
Candice Leonard
University of New Hampshire, Durham

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Abstract
This project explores the question of women's expectations and experience across the transition to parenthood. Specifically, the source of women's unmet expectations about the genderedness of household division of labor and familywork are examined, bridging the literatures on expectation formation and information-seeking behavior.

The centerpiece of the study is a comprehensive, context-sensitive analysis of the fatherhood discourse in Parents Magazine from 1929 through 1994, which uses both quantitative and qualitative methods. Importance is placed on the fact that this is primarily a male-produced discourse that defines fatherhood for women. It was found that there are significant differences by author sex in how family life is depicted, the degree of father involvement, and the particular tasks fathers perform. Parenting tasks are deconstructed and their meanings for men and women are explored.

Results show nonlinear variation over time, and that superficial but compelling depictions of referent fathers (the articles' subjects) as compared with fathers-in-general (real men in the real world) create an impression of great decline in the genderedness of parenting roles, while gendered parenting is implicitly endorsed. Unlike most content analyses, this project recontextualizes observed themes back into the text in light of other themes, and also looks at the text within a context of contemporaneous cultural events and trends.

Mass media are conceptualized as the link between the individual and social structure, such that analyses of the popular culture disseminated by mass media suggest a method for transcending the micro/macro dichotomy within sociology. While much social science research assumes popular cultural messages have an impact on individuals, this framework provides a logical premise on which to base that conclusion--in this case, that messages about gendered parenting inform women's expectations about family life with children.

Whether this text contributes to discrepant expectations and thus to poor adjustment to parenthood, or, whether the text invites oppositional readings and is an agent of change is explored. The desirability of reducing the discrepancy between expectations and experience is questioned, and interventions are considered.

Keywords
Sociology, Individual and Family Studies, Women's Studies, Mass Communications

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ILLUSIONS OF CHANGE:
AN ANALYSIS OF THE FATHERHOOD DISCOURSE IN
PARENTS MAGAZINE, 1929-1994

by

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B.A., Queens College, 1977
M.A., Teachers College, Columbia University, 1978

DISSERTATION

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the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Sociology

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May 3, 1996
Date
For
Janna and Adam
and their 21st century families
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managing my occasional inclination toward commentary and colloquialism, and for not assuming -- as others have in the past -- that these forms of expression are incompatible with being a serious scholar.

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ABSTRACT

ILLUSIONS OF CHANGE: AN ANALYSIS OF THE FATHERHOOD DISCOURSE IN PARENTS MAGAZINE, 1929-1994

by

Candice Leonard
University of New Hampshire, May, 1996

This project explores the question of women's expectations and experience across the transition to parenthood. Specifically, the source of women's unmet expectations about the genderedness of household division of labor and familywork are examined, bridging the literatures on expectation formation and information-seeking behavior.

The centerpiece of the study is a comprehensive, context-sensitive analysis of the fatherhood discourse in Parents Magazine from 1929 through 1994, which uses both quantitative and qualitative methods. Importance is placed on the fact that this is primarily a male-produced discourse that defines fatherhood for women. It was found that there are significant differences by author sex in how family life is depicted, the degree of father involvement, and the particular tasks fathers perform. Parenting tasks are deconstructed and their meanings for men and women are explored.

Results show nonlinear variation over time, and that superficial but compelling depictions of referent fathers (the articles' subjects) as compared with fathers-in-general
(real men in the real world) create an impression of great decline in the genderedness of parenting roles, while gendered parenting is implicitly endorsed. Unlike most content analyses, this project recontextualizes observed themes back into the text in light of other themes, and also looks at the text within a context of contemporaneous cultural events and trends.

Mass media are conceptualized as the link between the individual and social structure, such that analyses of the popular culture disseminated by mass media suggest a method for transcending the micro/macro dichotomy within sociology. While much social science research assumes popular cultural messages have an impact on individuals, this framework provides a logical premise on which to base that conclusion -- in this case, that messages about gendered parenting inform women's expectations about family life with children.

Whether this text contributes to discrepant expectations and thus to poor adjustment to parenthood, or, whether the text invites oppositional readings and is an agent of change is explored. The desirability of reducing the discrepancy between expectations and experience is questioned, and interventions are considered.
Perhaps the most fruitful distinction with which the sociological imagination works is between the "personal troubles of milieu" and the "public issues of social structure.'

----- C. Wright Mills

*The Sociological Imagination*, 1959

We are our children's handkerchiefs, their towels, their mops, their buckets, their tubs, their vacuum cleaners. As a parent, you come to understand life as a condition in which bodily fluids -- any bodily fluids -- may literally explode in your face at any moment of the day or night....It is particularly hard for men to adapt to the realities here.

-----Guy Martin

"The Decline and Fall of the Civilized Parent"


CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Gender politics within the family is one of the most frequently researched topics today in family sociology. Scholarly journals are filled with research that sets out to measure and explain the so-called "second shift." That women are expected to take mental and physical responsibility for the daily burdens of familywork after putting in a full day of paid work outside the home is also a subject of great interest in the popular media, presumably, because it is of great interest to the public. Every day, real men and real women living in real families must negotiate, cajole, complain and make decisions about "who will do what." Daily impasses and resentments between partners
about who should do what portion of familywork have resulted in lower housekeeping and child care standards (Hochschild, 1988).

At the same time, the "breakdown" or "transformation" of the nuclear family continues to be of great concern, especially regarding the impact of changing family structure. We know, too, that women initiate most divorce proceedings. Thus, there is evidence to suggest that when working mothers do a "cost-benefit analysis" of divorce versus mounting resentment over the second shift, many opt for divorce (Goodman, 1993).

It may appear too simplistic—especially within male-constructed mainstream social science— to suggest that divorce, single parenthood and the social problems to which they contribute can be traced to the fact that men read the newspaper while women do laundry and child care. Nevertheless, women's expectations about the texture, feel and reality of family life are informed by cultural standards that may be more ideological than real. When women's expectations about men's role in the family meet reality, there may be disturbing incongruence.

The discrepancy between the expectations held and the reality created by men and women in families can be a source of great personal distress, especially for women. It is important, then, to explore the ways in which our culture contributes to both ideological change and behavioral stasis -- and behavioral change and ideological stasis -- regarding household division of labor patterns.

Artifacts of popular culture, such as women's magazines, contribute "raw data" to the expectation formation process. It can be asked, then, what messages are offered
to women? Regarding expectations about family life with children, it should be asked, what messages are offered to mothers? Still, if we want to know what women might expect their partner's contribution to be, the question could be refined again to ask, what messages are offered to mothers regarding fathers’ contributions to familywork?

This project will answer that question through a quantitative and qualitative analysis of *Parents Magazine*, which, until about five years ago, was the only mass marketed popular cultural artifact speaking directly to women as mothers, and which has been doing so consistently for almost 70 years.

Of course, *Parents Magazine* does not speak to all mothers. During its sixty-six-year history, it has been targeted to white, educated, middle and upper-middle class women. It may be used, then, as an index of the dominant culture’s definition of parenthood.

**The Transition to Parenthood**

Although white, middle-class culture regards college graduation and marriage as rites of passage into adulthood, the transition to parenthood is regarded, subjectively, as more profound (Antonucci and Mikus, 1988). Despite many unwanted babies, babies born into poverty, babies born with health problems and the lack of preparedness of many new parents, our culture considers the transition to parenthood -- especially the white, middle-class transition to parenthood -- as a positive event. Yet, the transition to parenthood for any particular family is often not one of pure joy. Surprise and disappointment at the absence of total joy may contribute to even greater
disappointment.

In the 1940s and 50s, the sociological literature (Hill, 1949) regarded the transition to parenthood as a crisis. In light of research in the 60s and 70s that did not support the crisis view of parenthood (see, for example, Hobbs, 1968; Hobbs and Cole, 1976; Russell, 1974), the sociological literature reconceptualized the transition to parenthood as a time of both positive and negative stress, including satisfaction regarding the rewards of parenting (for example, Rossi, 1968; Jacoby, 1969).

In the face of changing gender roles and soaring divorce rates in the 1970s, the research on the transition to parenthood began focusing on how parenthood affects the marital relationship (Russell, 1974; Hobbs, 1976; and Lamb, 1978).

More recently, social psychological theory has been applied to this research area to see how subjective evaluations of the transition to parenthood are affected by expectations about what that transition will entail (Belsky, 1985; Belsky et al., 1986; Ruble et al., 1988). The research on expectations shows that pre-parents have many expectations about what parenthood will be like and that often these expectations are disconfirmed. This research shows that discrepancies between expectations and experience are associated with poorer adjustment, greater marital dissatisfaction, greater difficulty in managing the baby, and higher levels of depression. These negative outcomes are found for both men and women (Ruble, et al., 1988). However, because women have both quantitatively more and qualitatively different expectations, the implications of unfulfilled expectations are quantitatively and qualitatively greater for women than for men (Wallace and Gotlib, 1990; Suitor, 1991).

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One way to cope with uncertainty at times of important change is to gather information about the event and construct an image of what it will be like (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Ruble, 1987). The transition to parenthood is certainly such a time, and middle class women do engage in a great deal of information-seeking behavior prior to and during the experience of parenthood. Indeed, information-seeking behavior is encouraged by experts with whom the expectant mothers comes into contact, by friends and by the ubiquitousness of the information itself. Expectations about motherhood formed while information-seeking during pregnancy appear to affect later experiences (Deutsch et al., 1988).

While the transition-to-parenthood literature acknowledges the intense information-seeking behavior of pregnant women/mothers and the problems that arise with discrepant expectations, no connection has been made between these phenomena. Missing from this literature is how potentially misleading expectations -- and their resulting negative outcomes for family life -- are formed and where they come from. As discussed above, one goal of this project is to bridge these literatures and address this connection. I will examine the hypothesis that women's socialization into parenthood and their purposeful attempts to preempt or diminish potential crises by seeking information may actually contribute to the very crises they are working to avoid. In this regard, Parents Magazine will be looked at as an important source of parenting information that has played a part in expectation formation throughout the century. The magazine will be conceptualized as an index of parenting definitions and standards,
and will be used to create a "time line" of changes in the social construction of
gendered parenting. The final section will synthesize these two levels of analysis into a
model of how popular culture may mediate between the individual and the social
structure.

Division of Labor and Expectations

As mentioned above, one of the most troublesome discrepant expectations, and
one that currently has a prominent place in the sociology of the family literature is that
of household division of labor (or familywork), especially after the transition to
parenthood. Even in the face of strong intentions, commitments and explicitly shared
egalitarian values, men and women typically perform traditional gender roles as parents
(Cowan et al., 1985; Palkovitz and Copes, 1988; Clulow, 1990). This is especially
disappointing for women -- not only because of the enormous demands placed on
mothers, but because women's expectations for a more egalitarian relationship are
greater and therefore their experience is more discrepant (Ruble et al., 1988; Belsky, et
al., 1986).

