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Deregulated Patriarchy and the New Sexual Contract: One Step Forwards and Two Steps Back[1]

Social life has changed significantly over the last four decades. Women across the Western world have entered the workforce en masse, and, together with their partners, they have delayed (and in some cases eschewed) marriage and childbearing. Motherhood, which once seemed immutable and a natural function, is now subject to choice, including where, when, how, with whom, and if to have children. Women's individualization is the key driver of these social changes as they have sought—both individually and collectively—to release themselves from the strictures of patriarchal family structures. But has patriarchy disappeared? It is my contention that it has not. Instead, it has become fluid as with other contemporary social structures. In the "post-structural social," patriarchy has become what I call "deregulated patriarchy." Women are not legally subordinated, as in the first age of modernity; rather women are normatively free and equal. However, this freedom is now extended to women in their caregiving capacities, and, thus, bearing and rearing children become women's individual problem. In late modernity, motherhood has become an individualized risk, the consequences of which can be seen in women's interrupted employment histories and drastically reduced lifetime earnings. Where divorce is normal, such individualized responsibility for children is a source of profound injustice. This situation produces a complex picture of women's collective situation; women are free, and they are subordinated—it just depends on which phase of the life-course we are looking at. My key contention is that women are, with important intersectional differences, free as individuals and constrained as mothers, and that these two apparently polar outcomes are mutually constitutive, which generates major paradoxes in women's civil status in contemporary Western societies.

From the late twentieth century, a revolution in gender relations has been widely observed in mainstream social theory. In his *Rewriting the Sexual Contract*, Geoff Dench suggests that "each of us feels that we can be what we

like and construct our own biographies. If we want to have a new sort of template for society in which gender does not entail what it used to, or indeed mean anything at all then this is what we can now choose" (ix). Dench proposes two possible ends for this revolution in gender relations: first, the inexorable decline of "complementarity," or "the idea that men and women were inherently different and needed each other's distinctive mutual support" and, second, a corresponding rise of neoconservatism, whereby "ordinary people" will continue to enact traditional gender roles, presumably because this is the most enduring and sensible arrangement (ix). Dench notes a duality picked up by many sociologists: the pervasive hiatus between ideals and reality.

Clearly, with the advent of second-wave feminism in the late 1960s, Western women made an historic movement out of the home and into the public sphere. The transition from a manufacturing to a service economy, along with the rise of global capitalism and flexible employment, have consolidated this shift and furnished new economic foundations for women's labour market participation (Hakim, *Work-Lifestyle Choices*; Patten and Parker; Blau). At the same time, women have largely retained their so-called traditional[2] roles in the home. The question of whether women are emancipated or oppressed is, therefore, central in contemporary discourses of social change. Although social theorists point to processes of revolutionary transformation in private life—indicating a move towards greater equality between the sexes (indeed, some point to the "end of men")—feminists point to endemic structural inequalities associated with the rise of flexible capitalism and the ongoing domestic division of labour. Both sets of evidence prove compelling.

Women across the Western world have achieved unprecedented gains, considering their mass movement into education and the labour market (including, especially, the professions).[3] Women are increasingly postponing their first births, having fewer children overall—thanks to revolutionary developments in contraceptive technology—and retaining their place in the labour market once they are mothers. Together with the rise in (female initiated) divorce and the mother-headed family, there appears to be considerable evidence for what Manuel Castells calls the "end of patriarchalism" (Castells 20-21). In only four decades, Western women have achieved historic gains in their civil rights, economic independence, and personal autonomy, which suggests a different but no less compelling "end of history" narrative. If, as Mary Wollstonecraft asserted in 1792, "marriage has Bastilled me for life" (146), then her late modern daughters have certainly stormed the Bastille. The trajectory of female emancipation in the West appears to have reached its zenith with only a modicum of tweaking left. Or so the story goes.

In contrast, another parallel body of literature reveals systematic inequalities and injustices in contemporary gender relations. Large-scale international research in the advanced capitalist nations reveals significant gender

discrepancies in occupation, rates of pay, employment status and hours, and ongoing inequality in the domestic division of labour, including childcare and pervasive discrimination in the workplace (Bueskens, *Modern Motherhood*). Indeed, some of the most provocative research on gender suggests that the ideology of egalitarianism is the very obstacle preventing recognition of inequality (Bittman and Pixley; Baxter and Western; Dempsey, "Attempting"; McMahon). Most unequal marriages are now justified in the language of free choice. Feminists have questioned the purported "transformation of intimacy" thesis promulgated by Anthony Giddens and other social theorists, pointing out that even though attitudes have changed significantly in the contemporary West, behaviours have lagged sorely behind and, in some cases, have reversed (Jamieson; Beck-Gernsheim; Gross; England; Lauer and Yodanis). More recently, attitudes themselves have stalled (van Egmond et al.; Cotter et al.). It is now widely recognized that the family has become a key site of gender struggle and that women are, on average, far from equal within it and, therefore, outside of it. As Linda Hirschman succinctly puts it, when it comes to women's social progress, "the thickest glass ceiling is at home" (1).

