity among oppressed groups. A class is identified not only by its "objective" position relative to the means of production, but also by its "subjective" sense of itself as having a common identity and common interests. Unless it is a class "for itself" as well as a class "in itself," the group will not move to political action. For instance, although the peasants in 19th-century France shared a common relation to production, Marx argued that their isolation from and poor communication with each other prevented them from developing a sense of community and shared political purpose.⁴⁸ Contemporary women are in a position that in some ways resembles that of 19th-century French peasants though in other ways it differs from theirs. By and large, as we have seen, women do share a common relation to production: unlike men, they are all responsible for housework, for childrearing, for emotional nurturance and for sexual gratification; in addition, they are clustered in a few gender-defined paid occupations. Insofar as they work together in the paid labor force, the conditions do exist for women to develop a shared political identity and, as we have seen, that is beginning to happen with the growth of working women's organizations. Insofar as they are isolated from each other in the family, it is much harder for women to develop a shared identity as workers in the home. In the late 1960s, the explosion of consciousness-raising groups showed the need that women felt to overcome their isolation, and many kinds of support groups still continue. In this context, socialist feminists agree with radical feminists that the creation of a women's culture is essential to facilitating women's sense of themselves as a group with common interests and to encourage their political organization.

During the 1970s, women's culture mushroomed in the advanced capitalist nations. There are now feminist novels, feminist science fiction, feminist dance troupes, feminist films, feminist theater groups, feminist music and feminist visual art. Moreover, women's past cultural productions are being retrieved and women's traditional crafts are being revived. In addition, there are cultural events, restaurants, etc. for women only, "womanspaces" in which women can be together physically and which foster a sense of community between women. The values expressed in the women's culture are quite diverse, even though they are all feminist in one way or an-

other. At one extreme, they fantasize a world without men; at the other extreme, they show women "making it" in a man's world. Some feminist artists, such as Judy Chicago in her "The Dinner Party," show that women can be rulers, doctors, warriors, etc., just as well as men; others try to present alternative models of female achievement. The values presented depend in part on the intended audience and sometimes are modified to suit that audience. For instance, Marilyn French's best-selling novel *The Women's Room* ends with the central character walking alone on the beach, despairing of women's liberation or even of a degree of personal happiness, at least for feminist women. By contrast, the TV version of the book, perhaps in an attempt to make feminism palatable to an audience with less feminist sophistication than the readers of the book were presumed to possess, ended with the same character, smartly dressed, delivering a rousing feminist speech to a college audience and being wildly applauded.

As one aspect of feminist political activity, women's culture emphasizes the process as well as the product of artistic creation. Where possible, it uses collective rather than individual forms of creation and tries to minimize the gaps between creators, performers and technicians. It may also try to narrow the gap between artist and audience. The dance troupe Wallflower Order raises explicitly on the stage the question of process.

Wallflower examines the problems of working collectively in one of their pieces. Lack of money, feeling fed up with seeming endless criticism and self-criticism, feeling closed in by the group, wanting to reach out to other people and not being certain how. These are real problems faced by all of us who have attempted to work collectively. And it is wonderful to see these problems portrayed on stage in a way that allows us to both examine our difficulties and to laugh at ourselves.⁴⁹

Judy Chicago's "The Dinner Party" is accompanied on its travels by a film, "Right Out of History," which documents the four-year creation of the piece by a group of more than 400 people. Often the process of creating feminist art is imperfect; for instance, the process of creating "The Dinner Party" was clearly hierarchical and perhaps exploitative. Nevertheless, the very recognition by feminists of the importance of process raises important political questions about the relation between artistic and other kinds of production.

Socialist feminists view cultural work as a necessary part of political organization for social change. They do not accept uncritically all aspects of women's culture, but seek to encourage those aspects which explore new ways in which the artist and the community can relate to each other, which link women's oppression with that of other oppressed groups, and which emphasize the possibility of women's collective political action against their oppression. For socialist feminists, the creation of a women's culture is an important way in which women can develop political self-consciousness. Of course, such development is possible only because women do in fact already share objective political interests.