While current research on the transition to parenthood does not look at the
sources of expectations, there is increasing focus on the broad impacts of disconfirmed
expectations, especially regarding postnatal household division of labor (Cowan, 1985;
Ruble et al., 1988; Palkovitz and Copes, 1988; Clulow, 1990; Hackel and Ruble,
1992; and Kalmuss et al., 1992). In describing the often-noted trend toward more
traditional postnatal division of labor, Ruble et al. (1988) found that women expected
household and childcare tasks to be more shared than they actually were. However,
they show that it is not the amount of support or task sharing per se that was most important, but whether that amount contributed to the perceived absence of equity. In other words, the discrepancy between expectations and experience contributes to dissatisfaction. The greater this discrepancy, the more negative the women felt about the baby’s influence on the marital relationship, the greater the decline in feelings of closeness, and the greater marital dissatisfaction (Ruble et al., 1988; Belsky et al., 1986). Kalmuss concludes, "women's pre-birth parenting expectations do not match their post-birth experiences" and "the direction of the discrepancies suggests a pattern of inflated expectations" (1992, p. 521).

According to Cowan et al., (1985), men and women begin their journeys toward parenthood as if they were on separate trains heading down different tracks, hoping somehow to reach the same destination -- the formation of their family. Borrowing the "his and hers" model Jesse Bernard used to describe marriage, (Bernard, 1974) Cowan et al. (1985) show how the transition to parenthood makes men and women more different from each other. They found that new parents began to assume more gender-specialized tasks than they had established before childbirth and more than they expected. "Who does what" (p. 467) was at the top of their lists of issues leading to conflict and disagreement. Further, they found that women became more psychologically and physically involved in the parent role than did men. Women’s greater involvement in the parent role creates unexpected disequilibrium, distance, and increase in conflict.

Given past evidence that the discrepancy between expectations and reality is
related to negative outcomes for women, this study explores *Parents Magazine* as a cultural medium through which women's expectations are acquired.

Parenting messages in popular culture, such as *Parents Magazine* might contribute to the differentiation described by Cowan et al. (1985) and to the frequently observed increase in traditionality of gender roles following childbirth by exacerbating and legitimizing the "separate spheres." Special-interest magazines are said to create an environment (i.e., a sphere) for readers that serves to enhance the readers' identity (Wilson, 1993; Steinem, 1990). The magazine environment addresses the readers' concerns and interests, answering their questions and delineating a universe of discourse within which those readers may select and crystallize important portions of their identity.

In a study attempting to predict the impact of disconfirmed expectations after the first baby is born, Hackel and Ruble (1992) found that women were doing more housework and childcare postpartum than they expected and that men were doing less than the women expected. These disconfirmed expectations led to more negative reports about the marriage, especially for couples who were less traditional and held stronger expectations for an egalitarian relationship.

In an earlier study of information-seeking as an active coping strategy, Deutsch et al. (1988) noted that the "self-definitional process" and the "self-socialization process" during pregnancy are important influences on subsequent postpartum adaptation. Similarly, Palkovitz and Copes (1988) observe that society plays a role in
the way prospective parents formulate and defend their thoughts on parents' division of labor, and that prospective parents "frequently search for 'new data' on parenting" (p. 188, emphasis added). One of the important roles that society plays in this process is prescribing parental roles via mass media such as Parents Magazine. The search for "new data" on parenting often brings women to supportive, information-rich environments like Parents Magazine. Palkovitz and Copes (1988) further note that "first-time parents may be particularly at risk for disappointment" (p. 196) and that prior to delivery and after, "parents adjusted their expectations in a downward direction" (p. 196). The source of parents' expectations and the content of particular messages conveyed by these sources was not considered.

In a "best case scenario" of couples who purport to share both childcare and housework (Coltrane 1990), equitable household division of labor required the women to offer frequent reminders and to "loosen her standards and accept his way of doing things" (p. 172). Wives referred to their husbands as "helping" and these couples did not attempt to "redefine family work as a fully shared responsibility" (p. 173). Moreover, the women had to "struggle to maintain autonomy and career commitment in the face of maternal guilt" (p. 173). Even in these atypical "pioneer" families, women's expectations for shared housework and childcare required constant vigilance in order for them to become reality, and even then, their expectations went unmet.

Mass media, especially women's magazines, are often the sites of information-seeking behavior. These magazines speak directly to women, and are agents of socialization into the mother/wife role (Friedan, 1963; Tuchman, Daniels and Benet,
Definitions of the father role and standards of fatherhood have been important subject matter within this mother-oriented information-rich environment. Women's expectations about what day-to-day family life will be like for them are informed by these definitions of fatherhood. And, many of these definitions are more ideal than real, especially the frequent discussions of "The New Father." As LaRossa and Reitze (1993) aptly put it, "'new' fatherhood -- whether it is being promulgated in the 1930s or in the 1990s -- is likely to be embraced, if it is to be embraced at all, by the consumers of parenting culture...those consumers overwhelmingly are women" (1993). They were overwhelmingly women in the past, too. Similarly, "there are more women who advocate 'Androgynous Fatherhood' than there are men who practice it" (Rotundo, 1985).

Included in our cultural definition of motherhood is that it is women's responsibility to turn the cultural definition fatherhood into reality -- and/or managing the consequences. While she negotiates her responses to the cultural definitions prescribed for her, the new mother is experiencing physical, psychological, social and emotional reorientation. (This process continues as her children enter new developmental phases, so in some sense all mothers are experiencing the reorientation of new mothers -- motherhood is a series of new adjustments and information seeking). Mothers are the primary consumers of parenting information, so while a mother goes through her own adjustments, she also processes the parenting literature for her partner. While managing her own transition to the parent role, she is faced with the responsibility of passing selected information onto her partner and behaving in ways
that are likely to elicit the responses she wants. In other words, mothers and mothers-to-be are presented with the task of socializing their mates into the father role according to the current cultural standards -- as represented in, among other places, women's magazines.

In the present study, the mother and father roles are understood as reciprocal or complementary: expectations about fathers' role in familywork are implicitly expectations about what the experience will be like for mothers. Words and images from the popular media are an important ingredient in the admixture for the conceptual building blocks women use to construct their families.

Unlike many content analyses that ignore or distort meaning by removing content units from the context in which readers find and decode them, (Kracauer, 1952; Glassner and Corzine, 1982; Woodrum, 1984; Jensen et al., 1991) this study will analyze articles from Parents Magazine by two methods of content analysis: quantitative and qualitative. The quantitative analysis will identify the content, themes and tones of the articles and explore their frequencies and the various ways these three components combine at different times, resulting in particular messages. The qualitative analysis will be context-sensitive and comprehensive. This means that significant historical events, cultural artifacts, demographic data and contemporaneous documents will be called upon to support conclusions drawn from the analyses.
A Cultural Definition of Parenthood

Between 1923 and 1929, the Laura Spellman Rockefeller Foundation spent over seven million dollars training home economists and teachers as parent-educators, reaching out to uneducated and isolated mothers. The Foundation's goal was for the children of poor families to be raised according to the new methods put forward by behaviorist John B. Watson. Institutes and research centers were established across the country, offering standardized and controlled child-rearing techniques. The Foundation sponsored conferences where experts shared information. Although the federal government began sponsoring mass parenting education in 1914 with the publication of Infant Care, the Rockefeller Foundation is primarily responsible for the rapid "professionalization" of the child-rearing business in the 1920s (Berry, 1993).

Sensing that the time was right, George Hecht, businessman and part-time editor of a progressive social service magazine, approached the Rockefeller Foundation in 1923 to get their financial support for a popular magazine that would spread "the gospel of child development" to the lay public (Schlossman, 1981). Believing that popularization and dissemination of new knowledge was the key to a more just social order, Hecht successfully mediated the various interests and concerns of potential advertisers, the Rockefeller Foundation, Teachers College at Columbia, Yale University and the community of child development experts to turn his vision into a reality. Children, a Magazine for Parents, began publication in 1926, and shortly after that changed its name to Parents Magazine. During the 1930s and 1940s Parents Magazine was acclaimed as the most popular educational periodical in the world, and it
was the only commercial periodical whose circulation and advertising revenues climbed steadily upward during the depression (Schlossman, 1985).

Although it has gone through a few changes in affiliation and ownership, *Parents Magazine* has been published continuously for almost 70 years and had a paid circulation of more than one million by the end of World War II. Over the years, *Parents Magazine* has published articles from social scientists such as Bertrand Russell, Bruno Bettelheim, Ashley Montagu and Margaret Mead. It has published guest editorials from opinion leaders such as Eleanor Roosevelt, John F. Kennedy, Robert F. Kennedy and Hubert Humphrey.

The longevity of *Parents Magazine* is especially significant considering the fact that many important and socially significant magazines — such as *Life*, *Look*, and *The Saturday Evening Post* were unable to compete successfully with television for advertising dollars. Television was more appealing to advertisers because it allowed them to reach a larger audience at a lower cost per thousand than magazines, and it also allowed advertisers to demonstrate their products, often with music, theatrics, and attractive pitch people such as Ronald Reagan and Bess Meyersen.

*Parents Magazine* was able to survive competition from television because of the unique service it offered its readers. As mentioned above, the special-interest magazine offers readers an environment — a "place" where they can "go" to have their questions answered, their anxieties allayed and their interests and concerns affirmed. This is especially important for mothers, who are often insecure about suddenly being
responsible for a new life and meeting its myriad needs. Women know that our culture carefully scrutinizes mothers and is quick to blame them for any problems their children might have, and so the information they seek is vital for their own self-esteem and also for their baby’s well-being.

*Parents Magazine* provides that needed learning environment for mothers. It is a place for mothers-to-be to find out what mothers think about, talk about and worry about, and a place for mothers to have their thoughts and worries affirmed. It is a place to find out what products and services are available and how mothers are supposed to look. *Parents Magazine* has served as a primer on white, middle-class parenthood for almost the entire century. Ideas about what constitutes a “good mother” are always in flux, and the consumer products defined as necessities for babies and parents are constantly being updated, “improved” and expanded. Thus, the magazine is a chronicle of the young, white middle-class American family over the past six decades.

The success and longevity of *Parents Magazine* are testimony to the fact that pre-mothers and mothers seek and consume this type of information. While providing raw material for the mothers to use in developing their identities as mothers, *Parents Magazine* provides women with cultural definitions of family life and parental roles — it answers the question “what do mothers and fathers do?” This was especially important throughout this century, as cultural transmission from older to younger generation became increasingly more problematic due to rapid social change and geographic mobility. The increasing cultural authority of social scientists thus contributed to the success of *Parents Magazine*. 

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As of 1990, 34.6% of U.S. mothers with children under one year of age read Parents Magazine, and a recent study of 255 middle and upper-middle class parents of infants indicated that 64% read Parents Magazine (Magazine Audience Report, 1988, quoted in Young, 1990). In addition, Parents Magazine devotes 39.4% of its content to articles about child rearing, whereas a general women's magazine like Redbook devotes only 4.7% (Hall's Magazine Reports, quoted in Young, 1990).

According to Simmons Market Research Bureau, the average reader per copy from 1974 - 1994, which includes the very important pass-along rate (i.e., doctors' offices, libraries, etc.), was .59 for men and 2.53 for women (Simmons Market Research Bureau, 1995). In 1994, when the readers per copy rate for men was at an all time high, it was only .69. So while we should not conclude that a whole man has never read a Parents Magazine, we can conclude that this magazine is largely for mothers, despite its title.