When the two sets of evidence are placed together a complex portrait of women's situation emerges. This contradictory evidence is perhaps best encapsulated by Ulrich Beck and Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim's assertion that the process is one of "two steps forward, one step back" (55-6), which implies a still unfolding historical process. Or to put it another way, it implies that the social and political recognition of women's freedom is still evolving and that the current historical period reveals tensions between the two different gender systems: one related to the old sexual contract of female subordination and the other to a new social contract of gender equality.[4]

This portrait of simultaneous liberalization and constraint becomes more meaningful when considering transitions across the lifecycle. Longitudinal studies indicate that crucial gains made by women in their youth—in relation to education, the labour market, and personal autonomy—are not sustained across the lifecycle transitions of marriage and motherhood. Motherhood remains central in the loss of bargaining power both in the workplace and in relation to male partners (Craig; Baxter et al.; Treas and Drobnic; Bueskens, "Mothers and Basic Income"). After this point, as sociologists have observed for forty years now, most women are in a state of chronic and inexorable contradiction, ameliorated only by declining attachment to the labour force and/or radical declines in sleep and leisure. In other words, the historic gains made by women in their youth are, on average, not sustained into their thirties and beyond, and although marriage typically conceals this discrepancy, rising divorce rates reveal women's unequal status more clearly than ever before. Once women have crossed the threshold of motherhood, those without a breadwinner (as seemingly passé as such a term is now considered) are

confronted with multiple structural impediments.[5] Single mothers turn out to be among the most economically impoverished and time poor of any social group, and their capital accumulation (including superannuation and home ownership) is heavily compromised as a result (Christopher et al.; Walter; Gray et al.; Loxton; Christopher; de Vaus et al.). Certainly women can do it alone but only at a very high price, which casts a long shadow on the paradigm of equality currently hegemonic in the West. Yet, when examined in historical context, this may be the first time in history that women hold an independent legal status, have access to reliable birth control, can choose when or if to marry and become mothers, can enter any educational institution or profession, and can earn independent wages.[6] These are significant changes generating, as Catherine Hakim has argued, a revolutionary "new scenario" (*Work-Lifestyle Choices* 7).

In this article, I explore the dual and seemingly contradictory theses concerning Western women's liberation and oppression with a view to elucidating the terms of what I call the "new sexual contract."[7] The key statistical profiles on which this change is based—namely delayed marriage and declining fertility; women's increased labour force participation; and ongoing inequality in the domestic division of labour (also conceptualized as women's preference to care for young children and reject ideal worker norms)—are outlined in my recent book, *Modern Motherhood*.

This article focuses more specifically on the new sexual contract and, what I call "deregulated patriarchy"; it explores how women are operationalizing two modes of self in late modernity that were established as antithetical (or complementary) gendered personae from the outset. The new sexual contract has quite specific contours and takes root only after women become mothers, although its effects are still felt on those who are not. In keeping with the central dialectic outlined in *Modern Motherhood*, I argue that modernity has both enabled and disabled[8] women in diametrically opposed but interrelated ways. Specifically, modernity has enabled women as individuals and disabled them as mothers, with the twist that the very freedom women have gained as "individuals" relates directly to the difficulties they face as mothers.[9] It is only in late modernity as women have gained political, civil, social and economic freedom that these two differentiated personae have come together to produce the now well-documented contradictions associated with having dual roles and, indeed, dual personae.

While there is widespread research evidence of duality, then, theorists typically stress one pole over the other—individualization, and thus freedom, or double shifts, and thus oppression. For those who acknowledge both (and this is rare), there is no theoretical framework that makes sense of this duality. Catherine Hakim's widely influential "preference theory"— emphasizing women's choice to work part time (or not at all), and thus assume the majority

of domestic work—fails to examine either the causes or the consequences of these preferences and, by implication, their relationship to the old and new sexual contracts. Again, the freedom dimension is stressed over the constraint dimension producing a truncated problem and a truncated analysis. *Some* women may now be free to choose the precise allocation of home time and work time, and, thus, mitigate the strain ordinarily associated with having dual roles; however, this fact does not help us to understand why the two roles are contradictory in the first place and, more specifically, why this contradiction is gender specific. As it stands, no one has asked the simple question: why are women free and oppressed in late modernity and what are the causes and consequences of this contradictory duality? To address this, I have developed a theory of women's duality with a view to interpreting rather than simply restating the extant problematic.

