

THE POLITICAL THEORY WORKSHOP PRESENTS . . .

SOME CONSIDERATIONS ON THE MATERNAL CONTRACT

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with Deng Yinghao, Political Science, as discussant*

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Scholars of maternal politics have traditionally characterized maternal activism as a social movement, a performance, a protest, and, lately, as a public expression of precariousness. These accounts of maternal politics have helped to illuminate the relationship between maternal activism and citizenship by analyzing the ways in which mothers' groups from different localities work to challenge—and sometimes to legitimize—political regimes. However, most scholars overlook the relationship between maternal activism and sovereignty. This chapter develops the concept of the maternal contract by reading the social contract tradition in political philosophy alongside public statements, manifestos, and televised interviews of maternal activists. Orozco Mendoza argues that the proliferation of mothers' collectives reveal the existence of a subaltern social contract—the maternal contract—whereby minoritized peoples are left to undertake crucial functions of sovereignty due to a pervasive context of extreme violence and institutional abandonment. By offering this argument, the chapter contributes to the study of sovereignty within political theory by suggesting that political theorists engage maternal activists to broaden our understanding of power and in-security in the twenty-first century.



Elva Orozco Mendoza is an assistant professor of political science at Texas Christian University. Her research interests include extreme gender violence, democratic theory and practice, protest politics and political action in Latin America, critical approaches to state sovereignty, and comparative political theory. Orozco Mendoza's research has been published in journals, including *Theory & Event*, *New Political Science*, and the *Journal of Latin American Geography*. In fall 2019, Orozco Mendoza received the Claudia V. Camp Research and Creativity Award for academic excellence at Texas Christian University. She is a 2020 Woodrow Wilson Career Enhancement Fellow.