

## Cooperative reorganizing by relying on feminine rationality

Samiramis Shah-Esmailie<sup>#1</sup>- Anahita Eslah-Pazir<sup>2</sup>

- Introduction and subject statement

The traditional conservative discourse believes that women's identity possesses a strong emotional aspect due to the natural cycle of childbirth and child care, and thereby, considers their presence to be inefficient in major managerial, governing, and decision-making positions that require instrumental rationality. In this sense, motherhood is directly related to the exclusion of women and their marginalization. In contrast, extremist feminist approaches separate motherhood as a costly choice from femininity by defending the presence of women in the public sphere. Both approaches put women in an unrealistic, ideological, and limited situation and cut their connections off from life issues. This paper was focused on answering the question, as an alternative to the two approaches, “Can maternal experience pave the ground for entering the public arena?” The results of a theoretical review of the literature suggest that governance in cooperatives is an accessible position for women, which seems to be consistent with the motherhood style and creates special management styles. To answer that question, this research utilized a qualitative approach to theoretical review and used a descriptive-analytical method and a library technique.

- The controversial issue of motherhood in the eyes of the right-wing and left-wing

Gender, and consequently motherhood, have been always an argumentative and controversial issue among different social currents. In the traditional right view, female biology has a definite aspect and will be her destiny. In this approach, maternal behavior is the function of the mother's instinct and originates from nature and human biology (Evelyn Reid, 2003). This view considers the priority of women's activity to play the role of mothering. In contrast, contemporary leftist approaches see gender, and consequently motherhood, as an unnatural, constructive, and contextual identity. In contemporary approaches, motherhood is a manifestation of communications in the historical, social, economic, and even racial spaces (Glenn, 1994). This approach has transformed motherhood in the heart of social changes from a natural to a selective process; changes like the growth of employment and education rates of women, increasing the age of marriage, and the development of medical knowledge allowing the regulating of pregnancy and its termination. However, Western feminism as a proponent of women's freedom has hardly succeeded to explain life and its real issues. Claiming the gaining equality for women, they reduced motherhood to reproduction and launched the project to masculinize

---

<sup>1</sup> #Ph.D.Student in Sociology, Iran

<sup>2</sup> \*M.A. in MBA, Iran

women. Many pro-feminist women and girls and supporters of the sexual revolution finally gained well-off jobs and conditions in their middle-aged but their fertility has also decreased and turned into a distant dream.

- A new approach to motherhood

The family-oriented feminism is a recent movement that tries to establish a more real relationship with women's lives. They believe that motherhood is an integral part of women's lives and apt to manifest special capacities in the private sphere, which can be extended to the public domain. They see motherhood as a choice for women and a style of being of a human with the requirements of female biology. In the private sphere, motherhood is defined in the sense of childbirth, attention and care, the satisfaction of maternal, emotional, and psychological needs and feeling responsibility towards them as well as establishing relationships that meet their needs. Motherhood puts women in an active position; a mother raises and preserves the child through agency and feels more serious accountability and a sense of responsibility. In this situation, the woman lives a more moral realm in the private sphere (meaning sacrifice and giving priority to the other) and develops her communication aspects aimed at taking care of her child. Sociologists have discovered that a family is a place of peace in this cruel time and that women, as mothers and wives, are the guardians of this paradise. Catharine Beecher and Harriet Beecher Stowe were American social critics who believed that women must increasingly preserve family values in the age of individualism (Budig, 2004: 418). Living in the private sphere of motherhood develops certain behavioral patterns that can be expanded in the public sphere.

- Motherhood and entering the public realm

Women's homes and family roles are a source of power and wisdom, which seem to be useful for making the world a better place. The experience of motherhood in the private realm of women turns into the thought of motherhood, which can be extended to the public domain as a way and style of life. The caring role of women in maternal activities, including childbirth, care and maintenance of children, raising them, protecting and nursing them, and preparing them to enter and be accepted into a larger community appears to be prominent and provides the ground for the development of peace in the public sphere. Roddick also emphasizes the maternal thinking with the values and ways of the motherly insights embedded within its context, and by evaluating Gandhi's model of peace-building without violence, with forgiveness, resistance, reconciliation, and the maintenance of peace, he believes that these elements are genuinely living in the motherly thinking (Humm, 2003, 124 & 269).

The role of motherhood is influential in creating social solidarity in the public sphere since motherhood is a center of gravity that creates and develops the networks of human relations and links the private sphere to the public sphere on this path. Roderick is another family-oriented theorist who considers maternal thinking to be derived from maternal experience and sees motherly activity as a kind of motherly thinking, which provides

the ground for avoiding violence, fostering and establishing peace with the potential to create and maintain a community through intimate and friendly relationships and communication. In his view of point, these features of this thinking provide a basis for adopting a non-violent approach to resolving issues, which is initially inspiring in the individual scope and then at the national and international scales. According to his belief, motherly work embodies the ideals of free of violence, forgiveness, avoiding violence, resistance, reconciliation, and peace (Budig, 2004: 429).

