and political analyses are incomplete if they do not consider women, marriage, and sexuality. Traditional concerns of anthropology and social science—such as the evolution of social stratification and the origin of the state—must be reworked to include the implications of matrilateral cross-cousin marriage, surplus extracted in the form of daughters, the conversion of female labor into male wealth, the conversion of female lives into marriage alliances, the contribution of marriage to political power, and the transformations which all of these varied aspects of society have undergone in the course of time.

This sort of endeavor is, in the final analysis, exactly what Engels tried to do in his effort to weave a coherent analysis of so many of the diverse aspects of social life. He tried to relate men and women, town and country, kinship and state, forms of property, systems of land tenure, convertibility of wealth, forms of exchange, the technology of food production, and forms of trade, to name a few, into a systematic historical account. Eventually, someone will have to write a new version of *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State*, recognizing the mutual interdependence of sexuality, economics, and politics without underestimating the full significance of each in human society.

Karen Sacks

Engels Revisited: Women, the Organization of Production, and Private Property

This paper reexamines Engels' ideas on the bases of women's social position relative to that of men. Engels is almost alone in providing a materialist theory—one that sees women's position as varying from society to society, or epoch to epoch, according to the prevailing economic and political relationships of the society. Though he made a number of specific ethnographic errors,* I think his main ideas are correct—and remain the best way of explaining data gathered since he wrote—namely ethnographic and historical data which show that women's social position has *not* always been, everywhere or in most respects, subordinate to that of men.

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* I have excluded enumeration of these partly for lack of space, but also because they are substantively secondary and are more than amply dealt with by others. Two such errors, however, are germane to the discussion in this paper. Engels believed that men were always the collectors or producers of subsistence. It has since become clear that for gathering-hunting societies the reverse is closer to the norm (Lee and DeVore, 1968); and for horticultural societies, it is often the women's

Since capitalism has dominated and transformed the social orders of most of the world's peoples, it is useful to look to the past, as Engels did, through ethnographic and historical reconstruction, both to understand the present state of affairs and to help shape the future. Looking at noncapitalist ways of organizing economic and political relations and how these affected the relative positions of men and women provided Engels with an answer as to why women were subordinate to men in capitalist society, and what political and economic changes were needed to end sexual inequality.

The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State (1891) is more than an analysis of women's status. It is a contrast between nonclass and class societies. Set in an evolutionary framework, it shows how private property originated; and how, once on the scene, it undermined an egalitarian tribal order, creating families as economic units, inequality of property ownership, and, finally, exploitative class societies. It includes a description of how women's social position declined as private property gained strength as an organizing principle of society, and weaves in an analysis of why property had the effect it did; specifically, how it transformed women's work organization and, more generally, the relationship of property to class and sex.

The first part of this paper pulls together some of Engels' key points on how the sexual egalitarianism of preclass societies was undermined by changes in women's work, and by the growth of the family as an important economic unit. It is a selective and somewhat interpretive summary: selective in that it focuses on Engels' ideas about public labor, the family, and private property as they relate to women's status, and excludes his discussion of incest, exogamy, and the early

horticultural activities which are the basis of subsistence (see Judith Brown, this volume). Engels also believed that the domestication of animals preceded cultivation of the soil. Today, as a result of more recent research, a more commonly accepted theory is that cultivation and pastoralism developed at the same time in the same milieu, as progressively divergent and somewhat interdependent adaptations (Lattimore, 1957).

stages of human social evolution in general*; interpretive in that I have used some of what has been learned since Engels wrote as the lens through which to view his ideas. A second section redefines some of Engels' terminology and framework in the context of nonclass societies. The third section examines, using ethnographic data, Engels' ideas about the importance of public labor, private property, and the family for determining women's status. While these indeed appear to be factors determining women's position, this examination suggests some modification of Engels' idea that women are *either* social adults *or* wifely dependents. Based on this modification, namely that the existence of private property does not directly lead to a lower social status for women, the fourth section suggests an alternate explanation for Engels' observation that class societies have used the family to circumscribe and subordinate women.

Women in Engels' Theory: A Reconstruction

Engels presents a historical process by which women are transformed from free and equal productive *members of society* to subordinate and dependent *wives* and wards. The growth of male-owned private property, with the family as the institution that appropriates and perpetuates it, is the cause of this transformation.

According to Engels, in the early stages of society productive resources were owned communally by the tribe or the clan. Food had to be collected and cooked daily. Production was for use only, that is, to meet people's subsistence needs. There was no surplus produced for exchange.** The group,

* For a full discussion of Engels' entire work in the light of current knowledge, Eleanor Leacock's Introduction to the 1972 edition is of key importance. Kathleen Gough, in "The Origin of the Family" (1971 and this volume), and in "An Anthropologist Looks at Engels" (1972), provides important reexaminations of Engels' theory of women.

