Tenure, Gender and Household Structure

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ABSTRACT Starting with a review of recent literature on gender and housing, this paper goes on to develop a new theory of household structure, in which concepts of gender and generation play a key role. The utility of this theory is then demonstrated in the analysis of data from a survey of households in the City of Salford.

Introduction

Gender issues are crucial to all social analysis and theory. Approaches to the explanation of social phenomena which do not take account of gender differences and divisions are very limited, and possibly fundamentally flawed. In the field of housing perhaps more than in other fields, the question of gender has received significant attention, but writers have tended to concentrate on the issue of the differential access to housing for men and women rather on the issue of the relations between men and women in housing contexts. This paper attempts to correct the situation by focusing on the nature of household structure, which is typically determined by relations of gender and generation. Variations in household structure are argued to be particularly important for explaining the economic and social relations of housing, and empirical data from a survey of households in Salford is used to support this argument and to suggest new ways of looking at the relations between gender and housing.

The structure of the paper is as follows: the next section reviews the different types of publication on gender and housing, in an attempt to summarise the current state of knowledge in this area. The purpose of the literature analysis is not to discuss in detail the various issues raised, but only to indicate the existence of certain gaps, in particular with regard to the subject of parent-child relations. The third section then introduces the argument that households are

structured primarily on the basis of parent-child (or generational) relations as well as gender relations. The main aim of this section is to identify the dynamics of household structuring, with a view to explaining (in the following section) why feminist theory in this area needs to be supplemented by a new theoretical understanding of parent-child relations. The fourth section offers a preliminary analysis of the parent-child relation in terms of a contradiction between exploitation and control relations, again arising out of criticism of limitations in feminist theory. The analysis is intended to be a provisional step, following the work of Pugh (1990, 1991), towards the construction of a new theory of familial relations and household structuring. The author believes that the approach taken has important and far-reaching implications for sociology and social policy. The final section presents empirical material which is intended to be relevant to the theoretical arguments of the preceding sections. The main aim of this section is to consider some empirical effects of household structuring on housing tenure relations, and to provide preliminary and provisional tests of some implications for housing tenure of the theoretical analysis of household structure.

Gender and Housing

Publications about gender and housing generally fall into five or possibly six categories. The first category is concerned with women's disadvantaged position compared with men's in relation to access into housing and quality of housing occupied. Relevant texts in this area are: Matrix (1984); Brailey (1985); Watson & Austerberry (1986); GLC (1986); Munro & Smith (1989); Sexty (1990); Forrest & Murie (1991); Roberts (1991). The second category covers the gender division of labour in the home—Oakley (1974); Edgell (1980); Vanek (1980); Hunt (1980); Luxton (1980); Hartmann (1981); Graham (1983); Strasser (1982); Pahl (1984); Pahl & Wallace (1985); Martin & Roberts (1984); Osborn et al. (1984); Lewis & O'Brien (1987); Hardyment (1988); Sharpe (1984); Hewlett (1987); Mason (1987);

C. Williams (1988); Hunt (1989); Devine (1989); Hochschild (1990); Cowan (1989); Neutze & Kendig (1991). The third category overlaps with the second but concentrates on the issue of resource distribution within the home—Pahl (1980, 1983, 1989); Brannen & Wilson (1987); Glendinning & Millar (1992); Burgoyne (1990). The fourth category is closely related to the third but focuses specifically on the problem of 'domestic violence'—Dobash & Dobash (1980); Borkowski, Murch & Walker (1983); Pahl (1985); Hamner & Maynard, 1986; Smith (1989). The fifth category is concerned more broadly with the formation, maintenance and dissolution of domestic relationships, especially power and status relationships, but also economic relationships, between women and men—Leonard & Speakman (1986); Robertson-Elliot (1986); Henwood et al. (1987); Logan (1987); Stubbs (1988); Wallerstein & Blakeslee (1989); Davis & Murch (1988); Clark (Ed.), (1991); Delphy & Leonard (1992). And the sixth category, rather different from the others, deals with the relations between gender and housing employment— Levison & Atkins (1987); Brion & Tinker (1980); GLC (1986).

In each of the above categories, valuable contributions have been made to our understanding of gender relations in the home, especially by those writing from a feminist perspective. From the first type of publication we receive a clear picture of the nature and extent of women's housing disadvantage, and of the ways in which the housing system reflects and reinforces women's dependence on men. The second category tells us that women do most of the work in the home, especially the more routine and low status work, and that the situation is changing hardly at all. Third, in spite of increased participation of women in the labour market, resources coming into the home are still controlled predominantly by men, although the forms of management of those resources are complex and varied, and are typically the responsibility of women. Similarly, the research on so-called 'domestic violence' reveals a complexity of ways of coping

with the problem but indicates that the root cause lies in structures which sanction traditional forms of male dominance. In much the same vein, the writings on marriage, divorce, and the family (the fifth category) show how the pattern of domestic male dominance has been established over a long historical period, is supported strongly by complex economic, legal and ideological forms, and is changing only very slowly. And finally, the research on women and housing work demonstrates the same pyramidal and glass ceiling effects as are found in other areas of women's employment (Beechey, 1986; EOC, 1990).