One of the interests shared by women is the availability of quality goods and services such as food, clothing, housing, medical care and education. Of course, everyone has an interest in these, but women have a special interest because it is they who, according to the prevailing division of labor, are responsible for making these goods and services directly available to their families. Women buy and cook food, buy or make clothing, furnish homes, take their children to the doctor and worry about

schooling. Weinbaum and Bridges characterize this work as consumption work. They point out that it is time-consuming, exhausting and alienating.⁵⁰ Women who find this work intolerable have two options. One is to demand that the work be shared by men. This option challenges the sexual division of labor but has the disadvantages that men may not be available, that men's economic privilege puts them in a strong position to refuse and, finally, that this option does not make the goods and services any more available; it just gives somebody else the responsibility for procuring them. Women's other option is to organize politically against the unavailability of goods and services, and this option has often been chosen by working-class women. Women have taken the lead in forming tenants' unions, in boycotting expensive or racist stores or products, in protesting cutbacks in services such as welfare or childcare and in taking militant action against the high price of, for example, public utilities. Socialist feminists believe that all these "community based" political activities are necessary parts of the struggle for a socialist and feminist transformation of society.

In order to achieve a thoroughgoing socialist and feminist transformation of social relations, socialist feminists believe that a wide range of political activity is necessary. It includes community struggles, the organization of women against their alienation in wage labor, the creation of a distinctive socialist feminist culture and attempts to restructure sexual and childrearing relations. All these struggles must be linked together to ensure that the social transformation is total and that all aspects of women's alienation are overcome.

One obvious problem with the strategy as presented so far is that it offers no political priorities: it suggests that everything must be done at once. Socialist feminists refuse to assign permanent priority to any one type of political activity over the others; they believe that a socialist and feminist revolution cannot happen without struggle on all these fronts. Yet they do suggest some general criteria that socialist feminists might use in deciding where to direct their political energy. Charlotte Bunch offers five criteria that are similar to those proposed by other socialist feminist writers.

Material reforms should aid as many women as possible and should particularly seek to redistribute income and status so that the class, race and heterosexual privileges that divide women are eliminated. ...

Reform activities that help women find a sense of themselves apart from their oppressed functions and which are not based on the false sense of race, class, or heterosexual superiority are important. ...

Women need to win. We need to struggle for reforms that are attainable. ... Victories and programs, especially when linked to specific organizations, give us a clearer sense of what we can win and illustrate the plans, imagination, and changes that women will bring as they gain power. ...

Since winning one reform is not our final goal, we should ask if working on that issue will teach us new and important things about ourselves and society. Particularly when a reform fails, political education is important to motivate women to continue, rather than to become cynical about change. ...

As women, we want to improve the conditions of our daily lives. In order to do this, we must have power over the institutions—the family, schools, factories, laws, and so on—that determine those conditions ... above all, we should demand that those most affected by each institution have the power to determine its nature and direction. Initially, these challenges and reforms help to undermine the power of patriarchy, capital-

ism and white supremacy. Ultimately, these actions must lead to the people's control of all institutions so that we can determine how our society will function.⁵¹

With respect to her final criterion, Bunch suggests that one way of building power is by creating alternative institutions "such as health clinics that give us more control over our bodies or women's media that control our communications with the public." Bunch adds, "Alternative institutions should not be havens of retreat, but challenges that weaken male power over our lives."⁵² In this sentence, Bunch sums up the difference between the socialist feminist conception of alternative institutions and the radical feminist conception of a womanculture. Radical feminists intend that their alternative institutions should enable women to withdraw as far as possible from the dominant culture by facilitating women's independence from that culture. They have high hopes for creating womanspace that provides a total contrast to patriarchal space and is a refuge from it. Socialist feminists, by contrast, argue that women's independence from the dominant male, white and capitalist culture is an impossible fantasy: they build alternative institutions as a way of partially satisfying existing needs and also as a way of experimenting with new forms of working together. The difference here between radical and socialist feminists is not clear-cut: both radical and socialist feminists might work on the same alternative project, such as a health center. But socialist feminists expect that social relations within the project will be distorted by the pressures of the larger society outside, and they do not anticipate that their project will become part of a permanent women's counterculture.