** Though Engels does not deal with this situation, people in many nonclass and noncapitalist societies do in fact produce for exchange. The question of how production for exchange in these societies differs

consisting of husband, wife, and dependent children, was neither a productive unit nor one for performing housework —nor did it own property. Since Engels saw economic functions (production, consumption, and property ownership), as defining the family, and since this group was in no way an economic unit, the family did not exist at this stage; it had not precipitated out of the larger household. The household, which was the basic social and economic unit, was communistic in that all food stores were held in common, and all work was done for the household rather than for individual members or couples. Women did the housework and ran these households.

> In the old communistic household, which embraced numerous couples and their children, the administration of the household, entrusted to the women, was just as much a public, a socially necessary industry as the providing of food by the men. (Engels, 1891:120)

Instead of the family, the context of men's and women's life and labor was a larger group based on kinship or residence in a common territory. This was a communal property-owning group, called the *gens* by Engels. Although individuals of both sexes owned tools and personal effects, on their death these passed to other members of the same sex in their *gens*, not necessarily to their own children. Decision-making, both economic and political, involved the equal participation of all members, both men and women. Both sexes were equal members of the group because both made crucial contributions to its economic life.

Engels concluded that the absence of private property made men's productive work and women's household work of equal social significance. Men and women were simply involved in different stages of the production of the same

from that of capitalist societies is a complex one. A good discussion of the fundamental differences involved can be found in Marshall Sahlins, *Stone Age Economics* (1971).

kinds of goods—the production of subsistence. All production was of the same kind: production for use.

Engels focused on the public rights of women in the early stages of society: their participation in political decision-making and (for the Iroquois) their collective right to depose a chief. These rights came from membership in the *gens*, which in turn was based on the performance of public or social labor. He was also impressed with the high status of a wife relative to that of her husband, which he attributed to the solidarity and kinship among the women, who were the core of the household.

The material base for women's transformation from equal members of society to subordinate wives lay in the development of valuable productive resources, initially the domestication of large animals, as private property. For Engels, the words "private" and "property" had a specific meaning. Only goods or resources with productive potential could be considered *property*. He was aware that people held personal goods individually. Though these were private, they were not property in the sense Engels meant the word. Only things with productive potential can be considered property. Tools (productive means) are unimportant because the skills and materials for their manufacture are equally available to all. In non-industrial societies, the most important types of private property are domesticated animals and cultivated land. These are productive *resources*.

Engles' use of the word "private" is broader than its use under capitalism—where there are almost no restrictions on what the owner can do with property. For Engels, private seems to mean property owned by an individual or by a family where rights to manage it are vested in one of the owners. It also means that these goods can be disposed of with *some* leeway—that is, to acquire wives, clients, or service from others. Engels saw "gaining a livelihood" as always men's work, and the means of production as always having been owned by the user (with the stipulation that inheritance remained in the *gens*). From this he reasoned that the earliest

private property, which seemed to be domestic animals, must have been owned by men.* For Engels, private property became possible in human history only when technological development and natural resources allowed a society to develop the skills needed to domesticate animals or to invest labor in land so that its productivity lasted for some appreciable length of time. He believed that enduring productivity led to enduring private ownership.

Domesticated animals were assimilated into the older patterns of tool ownership—that is, they were privately owned. Yet animals were a qualitatively new kind of item: they met subsistence needs, and they reproduced themselves. The growth of private property shattered the communal political economy of the *gens*. The foundation for its egalitarianism had been the collective ownership of productive property. Now that property was privately owned (by men), the family grew in importance and soon overshadowed the *gens* as the key economic and decision-making group. Unlike the *gens*, though, internal family structure was not egalitarian. Families contained propertyless dependents (all women and children, and some propertyless men).

Private property transformed the relations between men and women within the *household* only because it also radically changed the political and economic relations in the larger *society*. For Engels the new wealth in domesticated animals meant that there was a surplus of goods available for exchange between productive units. With time, production by men specifically for exchange purposes developed, expanded, and came to overshadow the household's production for use. Industrial capitalism had now reached the stage where production was almost exclusively social, outside the household, and for exchange, leaving women's work as private maintenance for *family* use.

* It is worth noting that Engels saw these new items (domesticated animals, cultivated land) as being assimilated into an already existing social context: the pattern of owning personal effects. The qualitatively different nature of these new "effects"—that they could reproduce themselves and their fruits—led to the destruction of the communal political and economic order that had created them. Engels does not attribute the development of private property to a greedy male nature.

