

Sylvia Walby

Key Concepts: Gender Equality, Public & Private Patriarchy, Six Structures of Patriarchy
Key Works: *Theorizing Patriarchy* (1990), *Sex Crime in the News* (1991)

How do we understand the nature of the “Patriarchy”?

“Patriarchy is a ‘system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress, and exploit women.’ *Theorizing Patriarchy*

Public Patriarchy

This form of patriarchy operates in the public world.

It is most often associated with the ways in which oppression operates in working world. In public life, Walby argues, women are more collectively separated from power, wealth, and influence than men are, such as in the greater difficulty they face in finding higher paid work or gaining promotions.

Private Patriarchy

This form of patriarchy is found in the household.

In this view, one individual patriarch (the dominant male, usually the husband) dominate and oppress the subjugated female (usually the wife, but also daughters). Walby believes this acts as an exclusionary tactic as women are prevented from taking part in public discourse outside the home.

I've seen examples of this in my own life/context when...

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

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- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

What is the connection between these two forms of patriarchy? Walby insists that we don't see Patriarchy as either purely **structural** (enforced by or within cultural institutions, making women passive victims), nor purely **'agency'** (based on the acts of individual men & women, where women might be seen as “colluding with their patriarchal oppressors”). Modern women's experience is shifting from private to public experiences of Patriarchy.

How did we get here?

FIRST WAVE FEMINISM

This movement, seen mainly in the 19th & early 20th Century, focused primarily on securing women's **right to vote** and own **private property**. They thought nothing else could happen until there was a Female **Franchise**. Early works, like Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), argued for the social and moral equality of the sexes. She is seen as the "**fore-mother**" of the feminist movement and her ideas shaped the thinking of the **suffragettes**, who campaigned for women's votes. The vote was secured in the UK in 1918, but not until 1971 in Switzerland. There remain parts of the world where women can't vote. Gave way to... →→→

SECOND WAVE FEMINISM

Having achieved the right to vote, in the 1960s this movement broadened the debate to include a wider range of issues: sexuality, family, the women in the workplace, reproductive rights (contraception and abortion), *de facto* inequalities, and official legal inequalities. It focused on critiquing the male-domination of institutions, and cultural practices throughout society. Second-wave feminism also drew attention to the issues of **domestic violence** and **marital rape, custody laws** and **divorce law**. Disputes within this group over issues such as pornography and sexuality saw this movement lose steam in the 1980, giving way to... →→→

THIRD WAVE FEMINISM

This movement had a much broader way of seeing feminist issues. It brought in different perspectives like **black, indigenous, and Islamic** Feminisms. Women's experience is diverse and this must be reflected in a feminist analysis of the world. For example, the struggles faced by Ivanka Trump will obviously be very different in practical terms from those faced by Malala Yousafzai as a young woman in Pakistan (though there may be overlaps in those experiences). The 3rd wave placed an emphasis on sexuality as a form of empowerment and self-expression that we associate with 'girl power'. Uneven distribution of power was seen as a key issue to be addressed.

Bear in mind that this is generally viewed as the history of “Western” Feminism in general terms. Different societies and cultures will find themselves at different stages of this journey at different times, perhaps even in different orders. What would a more global perspective reveal about the struggle for Gender Equality?

Types of Feminism identified by Walby

Liberal Feminism

This group believe that freedom is a fundamental value, and that a just state should guarantee individual freedom. Liberal feminists share this view, insisting on freedom for women within that structure. They think of freedom as **personal autonomy**—living a life of their choosing—and **political autonomy**. They focus on women's ability to keep their equality through their own actions & choices.

Radical Feminism

For Walby, this is distinguished by its analysis of gender inequality in which men (the Patriarchy) as a group dominate women as a group and benefit from their subordination. This mean a system of domination that doesn't derive from any other social system of inequality (i.e. not a by-product of capitalism). Their slogan 'The Personal is Political' is a way of thinking about the range of issues addressed here.

Marxist Feminism

This group analyses the ways in which women are exploited through **capitalism** & the individual ownership of private property. They argue that women's liberation can only be achieved by dismantling the capitalist systems in which they argue much of women's labour is uncompensated. As Walby points out, "*Men's domination over women is a by-product of capital's domination over labour.*"

Dual System Theory

Essentially this is a combination of Radical and Marxist feminism which, rather than being "*an exclusive focus on their capitalism or patriarchy*" argues that "*both systems are present and important in the construction of contemporary gender relations.*" In more modern terms, we might link this to '**Intersectional Feminism**' that sees the impact of race, class, gender, sexuality, immigration status etc.

Thinking about the place of women in the Irish Constitution

Article 41.2 of the Irish Constitution states:

- 1. In particular, the State recognises that by her life within the home, woman gives to the State a support without which the common good cannot be achieved.*
- 2. The State shall, therefore, endeavour to ensure that mothers shall not be obliged by economic necessity to engage in labour to the neglect of their duties in the home.*

How did **you** feel when you first encountered this provision of the Irish Constitution? Shocked? Confused? Bemused? Angry?

