

The development of the housewife role

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'Housewife'

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Housewife role and domestic division of labour

KEY ISSUES

- How did the housewife role develop (and when)
 - Has there been a movement towards greater equality in the home, if so to what extent and why?
- How has woman's increasing participation in the paid labour market affected the domestic division of labour?

KEY TERMS

- ***CONJUGAL ROLES*** relationship between husband and wife within a marriage, with particular reference to the domestic division of labour
- ***SEGREGATED OR JOINT***
- Due to the increase in cohabitation it is common to refer to the '*domestic division of labour*' rather than conjugal roles

Social construct

- Sexual division based not on biological/ 'natural' factors but is a social construct

Pre-Industrial

- Women and girls worked – tended animals, cooked: cottage industry – their work was essential to the family economy

Early industrial

- Women and girls worked in factories, mills and mines alongside men
- BUT were paid less

Later Industrialisation

- Separation of 'public' world of work and production and the 'private' sphere of home and consumption brought about by:
 1. **Laws** – Restricted female labour. Restricting child labour, women had to look after children at home (Guardianship of Infants 1925).

2. Pressure from men - women were a cheap source of labour – could be paid less. Men resented this competition for jobs and a rise in unemployment (not enough jobs to go around).

Men used the emerging trade union movement to squeeze women into the home

3. Ideology - idea of 'womanhood' began to change – m/c women begin to have a home/family as their focus. Development of a 'family wage'. Masculine pride to support a family.

This was perpetuated through socialisation, education and media etc, motherhood seen as the pinnacle of female achievement

The mother/housewife role becomes 'natural' and 'normal'

The housewife role as 'natural' and 'normal'

- Catherine Hall (1980)
- While the dominant ideology stressed the desirability of domesticity, this was often contradicted in practice

The housewife role becomes 'natural' and 'normal'

- Hilary Land (1976)
- Development of the family wage helped to create a situation where women and children become dependants
- Thus reinforcing the males status as the head of the family