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# The Sugar in His Tea: Sexuality, Patriarchy and Sexual Politics

by Catherine Hakim

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The first black British man to become a professor of sociology in Britain, Stuart Hall, is famous for saying “we are the sugar in the British cup of tea.” He was referring to the black African slave labour on the plantations in the Caribbean that made sugar an affordable luxury for the working classes in Britain.

To paraphrase Stuart Hall, this paper argues that women, or more precisely sexually attractive females, are the sugar in men’s cup of tea. Men’s desire to control female sexuality remains the underlying cause of patriarchy in the Twenty-First century. We revise and update Lerner’s [1986] explanation for the *creation* of patriarchy to identify sexuality, rather than fertility, as the driving factor for its *maintenance* today. Despite the “sexual revolution” of the 1960s, there is a permanent universal sexual deficit among men, which causes problems in public and private life. National sex survey data, case study and qualitative research are consistent: men find sexual liaisons are in short supply, at all ages, fuelling a rarely admitted hidden resentment of women and a desire to control women.

## 1. The Origins of Patriarchy

Patriarchy has proved a useful concept in feminist theory, identifying how men, and the social institutions created and controlled by men, have actively subordinated women not only in the labour market, as Hartmann [1976] first argued, but more

generally in family life, in politics, and in the wider public sphere. Walby defined patriarchy as a system of social structures and practices used by men to dominate, oppress and exploit women [Walby 1990, 20]. She identified six key structures that oppress women: paid work, housework, culture, heterosexuality, physical violence, and the state. Her thesis was that there has been a shift from private patriarchy in the past to modern structures that impose male dominance in the public sphere, including the workforce [*Ibidem*, 24]. Walby demonstrated the great variety of theories of patriarchy, but the core element is male dominance. Put simply, patriarchal ideology claims that men, not women, have a *right* to be in control, can set the rules, *should* take priority over women. Patriarchy does not mean that men invariably *achieve* control, all the time, everywhere, or that there are no competing values and institutions giving women power.

The term patriarchy went out of fashion as feminist debates became more complex and diverse.<sup>1</sup> Walby herself switched to using the terms “gender regimes” and “gender systems” [Walby 2004]. However the term is now returning to fashion, and the concept of patriarchy is implicit in debates on gender equality, equal pay, and sexual harassment, with the implication of injustice imposed by un-named others on women. Feminists demand “gender equality” (defined as completely symmetrical lives for men and women), without first identifying theories or explanations for the ubiquity of differential life outcomes, how and why patriarchy developed, or why gender symmetry is a realistic demand despite differences in aspirations and dispositions [Phillips 2004].

Arguably, power and authority are self-evidently worth having. However in most societies this is gained through competition in the social and economic hierarchy, through the class or caste system, or through dominance over slave, immigrant and other “out-groups” – all of which allow women as well as men to benefit from higher status. We have to explain why men seek to subordinate *women* specifically. Academics have been assiduous in describing the mechanisms, characteristics and outcomes of patriarchy (or female oppression), but rarely address the “why.”<sup>2</sup> Space constraints preclude full discussion of the voluminous, rich and complex scholarly feminist literature, and we ignore the numerous literary and philosophical discourses<sup>3</sup> to focus exclusively on social science evidence and testable theories. With this narrow

<sup>1</sup> Patil [2013] provides a useful summary of these developments.

<sup>2</sup> As Patil observed, “patriarchy as explanation is really no explanation at all,” and the term can become tautologous –patriarchy becomes the explanation for gendered power relations [Patil 2013, 851-852]. Pierre Bourdieu’s [1998] *La Domination Masculine* is a classic example of exposition without any attempt at explanation.

<sup>3</sup> Hence we ignore philosophical discourses by scholars such as Judith Butler, Nancy Holmstrom and other writers on gender, sexuality and capitalism.

focus, we can identify four main explanations for *why* men would choose to oppress their own partners, the people they share a bed with at night.

One explanation exonerates men from misogyny and focuses on the “facts of life” that give men and women different roles in the family. Firestone [1974] underlined the crucial fact that women alone give birth and nurture tiny infants. At this stage, mother and baby need protection and support, setting in train social processes and customs that place women at home and leave men free to dominate the public sphere. Her focus on women’s role in reproduction as the source of the problem also identified possible solutions. Women could remain childless, or insist that childcare be organized communally, so as to free up women’s time for other activities in the public sphere, alongside men. On this analysis, men’s domination of public life, including politics, the workforce and the best-paid jobs, was just a timetabling accident. With no malicious intent driving it, male dominance could be eliminated by more flexible work arrangements. The validity of this explanation is demonstrated by the fact that there is now no pay gap in modern societies (such as Britain and the USA) between childless career women and men [Hakim 2004]. In Britain, there is no pay gap at all among people under the age of 35. The pay gap between men and women has been replaced by the “motherhood gap” in earnings between childless women and mothers [*Ibidem*].

Marxist or socialist feminism has traditionally placed the blame on the shoulders of capitalism, so that the elimination of capitalism implied the eradication of patriarchy as well. It offered no explanation for patriarchal practices that pre-date capitalism by millennia, nor for gender inequality in socialist societies. Class relations were the over-riding focus, and gender relations a side effect. Women’s subordination was a by-product of capitalism, hence misogyny was ruled out. Dialectic forces were predicted to bring about radical change, including gender equality. The thesis has been contradicted by events. There are few women in positions of power in socialist countries such as Russia and China. Women are more likely to achieve top management jobs in the laissez-faire capitalist USA and Britain than in the gender and class-equality regimes of Sweden and other Scandinavian economies [Henrekson and Stenkula 2009]. In practice, as economists argue, capitalist employers do not much care whether they hire males or females so long as their labour delivers a profit. The evidence is that patriarchy operates independently from capitalism.