The above categories of publication on gender and housing are by no means exhaustive. There are also several categories of writing which focus on wider housing market and social processes, or attempt to identify and theorise the links between gender relations in the home and social relations outside the home, or which are otherwise concerned with probing the differential meaning of home for women and men. There is an extensive literature on the gender aspects of inner-city gentrification (Bondi, 1989; Hayden, 1981; Rose, 1989). In addition, a large body of feminist writing has traditionally seen the home as the key source of patriarchal economic and political structures (Barrett & Macintosh, 1982; Hartmann, 1987), and this is a view which has recently been revived in a variety of new forms (Pugh, 1990, 1991; Pratt & Hanson, 1991; Delphy & Leonard, 1992) which I shall consider in the fourth section. Finally, there is a new interest in the social meaning of the home which has far-reaching implications for our understanding of gender relations as well as of all other social relations (Saunders & Williams, 1988; Allan & Crow, 1989; Somerville, 1989, 1992; Madigan et ah, 1990; Gurney, 1990; Munro & Madigan, 1993). Literature on residential differentiation, on feminist economics and politics, and on domestic signification, therefore all impinge very greatly on gender and housing debates.

A feminist perspective is commonly found in all types of publication on gender and housing, and typically predominates in writing about access to housing, the domestic division of labour, domestic resource distribution, and domestic violence. In essence, this perspective holds that women are systematically disadvantaged in relation to men, and that gender relations can be explained primarily in terms of institutionalised male dominance. In housing as in other fields, the perspective has considerable historical support (E. Roberts, 1984; Lewis, 1984,1986; P. Williams, 1987; Nicholson, 1986). There is clearly also potential for feminist developments in other topic areas where hitherto non-feminist accounts have tended to predominate, for example in writing about family relationships (see Walby, 1989, 1990; Delphy & Leonard, 1992), gentrification (Alisch, 1992) and the meaning of the home (Saegert, 1980; Allan & Crow, 1989; Darke, 1992). Within the overall feminist perspective on housing, however, there is a good deal of difference of opinion and of emphasis, and some confusion about the relations between gender and other social categories such as class and 'family-household' (Barrett & Macintosh, 1982). In particular, parent-child relations have not usually been distinguished as a category from gender relations in the home: the issues of access to housing, division of labour and resource distribution have been examined almost exclusively as gender issues, and their generational dimension has not been taken into account (one exception to this, however, is the matter of inheritance—Hamnett et ah, 1991). Or again, domestic violence has been treated as a gender issue which is quite separate from child abuse (Smith, 1989), or else it has been incorporated with child abuse and other forms of violence within families under a general heading of 'intimate violence' (Gelles & Straus, 1988). This paper aims to clarify the relations between gender relations and generational relations by means of a new conceptualisation of household structure.

Gender and Generation

The aim of this section is to show that households are structured primarily on the basis of nuclear family relations. Arguments purporting to show the contrary are found wanting. Nuclear family relations are then argued to consist primarily of gender and generational relations.

The concept of household structure is generally untheorised, even in accounts which emphasise the theoretical importance of the concept of household itself, e.g. Randolph (1991) sees the household as a key link between the housing market and the labour market, but does not explain how relations within the household might determine the nature of this link. In practice, household structure is typically represented in terms of a number of descriptive categories based largely on age, heterosexual pairing and numbers of adults and children. For example, the Census classifies households according to whether the household head is under or over pensionable age, single or couple or more than two adults, and with none or one or two or more than two dependent children (Census, 1981, Table 21, p. 508). The impression conveyed by such a survey is that the key determinants of household structure are age of withdrawal from the labour market, the numbers of adults in the household, and the numbers of dependent children in the household. This impression, however, is not necessarily a correct one.

There is in fact no sound theoretical reason to suppose that the age of the household head has any intrinsic significance in the determination of household structure. Both very young (or very new) and very old households are more likely than other households to contain only one person, and much more likely to have no dependent children, but this does not justify any simple binary opposition of working age versus pensionable age. Indeed, the focus on a precise term of years of life to mark the transition from one household type to another

is in itself ageist, since it tends to reinforce stereotypes about the distinct status of 'old age pensioners' (Fennell et al., 1988). Similarly, the concept of head of household has been criticised for its implicit sexism (Crompton & Mann, 1986). The numbers of adults or children in the household also do not in themselves appear to be the key issues in the determination of household structure. This is because it is the relationships between these individuals which matter, not merely how many of them there are. For example, the majority of households with more than two adults actually consist of a married couple with one or more adult offspring (Smith & Browne, 1992, Tables 2.25 and 2.26), and can therefore be regarded as continuations of households containing a married couple with dependent children—no change of structure need have taken place. Again, although additional numbers of children clearly affect relationships among siblings, the core patterning of parent-child relations is set with the first-born, and indeed before the first child is even conceived (see Henwood et al., 1987, on the role of the 'anticipation of parenthood' in the structuring of marital relations). On the whole, the evidence indicates that, rather than the age or number of individuals in a household, it is nuclear family relations which predominate in the determination of household structure. This conclusion, however, appears to run counter to evidence that nuclear family households constitute a declining minority of all households. For example, the General Household Survey researchers have recently reported that:

It is interesting to note that 'traditional' households, consisting of a couple with dependent children, have comprised fewer than one-third of all households for some considerable time. Indeed, the proportion of households classified in this way has been in decline; in 1990, 25 per cent of households were of this type compared with 31 per cent in 1979 (Smyth & Browne, 1992, p. 16).

