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## A Good Wife Always Knows Her Place?

In the late 1960s to early 1970s, a new movement of feminism emerged in America. Second wave feminism perhaps began in response to the 1950's housewife stereotype that many women were trying to conform to. Up until 1980, the "head of the household" according to the U.S. Census needed to be a male (Baumgardner 331). In the 1950's, women were subjected to media, advertisements, and society to become the "ideal" housewife. The following is an example of a spread used to stereotypically describe the role of a housewife in a *Housekeeping Monthly* magazine from 1955:

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### *The good wife's guide*

- Have dinner ready. Plan ahead, even the night before, to have a delicious meal ready, on time for his return. This is a way of letting him know that you have been thinking about him and are concerned about his needs. Most men are hungry when they come home and the prospect of a good meal (especially his favourite dish) is part of the warm welcome needed.
- Prepare yourself. Take 15 minutes to rest so you'll be refreshed when he arrives. Touch up your make-up, put a ribbon in your hair and be fresh-looking. He has just been with a lot of work-weary people.
- Be a little gay and a little more interesting for him. His boring day may need a lift and one of your duties is to provide it.
- Clear away the clutter. Make one last trip through the main part of the house just before your husband arrives.

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- Gather up schoolbooks, toys, paper etc and then run a dustcloth over the tables.
- Over the cooler months of the year you should prepare and light a fire for him to unwind by. Your husband will feel he has reached a haven of rest and order, and it will give you a lift too. After all, catering for his comfort will provide you with immense personal satisfaction.
- Prepare the children. Take a few minutes to wash the children's hands and faces (if they are small), comb their hair and, if necessary, change their clothes. They are little treasures and he would like to see them playing the part. Minimise all noise. At the time of his arrival, eliminate all noise of the washer, dryer or vacuum. Try to encourage the children to be quiet.
- Be happy to see him.
- Greet him with a warm smile and show sincerity in your desire to please him.
- Listen to him. You may have a dozen important things to tell him, but the moment of his arrival is not the time. Let him talk first – remember, his topics of conversation are more important than yours.
- Make the evening his. Never complain if he comes home late or goes out to dinner, or other places of entertainment without you. Instead, try to understand his world of strain and pressure and his very real need to be at home and relax.
- Your goal: Try to make sure your home is a place of peace, order and tranquillity where your husband can renew himself in body and spirit.
- Don't greet him with complaints and problems.
- Don't complain if he's late home for dinner or even if he stays out all night. Count this as minor compared to what he might have gone through that day.
- Make him comfortable. Have him lean back in a comfortable chair or have him lie down in the bedroom. Have a cool or warm drink ready for him.
- Arrange his pillow and offer to take off his shoes. Speak in a low, soothing and pleasant voice.
- Don't ask him questions about his actions or question his judgment or integrity. Remember, he is the master of the house and as such will always exercise his will with fairness and truthfulness. You have no right to question him.
- A good wife always knows her place.

This type of woman was encouraged to become dedicated to household work and activities centered on her spouse and family. The exigency for this feminist movement was due to the frustrated at this subordination of women. Activists of second wave feminism took charge. This form of feminism urged women to embrace their gender identity, and become independent from the male sex. It also insisted that women should be treated equally to men. The roles of women were about to change. Groups such as the National Organization of Women (NOW) used tactics such as holding a “Rights Not Roses” event on Mother’s Day. The goal of this event was to show the nation that women should be freely accepted in the workplace, as well as having equal rights to men. On this day, many women dumped piles of aprons on the White House’s lawn.

Though, there were those of second-wave feminism that thought more action needed to occur. Women with strong, rebellious ideas, whom challenged women to dismiss males and grasp the idea of independence, arose. There was a community of these radical feminist who recorded there hysterical thoughts in manifestos to share with the public. A manifesto is a source available to the public, which states aims and goals of a given organization. The *S.C.U.M. Manifesto* by Valerie Solanas, “The Bitch Manifesto” by Jareen Freeman, and “Redstockings Manifesto”, all took the feminist ideas to the next level. This discourse community used their language to gain power in the feminist movement. Solanas completely doubted the purpose for men to even live on this planet. She believed they were “pigs” who did not deserve to exist. Freeman too encourages independence for women from males. She allows people to think that it is acceptable, rather a good thing, to be called a “bitch”. She states that bitches are tough, independent, and strong women, who should be proud of their militant nature. The last manifesto that I will analyze as a part of this discourse community is the “Redstockings Manifesto”. This document is a representation of the core values of the revolutionary left

feminist group, the Redstockings. These groups hoped to tell women that it was their responsibility to break away from the oppressions of the male class in order to become independent female.

So who listened to these manifestos? Solanas wanted to grab women's attention through her provocative language in *SCUM Manifesto*. She hoped to unite women to fight against the "worthless" male species. Here sisterhood was an audience that she hoped to be formed would be "dominant, secure, self-confident, nasty, violent, selfish, independent, proud, thrill-seeking, free-wheeling, arrogant females, who considered themselves fit to rule the universe" (Dederer 56). Freeman wrote her *BITCH Manifesto* without a formal organization. In fact, at the beginning of the manifesto, she clearly states that "BITCH is an organization which does not exist yet" (Crow 226). She recognizes the term "bitch" as not an identity that should be embraced. She states, "A woman should be proud to declare she is a Bitch, because Bitch is Beautiful" (226). Freeman aimed for an audience of women who were interested in becoming powerful, shameless, independent women. The audience of the *Redstockings Manifesto*, on the other hand, was clearly defined. The Redstockings were an established group during second wave feminism. This group is an organization that stands up for women's liberation. In the late 1960s, the audience who followed actions of the Redstockings was those who believed in the ideas their manifesto described.