Radical feminism focuses on sexuality as the key to patriarchy [Brownmiller 1975; Dworkin 1981 and 1987; MacKinnon 1979; Walby 1990; Jeffreys 1997; see also O’Connell Davidson 2006]. Heterosexuality is presented as a patriarchal institution used by men to dominate and oppress women. Radical feminism portrays heterosexuality as dangerous and demeaning, characterized by rape, sexual slavery in

marriage, and sexual slavery in the sex industry. It claims that people who reject compulsory heterosexuality are portrayed as mad or bad. However the theory offers no explanation for why men do this to women – *why* they need to oppress their sexual partners. Logically, going solo, or lesbianism, would be solutions. The increasing social acceptance of gay men and lesbians (and alternative sexual lifestyles generally) seems to contradict this thesis. Further, homosexuality has not become widespread: in Britain, Australia and the USA, 97% of men and women still self-identify as heterosexuals. Paradoxically, modern feminist scholars focus attention on sexuality, but then deny its importance. The thesis that the sex drive is purely a cultural construct means that sexuality cannot be a driving causal factor. Similarly the thesis that there are no differences in sexuality between men and women (an idea dismissed as an “essentialist assumption” that does not need to be tested) also neutralizes sexuality as a factor in social life.

The historian Lerner [1986] offered a fourth explanation, which was ignored by social scientists and most feminists (as illustrated by Walby’s [1990] review). Lerner developed an empirically-based explanation for the creation of patriarchy from her analysis of the historical evidence for Mesopotamia, where patriarchal laws and practices first emerged. Lerner argues that patriarchy only appears after social hierarchies develop, archaic states are formed, and a ruling elite emerges. Men became concerned to pass on their wealth to their own progeny, and hence sought to control women’s sexuality and fertility. Women know who their children are, as they give birth to them. Men never have the same certainty about paternity, so sexual fidelity became crucial. Patriarchal laws were introduced to ensure married women stayed sexually faithful, and to deter male trespassers on another man’s female sexual “property”, says Lerner. Only much later did patriarchal control extend to women’s economic activities as well, and Lerner notes this did not happen everywhere. Lerner shows the original cause of patriarchy to be men’s desire to control female fertility, not their labour power nor their earnings. The subordination of women was thus focused on women’s reproductive role, even though it was prompted by a concern with power, money and inheritance.

Lerner’s analysis is persuasive, compatible with Firestone’s thesis on the child-rearing role, and is reinforced by subsequent scholarship [Stonehouse 1994]. Crucially, the thesis applies to all men, all cultures and economies. Throughout history the vast majority of men led lives that were “nasty, brutish and short” – as the social philosopher Thomas Hobbes famously put it. Most men did not own land or money to pass on to their progeny. This was especially true thousands of years ago, when even kings had fewer luxuries than the average working class family enjoys today. Serfs and townspeople were focused on getting enough to eat, keeping warm, avoiding

debilitating illnesses – on survival, and perhaps on maintenance of their blood line. As Inglehart and Norris [2003] have shown through analyses of the World Values Survey database, patriarchal values are closely associated with “materialist” values that focus on survival and stability, and with religious values that emphasise fertility and family life. Most men are concerned that their hard labour and scarce funds feed and support their own offspring, not another man’s child, even if they have no assets of any great value to pass on to descendants. So property inheritance is not crucial. Your children can offer immortality.

Lerner’s thesis is that patriarchal laws and institutions enshrined the rights of men to control and appropriate the sexual and reproductive services of women. But despite repeated references to female *sexuality*, Lerner’s focus is actually on male control of women’s *fertility* and reproductive work. At a time when contraception was rudimentary or non-existent, female sexuality and child-bearing could be synonymous. Also, her theory focuses on the control of married women’s fertility, and the virginity of those yet to marry. She shows, for example, that veiling was introduced to distinguish married (private) women from prostitute (public) women. However the exploitation of female sexuality was not controlled. The goddess Ishtar was described as free with her sexual favours and the protector of prostitutes. There were several classes of temple prostitutes, and high priestesses performed religious rituals of the Sacred Marriage with priests. Sexuality was actively celebrated – for its links to fertility of people and the land. This positive exaltation of female sexuality and Mother-Goddess cults continued long after patriarchal laws were introduced [Lerner 1986, 141-160].

Our thesis builds on Lerner’s theory that the original root cause of patriarchy was a desire to control *private* relationships and female fertility, *not* women’s labour power, nor their roles in public life. Lerner’s theory is supported by the historical evidence, and by the widespread acceptance of policies to promote gender equality in the labour market and public life today. But it needs updating for the Twenty-First century.

The separation of reproductive and recreational sexuality is much greater in the modern world than it was 4000-5000 years ago, due to reliable contraception and low fertility rates. In societies and groups that do not have pro-natalist cultures, the focus of male control of female sexuality has shifted from reproductive sexuality and childbearing to recreational sexuality. Today, around one-fifth of men and women in Western Europe remain child-free; families are small; children are regarded as a cost rather than an asset; some children are conceived through IVF<sup>4</sup> with donor sperm

<sup>4</sup> In vitro fertilisation.

or eggs, or else are adopted. However recreational sexuality has become a major entertainment, not only for the wealthy élite (who could always afford kept mistresses and concubines) but for people generally, including the young and impecunious. In this context, the male sexual deficit matters a lot.

We summarise the evidence, commonly ignored, on the social fact of the male sexual deficit, due to the universal imbalance of sexual interest between men and women, which seems to be increasing, reviewing national survey data, case studies, qualitative research and sex memoirs. We then review arguments offered by (patriarchal) men and (feminist) women, to deny or obscure the male sexual deficit within sexual politics debates and sexual markets.

## 2. The Male Sexual Deficit

Mainstream sociology and economics have generally ignored sexuality, both empirically and theoretically, even in studies of the family.<sup>5</sup> The focus is often on money alone, as if the family were an extension of the labour market. Becker's *Treatise on the Family* [1981] assumes that couples are concerned with maximizing household income, and generally ignores benefits in kind, intra-household transfers and the role of sexuality in relationships. Similarly sociologists fail to recognise that their studies of families and couples omit one crucial element in relationships: sexuality. Until recently, there was good reason for this one-eyed perspective. Sexuality is normally a private activity, invisible to others, so it provides fertile ground for myths and misinformation [Magnanti 2012]. The key myth is that everyone has as much sex as they want, so it is not a scarce commodity, unlike money, status and power. Until the late Twentieth century, there was no reliable nationally representative data on sexuality to show this assumption to be false.

