Gender Relations and the Spatial Structure of the City

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Abstract: This paper begins with the premise that gender relations are socially and culturally constructed and, as such, vary over time and space. It is argued that the particular nature of gender relations at any point in time is reflected in the spatial structure of cities, and as gender relations are not constant over time, neither is the spatial structure of cities. These ideas are initially explored in this paper through a brief discussion of social theories and how they facilitate an understanding of the spatial structure of the city from the viewpoint of gender relations. This is followed by interpreting the recent history of American cities as one of increasing spatial and functional separation of public and private spheres to produce a city with distinct areas of production and reproduction. Two post-Second World War trends—the increase of women in paid employment and the changing composition of households—have highlighted the inadequacy of this form of the city. Given these trends, attention turns to an examination of how the city is being restructured by new household forms such as single women householders in well-paid jobs (gentrifiers) and poor women householders. The concluding section consists of a discussion of some of the points raised in the paper and how these should be interpreted in light of the insights gained by employing social theories.

Introduction

Gender relations infiltrate every arena of social activity. As such, feminist geographers regard the analysis of gender relations and gender roles as fundamental to a thorough understanding of the causal relationship between women's and men's actions and sociospatial structures such as cities. Gender relations and gender roles are central to the allocation of resources, facilities and opportunities in a city, which in turn is essential to the structuring of urban space. This is not to imply that the analysis of gender relations should replace all other viewpoints, but they are an important facet of the social structuring of space and should be recognized as such.[1]

This paper explores the changing relationship between gender relations and the spatial structure of cities in the United States. A central premise is that the nature of gender relations is reflected in the spatial structure of cities. As the form of gender relations is not constant over time (or indeed space), it follows that the spatial structure of cities also varies over time. In exploring these ideas attention will turn firstly to a brief discussion of social theories and how they can facilitate the understanding of the relationship between gender relations and the spatial structure of the city. This is followed by an historical analysis of the relationship between gender relations and the private/public spheres, and how recent American urban history can be viewed as one of increasing spatial and functional separation of the public and private spheres to produce a city with distinct areas of reproduction and production. The increase in women in paid employment and changing household composition have highlighted the inadequacy of this form of the city. Following an examination of these issues, therefore, is a discussion of how the city is being restructured by new household forms such as single women householders in well-paid jobs

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(gentrifiers) and poor women householders. The concluding section consists of a discussion of some of the points raised in this paper and how these should be interpreted in light of the insights gained by employing social theories.

Social Theories, Gender Relations, and the Spatial Structure of the City

Recently a number of geographers have been employing social theories in an attempt to overcome the dualism of society and space. It is suggested that in order to understand space we have to understand the social relations of people. Thus space is viewed as a social construct; but at the same time social relations are necessarily spatial. In short, spatial structures are conceptualized as being both the medium and outcome of social action (hence the duality of society and space). However, this is not to imply a socially deterministic view of spatial structures. Indeed, there is an equal concern with abolishing the individual–society dualism as that of the dualism of society and space. Hence the conceptualization of the duality of individual and society: individuals are active only in and through social structures, but those social structures would not exist without individual activity as they are the reproduced and transformed outcome of individual activity. By putting all these ideas together (individual, society, and space) we arrive at the duality of individuals and sociospatial structures.

Employing these ideas it becomes apparent that the particular form that gender relations and gender roles take at any time are fossilized into the concrete appearance of space. Hence the location of residential areas, work-places, transportation networks, and the overall layout of cities in general reflect a patriarchal capitalist society's expectations of what types of activities take place where, when, and by whom. In turn, the city supports and perpetuates the beliefs about gender that generated it. Thus society is involved at the deepest level in determining the very nature and form of the city and, as such, cities contain important visual symbols of social attitudes.

In short, the spatial structure of the city is not neutral. Accordingly, a sensitive reading of the city can generate important insights into the social processes and assumptions that it reflects and helps to perpetuate. For instance, the present form of the city, with suburban residencies for social reproduction segregated from production on the distant fringes of the