The apparent discrepancy here arises because the surveys are 'snapshots' of households at particular times rather than longitudinal studies of households through the duration of their lifetimes. When the biographies of households are considered, the continuing predominance of 'traditional' nuclearity is clearly discernible (Robertson-Elliot, 1986; Bryman et ah, 1987). There has certainly been a growth in numbers of one-person households, from 17 per cent of all households in 1971 to 26 per cent in 1990 (Smyth & Browne, 1992, p. 41) and of one-parent families from 8 per cent of all households in 1979 to 10 per cent in 1990 (Smyth & Browne, 1992, p. 42). Neither of these increases, however, can be said to signify a clear decline in the 'traditional' or conventional nuclear family norm. This is because available evidence indicates that the vast majority of one-person households occur at the beginning or end of the life of a nuclear family household (e.g. young single people leaving the parental home or elderly single people whose children have left home and whose spouses have died), and the majority of one-parent families change into two-parent nuclear families within a relatively short period of time (e.g. evidence from Holmans et ah, 1987, indicates that most never-married mothers get married later on, as do a high proportion of divorced lone parents). Even in Sweden, where the 1990 Census found that almost 40 per cent of households consisted of one person, researchers have concluded that "living alone is more of an intermediate stage than a permanent state" (Fransson & Lundin, 1993, p. 17).

It is true, then, that the conventional nuclear family is not the predominant household type at any one moment of time. Nevertheless, the evidence clearly indicates that the predominant pattern of family formation is 'neolocal' (Harris, 1990, p. 71), meaning that the creation of a new nuclear family is typically associated with the formation of a new household, and that the formation of households which are not nuclear families is generally of a marginalised character

and on a relatively short-term basis (Anderson, 1985). Adult status itself is gained through marriage and family formation (Jones, 1987). The commonly held view that: "The nuclear family household ... is becoming less and less the norm" (Ginsburg & Watson, 1992, p. 151) is therefore probably incorrect. The error stems from failing to understand household structure diachronically, over the entire period of household formation, maintenance and dissolution. When this is done, the normalisation of nuclearity is seen to be overwhelming, even though it may be rather less overwhelming now than it was in the 1950s and 1960s.

This point is of such key importance that it is worthy of some elaboration. Up to 1980, there was widespread agreement that the conventional nuclear family was "the predominant form for recruitment to and maintenance of private households" (Seccombe, 1980, p. 59—quoted in Cheal, 1991, p. 106). Commentators in both Europe and North America drew attention to the existence of a long-term trend up to the 1970s of more and more people marrying, having children and surviving until at least the age of 50 in an intact first marriage (Uhlenberg, 1978; Robertson-Elliot, 1986).

In the US, it was noticed that there was an increasing acceptance of life courses which differed from this form, especially serial monogamy and lone parenthood, but nevertheless "the majority still marry, remain married, have children, live in single-family households, and prefer sexual exclusivity with their spouse" (Macklin, 1980, pp. 916-917). In general, 'normal family life' was built around the nuclear family living independently in its own, separate dwelling (Leonard, 1980; Leonard & Speakman, 1986). The argument therefore centres on the significance of the changes which have taken place since 1980. Clearly, there has been some ideological shift since the 1970s, in the sense that the conventional nuclear family norm is less strongly advocated for all, at least in Europe: "the

common trend in all the 14 countries studied ... is ... the growing acceptance and legitimation of a diversity in family life patterns" (Boh et ah, 1989, p. 12). In the light of New Right rhetoric in favour of a re-assertion of 'family values', however, it is easy to exaggerate the extent of the shift which has taken place—as Finch & Morgan (1991) state, there is a good deal of research and evidence which indicates that "most people have continued to adhere strongly to rather conventional values about marriage and the family", although it should not be forgotten that conventional values themselves have changed, with "the substitution of more pseudo-democratic forms of control for 'traditional authority' " (Jamieson & Toynbee, 1990, p. 88). Even if there has been a change of attitudes towards 'non-conventional' family/household formation, however, it does not follow that conventional nuclear family relations have become less predominant in the determination of household structure: as Cheal (1991) and others have pointed out, the present situation "appears to permit interpretations of both familial standardisation and lifestyle diversification" (p. 124)—that is, the conventional nuclear family standard continues to predominate, while at the same time the number of alternative household/family forms continues to proliferate, and their duration increases (see also Glick, 1984). So far, the most important changes appear to have been the increases in women choosing not to have husbands (Renvoize, 1985) and in women choosing not to have children (Veevers, 1980; Allen, 1989; Boh et ah, 1989, p. 290).

Trost (1988) argues that the nuclear family contains two main types of unit, the parent-child unit and the spousal unit. Strictly speaking, however, the nuclear family does not contain two types of unit, but rather two main types of member of a single unit, namely parent and child members of a family unit. It is the relationships among these members which define the changing structure of the household. Typically, there are two parents of opposite sexes and at least

one child, with the vast majority of men and women getting married by their 30s

(Breeze et ah, 1991, p. 138), and nearly 90 per cent of women giving birth to at

least one child (Breeze et ah, 1991, p. 167, Table 7.3). In addition, however, unless

we restrict ourselves to the conventional interpretation, the nuclear family

household could be argued to include cases of lone parents and parents of the

same sex. The structure of lone parent family households and of family households

with same-sex parents is different from that of family households with

opposite-sex parents (e.g. see Popay et ah, 1983, on one-parent families), but

these differences can be largely explained by reference to gender inequalities,

e.g. see earlier references on gender divisions in the home. If the concept of the

nuclear family is interpreted in this wider sense, it can be said that more than

90 per cent of people in Great Britain spend a large part of their lives (especially

as young children and as parents of young children) in nuclear family households.