As production for exchange eclipsed production for use, it changed the nature of the household, the significance of women's work within it, and consequently women's position in society. Women worked for their husbands and families instead of for society as a whole. Private property made its owner the ruler of the household. Women and other propertyless dependents worked to maintain and augment the household head's property, for he was now engaged in competitive production and exchange with other heads of households. Women's labor was a necessary but socially subordinate part of producing an exchangeable surplus. Women became wards, wives, and daughters instead of adult members of the society.

Families perpetuated themselves through time by the inheritance of property. Thus changes took place in the definition of children. From new members of a societal group, they became either private heirs or subordinate, dependent workers. This meant that women's reproductive labor, like their productive work, also underwent a transformation from social to private. That is, women bore *men's* heirs—to both property and social position—whereas before they had borne new members of a social group that included men and women. People and property became intertwined, and each became part of the definition of the other.

With the further development of technology and accumulation of wealth, the property owners separated themselves from their subordinate kinsmen and allied with other property owners to preserve and defend their holdings against the claims of the nonpropertied. This marked the end of kinship-based productive groups, and the beginning of class society and the state.

Engels' Theory and Nonclass Societies

To use Engels' concepts of social labor and production for exchange and apply them to nonclass societies, I will have to redefine them so that they are more in line with the ways these societies are organized. Engels' use of social or public labor in nonclass societies emphasizes work for and in the context of one's own corporate property-owning group. But marriage often joins two such groups; this generally means that at least one partner is not working for and in the context of his or her natal group. At the same time, he or she is not necessarily doing what Engels would call domestic work—work for one's own household. Therefore I will stretch his concept of social labor to include any work done (singly or in a group) for use or appropriation by someone of another household. Some examples of social labor, illustrated in the next section, indicate the wide range of organizations it covers: participation in a cooperative work group, tributary labor for a chief, corvée, collective livestock raiding, etc.

Engels' discussion of production for exchange in the context of nonclass societies has to be amplified somewhat. People do not spontaneously work to produce a surplus as Engels implies (1891:264). There has to be some power forcing them to produce more than they use. People in all societies give hospitality and gifts, and these always put the recipient under an obligation to make a return. In a general way, as long as everyone has equal access to the means of subsistence, production is planned to include hospitality and gifts, and these are things which everyone has or can expect to have by his or her own effort—and can thus make an equivalent return in goods. But when the means of subsistence are privately and unequally held, a recipient is often unable to make an equivalent return in goods. He or she may then be expected to return the favor with service and become a loyal dependent or client-follower, perhaps part of a retinue helping enforce unequal exchange.

Both situations, the return of equivalent goods and the return of service for goods, are instances of exchange. But

only the second gives one of the parties the ability to harness the labor power of others for his or her own ends. Thus the production of goods to gain control over the services of others must also be included in production for exchange. Indeed, Engels argues that the domestic and private ownership of cattle brought with it increased productivity of labor and the use of cattle to conquer or purchase labor to serve the wealthy (ibid.:265).

While production of goods for trade or barter between groups exists in societies without private property, it exists in the fabric of a political economy geared principally toward production for use. Perhaps this fabric was first rent when private property allowed the use of wealth to gain followers,* and then the need to use the productive and military labor of one's followers to create still more wealth to keep their loyalty. In any case, this particular kind of production for exchange in nonclass societies goes hand in hand with private property, and with economic and political inequality.

For example, there is wealth inequality and clientage in nonclass societies with large domesticated animals. These animals not only contribute to subsistence, but they are also necessary in order for a man to marry and to have some political standing. Thus, in much of East Africa prior to imperialist rule, men obtained cattle from kinsmen or from service to a chief or other wealthy man, to whom they then owed loyalty in exchange for the cattle. The production of cattle was a kind of production for exchange, in that loyalty and service were given for livestock and were used to augment the wealth and power of the benefactor, whether kinsman or not. Regardless of overlapping rights and obligations of various people to the livestock, the cattle were private property because there was some choice in how they would be allocated, and because an individual was empowered to make that choice.

* A discussion of the variety of conditions under which loyal followers would be desirable belongs in a consideration of the origin of stratification and the state, which is beyond the scope of this paper.

Women as Social Adults and Wives: Four African Societies

Though Engels has an integrated theory, at the risk of some distortion I would like to separate out two sets of ideas: (1) Those about the immediate determinants or material bases of women's status—that social or public labor makes men or women adult citizens in the eyes of society and that men's ownership of private property establishes their dominance over women in the family and society. (2) Those about the evolutionary aspect—that women's status became solely subordinate and domestic with the development of male private property, production for exchange, and class society.