city, reflects patriarchal assumptions about the 'traditional' nuclear family of a full-time homemaker wife, full-time wage laborer husband, and children (of course the family is also a social construct, the form of which varies over time and space). In turn, the suburbs support and perpetuate these beliefs. Furthermore, this spatial division also reflects the form that gender relations take within the 'traditional' nuclear family. Informed by the recent historical form of reproduction and production, there is a distinct gender division of labor within the family: 'women's' work being in the 'private' sphere of home, family and domesticity, and 'men's' work being in the 'public' sphere of waged work and political activity. As a substantial feminist literature has indicated women's role as unpaid domestic laborers in the private sphere—maintaining and reproducing the paid labor force, keeping wages down and profits up (since these services would have to be paid for otherwise)—is as essential as paid labor in the public sphere for the maintenance of capitalism [see, for example, DELLA COSTA (1975), GARDINER (1976), MACKINTOSH (1977) and SECCOMBE (1974); also see HAMILTON and BARRETT (1987) for recent reconceptualizations of the so-called domestic labor debate].[2] Indeed, the whole notion of dichotomous spheres—private/public, unpaid/paid, 'unproductive'/productive, reproduction/production—is somewhat redundant. However, by neglecting the spheres associated with 'women's' work (which many social scientists have tended to do) a vital component necessary for a thorough understanding of capitalist society is missing. As FINCHER (1987, p. 11) emphatically states: "This situation is a case of complete analysis, not of politics."

History of the Relationship between Women and Suburbs

Today's so-called 'traditional' nuclear family is, in reality, a fairly recent form which emerged during the late nineteenth century and captured popular imagination as the 'ideal' family form. Prior to the rise of industrial capitalism in Europe women (and children) played a very active role in the economic life of society. Indeed, women dominated a number of crucial economic activities, and their labor and knowledge were indispensable to the family and community. Precapitalist society also viewed marriage as an economic partnership: men did not 'support' women. The law reflected this in that women could make contracts in their own name and retain their own property even after marriage (BEARD, 1962, OAK-

LEY, 1974).[3] Essentially, preindustrial European societies were characterized by the unity of the reproductive and productive spheres into one way of life in communal villages. The rise of capitalism saw the separation of these spheres as reproduction was removed from the communal sphere of the village and relegated to the private, isolated sphere of the household; and commodity production increasingly took place in the large-scale factory under the wage labor system.[4]

As the private and public spheres became increasingly more distinct under capitalism, the meanings attached to 'family' and 'home' changed. Families in precapitalist and early capitalist European societies were not especially child-centered. Instead a family usually operated like a small business, with all family members expected to contribute to their family's budget. For many families it was economically necessary for children to work.[5] However, with the separation of commodity production from the household, the family no longer held the function of organizing this production. The household became a private place for the family—that is a 'home.' Accordingly, family relationships gained a content of their own as the sharing that had characterized the household developed an emotional dimension of love and personal attachment among family members (MATTHAEI, 1982). The role of women in the 'home' (as opposed to household) also underwent a change as women began to gradually withdraw from the paid labor force into the home to perform the role of full-time wife, mother, and household manager. The gender ideology supporting the privatization of the family included the 'cult of true womanhood' which reinforced the notion that women were frail and delicate, uniquely endowed with the emotional qualities required to maintain the domestic sphere and protect society's moral fabric from the corrupting influences of capitalism. Soon this 'feminine' ideal developed into a belief that a nurturing full-time mother was necessary for the healthy functioning of the family and should be every woman's priority in life (RYAN, 1979; WELTEN, 1966).[6]

By the end of the nineteenth century the privatization of women and the family was already being reflected in the urban build environment, characterized by areas of specialized reproduction—residential suburbs—and specialized production in central cities. Cities still had some mixed socioeconomic neighborhoods, containing a variety of housing styles ranging from mansions for the very wealthy to run-down tenement buildings for the working classes, inter-

faced with factories and other (paid) work-places. However, for those in the upper and middle classes who wished and could afford to leave the increasingly undesirable city, specialized residential areas were becoming increasingly available on the edge of the city. These residential developments were usually constructed close to streetcar or railroad lines which provided transportation back to the central city, allowing men to work in the city while housing their wives and children in the countryside. Thus social reproduction and production were spatially divided. On the one hand, production continued to be a collective process undertaken largely by men [however, as KESSLER-HARRIS (1982) reminds us, some 'women have always worked'], but began to take place in specialized locations. On the other hand, social reproduction increasingly took place within individual family housing units segregated from production. This in turn maximized privacy for the family but increased the domestic labor for the woman (MACKENZIE, 1984; WESTWOOD, 1984). Indeed by the 1950s, almost regardless of class, women became full-time, all-purpose 'high-value low-cost housewives' (OAKLEY, 1976). The housewife was responsible for the upkeep of her detached single-family dwelling as a private, safe haven for the emotional well-being of her family, for reproducing the paid labor force, and for being an active private consumer of mass-produced goods and services in pursuit of an arcadian life-style away from the ravages and harsh reality of production (BOWLBY et al., 1982; KESSLER-HARRIS, 1982; MACKENZIE and ROSE, 1983; RAVETZ, 1984; WESTWOOD, 1984).