Parents Magazine defines the mother role; but it also defines the father role -- for women. Parents Magazine provides mothers with cultural definitions and standards for fathers, fatherhood and the experience of family life. Yet, these representations may or may not conform to the reality mothers are living. Because mothers typically perceive themselves as primarily responsible for the socio-emotional life of the home and family, each mother has the job of somehow managing the discrepancy between cultural definitions and her reality. This may involve trying to change her mate in some way, dealing with her disappointment about the father/husband he has turned out
to be, or, for some, enjoying a blissful new stage of life. In any case, during this management or negotiating process, the new mother is experiencing profound physical, psychological, social and emotional reorientation: Her body is changing and is functioning in ways that are entirely new for her; she may be physically exhausted; her priorities are in flux and need to be rearranged; she may be perceiving her own parents differently; her relationships with her friends and other family members may need to be tacitly renegotiated, and her conception of time is altered.

The new mother must develop new criteria by which to evaluate her own competence in almost every arena of her life, thus her sense of self as a functioning adult in the world is disrupted to its very core. (This process continues as her children enter new developmental phases, so in some sense all mothers are experiencing the reorientation of new mothers -- motherhood is a series of new adjustments and information seeking). These processes can become very complex and difficult, constituting the "crisis" that accompanies new parenthood and the disillusionment and frustration that comprise a large chunk of the parenting experience for many women.

Although other women's magazines during this century featured and continue to feature articles about fatherhood, Parents Magazine was, until about six years ago, the only mass circulation magazine that spoke to women in their role as mothers. It has been and continues to be a direct channel of communication between the culture and the MOTHER portion of women's brains. It continues to stand as an important authority on parenting issues and is an important institution within parent culture.

The main goal of this project is to gain some understanding about the dynamics
of gendered parenting over the past six decades. For reasons described above, *Parents Magazine* can be used as an index of constancy and change in cultural standards for both the mother and father role. These roles are conceptualized as reciprocal, and so the female readers of *Parents Magazine* are offered implicit definitions of the mother role, though this study examines only the father role directly. In other words, what has our culture told women to expect their “partners in parenting” to be and do, and how have these cultural messages changed over the past 66 years? Social science research has shown that contrasts between expectations and reality are a source of negative sentiment and conflict in family life. By closely analyzing cultural messages that are an important source of expectations, we may be better able to understand day-to-day family life for men and women and why parenthood has been and continues to be an experience fraught with unmet expectations. This is not a study of fatherhood, nor is it a study of motherhood; its goal is to examine expectations about gendered parenting by looking at cultural messages which define the father role for mothers.

The results of this project will be reported in three chapters: The first one (III) describes the number and structure of the articles; the second one (IV) addresses specific themes, and the third (V) discusses the tone of the articles. The second and third results chapters will build on the previous ones. Each of the three results chapters will consider time as a variable, and will place the findings within social and historical contexts. Each chapter will have a summary and discussion section.

These three chapters are organized by content, and show how the content changed over time. These three chapters are followed by a summary and discussion
chapter which is organized chronologically. This chapter (VI) considers the content of *Parents Magazine* in relation to other social and historical forces that were impacting families at various times. The final chapter (VII) looks at the implications of these findings concerning the various ways expectations might be formed in response to a text, and the function of the text as an agent of social change. Possibilities for future research are explored.
CHAPTER II

METHODS

This chapter is divided into five sections. The first section is a discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of quantitative content analysis with reference to this study. The second section provides a similar discussion of qualitative content analysis. The third section, building on the previous two, will explore how content analysis may be used to link micro and macro levels of analysis in sociology. The fourth section offers a detailed discussion of the method and assumptions of this study. Special terms and concepts used in this project and issues of periodization are discussed in section five.

Quantitative Content Analysis

The advantages of quantitative content analysis are its reliability and the ease with which the results can be analyzed with statistical techniques. It is an important starting point for a more comprehensive analysis of cultural artifacts such as Parents Magazine in that it offers an objective inventory of messages.

Results of quantitative content analyses are often reported in a manner and style that imply both impact on an audience and broad cultural significance. The processes and mechanisms of “having impact” are assumed, but never explained. Because it makes intuitive sense that cultural messages have an impact, there is often no felt need
to explore the process (see, for example, Malamuth and Spinner, 1980, or Bogaert, Turkovich and Hafer, 1993) Also, there is an assumption that every member of the audience gets the same meaning, and that meaning is somehow inherent in the text itself. Recent work in communication, hermeneutics, literary and cultural studies rejects these simplistic assumptions in favor of a more negotiated and socially constructed conception of meaning (Radway, 1984; Fiske, 1992; Gans, 1994; Livingstone, 1989; Morely, 1994).

Quantitative content analysis follows formal rules, is internally consistent, and reliable if properly executed. However, it is often removed from any context that might give the content meaning and significance or that might explain variations in meaning within an audience or across time. In addition, the data reduction processes necessary for quantitative analysis include many moments of subjective judgment and lost meaning. Thus the process itself is not as objective as is often claimed (Kracauer, 1952; Thomas, 1994).

Quantitative content analysis assumes that the frequency with which certain content appears in a given case is significant, overlooking the fact that some parts of the content may be more substantively significant than others. For example, an analysis of one of Hitler's speeches might find 99 mentions of the phrase "law and order," and only one mention at the end to a plan to kill all the non-Aryan members of the population. Certainly, that one content unit has disproportionate significance that may only emerge through qualitative and interpretive techniques. In a strictly quantitative analysis, the speech was about law and order.
Frequency of content across cases and its variation over time is more meaningful than within-case frequencies. For example, knowing that a certain article used the word “diaper” ten times is not as meaningful as knowing that the use of the word peaked in a certain year or decade and then fell drastically the next. More meaningful still is the context in which the word is used and how that has changed over time. Also, the way time periods are defined will determine the frequencies found, and therefore, the interpretations. As will be discussed below and demonstrated throughout this study, different punctuations of time can result in different findings and different interpretations.

Quantitative analysis alone is limited to the extent that it removes content units from their context, thus tampering with their meaning, which is often dependent on the positioning of textual units rather than the frequency or order of appearance (Kracauer, 1952). Also, the themes that emerge for a researcher today may not get at the aspect of the text that was culturally significant or resonant for an audience in the past. For example, the television series M*A*S*H was, in manifest content, about the long-over Korean war. Yet its latent content may be interpreted as an attack on the then ongoing Vietnam War. Similarly, one could ask if the films "League of Their Own" and "Field of Dreams" were simply about baseball.

Concerns about the ultimate value of quantitative content analysis were clearly expressed by Siegfried Kracauer in 1952:

Documents which are not simply agglomerations of facts participate in the process of living, and every word in them vibrates with the intentions in which they originate and simultaneously foreshadows the indefinite
effects they may produce. Their content is no longer their content if it is
detached from the texture of intimations and implications to which it
belongs and taken literally; it exists only with and within this texture -- a
still fragmentary manifestation of life, which depends upon response to
evolve its properties. Most communications are not so much fixed
entities as ambivalent challenges (pp. 641-642).

It is interesting to note how this passage, written over 40 years ago, evokes concepts
within current postmodern approaches to text analysis.

In sum, while quantitative content analysis has the advantages of objectivity and
reliability, its tendency to disregard context represents an important limitation.

Qualitative Content Analysis

Qualitative content analysis requires knowledge and insight about the
characteristics and goals of the producer and about the historical and cultural conditions
under which the text was produced (Glassner and Corzine, 1982) and consumed. The
disadvantages of quantitative content analysis are remedied through qualitative analysis.
Likewise, the disadvantages of qualitative analysis are remedied through quantitative
analysis. As will be shown below, using both approaches enables the researcher to
draw on the strengths of both while overcoming their respective weaknesses.

Qualitative content analysis does not analyze "units" of content, but "clusters of
meaning" -- within the context of other units and within the social, historical and
cultural context within which the text itself exists -- it is context-sensitive.

The qualitative and quantitative components of this project will be presented as
an integrated analysis for each significant theme or coding category. These analyses
will draw on historical events, social histories of the family, and other documents - popular, official and scholarly.

According to Glassner and Corzine's "library research as fieldwork" approach (1982; p. 305), the qualitative content analyst must leave "field notes." These notes will explicate the assumptions, choices, frameworks and conclusions so that other researchers may not necessarily come to the same conclusions, but they will know how and why particular conclusions were reached and can engage the researcher in meaningful conversation and debate. This conversation between researchers with shared interests and concerns will stimulate further research and better understanding about both the subject matter and the method. This process is more fertile and productive than an objective exercise that has formal rules, internal consistency and closure but is so abstracted out of the real world as to be virtually meaningless -- sacrificing validity for reliability.

Glassner and Corzine (1982) trace their approach to the Chicago School of the 20s and 30s, and find support for it in the work of Glaser and Strauss (1967:163):

There are some striking similarities . . . between fieldwork and library research. When someone stands in the library stacks, she is, metaphorically surrounded by voices to be heard. Every book, every magazine article, represents at least one person who is equivalent to the anthropologist’s informant or the sociologist’s interviewee. In those publications, people converse, announce positions, argue with a range of eloquence, and describe events or scenes in ways entirely comparable to what is seen and heard during fieldwork. The researcher needs only to discover the voices in the library to release them for her analytic use [gender changed].

We can go back in time and "hear the words" of interviewees who are now dead, but
we cannot converse with them -- we cannot ask follow-up questions or probe further. We have to rely on other historical documents. We have to probe and follow-up by finding contemporaneous documents and other data that corroborate (or conflict with) what we think our dead interviewees are telling us.

The fieldwork model offers a conceptualization of qualitative content analysis that allows its potential to emerge. The model invites context-sensitive analyses that are disciplined but organic, recognizing the researcher as an active interpreter within carefully circumscribed limits. The "field notes" (description of methods and procedures) provide a map by which others can survey the same territory. The pretense of objectivity and the fear of subjectivity can both be abandoned. The analysis is done in the open, and any subsequent investigator can follow the map and reach the same place - or can find new "uncharted territory" and a make the case for a different destination.

It has been said that content analysis exists in a "methodological ghetto" (Markoff, et al., 1975). According to Woodrum (1984) content analysis is an underdeveloped and underutilized technique. He attributes this to "factionalism between qualitative and quantitative oriented social scientists," with each camp assigning it to the toolbox of the other. Woodrum sees the value of content analysis as a "bridging technique" (pp. 7-8) between qualitative and quantitative analyses. Ways of seeing that transcend dichotomies are often resisted, and content analysis is no exception.

The current project combines descriptive quantitative and frequency analyses with qualitative, context-sensitive interpretive analyses. These approaches complement each
other and will be used together for a multifaceted understanding of cultural artifacts, their meaning, and their potential impact on behavior. Context-sensitive content analysis of popular culture, informed by sociological theory and perspective, can add to our understanding of the relationship between the individual and social structure.

Content Analysis and the Micro/Macro Link: Transcending Dichotomies

It is an implicit assumption of all content analyses that information conveyed to many individuals simultaneously through the media has an impact on social structure through its impact on individuals. Similarly, analyses of popular culture within the "cultural studies" school assume that messages are the "tools" of hegemonic forces. As such, their meaning reflects the dominant ideology. According to this view, critical analysis or deconstruction of meaning is an act of political opposition. Any intellectual endeavor that engages in content analysis can, at its core, conceptualize the various media as links between the individual and social structure. Mass mediated messages, provided by and sanctioned by powerful institutional forces, link individuals to social structure (Edgar, 1974; Jensen, 1991). When we explore links between the individual and the social structure over time, we are doing historical sociology and transcending the micro/macro dichotomy in sociology.