In this section I will discuss the immediate determinants of women's status by using ethnographic illustrations. This has the advantage of focusing first on the material bases of women's position. Even if Engels is right in a general way, that women are worse off in class than in nonclass societies, we still need to know what gives rise to this state. Using ethnographic reconstruction allows us to look at some of the variety in women's status in noncapitalist societies—nonclass as well as class—and to use the comparisons to illuminate Engels' ideas.

I do not believe that Engels' evolutionary explanation is correct as it stands: there is too much data showing that women are not the complete equals of men in most nonclass societies lacking private property. There are also many societies, with and without classes, where women do own and inherit property. The final section will use some illustrations from class societies to suggest a different route to Engels' conclusions.

The following illustration is a reconstruction, mainly from ethnographic sources, of women's position in four African societies prior to the imposition of effective imperialist domination.*

* This section summarizes a portion of my dissertation (Sacks, 1971). These societies were selected from the writings on East and Southern Africa because the data on women are adequate and comparable. Thus

The Mbuti of Zaïre can be characterized as a band society with subsistence based on communal net hunting and the gathering of vegetable food. In South Africa, the Lovedu were principally hoe agriculturalists, while the Pondo combined agriculture with livestock. The Ganda, a class society in Uganda, were also hoe agriculturalists.

If we place these societies on a continuum from egalitarian to class society, our rankings can be seen to hold in three principal respects. First, Mbuti and Lovedu have economies of production for use; the Pondo have the beginnings of production for exchange centered around cattle; and in Ganda production for exchange is quite important. Second, in Mbuti and Lovedu both sexes perform social labor in a use economy; among the Pondo, this remains the organization of women's labor, but the men perform social labor at least in part in an exchange economy; and in Ganda women's work is individual domestic production for household use, while men work in groups, almost totally in production for exchange. Third, the Mbuti band owns the productive resources; these are largely patrilineal family estates in Lovedu and Pondo; and in Ganda they become less enmeshed in family obligations and are in male hands.

Among the Mbuti, Lovedu, and Pondo, women's productive activities are social and women have an adult social status. In Ganda, where women's productive activities are domestic, the status of woman is that of wife and ward only —despite the fact that women produce the bulk of the food. This suggests that Engels is right in seeing public or social labor as the basis for social adulthood. A more detailed look, however, shows that women do not have to be characterized as *either* social adults *or* wifely wards. Rather, the data suggest that women can be both simultaneously, and that women's status in a marital relationship seems to vary independently of their status in the larger society. Engels does seem correct in seeing the status of wife relative to husband

many aspects—for example, concerning women in trade and marketing roles—though they are important, simply cannot be dealt with here.

as dependent on their relationships to the property of the household; that is, the spouse who owns the property rules the household.

Table 1 summarizes some indices of women's status in society and in the family, and their relationship to women's organization of productive activities and to property ownership.* Essentially, Mbuti and Lovedu women are the equals of men, whereas Ganda women are subordinate, and Pondo women fall somewhere in between. The first nine variables I see as representing social adulthood, and the first five of these involve egalitarian relationships with people outside the household.

A look at the first variable, mutual-aid relationships, suggests that social adulthood is based on performing collective social labor. Though the Mbuti have no categories of relationship that are specifically identifiable as mutual aid, Lovedu men and women both have some sort of age groupings that are mobilized to do some work for the district head and queen.** For women, at least, those of a neighborhood age group may take collective action against the group of a person who has offended one of its members. Pondo women of a neighborhood work together and cooperate in the performance of girls' initiation ceremonies, and women of the same household cooperate in arranging extramarital sexual affairs. Women's collective action is recognized by men when they collectively punish women and girls for what they deem to be sex offenses. Ganda men enter a number of mutual-aid relationships with nonkin, or even non-Ganda; women have no such relationships.

Self-representation in legal proceedings indicates that a woman is regarded as able to be wronged or to do wrong in the eyes of society, as is the case among Mbuti, Lovedu, and

* The variables and their categorization, rather than being determined in advance by a logical scheme, emerged as a result of comparing the position of women in each of these four societies.

** "Queen," the title used in the ethnographies, is a misnomer. The office is actually that of a tribal chief, carrying moral authority but little if any coercive power.