Deregulated Patriarchy or the New Sexual Contract

Social life has changed significantly over the last four decades. Women across the Western world have entered the workforce *en masse*, and together with their partners, have delayed (and in some cases eschewed) marriage and childbearing while having fewer children overall. Women are initiating and experiencing more separations and divorces, and many more women are combining paid work with mothering. Simultaneously, and as part of this process, there is a dissolution of the hard social structures of modernity. The deregulation of the family brought about by globalization and individualization means that marriage and childrearing have moved from being the centre of life to one (defining) stage while more people are choosing to remain single and/or childless.

In the modern West, marriages are contracted on the basis of love and affinity and terminated according to these same criteria. Moreover, motherhood, that seemingly immutable and natural function, is now subject to choice, including where, when, how, with whom, and even if to have children, although as research shows, such choice is compromised by the inability for some to find a suitable partner, which has produced new categories of the "circumstantially childless" (Cannold 284) and the "socially infertile" (Marriner). What the social statistics show is that couples (and single women) increasingly postpone first births and then compress their childbearing to one or two closely spaced children. Having children—or, as is increasingly likely, just one child—is now defined as a smaller part of life, much more of which is defined by being childfree. Women's individualization is the key driver of these social changes, as they have sought, both individually and collectively, to release themselves from the strictures of patriarchal family structures.

But has patriarchy disappeared? It is my contention that it has not. Instead,

it has become fluid like other contemporary social structures. In the "post-structural social" (Adkins 139), patriarchy has become what I call "deregulated patriarchy." Women are not legally subordinated as in the first age of modernity; rather, women are ostensibly free and equal citizens. However, this normative individualism is now extended to women in their caregiving capacities, and, thus, bearing and rearing children becomes women's *individual problem*. In other words, in late modernity, motherhood has become an individualized risk, the consequences of which can be seen in women's interrupted employment histories and drastically reduced lifetime earnings (Blau; Baxter and Hewitt). Where divorce is normal, such individualized responsibility for children is a source of profound injustice. Again, this situation produces a complex picture of women's collective situation: women are free and they are subordinated; it just depends on which phase of the life course we are looking at (and which part of the self we are examining). Moreover, such freedom—or lack thereof—is determined by the presence or absence of a child and the presence or absence of a husband, which is something that is patently not the case for men.

Just as the obstacles to women's freedom as individuals are being swept away by modernity, so too is the economic security women have traditionally received as men's dependents and the broader nexus of community and familial support within which women traditionally mothered. Clearly, the key social structures, such as marriage, the family, and the labour market are deregulating. However, the lack of substantive policy initiatives that support mothers in the labour force—through adequate leave provisions, flexible hours, working from home, and government contributions to superannuation—means women face not only economic compromises should they take "time out" for even one child, let alone two or three, but also great logistical difficulties combining their paid and unpaid work should they remain in the workforce. Importantly, prioritizing care over paid work has all but evaporated as a genuine choice in neoliberal economies with their retracting welfare states and imperatives for all adults to be economically self-sufficient (Orloff).

My key contention is that women are now free as "individuals"[10] and constrained as mothers and that these two apparently polar outcomes are mutually constitutive, which generates major paradoxes in women's civil status in contemporary Western societies. Moreover, the deregulation of social structures and increasing individualization reveal the sexual contract more clearly than ever before. That is, without the safety net of marriage, women's compromised status as "individuals" is exposed. In particular, when women have to compete in the labour market on the same terms as men (with wives) and/or childfree individuals, the otherwise repressed sexual contract is revealed. The upshot is a pervasive feminization of poverty in the advanced capitalist nations running alongside—and indeed related to—the increasing

individualization, or freedom, of women.[11] Not surprisingly, as the gendered wage gap has narrowed, the gap between mothers and (all) others has increased.[12]