While the history of 'suburbanization' must not be seen only in terms of an attempt to establish the 'bourgeois family ideal' in a sphere separate from production, it is clear that the whole notion of suburban residencies on the distant fringes of the city is implicitly grounded in the social construction of the 'traditional' nuclear family, its inherent gender inequalities and the gender ideology which informed it. Initially, this gender ideology only informed the practices of the upper class and the more wealthy bourgeoisie. However, while many poor, working-class, immigrant and Black women have always worked for pay outside the home (KESSLER-HARRIS, 1982; TILLY and SCOTT, 1978), many such women (and their husbands) aspired to replicate the life-style of the upper classes; and by the late nineteenth century, with the introduction of the family wage, even some working-class wives and mothers were staying at home (BOWLBY et al.,

1982; HARTMANN, 1976; McDOWELL, 1983; MACKENZIE and ROSE, 1983; OAKLEY, 1976).

State Intervention and the Shaping of the Suburbs

Widely held beliefs about the nature of social relations are often endorsed by the state. As such, state intervention has tended to reflect the patriarchal character of the contemporary form of gender relations and to explicitly embrace the concept of the 'traditional' nuclear family. For example, strictly segregated gender roles were a fundamental element in the design of the 'Greenbelt Towns' program (which was directed by the Resettlement Administration set up by F. D. Roosevelt during the 1930s to oversee various New Deal programs focusing on rural land use and community construction). The 'greenbelt towns'—Greenhills, Ohio (near Cincinnati); Greenbelt, Maryland (near Washington, D.C.); and Greendale, Wisconsin (near Milwaukee)—were initially aimed at relocating socially and emotionally underprivileged families to rural areas around the cities. The preferred tenants were the 'traditional' nuclear family with a commuting husband and homemaker wife; indeed, two-earner couples were often prohibited, as the wives of employed husbands were not permitted to have paid jobs. The residential lease read that 'the premises and any part thereof shall be occupied by the tenant and the members of his family only, as a strictly private dwelling,' and women were forbidden from using the home as a base for any 'trade, profession, or industry, without the written consent of the Government' [LARSON (1939) quoted in WAGNER (1984, p. 38)]. In short, while their husbands commuted to the city (there was no locally available employment), women were expected to remain in the greenbelt towns where they could carry out their "day by day shopping, moviegoing, access to grade school, and so forth . . . almost altogether by walking, since every dwelling unit in the community will be within one-half mile of these facilities" [*Architectural Record* (1936) quoted in WAGNER (1984, p. 36)].

By the middle of the twentieth century the popularity of the suburban way of life had rapidly expanded. Young adults were increasingly able to buy houses and establish single-family residences independently of their parents, and even working-class families were acquiring the 'American Dream' of owning a home in the suburbs. Mediation of these consumption patterns by the state was fundamental. Much of the legislation which is crucial to understanding the post-Second World War growth in single-family dwellings in the suburbs was also developed as part of the New Deal programs. A financial regulatory system aimed at promoting mass private consumption was created, resulting in the indirect involvement of the state in private housing (there was some limited direct state intervention into public housing which was spatially restricted to the central city) (FLORIDA and JONAS, 1988). Part of this regulatory system originated with the Federal Home Bank Act and the establishment of the Federal Housing Administration (FHA). These provided for federally-insured low interest rate mortgages. An essential prerequisite for obtaining an FHA home mortgage was that the house was in a neighborhood with zoning restrictions. Zoning regulated the use, height, and bulk of structures in an area, and served to protect and stabilize the land-use in residential subdivision. As most neighborhoods with zoning regulations were on the outskirts of the city, suburban homeownership was favored by the FHA. Indeed, WEISS (1987) argues that the FHA used zoning to protect entire subdivisions of middle-class, single-family owner-occupied houses. Clearly, the suburbs were oriented toward 'traditional' nuclear family life and were seen as an ideal environment in which to raise children. However, by requiring the segregation of residential from production land—and by prohibiting the use of the home for 'trade, profession, or industry'—the efforts of both women and men to combine paid and unpaid work were restricted. By defining 'family' in its limited sense, moreover, sharing a house with unrelated individuals (an attractive option for older women or single mothers) was prohibited. Clearly zoning, then as now, limits the opportunities of both nontraditional and nonheterosexual families.