One institution to which some socialist feminists are seeking immediate alternatives is the stereotypical 20th-century nuclear family, with its familiar sexual division of labor, according to which the wife is assigned responsibility for childrearing and housework while the husband has responsibility for economic support of the family. Socialist feminists, like many other feminists, see this family structure as a cornerstone of women's oppression: it enforces women's dependence on men, it enforces heterosexuality and it imposes the prevailing masculine and feminine character structures on the next generation. In addition, the traditional nuclear family is a bulwark of the capitalist system insofar as it makes possible the use of women as a reserve army of labor, sustains a high level of demand for consumer goods, and inculcates in children the values of dominance and submission, of alienated labor and consumption and of competition. Many points in the socialist feminist critique of the family are identical with points made by traditional Marxists, but socialist feminists differ from traditional Marxists in their belief that immediate changes in living arrangements can be a significant part of a broader strategy for social transformation. Unlike traditional Marxists, socialist feminists do not believe that consciously designed changes in family structure must wait until "after the revolution." They believe that immediate changes are necessary in order to enable women to participate fully in the revolutionary process and to ensure that process is feminist as well as socialist.

Many commentators have pointed out that in fact the classic nuclear family is disappearing rapidly in advanced capitalist countries at the end of the 20th century. Increasing numbers of women, regardless of their politics, are living in alternatives to that family, either because they bring a second wage into the home or because they are bringing up children as single parents. What distinguishes socialist feminist alternatives is that they are self-conscious attempts to incorporate socialist feminist

values in their daily living arrangements. These values include equality, cooperation, sharing, political commitment, freedom from sexual stereotyping and freedom from personal possessiveness.

Many socialist feminists live in family structures that are not obviously different from those of most other women: they are the structures of marriage or cohabitation with a man or of single motherhood. Within these relatively traditional structures, it is impossible to practice all the socialist feminist values. For instance, a single mother cannot model the range of alternatives possible for women and a heterosexual couple cannot demonstrate the validity of alternatives to heterosexuality. Even within these relatively traditional structures, however, many traditional values can be challenged: fathers and mothers can refuse the traditional sexual division of labor, reversing the traditional roles or sharing equally the responsibility for breadwinning and childcare; single mothers can hardly fail to present a model of an independent woman. It is in larger households, however, that the dominant values of possessiveness, privatism, emotional dependence and consumerism can be challenged more thoroughly. Larger socialist feminist households may be all women or may include men. Ann Ferguson lists seven goals for such socialist and feminist "revolutionary family-communities":

1. To alter childrearing inequalities between men and women, to provide the structural base for men and women to be *equal nurturers* to children and to each other as well as *equally autonomous* ...
2. To challenge the sexual division of labor ...
3. To break down the possessive privacy of the two primary sets of relationships in the American patriarchal family: the couple and the parent-child relationship ...
4. To equalize power as far as possible between parents and children and, in general, between adults and children ...
5. To eliminate the base for heterosexism in a society which, along with patriarchy and capitalism, contributes to women's oppression. This means openly allowing gay persons, including gay mothers and fathers, openly into the revolutionary family-community ...
6. To break down elitist attitudes about the superiority of mental and professional work to manual work.
7. To deal with racism and classism.
8. To introduce economic sharing in the family-community which allows its members to develop a sense of commitment to each other.⁵³

