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## Capitalism crushed the patriarchy

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Biology does not favor women.

Women are physically weaker than men and (usually) the gatekeepers of sex, meaning that for most of human history, a world rife with violence and devoid of rules has been awful to women, as gatherers, as homemakers, as sexual objects, and as property.

Luckily, we got capitalism. While men throughout the Middle Ages and modernity have always been seen as functional economic actors, the advent of free markets allowed for the sorts of innovation that allowed women to spend less time on "gathering" or homemaking as a necessity. As a new report from the Cato Institute notes, the division of labor by parts, automation, and advances in technology has turned cooking and cleaning from full-time jobs to minor chores. A century ago, American households spent a quarter of the day cooking. Now they spend around an hour. As the overall time required for these tasks has diminished, their distribution has become more equitable.

"In the United States, from the mid-1960s to 2008, women more than halved the amount of time they spent on food preparation, whereas men nearly doubled time spent on that activity, as household labor distributions became more equitable between genders," writes Chelsea Follett at the Cato Institute. The effect is similar with cleaning and washing, clearing up hours of each day for economic benefit.

Even more significant on women's liberation have been advances in healthcare. As Cato notes, women in 1800 on average would birth seven children, with only four living past infancy. Since then, both maternal deaths and infant deaths have plummeted. Female life expectancy has improved by a matter of decades.

Men had much to gain from the ascent of capitalism in similar terms, but in decoupling immense risks of danger from motherhood and freeing up the labor associated with traditionally female tasks, there's not much that men can do that women can't. Jobs requiring incredible physical strength still remain mostly male, but the greater workforce now has plenty of room for women who are also mothers and homemakers.

Furthermore, the greatest advances of second-wave feminism, such as modern birth control, were only made possible by a market-driven pharmaceutical industry. After all, it was American, not Soviet, researchers who first developed oral contraceptives.

Despite the third-wave feminist tendency to conflate the ephemeral patriarchy with capitalism, the two couldn't be more incompatible. Free markets have revolutionized the quality of human life for everyone, but perhaps for none more than women.