Table 1
Women's Social and Domestic Status Compared with Men's in Four African Societies

	Discrimination against women's participation			
Indexes of women's status	*Mbuti*	*Lovedu*	*Pondo*	*Ganda*
	Social			
Mutual aid	n.a.	none	none	active
Self-representation	none	none	none	active
Socializing opportunity	none	none	none	active
Extramarital sex	none	none	none	active
Divorce	none	none	none	active
Social disposal of wealth	none	none	active	active
Political office	none	none	active	active
Extradomestic dispute settlement	none	none	active	active
Extradomestic mediation with supernatural	none	none	active	active
	Domestic			
Wife's inheritance of marital estate	none	active	active	active
Wife's authority over domestic affairs	none	active	active	active
Wife as private reproducer (adultery compensation)	none	active	active	active
Menstrual and pregnancy restrictions	none	weak	weak	active

Note: Ownership of major productive resources: the band in Mbuti, the family in Lovedu and Pondo, and the individual in Ganda. Collective social production by women, as against that by men: equal in Mbuti and Lovedu, unequal in Pondo, and absent in Ganda.

Pondo. A Ganda woman, by contrast, needs a male guardian (generally a husband or father) to bring her case to court. The guardian is held responsible for her acts and receives compensation for wrongs done to her.

Though Mbuti, Lovedu, and Pondo men and women participate in most of the same social activities, in the latter two societies young wives are kept busy at domestic work, which significantly restricts their ability to enjoy these events. But as older wives, as sisters visiting their own kinsmen, and as diviners, women attend social events as freely as do men. In Ganda, a large portion of the social activities are patron- or state-oriented; from these, women are excluded.

Mbuti and Lovedu have a single standard regarding extramarital sexual affairs. Pondo women view their extramarital affairs as right and proper, but the men see women's affairs as immoral. A Ganda husband may kill his wife for real or suspected adultery, but a wife has little recourse against her husband. Men may use the courts to deal out severe punishment to their wives' lovers. In general, Ganda restricts extramarital sexual activity much more than do the other societies. Exceptions are made for high-ranking men who have affairs with peasant women, but men and women in the reverse situation are punished severely. Yehudi Cohen's (1969) point that restricted sexual activity serves to strengthen the marital bond at the expense of bonds which could serve as a basis for rebellion in class societies seems borne out here.

While marital and social status are very closely related, the ease of divorce for men versus women indicates the relative importance of marital and social status for each. In Ganda a husband can effectively end a marriage by simply ignoring his wife, but a woman who wishes a divorce must contend not only with her husband but with her brother, who is partial guardian and generally acts to preserve the marriage.

Being able to give and receive food and items of social exchange is the material basis for exercising political power. Engels suggests that real power develops only with production for exchange and private property. In societies without these—that is, in societies based on production for use—the

performance of social labor gives a person the right to join with other adults in making political decisions and settling disputes. This is because political decision-making and dispute settlement are responsibilities of adult members of an egalitarian society. Among Mbuti and Lovedu both sexes give and receive food. Lovedu women give and receive cattle and may marry a wife with them; they become husbands in social status. Pondo women, though they are social producers, cannot dispose of the most important exchange item: livestock. Perhaps the explanation lies in the nature of Pondo production for exchange. Women's agricultural work is for use; work is geared over the long and short run to the needs of the households. But men's organization for livestock raiding involves them in production for exchange. Over the short run, warfare is geared more to the power need of a chief, who keeps a following by having cattle to distribute, than to household needs. Over the long run a chief keeps power by actually distributing cattle more or less widely. He owns the cattle captured in warfare, but sooner or later he distributes them among the warriors by virtue of their role in raiding. These livestock are the chief's to allocate. They are the most important item of exchange (in bridewealth, loans, and feasts), and of establishing long-term relationships (marriage and service). Because Pondo women do not participate in production for exchange (raiding), they cannot dispose of the property which establishes these power relationships. Thus, they do not hold overt political power.

Lovedu women hold political office, enter the decision-making arenas of the society, and predominate in officiating in religious rituals on behalf of their lineages. Ganda peasant women are barred from even the minimal access to political positions available to peasant men. Yet the mother and one sister of the king do hold important offices and exercise some power predicated on their relationship to the king.

A wife's position vis-à-vis her husband is based on her ownership, or lack of it, of the marital estate. In Lovedu, Pondo, and Ganda, productive resources are inherited patrilineally. Here there is a contradiction, or opposition, between

the fact that production is organized in a social or public way, but that families or individuals appropriate and inherit the productive resources. A wife does not participate in the ownership of resources of her marital household. On the other hand, the Mbuti's appropriation for *use* by families seems to me qualitatively different from the appropriation for inheritance and exchange of the other societies. Mbuti resources are owned by the territorial band as a whole. Residence entitles a person to use these, and there is no inheritance. Thus, Mbuti husbands and wives have the same relationship to the band resources.