If nuclear families can contain lone parents or same-sex parents as well as

opposite-sex parents, it follows that gender relations cannot be crucial in the

constitution of nuclearity. Parent-child relations therefore have a distinct character

which cannot be completely explained from a feminist perspective.

Nevertheless, the continuing predominance of nuclear families with opposite-sex

parents testifies to the on-going relevance of feminist analysis. In particular, it

has been clearly established that it is women's responsibility for children which

holds them back from achieving equality with men in the labour market (Michel,

1989). Even when women are free from the gender relations of the conventional

nuclear family, therefore, they may still be disadvantaged as a result of their

parental role. The parent-child relation is itself gendered, and it is this genderedness

which is addressed by feminist arguments. The parent-child relation is not

just a gendered relation, however, and therefore still presents a problem for

feminist theory.

The Economics and Politics of Domestic Relations

In this section it is argued that parent-child relations exhibit distinct structures of dominance and exploitation which cannot be reduced to gender relations or to social relations of any other type. Following Pugh (1990, 1991), the nature of these dominance and exploitation relations is analysed in greater detail, and some political implications of the analysis are suggested.

The economics and politics of gender relations in the home have been well explored by a number of writers (see references in the second section). This is far from being true, however, of generational relations. Indeed, the mainstream feminist literature in this area has tended to subsume the politics of generation under the politics of gender by means of an over-arching concept of 'patriarchy' (see Watson & Austerberry, 1986; Walby, 1990). This concept has been criticised on a number of grounds (see Acker, 1989), but the real problem with it here is that it fundamentally misrepresents contemporary household structures as being only structures of male exploitation and dominance. In fact, even though they also are articulated within structures of dominance and exploitation, the relations between parents and children are quite distinct from the male/female parent relation, and the structures of dominance and exploitation associated with parent/child relations are therefore characteristically different as well. As Acker (1989) says, all social relations are gendered, so that the relation between father and child is different from the relation between mother and child, but nevertheless the relation between either parent and her/his child is not at all the same kind of relation as that between male parent and female parent.

All this is by way of saying that feminist theory has not yet come to terms with certain fundamentals of household structure. This is not to say, however, that feminists have not been aware of the problem. Indeed, it has been a crucial issue for many feminists for a very long time—see Barrett & Macintosh (1982).

The point continues to be restated that:

Relationships within the household are the critical arrangements through which societal processes [labour markets, capitalist production relations, the state] are mediated, experienced, and in part shaped by individuals (Pratt & Hanson, 1991, p. 55).

Household structures are therefore a key to determining patterns of social relations generally. A better understanding of such structures should throw important light on wider economic and political issues.

What is distinctive, then, about the economic and social relations of parenthood? Pugh (1990,1991) has made a useful contribution towards answering this question. He has argued that economic relations in the home (the so-called 'domestic economy') are characteristically different from, but closely interrelated with, market relations and public service relations. Traditionally, the household has been the typical basic unit of 'self-provisioning' (Gershuny, 1978), and the character of gender relations in modern capitalist societies has been produced largely by the ways in which the growth of wage-labour has attenuated such domestic self-provisioning and separated men in particular from domestic routines (Oakley, 1974). It is therefore well established that in these societies the bulk of domestic labour is carried out by women, and that since this labour is unpaid and yet benefits their husbands, the economic relation between husband and wife is one of exploitation (Hartmann, 1981; Delphy & Leonard, 1992). What Pugh points out, however, is that children also benefit from their mother's (and to a lesser extent their father's) unpaid labour, so that the relationship between children and parents is also one of exploitation (Pugh, 1990, p. 119).

This is a controversial finding, and therefore needs to be defended at greater length. The usual feminist argument is to the effect that children cannot be said

to exploit their mothers because the work their mothers do for them is appropriated by the 'head of the family', i.e. the father. As Delphy & Leonard (1992) put it: "It is work for the maintenance of his household ... and he would have to perform such work himself if his wife ... did not do it" (p. 125). Most work which mothers do for their children, however, is not strictly required for the maintenance of the household, and in the absence of mothers, fathers might well not perform such work. The household could even be maintained by excluding some or all of the children from it altogether. According to the marxist-feminist notion of the appropriation of unpaid labour, therefore, it seems clear that children do appropriate maternal (and to a lesser extent paternal) labour, and can consequently be said to exploit their parents.

Those who are not of a marxist-feminist persuasion (that is, those who do not accept that wives are exploited by their husbands) will take rather more convincing. Referees of earlier versions of this paper have described the claim that parents are exploited by their children as bizarre and grotesque, and have asked how a relationship can be exploitative if it is voluntary and if the labour is freely/lovingly given. Such comments betray a lack of understanding of exploitation relations, which exist independently of the intentions or feelings of the parties concerned. After all, workers may hire out their labour willingly in return for wages, but this in no way prevents their employers from appropriating the products of their labour and making profits therefrom. The difference with parent-child relations is only that the labour is performed for love rather than money, forming part of a 'moral economy' rather than a 'political economy' (Cheal, 1989). The nature of the exploitation is revealed not so much through the appropriation of specific products as through patterns of mutual parent-child moral obligations (Finch, 1987,1989), in which the obligations of parents to their children clearly outweigh the obligations of children to their parents. Similar

arguments relating to the nature of 'emotional labour' and 'emotional work' have been used to improve our understanding of marital relations (Hochschild, 1983; James, 1989; Mason 1987, 1989; Duncombe & Marsden, 1993), as well as domestic service relations generally (Graham, 1991).