Media content is negotiated between individuals, groups, corporate interests and elites based on their goals and agendas. Editorial policies, textual material, and advertisements anticipate and adjust to audience expectations and desires -- this is the negotiating process. However, the ultimate meaning and sociologic significance of
these messages are created by a reader within a particular cultural, historical and social context. The individual decodes text and transforms it into his or her own idiosyncratic semantic configuration, creating meaning that is congruent with his or her preexisting cognitive schema. However, each idiosyncratic semantic configuration is created by historical and cultural context. In other words, the meaning created by individuals falls within a range that has been defined as a result of living at a certain time and place, within a certain social class, etc. (Counihan, 1974; Edgar, 1974; Murdock, 1974; Evans, 1990; Jensen, 1991; Jensen, 1994).

Mass media can thus be conceptualized as the conduits for particles of potential meaning that link the micro and macro levels of traditional sociological analysis. Mass media content is created by agents of social structure and consumed by individuals (or groups of individuals termed "interpretive communities" [Radway, 1984]) who create meaning based on their historical, cultural, and social structural reality. Conceptualizing mass media and their content as the links between individuals and social structure enables us to transcend the micro/macro dichotomy in sociology.

When content analysis moves beyond enumerating context-free words or images, it becomes a tool for examining these tiny particles of potential meaning that get passed back and forth between the individual and the social structure. In addition, content analysis identifies a place for the study of mass media within American sociology, which has largely neglected or ignored the impact of mass media and popular culture on social-psychological processes and social structure.
A Content Analysis of Parents Magazine

Defining the Population

Using the Readers Guide to Periodical Literature, I located all the articles under the subject headings Father or fathers from Parents Magazine. Although the magazine began publication in 1926, my search through the Readers Guide began in 1929, the year that the UNH Dimond Library's hard copy collection begins. Given that this study does not intend to provide a history or review of the magazine itself, omitting these first three years of publication from the analysis is of no consequence.

At various times, the Readers Guide cross-referenced fathers to parent-child relations or family relations. Articles under those headings that focused on the father role were included as well. This search process yielded a population of 243 articles. Knowing that I would be working on this project during 1995, I decided to end the time frame with the last full year prior to that. Thus, the time frame of the study is 1929-1994.

The Coding Scheme

Posing the question, "What expectations about family life would one have based on these articles" and paying particular attention to gender issues in parenting and housework, I derived a preliminary coding scheme. I and another coder used this scheme to code approximately 10% of the articles (25) to test its inter-rater reliability. Designing this coding scheme was complicated by the fact that there were two "subsets" of articles within the group: forty-nine percent of the articles were written in "first person voice," typically by a father; and the other 51% were written by experts
in psychology, family relations and related fields. My goal in designing the coding scheme was to have the fewest number of items possible that allowed for all significant themes and the two author perspectives to be captured.

The final version of the coding scheme (see Appendix B) yielded inter-rater reliability coefficients in the .78 to 1.00 (see Appendix A), and was used to code all 243 articles. This scheme enabled identification of the major themes and rhetorical flavor of each article and how these varied over time. In other words, the presence or absence of particular themes and the patterns among them at different time periods could be examined. Preliminary analyses showed that some dominant themes occurred in consistent combinations and in a large enough numbers of cases to constitute new variables. Some less dominant themes allowed for different nuances of meaning within a subset of articles to be identified.

The coding scheme is in Appendix B, in its entirety. However, it may be helpful to explain the assumptions and purpose of some of the categories.

When reading through the articles at a very early stage of this project, I noticed that the articles seem to establish two separate but interfacing worlds: one “out there” inhabited by most men and women, and the other one within the magazine itself. Many of the articles, especially those written in first-person voice, establish two behavior standards. The subjects, or referent parents, are implicitly compared with or measured against the standard “out there,” yet the referent parents have obviously been influenced by standards “out there.” The articles are subtly implying “they do that, but I (or you should) do this.” A tension, or friction surrounds the interface of
these two worlds — and the reader is there, too. The reader, existing in neither world, must decide where she stands in relation to these two worlds; she must also decide where her husband fits in. Items 5-12 are designed to explore the space between these two worlds.

The purpose of items 13-22 is to see what familywork fathers are depicted as doing. The relative frequencies of the various tasks can be determined, which also suggests which are considered important and/or appropriate for men to do. The purpose of items 23 and 24 is to see the frequency and the attitudes with which the referent fathers do familywork, compared to fathers-in-general. Also, it would be helpful to know which attitudes accompany which frequencies.

The remaining coding categories are designed to find out what the articles imply about these issues, and also to get a sense of the degree to which the articles reflect the norms, attitudes and conventional wisdom of the real world.

The purpose of item 38 is to explore the power distribution in the referent family and whether the depiction of parenting is gendered or non-gendered. As discussed above, to remove content units from their context changes their meaning. By exploring these numerous content units for each article — including subtleties such as tone -- context is to some extent reassembled by the way the units group and combine. The articles can then be looked at in relation to the broader socio-historical context.
Familywork, Periodization Issues, and the Nature-Culture Framework

What is Familywork?

This project explores the father and mother roles in reference to the familywork they do. Familywork and who does it in families with children is very much the core of this project, and so familywork must be precisely defined. Familywork, in part, refers to all the tasks and responsibilities that are the by-products of family life with children, traditionally considered “women’s work.” Most familywork tasks have to be done on a regular, frequent basis, if not every day. As William Beer points out in his book *Househusbands: Men and Housework in American Families* (1983), our definition of “housework” is rooted in the sexual division of labor, and the word “evokes the image of cooking, cleaning, child care, shopping, laundry and household maintenance.” However, there are other tasks that do not seem to fit this category: Beer asks:

what of mowing the lawn, trimming the hedges, weeding the garden, painting the house. What of taking care of the car, changing the oil and filter, washing and waxing the finish, tuning the engine? What of cutting firewood, repairing a bicycle, replacing a broken window pane?…Little objection would be raised to classifying the first six tasks as ‘housework’: most often ‘housework’ denotes tasks performed by housewives. In the United States, men do immense amounts of housework, as in the jobs just mentioned, but neither they nor others refer to it as such (1983, ix).

The “male housework” or household work described by Beer should be included in the definition of familywork. We could say, then, familywork=housework or “women’s work” +tasks created by the presence of children+household work or “men’s work.”
Beyond tasks necessary for physical health and safety such as preparing food and changing diapers, a great deal of familywork is defined as mandatory by community or class. For some families, driving a three-year-old to Suzuki violin lessons three days a week is familywork, as is putting in color coordinated annual flower beds every Spring and keeping them weeded all summer. For a larger group of families, parent-teacher conferences are familywork, as is attending children’s athletic events. For an even larger group, shopping for Christmas and birthday gifts is familywork, as is maintaining the car. For most families, eating and personal hygiene would be defined as mandatory, as is taking out the garbage. A definition of familywork must take into account tasks that are culturally defined as male or female, and must also include tasks defined as mandatory by particular subcultures, or even by a particular family. The familywork “equation” looks like this:

\[
\text{Familywork} = \text{defined as mandatory} (\text{housework} + \text{child-generated work} + \text{household work})
\]

Familywork can be conceptualized as a continuum, analogous to Abraham Maslow’s hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1968), in which the most basic human needs for survival are at the bottom and must be met by all, with the uppermost needs for self-actualization being met by fewer people. At the bottom of the hierarchy, or at one end of the familywork continuum, are tasks related to health and safety. As we move along the continuum, the tasks become more subculturally defined, more optional, and less tied to specific time demands. The performer of the tasks at this end of the continuum has more control and can exercise more choice about whether, how and when the familywork gets done. As in Maslow’s hierarchy, the tasks at the upper end of the
hierarchy or continuum of familywork are more abstract and involve planning and other higher order thought processes. As will be discussed later, these are the tasks that are more "culture" than "nature" and tend to be done more by men.

Doing familywork consumes parental time and energy (mental and physical). Time and energy consumed by familywork is not available for paid work outside the home or for each parent to use according to his or her personal preference. This is important, because lack of discretionary time is considered one of the most stressful aspects of family life (Louv, 1990; Moen, 1992). There is an inverse relationship between the amount of familywork a parent does and the amount of discretionary time a parent has.

As the historical gendering of familywork is called into question because of other technological, economic and ideological change, the conflicts that arise about fairness and "who will do what" are really about who will have more discretionary time -- which has become the rare and valuable resource in family life. Because this project is concerned with father's involvement in the traditionally female components of familywork, household work will not be considered in this analysis. However, the degree to which and the circumstances under which women assume household work -- the "male" component -- is also an important issue for gender and family scholars to examine. Somebody's time and energy is consumed in the performance of household work.) Discretionary time is important for psychological well-being, and when it is used for rest, recreation and exercise it becomes a factor in physical well-being as well. Symbolically, parents discretionary time is a measure of autonomy and power. Though
the term "discretionary time" is not used in any of the articles studied, the concept is present in almost every article, to some extent. The definitions of parenting roles embedded in these articles are also statements about the apportionment of discretionary time. Thus, to the extent women's expectations about family life with children are informed by these articles, so too are their expectations about their own discretionary time.

Periodization Issues: Punctuating Time

How these combinations of themes and tones change over time is a central part of this analysis. Decades or half-decades are conventional and convenient ways of organizing time and events, but may not accurately reflect the intervals or moments that are meaningful for a particular phenomenon or set of phenomena. As historian William Chafe has noted, historians often become "captives of a chronology that deceives more than in informs" (Chafe, 1991). We are in the habit of talking and thinking in round decades, and so the phenomena of interest are forced, for convenience, into these round periods. Important patterns, trends and details may be obscured by using what are, in effect, arbitrary (though customary) intervals. As will demonstrated in later sections, the periodization used in reporting results can determine the findings and how they are interpreted. Occasionally, different periodizations result in vastly different pictures of reality.

I began this project thinking in terms of decades, and then broke those down into half-decades in an effort to see more detail. While scanning columns of SPSS printout pertaining to different variables, I noticed that several important themes and
other content units clustered (or didn’t cluster) over time in distinct ways. A meaningful periodization emerged from the data after frequency analyses of major themes and tones. This periodization, which I call the *Parents Magazine* periodization, or PMP, loosely approximates six-year intervals.

Results of this study are variously reported in years, decades, half-decades, and the PMP. There are a few variables for which statistical significance was found for one or two of the periodizations and not the others; in those cases, results were reported in the statistically significant interval. In many cases they were all significant, so I selected the periodization which offered the clearer detail, typically half-decade or PMP. In several instances, where the differences were striking, more than one periodization will be discussed or charted for the purpose of illustrating this point. When different periodizations for the same phenomenon lead to different conclusions, they ask the researcher to probe deeper into conclusions and assumptions, thus offering an opportunity for greater insight.

Although one periodization is no more “true” than any other, one that is derived “organically” from the data may have more inherent meaning and thus do a better job of describing the phenomena under study. The periodization that emerged from this data may be useful in other analyses of the family and for further explorations into the social construction of gendered parenthood.