Mothers are losing out in the neoliberal economy because they cannot earn fulltime wages in the context of their (largely unshared) caregiving responsibilities, nor can they work within the inflexible industrial time structures of most paid work. One of the critical outcomes of the new sexual contract, then, is declining fertility, as women increasingly calculate their options in a high divorce society with inhospitable workplace practices and unrenovated models of mothering. In effect, what we see is a "fertility strike" in the West. Underlying this strike, however, is a deeper point: motherhood constitutes an individualized risk in deregulated patriarchy because the social contract still does not, as Carole Pateman contended thirty years ago, account for the fact that there are two kinds of individuals, male and female, with different corporeal (reproductive) capacities and, thus, different relationships to the social order. Unless or until the social contract can extend genuine freedom and equality to its maternal citizens, which means transforming motherhood from an individualized liability mandating unequal dependence into a recognized and remunerated social good, then pervasive inequality will only increase. It is, in fact, the individualization of women that has exposed this problem by insisting that women are free and equal and by reconstructing marriage as a soluble institution. Although it is clearly beneficial that women (and men) can leave destructive or abusive marriages, in the absence of economic alternatives to marriage for women who are mothers, we are left in a social and economic predicament.[13] As policy analysts in Australia have noted, women are encouraged to stay at home when they have young children through a combination of tax and family policies that reward male breadwinner families (van Gellecum et al.; Cooke and Baxter; Craig et al.) generating a process of deskilling and interrupted work histories, leaving many women vulnerable to poverty in the event of divorce (Walter; Loxton; Baxter and Render), which now occurs in a third of all marriages and is predicted to increase to half or more in the coming decades (Hewitt and Baxter). It is women and their children who fill the ranks of the poor in the advanced capitalist nations, which results directly from mothers' caregiving responsibilities (Kingfisher).

Although women in the advanced capitalist nations can more or less function as individuals in their youth, once they marry and become mothers (still the majority preference), this equality is seriously eroded and a new sexual contract emerges. Tracing the contours of the social norm, it is clear that patriarchy is busy reproducing itself in the present generation. Variously defined as the traditionalization process or, more innocuously, as "the gendered division of labour," the transition from individual to mother is pivotal for understanding

the new sexual contract. The subjection women experience as mothers is not necessary or natural; it is a function of the old sexual contract that never granted a full place, observes Pateman, to "women *as* women" (16) in the first place. And it is on this unequal foundation that modern liberal-democratic societies have grown.

The early exclusions of women from the social contract on the grounds of their sexual, reproductive, and caregiving capacities are critical to the dilemmas contemporary women face. As it stands, women can participate as men—or in the words of social contract doctrine, as "individuals"—but not *as* women, to use Pateman's insightful yet routinely misconstrued formulation (16). This is why women without children are making the greatest strides in careers and in closing the pay gap. Hakim shows that work-centred women (who are much more likely to be unmarried and/or childless) earn 30 percent more than their peers with children (*Work-Lifestyle*; see also Crittenden; Budig and England). Though still dealing with gender discrimination, childless women are able to meet ideal worker norms and reduce the conflict routinely experienced by women who are mothers of dependent children.

A longitudinal approach, which considers the significant changes in women's work and family life across the lifecycle, can track this transition with greater clarity than cross-sectional studies. Understanding the "new sexual contract" also requires a dialectical method moving between social theory and empirical research, since both have important contributions to make in grasping the complexity of contemporary women's situation. Importantly, women are free "individuals" in contemporary Western societies, as both grand social theorists and lay commentators contend, and have historically unprecedented choices in personal and professional life; however, this position becomes increasingly difficult for even privileged women to sustain as they enter their thirties, become mothers, and typically withdraw or substantially reduce their labour market participation (Craig), generating unequal dependence on marriage, in turn reducing women's bargaining power in the home and at work. These are mutually reinforcing problems, for the simple reason that the gender system is organized around the complementary – although for women who are working mothers *"conflictual"* – relationship between family work and market work

Integral to the mechanics of the new sexual contract, then, is the gendered division of labour (Craig; Bianchi et al.). Although this division is old, what is new is that it now runs alongside and, in fact, underscores increasing individualization. Women continue to undertake the vast majority of childcare and domestic work despite the new disembedding of structure from agency. Indeed, the more individualized everybody (else) becomes, the more work is left to women who are wives and mothers—specifically, the care of households, husbands, children, grandchildren, ill family members, and aging parents. In

sharp contrast to their early adult years, women in their middle and later adult years bear a disproportionately large care load, which has a direct relationship to the contraction of the extended family and community in the rest of society. Moreover, with the exception of the Nordic countries, social policies typically reinforce male breadwinner/ female nurturer families through failing to provide adequate paid maternity leave, affordable childcare, workplace flexibility, and imposing heavy taxes on double income families.[14] Lastly, men's resistance to sharing childcare and domestic labour, combined with their higher earning power, typically obstructs a shared division of family work.[15] As Linda Hirshman insists, this is the primary reason for the so-called glass ceiling at work. Women's performance at work, and their structural position in the labour market, is inextricably tied up with their roles in the home—a phenomenon that cuts across class and occupation categories and, thus, reconstitutes women as a sex class notwithstanding the apparent demise of social structure.