Ferguson realizes that no single revolutionary family-community can achieve all these goals easily, if at all. In addition to the "internalized" psychological problems of emotional insecurity, jealousy, competitiveness or heterosexism, such communities are subject to external or social constraints: women will find it harder than men to obtain adequately paying jobs, and people's work or study plans may require them to leave the area. Revolutionary family-communities are certainly not envisioned as utopian refuges from male dominance, racism and capitalism. They are places where people can experiment with new ways of organizing childrearing and sexuality, prefiguring, though imperfectly, some of the new forms of social relations that will be

part of a socialist feminist revolution. In the meantime, they will also provide people with the "material support needed to continue to challenge the combined domination systems of capitalist patriarchy."⁵⁴

Delores Hayden recognizes that only a relatively few women are ready for the revolutionary family-communities outlined by Ferguson. For those who are not ready, Hayden proposes the less immediately radical alternative of HOMES: Homemakers Organized for a More Equal Society.⁵⁵ HOMES groups would own housing cooperatively. Their property would contain private dwelling units and some private, fenced, outdoor space, but it would also include public outdoor areas and the facilities to provide a number of services, such as childcare, laundry, food preparation, van transportation and home help for the elderly, the sick and employed parents whose children are sick. Existing suburban blocks could be converted for use by HOMES groups. In designing their living arrangements, Hayden states that HOMES should be guided by the following principles to

- (1) involve both men and women in the unpaid labor associated with housekeeping and child care on an equal basis; (2) involve both men and women in the paid-labor force on an equal basis; (3) eliminate residential segregation by class, race, and age; (4) eliminate all federal, state, and local programs and laws which offer implicit or explicit reinforcement of the unpaid role of the female homemaker; (5) minimize unpaid domestic labor and wasteful energy consumption; (6) maximize real choices for households concerning recreation and sociability.⁵⁶

Alternative living arrangements are one way in which socialist feminists seek to translate into practice their insight that the personal is political. Another way is in their general concern for the process as well as the product of political activity. They are aware that organizational form is not politically neutral, and they have seen how the centralized and hierarchical forms of traditional political organization have perpetuated the subordination and passivity of women—and of other groups. Like radical feminists, socialist feminists are experimenting with new forms of organizational structure that can help people to overcome the partial and distorted development of their capacities that has been imposed by the capitalist and male-dominant division of labor. Without direct efforts to contradict these distorted developments of contemporary human nature, revolutionary organizations will only reinforce that which they are ostensibly struggling against. A hierarchical, undemocratic, sexist and racist organization can achieve only a hierarchical, undemocratic, sexist and racist "revolution."

Although they seek to avoid replicating within their own organizations the division of labor imposed by the dominant society, socialist feminists do not go to the opposite extreme of insisting that everybody should do every job. In a sensitive discussion of the problems involved in restructuring the labor process, Nancy Hartsock points out that alienation does not result simply from specialization in one kind of work, but rather from the social relations within which, in contemporary society, specialized work is usually performed. Within these relations, work is coerced and execution is separated from conception. Hartsock believes that a socialist feminist restructuring of the labor process can avoid both coercion and the separation of execution from conception without requiring that everyone should do everything:

By rotating all members through the various tasks of the group, and by insisting that every member of a collective do every activity that the group as a whole is engaged in, the

collective, in practice, treats its members as interchangeable and equivalent parts. It reproduces the assembly line of the modern factory, but instead of running the work past the people, people are run past the work.⁵⁷

Hartsock suggests that a better alternative is to allow individuals or groups to have responsibility for whole aspects of projects, involving both planning and executing the work to be done.

Having responsibility for some parts of the work done by a group allows us not only to see our own accomplishments but also to expand ourselves by sharing in the accomplishments of others. We are not superwomen, able to do everything. Only by sharing in the different accomplishments of others can we participate in the activities of all women.⁵⁸

In their recognition of the inseparability of means from ends, socialist feminists are closer to radical feminists than to any other group of feminists. Unlike radical feminists, however, socialist feminists do not see themselves as "living the revolution." This is true for two reasons. First, socialist feminists recognize the ways in which the larger society imposes limits on the possibilities of alternative ways for living and working.