**The Nature-Culture Framework**

The purpose of this study is to explore how *Parents Magazine* has represented fathers and how those representations inform women’s expectations about their own
roles in family life. There is a sense then, in which this is a study of both sex and
gender differences. The representations of men and women in popular culture and the
meanings these representations may have for an audience can be understood within the
Nature-Culture framework of anthropologist Sherry B. Ortner.

Looking for an explanation for the universality of female subordination, Ortner
rejects explanations based on genetic differences, noting that these differences are
differentially valued across cultures, but that female subordination remains universal.
Ortner formulates the question, “What could there be in the generalized structure and
conditions of existence, common to every culture, that would lead every culture to
place a lower value on women?” Her thesis is that

woman is being identified with - or, if you will, seems to be a symbol of
- something that every culture devalues, something that every culture
defines as being of a lower order of existence than itself. Now it seems
that there is only one thing that would fit that description, and that is
‘nature’ in the most generalized sense....every culture implicitly
recognizes and asserts a distinction between the operation of nature and
the operation of culture (human consciousness and its products); and
further, that the distinctive-ness of culture rests precisely on the fact that
it can under most circumstances transcend natural conditions and turn
them to its purposes. Thus culture (i.e. every culture) at some level of
awareness asserts itself not only to be distinct from but superior to
nature, and that sense of distinctiveness and superiority rests precisely on
the ability to transform--to “socialize” and “culturalize”--nature.

Woman is seen to occupy an intermediate position between nature and culture, but
closer to nature. Ortner’s position draws on the work of structuralists Simone de
Beauvoir and Claude Levi-Strauss and the value of her analysis, like theirs, is in
revealing and exploring mythologies embedded in our culture. Its relevance to this
project is that these mythologies are reflected in and kept alive in our popular culture.

As will be shown in later chapters, Ortner’s framework is useful for analyzing the
gendered parenting behavior in Parents Magazine.
CHAPTER III

NUMBERS AND NON-THEMATIC CHARACTERISTICS OF ARTICLES

Number of Articles

There is a great deal of variation by decade in the number of articles under the subject heading "fathers." As can be seen on figure 3.1, the number of articles per decade is greatest in the thirties, dips through the fifties, plateaus through the sixties and seventies then increases dramatically in the eighties and nineties. (Considering that there are already 40 articles on fatherhood after only four years in the nineties, there will likely be another huge increase by the end of the nineties.)

Figure 3.1

Number of Articles Per Decade
Under Subject Heading "Father"
In Parents Magazine

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There were no articles under the subject heading "fathers" in 1938, 1961, 1963, 1969, 1970, 1973, 1975 and 1977. This absence is especially noteworthy for 1969, 1970 and 1973. By this time, the discussion of gender roles had already become commonplace in public discourse and the mass media, and the assumption that housework and child care are women's work was being questioned. Readers of Parents Magazine were faced with challenges to this assumption at various times throughout the century, yet during these particularly tumultuous years, the issue was not addressed.

The articles are disproportionately distributed throughout the half-decades, \( x^2(6) = 43.25, p < .001 \), and decades, \( x^2(12) = 87.99, p < .001 \), with 26% from 1929 through 1939, and 31% from between 1985 and 1994. The greatest number of articles on fathers were in 1933 and 1989 -- 56 years apart. This suggests that readers of Parents Magazine were pondering questions of fatherhood, or at least that the magazine's editors thought they were, during the last few years. The cohort of women reading Parents Magazine during the most recent five-year period were born in the late fifties through the late sixties. They came of age at a time when gender roles were open to a great deal of scrutiny, for ideological and economic reasons. While Parents Magazine never presented itself as a forum for discussing changing gender roles, it has, over the years, and especially recently, offered readers discussions about changes in family life due to changing gender expectations.

**Voice**

As discussed earlier, there are two very different kinds of articles within the
population studied. Almost half the articles (46.5%) are written in the first person voice, with the author -- usually a father -- offering personal thoughts, reminiscences, and experiences. There is frequent use of the pronoun “I.” The remaining 53.5% are written by clinicians or professionals in the social sciences about an issue or situation regarding fathers and family life. The distinction between first-person and third-person voice is an important distinction when considering impact on readers. First-person writing is more personal and direct, creating a more intimate connection between the writer and the reader. These first-person pieces are typically written in a light, informal style. So while the author is sharing his experience, he invites the reader to process it as “our experience.” In first-person writing, the author assumes he or she has had an experience or a viewpoint worth sharing and can express it in an entertaining manner. Editors receive many more such pieces than they can use, and so they must choose submissions based on the kind of viewpoints and experiences they think their readers would find most appealing. *Parents Magazine* seems to want parents’ (i.e., readers’) voices in their magazine. However, the parents’ voices offered are overwhelmingly male. Male authors comprise a disproportionate 86.1% of articles in the first-person voice. $x^2(1)=59.90, p<.001$ (see figure 3.2).

**Sex of Author**

Three quarters (75.3%) of the articles are written by men and 21.8% are written by women. (The remaining 2.9% are coauthored by a man and a woman.) Figure 3.3a shows numbers of articles per half-decade, broken down by author sex. Figure 3.3b also breaks the time frame into half-decade intervals showing the
Figure 3.2
Sex of Author:
Articles in First-Person Voice
female authors 13.9%

male authors 86.1%

Figure 3.3a
Sex of Author

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Half-Decades</th>
<th>Male Authors</th>
<th>Female Authors</th>
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40

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Figure 3.3b Proportion of Articles By Women Per Half-Decade

Figure 3.3c Proportion of Articles By Women Per Decade

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proportion of women-authored articles per interval. The period from 1960 through 1964 has no women-authored articles, and in the following five-year period, 40% of the articles are women-authored -- the highest since the 1945-1949 post-war period. As can be seen on figure 3.3c, these patterns are obscured when looked at in wider intervals. An analysis based on decades would erroneously conclude that there is a steady increase in women-authored articles from the fifties through the seventies.

There is a statistically significant association between author sex and half-decade intervals, \( x^2(24) = 52.62, p < .001 \), as there is for author sex and year, decade and the PMP. There is a disproportionate number of women-authored articles from 1945-1949 and from 1990-1994, \( x^2(11) = 26.47, p < .01 \).

*Parents Magazine* has always been read primarily by women and is, in effect, a "woman's magazine," despite its title. In addition to advertisements for gender-neutral consumer products like cereals and soups -- which advertisers assume are purchased primarily by women -- there are also advertisements for gendered products such as beauty aids and feminine hygiene products. There are no ads for shaving cream or other "male" products. The editorial content falls within women's traditional areas of interest and expertise, and, overall, the magazine appears to be and "feels" like an environment for women.

When sex of author and voice of article are looked at together, a clear picture emerges: over half of all articles by men (54%) are written in first-person voice; yet first-person voice makes up only a quarter (26%) of articles by women. Not only is the ratio of male to female authors three to one, but male authors are more than twice
as likely as female authors to be writing about their own experience, speaking
"directly" to the (female) reader, $x^2(1)=4.86, p < .05$. Of total articles, 41% are first-
person male, and only 6.5% are first-person female, which is statistically significant,
$x^2(2)=15.90, p < .001$. Ironically, even though the magazine appears to be and "feels"
like an environment for women, *Parents Magazine* clearly has not been a forum for
personal communication between women on the subject of fathering, men and
familywork.

Figure 3.4 breaks down first-person voice articles by sex of author, using the
intervals of the PMP. It can be seen that first-person male has been the predominant

![Figure 3.4: Articles in First-Person Voice By Sex of Author](image)

voice in these articles over the 66-year period, and that there have not been as many
first-person female voices as there were during and shortly after World War II. From
1971 through 1984, a 13-year period of widespread reappraisal of gender roles, there
were no first-person female authored articles talking about fathers.

**Age and Sex of Children**

It is important to know the age and sex of the referent children in the articles, because it may be that men's familywork behavior is related to whether they have sons or daughters, and their children's ages. Given the strong tradition within many cultures of preferring sons, including the Judeo-Christian West, I was curious to see if there is any evidence of this in *Parents Magazine*. In addition, I wanted to see if the symbolic annihilation of adult women so prevalent in the mass media (Tuchman, Daniels and Benét, 1978) is also evidenced in the presentation of girls and daughters.

Almost half the articles (47.7%) refer to sex-neutral children. That is, children in the abstract, “childpeople,” not particular girls or boys. Boys were the referent child in 29.2% of articles, girls in 23%, a minor difference. Yet, there is a statistically significant association between sex of referent child and sex of author, $\chi^2(2) = 13.42$, $p < .01$, with 42% of men's articles referring to sex-neutral children, whereas 60.3% of women authors refer to sex-neutral children, and 100% of mixed-sex co-authors refer to sex-neutral children. In other words, women are significantly more likely than men to write about children in the abstract than about particular children, $\chi^2(2) = 7.60$, $p < .05$.

The age of the children referred to in the articles ranged from not-yet-born through teenage. The greatest number of children of an identifiable age were 0 - three. Sixty-one percent of the articles about teenagers were written in the 1930s. This probably reflects a changing focus of the magazine in later years more toward younger
children. This shift toward younger children is confirmed by the significant negative correlation between year and age of referent child ($r = -0.1898, p < .01$). Seventy-eight percent of the articles about pregnancy, labor and birth were from 1978 through 1994. This probably reflects more open discussion of medical and health matters in general, and it also reflects the family-centered maternity movement of the past twenty years which seeks to involve fathers in pregnancy, labor and birth. (The first article about classes for expectant fathers was in 1934; the first father’s eyewitness account at the hospital of the labor process was in 1959.) There is a significant association between age of referent child and decade, $x^2(54) = 72.67, p < .05$.

Men and women write about age-neutral children in equal proportions, 30% for both. Yet, there is a statistically significant association between author sex and age of referent children, in those cases where an age is known, $x^2(16) = 28.4, p < .05$. Only 2.3% of male-authored articles are about children six to twelve months of age, yet 20% of male-authored articles write about seven to 12-year olds. Only 5.5% of women-authors write about teenagers, yet 32% of women-authors write about children age zero to 6-months.

**Family Composition**

Unless it was explicitly stated otherwise, families were coded as intact, since historically, this has been the norm. Thus 87.2% of the families were intact - mother and father married and living together. This count includes fathers who were away in the armed forces during World War II and temporarily not living at home. (Interestingly, the Korean War, the Vietnam War and the Persian Gulf War -- around
which there was much bitter controversy -- are not mentioned.) Of the remaining 12.8%, about half are single mothers, and the other half is split between single fathers and step families. Since 1960, the proportion of articles with a non-intact referent family averaged 20% (see figure 3.5) ranging from the low teens in the seventies to almost 30% in the early sixties and late eighties. There is a significant correlation between family composition and year ($r = .2226, p < .001$). with a disproportionate number of non-intact families depicted in the sixties and eighties $\chi^2(5) = 18.35, p < .01$.