Would you support holding a referendum on this topic? Why? Why not?

Here's what the IHREC says about this part of the Constitution:

The Commission and its predecessor bodies, have previously highlighted human rights and equality concerns with respect to Article 41.2. Most recently the Commission's 2017 report to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) noted '*that this provision perpetuates stereotypical attitudes towards the role of women in Irish society*' and stated that: The Commission is of the view that constitutional reform is necessary in order to address stereotyping concerning the roles and responsibilities of women and men in the family and in society and encourages the Government to call a referendum on Article 41.2 of the Constitution of Ireland without delay.

Source: <https://www.ihrec.ie/app/uploads/2018/07/IHREC-policy-statement-on-Article-41.2-of-the-Constitution-of-Ireland-1.pdf>

This statement gives students an excellent example of how issues of gender on our course overlap with Human Rights Institutions and International Covenants to which we are a party and duty bearer.

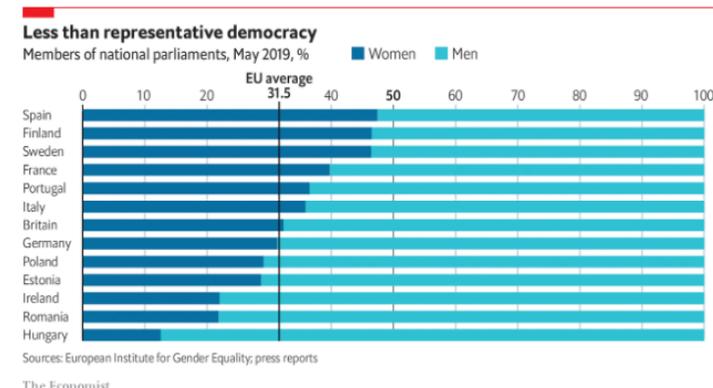
What about women's representation in the Irish political system?

National Level (Oireachtas):

Despite the population being more or less evenly split between males and females, only **22.5% of TDs are women**, who represent only **one-quarter** of appointments to cabinet and junior ministries. The introduction of gender quotas in 2016 saw a **doubling of female candidacy to 31%** in the 2020 general election, compared with 2011. Despite this, **36 female TDs** were elected in the February 2020 General Election, an increase of just one since 2016.

Local Government:

Men significantly out-numbered women in Local Government seats between 2004 and 2019 with about four times as many men as women. One in five (20.2%) seats were taken by women in LE 2004, dropping to 17.3% in the LE 2009, rising to 20.1% in 2014 and to **23.9% in 2019**. The Gender Quota legislation did not apply to this election, partly explaining the relatively small increase in female representation. By 2019, 40% or more of seats had been taken by women in three local authorities - Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown, Dublin City and Kildare.