Sexuality only became the subject of extensive social science research after the “sexual revolution” of the 1960s and the AIDS scare of the 1980s. Before that, there were isolated studies, notably Kinsey's and Hite's studies of male and female sexuality in the 1940s and 1970s. The appearance of AIDS was the catalyst for government interest in what people do in the privacy of their bedrooms. Funding for nationally representative sex surveys became available, and most Western countries carried out at least one. Researchers in Finland made a speciality of the topic, and carried out a series of five national surveys, the latest in 2015, plus qualitative research and case studies, to provide a rich understanding of changing sexual attitudes and behavior,

<sup>5</sup> The rare exceptions – such as Edlund and Kom [2002] – ignore the research evidence, and rely on stereotypes and assumptions about sexual behaviour within and outside marriage.

and of enduring differences between male and female sexuality [Haavio-Mannila, Kontula and Rotkirch 2002; Kontula 2009]. Britain is the runner-up, with three national surveys so far (in 1990, 2000 and 2010) and one major report [Wellings *et al.* 1994; Mercer *et al.* 2013; Mitchell *et al.* 2013].

The new sex surveys rely on personal interviews with nationally-representative samples of adults, often using CAPI (Computer-Aided Personal Interview) systems. Typically, the interviewer gives their laptop to the respondent to answer the most sensitive questions directly on the machine, so replies are invisible to the interviewer. The Australian surveys rely on telephone interviews, which provide a different type of privacy for respondents. Sample sizes range from 20,000 (Britain, Australia and China) to 1000 [Hakim 2011, 263-266; Hubert, Bajos and Sandfort 1998].

A key finding from the national sex surveys is what the sociologist Hakim [2011, 31-61; 2015a] terms the “sexual deficit” among men, and social psychologists describe as differential sexual motivation [Baumeister, Catanese and Vohs 2001]. Across all cultures, sexual interest and motivation among males is greater than among females. On average, men are twice as motivated; will take larger risks and pay more to get sex; express greater interest in a wider variety of sexual activities; seek more sexual partners; make greater use of erotica and pornography; and masturbate far more often – even when married. Since most people identify themselves as heterosexual, men seek female partners, and women’s systematically lesser sexual interest creates a sexual deficit among men (or a surplus of male sexuality), something that is resented more as recreational sex becomes valorised.

The sexual deficit can be measured at the *individual* level, when a man (or, more rarely, a woman) complains that they want more sex than s/he is currently getting. At the *macro*-level, it is measured by the ubiquitous sex differentials revealed by national survey results. This is why it could not be identified reliably before the national sex survey results became available, showing the same pattern across cultures around the world at the start of the Twenty-First<sup>t</sup> century.

As a group, men throw up a higher proportion of high-libido, highly sexually active cases than do women: 5% of men compared to 2% of women are “sexually superactive” as the Swedish report puts it [Wellings *et al.* 1994, 109; Lewin 2000, 67-74; Hakim 2011, 55; Laumann *et al.* 1994, 170-171 and 518-519]. These people have an early sexual debut, and are more active and promiscuous at all ages. But even *within* this group, the men are far more sexually active and have many more partners than the women. The tiny group of sexual superactives accounts for half of all partners in sexual markets, and most of them are men [Lewin 2000]. This is a really dramatic “market dominance.” Scholars are puzzled by men reporting



a higher number of sexual partners than women do, but these survey results are credible.<sup>6</sup>

Sex differences in sexual motivation are also indicated by celibacy rates, which rise quickly among women from age 30 onwards. Men retain their sexual motivation much longer and become celibate at later ages [Laumann *et al.* 1994, 91; Hakim 2011, 47-53].

The broad results of the national surveys on sex differences in sexuality around the globe are corroborated by more detailed studies of the sex drive by social psychologists [Baumeister 2000 and 2004; Baumeister, Catanese and Vohs 2001; Baumeister and Twenge 2002; Baumeister and Vohs 2004 and 2012] with studies focused on North America. A meta-analysis by Petersen and Hyde [2010] did not address sexual desire or sexual interest, unfortunately. On other measures of sexuality, they discover no definite trends – sex differences widen, or shrink, on various indicators. However they found that large and important differences between men and women persist in attitudes to casual sex, casual sex practice, pornography use, and masturbation.

We might have expected the sexual imbalance between men and women to reduce or even disappear after the contraceptive revolution of the 1960s eliminated the fear of pregnancy among women, as this was a powerful demotivator [Szreter and Fisher 2011].<sup>7</sup> However sexual interest does not change much across generations. The 2010 British survey provides the most up-to-date information on sexual expression. It shows that in all age groups, females are more than twice as likely as men to lack interest in sex (Table 1). From their 20s onwards, one-third of women report they

<sup>6</sup> This is frequently regarded as implausible by academic researchers. In fact, the sex differential is easily explained. First, people working in the local sex industry do not participate in conventional sex surveys – the majority being women. Second, sexual markets are not closed and limited by national frontiers, as are surveys. Men who travel on business may have sexual encounters in other countries, both amateur and commercial. Some men engage in “sex tourism” holidays in countries such as Thailand, usually with several partners. In Sweden, for example, the great majority (80%) of men who buy commercial sexual services do so outside Sweden, in neighbouring countries, or in Thailand, Spain and other countries where there is a more relaxed attitude to sexuality [Lewin 2000]. Third, heterosexual researchers overlook the impact of the gay community on survey results for men. All surveys show that gay men report substantially higher numbers of partners than heterosexual men – with the extreme outliers reporting thousands of partners (all male) rather than hundreds, as do heterosexuals. Inevitably, there is some rounding of numbers, as few people keep meticulous records along the lines of Casanova’s memoirs of his 130 lifetime sexual conquests. Some married men who live a heterosexual lifestyle also engage discreetly in gay sex, in bathhouses or in private sex parties. Finally, there is the explanation offered by academics: men exaggerate their sexual conquests, while women tend to minimize the numbers.

<sup>7</sup> Many women experienced unwanted pregnancies, which started to decline from the 1960s onwards. In the 1960s, one-third of pregnant women with three children already said their pregnancy was unwanted; for mothers with four or more children already, half did not welcome the new pregnancy [Cartwright 1978].

lack interest in sexual activity. They are also twice as likely to say they lack enjoyment in sex: 12% compared to 5% of men, but these are small minorities.