![Figure 3.5 Non-Intact Families](image)

If figure 3.5 can be considered a chart of the divorce rate according to the world of *Parents Magazine*, it is quite different from the divorce rate in the real world. In fact, according to *Parents Magazine*, the two intervals from 1970-1979 suggest a decrease in divorce, whereas the divorce rate was actually peaking during the late...
seventies. The spike in the divorce rate after World War II is also not reflected. It may be that articles about fatherhood during the seventies were showcasing the "new father" rather than dwelling on divorce or the problems of single-motherhood. Moreover, the rapid increase in the divorce rate in the seventies may be reflected in the large proportion of eighties' articles that say men's involvement in family work will improve the husband-wife relationship (see figure 3.6), which is one of the themes that will be analyzed in the next chapter.

![Figure 3.6](image)

Over the entire time frame, only 12.8% of articles depict a family that deviates from the intact nuclear family. The editors of Parents Magazine may have wanted family composition to be intact or ambiguous so that any reader would more easily identify with the articles. It may also be that market research at Parents Magazine has

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found that most of their readers are married mothers. In any case, the composition of families in Parents Magazine does not reflect the steady increase in the divorce rate over these decades.

Working Mothers

It is important to know how, if and when Parents Magazine depicts working mothers because this dramatic change over the last six decades was central to forcing public and private reconsideration of gender roles, including parenting. Although these articles are about fathers, many of them explicitly or implicitly refer to mothers’ work status. Seventy percent of the articles assume women-in-general are full-time mothers, and 30% assume that some mothers work full-time, some work part-time and some do not work, and/or no generalization can be made. There is a significant correlation between the assumed employment status of mothers-in-general and all the periodizations (r values ranging from .72 through .87, $p < .01$). Until 1958, 100% of the articles assumed mothers-in-general were at-home mothers. That year, and again the next year, there was one article per year in which it was suggested that mothers-in-general might be employed. Beginning in 1978, Parents Magazine articles about fathers were increasingly less likely to imply that mothers-in-general might be at home and not in the labor force.

Parents Magazine reasonably reflects the increase of employed mothers-in-general. However, employed referent mothers were depicted in only 8.6% of articles. In other words, it is normative for those mothers to work, but not these mothers. For
the entire 66-year time span, only 8.6% of the mothers in the articles worked outside the home, 35.4% are full-time at-home mothers, and employment status can't be discerned in 56%. There is a statistically significant correlation between employed referent mothers and decade ($r = .8766, p < .01$) and between fulltime employed referent mothers (7%) and decade ($r = .8123, p < .05$). Referent mothers employed part-time -- the preferred employment status for real-world mothers who work -- make up only 1.6% of all articles.

Employment status of mothers-in-general and employment status of referent mothers are both significantly associated with women as a percent of the labor force ($p < .001$ and $p < .01$, respectively). Figure 3.7 compares the change in these three employment variables over time, using the PMP. Of course, women as a percent of labor force shows steady increase. However, there is no solid trend of employed

![Figure 3.7](image-url)

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referent mothers until 1971. The proportion of employed referent mothers exceeds the proportion that assume maternal employment in general in the 1971-1977 period, and also in the earlier 1941-1947 period. While this may seem illogical, it suggests that the employed referent mothers were presented as atypical and extraordinary during these intervals. This is certainly how employed referent mothers were presented during the war years, within the context of contributing to the war effort. The exceptional employed referent mothers of the 1971-1977 period seem to serve as the counterpoint or rationale for the “new fathers.” Thus, an endorsement of working mothers might be inferred during the 194-1947 and 1971-1978 intervals.

The relative proportion of employed referent mothers to mothers-in-general are similar in the 1955-1963 period and the 1978-1984 period. At both intervals, an employed referent mother was not inconsistent with how mothers in general were presented, and at both intervals, the difference between the two proportions is about 50% (although overall numbers are greater during the 1978-1984 period). Both intervals suggest employed mothers as typifying a greater trend, perhaps suggesting a neutral stance toward the phenomenon.

The decreasing proportion of referent working mothers compared with mothers-in-general from 1985 through 1994 might be interpreted as a conservative turn, or an endorsement of at-home mothers.

In sum, these findings suggest that as it became more normative to be an employed mother -- in the real world and in Parents Magazine -- there was a proportional decrease in the actual depiction of working mothers in Parents Magazine.
Length of Articles

One third of the articles (33.7%) are one page in length; about a quarter (25.9%) are two pages in length; 16% are three pages in length, and the remaining 24.4% range from four to eight pages. There is a statistically significant association between article length and all the time periodizations of \( p < .01 \) or better. As can be seen on figure 3.8a, the distribution of length over the 66 years is fairly symmetrical, approximating a bell curve. From 1948-1970, the average length of an article is 1.9 pages, and then drops to a low of 1.4 in the 1985-1991 period. One explanation for this drop in length might be that the readers at that time were the first generation who grew up with television, and they may have been accustomed to getting information in smaller chunks, and with a more superficial level of detail (Postman, 1985). The development and success of media content that breaks information into small chunks, such as USA Today, People Magazine, and CNN Headline News would support this analysis. Article length may also have decreased because people were spending more time with television and less time reading magazines. In fact, there is a significant negative correlation between article length and television viewing time per household, \( r = -.2849, p < .001 \) (see figure 3.8b), and also between article length and households with television, \( r = -.2709, p < .001 \) (see figure 3.8c).

The trend toward shorter articles could also be Parents Magazine's response to more mothers having less time to read due to labor force participation. This explanation is supported by a significant negative correlation between article length and articles implying mothers-in-general are employed, \( r = -.1518, p < .01 \).
Figure 3.8a
Mean Length of Fatherhood Article in Parents Magazine

Figure 3.8b
Length of Articles in Parents Magazine and TV Viewing Time Per Household

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Figure 3.8c

Length of Articles in Parents Magazine and Households with Television

Figure 3.9

Articles Per Month
The increase in length of fatherhood articles in the 1992-1994 period might reflect the increase in serious attention to fatherhood issues that resulted in and grew out of the Murphy Brown-Dan Quayle altercation. Indeed, one lengthy article from 1992 refers to this controversy between the Vice President and the fictional television character, whose behavior expressed the perceived superfluousness of fathers.

At the other side of the length distribution, it may be that fathering was discussed in more depth during the 1929-1933 interval due to the depression’s impact on the breadwinner role; and again during and immediately after World War II. There were several lengthy articles in 1946 and 1947 which discuss in depth how fathers can be successfully integrated back into the family after time in the armed forces.

**Month**

Nineteen percent of all the articles were from a June issue, with the other months in the five to ten range, averaging 7.2. In other words, there were over two and a half times as many articles about fatherhood in June than the average for all the other months, $x^2(11)=42.58, p < .001$, (see figure 3.9). This suggests that throughout the century, there was a strong tendency to discuss fathers in the context of Father’s Day, celebrating them and taking them out of the context of daily family experience. Special emphasis on fathers in June supports the notion that *Parents Magazine* is a women’s magazine, despite its title.

**Summary and Discussion**

The eight article variables discussed above provide a concrete context for understanding and interpreting the less objective, more qualitative characteristics of
these articles which will be explored in the next two chapters.

Of particular interest are the author sex and voice breakdown, the finding that male authors specify children (by age and gender) more than women authors, and that the six to twelve-month old age range has the fewest number of male-authored articles.

The viewpoint most often heard in these articles is male — either an expert or a father. As discussed above, all the articles being analyzed are about fathers, so male authorship *per se* is not remarkable. Yet in most of these articles, men are defining fatherhood for women readers.

The articles selected for study were all under the subject heading “fathers” and so it may be appropriate that the articles are 75% male-authored — the articles are, after all, about them. Nevertheless, the familywork that men claim to do or that men prescribe for other men to do (via a female reader) in these articles becomes the standard. However, the men who write for *Parents Magazine* are exceptional; they are superhusbands. And although the authors make implicit comparisons between themselves and fathers-in-general, they are presenting themselves as “regular guys.”

There is a sense in which this is good for women because these vanguard men are making men’s increased engagement with familywork more normative. But the *real* regular guys the readers live with are likely below this standard. Women evolve their own family role and assess what will be expected of them based on the men they live with and the reality they jointly construct. Still, the fathers in *Parents Magazine* are providing a theoretical frame of reference. They function as a frame of reference especially for expectant mothers, who experience the husbands in *Parents Magazine*
before they experience their husbands as fathers. These male writers are atypical, but even if they weren't -- even if all men were truly like these men -- women are still disadvantaged because of the particular aspects of familywork men actually do in these depictions. As will be shown in the next chapter, the referent fathers typically do the familywork that least interferes with one’s personal freedom.

The proportion of first-person male voice (41%) to first-person female voice (6%) suggests that the definition of fatherhood offered by men in these articles, though not totally monolithic, is not balanced with women offering their perceptions of their husbands as fathers or of their own fathers, with other women. There is a sense in which men are entering a female environment, as guest speakers, and then, as will be shown later, engage in distorting and goading rhetoric.

That women are more likely to write about children-in-general than specific children can be explained by Ortner’s Nature-Culture framework, which says that “women are more involved more of the time with ‘species-life,’” (Ortner, 1974); and that women’s love for their children is an “unmediated commitment” regardless of their clan affiliation or other categories in which the child might participate.” According to Ortner, this is a “challenge to culture” in that it “represents generalized human values beyond social categories.”

Similarly, the finding that men are least likely to write about infants from the age of six to twelve months can also be explained within the Nature-Culture framework. At this age, the baby is somewhat mobile but lacks control over its movement and can wreak havoc in its path. The baby is vocal but largely

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unintelligible, which can be frustrating for both parents and child. Feeding a baby is often labor-intensive and messy. Relatively inoffensive newborn “poop” has turned into stinky baby shit (still affectionately referred to as “poop”). In other words, from six to 12 months, babies produce a great deal of noise and other unpleasant stimuli in the home. Their needs have to come before those of parents, who perhaps can’t remember the last time they made love or had dinner together. Some of the more unpleasant aspects of having a baby become salient and life with a baby becomes routinized. The novelty of having a newborn has worn off, and the honeymoon of new parenthood is over. And the six to 12-month-old is still much more “nature” than “culture.”

A father’s attitude about a child in this age range is exemplified in the excerpt below from a June 1966 article called “The Day I Really Became a Father” (#131).

The author-father refers to his newborn as “the killjoy in the nursery” and then describes his feelings toward the end of the first year:

As the weeks passed, Mark seemed to be constantly underfoot, charging about the house, endangering himself and every fragile thing we owned. My sweet infant had turned into a first-rate pest. He didn’t even want to play with blocks the right way. I would build them up; he would knock them down.

So about this time I started working later than usual. One night I was talking to an office colleague who confessed he got home late as many as three nights a week. “It’s so quiet when I get there’ he said. ‘The kids are asleep.’ I agreed, and we compared notes on how annoying youngsters become toward the end of the day. ‘They’re tired and irritable’ he said. ‘So are we’ I added....I was convinced again that man is not meant to be an active parent. So I continued to work late more often than was absolutely necessary.
This excerpt expresses a father's disdain for his infant, implying the child's age-appropriate behaviors are deficiencies. This excerpt presents the six to twelve month-old who acts on raw sensory information and natural curiosity in opposition to the adult male and his need for order, personal boundaries, and cultural symbols of his achieved status.

