

Look at work and family sociology essay

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SOC 3030-800 Work and Family The doctrine of separate spheres is an ideology that states that there are separate spheres of life: the public sphere and the private sphere. Life in the public sphere takes place outside the home, for example in the workplace. The private sphere is home and family life. The doctrine states the two spheres do not overlap. According to the doctrine, men should be in the public sphere, which includes working outside the home and taking part in politics. The women's sphere consists of the home: cleaning, raising children, maintaining relationships with kin.

Traditionally men are known as the breadwinners and women as the homemakers. The separate spheres are arranged in a way that men rarely have to concern themselves with home responsibilities. The woman is there to take care of anything that comes up with the house or the children, so the man can completely commit himself to his work. In Veronica Jaris Tichenor's article, "Gendered Bargain: Why Wives Cannot Trade Their Money for Housework," she describes how the separate spheres intersect with one another for women who work outside the home. According to Tichenor, women have not replaced housework with jobs outside the home, but "have simply added paid employment to their duties as wives and mothers." (2005)

For example, research shows that women who work outside the home are still responsible for a majority of the domestic work, and therefore end up working longer hours each week than their husbands considering work inside and outside the home. Spillover from the public sphere into the private sphere puts time constraints on women as their duties outside the home affect the time they have to complete their duties inside the home. The article's title raises the question, 'Why don't wives who make more money get to opt out of housework?' Studies show that while men have assumed <https://assignbuster.com/look-at-work-and-family-sociology-essay/>

more of the household responsibility when their wives outside the home, the amount of household work they have taken on is not enough to make a substantial impact on the domestic duties of their wives. In fact, it is likely that men are taking on more duties in the home simply because their wives do not have the time to do them (Tichenor, 2005.) So the income of the wives is irrelevant to amount of housework that is expected of them. In fact, Tichenor states that when women make more money than their husbands, men execute very little to no domestic duties (Tichenor, 2005.) The public sphere and the private sphere are separate and distinct for men, who have little expectation of performing domestic duties when they are employed outside the home. However, when a woman is employed outside the home, she is still expected to perform the domestic duties she would be expected to do if she was not employed. Another example of how the two spheres are not exclusive of one another is in the article titled, " The Work-Home Crunch" by Kathleen Gerson and Jerry A. Jacobs. This article states that families with dual-earner families with children are more likely to work shorter workweeks than those without children (Gerson and Jacobs, 2004). This means that the private sphere is having a direct influence over the amount of time spent in the public sphere. In most families with dual-earners, the parents are willing to sacrifice time at work and income to make room for time with their children. The amount of control a person has in the shaping of their work and family life has a lot to do with gender. For example, because women are expected to take care of the domestic duties, it is more acceptable (in general) to employers if a woman has to take time off from work for her children. The label of " family man" implies that a man is not as dedicated to his job as a man without children. Role conflicts emerge as men and women

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try to balance the expectations of their families with those of their jobs. Social class affects how a person balances their two spheres as well. People with low-paying or temporary jobs find it more difficult to take time off for their families because unskilled jobs are easier to fill than jobs that require a skill or higher education. This places a serious strain on the family because of work demands. It is more difficult for people in lower social classes to separate their public and private spheres. Reproductive labor is considered to be work that is done on a daily basis that usually benefits the family. This work is considered to be woman's work. Child care, cooking, cleaning, laundry, and preparing the family for school and work are all considered reproductive labor. It is also known as invisible work because it is not paid, and the only time it is noticed it is when it is not done. The doctrine of separate spheres still has a major impact on the division of labor in most households today. In Tichenor's article, the conventional marriage contract is compared with the reality of domestic labor distribution between spouses when both spouses work. The conventional marriage contract is an implied agreement that holds that the spouse who makes the most money is exempt from doing the most housework. This arrangement works well when the man is the only one working outside the home. But the two spheres get mixed up when the woman goes to work outside the home. In spite of the fact that most women work outside the home today, reproductive labor has not become more equal. A majority of housework is gendered and is still considered to be the woman's responsibility. Men do yard work and repairs, while women are responsible for the work inside the home like cooking, cleaning, and laundry. Husbands of wives that work outside the home still only do about half of the housework their wives do. When women work

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outside the home, their contribution to household duties decreases while men's increases. Yet the lion's share of the domestic responsibility still lies with the women. Men often look at their domestic role as optional, and seem to be more apt to pick and choose the duties they want to perform in the home. Tichenor (2005) writes that the tasks men choose to do are frequently more enjoyable (entertaining the children) than necessary (cleaning a bathroom.) Men's "optional" participation in household duties is an example of the power struggle between husbands and wives. Children are helping less around the house as well, which puts even more of a domestic burden on the wives. When I was growing up, my father worked full time at a psychiatric hospital and my mother worked part time at a regular hospital. When my brother and I were too young to be home alone, my mother only worked evenings, so that they would only have to pay a babysitter for a couple of hours between the time mom had to leave for work and when dad got home. Both of my parents were very concerned with the house being clean, but I don't recall my father doing a lot of the indoor housework. He would work outside or do repair projects while my mother was concerned with housework. My father has always loved to cook, though, so he has always helped with the cooking in the house. He also played an active part in childcare. Because my mother worked a lot of evenings, it was up to dad to take us to activities like scouts and sports. My family's experiences are a lot like the families in our readings in that the two spheres melded together and made my parents work their job schedules around caring for my brother and me. For example, even though my mother worked late evening hours, she was the one responsible for getting up early with us in the mornings, making our lunches, and coming to get us from school if we were sick. My father's

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job was considered more important because he made more money. This concept illustrates the conventional marriage contract discussed by Tichenor in "Gendered Bargain": my father's larger income translated to less responsibility for household tasks. The doctrine of separate spheres is an outdated ideology that assumes that men are the sole breadwinners and women are homemakers, and that the public and private spheres do not intermingle. But in today's society, more women work outside the home than don't. So why haven't the expectations regarding the division of domestic responsibilities evolved along with the need for two incomes per household? The men's spheres have remained separate while the women's spheres are intertwined. The power struggle between men and women continues in this as well as many other aspects of modern society. Resources Gerson, Kathleen and Jerry A. Jacobs. 2004. "The Work-Home Crunch." *Shifting the Center*, pgs. 626-635. Kelly, E. Brooke. 2007. "Work and Family." Retrieved February 24, 2013 https://blackboard.uncp.edu/courses/1/SOC-3030-800-801-802-S13/content/_1300462_1/dir_WorkandFamily.zip/index.html. Tichenor, Veronica J. 2005. "Gendered Bargain: Why Wives Cannot Trade Their Money For Housework." *Shifting the Center*, pgs. 666-678.