TAB. 1. *Lack of Interest in Sexual Activity by Age. Britain, 2010.*

|         | 16-24 | 25-34 | 35-44 | 45-54 | 55-64 | 65-74 | 16-74 |
|---------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Males   | 11    | 15    | 17    | 15    | 16    | 14    | 15    |
| Females | 25    | 32    | 37    | 38    | 39    | 34    | 34    |

Source: Extracted from Mercer et al. [2013]

The imbalance in sexual interest at the macro-level is duplicated at the micro-level among people in relationships. Among couples aged 25 and over, one-quarter of men and one-third of women report an imbalance in sexual interest with their partner. The imbalance is smallest in the 16-24 age group: 15% of young men and 20% of young women report the problem [Mitchell *et al.* 2013, see Table 3].

The sexual deficit first emerges around age 30 *within relationships* (Figure 1). From 30 onwards, female sexual desire typically declines sharply, while the male sexual drive remains lively. The gap between men and women is largest from age 30 to 50, then slowly declines with age. The Finnish survey found that around half of men would like to have sexual intercourse more frequently in their current relationship, compared to less than 20% of women. This indicator suggests that many couples are poorly matched on sexuality, but it does not address men's desire also for a *variety* of sexual partners. So even in the Twenty-First century, one-third of women report no sexual interest and/or an imbalance of sexual interest in a current relationship.

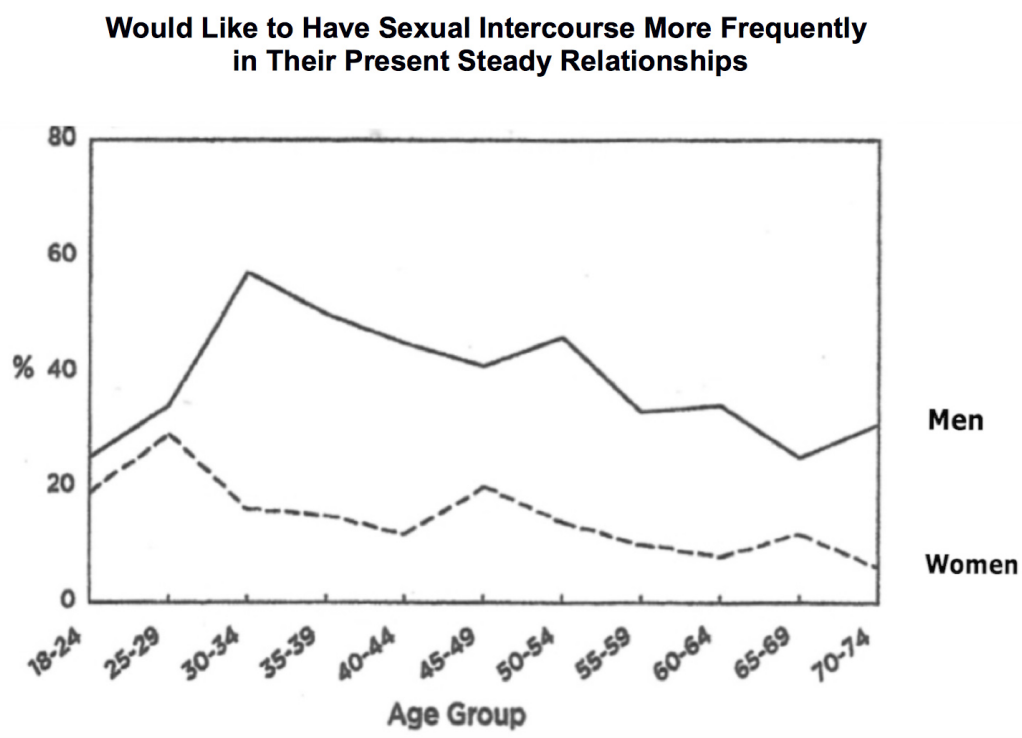


FIG. 1. Sex Differences in Unmet Sexual Desire by Age.

Source: 1992 National Survey in Finland [Reported page 105 in *Sexual Pleasures*, by O. Kontula and E. Haavio-Mannila. Dartmouth: Aldershot, 1995].

An early American study asking spouses about their ideal and actual frequency of sex [Ard 1977] gives consistent results. Husbands' ideal frequency for sex was around 50% higher than the actual frequency, which was close to the wife's ideal frequency. For women, the sexual imbalance is not a problem: male interest is usually available when they want it. For men, the problem can be serious, when a continuing sexual vitality meets female indifference and rejection [Arndt 2009], especially if the man has little sex appeal, few social skills and no wealth to share [Hakim 2015b].

### 3. Difficult Research Findings

One reason for the lack of awareness of the male sexual deficit is that feminist theory dictates that it cannot exist: since men and women are “equal” (symmetrical) in talents and abilities, sexuality must be the same.<sup>8</sup> This is often stated as self-evident,

<sup>8</sup> This is part of a general feminist objection to “essentialist” theories that posit fundamental and ineradicable differences between males and females, and feminist insistence on the “blank slate” view

that a greater male sex drive is another patriarchal myth. Writers do not address the issue explicitly, usually taking the falsehood for granted, and academic journals reject papers that report a greater male sex drive, claiming that this is a tired and out-dated stereotype [Baumeister 2010, 221]. Some feminists even dismiss the idea of a sex drive as a patriarchal myth [Shrage 1994, 141]. Much of this literature was written before the sex surveys reported. However the survey reports seem to have had no impact at all on subsequent sociological and feminist theory, possibly because they are not easy to identify and track down, or have not been translated into English.<sup>9</sup> Instead, academics quote anthropological evidence on small less-developed societies to demonstrate the pliability of sexual behavior and to conclude that sexuality (and even gender itself) is “socially constructed”, not shaped by physiology and genetics. They deny that the sex drive is any stronger in men than in women. They claim the sex drive is a “cultural construction”, just an idea, and that women’s sexuality has traditionally been repressed. For proof, they point to the diversity of sexual cultures around the world. Baumeister and Twenge [2002] and Baumeister, Catanese and Vohs [2001] address and refute these arguments, with evidence.

The argument is also an illogical *non sequitur*. There is even greater diversity in cuisines and food styles around the globe including veganism, vegetarianism, fish-centered cuisines and meat-centered cuisines, even before we get to variations such as cold Japanese sushi and sashimi versus fiery hot and spicy Indian curries. Food styles and cuisines are “socially constructed” and defined by local resources and cultures. But that does not deny the reality of hunger as a natural drive, and eating as a physiological necessity. Hunger is a major motivating force. Lust is also a powerful motivating force, even if culture moulds sexual expression.<sup>10</sup> All the evidence from the national sex surveys and sexuality research points to stronger sexual desire and higher libido among males than among females as a group [Hakim 2015a]. Men’s “obsession” with sex (as women see it) is fact, not fiction, and it often lasts a lifetime, well into the age when men are unable to perform.

