

The bonds of womanhood by nancy cott



Nancy Cott, the writer and editor of 'The Bonds of Womanhood', aimed at analyzing the lives of American women in the 19th century and also discussing on the thought of "separate spheres." She also involved true womanhood cult in the context of his book. Cott's book covers a social history that took place in New England between 1780 and 1835. Her research work covers personal narratives as well as prescriptive literature. The writer was inspired by the fact that during the 19th century women were idealized by men as godly mothers and ideal examples of virtue. She introduced the principle of domesticity which tackles the idea of women providing a happy environment or rather sanctuary for men while at home. In most occasions, women were idealized and marginalized by men in the society. The writer in this case portrays women as domestic defenders according to the way they were being treated during that period. In this case, women are not treated as passive victims by the author but instead she uses women to indicate true womanhood by the way they actively helped in creating an ideal vision of being a woman.

This paper will primarily focus on Nancy Cott's book "The Bonds of Womanhood" that covers the aspect of woman's Sphere during the 19th century period in New England.

Women's Sphere in the Bonds of Womanhood

This book is a classic work established by Nancy Cott relating to the history of women in the 19th century. Cott remains the best historian of oppression and women's bond. She also foresaw domesticity bond tendency that led to feminism about 20 years ago. Her work has become an inspiration to most women and creates a way through which women can be understood easily

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by the society. Looking at the preface of the book, issues are raised that are of contemporary importance to every reader of this book. Cott lays most of her emphasis on the voices of women which acts as her primary source when writing the book. Nancy Cott builds a sense of different forms that resulted to the oppression of women. In addition, Cott tries to highlight the role that women took in America during the age of early capitalism.

The author uses her collection to mark the beginning of her appreciation on the changes brought about by the growth of capitalism during the early nineteenth century in America. In her study work, Cott examines changes that occurred in the society between 1785 and 1830. The author compared different family types that existed in New England during that time period putting into consideration records and diaries written by women. Cott puts forward that a separate sphere for women was created following the market revolution that took place in America during the early stages. The women's "sphere" was domesticity that behaved as a form of feminist "space." What's more is that she outlines a "private sphere" to indicate a separate sphere where women were positioned. With relation to the private sphere, the author's argument is that it can also be phrased as a "domesticity cult." Nancy Cott highlights that movements of proto-feminism were brought about through acts of women forging bonds via associate homemakers and churches as a result of domesticity cult in early nineteenth century.

Additionally, Cott's intention was to define the role that women took before mid 19th century. She used journals and letters written by New England Women. The author incorporates several women aspects that took place during the late 18th century and early 19th century. Her first part of study is <https://assignbuster.com/the-bonds-of-womanhood-by-nancy-cott/>

the work area. She points out that looking at the economic life; women appeared to be more secondary than men. On top of this is that a woman's earnings and property were considered to belong to the husband or any other male relative. According to Cott, the work for women was more need driven as compared to men's work which was time disciplined, regulated and constrained. With time, women's work became seasonally determined which differed depending on family needs. She goes on further to accede that women who were young and unmarried had more flexibility in terms of employment especially in teaching areas and textile mills. Nonetheless, she argues that work done was intended to generate income for the family and not for personal support.

Nancy Cott keeps her perspective by examining the impact on women especially as they were left at home by male exodus who considered themselves as breadwinners. Her point was that while women labored more at home, men worked outside homes as a sign of toil division that was based on gender differences. The author's view on domesticity features on the need for a woman's commitment to married life and family be it an extended family or a nuclear family of close blood relations. Cott's way of thought is that during this period, the roles carried out by married women started to resemble those of men. Her definition of domesticity is a woman's ability to manage a home, organize tasks and establish an economical household which becomes time disciplined and well regulated.

With relation to Cott's findings, the role of mothers was placed at a higher relief following the loss of women acting as providers and domestic manufacturers. Cott considers that the future of the generation to come

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depends on how mothers attend to their children. The author foresees an increase in opportunities in fields of religious expression and education as a result of encouragement.

Women who were young and unmarried got the chance to teach girls' schools. The overall idea was to support future mothers who would educate the future citizens as the number grew. This led to the growth of women scholars as well as teachers. This broadened the curricula for young women who had accomplished their education. Furthermore, new authors were hosted following an increase in literacy that came about due to increased education. This led to the expansion of publishing industry with the majority being women. Cott continues to emphasize on how the model of religion that came into being established opportunities for the women in particular to move to the sphere of publicity as guardians for morals and reformers.

Conclusion

Cott focused on the theme of moral authority as seen in many families in modern society. This has caused a lot of questions to arise among many scholars. Nancy Cott applied the concept of having 'women's sphere' to indicate the importance of female gender in the society inclusive of evangelical Christianity. This promotes women in areas which they are deemed with relation to their sex. According to Cott, the bonds declared by the society for women's activities strengthened the sisterhood connection between women. This helped in perpetuation of the bond that restricted women in their sphere.