Exploitation relations constitute only one element of the domestic economy: there are also exchange relations and control relations. Parents transfer substantial proportions of their financial and other resources to their children as part of "the dialectic of intimacy" (Cheal, 1987), and this occurs in addition to the children's appropriation of their labour. On the other hand, however, unlike in a political economy, relations of exploitation and unequal exchange in the domestic economy are not reflected in the power relations between parents and children, although this does seem to occur in the case of husband-wife relations (Pahl, 1985, Mason, 1987). Indeed, the politics of generation appear to be in direct contradiction with its economics, with children being simultaneously exploiters and oppressed. In Britain, for example, children are normally legally subject to the control of their parents until the age of 16, and until recently (Children Act, 1989) they had few rights which could be exercised in relation to their parents. What are commonly referred to as 'family obligations' (Finch 1987, 1989) are to a large extent rules for the regulation of the lives of children and other family dependents. These rules are partly ordained by moral or political authority (Donzelot, 1980; Land, 1978), especially through the school system (David, 1980; Lewis, 1980; Reiger, 1985; Paterson, 1988), and partly constructed through a process of negotiation between the family members concerned (Backett, 1982; Finch, 1987). Parental rules may oppress children (for example, by causing suffering and distress), but on the other hand they may promote children's health and well-being and enable them to exploit their parents more effectively.

This contradiction in domestic relations is of recent historical origin, being a product of the decline of domestic self-provisioning, to which children traditionally have made a significant contribution. In other words, until the 19th century, exploitation as well as oppression of children had been the norm. With the abolition of child labour and the introduction of compulsory education, however, the position of children changed from being exploited by parents and employers to being state-regulated exploiters of parents, a position which remains essentially unchanged to this day. At the same time, as contributors to the domestic economy children had until the 19th century a certain degree of economic power and even independence, although this should not be exaggerated (Aries, 1962). With the loss of this economic autonomy, children became more susceptible to parental and state control (Davin, 1990). In other words, the liberation of children from economic exploitation has been, and continues to be, indissolubly associated with the introduction of new mechanisms of child regulation and oppression.

Historically, therefore, children have been transformed from exploited into exploiters, with enormous amounts of capital now being invested to secure their health, education and welfare. This historical transition helps to explain, for example, why birth rates in Europe declined from the late 19th century onwards. The exploitation in question, however, is only of their parents, and the existence and nature of such exploitation is determined largely by the state, not by children themselves. It is the state which ensures that children remain overwhelmingly economically inactive, it is the state which sets standards of health, education and welfare provision, and it is the state which obliges and encourages parents to meet these standards for their children. For these reasons, the historical transformation in the economic status of children can be fairly characterised as a new form of exploitation of parents initiated and regulated by the

state, in which children have a largely passive role (stereotypically, they do not exist in the present, but only as 'the future').

A discussion of the nature of the state is beyond the scope of this paper. The above analysis, however, clearly has important implications for our understanding of state/household relations, throwing new light on issues such as parent power in schools, the equity of the state system of taxes and benefits for different household types (Pugh, 1991), and the responsibility of the state (vis-a-vis parents) for securing future labour supply.

To take education as one example, children have no control over its form or content, its organisation or its delivery. The rules have traditionally been set by Parliament and by local authorities, supplemented by regulations laid down by teachers, especially headteachers, and school governing bodies. In the face of such rules and regulations, parents have had little more power than their children in determining the course of events. On the other hand, however, education has served to increase knowledge and skills among children, and also to assist parents in their task of preparing children for the adult world (Willis, 1977). To some extent, therefore, the school system provides parents with some relief from exploitation by their children, while at the same time it acts as a further source of control over those children. Within the school system itself, what exists is neither a moral economy nor a political economy as such but something which is quite different from either: children in school are neither exploiters nor exploited, and the regime to which they are subject contributes to their liberation as well as to their oppression. In this context, the increasing legal powers of parents (Education Acts, 1986, 1988) do not represent a radical change in the school system, since they do little more than shift some power from local authorities to parents. In contrast, the state's nationalisation of the curriculum and of assessment methods represents a more serious challenge to

teachers' professional power, and in resisting such a challenge teachers attempt

to enlist the support of parents. To the extent that parents recognise that it is

the state which is responsible for their exploitation (by their children), such

support is likely to be forthcoming. Understanding the nature of parental

exploitation therefore assists in the development of liberationist educational

strategy.

One possible objection to the line of argument in this section is: why should

anyone choose to be exploited by having children? This is very much the same

sort of objection as that raised against feminist accounts of gender relations,

namely: why do women (apparently) choose to enter into exploitative relationships

with men? In both cases, there is a host of reasons, which I do not have

the space to explore in this paper: status achievement (e.g. being a mother or a

father), the satisfaction of emotional needs (e.g. to love and be loved), the

exercise of personal power (e.g. shaping new human beings in accordance with

one's desires and aspirations), and insurance against insecurity and loneliness in

old age.

Domestic Relations and Housing Tenure

In this section, data on housing tenure relations are used as a small first step in

discovering the empirical significance of the theory of household structure

developed in previous sections. It is accepted that considerably more empirical

work is required in order to provide a satisfactory test of the new theory.