Lovedu, Pondo, and Ganda wives labor for their husbands and their husbands' patrikin, but do not belong to the group that appropriates the product of their labor. Wives provide heirs, raise children, and do the bulk of the domestic work under the authority of the husband and his kin. They do not represent the household to outsiders. By contrast, Mbuti marriage carries no restrictions on a woman's authority over her work, children, or socializing. Her fertility cannot be said to be private since her husband receives no compensation for her extramarital sexual relationships.

Menstrual and pregnancy restrictions on women's activities among Lovedu, Pondo, and Ganda seem to operate to separate women's reproductive functions from contact with the social production of exchange goods; that is, from contact with warriors, cattle, craft, and some medical practices. In these three societies children inherit property and continue the family line. Regardless of how women's productive activities are organized, their reproductive potential is private. But among the Mbuti, where children are social members rather than private heirs, menstruation and pregnancy are not surrounded by any such restrictions. This contrast suggests that menstrual and pregnancy restrictions are based on private property, and that they serve to symbolize a contradiction between social production of exchange goods and private or familial appropriation. Since men are also involved in the reproductive process, and contain the same contradiction, logically they should—and actually they do—face analagous

restrictions. Lovedu, Pondo, and Ganda men must separate sexual relations from their participation in social production for exchange. By contrast Mbuti regard the collective hunt as an ideal time for sexual liaisons.

A final point remains. Though Ganda is a class society, I have not dealt with the differences between women of ruling and peasant families. There are several privileges accorded to wives, sisters, and daughters of the king. Each category of ruling-class women shares some privilege with ruling-class men which distinguishes them from peasant women: freedom from productive labor for some wives; sexual freedom for sisters and daughters; political and economic power for the queen mother and sister. But none of these women has all the privileges of the men of their class, which seems to reflect the contradictory position of ruling-class women: they are of a privileged class, but of a subordinate sex. I have not dealt with them in depth because their existence does not really change the generalizations made on the basis of peasant women. This should not be surprising if we recall Queen Victoria and her times in England, but it should make one wary of generalizations based on a few women holding prominent positions.

Though I have separated women's position as wives from their position as social beings, in reality the two are interrelated. Wifely subservience reduces the ability of Lovedu and Pondo women to exercise their social prerogatives. They are held back from social activities to the extent that they work under the authority of husband and his kin. Similarly, while Pondo women may become diviners, and while most diviners are women—allowing the women opportunities for travel, socializing, and financial reward—they may not be initiated to practice without their husband's consent.

Things can work the other way also. If a woman is socially regarded as an adult, this can limit the extent to which she can be subordinated as a wife. Thus, while a Pondo woman's fertility may be said to belong to her husband, and while he may claim compensation for her extramarital sexual affairs, this is a matter between men. Women regard these affairs as

proper, and are assisted in arranging them by their husband's own kinswomen. Moreover, should a woman choose to end a marriage or visit her own kin, there is little her husband can do to prevent it.

I have suggested that there are two aspects to women's position—women as social adults, and women as wives—and that these can vary somewhat independently. What determines how, or whether, women are regarded as adults is not the same as what determines their positions vis-à-vis their husbands. Basically, women are social adults where they work collectively as part of a productive group larger than or separate from their domestic establishment. The meaning and status of "wife," though, depend on the nature of the family in much the way Engels suggests. Where the estate is familial, and the wife works for it but does not share in its ownership, she is in much the same relationship to her husband and his kin as is a worker to his boss. Where there are no private estates, or perhaps where the family estate is jointly owned, the *domestic* relationship is a more egalitarian one (Friedl, 1967). This last point is overstated, since the domestic and social spheres of life are not really independent. On the basis of the American experience, it is difficult to conceive of a completely egalitarian domestic relationship when only the male partner is regarded as fully adult beyond the bounds of the household.

Women in Class Societies: A Reinterpretation

If we agree that the position of women declined from Mbuti and Lovedu to Ganda, as illustrated above, in direct correlation to the domestication of women's work and the development of production for exchange and private property, it is tempting to conclude that Engels was right after all—that private property and production for exchange lead to women's domestication and subordination. Many anthropologists accept something like Engels' view of the relationship between private property and the growth of social inequality and classes. While I suspect that women in general

stand in more equal relationship to men in nonclass societies than in class societies, I do not think that male property ownership is the basis for the male's supremacy. First, not all males own productive property. Second, in many class societies—even in those with a strong pattern of male dominance—women as well as men own productive property, and a wife's ownership of property gives her a substantial amount of domestic power vis-à-vis her husband (ibid.). But class societies make a sharp dichotomy between the domestic and public spheres of life, and this domestic power is not translatable into social power or position in the public sphere. Moreover, in class societies the economic and political autonomy of a household is quite restricted. Thus, in necessary dealings in the public sector women are at an overt or covert disadvantage. This probably militates against even domestic equality.