The Suburbs Today

The discussion in the previous section indicates that, at least initially, there was a good deal of concordance between women's beliefs and the urban spatial structure. Generally speaking, women saw marriage and domestic life as very desirable, and as marking the start of their proper and most fulfilling station in life. Marriage rescued them from the tedium of paid work and the controlled environment of their parents' home. Indeed, marriage was regarded as a form of independence because they could have some autonomy and control in their own homes (TILLY and SCOTT, 1978). However, the expansion of suburban developments during this century has arguably con-

tributed to the solidification of segregated gender roles in the 'traditional' nuclear family, the dominant family form in these residential developments. As suburbs were built further and further from the central city the commuting times for men grew longer, decreasing both the amount of time they spent with their families and their input into domestic labor, which in turn increased the isolation women felt by being removed from the support networks in the city.[7] This isolation was compounded by the tendency of married couples to allocate household resources along traditional patriarchal lines such that each partner had differential access to family resources, including money, time, and use of the family cars. But, as MAZEY and LEE (1983, pp. 63–64) point out:

> Even with a car, (the suburban woman) was restricted because shopping and car pooling consumed much of her day. Suburban housewives have been called the 'new servant class' spending endless hours chauffeuring children to lessons, appointments, and friends' homes. To many women, intellectual stagnation became a problem. Whereas the urban woman could easily obtain stimulation in the museums and theaters of the city, the suburban woman could only attend such events with difficulty. Daytime TV offered pallid substitutes.

By the 1960s there was growing dissatisfaction with the role of full-time homemaker particularly among younger women who had not yet committed themselves to full-time domestic roles. At the same time there was an increased emphasis on equal opportunities and educational achievement which raised women's aspirations and expectations, along with the revival of feminism especially among White, middle-class women. Although feminism has had the strongest impacts on middle-class women, it has also provided an ideology to 'justify' the movement of women into paid employment, especially traditional 'male' occupations, to push for higher wages, better working conditions (such as the elimination of the more flagrant examples of sexist behavior), and to expand opportunities for upward mobility within traditional 'female' occupations (GERSON, 1983; VAN HORN, 1988). The increased number of women in paid employment has highlighted the inadequacies of suburban housing for women, given that most suburban residential neighborhoods were planned and built to facilitate only one role for women. The form of the urban spatial structure which worked for women who were full-time suburban homemakers simply does not work for women helping to finance as well as maintain the suburban home (MACKENZIE, 1984).

In short, there is a contradiction between the present form of the city and changing gender relations and women's changing roles. This is apparent in the recent surge of the academic interest and public concern over women's dual roles. For instance, it is recognized that when women combine their numerous roles they face a variety of temporal and spatial constraints. First, studies suggest that when a wife is in paid employment she still carries her double load with little assistance from her spouse. Generally, it is still women who do the domestic duties (such as housework, grocery shopping, and child-care, including taking time off work when children are sick), although this situation does appear to be becoming more equitable among couples in their twenties and thirties, especially when it comes to child-care (BERK, 1980, 1985; BLAU and FERBER, 1986). Thus, by assuming multiple roles, women, especially the mothers of young children, face time squeezes and need to reconcile their various roles within a finite time. Second, women negotiating dual roles confront spatial constraints such as poor public transportation and limited opportunities for affordable quality child-care at accessible locations. Indeed women living in homogeneous suburbs are often especially impacted by limited public transportation (given the inequality that exists between couples regarding household resources) and the lack of paid employment opportunities to fit their schedules.

Furthermore, women continue to suffer a distinct spatial disadvantage compared to men, reflecting the present nature of gender relations wherein the social positions of women and men operate to the advantage of men so that women and men have unequal power, opportunities and social prestige. For instance, men are 2 or 3 times more likely to have access to a car than women are (GUILIANO, 1979; GURIN, 1981; HANSON and HANSON, 1980, 1981), and in one-car families when women do get the car it is often to do chores for other people (FAVA, 1980). In addition, women are less likely to own a car and they are less likely to hold a driver's license (FOX, 1983; PUCHER et al., 1981). All these factors make women more dependent on slower, less flexible public transportation (DIX et al., 1983; FAGNANI, 1983; HANSON and JOHNSTON, 1985; RUTHERFORD and WEKERLE, 1988; WEKERLE, 1981).

One approach used by geographers to understand the role of constraints on activities is that of 'time geography.' Time geography studies have been employed in order to examine the spatial and temporal constraints of women when negotiating multiple roles.

For example PRED and PALM (1978) provide the instance of 'Jane,' an unmarried women with a 2-year-old child, considering two job offers. 'Jane' cannot choose one of the work-places (although it offers a better salary and is a more challenging job) because the location and operating times of the child-care center are such that she would arrive late for work in the morning, and in the evening she would arrive at the child-care center too late to pick up her child. TIVERS (1985) offers a modified version of time geography employing 'gender role constraints.' She argues that gender ideology must be acknowledged as being a key constraint for both women and men because it predetermines gender roles, and so differentially ascribes particular tasks and activities by gender. These, in turn, constrain the activities and opportunities of women and men to predetermined social roles. PICKUP (1984) uses gender role constraint to illustrate how women's access to paid employment opportunities is not only constrained by their lack of mobility (itself deriving from their position in the domestic division of labor), but is also limited by expectations about their gender role given the gender relations within the family. In short, women's gender roles serve to restrain their behavior, limit their activities and confine them to a smaller geographic area than men (CICHOCKI, 1980; MILLER, 1983; MONK and RENGERT, 1982; TIVERS, 1978, 1985).