Our strategies for change and the internal organization of work must grow out of the tension between using our organizations as instruments for both taking and transforming power in a society structured by power understood only as domination and using our organizations to build models for a society based on power understood as energy and initiative ... There are real pressures to reproduce the patterns of estranged labor in the interests of efficiency and taking power. At the same time, there are pressures to oppose estranged labor by insisting that each of us do every job.⁵⁹

The other reason why socialist feminists do not see themselves as "living the revolution" is because they do not think that social transformation can occur through the gradual accretion of socialist and feminist reforms and through the gradual undermining of dominant by alternative institutions. Radical feminists depend on slow, evolutionary rather than sudden, revolutionary change both for moral and practical reasons. On the one hand, they eschew the use of force as a patriarchal tactic; on the other hand, even the potential constituency of radical feminism is so small that there seems little chance of its winning over those women they see as their potential allies. Socialist feminists expect that there will be a distinctive revolutionary period, characterized by acute social turmoil, but they also expect that the outcome of this turmoil will be determined by the kind and quality of the pre-revolutionary activity that has preceded it. To this extent, they see themselves not so much as living the revolution as preparing for it and attempting in limited ways to prefigure it.

The socialist feminist contribution to revolutionary strategy is not simply to add women's issues to the list of concerns that a revolutionary movement must address. Socialist feminism does indeed broaden the traditional Marxist conception of revolutionary struggle to include, for instance, reproductive freedom. But ultimately socialist feminism denies the separation between so called class issues, race issues and women's issues. It argues that every issue is a women's issue, just as every issue has race and class implications. That is to say, socialist feminism argues that a feminist perspective can illuminate understanding not only of family life or of education but also of foreign policy, of imperialism and of political organization. To ask how a certain practice or institution affects women is different from asking how it affects the

working class or the colonized nation as a whole. Because male dominance structures every area of life, a foreign policy based on explicit concern for women's interests would be quite different from a foreign policy that was based only on a concern for the working class conceived as a unified whole or for some ethnic minority within that class. On the socialist feminist view, it is necessary to approach all political issues with a consciousness that is explicitly feminist as well as explicitly anti-racist and explicitly socialist. This consciousness will change both the form and the content of revolutionary political practice.

Notes

1. CARASA (Committee for Abortion Rights and Against Sterilization Abuse), *Women Under Attack: Abortion, Sterilization Abuse, and Reproductive Freedom* (New York: CARASA, 1979), p. 11 (italics in original).
2. Rosalind Pollack Petchesky, "Reproductive Freedom: Beyond 'A Woman's Right to Choose,'" *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 5, no. 4 (Summer 1980):662. This paper is reprinted in Catharine R. Stimpson and Ethel Spector Person, eds., *Women, Sex and Sexuality* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1980), pp. 92-116.
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 669-70.
4. For a more extended discussion of this claim, see my "Abortion and a Woman's Right to Decide," *Philosophical Forum* 5, nos. 1-2 (Winter 1975). Reprinted in Robert Baker and Frederick Elliston, eds., *Philosophy & Sex* (Buffalo, N.Y.: Prometheus Books, 1975), pp. 324-37.
5. Dinnerstein, *The Mermaid and the Minotaur*.
6. Nancy Chodorow, *Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1978). ...
7. One who has made this argument is Ann Ferguson, panel discussant of Nancy Chodorow's book, Radical Caucus/Society for Women in Philosophy Joint Session, Eastern Division meetings of the American Philosophical Association, Boston, 29 December 1980.
8. Petchesky, "Reproductive Freedom," p. 682. Also Adrienne Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 5, no. 4 (Summer 1980):638.
9. Linda Gordon, "The Struggle for Reproductive Freedom: Three States of Feminism" in Zillah R. Eisenstein, ed., *Capitalist Patriarchy and the Case for Socialist Feminism*, (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1979), p. 109. A number of the following points are made by Gordon in her excellent essay.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 113.
11. Anne Koedt, "The Myth of the Vaginal Orgasm," in Ann Koedt, Ellen Levine, and Anita Rapone, eds., *Radical Feminism*, (New York: Quadrangle Books, 1973), pp. 198-207. The article was first published in 1970 in *Notes from the Second Year*.
12. Gordon, "Struggle for Reproductive Freedom," p. 123.
13. Gayle Rubin, "The Traffic in Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy' of Sex," in Rayna R. Reiter, ed., *Toward an Anthropology of Women* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975), p. 187. Abridged version reprinted in Alison M. Jaggar and Paula R. Struhl, eds., *Feminist Frameworks: Alternative Theoretical Accounts of the Relations between Women and Men* (McGraw-Hill, 1978), p. 164.
14. Gordon, "Struggle for Reproductive Freedom," p. 127.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 127.
16. *Ibid.*, pp. 123-24.
17. Joan Kelly, "The Doubled Vision of Feminist Theory: A Postscript to the 'Women and Power' Conference," *Feminist Studies* 5, no. 1 (Spring 1979):220.