It seems likely, then, that in class societies the subordinate position of women derives not from domestic property relations but from something outside the household which denies women adult social status. The question is then why do male public power and ideals of male social dominance predominate in class societies? For an explanation, the focus has to shift from the domestic to the societal level.

We have seen that public or social labor is the material basis for adult social status. It follows that a society would have to exclude women from public labor or in some way denigrate women's performance of such labor in order to deny them social adulthood for any length of time.* The former seems to have been the case, at least for many precapitalist agrarian states of Eurasia (Boserup, 1970). Leaving aside for the moment the apparent exception of industrial capitalism, what were the circumstances that may have led class societies to exclude women from social production?

* An earlier version of this paper argued that all precapitalist class societies excluded women from public labor. Kathleen Gough has pointed out (personal communication) that this was not the case in precapitalist Indian states. I have thus modified this section.

Class societies are exploitative, which means that many people must work for the benefit of a few. While tithes and taxes on domestically produced goods can serve this end, even agrarian societies do not rely exclusively, or even mainly, on this form of production. Corvée for public works, both sumptuary and productive, conscription and predatory war, and collective agricultural or wage work for the rulers—all collective forms of social or public labor—are important productive activities in class societies. While these may not necessarily seem large from the local viewpoint, they are crucial nationally—for creating the "surpluses" by which rulers and their states are maintained.

Though women may or may not engage in domestic agriculture, they seem rarely to participate in these large-scale forms of social production. It seems that class societies tend to socialize the work of men and domesticate that of women. This creates the material and organizational foundations for denying that women are adults and allows ruling classes to define them as wards of men.

But why would this happen in a class society? With the development of socialized production for a ruling class, domestic production for subsistence becomes more precarious, forcing people into greater reliance on production for exchange—laboring for the rulers in exchange for their subsistence (alternatively, rulers can force people to work for them as a condition of access to subsistence resources). Ruling classes tend to select men as social laborers partly because they are more mobile, but probably more significantly because they can be more intensively exploited than women, not having to nurse and rear children.

Alice Clark (1968) provides rather gruesome data from seventeenth-century England, a period *preceding* and setting the social conditions for later industrialization. Peasants were being forced off the land and swelling a class of rural, landless laborers. The idea of wages as something paid for a task was not yet fully institutionalized; and it conflicted with the earlier notion that an employer was in some way obligated to meet the subsistence needs of the worker. Yet payments were

so low that a landless family had difficulty surviving. A man or woman without children could survive, but prevailing remuneration did not allow for reproduction and rearing of the next generation of laborers. Indeed, they did not reproduce themselves. Clark shows that the laboring class grew in size only from constant new recruits from the peasantry. Women and children were deliberately excluded from wage work by employers, who felt an obligation to, but could not or would not, bear the burden of supporting nonproductive dependents. In human terms the results were the abandonment of women and their early death, and in organizational terms a largely male public labor force.

Once such a dichotomy is made—women in domestic work for family use, men in social production for exchange—there is an organizational basis for a sexual divide-and-rule policy. Whether such policy is conscious or not is irrelevant. The *effect* of state legal systems and other aspects of ideology developed mainly by ruling classes has been to convert differences between men and women in terms of their roles in production into differential worth. Through their labor men are social adults; women are domestic wards.

Men are more directly exploited and more often collectively so—a situation which gives them the possibility of doing something about it. Women's field of activity and major responsibility is restricted to the household, which neither produces nor owns the means of production for more than domestic subsistence, a level of organization at which little can be done to institute social change in a class society. This situation has several consequences. First, women are relegated to the bottom of a social pecking order (a *man's* home is his castle). Second, because of their isolation and exclusion from the public sector, women can be used as a conservative force, unconsciously upholding the status quo in their commitment to the values surrounding maintenance of home, family, and children. Finally, the family is the sole institution with responsibility for consumption and for the maintenance of its members and rearing of its children, the future generation of exchange workers. It is necessary labor

for the rulers, but women are forced to perform it without compensation.