This reality is, however, complex. As Hakim's research also shows, women's partial (and sometimes total) withdrawal from the workforce when they become mothers is largely in keeping with their preferences. If we step back from the consequences of these preferences for one moment and take seriously what women say, then a central message emerges from Hakim's research: male models of work are not working for (most) women once they become mothers. If caring for children in combination with part-time work is what most women want,[16] then clearly women are not going to be able to "have it all", given the present structure of paid work. As Kathleen Gerson argued over thirty years ago, "hard choices" still exist for the majority of women between children and careers or, less obviously, between careers and jobs. As Hirshman found in her study of elite women, many were still working after they became mothers, however not in their chosen field. Nor are women able to independently run households on the kinds of salaries that part-time work, even part-time professional work at the higher levels, pays. Again, this generates asymmetrical gender dependency inside marriage and inequality in the workforce as well as in society at large.

Thus, in the current social order, specifically in the "post-structural social," in which are women are said to have transcended the constraints of patriarchy, women who exercise their procreative capacities and become mothers—which is still the overwhelming majority of women—have to be married or else face severe economic discrimination. This imperative forecloses gender equality and the capacity to negotiate fairly with partners. Importantly, one must be free to leave a relationship (or institution) in order to freely be in it, let alone to renovate it. As the nineteenth-century feminists were at pains to point out, these facts stand separately from the question of love and arguably provide love with its proper foundation: freedom rather than necessity. Many women are married to men they freely chose to be with and whom they love, and these men may be good and kind men who economically provide and, to a lesser

extent, share household and childrearing duties, but this does not alter the fundamental structural reality that their wives (or partners) could not live adequately without them. Such asymmetrical dependence is neither anomalous nor random but the normal situation for the vast majority of women (after motherhood) in contemporary Western societies, which casts a long shadow on the paradigm of freedom and equality prevailing in the West.

Even Hakim, who trumps women's "free choice" in the "new scenario" puts in the disclaimer that women's choices are not evident until they have secured for themselves a "breadwinner spouse" ("Women's Lifestyle Preferences" 83). It seems problematic, to say the least, that women's "free choice" remains contingent upon a breadwinner spouse. Moreover, this inadvertently reveals the considerable difficulties unmarried, never married, and/or divorced women have exercising their preferences.

The discourse of choice has trumped the analysis of social structure much to the chagrin of feminists. However, the critical problem with the new sexual contract lies not in the choices women make to work less or "opt out" but in the long-term consequences of these choices. It is the fact that society—including its key institutions of the government, the labour market, and the family—has failed to provide a satisfactory support structure for women as individuals who (choose to) give birth to and rear children—that is, who choose to become mothers. Marriage has provided an economic safety net for women as members of families but not as individuals. To rely exclusively on marriage as a support structure for mothers is inconsistent with the ethics of liberty and equality on which liberal democracies are ostensibly based, which, in turn, generates a structure of subordination based on natural difference. If all men and women are created free and equal, then the new social contract will have to renovate the sexual contract so that the reproduction of the species is, if not rewarded, then at the very least no longer punished.

Duality Theory and Women's Two Modes of Self

Crucially, women's individualization predisposes them to expect and even demand greater equality and the free exercise of choice. Part of the difficulty lies in the fact that this expectation is derived from an individualist and liberal rights philosophy that is itself founded on the subjection of women (Pateman). Women's claim to freedom and equality is built on the liberal separation of spheres, which simultaneously sequesters women to the private domestic sphere as wives and mothers. Herein lies the conundrum: women's freedom is implicated in women's subjection. Liberalism created the structural and ideological conditions for the release of "the individual"; however, it simultaneously created the stay-at-home wife and mother, who was assigned to provide structural (social, emotional, and domestic) support to individuals.

The intensification of motherhood was an outcrop of modern Rousseauist ideals that countered the impersonal ethos of liberalism as well as, paradoxically, an extension of rationalization and individualization into the private sphere. The private-domestic sphere developed its own counter-discourse of love and care in opposition to the prevailing ethos of competitive individualism. In a patriarchal social system, the two spheres were complementary rather than incompatible. It was only once women sought a role in public life as "individuals" that problems emerged, something that only developed on a mass scale in the last quarter of the twentieth century.

Duality, thus, operates at the structural, ideological, cultural, and psychological level. It is not only that modern social structure pushed women into the newly isolated home, it is also that cultural ideologies elaborated on this with a new emphasis on romantic partnership and the intensive care of children, who were now valued as ends in themselves. What Edward Shorter call the "surge of sentiment" (170) was the private face of political individualism, which emerged in women's own preferences—still evident today—to nurture their children within the domestic sphere. The psychology of individualism includes and, indeed, fosters "intensive mothering" (Hays, "Cultural Contradictions" 3).