Paradoxically, compelling evidence on sex differences in sexuality comes from homosexuals. Lesbian couples enjoy sex less frequently than any other group. Even if they are not all permanent libertines, gay men enjoy sex more frequently than any

of human nature [Pinker 2002]. However neither of these extreme perspectives is supported by the latest research evidence on genetics, social psychology, sexual attitudes and behaviour.

<sup>9</sup> For example, the French, Italian, Norwegian and German surveys have never been translated into English. See Vaccaro [2003]; Hubert, Bajos and Sandfort [1998].

<sup>10</sup> Even Berger and Luckmann [1972, 67, 101 and 202] recognised that sexual expression and food consumption are two intrinsically biological-physiological drives that are moulded by, but not constructed by socialisation processes. These two drives may be malleable to some degree but are never deniable.

other group – both within and outside their primary relationships [Laumann *et al.* 2004, 93-123; Messiah 1998; Mossuz-Lavau 2002]. Even among people who step outside the heterosexual hegemony to develop alternative sexual cultures, men are much more sexually active and promiscuous than women. In Britain, from around 2011 onwards, chemsex parties became popular among gay men. These drug-driven sex orgies could last the whole weekend, and sometimes resulted in death.

The frequency of sexual activity appears to be on the low side in modern capitalist countries, to judge by cross-national comparisons. In some African societies, couples have sex 440 times a year, on average, while neighbouring tribes have much lower frequencies of 230 times a year, on average. In most Western societies, average frequencies are far lower than this, between 24 to 120 times a year, depending on the age group [Hakim 2011, 53-54]. The Puritan ethic and the work ethic seem to be effective bits of social engineering, prompting a reallocation of time, imagination and energy away from sexuality and other pleasures to hard work, ascetism, capital accumulation and achievement in the labour market. Possibly, the higher frequencies of sex among the tiny group of sexual “superactives”, and in the gay community, are closer to “normal” behavior in the absence of social and time constraints.

Kontula has definitively documented the sex differences in sexual desire that persist even in the sexually-liberated Scandinavian countries. He also reveals a puzzling *widening* differential in desire in recent years in Western societies [Kontula 2009, 223 and 225] which continued up to 2015 [Arndt 2015]. There are consistent results from the 2010 British sex survey. This found an increase in the average number of sexual partners, especially among young people, but a *decline* in the frequency of sexual intercourse, among both married and unmarried people [Mercer *et al.* 2013]. Any decline in frequency must increase the male sexual deficit.

There are two possible explanations for this trend. It might be because more women have demanding full-time jobs and are too tired to be interested in sexual games at the end of a long day. Time budget studies show that full-time housewives have the lowest total workload, so housewives might be more sexually lively than wives with jobs. Alternatively, women who are financially independent no longer need to bend towards male sexual demands, or may decide not to have any sexual partner, so they are reducing the supply to sexual markets, or going solo. However American studies find no impact of wives’ paid work hours, income or gender ideology on sexual frequency [Kornrich, Brines and Leupp 2012], which seems to have its own momentum.

Some feminists deny the reality of the male sexual deficit in case it is used to justify male sexual demands, including rape, or male ideas of sexual “entitle-

ment". However the function of social science is to find explanations for social processes. Empirically-based explanations cannot be conflated with moral justifications for sexual coercion. As Rubin [1999] points out, feminist thinking about sex is polarized, with radical feminists presenting (hetero)sexuality with unremitting condemnation and contempt. This does not aid clear thinking and analysis.

#### 4. Sexual Starvation

Does the male sexual deficit really matter? Perhaps celibacy is no more onerous for men than it is for women. However qualitative research, case studies and memoirs indicate that sexual starvation is resented more often, and more intensely, by men than women, especially in Western societies where recreational sex has become the norm. Of course cultures vary greatly in the social controls (or self-control) imposed on libidinous males.<sup>11</sup>

In some cultures, having sex every day is taken for granted by couples, at any age. Impotence is defined by men as the inability to perform daily, at least. One Spanish sex survey had a tick box response for people having sex five times a day or more.<sup>12</sup> Among gay men who visit bathhouses or sex parties, the minimum expectation is one sexual contact, but several (with different partners) would be welcomed, if opportunity allows it. Sex surveys and memoirs (such as Muller [2009]) show daily sex is exceptional among heterosexuals in the Western world.

There are more sex memoirs written by men than by women [Zetterberg 2002, 7 and 36]. These display the constant desire for more sex, and more varied sexual activities and partners, even today in sexually liberated societies of the Twenty-First century. The usual solutions to a sexual deficit in a primary relationship are affairs, casual sex, and commercial sexual services. But unmet sexual desire may also spill over into other contexts, and help explain male sexual harassment of strangers in public places, coercive sex, and high consumption of porn and other erotica, although these are less likely to be described in memoirs.

<sup>11</sup> Despite a 20% surplus of males, rape is rare in China, where it is punishable by death, delivered swiftly. In contrast, with a smaller surplus of males, rape is much more common in India, especially in the North, where the (male-dominated) criminal justice system appears reluctant to pursue or punish rapists, and cases can drag on for up to a decade. The violent rape and murder of a young woman student in Delhi in 2012, with her companion also left for dead, may be changing attitudes in India.

<sup>12</sup> This is considered realistic by some men – as illustrated by an American man who kept a mistress for decades: once in the morning, once on getting home from work, and three times during the night [She and He 2013].

Contemplating marriage finally at the age of 39, a London journalist, Sean Thomas reviews his sexual history to assess whether he has slept with enough women before settling down to monogamy. He calculates that he has slept with 60 women, or 70 if prostitutes are included, and decides this score is average for his peer group. A key feature of his memoirs is his sex holidays in Thailand. He underlines his raging libido and permanent sexual frustration, and reports that the only time he ever felt truly relaxed and calm was during sex holidays in Thailand, when he had as much sex as he wanted, temporarily [Thomas 2006].