Nevertheless, analysis of the data reveals that processes of household structuring

appear to exert independent effects which cannot be fully explained in terms

of class or gender relations. Tenure relations were chosen because they express

the formal ways in which the state regulates the distribution of housing to

households of different types (Somerville & Knowles, 1991). The effects of such

state regulation on parent-child relations, however, will have to be the subject of

a separate paper.

In an earlier paper (Somerville & Knowles, 1991), I argued that housing tenures are structured on the basis of characteristic control, exchange, and state/household relations. Gender relations in the home were considered to some extent, for example in the determination of levels of owner occupation, but little mention was made of generational relations except in the context of the inheritance of owner occupied wealth (for a more up-to-date treatment of this subject, see Hamnett et ah, 1991). As we have seen, however, generational relations are closely interwoven with other social relations, including tenure relations (housing inheritance being a good example of this), so it is to be expected that household structure will have a significant effect on housing tenure relations well beyond the inheritance issue. There could be a sense in which all social relations are generation-specific (or 'generationalised') as well as gendered.

It is no coincidence that in the analysis of household structure the same types of relations figure as in the analysis of tenure, namely control relations (power of men over women, power of parents over children), exchange relations (the exploitation and gift relations discussed above) and state/household relations (mainly financial and legal). This homology is simply the product of the mutual interpenetration of domestic relations and extra-domestic relations which Pugh (1991) has already noted. This interpenetration, however, carries the important implication that the characteristic contradictory complexity of household structure must be reflected in some form in the articulation of tenure relations. It should be possible to identify not only gender-variable and generation-variable tenure relations, as in the literature on women's access to housing (see earlier references) and on property rights generally (Saunders, 1990), but also links between the control relations in a household and the control relations which

characterise the tenure which that household has, and similarly for exchange relations and state/household relations.

In a recent paper (Somerville & Knowles, 1992), I presented some findings from a survey of tenure relations in Salford. My colleague Andy Knowles and myself found strong statistical associations between two-parent nuclear family household types and owner occupation, and between other household types (one-person and one-parent households) and council renting. We found that these associations could be explained only partly in terms of class differences (Somerville & Knowles, 1992, p. 43), and it was therefore necessary to invoke independent processes of household formation, maintenance and dissolution (Somerville & Knowles, 1992, p. 36). At that time, however, we did not provide any detailed account of the nature of these processes. Now, the argument in the earlier sections of this paper suggests that it is the dynamics of gender and generational relations which is responsible for the 'independence' of processes of household structural change, and the observed tenure variation by household type should thus be explicable in terms of a combination of class and domestic relations.

This conclusion requires further comment, in at least two respects. Firstly, it is necessary to explain why domestic relations of the two-parent nuclear family type should be associated with owner occupation, while domestic relations of other types are associated with council renting. The obvious answer is that the presence of two incomes greatly increases the possibility of home ownership (Murphy & Sullivan, 1983; Madge & Brown, 1981; Ineichen, 1981; Munro & Smith, 1989; Savage et al., 1990; Ong & Grigsby, 1988; Krishnan & Krotki, 1993, p. 125). In our research, however, we found no significant association between working class working age owner occupation and dual-income households (Somerville & Knowles, 1992, p. 27), so this cannot be the whole answer.

Household type-tenure associations cannot be fully explained in terms of a combination of class and household income.

Secondly, the empirical implications of the theory of household structure outlined in this paper require considerable clarification. It is suggested, for example, that the actual predominance of the neolocal nuclear pattern of family formation (third section) is linked to the ideological normalisation of the two parent nuclear family household. We know that the housing market is already structurally biased in favour of the nuclear family norm (Anderson, 1985; Watson & Austerberry, 1986). It is therefore to be expected that as the rate of owner occupation rises from a minority to an increasingly large majority of households, owner occupation will become the normal or 'natural' tenure (Crow, 1989, p. 26), and that this ideological bias will be reflected in people's expressed attitudes on tenure preferences. The corollary of this is that non-traditional households will be marginalised, and this marginalisation will be associated with the residualisation of council housing (Forrest & Murie, 1990). Another implication of the theory outlined in this paper is that generational relations should be at least as important as gender relations in explaining variations in factors associated with household type. For example, other things being equal, one might expect families/households with children to have tenure preferences which differ significantly from those without children. There are serious problems, however, in operationalising this implication. Not only are other things never equal (for example, allowing for class and household income differences), but the associations occurring here could run counter to the associations with nuclear family normalisation—for example, childless couples could be potential two-parent families (and therefore associated with a preference for owner occupation), while in contrast one-parent families could be marginalised, and therefore associated with a preference for council housing. In

order to resolve this problem satisfactorily, it would be necessary to conduct a longitudinal study of the dynamics of household change over all the main stages of the life cycle.