The contradiction between the form of the urban spatial structure and the shift in women's consciousness and gender roles is reflected in numerous 'neighborhood preference' studies. These studies have indicated that today married women are less positive and less satisfied about living in the suburbs than are their husbands. These studies show that men favor residencies in the suburbs over those in the city, and regard their suburban home to be a sound financial investment. Men also enjoy being able to retreat from their hectic city jobs to a 'relaxed' life which offers many outdoor activities. Women, on the other hand, are much more ambivalent. They value the perceived safety of the homogeneous suburban environment for its contribution to a contented family life, and as a good place to raise children. However, they also find the suburbs isolating and boring. On the other hand, the city is seen as a stimulating place where they can enjoy numerous amenities and services. But cities also present problems such as higher crime rates and traffic congestion, which makes cities less attractive places for raising children (KELLER, 1981; MICHELSON, 1977; SAEGERT, 1981; SPAIN, 1988). Indeed, SAEGERT (1981) suggests that

cities–public and suburbs–private dichotomies symbolize polarized worlds and contradictory realities for women, particularly for those who wish to both explore their personal potential and raise a family. In giving rise to particular forms of the built environment these dichotomies reinforce specific life-styles, limiting freedom of choice, and so perpetuate inequalities between women and men. In other words, suburbs provide men with a private retreat largely maintained by women, but tend to mitigate against women's attempts to negotiate dual roles as mother, domestic manager, partner, and wage earner (SAEGERT, 1981). As WEKERLE (1984, p. 11) notes:

> Women are no longer available to be full-time home-managers, chauffeurs and neighborhood volunteers. As a result, suburbs of the fifties and sixties with their low density, single family housing, and reliance on cars, have become increasingly dysfunctional.

Indeed, the city based on dichotomous spheres has not only become dysfunctional for suburban women with multiple roles, but it *never* worked for single people, single parents, two-earner couples, or aged people (MACKENZIE, 1984).

The expansion of women's roles to once again include paid employment is clearly reflected in Table 1. The 'traditional' nuclear family with a homemaker wife has been declining in significance since the 1950s when almost 60% of all households conformed to the full-time homemaker wife and full-time wage earner husband picture of the family. By 1987 only one fourth did. No longer the predominant family form, the 'traditional nuclear family' now coexists with fast growing numbers of some of the very household forms for which the dichotomous city is dysfunctional: two-earner married couple family householders (which rose from 19.6 to 32.5% between 1950 and 1987) resulting from the rapid growth in the paid employment of married women since the Second World War; nonfamily households (which rose from 11.9 to 27.9% between 1950 and 1987), largely composed of people living alone due to young people delaying or shunning marriage altogether; and female householders (in 1987 27.7% of all households and 11.7% of all families' households were headed by women, up from 15.1 and 8%, respectively, in 1950) constituting a large component of the growth in nonfamily households but also very significant in terms of family householders which are often formed by divorce. All indicators suggest these are upward trends which will continue. For example, population projections suggest that by the year 2000 one-third of all households will be headed by women.

Table 1. Changing composition of households, 1950–1987*

Household type[8]	1950	1960	1970	1980	1987
Total households	42,251	52,809	63,573	80,389	89,479
Family household (%)	88.1	85.0	80.5	73.3	72.1
Married couple (%)					
Nonworking wife (%)	59.4	51.2	41.6	30.3	25.4
Working wife (%)	19.6	23.2	28.9	30.6	32.5
Female householder (%)	8.0	7.8	8.7	10.5	11.7
Male householder (%)	3.1	2.4	2.6	2.6	2.8
Nonfamily household (%)	11.9	15.0	20.0	26.8	27.9
Female householder (%)	7.1	9.4	12.3	15.3	16.0
Male householder (%)	4.4	5.6	7.3	11.4	11.9

*Sources: BIANCHI and SPAIN (1986), GERSON (1983), and U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE (1988b).

Table 2. Household composition and location, 1987

Household type	Central city	Metropolitan ring	Non-metropolitan
Family household (%)	29.3	45.2	23.3
With children under 18 (%)	29.3	47.7	23.0
With children under 6 only (%)	32.2	46.6	21.2
Married couple (%)	26.3	49.4	24.3
With children under 18 (%)	25.0	50.9	24.1
With children under 6 only (%)	28.7	49.7	21.6
Female householder (%)	43.5	37.0	19.0
With children under 18 (%)	45.6	35.0	19.3
With children under 6 only (%)	50.0	30.2	19.8
Male householder[9]	36.7	44.4	18.0
Nonfamily household (%)	41.9	36.9	21.2
Female householder (%)	41.3	36.8	21.9
Male householder (%)	42.7	37.0	20.3

*Source: U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE (1988b).