Modern capitalism has maintained this pattern of exploiting the private *domestic* labor of women, but since industrialization women have also been involved heavily in public or wage labor. Meeting the labor burden that capitalism places on the family remains socially women's responsibility. Responsibility for domestic work is one of the material bases for present barriers to women working for money and for placing them in a more exploitable position than men in the public labor force. As Margaret Benston (1969) shows, this domestic work is not considered "real" work because it has only private use value and no exchange value—it is not public labor. Women's greater exploitability in the modern wage labor force may derive from a preindustrial adaptation to being excluded from public labor (ironically, because women were *less* exploitable in a pre-wage milieu). Only after they had been defined as inadequate for public labor were the conditions right for industrial capitalism to discover women as a source of cheap labor.

However, there have been precapitalist societies where women have participated in social production. On the one hand, this means that the exclusion of women is not a necessary condition for their exploitation, or for sexual divide-and-rule. On the other hand, the position of women involved in such labor seems to reinforce the thesis that social labor is the material basis of social adulthood. It suggests, too, that social adulthood is not synonymous with sexual equality in class societies.

At least some of the precapitalist states of India contained a large class of state slaves—for example, the Chola and Vijayanagar empires.* Both men and women of this class, which was recruited from the "exterior" or Untouchable castes, served as agricultural laborers for religious, military, and government officials, as well as being corvéed for public

* All the information on India has been most generously supplied by Kathleen Gough.

works. However, women were paid considerably less for their labor than men. At the same time, Gough points out that in Untouchable tenant-farming and village-service castes or classes, where women work today for village communities in similar relationships of production, they "have greater sexual freedom, power of divorce, authority to speak and witness in caste assemblies, authority over children, ability to dispose of their own belongings, rights to indemnity for wrongs done to them, rights to have disputes settled outside the domestic sphere, and representation in public rituals." In short, women who perform social labor have a higher status vis-à-vis men of their own class than do women who labor only in the domestic sphere or do no labor.

In sum, I am suggesting two patterns: (1) Intensive exploitation in social production by and for ruling classes favored making this men's work. In turn, ruling classes capitalized on the situation, legitimizing the division of labor by a thoroughgoing system of differential worth. In return for the loss of economic autonomy, they conferred upon men exclusive social adulthood and guardianship of women. Under these circumstances, even if women own property the state intervenes to limit what they can do with it publicly, and to subordinate the household to the larger society. (2) States incorporate women of the poorer or propertyless classes into social production. Here there is a "second line of defense" against equality institutionalized through pay differentials. While these women are social adults with respect to men of their class, economic policies prevent actual equality. The key aspect of women's position, especially in class societies, is social adulthood, and this comes from participation in social production.

This brief examination of the bases of women's domestic and social status suggests some tentative conclusions about the kinds of economic and social changes necessary for full sexual equality. While property ownership seems important for women's domestic position vis-à-vis a husband, the exercise of domestic power, particularly in class societies, is

limited by whether or not women have adult status in the social sphere. This in turn is determined by their participation in social production. But the dichotomization of family and society, which is especially strong in class societies, makes women responsible for the production of private use value and makes men responsible for the production of exchange values. The distinction between production for use and production for exchange places a heavy responsibility on women to maintain themselves as well as exchange workers and to rear future exchange and maintenance workers. In this context, wage work (or social labor) becomes an additional burden and in no way changes women's responsibility for domestic work. For full social equality, men's and women's work must be of the same kind: the production of social use values. For this to happen, family and society cannot remain separate *economic* spheres of life. Production, consumption, child-rearing, and economic decision-making all need to take place in a single social sphere—something analogous to the Iroquois *gens* as described by Engels, or to the production brigades of China during the Great Leap Forward. What is now private family work must become public work for women to become fully social adults.

Judith K. Brown

Iroquois Women: An Ethnohistoric Note

My purpose is to investigate the relationship between the position of women and their economic role. At least three possibilities are suggested in the literature. Robert H. Lowie (1961:201) felt that the two were unrelated, that in determining women's status, economic considerations could be "offset and even negatived" by historical factors. On the other hand, Bronislaw Malinowski (1913) maintained that the considerable economic contribution of Australian aborigine women confirmed their subservient position, since their labors were extorted from them through male "brutalization." The opposite point of view is expressed by Jenness:

> If women among the Iroquois enjoyed more privileges and possessed greater freedom than the women of other tribes, this was due . . . to the important place that agriculture held in their economic life, and the distribution of labor . . . [which left] the entire cultivation of the fields and the acquisition of the greater part of the food supply to the women. (1932:137)

His explanation for the high status of women among the Iroquois stresses the extensiveness of their economic contribution. A similar position is taken by B. H. Quain (1961),

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