Our research on Salford sheds some light on attitudes to tenure of individuals within different household structures. We used a form of two-stage stratified cluster sampling (Knowles, 1989). According to this method, a random 10 per cent sample of 50 Enumeration Districts (EDs) was first drawn from the

Table 1. Tenure preference attributes in Salford

(council tenants only)

Attribute	Preferred tenure
Elderly	Local authority
In paid employment	Owner occupation
Not in paid employment	Local authority
With partner	Owner occupation
With no partner	Local authority
Of working age with no partner	Local authority
Non-elderly one person	Local authority
With children	Owner occupation
Couple with children	Owner occupation
Single with children	Local authority
With no children	Local authority
Of working age with no children	Local authority
Outer city	Owner occupation
Inner city	Local authority

population of Salford EDs, stratified by predominant tenure (owner occupied, local authority rented, or private rented/mixed) and by location (inner city or outer city). A 13 per cent random sample of households from each selected ED

was then drawn for the survey. A total of 536 questionnaires were finally completed (for further details, see Somerville & Knowles, 1992). In the survey, we asked respondents to indicate which tenure they preferred and why. Since the link between tenure and tenure preference was extremely strong {y1

 = 358

with two degrees of freedom), a significant association between tenure and preference and household type was inevitable, with 'traditional' households being much more likely to prefer owner occupation than non-traditional ones. In our analysis, therefore, we controlled for the link between tenure and tenure preference, and we still found statistically significant associations between tenure preference and certain attributes, but for council tenants only, not for owner occupiers (the link between tenure and tenure preference for owner occupiers was simply too strong to allow for this). The relevant findings are summarised in Table 1.

The significance of the associations listed in Table 1 was made possible by the fact that whereas 99 per cent of our owner occupier respondents expressed a preference for owner occupation, only 62 per cent of our local authority tenant respondents stated council renting as their preferred tenure, with 30.5 per cent favouring owner occupation. The link between tenure and tenure preference was therefore much weaker for council housing than for owner occupation. Interestingly, we did not find any significant gender difference in tenure preference, but

Table 1 clearly shows that household structure is a major factor here, along with economic activity, age, and (to a lesser extent) location. The 'traditional' households consisting of couples with children were more likely to favour owner occupation, while the 'non-traditional' households containing one person or one parent were more likely to prefer renting from the council. The findings on tenure preference therefore support the hypothesis that variations in household

structure are reflected to some extent in social attitudes to the legal relations of

housing. These findings, however, should be treated with caution, because they

Type of reason

Table 2a. Reasons for preferring owner occupation

Number of responses

Owner Council

occupiers tenants Total

No. % No. % No. %

1. Pride of ownership/individuality/'own

home'/'it's your own'

2. Independence/freedom of choice

3. Security for the future/ownership rights

4. Choice of and control of repairs/alterations

5. Choice of where to live/type of

accommodation/when to move

6. Eventual outright ownership/pass on to

offspring

7. Freedom from landlords

Sub-total: Control/rights reasons

8. Saleable capital asset/investment

9. Financial benefit or gains/increasing property

values

10. Financially preferable to renting (e.g. cheaper

11. Financial security and choice/insurance for the

future

12. Renting is a waste of money

13. Collateral (for loans, etc)

Sub-total: Financial reasons

14. 'No problems'/'it's what everyone wants'

15. Rented accommodation unavailable where

desired

16. No particular reason/'just fancies it'/always

lived in owner occupied property

Total

58

32

41

22

27

26

0

206

67

24

28

30

23

0

172

5

4

6

393

15

8

10

6

7

7

0

52

17

6

7

8

6

0

44

1

1

2

100

12

5

9

19

9

1

6

61

16

13

7

10

12

3

61

0

1

1

124

10

4

7

15

7

1

5

49

13

10

6

8

10

2

49

0

1

1

100

70

37

50

41

36

27

6

267

83

37

35

40

35

3

233

5

5

7

517

14

7

10

8

7

5

1

52

16

7

7

8

7

1

45

1

1

1

100

represent the position of households at only one point in time: they do not take

account of the dynamic relations within these households, and they do not

constitute a test of the theory outlined in the preceding sections.

It is possible, of course, that differences in tenure preferences may be due not

so much to differences in people's perceptions of the tenures themselves as to

differences in characteristics associated with the different tenures, such as

location, house type, and amenities. In order to check for this, we looked at the

reasons given by respondents for their tenure preferences. Responses to this

question were received from 367 households, but 28 of these had to be discounted

because their meaning was unclear or ambiguous. Wherever possible,

the responses from all adult members of the household were obtained, although

in practice it was common for a wife or husband to speak on behalf of her/his

spouse as well as of herself/himself, or for the couple to agree between

themselves as to the reasons for their preference. In addition, many respondents

stated more than one reason. As a result, a total of 698 reasons were offered, of which 339 came from men and 359 from women. The main types of reason, and the number of respondents mentioning each type, are set out in Table 2.

In the case of owner occupation, most of the types of reason can be grouped

Table 2b. Reasons for preferring local authority renting

Type of reason No. of responses %

1. Happy/satisfied/no complaints/good service/fair

deal

2. Too old to buy/too late to change

3. Better the devil you know/wouldn't want worry

of buying/no worry about mortgage and other

costs of ownership

4. Can't afford to buy

5. Expense of property ownership (e.g.

repairs)/repairs done for you

6. No responsibility for property/everything taken

care of

7. Security of tenure/'safer with the council'

8. Private landlord/housing association do not take

care of you

9. Council best for low income/lower rents

10. No choice

Total

Table 2c. Reasons for preferring housing association renting

Type of reason No. of responses %

33

23

11

39

15

10

6

3

4

1

145

23

16

8

27

10

7

4

2

3

1

100

1.

2.