The Reorganization of Urban Spatial Structures

These shifts in women's roles and their consciousness have had an impact on the spatial structure of the city. Indeed, ROISTACHER and YOUNG (1981, p. 218) argue that three household types—the single women, dual-earner families, and divorced female householders—will shape the future of American cities "by their impact not only on the labor market but also on the demand for housing, tenure choice (whether to own or rent), and particularly on choice of residential locations." They find that the residential location among these groups is often the central city. This is overwhelmingly true of the women householders (both single and divorced), while among two-earner married couples a centralized location is more likely if they have no children.

Certainly, central cities, especially when compared with single family dwelling suburbs, have more accessible facilities and greater diversity of housing and services. Indeed, the central city is regarded as being potentially more *supportive* of women than low-density, homogeneous suburbs. Central-city neighborhoods make it easier for people to develop social support systems, and allow for the communalization of domestic responsibilities such as child-care (HAYDEN, 1984; HOLCOMB, 1984a; MONK, 1984; ROSE, 1984). ROSE (1984) argues that this is the most appropriate built environment for all women with children, especially for those women in 'nontraditional' households.

Table 2 bears some of this out. The highest rates of central-city residency are among female householder

families and nonfamily-householders, while the married couple family households were the least represented. In the suburbs the converse is true. A higher proportion of married couple family households, along with male-headed family households, are suburban dwellers in comparison with the other household forms.

The suburbs are, then, still dominated by married couple family households despite changes in the composition of households and shifts in women's roles and consciousness. In fact, it also appears that marital status is still an important determinant of household location. Indeed, GOODMAN (1979) reports that, when a person says that changing marital status precipitated their move, most suburban-to-central city moves were undertaken by people who were recently divorced, separated, or widowed, while most central city-to-suburban moves were made by people who were recently married (GOODMAN, 1979). So, although central-city neighborhoods might be the most appropriate location for women, and despite the conclusions of neighborhood preference studies which indicate that women are ambivalent about suburban residency, there are women who cannot adjust their residential location to take advantage of the more supportive central-city residential neighborhoods. For instance, married women with children have to make decisions about residential location which take their husband's and children's needs into account.

However, Table 2 does indicate that there is a definite concentration of female householders in the central city: 43.5% of female-headed family households and 41.3% of female-headed nonfamily households reside there: indeed 35.4% of all central city householders are women. Some of this centralization of female householders is due to gentrification. It is now recognized that women are increasingly active in this process with the 'typical' woman gentrifier being young, possibly married, usually childless and employed in a well-paid professional or managerial position (HOLCOMB, 1981; LEY, 1981; MARKUSEN, 1981; ROISTACHER and YOUNG, 1981; ROSE, 1984). This type of 'nontraditional' household has been hailed as important, both in furthering the processes of gentrification and in breaking down the patriarchal family. Indeed, ROSE (1984) argues that gentrification is especially likely among those women who stand at the intersection of changing patterns of women's paid employment (particularly with regard to their increased access to well-paid professional and managerial jobs), and changing fam-

ily composition and gender relations within the family. Such women have specific needs regarding housing and community facilities. According to ROSE (1984, p. 64), gentrified neighborhoods:

> . . . facilitate access to community services, enable shared use of facilities, provide an efficient and non-isolating environment for reproductive work, and enhance opportunities for women to develop locally based friendship networks and a supportive environment.

Additional support for these ideas comes from studies which indicate that women in paid employment are more likely to locate in more centralized residential areas than are women in other forms of households (FREEMAN, 1981; HANSON and JOHNSTON, 1985; MADDEN, 1981). In addition, 'neighborhood preference' studies have concluded that women, especially single mothers with their greater need for child-care and other support services, prefer central-city over suburban neighborhoods (COOK and RUDD, 1984; FOX, 1983; MICHELSON, 1985; ROTHBLATT et al., 1979). Indeed, even in those studies using high-density urban neighborhoods which are labelled 'disorganized' and 'declining' by planners, the women living there find them more desirable than homogeneous suburban neighborhoods because they provide precisely the social support, paid jobs, child-care, and services that they require (BANNER et al., 1982).

Clearly, women gentrifiers have *chosen* to live in central-city neighborhoods. They can enjoy the growing 'yuppy' social and cultural ambience, as well as the proximity to stores and services which help them simplify their domestic responsibilities, and their central-city location reduces their commuting time and cost, and, in the case of two-earner couples, maximizes access to two work-places. However, since only 50.4% of all women in paid employment have year-round, full-time paid jobs, and only 12.9% earn over $30,000 (the median income for men working full-time year-round was $26,772 in 1987) the number of central-city women householders who actually are gentrifiers is probably small relative to the other women householders with whom they share the central city (HOLCOMB, 1984b).