Another young man, in this case gay, studied sexual cheating by heterosexual young single men in the United States and Britain. Anderson argues that male sexual cheating is ubiquitous; that men cheat despite loving their partners; that women should understand and accept this; that Western rules of fidelity and monogamy impose intolerable and irrational constraints on men's innate lifelong somatic need for sexual exploration and adventure; that almost all men become sexually bored with their partner roughly two years into a relationship when they decide they need more diversity and novelty; that the only solution, for men at least, is open sexual relationships, as practiced in the gay community. The young men in his study were unmarried university students in steady relationships with girlfriends, including college sport stars. Almost all of them had sexual encounters with other women when they thought they could avoid discovery. Yet almost all these young men denied their girlfriend the same freedom for casual sexual encounters that they demanded for themselves [Anderson 2012].

Male stars in the entertainment and sports industries attract so many "groupies" and fans offering free sex that they rarely experience sexual starvation. This affects the balance of power in their marriages and allows men to impose the sexual double standard on partners [Ortiz 2006].

The misery and frustration of husbands who experience a permanent sex famine because their wives have lost interest in sex are described in studies by Arndt [2009; 2010]. She persuaded 100 Australian couples to keep sex diaries for nine months. The main theme of the entries was the men's daily experience of sexual starvation, and their wives' irritation at men's constant sexual demands. An American social psychologist also underlines the ubiquity of male sexual desire and men's frustration with "stingy" females [Baumeister 2010, 221-248; Baumeister and Vohs 2012].

In contrast, a unique sex memoir by a well-established French art critic, Catherine Millet [2002], admits that her taste for sex orgies and sex parties in her youth was, and remains, very rare among women. She would have sex with dozens of strangers

at these events, organized and supervised by her boyfriend. Women who want more sex usually have no difficulty in finding a plentiful supply of willing males.

## 5. Sexual Economics: Spot Markets versus Marriage Markets

Sexuality can be just as important as money in relationships. Yet it is rarely discussed in sociological and economic theory and research. Theories of prostitution typically ignore sexuality as the main event [Edlund and Kom 2002; Della Giusta, di Tommaso and Strom 2009; but Hakim 2015b is one exception]. One reason for avoiding the topic is that analyses quickly become embroiled in political correctness, and *parti pris* arguments defending the perspectives of (feminist) women or (patriarchal) men. Sexual economics provokes lively debates.

Another problem is that the complexities of bargaining and negotiation in private relationships are not fully accessible to social science research. There are similar problems in relation to the public sphere. There is an invisibly fine line between sexual harassment and mutually enjoyable office flirtations [Williams *et al.* 1999]. Within marriage and long-term relationships, bargains cover such long periods and combine so many factors (including investments in children and property) that the role of sexuality may be hidden or reduced.

Short-term relationships and casual sex provide a more transparent, simpler setting for analysis. There are fundamental differences between marriage markets (long-term relationships) and the “spot market” of short-term liaisons. The spot market includes dating, hookups, casual sex prior to courtship proper, flings and affairs after marriage, and encounters in the commercial sex industry [Hakim 2015b]. As a result of the contraceptive revolution of the 1960s, sexual activity now occurs almost as often in the spot market as within long-term relationships in modern societies. Marriage no longer has the monopoly on sexual expression, as it still does in many developing countries [Wellings *et al.* 2006, figure 5].

Two settings illustrate spot markets for sexuality. Internet dating and commercial sexual services provide two windows on the economics and politics of sexual negotiations – they provide strategic case studies. Internet dating and speed-dating events supply social scientists with real-world social interactions with many of the advantages of laboratory experiments: participants provide photos, profiles and personal information in standardized formats; there are records of the interactions; and outcomes are observable relatively quickly. Research on speed-dating events and internet dating websites shows the usual bias towards homogamy, but also that the exchange of (male) economic capital and (female) erotic capital persists in the Twenty-



First century, at all levels of the occupational structure [Todd *et al.* 2007; Rudder 2014, 47]. In dating contexts where marriage and long-term relationships are ruled out, this exchange becomes dominant [Croydon 2011; Hakim 2012].

Men seeking affairs or a mistress typically prioritise youth, good looks and sex appeal – they choose women with erotic capital. Women have more diverse aims, but many prioritise status and wealth as well as good looks. Women are aware that being attractive “buys” the interest of desirable men. Men are aware that advertising status and wealth “buys” the interest of attractive women. However in spot sexual markets male supply vastly exceeds female supply, by a factor of 10 to 1 or even 20 to 1 [*Ibidem*], unless there is a large compensating economic input from men [Croydon 2011].<sup>13</sup> Spot markets show that female sexuality still has scarcity value.

A case study of internet dating included over 100 interviews with people using websites for extra-marital affairs in London. It reveals that men vilify women who seek to exploit their erotic capital, their scarcity value, and the male sexual deficit by requesting gifts or money. These women, many of them young and stunningly attractive, were criticized and discredited (even by old, bald and unattractive male players) for being cheats, immoral and venal “gold-diggers”. These negotiations prompted the most patriarchal dominance behaviours among male website users, who insisted that women’s sexuality should always be available at no cost (“for free”); that men had the right to control relationships, to set the terms and conditions for any liaison; and men had the right to control women’s behavior [Hakim 2012].

A study of “sugar daddy” dating websites was based on personal experiences over a two-year period by an exceptionally attractive young blonde journalist in London. Here, the exchange of economic and erotic capital is accepted and overt, and negotiations are normally civilized. But here too, men tend to argue that money invariably trumps good looks, so they should be in the driving seat and control relationships, and some men belittle the beautiful women for their presence on the website, even while they date them [Croydon 2011; Hakim 2011, 147-148 and 159-160]. Men often invent stories that redefine the nature of the exchange. For example, they claim they first establish that the girl “really likes me” before they start payments and gifts, or they recast the situation as a “mentoring” relationship. In contrast, such rela-

<sup>13</sup> Men outnumber women by somewhere between 10 to one and 20 to one on dating websites for married people seeking discreet affairs, and on websites catering for casual sex hook-ups more generally. It is only on singles dating websites, where the aim is often long-term relationships, that the numbers of men and women are more balanced, or where women may outnumber men. The only dating websites where women greatly outnumber men are those advertising “sugar daddy” arrangements between successful wealthy and generous men and young attractive women, a clear exchange of economic and erotic capital. Yet even here the most attractive women have the choice of partners [Croydon 2011].

tionships are well-established in many other cultures, such as Brazil, Nigeria, Malaysia, and Japan under the mottoes “No romance without finance” or “No money, no honey” [*Ibidem*].