Moreover, as Nancy Chodorow has perspicaciously observed, in the normal "male dominant father absent family" (40), women (and men) internalize a model of attachment based on near exclusive maternal and/or female care. In the formative years between birth and three years of age, few infants and toddlers internalize substantive embodied nurture from men. For Chodorow, this early experience of (near) exclusive female care becomes internalized and forms the basis of gendered identity, with the corollary that separation, individuation, and freedom become aligned with masculinity, and empathy, altruism and relationship with femininity. Feminine selves are cultivated by women drawing on these early models of mother-centred (or female-centred) care. They are also (re)activated when women themselves become mothers and provide care for their own infants and young children (Baraitser; A Stone; Bueskens, "Maternal Subjectivity").

Suffice it to say that the combination of early attachment with mothers and the complex historical legacy of the modern separation of spheres means women in the twenty-first century have well-developed maternal selves, memorably identified by Carol Gilligan as a morally distinct "ethic of care". Women, and more particularly mothers, have selves that are crafted in, and defined through, embodied nurture, both that which they likely received from their own mothers and that which they give to their children. What has shifted in more recent decades is that women have increasingly come to inhabit the category of the neutral individual too; or, in the language of moral philosophers, women have come to adopt the "ethic of justice" (Kohlberg). This means that most women in the twenty-first century have two modes of self—

an individualized self oriented to competition and achievement in the public sphere and a maternal or nurturing self oriented to care for family members in the private sphere. These selves overlap, although they may also operate independently. For example, prior to motherhood, young women in the West are mostly operating with their individualized selves (albeit, in anticipation of a later maternal phase)—a requirement, as Ulrich Beck and Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim note, for participation in modern institutions. Likewise, the majority of women who withdraw from or reduce their participation in the workforce while their children are young are largely operating with their maternal selves, although even among women who are at home fulltime, the sense of having another, individualized, self in addition to the mothering self is evident (Bueskens, *Modern Motherhood*). Similarly, women at work often undertake mothering tasks, including making contact with children and organizing appointments and schedules throughout the day (Morehead; Bittman et al.; Maher).

Arguably all women in the West now have dual selves; however, it is those who are engaged in active participation in both the public and private spheres—that is, mothers of dependent children who are simultaneously active in the labour force—who feel the dual role burden most sharply. The contradiction, therefore, exists at both the structural level (the contradiction between spheres and activities) and at the psychological level (the contradiction between different parts of the self). Although this contradiction is identified in the literature on motherhood, it is rarely linked back to the history of modernity or to the paradoxes inherent in liberal individualism. Moreover, there tends to be an emphasis on either women's newfound freedom as individuals or on their constraints as mothers; few researchers or social theorists hold both dimensions simultaneously, which is required to understand the contemporary dilemma of dual roles.

The Problematic as It Stands

There are ten key points that can be gleaned from extant research, which form the backbone of my conceptualization of women's duality and the new sexual contract.

1. In late modernity, women are free as individuals and constrained as mothers. This freedom and constraint can be directly related to the contradictions women experience between work and home and between their autonomous and maternal (or caregiving) selves.
2. These two seemingly opposing developments are mutually constitutive, producing an especially complex dual role problematic. Women's freedom as individuals is produced by the same social structure and philosophical foundations that produced and continually recreates women's sequestration to the private sphere.

3. In the contemporary West, patriarchy operates in a deregulated form, which reveals women's compromised status as individuals more clearly than in earlier phases of modernity, when women were defined as dependents within (fraternal-patriarchal) families.
4. After motherhood, women experience a massive increase in their workload, as they undertake the majority of domestic work and childcare in heterosexual, married couple families, which constitute the majority of couple families with children, although a substantial minority of these households transition to single parent, step, and blended-family households. Between 80 and 95 percent of couples have a highly unequal division of domestic and childcare labour.
5. Most mothers prefer to stay at home when their children are in infancy and to work part time (or less) when their children are in preschool. Part-time work continues to be the majority preference (evidenced in the Nordic countries, where women are free to exercise their preferences, and also in Australia). Only a minority of mothers with dependent children prefer to work fulltime or stay at home fulltime (Hakim, "Women's Lifestyle Preferences").
6. Mothers manage the contradictions between family work and paid work through undertaking a "second shift" (Hochschild), which is operationalized as "multitasking" (Sayer et al.; Sayer) and "synchronising time" (Morehead)—or, in other words, performing tasks simultaneously. Employed mothers of young children who undertake fulltime or part-time paid work continue to undertake the majority of childcare and domestic work (Bianchi et. al). For upper-middle-class women, this work is routinely outsourced to other women rather than shared equally between "husbands" and "wives" (MacDonald; Baxter, Hewitt and Haynes; Baxter et al., "Who Uses").
7. Mothers in the West have dual selves, including an individualized self and a maternal self corresponding to their dual roles. These selves are experienced as both separate and intertwined. They remain difficult to activate simultaneously within the social structure of most liberal democracies, given extant intensive mothering and ideal worker norms and the structural separation of spheres.
8. In households with dependent children mothers are, for the most part, in the default position, which means their labour market participation and leisure are compromised to meet childcare and housework demands, including any contingencies or emergencies. The "default position" is, as a rule, not shared by husbands and fathers within families. On the flip side, most women prefer to undertake the majority of care work and to combine mothering with paid work.