Many of these other women householders personify the term 'feminization of poverty'. In 1987 the national poverty rate was 13.5% but the rate among all households headed by a woman was 27.6%, and among family households headed by women it was 34.3%. The poverty level among married couple

family households was 6 and 11.4% for family house-holds headed by men (in 1987 the median income of family households headed by women was $14,620 compared to $34,700 for married couples and $24,804 for family households headed by men). Furthermore, as many female householders have school-age children, the feminization of poverty also includes the impoverishment of children.

The probability of a woman being the head of a family's household and in poverty is greater if she is non-White. In 1987 41.8% of Black and 23.4% of Hispanic family households were headed by a woman compared with only 13% of similar White households, and 51.8% of Black and Hispanic woman-headed family households were in poverty compared with 26.7% of White woman-headed family households (U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, 1988a). At the present rate it has been predicted that by the year 2000 the population in poverty will consist solely of women and their dependent children (NATIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL OF ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY, 1980).

COOK and RUDD (1984) found that female house-holders tend to be concentrated in the central business district, in urban, densely populated census tracts, in housing structures built prior to 1950, and lower rent units. SMITH (1985) found similar concentrations in Springfield, Massachusetts, particularly in those tracts with above-average proportions of Black and impoverished residents.

These women occupy central-city locations due to their lower incomes and inability to pay the extra housing and transportation costs of less centralized locations. In addition, suburban zoning regulations often exclude such women, locking them into central-city housing markets. Indeed, poor women are more likely to rent than own their homes, and to live in public housing. Although they spend a large proportion of their income on housing these women are still left with the worst housing: substandard buildings, shared facilities, and public housing (HOLCOMB, 1984a; MONK, 1984; ROISTACHER and YOUNG, 1981; ROSE, 1984; WEKERLE, 1984). But poor female family householders' problems go beyond the economic to include the lack of affordable, quality child-care, building regulations which exclude children, and a basic fear for their own and their children's safety (SHAPIRO, 1982). Indeed, NETTER and PRICE (1983), in describing such women as members of the 'Nouveau Poor,' regard their poverty to be a partial product of spatial struc-

tures and environmental conditions which decrease their economic opportunities. In other words, the social and spatial oppression of these women has been 'overdetermined,' to use one of SAYER's (1984, p. 100) terms, in that their options are constrained by mechanisms other than just gender relations and gender roles.

Concluding Comments

An underlying theme in much of the preceding historical discussion of the relation between gender relations and the urban spatial structures casts women as the innocent, passive victims of an environment created by property developers, the state and patriarchy in an effort to establish a distinct territory for the 'traditional' nuclear family. This borders on spatial fetishism and oversimplifies the complex interrelationship between people and the spatial structure of the city. First and foremost, people are agents and as such women as well as men have shared the 'American Dream' and have willingly chosen suburban locations. Furthermore, FAVA (1985) points out that people tend to want to live in similar neighborhoods to those in which they were raised, and the generation of adults who grew up in the suburbs are likely to desire suburban residencies for themselves.

Thus it is important to realize that women are not passive victims of urban spatial structures. Far from it: women are actively changing the spatial structure of the city. Since the 1960s women have been pushing for changes in land-use and zoning legislation, altering housing structures, and neighborhoods to better fit their new roles and responsibilities. For example, women have set up neighborhood support networks to meet their needs and those of their children (GENOVESE, 1981; STAMP, 1980), and lesbians have also been creating 'safe spaces' in cities which provide a supportive environment relatively free of homophobic prejudice (BEYER, 1985; ETTORRE, 1978; HOLCOMB, 1986).

However, the housing industry is still geared toward the 'traditional' nuclear family and has yet to adequately respond to the massive increase in women householders and the feminization of poverty by providing affordable, livable housing. As a result, the patriarchal nature of the spatial structure of the city is permanent, at least for a while. There is a time-lag between the formation of new expectations and their expression in space. The spatial structure of the city cannot be changed as quickly as can social attitudes

and beliefs. Societal expectations about gender relations and gender roles are literally fossilized into bricks and mortar, so they will continue to partially constrain the possibilities open to people. As STAMP (1980, p. 192) notes:

> So while we must still occupy the built environment of the city in its present form, we are beginning to break down its isolating barriers within our groups, and within neighborhoods, and assert that its function will no longer remain as it was. The old form will no longer have the power to cripple us by stifling our growth, and this may be the most powerful step toward reshaping the form itself and breaking down the barriers of segregation between [women].