One way of understanding all this is that men try to conflate the marriage market and the spot market (although they know these are fundamentally different sexual markets) because men can have some leverage in marriage markets, but none in spot markets. The principle of least interest [Waller 1938; Baumeister and Vohs 2004, 342; Hakim 2011, 40, 228 and 233] generally gives women the upper hand in sexual bargaining.

As Woody Allen once commented, “the most expensive sex is free sex.” To get the sex they want, when they want it, many men are prepared to pay cash for it, as this is often a cheaper option than marriage. The sex industry exists because the demand from men is ineradicable, and growing, whereas few women are prepared to pay for sexual entertainment [Hakim 2015b]. Prostitution and sexual services have existed in all societies with a coinage.<sup>14</sup> Criminalising the exchange of money for sexual favours is no more effective than Prohibition was in the USA in eliminating the manufacture and sale of alcoholic drinks. An International Labour Office study of the sex industry around the world concluded that the demand for sexual entertainments of all kinds increases as countries (or individuals) become more affluent and can afford luxuries [Lim 1998]. A study of modern prostitution in capitalist cities by *The Economist* [2014] drew the same conclusion. Overall, the size and dynamism of the global sex industry attest to the much higher value of sexuality for men than for women in all cultures, a value that can be measured by the money that men are prepared to spend on this leisure activity.

Commercial sexual services expose men’s resentment of situations where women exploit the male sexual deficit for personal gain. Women who earn income from selling sexual services, part-time or full-time, are stigmatized and criminalized, or their trade is destroyed by other means. A higher proportion of men than women have sold sexual services,<sup>15</sup> but they are much less likely to be stigmatized and ostracized, and some regard the work as proof of their male virility. In Britain and most other European countries prostitution is legal. However few call-girls would be comfortable announcing their occupation at a dinner party.

Across a wide range of disciplines, scholars admit that men often respond with rage and violence to egalitarian sexual relationships that deprive them of control, and

<sup>14</sup> Experiments with monkeys (capuchins) show that males purchase sex as soon as they learn to use money [Levitt and Dubner 2009, 215-216].

<sup>15</sup> The 2001/2 Australian sex survey found 1% of men had been paid for sex (usually by another man) compared to 0.5% of women.

that pornography helps to fill their need for women who are docile and cooperative [Giddens 1992; Soble 2002]. Men can enjoy porn that humiliates or belittles women as a form of revenge for the attractive women who rejected their advances; porn helps men by showing that men can dominate women sexually [Stoller 1999]. A psychotherapist who specialises in counselling men who are physically violent to their wives and partners draws stronger conclusions. Jukes [1993] says that misogyny is universal, and that men need to control women, to define reality for them and lay down the rules of relationships. As feminists have pointed out, quite a lot of culture, values and social institutions are concerned with ensuring men's access to women on terms favourable to men. Carole Pateman [1988, 194 and 205] calls this the "male sex right", men's right to control their sexual access to women. This required taking control of public institutions, the law, religion, dominant ideologies and culture – the social context for sexual markets.

## 6. Ideological Defences

One (patriarchal) ideological defence recasts the problem as female sexual "stinginess". Another response blames women for causing male desire. Sexual frustration and rejection cause a lot of male anger against women [Baumeister 2010, 221; Baumeister and Vohs 2012]. Men criticize sexual "teasers" – women who awaken male desire but do not offer a sexual encounter. This is a routine situation in erotic entertainments, such as lapdancing clubs, but can happen anywhere. Surveys find that some men consider rape to be justified or excused, at least in part, when teenage girls or women arouse desire through "provocative" styles of dress and appearance, such as wearing sexy or revealing clothing or flirtatious behavior, or even because the woman is known to have had several lovers.<sup>16</sup> This argument rests on the idea that females have an obligation to satisfy male sexual desire. Weaker versions of this ideology underlie male sexual harassment of women in the workplace and other public settings: men demand attention (at the minimum) from attractive females. Some men use physical violence to assert their power over unwilling partners [Scully and Marolla 1990; Jukes 1993]. Using nationally representative data for Britain, Macdowall

<sup>16</sup> A 2005 opinion poll for Amnesty International in Britain found that men regarded a woman as totally or partially responsible for being raped when she had behaved in a flirtatious manner (34%), was wearing sexy or revealing clothing (26%), was drunk (30%), or was known to have had many sexual partners (22%) [ICM 2005]. A study for the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children found similar attitudes among libidinous secondary school students aged 15-17 who put pressure on their girlfriends for sex [NSPCC 2009]. Similar excuses and justifications were offered in a 1980 study of American convicted rapists, many of whom had used weapons to obtain sex by force [Scully and Marolla 1990].

*et al.* [2013] estimate that one in ten females but only one in seventy males have been coerced into sex at least once in their life. The *Slutwalks* campaign that originated in Canada insists that women have the right to dress how they please in public, without giving men the right to impose themselves sexually.

Another ideological defence belittles women's erotic capital as a shallow or waning asset and underlines men's wealth as a solid asset which increases in value. The most developed version of this patriarchal thesis is presented by an academic social psychologist [Baumeister 2010, 240; Baumeister and Vohs 2012]. Echoing some of Goldberg's [1993] arguments in *Why Men Rule* – first published as *The Inevitability of Patriarchy* [1973] – and drawing on evidence presented in *The Myth of Male Power* [Farrell 1993], Baumeister argues that men created all culture, knowledge, institutions, organizations, power and wealth, whereas women have produced almost nothing. Women's talents are focused on interpersonal skills and child-rearing, so they have relied on men to support and defend them. Unlike the earlier defences of male dominance, Baumeister says that society is man-made, literally, because men invest time and effort in pursuing wealth, chasing power, and building organizations and systems in order to exchange these assets for sex with women – in the spot market or in long-term relationships. He argues that it is women who need to exchange sexual favours for male wealth and power, that men have the upper hand in sexual bargaining from the age of 30 onwards, that marriage allows women to exploit men, not vice versa. In effect, men are in charge rightfully, should control relationships with women – and control women themselves [Baumeister 2010].