9. A third of all marriages end in divorce (in the USA and the UK this is closer 50 percent); and this number is forecast to increase in Australia in the coming decades to between 40 and 50 percent; while cohabiting de facto couples with children are even more likely to separate. Since the late twentieth century across the Western world, increased divorce rates have produced a large growth in single-parent families, of which the overwhelming majority are headed by women (on average between 85 and 90 percent). Close to half of these families—that is, many women and children—are in, or at great risk of, poverty.
10. In late modernity, women who are mothers are not free to choose marriage or permanent partnerships, since they are not fee to leave them without drastic economic consequences.[17] Married mothers are not free to negotiate fairly with partners, since they are not free to leave their relationships without a very serious decline in their own and their children's standard of living. Motherhood has, thus, transformed into an individualized risk in the "society of individuals". Given that the overwhelming majority of women choose to become mothers (approximately 90 percent), this means that almost all women are subject to the new sexual contract.

The unfinished business of feminism and of Western modernity is the complete emancipation of women, not only as individuals but also as mothers, specifically as autonomous mothers. We have grudgingly come to accept the independent woman, but the independent mother is still structurally and psychologically constrained. Given the interdependence of the public and private spheres and the historical relegation of women to the private sphere, in combination with women's majority preference to undertake and prioritize mothering, social reorganization is both necessary and inevitable.

In many respects, the self-made man is the icon of Western modernity, but the self-made woman is its unfinished project because she calls forth a second and final transformation in the relationship between the public and private spheres and, ultimately, in the relations between men and women. The problem requires two key shifts: first, legislative and policy change to facilitate women's attachment to the labour force across the transition to motherhood (including paid maternity and paternity leave, flexible employment, leave without pay, options for working from home, shorter working hours, remunerated childcare, a universal basic income etc.);[18] second, change in the domestic sphere, to facilitate a more equal division of household labour between men and women, which would enable women to pursue paid and/or other creative work. In short, there needs to be a reconstruction of the social and sexual contracts.

Endnotes

1. An earlier version of this paper was presented as a keynote address at the MIRCI "Matricentric Feminism" conference at Syracuse University in Florence in May 2018. This is a revised, edited, and abridged version of chapter five of my book *Modern Motherhood and Women's Dual Identities: Rewriting the Sexual Contract*.
2. The term "traditional" is a misnomer here; however, it is so widely used it becomes difficult to break with convention without causing confusion. Calling modern sequestered mothering "traditional" is both true and false. It is true in so far as an earlier noncontractual, kinship logic persists in the family, but it is also false because there is nothing traditional about the isolated, specialized, and intensive mothering characteristic of the contemporary Western family.
3. Across the Western world, and particularly in the US, Black and working-class women engaged in paid work from the outset of industrialisation, long before the mass movement of white, middle-class women into the labour market (Jones). This meant they could not subscribe to or embody ideal-typical norms of the "stay-at-home mother". Black women's mothering was not protected like white women's mothering was (Stack and Burton; Collins). Another feature of women's labour, including Black and working-class women's labour, is that it rarely provided a living wage that enabled independence from husbands, family wage pools, and/or welfare. Black women workers relied heavily on reciprocity networks to support their paid employment (Stack and Burton). Moreover, Black women suffered discrimination in access to higher status jobs and were, until recently (and, to some extent, even now)—largely segregated in low-paid and insecure domestic and childcare service work to the very white women who had entered the workforce *en masse* in the later twentieth century (Mutari et al).
4. When I refer to equality, this does not mean women's sameness with men; rather, it refers to women's right to stand as civil equals and, from there, express their difference.
5. It is widely assumed that women are now co-equal breadwinners with men; however, this is not the case in heterosexual couple families across the Western world, since women earn less, around 80 cents for every dollar men earn, and since most couples prioritize men's careers over women's when they become parents. In Australia, the USA, and the UK role-reversed families—that is where women are the primary breadwinners and men are the primary caregivers—constitute between 2 and 5 percent of all families (de Vaus et al.; Chesley, 644), and it is a pattern that is rarely sustained because mothers continue to perform more domestic work even when they are the primary providers (Chesley). Most mothers of dependent

