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# FEMINIST PLATFORMS: FAMILY

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3/10/20

Prof. Janet Werther

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## DEFINITION

### **cult of domesticity:**

An ideology about white womanhood that held that white women were asexual, pure, moral beings properly located in the private sphere of the household.

Importantly, this ideology was applied to all women as a measure of womanhood. The effects of this ideology were to systematically deny working-class white women and women of color access to the category of “women,” because these women had to work and earn wages to support their families. (OST, Ch. 16)

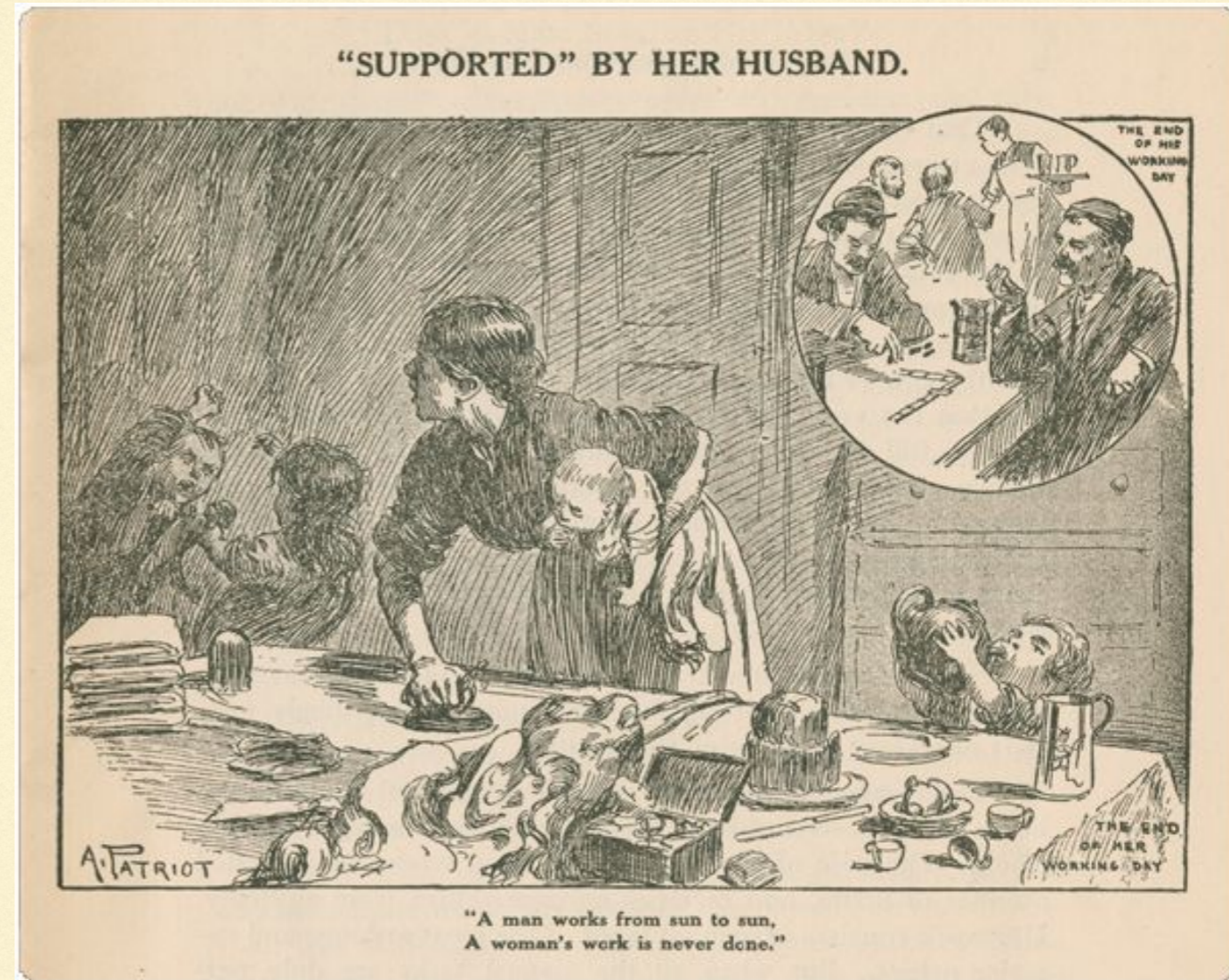


## DEFINITION

### **separate spheres:**

A false split between the publicly-oriented, working father and the privately-oriented domestic mother.