Lower rent/housing association best for low

income

Housing association looks after you better/more

reliable

Total

7

5

12

58

42

100

together into two main classes. The first, containing reasons (1) to (7), is concerned broadly with the greater degree of individual freedom and control associated with owner occupation rights. The second, containing reasons (8) to (13), is concerned with the perceived financial advantages of home ownership. The responses revealed no statistically significant gender or household structure differences in the stated reasons for preferring owner occupation, although men were rather more likely than women to give financial reasons (126 responses from men compared with 107 from women). Interestingly also, there were few differences between owner occupiers and council tenants in their reasons for preferring owner occupation. Tenants were proportionally more likely to mention control of repairs and improvements and freedom from landlords (only council tenants referred to the latter), and less likely to mention any long-term financial advantage of owner occupation or eventual outright ownership (referred to almost exclusively by owner occupiers). Overall, however, there was no statistically significant difference between owner occupiers and tenants in terms of the two broad classes of reasons for preferring owner occupation, although tenants were relatively more likely to cite financial reasons than control/rights reasons (61 out of 233 responses, or 26 per cent, compared with 61 out of 267 responses, or 23 per cent).

The advantages of owner occupation were therefore perceived to be clear by a large majority of respondents, with only 4 providing a negative reason for their

preference (due to unavailability of rented accommodation). In contrast, negative attitudes figured prominently in the reasons given for favouring council renting, with a total of 63 respondents saying they preferred to rent only because they could not afford to buy (39 respondents) or were too old to get a mortgage (23 respondents) or they had 'no choice'. The positive attitudes expressed were on the whole more complex, ranging from the fairly non-committal 'OK' to the highly favourable 'very happy', and from the diffident 'comfortable as I am' to the more categorical 'never wanted anything else'. The overall picture, however, was of a tenure which was either tolerated for financial reasons or appreciated largely for reasons of welfare and freedom from responsibilities (especially responsibility for repairs). Only 10 respondents offered reasons which could be interpreted as commitment to the principle of social rented housing provision as such, emphasising the security provided by the tenure (6 respondents) and the purpose of council housing in catering positively for low-income households (4 respondents). It appears, therefore, that the reasons given by respondents for preferring local authority tenure broadly reflect the marginalisation and residualisation of that tenure which was to be expected from its association with 'non-traditional' households. The factors cited by respondents generally related to the tenure itself rather than to attributes which might happen to be associated with the tenure such as type or quality of accommodation. On the basis of the field survey evidence, 'non-traditional' council tenant households appeared more likely to live in poorer quality accommodation, but this did not significantly affect their reasons for preferring owner occupation when compared with other council tenants.

These conclusions are further supported by the evidence from the few respondents who favoured renting from a housing association (Table 2c). Generally, such preference was expressed in comparison with renting from the

council, with housing associations being seen as having lower rents or as being more caring landlords. Interestingly, all 12 of the respondents here were from non-elderly single person or single parent households, but unfortunately the total number is too small to be of any statistical significance. This finding is also almost certainly related to the higher levels of dissatisfaction with the council expressed in the survey by 'non-traditional' households, especially one-parent families.

Conclusion

This paper has set out to provide critical support to feminist arguments concerning gender and household structure. The key elements of a feminist position such as the systematic exploitation and oppression of women in society are regarded as well established, but it is argued that feminist theory has not been able to provide a satisfactory explanation of relations between generations. In this respect, the concept of patriarchy has been particularly confusing and misleading, because it conflates male dominance with parental dominance. This paper has taken the view that these are two types of rule which are structurally quite different, even though they interlock to a substantial degree, especially in the organisation of households. According to this view, feminist theory needs to be modified, and supplemented by a theory of generational relations (in particular, a theory of how such relations are articulated within household structures). Consideration of the evidence on household structure leads inexorably to the conclusion that in modern Britain at least it is determined primarily by nuclear family relations. Such relations constitute a unique, and possibly the most basic, intertwining of gender and generational relations. Findings which appear to show that the nuclear family is declining in importance can be questioned to the extent that they fail to take account of the real dynamics of household formation, maintenance and dissolution. It is of course possible that the nuclear family is in

decline, but if so it would be a decline from a historically unprecedented peak, and the evidence in favour of it is still not very great.

Perhaps more controversially from a feminist point of view, it is asserted that generational relations are at least as important as gender relations in the determination of household structure. It may not be possible to substantiate this assertion, because the two types of relations may be incapable of being disentangled from each other. Nevertheless, it follows logically from the recognition of a structural similarity between one-parent and two-parent families, with gender relations being central in the latter but not in the former. If single parenthood becomes more a permanent alternative to the 'traditional' two-parent family, therefore, the primacy of generational relations in household structure determination should become more explicit.

Children are seen as both oppressed (by their parents and by the state) and exploitative (mainly of their parents). This contradictory situation has been produced historically in both capitalist and state socialist societies, mainly as a result of state action (and often in face of opposition from the parents affected—though this is not discussed here). The role of the state is crucial: the subjugation of parents to the ruling class in the 20th century may have been achieved largely by means of the state regulation of their children (especially through the education system). The implications for evaluating state policy in all fields are far-reaching.

In the last part of the paper, the theoretical discussion was applied, very tentatively, to empirical evidence from a survey of households in Salford. The determinant role of nuclear family relations was invoked to assist in the explanation of both the 'normalisation' of owner occupation and its corollary, the residualisation of council housing. Tenure preference was not found to be associated with gender at all, but was shown to be strongly associated with

household structure, thus supporting the view that generational relations could

be of great theoretical importance.

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