children work part time in Australia and undertake the majority of both domestic labour and childcare (Craig). In the USA, among heterosexual couple families, men are the breadwinners in just over 70 percent of families; women now constitute 29 percent of the breadwinners (Chesley). However, breadwinning mothers continue to undertake the majority of childcare and domestic labour (Bianchi et al.), even when their husbands are unemployed, and it is for this reason that this family pattern is rarely sustainable. Fulltime working mothers now also undertake more direct childcare than did mothers in the 1960s. In terms of the broad contours outlined in this article regarding the new sexual contract, fathers still constitute the great majority of breadwinners, and breadwinning wives are not relieved from the double shift that hampers their income earning potential, career trajectories, and quality of life. Both the institution of waged labour and the institution of motherhood presuppose structural interdependence to meet their respective normative ideals. Single mother families are particularly at risk of poverty for precisely these reasons and, therefore, can in no sense said to be "undoing the new sexual contract", except in the highly unusual cases of those with very high incomes, inheritance, or independent wealth.

6. I am referring here to Western women and recognize the variegated nature of these changes across different strata of women.
7. I am tracking a broad outline here based on average patterns for the majority of women. There are always women whose specific or individual situations vary from the normative pattern; however, very few mothers escape the economic and social consequences of the new sexual contract—that is, becoming a mother reduces income, leisure, and long-term economic security while increasing unpaid labour substantially.
8. I am not referring here to bodily ability or disability; rather, this term is being used as an adjective to describe the ways in which modernity has facilitated women to individualize and obtain autonomy and how it has simultaneously constrained women as mothers.
9. I am referring to legal freedom and also shifts in the culture that recognize this freedom. For example, it is more normal for young women today to prioritize education, relationships, travel, and career in their late teens and twenties rather than get married and have children as it was only forty years ago. Individualization is normative across the culture; it is not the preserve of the privileged exclusively. However, the capacity to actualize these preferences does correspond with privilege. I am here identifying normative rather than empirical freedom.

10. I am using the term "individual" in the more specific sense of classical liberalism where it referred to a philosophical and legal invention created with a view to granting equal political rights to all citizens]
11. The literature on the feminization of poverty, and more specifically the links between single motherhood and poverty, is well established (Christopher et al; Hays; Christopher; Misra et al., "Work Family Policies"; Misra et al., "Family Policies").
12. The role of motherhood in the gender pay gap, and more specifically the loss of relative and absolute income, is well established in the international research (Waldfogel; Budig and England; Crittenden; Gangl and Ziefle; Budig and Hodges; Baker; Livermore et al.; Kricheli-Katz; Budig et al.).
13. This includes marriage substitutes, such as a de facto partnership.
14. Policies in the Anglo American world, including Australia, make it difficult for women to combine paid and unpaid work (van Gellecum, et al; Cooke and Baxter; Craig et al.; Baxter and Chesters; Jones).
15. The literature on men's resistance to undertaking domestic work is well established (Komter; Delphy and Leonard; Bittman and Pixley; Dempsey, "Trying"; McMahon; Craig; Baxter et al., "Lifecourse"; Treas and Drobnic).
16. There is an extensive literature on women's preferences to combine motherhood with part-time work (Hakim, "Work-Lifestyle Choices"; Belkin; P Stone; Hakim, "Women's Lifestyle Preferences"; Hoffnung; Arthur and Lee).
17. This does not mean women cannot choose to leave marriages. Divorce is both legal and normal in the modern west. The point is that once women are mothers, they do not have a satisfactory alternative to marriage (or a "breadwinner spouse" to use Hakim's more precise terminology). With few exceptions, mothers are either married to a breadwinner spouse or in poverty. As such, women who are mothers cannot bargain from a position of equality within marriage or outside of it.
18. Supporting women in paid work may not come in the form of adaptation to prevailing models of work but rather in the transformation of work to be more accommodating of the necessity of care. Most women who are mothers are unable to adapt to prevailing models of work, so they withdraw, down scale their job, and/or transition to part-time and/or casual work. Renovating work also means transforming work cultures that operate around the norm of an unencumbered male breadwinner.

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