In looking at the findings discussed in this chapter -- and in the entire analysis -- it must be kept in mind that the magazine's top priority is keeping its advertisers happy -- its existence depends on that. Advertisers do not want their messages and images, whether in print or electronic media, to juxtapose messages that might be distressing or interfere with the consumption mindset. Consequently, the spirit of the magazine is very upbeat and positive. It is a "happy place" where the problems of the twentieth century can be managed and neither the nuclear family nor the American Dream is endangered; after all, only 12.8% of articles depict a family that deviates from the intact nuclear family, and only 8.6% of referent mothers are not home to greet their children after school.
CHAPTER IV

THE CONTENT OF ARTICLES: THEMES AND MESSAGES

Power In The Family

As a theme variable, power and privilege refer to who benefits from the way family energies are organized. In a male privileged family, the father is protected from the mundane trivialities of family life with children. His attention, time and energy are regarded as especially valuable. His personal space is less likely to be intruded upon, and there is greater respect for men's personal freedom and discretionary time than for women's. In a male privileged household, there is an assumption that fathers are free to choose whether or not and the degree to which they are involved in familywork. They have this freedom because it is assumed that women have primary responsibility for child care and housework. In an egalitarian family, there is an emphasis on fairness in the division of familywork between parents.

In keeping with the focus on Parents Magazine's role in maintaining or challenging the norm of gendered parenting, and in an effort to avoid highly connotative language, male privileged families will hereafter be referred to as gendered, and egalitarian families will be referred to as nongendered. This concept refers to whether power, privilege, work, and other dimensions of social life are organized on the basis of sex. In other words, are the biological and physical realities
of sex differences the basis on which an individual’s social roles and status are assigned. Genderedness will ultimately determine the power distribution in a family, with gendered households having a greater imbalance of power, and nongendered households having not only a more balanced power distribution, but an emphasis on fairness and task sharing.

There is an association between author sex and genderedness of the household, $x^2(2) = 6.08, p < .05$. Eleven percent of male authors depict nongendered households, compared with 22% of female authors. Thus, women-authored articles are twice as likely to depict nongendered households than male-authored articles, $x^2(1) = 3.63, p < .05$.

About a quarter (24.5%) of male-authored articles depict a gendered household, and 30% of women-authored articles depict genderedness. Female authors contribute disproportionately to the total of nongendered articles, $x^2(1) = 3.63, p < .05$.

There is a significant association between genderedness and all the time intervals, including year ($p < .01$).

**Gendered Families**

A quarter (25.9%) of all articles imply a gendered family, and these articles are disproportionately distributed throughout the time frame $x^2(11) = 48.96, p < .001$. As can be seen on figure 4.1, the proportion of gendered articles doubles between the late thirties and early forties, so that by 1940-1944, 80% of articles have this theme. There is a negative correlation between gendered articles and decade ($r = -.8379, p < .01$),
half-decade ($r = -0.5378, p < .05$) and PMP ($r = -0.6956, p < .05$).

The large number of gendered articles during the war may be interpreted as a break or inhibitor to women's increased power and authority -- in *Parents Magazine* and in the real world -- during these same years. While women are gaining power and opportunity in the public realm (employment, increased authorship of articles), genderedness in the private realm is reasserted. In the period immediately following the war, (1945-1949) women's roles in the public sphere declined, as did the proportion of gendered articles. Except for a brief surge to 33% in the early fifties, the level of gendered articles stays fairly constant until the next peak of 60% in the late sixties. This sudden increase is consistent with other evidence in this study that there was little
representation of nongendered parenting in the sixties.

A precipitous decline in the early seventies is followed by continued decline to the point where there are no depictions of gendered families in the early eighties. The rise in the proportion of gendered articles in the late eighties -- almost to the early seventies level -- after twenty years of decline is difficult to explain. However, there is again rapid and steep decline in the early nineties. It may be that by the nineties, certain themes would have been perceived by readers as “politically incorrect,” just as they may have seemed out of step with the times in the seventies. Yet, as will be shown later, there is an increase from the eighties to the nineties in the proportion of articles that might be offensive to feminist sensibilities.

An example of an early male privilege article is from November 1936 (#41), written by a father of three who granted his wife permission to make an “extended visit” to her parent’s home, alone. He says that “the mother had always had charge of the children for almost all purposes” and he had never tried to run “routine daily affairs.” He says that “in addition to the duties the children had previously performed, they now would have to absorb the many duties formerly taken care of by their mother” (emphasis added). Rather than taking over the tasks mother does, he passes them along to the children, and does so in a highly gendered way. He assigns his son the job of “timekeeper” explaining that “he will have custody of the big alarm clock. He will set the alarm so as to get the girls up in plenty of time to get breakfast on time . . . Barbara shall be the cook . . . Anne shall be the housekeeper.”

In “When Father Cooks” from March 1939 (#51), male privilege is clearly implied
in this description of the different attitudes that mothers and fathers have toward cooking:

...cooking is a man’s avocation and not a job. He is concerned with the result but still more interested in the process. He may have plenty of faults as a practical cook in his lavish use of expensive ingredients and his obliviousness to the state of the kitchen after the cooking spree. But he is able, as few mothers are, to shed all other responsibilities while he devotes himself to the flavoring of a pot roast. He knows that he cannot help Johnnie with his home work or advise Mary Lou about cutting out a skating skirt and at the same time cook a delectable dish. And he does not try. If and when he cooks it is because he wants to do it and not because it is expected of him.

Articles about the importance of fathers’ involvement in family life also suggest male privilege. An article from December 1940, “The Forgotten Father” (#57), makes the point that children suffer when their “father plays too minor a role in their lives.” He says that “the husband occupies more the position of a star boarder whose wishes are carefully attended to but who is spared much knowledge of the daily ups and downs of the household.”

In “Fifty-fifty Baby” (#94) from June 1948, the mother-author describes how her husband’s odd work hours resulted in their sharing baby care when their son was a newborn. They continued this arrangement even after his work hours became more regular. She says her husband “is very proud of [their] baby’s progress and of his share in helping to bring up [their] son.” But in the final paragraph, she offers “a word of caution to mothers . . . [d]o not leave too many of the little jobs for your husband to do in the evening as he has to work all day too. Help him enjoy the
children without feeling their care is an extra burden.”

In “When Daddy Comes Home” (#99) from May 1950, a father writes about his wife, “although it would be more convenient if she were two people, she does manage to feed the three children their supper while she is putting the finishing touches on ours at the same time without getting a split personality.”

Another article discussing men and cooking from June 1951 (#103) called “Father’s in The Kitchen” explains:

Father’s attitude toward cooking is different than Mother’s. It’s somewhat of a hobby with him. When Mother prepares family meals, she usually has a hundred and one things on her mind demanding her time and attention. But when Father is preparing his special dish, he has all the time in the world. He likes having the family around to joke with him and to help with little chores—and the children are happy to share in the fun and food of Father’s efforts.

Many articles set up Mom’s absence as an unusual circumstance that requires father’s involvement. In an article from November 1949 (#96) called “Weekend Off for Mother” a mother writes,

There’s no denying that replacing Mother for a weekend entails a real sacrifice of time and energy, and Paul doesn’t pretend that its as restful as his accustomed interval between two busy weeks. He admits its not a time to get in nine holes of golf or drop in at a neighbor’s to spend an afternoon with television . . . The secret lies in making up his mind, ahead of time, to devote the entire weekend to the children and not to attempt anything which would make him feel that the children were interfering with his pleasure . . . he doesn’t mind it once or twice a year.

In “Be Fair to Father” from June 1958 (#118), the male-female co-authors write,

There’s neither incontrovertible psychological nor physiological reason why a father shouldn’t participate in the care of his infants. That is, of
course, if he wants to. *If he wants to* is the key; ought’s and oughtnot’s, do’s and don’ts in the Strange Case of Pop Today, aren’t laws to be adhered to with unthinking allegiance. Those fathers who take no pleasure in participating in the nursery shouldn’t feel as if they have to.

A women-authored photo essay from June 1965, titled “Double Duty for Dad” (#130) begins, “When the mother of this family was away for a long weekend, Dad decided to take over full housekeeping duties, *spurning the offers of neighbors to cook supper and take the kids for the night*” (emphases added).

In a June 1968 photo essay called “Father’s Day With Baby” (#137), the author talks about how father and baby can become acquainted if father “takes a hand in caring for him.” The author adds, “Of course no father can or should be expected to give as many bottles or change as many diapers as mother does.”

The issue of father’s choice, related to genderedness, is exemplified in “Father Takes a Turn at Baby Care” from April 1972 (#140) which talks about how some fathers have “elaborate schedules for the particular chores they have *elected* to do” (emphasis added). Half the page on which this quote appears is taken up with a photograph of a young father sitting on the couch playing guitar to an attentive infant. Apparently this is one of the chores he “elected.”

Father’s choice is exemplified again in what is in many ways a very progressive article from October 1985 called “Fathers Make Great Mothers” (#171). In the final paragraph, the author says, “It seems to me, then, that men can be as competent as women to care for an infant and child; whether they are depends upon whether they *want to be*” (emphasis added). The same author, Dr. Robert McCall, writes in a July
1986 piece called “The Reluctant Father” (#175) that husbands “clearly prefer playing with their babies to doing routine caretaking chores.” The recurring theme of father being a playmate rather than a caretaker will be looked at again in later discussions.

Nongendered Families

The importance of fairness regarding familywork is suggested in 14.4% of the articles. This theme is expressed in a disproportionate number of women-authored articles $x^2(1)=25.58, p<.05$. These articles offer something of a mixed message, however, because while they do explicitly discuss the importance and advantages of a nongendered household, more than a third of them (34.2%) also say that mother is ultimately responsible for familywork and that fathers can choose if and the degree to which they are involved with familywork. In terms of these articles being a force for change, these messages cancel each other out.

Figure 4.2 shows the proportion of articles per half-decade depicting a nongendered family. There was actually a slightly greater proportion of nongendered articles from 1935-1939 than there was from 1975-1979, which is interesting considering how gender roles changed in the forty-year interim. The 13% from 1975-1979 increases over three and a half times, so that by the next interval, 1980-1984, almost half (46%) the articles on fatherhood depict a nongendered household. Beginning in 1955, the proportion of articles depicting a nongendered household never fell below 10%, perhaps suggesting that a norm had changed.

Referring back, to figure 4.1 while looking at 4.2, it is striking that for both gendered and nongendered households, the percentage from 1955 - 1964 (two intervals) is 14%. 

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This balanced constancy suggests a stalled response to the profound social changes happening in the real world between 1959 and 1964. (The publication of Betty Friedan's *Feminine Mystique*, oral contraceptives, race issues, war, poverty, student protests, space exploration, assassinations, rock’n’roll.) This plateau was changed by an *increase* in gendered articles and a *decrease* in nongendered articles, suggesting a conservative response to the sixties. Also consistent with other findings is the peak for nongendered parenting messages being in the early eighties, which is significantly disproportionate, $x^2(11)=34.00$, $p < .01$.

An early example of an article espousing fairness is this one from June 1931 called "Are You Fit to Be a Father?" (#9) which declares

...during an earlier phase of our social life care of children, especially in

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their early years, has been thought of as one of the many household tasks that were ‘mother’s work’. An intelligent household is a communal one. Although specific tasks may be delegated, the responsibility for the family life should be shared by both father and mother.