In other words, the spatial structure of the city is not merely the concrete manifestation of past and present ideas about gender and other social relations. It not only provides the conditions for the reproduction of gender relations and gender roles, but, hopefully, it also provides some of the conditions for the transformation of those gender relations and gender roles into a more spatially equal city.

Notes

1. That the emphasis is placed on gender relations and gender roles is an explicit recognition of the socially constructed nature of what is meant by 'women' and 'men', 'femininity' and 'masculinity,' and so on. The present form and characteristics of these categories should not be taken for granted or be regarded as transhistorical and natural. 'Feminine' docility and 'masculine' aggression are not inherently natural attributes of women and men. That these people are biologically female or male is not the issue. What is considered appropriate behavior for women and men are historically and spatially contingent forms of gender relations, gender roles, and their subsequent social practices. As such they are neither necessary nor inevitable.

2. Of course, the content of domestic labor has been altered as many domestic tasks previously performed in the household have been displaced and mediated by consumer goods and services. In recent decades the state has expanded into the sphere of reproduction, taking over some of the responsibilities for social reproduction, through education, health care, and the general apparatus of the welfare state. However, under both Reagan and Thatcher many welfare programs and human services were dismantled or reduced, for instance long-term care of the elderly and handicapped, subsidized child-care centers, school meals, and free milk; these cutbacks have returned the onus to the domestic sphere or, more specifically, to women's unpaid labor

(BOWLBY *et al.*, 1982; PRICE, 1984; WEKERLE, 1981).

3. This is not to say that life is precapitalist Europe was idyllic. Far from it, people worked long, arduous hours, and class and gender relations were often oppressive. Women in precapitalist European society did not have social equality with their husbands, and 'women's work' was seen as less important than 'men's work', but it *was* seen as vital to the family's survival—a recognition that European and American women no longer enjoyed by the 1950s (WOMEN AND GEOGRAPHY STUDY GROUP OF THE IBG, 1984). Indeed, feminist historians argue that the situation of women has worsened with the advance of capitalism, the growth of urbanization and the privatization of the family (KELLY-GADOL, 1983; OAKLEY, 1974; ZARETSKY, 1976). By the nineteenth century woman's economic independence had been almost entirely undermined and her legal rights were virtually nonexistent (TILLY and SCOTT, 1978; KESSLER-HARRIS, 1982). While a gender division of labor clearly did exist before capitalism, in many cases gender roles had overlapped and there had been a degree of continuity between many of women's and men's tasks.

4. The value of labor came to be assessed in monetary terms, changing the meanings people attached to 'work'. Labor within the public sphere became 'real' work, while labor within the private sector, although absolutely essential for the reproduction of the labor force, came to be considered as of little economic or social value.

5. Even in the early part of this century many children left home, resided at boarding houses and worked for pay well before what would be considered an appropriate age for such activities today (ZELIZER, 1985). Strict child labor laws were not really enforced until the 1930s (GLAZER, 1980). Indeed, the whole notion of childhood and adolescence as separate from adulthood is a historically recent social construction tied to the rise of compulsory education, child labor laws, and a capitalist industrial economy (COX and ENGLAND, 1988).

6. This form of gender ideology was further entrenched by the rise of professional 'experts' (especially doctors and psychologists) emphasizing the need to 'rebuild' the family following the Second World War. Accordingly, the mother–child relationship was the key to the healthy development of the post-war generation (LEWIS, 1985). Child-care was modified by Freudian-inspired theories of child development whereby mothers were (as they continue to be) cautioned to care for children's social and mental development, as well as their health, discipline, and cleanliness (VANEK, 1980).

7. In addition to isolating women in their homes, most single family housing is not usually designed to facilitate the sharing of domestic labor, and often maximizes the domestic work of individual women through poor design. The internal layout of such houses—large glass windows, open plan settings, fire-places, and galley kitchens—add to the visibility of housework, enforcing high standards of cleanliness and neatness (HAYDEN, 1986; McDOWELL, 1983). Thus architects as well as developers, businesspeople, and planners have been criticized for designing dwellings and neighborhoods based on patriarchal assumptions about 'appropriate'

gender roles, gender relations, and the subsequent social practices (BOYS, 1984; HAYDEN, 1986; KELLER, 1981; MATRIX, 1984).

8. A family household is a household maintained by a group of two or more persons (one of whom is the householder) related by birth, marriage, or adoption, and residing together. A nonfamily householder is a person who lives alone or with nonrelatives only (U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, 1988a).

9. Breakdowns by age of children and residence were not available for male family householders. Presumably this is because, in 1987, 9.7% of all family households containing children under the age of 18 were headed by a woman while the equivalent figure for male family householders was only 1.5% (U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, 1988b).

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