A constraint that many radical feminists had was that their ideas would not be taken seriously by the public. They are called radical feminists for a reason. The ideas that they expressed were out of the box, and not what society was used to seeing. Viewing these three manifestos, one can conclude that men were classified as the enemy. Though the manifestos were meant to be provocative, bold, and contradictory of what many people believed during this

time period (Crow 6). According to an article from The American Journal of Sociology, Aldon Morris states that the downfall of the radical feminists was that they stated that all women were the same, and that they put gender issues above the importance of race and class issues (Morris 801).

Every ideology has a beginning. There is typically a defining moment in which an ideology motivates the interest of others. Second-wave feminism began full throttle in the late 1960s to early 1970s in response to the domestic image women were portrayed as in the 1950s. Deborah Siegal describes in her book, *Sisterhood Interrupted*, the urgency for this movement to take action as a “national attack on domesticity” (Siegal 1). Notable events preformed during second wave feminism include the Miss America protest in 1969, where women freely threw stereotypical women items, such as aprons and high heels, into trashcans, N.O.W.’s “Rights, Not Roses” protest, and political actions supporting abortion and women’s reproductive rights (2). There were some women who pushed the ideas of second wave feminism to the next level. These radical feminists of this time period had their own framework of ideas and beliefs.

The manifestos of Radical feminists, such as Valorie Solanas, Joreen Freeman, and the Redstockings clearly state their core beliefs and values. There is a framework of beliefs and values for the ideology of radical feminists’ manifestos during the late 1960s to early 1970s. The three manifestos in which I examine, share different ideas; however they all have a similar core belief that bonds them. The manifestos of Radical feminists, such as Valorie Solanas, Joreen Freeman, and the Redstockings clearly state their core beliefs and values. The major idea that many of these women made as the essence to their ideology is that men are the enemy in society. The manifestos would take this idea, and lay it out into a detailed document, with information supporting it. The manifestos were the sacred text for many of the people of this ideology.

Radical feminists would look to these documents as support for their beliefs, as well as a testament of this ideological community.

In Solanas's *SCUM Manifesto*, she dismisses the importance and purpose of men. Solanas states, "Every man deep down, knows he's a worthless piece of shit" (Crow 203). She criticizes the male species as pointless, and a mistake. Freeman's *Bitch Manifesto* illustrates the idea that women should embrace their independence and power. She urges women to become a Bitch, and be proud of it. With control, Freeman mentions, "Bitches are good examples of how women can be strong enough to survive even the rigid, punitive, socialization of our society" (228). In the view of Freeman, a Bitch is a survivor to all the evils women must face from society. The Redstockings is an organization that focuses on women liberation. Their goals in their manifesto were to gain freedom from male supremacy.

In society, we tend to label people on whether they are crazy or reasonable, and based on that, we choose how we understand the information presented by that individual. As mentioned before, the ideas of radical feminist during this time period we seen as madness. Discourse is a language of expertise expressed by the language of a community. It is meant to keep communities together. Communities support the discourse, funding power to it, which keeps non-communities members out. Michel Foucault describes prohibition as an order of discourse. He states, "It does not matter if the discourse appears to be of little account, because the prohibitions that surround it very soon reveal its link with desire and with power" (Foucault 1461). Second wave feminism's goal was to fix the inequalities that women faced compared to men. These manifestos took the feminist ideas of second wave feminism to the extreme. The ideas in all three manifestos entered the realm of prohibition. The thoughts expressed were the forbidden speech in society.

It is important to understand the authors of these manifestos in order to comprehend the madness that revolved around them. As Foucault suggests, “The author is what gives the disturbing language of fiction its unities, its nodes of coherence, its insertion in the real” (Foucault 1465). To exemplify the connection between madness and an author, we can look at the history of Solanas and her actions following writing the manifesto. Her ideas were insulting to the male race and she was not apologetic of the way she wrote in her manifesto. Solanas was not opposed to violence, if it meant saving the women’s species from men. If men did not agree with the proposition of SCUM, Solanas threatened that “SCUM will kill all the men who are not in the Men’s Auxillary of SCUM” (Crow 218). Solanas was perceived by non-feminist a madwoman. Solanas became obsessed with the ideas that she displayed in *SCUM Manifest*. With fear of famous artist, Andy Warhol, taking her ideas, Solanas shot him three times in the chest, an attempted murder. Shortly after doing so, she turned herself in to the police. Solanas was charged with attempted murder, assault, and illegal possession of a gun (Solanas 54). She was sent to Bellevue Psychiatric Center, then later, Ward Island Hospital to be cared for. It is fascinating to note that Solanas was not remorseful for what she had done. In an interview, she commented, “I consider that a moral act. And I consider it immoral that I missed. I should have done target practice” (Kaufman et al. 204). This statement by her proves that she believed so strongly in her radical ideas, that if violence was necessary to protect them, than it should be done.

Prohibition is when discourse uses a forbidden topic or language that may not be accepted by the community. Foucault describes prohibition when he states, “We do not have the right to say everything, that we cannot speak of just anything in any circumstances whatsoever” (1461). Though, the *Bitch Manifesto* challenges the word “bitch”, which is seen negatively in

society. Freeman hopes to transform this word from an insult, to a compliment that women should embrace. Doing so, she is shattering the prohibition surrounding this word by explaining her theory of this word. She transforms the word “bitch” from being a derogatory term, into an expression of women’s beauty. Freeman argues that one can be feminine as well as being considered as an actual human, not someone subordinate to a man. A bitch is someone who does not fit the stereotypical model of a woman during this era, but rather a woman who does not compete with society, rather challenges their norms. This type of woman is not shy, but aggressive, extroverted, strong, and confident.

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