18. Margery Davies, "Woman's Place Is at the Typewriter: The Feminization of the Clerical Labor Force," in Eisenstein, ed., *Capitalist Patriarchy*, pp. 248-66.
19. The participation of women in the paid labor force has steadily increased since 1947, while that of men has steadily decreased. Harry Braverman, *Labor and Monopoly Capital: The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1974), chap. 17.
20. *Employment and Earnings*, January 1978, pp. 151-53. Cited by Evelyn Nakano Glenn and Roslyn L. Feldberg, "Clerical Work: The Female Occupation," in Jo Freeman, ed., *Women: A Feminist Perspective*, 2nd ed. (Palo Alto, CA: Mayfield Publishing Co., 1975), p. 317.
21. Karen Nussbaum, "Women Clerical Workers," *Socialist Review* 49, pp. 151-59.
22. Braverman, *Labor and Monopoly Capital*, p. 391. Cf. also Pat Armstrong and Hugh Armstrong, *The Double Ghetto: Canadian Women and Their Segregated Work* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1978), chap. 2.
23. Eva Gamarnikow, "Sexual Division of Labour: The Case of Nursing," in Annette Kuhn and AnnMarie Wolpe, eds., *Feminism and Materialism: Women and Modes of Production* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), pp. 96-123.
24. J. Timothy Diamond, "The Dialectical Relationship of Medicine and Nursing: A Proposal for Research" (unpublished), December 1978, p. 16.
25. Davies, "Woman's Place Is at the Typewriter," p. 249.
26. Braverman, *Labor and Monopoly Capital*, p. 294.
27. Davis, "Woman's Place Is at the Typewriter."
28. Lin Farley, *Sexual Shakedown: The Sexual Harassment of Women on the Job* (New York: Warner, 1978), pp. 131-37.
29. Veronica Beechey, "Women and Production: A Critical Analysis of Some Sociological Theories of Women's Work," in Kuhn and Wolpe, eds., *Feminism and Materialism*, pp. 155-97. Tim Diamond brought this article to my attention.
30. Glenn and Feldberg, "Clerical Work," p. 331.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 331.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 334.
33. Nussbaum, "Women Clerical Workers."
34. Mary Bularzik, "Sexual Harassment at the Workplace: Historical Notes," *Radical America*, July-August 1978, p. 2. Reprinted as a pamphlet by the New England Free Press, 60 Union Square, Somerville, Mass. 02143.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 2.
36. *Ibid.*, p. 2.
37. Farley, *Sexual Shakedown*.
38. Jeanne Mager Stellman, *Women's Work, Women's Health: Myths and Realities* (New York: Pantheon, 1977).
39. "This is Nursing: Introduction to a Struggle," in Wendy Edmond and Suzie Fleming, eds., *All Work and No Pay: Women, Housework, and the Wages Due* (Bristol: Power of Women Collective and Falling Wall Press, 1975), p. 61.
40. The Boston Nurses Group, "The False Promise: Professionalism in Nursing," *Science for the People*, May-June 1978 and July-August 1978. Reprinted as a pamphlet by the New England Free Press.
41. The most influential statement in English of the Italian wages for housework movement was Mariarosa Dalla Costa and Selma James, *The Power of Women and the Subversion of the Community*, 3rd ed. (Bristol: Falling Wall Press, 1975). A shorter statement is Giuliana Pompei, "Wages for Housework" in *WOMEN: A Journal of Liberation* 3, no. 3 (1972):60-62. A good short critique of the position is Carol Lopate's "Women and Pay for Housework," *Liberation*, June 1974, pp. 8-11. Both articles are reprinted in Jaggar and Struhl, eds., *Feminist Frameworks*. More arguments in favor of wages for housework can be found in Edmond and Fleming, eds., *All Work and No Pay*.