- Governance with a cooperative approach (cooperative and its democratic aspect)

Cooperatives are socially and economically autonomous structures that are democratically managed and governed. Cooperative governance is derived from public control and persuasion. Participation and responsibility are the two core pillars of a cooperative, which ensure its sustainability. The motherhood care-like approach as a behavioral style significantly resembles the type of cooperative governance. Sympathy, empathy, compassion, love, and cooperation are the obvious and explicit characteristics of motherhood that are identical and similar to the structure of cooperation.

Meanwhile expressing some concerns about criticizing the alpha (male) style regarding women working outside the home, which is predominant in the field of work and is a quantitative and abstract analysis, Friedan sought to create a beta (feminine) management that is qualitative and holistic. In her perspective, the first style does not belong to women; rather, it is equally available to men equally and men need to employ this way of thinking as a means to promote tolerance, diversity, and consensus (Wilford, 342). Elshtain writes that women's experiences as mothers bring them such superiority as mothers that they can be utilized in governing the world. She claims that people in the family are exposed to the best experiences of human relationships: Long-term relationships, necessities and mutual responsibilities, intimacy, care, and attachment. Moreover, the family is the only place in the capitalist world where people find love and peace. For, it is the only place where profit and benefit are not the ultimate goals of the individuals. For the same reason, home is the only place where people learn fair behavior, compassion, ethics, and responsibility. Elshtain claims that if these qualities are passed on to people through a good mother and if such a process of care and attention is extended to society, substantial changes will occur in the structural foundations of rights, responsibilities, and laws. The family will create an ethic of accountability to society and others; however, the current process prefers individual freedoms to ethical orientation (Budig, 2004: 427). Elshtain claims that although the family's emotional bonds are fragile and vulnerable, however, the very same links keep the views and values alive that guide the family members towards true self-esteem, honesty, loyalty, and collective support. According to her, the family is an institution that has more capacity than any other institution to bond people to each other in a way other than what the market defines. Elshtain acknowledges the occurrence of misbehavior and neglect

in the family; however, she considers them as the outcome of failure and cruelty resulting from exchange relations and market values, not the inherent feature of the family (Somerville, 2009, 170).

- Conclusion

This theoretical review revealed that the elements of motherhood have the potential to be extended to the public domain. Motherhood involves unique traits that may be transformed into a special style of governing in the public domain and in the public arena. Cooperative is one of the most similar structures to the motherhood style in terms of social structure and approach, and thus, cooperative governance can follow maternal characteristics. The following table provides an overview of the principles of cooperation, the similar maternal characteristics, and the management styles that are inspired. In fact, governance in the cooperative (cooperative governance) can be restructured and reorganized with feminine rationality and motherly style, and with the mentioned management methods. Accordingly, the principles of cooperation will lead to a special self-ruling with a female reading.

	<b>Cooperative principles</b>	<b>Motherhood style in a theoretical review</b>	<b>Feminine governance style in cooperatives</b>
1	Free membership	Flexibility and acceptance  Friendly relationships, creating community	Flexible management
2	Democracy and public control	Ethical-orientation	Democratic management
3	Participation  Economic participation of members	Participation and cooperation in raising children  Economic participation for the survival and upbringing of children  Persuasion and conversation	Persuasive management
4	Cooperation between cooperatives	Collaboration and assistance	Delegated management
5	Self-government and independence	Independence and resistance	Participatory management
6	Training and updating	Creativity, innovation	Transformational management
7	Paying attention to society	Pacifism	Justice-oriented management

Table 1. The conformity of cooperation principles with motherhood style and managerial types

- References

1. Bostan, Hossein., *Inequality and Gender Oppression from the Perspective of Islam and Feminism*, Seminary and University Research Institute, Qom, 2008.
2. Somerville, Jennifer., *Feminism, and the Family (Politics and Society in the United States and the United Kingdom)*, Mahmoud Arghavan, Research Institute for Cultural and Social Studies, Tehran, First Edition, 2009.
3. Wilford, Rick., *An Introduction to Political Ideologies, The Feminism Article*, Mohammad Ghaed, Markaz Publishing, Tehran, Third Edition, 2011.
4. Humm, Maggie., Gamble, Sarah., *The Culture of Feminist Theories*, Farrokh Gharadaghi, Noushin Khorasani, and Firoozeh Mohajer, Roshangaran Publishing and Women Studies, Tehran, 2003.
5. Evelyn Reid, Translated by Fata Mohammadi, *Hezarey-e Sevvom Publishing*, Tehran, First Edition, 2003.
6. Michel Budig, *Feminism and the Family: The Blackwell Companion to the Sociology of Families*. Edited by Jacqueline Scott, Judith Treas, and Martin Richards. Copyright © 2004 by Blackwell Publishing Ltd. 419.
7. Evelyn Nakano Glenn, 1994. *Mothering: Ideology, Experience, and Agency*.
8. Friedman, Marilyn. and Bolte, Angela. (2007). *Ethics and Feminism*, in: *The Blackwell Guide to Feminist Philosophy*, Edi. By Linda Martin Alcoff and Eva Feder Kittay, Malden, Blackwell Publishing Ltd.
9. Sara Ruddick, *Maternal Thinking: Toward a Politics of Peace* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1986), p. 5