The ideology of separate spheres held that women and men were distinctly different creatures, with different natures and therefore suited for different activities. Masculinity was equated with breadwinning, and femininity was equated with homemaking. (OST, Ch. 16)



**"SUPPORTED" BY HER HUSBAND.**



**"A man works from sun to sun,  
A woman's work is never done."**

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Many iterations of the “women’s movement” have sought to liberate women\* from the domestic sphere & agitate for access to the public sphere.

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- \*based on the norms of the cult of domesticity, “women” in this context means white, middle or upper class, cisgender, heterosexual women.
- “1st wave” feminism & Suffrage
- “2nd wave” feminism & 1960s/70s women’s lib (*The Feminine Mystique* by Betty Friedan, 1963)

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“Since sexism delegates to females the task of creating and sustaining a home environment, it has been primarily the responsibility of black women to construct domestic households as spaces of care and nurturance in the face of the brutal harsh reality of racist oppression, of sexist domination. Historically, African- American people believed that the construction of a homeplace, however fragile and tenuous (the slave hut, the wooden shack), had a radical political dimension. [...] one’s homeplace was the one site where one could freely confront the issue of humanization, where one could resist.”

*–bell hooks, “Homeplace (a site of resistance)”*

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“The ethos of mothering involves valuing *in and of itself*  
a commitment to the survival and thriving of other  
bodies.”

–Cynthia Dewi Oka, “Mothering as Revolutionary Praxis,” 52

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## DEFINITION

### **family:**

When we try to define the word “family” we realize just how slippery of a concept it is (OST, Ch. 16)







# *AND BABY MAKES SEVEN (1984)*

By Paula Vogel

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“Queerness is not yet here. Queerness is an ideality. Put another way, we are not yet queer, but we can feel it as the warm illumination of a horizon imbued with potentiality. We have never been queer, yet queerness exists for us as an ideality that can be distilled from the past and used to imagine a future. The future is queerness's domain.

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—José Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, I

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# The State's Investment in Marriage

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- Presumptive Parenthood
  - Housing Rights
  - Next of Kin
  - Social Security Benefits
  - Applicability for Workplace Benefits
  - Tax Benefits\*  
(\*If you are a single income family or one partner makes significantly more \$)
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# “COMMON SENSE” NOTIONS OF KINSHIP

- **Braschi v. Stahl, 1989**

Determined that a surviving same sex partner could inherit a rent-controlled apartment in NYC bc the men met a “common sense notion of kinship.”

## **Domestic Partnerships**

Enable *some* of the same benefits as marriage (ie next of kin, workplace benefits, etc.) without the religious or romantic presumptions of marriage

## **Parenthood in California Law**

The only US State that allows up to 4 legal parents. Predicated on a court case w/queer parentage, presumed to specifically support LGBTQ+ families. Yet has been utilized most by heterosexual families w/divorce & step parents.

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# The State's Investment in Marriage

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- 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA)
  - Uses the legal benefits system to promote (heterosexual) marriage...
  - Why is this a problem??
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# Beyond Marriage Equality Statement

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- 2006
  - Links issues of (anti)capitalism, racism, and immigration to relationship recognition for LGBTQ+ folks
  - The criminalization of radicalized poverty & the state's interference in family/kinship
  - Chosen Family
  - <http://beyondmarriage2006.blogspot.com/>
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## Dewi Oka's Manifesto

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- Fight for the reproductive integrity and self-determination of all indigenous women, women of color, queer, trans, disabled, and poor women.
  - Work toward sexual justice for genders that are labeled "deviant" by hetero-patriarchal ideology.
  - Reclaim communal responsibility for caregiving, including childrearing and homemaking.
  - Politicize Familial Love
  - Create structures of community accountability around intimate violence.
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## Dewi Oka's Manifesto

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- Advance a justice-centered concept of health and develop autonomous spaces for healing work.
  - Develop radical, mobile, autonomous free schools that centralize the participation of children, youth and people excluded from hegemonic educational institutions.
  - Create structures for the collective distribution of necessary goods.
  - Reclaim the process of art for facilitating collective critical reflection, connectedness and inspiration.
  - Decolonize our relationship to the earth and other living beings.
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WHAT ACTION STEPS CAN WE  
TAKE IN OUR REGULAR LIVES?

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