42. Karl Marx, "Wages, Price and Profit, in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Selected Works* (New York: International Publishers, 1968), p. 229.
43. This is the title of an influential pamphlet by Christine Delphy: *The Main Enemy: A Materialist Analysis of Women's Oppression*, trans. by Lucy ap Roberts and Diane Leonard Barker (London: Women's Research and Resources Centre Publications, 1977).
44. Heidi I. Hartmann and Ann R. Markusen, "Contemporary Marxist Theory and Practice: A Feminist Critique," *The Review of Political Economics* 12, no. 2 (Summer 1980):91.
45. Ibid.
46. Charlotte Perkins Gilman Chapter of the New American Movement, "A Socialist-Feminist Response to the Durham Organizing Collective's 'Towards a Marxist Theory on Women's Oppression and a Strategy for Liberation'" (mimeographed), circulated in the mid-1970s.
47. Foreman, *Femininity as Alienation*, p. 157.
48. Karl Marx, "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte," in Marx and Engels, *Selected Works*, pp. 171-72. I owe this reference to Ann Ferguson, "Women as a New Revolutionary Class in the United States," in Pat Walker, ed., *Between Labor and Capital* (Boston: South End Press, 1979), p. 285.
49. Part of the publicity for Wallflower Order, said to be from a review of the Wallflower's performance in Vancouver and an interview with them in *Kinesis*, 1980.
50. Batya Weinbaum and Amy Bridges, "The Other Side of the Paycheck: Monopoly Capital and the Structure of Consumption," *Monthly Review*, July-August 1976. Reprinted in Eisenstein, ed., *Capitalist Patriarchy and the Case for Socialist Feminism*, p. 198.
51. Charlotte Bunch, "The Reform Tool Kit," in *Building Feminist Theory: Essays from Quest* (New York: Longman, 1981), pp. 197-98. Similar lists are given by the Hyde Park Chapter, Chicago Women's Liberation Union, *Socialist Feminism: A Strategy for the Women's Movement*, a pamphlet published in 1972, pp. 9-15; and by Nancy Hartsock, "Political Change: Two Perspectives on Power," in *Building Feminist Theory*, p. 17.
52. Ibid., p. 198.
53. Ann Ferguson, "The Che-Lumumba School: Creating a Revolutionary Family-Community," *Quest: A Feminist Quarterly* 5, no. 3 (Feb./Mar. 1980):15-17.
54. Ibid., p. 1.
55. Dolores Hayden, "What Would a Non-Sexist City Be Like? Speculations on Housing, Urban Design, and Human Work," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society, Special Issue: Women and the American City* 5, no. 3 (Supplement Spring 1980).
56. Ibid., p. 181.
57. Nancy Hartsock, "Staying Alive," in *Building Feminist Theory*, p. 120.
58. Ibid., p. 119.
59. Ibid., p. 121.

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