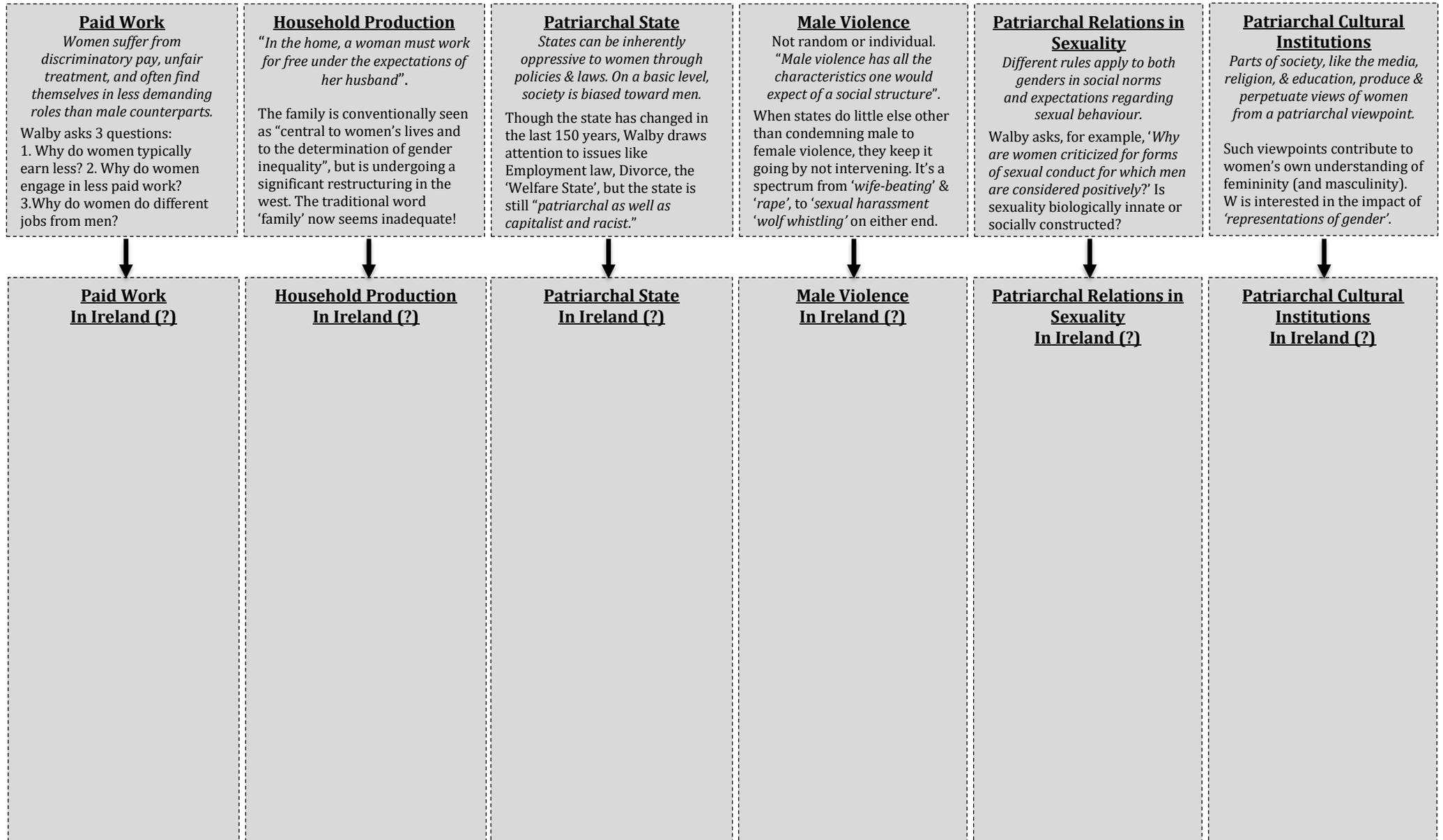


Source: <https://www.economist.com/graphic-detail/2019/05/03/which-european-country-has-the-most-female->

It is important to remember that Patriarchal structures will vary from country to country, and might have a strong urban/rural divide. But as Walby argues, the theory of patriarchy "*is essential to capture the depth, pervasiveness and interconnectedness of different aspects of women's subordination, and can be developed in such a way as to take account of the different forms of gender inequality over time, class and ethnic group.*" Walby focuses on the UK, but notes that "*the patriarchy can take different forms*" ...

Walby's SIX Structures of Patriarchy

The tool that we will use to explore whether or not Ireland is (or isn't) a 'Patriarchy'. Understand each and compare with the evidence...



In order to be able to argue convincingly if Ireland is (or isn't) a 'Patriarchy', you need to assess the degree to which it "satisfied each of the components". i.e. if your research reveals that patriarchal practices are evident in each individual category. Using **DEDUCTIVE REASONING** we can conclude that Ireland, as a whole, is(n't) Patriarchal. But is that experience universal across all categories and areas of Irish Society? As Walby says "Patriarchy is not an historical constant".

Thinker's Background

- Born in 1953, Walby is a British sociologist, formerly a Professor of Sociology at Lancaster University.
- The focus of her work has involved domestic and gender-based violence, patriarchy, gender relations in the workplace, the media and more recently, the impact of globalisation. Therefore, she links in with many aspects of our course.
- She is the coordinator of the “*Gender Equality Research Network International*” and was the first person appointed as the *UNESCO Chair in Gender Research* and coordinates the UNESCO Gender Research Group.
- Apart from Lancaster University, she has also worked in the London School of Economics, UCLA, and Harvard University, and was awarded an Honorary Doctorate by Queens University, Belfast in 2017
- Professor Sylvia Walby joined City, University of London as Professor of Sociology and Director of the interdisciplinary Violence and Society Centre on 1 March 2019

Personal Response

(A.) What aspects of other LC subjects might this be relevant? (Which specific aspects of Religion, Biology, and Human Geography are most relevant....?)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

(B.) To what aspects of your daily life might the ideas of Sylvia Walby be relevant? Particularly think about the interaction between her ideas and other UN Programmes/Institutions you've studied.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Links to other aspects of the course

List different aspects of the course to which you think Walby might be relevant. Can you list 3-4 beyond the 2 listed here?

1. **Media:** In her 1991 book “Sex Crime in the News”, Walby argued based on an analysis of 5000 newspapers reports of Sexual crime over a 40-year period, that much of the reportage is trivial, whilst serious studies into sex crimes and law reform are given “*short shrift*” (basically ignored!) in the popular press.
2. **Globalization:** In her most recent book “Crisis” she argues that the aftermath of the financial crisis of 2008-9 is still having an impact on society. What started as a financial, economic, and fiscal problem, “continues to cascade through the political system.” She argues that the “*effects of the crisis are borne unevenly, exacerbating class and other inequalities. The crisis is gendered, both in its causes and its consequences. After the first wave of the recession when men lost their jobs, women have borne the brunt of austerity, and are central to alternative visions of the future.... The failure in the governance of finance is gendered: the exclusion of women from economic and financial decision-making is part of the cause of the crisis.*”