Sexual politics requires that the male sexual deficit be concealed and denied, and the power and value of female erotic capital (or sex appeal) also be denied, as often happens in the Puritan Anglo-Saxon cultures of Britain and the USA [Rubin 1999; Hakim 2011, 74-102]. Patriarchal ideology argues that women need men even more than men need women, because what men have to offer, in wealth and power, is more valuable than anything women can offer, in sexuality and attractive arm candy (or anything else).<sup>17</sup> There may potentially be a fair and balanced exchange in marriage markets, when male wealth provides long-term support for women and their children in return for regular sex, *inter alia*, all regulated by social customs and the law. However it is not clear that there is always a fair exchange in spot sexual markets, especially when women are earning their own incomes. In spot markets, every couple has to negotiate their own terms for a short-term liaison. In affluent modern societies with equal opportunities policies, high levels of female employment and low

<sup>17</sup> A mischievous essay by the sociologist Esther Vilar [1971] offered the same argument in extreme form.

fertility, spot markets and short-term relationships are just as important as marriage markets and long-term relationships. In all markets, the key process is *exchange*: unless men *transfer* some of their wealth, power and status to sexual partners, there is no exchange. In practice, men seek to transfer as little as possible, to obtain sexual liaisons at the lowest possible price. They choose to believe that they acquire lovers because they are wealthy and powerful, rather than because they are generous with their wealth.

Men seek to dominate positions of power, status and wealth to give themselves a strong bargaining position *vis a vis* women in sexual markets, not to exclude women *per se*. However women's rising status in modern labour markets poses a problem for men, increasing the competition for top jobs, and reducing the male monopoly of public life, status and wealth. In this context, it is perhaps not surprising that in the Twenty-First century we still have problems of rape, sexual harassment in public places, and what Bates [2014] calls "everyday sexism".

## 7. Conclusions

In 1990, Walby argued that private patriarchy was being replaced by patriarchy in the public sphere. We conclude, on the contrary, that private relationships remain the central arena for sexual politics in modern societies in the Twenty-First century. Equal opportunities laws and policies to outlaw sex discrimination have opened up women's access to the public sphere: to education, jobs, careers, status, wealth and power if women want to compete with men. Women's financial dependence on men is now a matter of choice [Hakim 2004]. Women can withdraw from unfair partnerships. Men's dependence on women for sexual liaisons becomes exposed more sharply – by research on sexuality, by dating websites that create transparent sexual markets, by men resorting to "date rape" drugs and physical force to obtain sex, even in sexually liberated modern societies [Macdowall *et al.* 2013]. Recent developments confirm Lerner's conclusion that patriarchal controls over women were never aimed principally at women's work and activities in the public sphere; this was an accidental overspill that has been corrected in modern economies [Henrekson and Stenkula 2009].

Sexual politics is about sexuality, and the relative importance of sexuality for men and women. Patriarchal ideology reaffirms male control of sexual and other relationships alongside male dominance in social and economic institutions. Sociological and economic theory need to pay far more attention to the role of sexuality in both the public and private spheres. Patriarchal institutions and ideologies probably were

created to give men control over women's fertility, as Lerner [1986] argued. In the Twenty-First century, patriarchal cultures and values persist because men still seek to control sexual markets and want to maintain their historical dominance within mating and marriage markets. Despite the sexual liberation offered by the contraceptive pill in the 1960s, the male sexual deficit remains sizeable, and may even be increasing. In contrast, there is a reduction in men's relative economic and social dominance as more women have successful careers in the public sphere. So it is not surprising that the incidence of male sexual violence of all sorts has not vanished in modern societies, the consumption of porn increases steadily, and the sex industry is growing.

Sexual cultures differ, so there is variation in responses to the problem. In Finland, masturbation saves the day, as Kontula [2009, 236] concluded. In other cultures, the male sexual deficit leads to rape and sexual violence – as illustrated by the rape and murder of a young Indian woman on a bus in Delhi in 2012, a not uncommon event in northern India. In Latin societies, the surplus of male sexuality stimulates a culture of eroticism and flirtation, an emphasis on male as well as female erotic capital and on seduction skills. Another potential effect may be an increase in gay male sexual activity in Western societies. The outcome in Puritan Anglo-Saxon cultures seems to be the suppression and control of sexuality through the law, regulations and the criminal justice system – as illustrated by Sweden and Britain, neatly summarized in the legal problems encountered by Julian Assange in London after 2010. In Japan, where sexuality is enjoyed without anxiety or hang-ups, there appears to be a decline in sexual activity, even among young people. Celibacy is accepted by some young people, who even eschew marriage, to the government's consternation at declining fertility.

There is a need for more research on sexuality among heterosexuals – not as a side-issue, a diversion from the central concerns of sociology and economics, but as a central factor in mainstream economics and sociology of life in the Twenty-First century. The focus has to be on heterosexuals, who form around 96% of most populations. The fashionable focus on tiny sexual minorities is not helpful, given fundamental differences between these sexual markets. Sexuality is central to understanding not only the patriarchal practices of the past, but social institutions and attitudes more generally, and contemporary developments in the Twenty-First century.

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## The Sugar in His Tea: Sexuality, Patriarchy and Sexual Politics

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Abstract: The role of sexuality has generally been overlooked in sociological and economic research, partly due to the lack of representative data. We present a new theory of sexuality as the underlying source of patriarchy in the Twenty-First century, drawing on nationally representative surveys, qualitative and case study evidence on sex differences in sexuality. Lerner's [1986] explanation for the *creation* of patriarchy is updated to identify sexuality rather than fertility as the driving force for male attempts to *maintain* male dominance in private and public life today, because recreational sexuality is now more important than reproductive sexuality. Sex surveys across the world carried out in 1990-2010 reveal a persistent sex differential in sexual interest and motivation, resulting in a sexual deficit among men. Strategic case studies of two sexual spot markets (internet dating and commercial sex) illuminate the continuing patriarchal ideological response today to women who exploit the male sexual deficit. The male sexual deficit helps explain the stigmatization of women selling sexual services and entertainments, sexual harassment, sexual violence, and rape – even in Western liberal democracies. The male sexual deficit is increased by women's access to higher education and independent incomes, leading some women to withdraw from sexual and marriage markets. For different reasons, patriarchal men and feminist women often deny the significance of sexuality in sexual politics debates.

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*Keywords: Sexuality; Patriarchy; Sexual Economics; Internet Dating; Commercial Sex.*

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