Similarly, a “For Fathers Only” column from March 1933 (#20) says that

Until the last ten years or so, a man married and had children and that was the end of it so far as he was concerned. The nursery wasn’t his province and he knew it. Without concern, he left the children to his wife, and more often than not was known to his offspring merely as the man who stayed with them at week-ends. This has now completely changed. The old type of father is passing!

In “Should a Family Have Two Heads?” (#50) from February 1939, the author begins the article with, “The modern family is supposed to be a community enterprise directed by a partnership of two persons, husband and wife, equal rights, equal privileges, equal responsibilities, equal duties and equal obligations.” This author, Director of the Institute of Family Living in Los Angeles, goes on to say “... that families with two heads are more successful than those in which either husband or wife is (more or less!) undisputed boss.” Later in the piece, talking about the importance of division of labor, he says

The manner of division of labor is unimportant; the fact of division of labor is extremely important. The family cannot have two heads unless there is a great deal of intelligent division of labor to prevent conflict, waste of time, and hard feelings.

In “A New Father Speaks Up” (#120) from August 1959, the author talks about how he supported his wife during her pregnancy, how he believed it was a good thing that “[m]ost hospitals allow husbands in the labor room.” When they came home with their new baby, he discovered:
...that it's not necessarily true that a baby instinctively turns to his mother. He responds, instead, to the person who takes care of most of his needs. Since I am a student with a working wife, I take care of our boy during most of his waking hours. He turns to me for comfort as readily as to my wife.

This 1959 article is noteworthy in that it was the first to explicitly mention a working wife/mother. This nongendered family is depicted as nongendered in a balanced way.

In a February 1984 piece called “Fulltime Father: Staying Home With Baby,” (#163) the author reports on fathers who stayed home fulltime with their newborns. The point of the article is that being home with a newborn is hard work for anybody, male or female. In a reversal on the classic complaints of fulltime mothers, the author quotes fathers who say things such as, “I was even too tired for sex” and “I can remember taking the garbage out and thinking that was as far from the house as I had gotten in five days.” Toward the end of the article, the intent is transparent:

Fortunately, when my wife did come home, she pitched in and took charge of our daughter. That was great. I mean, there were times I felt the whole world was against me, and if she had popped open a beer, put her feet up, and stuck her head in a newspaper, I would have lost control.

The piece ends with an urge to fathers who work fulltime outside the home to take over at home for a few days once in a while...send your wife out for the day...or for the weekend...help with the chores everyday; let your wife know you support and love her....take an active role in raising your child....

This article presents some interesting dynamics: it is a male-authored article “about” fulltime fathers that puts traditional female complaints into men's mouths in order to
make the case that men should be more engaged in familywork. And it is read almost exclusively by women. Any fulltime at-home mother would feel affirmed and validated by this article, maybe even a bit amused. Still, in order for an article like this to hold any possibility for change, it would have to be read by men -- which these articles for the most part were not. Articles with fairness themes such as this may work to establish standards for men’s behavior -- but only for women. A (woman) reader may be unable to respond to an article like this in a constructive way, and it may leave her feeling that her situation is below the norm. Yet she would find the messages supportive.

In “Remaking Fatherhood” (#243) from December 1994, author Richard Louv compares some trends in fatherhood today with preindustrial fatherhood, when men could be more involved with their children because they were not out of the house all day. The author acknowledges that it is yet a small minority of fathers who take advantage of electronic communications technologies and work at home, but maintains that “it’s becoming quite evident to anyone who takes a clear-eyed look at today’s American family that, one way or another, in ever growing numbers, fathers are finding their way home.” He continues:

Today, after a long hiatus, men are regaining their appreciation of domestic involvement, in many cases because their wives are at work full-time. Unlike their colonial counterparts, however, good family men today are not focused just on the loftier aspects of parenthood, such as the academic and spiritual instruction of their children; dads are also in the trenches, changing diapers and spooning applesauce. They still have a long way to go before they share domestic chores equally with women, but on almost every front, from household chores to daily child care, fathers have moved closer to equality in the last decade.

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This article, like several others in this analysis, reifies a change in fatherhood and in men’s familywork behavior, while acknowledging there is a need for further change. His description of men changing diapers and spooning applesauce as being “in the trenches” is noteworthy in its gender codings. He uses a male metaphor, from war, denoting work that is unpleasant, difficult, dangerous and destructive to describe the often unpleasant but nurturing tasks of cleaning and feeding children. This is, on one level, an acknowledgment of the difficulties of certain aspects of parenthood; but it also evokes the Nature--Culture distinction discussed earlier, suggesting that men are willing and able to descend (literally, into trenches, into dirt) to do work that is closer to nature. (That this is the most recent article suggests a cautiously optimistic ending to the 66-year story told by these articles.)

A Nongendered Household Improves the Husband/Wife Relationship

An October 1984 article called “Fathers Are Important, Too” (#165) emphasizes fairness, and like many articles with the fairness theme, also expresses the idea that the relationship between husband and wife will be improved if familywork is both parent’s responsibility: “When a father shares in family and child rearing activities, both parents have greater opportunity to understand and respect each other’s role in their partnership.” There is a statistically significant association between genderedness and the improved relationship theme, \( \chi^2(2) = 33.27, p < .001 \).

As can be seen on figure 4.3a, there were no articles from 1960-1964 suggesting that sharing familywork would improve the husband-wife relationship. This is remarkable in light of the fact that this theme is present in 40% of articles in the
previous two intervals (ten years), and the following one. While there are some indicators that the early seventies seem to be the pivotal moment for a new conception
of the father role, figure 4.3a indicates that discussions of the new involved father did not mention the impact of his behavior on his marriage as a "selling point." Twenty percent of fatherhood articles in the early forties said engaged fathers improve their relationship with their wives; however, in the early nineties, the number was the same. The early eighties again emerges as the period with the greatest emphasis on shared familywork, or nongenderedness.

Figure 4.3b takes the same data as figure 4.3a, but makes sex of author visible. There is a significant association between author sex and the father's involvement improves the relationship theme ($x^2(2) = 28.36, p < .001$). In the early fifties, and mid-seventies to mid-eighties, a greater proportion of women authors than male authors talked about the positive impact of men's involvement on the marriage ($p < .05$). There are also several periods when men and women authors expressed this theme in equal proportions (55-59, 65-69, 70-74 and 90-94). Overall, women expressed this theme in greater or equal proportion to men between 1945 and 1985.

Of all the articles expressing this theme, 45.8% are women-authored and 54.2% are male-authored. Considering that the ratio of women-authored to male-authored articles overall is approximately 1:3, we can conclude that this is a disproportionately female perception, $x^2(1) = 14.98, p < .001$.

An early example of the linkage of these two themes (fairness and improved relationship) can be found in a June 1937 "For Fathers Only" column (#43). The father-author describes his experience when he had to take over caring for their young infant when his wife and her mother both had the flu:

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Time seemed a very precious thing when I calculated that five feedings at half an hour each took two and a half hours from my day. Time for a tennis match or a book before the baby came, and this was only a fraction of the care needed. How on earth could anyone find time for both a baby and regular household tasks, when the baby alone was a fulltime job for me?"

This father realized that

Caring for a baby is work, and sometimes anxiety and disappointment. I understand [my wife's] problems so much better now than if I had just casually helped out once in a while. It seems terribly unfair that a mother should have to drudge all day and give up many outside contacts. I am promising myself that I will share the responsibility....

In a June 1944 article called “Father’s Day” (#72), the author-father describes how he had to take over when his wife was sick and their housekeeper had recently left to take a job in the munitions industry. He ends his essay noting that “it even counted with my wife, this househusbanding of mine. Already we have spoken of menus and recipes, budgets and household management with a new sense of fellowship.” (For this father, unfortunately, fellowship must have been a bit threatening because, he adds, “I look forward to the time when I can say, ‘an excellent cake my dear, but I find that another egg-white improves the texture a great deal, don’t you?’”) Note the early, though sarcastic, use of the term “househusbanding.”

These two themes (father’s involvement and how it improves husband-wife relationship) often form a triad with the theme of broadening definitions of the male role; or, as it was described in #165, men freeing themselves from the constraints of “what a ‘man’ is supposed to be in American society-- someone who shouldn’t play,
cry, be gentle or show affection.”

The first article expressing this trio of themes (father’s involvement, changing gender roles and improved marriage with husband’s involvement) did not appear until June 1967 in “The Challenge of Fatherhood” (#134). The author, Rachele Thomas, a clinical psychologist, writes

Everyone is well aware that for centuries women were deprived of fulfilling experiences outside the home. Until recently, we have been less sensitive to the fact that men, too, have been cheated of experiences that do not fit traditional stereotypes of masculinity. Many of our ideas about manliness have seriously hindered men from becoming creative fathers.

She talks about how traditional female traits in men have been “erroneously equated with weakness and effeminacy” and in a damning statement about gender roles, notes that this is “only one reflection of the unfortunate male-female stereotyping that has so often prevented men and women from developing fully.” Thomas goes on to say that “in our complex society, men and women need a much wider array of feelings, attitudes and skills….if we are to live in peace with others in the world.” Her perspective foreshadows the androgyny research of the mid-to-late seventies. She urges fathers to help with chores and “see to it that their wives have a chance to be reasonably relaxed and rested. The most genuinely ‘maternal’ mother does not have an inexhaustible supply of patience and good humor”

After admonishing against assigning family activities into male and female categories because it sets a bad example for children, she says that what is often referred to as “sissy stuff” is just part of the “day-to-day activities of living in a
family....What is important is not to set up a model for living in which we take it for
granted that menial tasks are for women only.”

Eleven years later, in a July 1978 article called “When Dad Becomes a
Househusband” (#151) the author talks about how he is happy to unlearn the “prideful
male self-reliance and ‘masculine’ independence and separateness that so often places a
buffer of dead air between men and other people, even their own kids.” The author
enthusiastically explains how “there’s never enough time for everything” yet
“everybody thrives:”

...various tasks, without our really planning it, have naturally fallen to one or
the other of us. I do the dishes but [my wife] helps [the children] with their
clothes. I cook breakfast, [my wife] cooks dinner (even though I start it). We
both iron, I do the sewing and mending....we both hug them a lot, hold them
and put bandages on cuts and either one of us or both of us gets out of bed if
anyone has a bad dream and needs a little comforting....It’s almost as though
we’ve simply forgotten about the restrictive aspects of sex roles -- an emerging
pattern we see more and more often in friends who are also working parents.

A June 1981 article called “Fathers Who Deliver” (#157) focuses on fathers
who are not only present during labor and birth, but who actually, with a doctor’s
supervision, deliver their own babies. Follow-up studies on these families show that
fathers who deliver their own babies

are more active in their care and feeding, that the couple resumes sexual
relations earlier, and that their marital relationship is better than those of
couples in which the father was present at the delivery as a coach. When the
husbands participate in child care, their wives are able to rest or grab some time
for themselves and the marital relationship reaps the rewards....

This is one of several articles, since the mid-sixties, that discuss the importance of
fathers having a more active, central role in the birth process.

"Are Dads Doing More?" (#197) from June 1989 is one out of a total of 16 (6.6%) women-authored articles in first-person voice. The author describes how she and her husband always assumed that "housework and child care were joint responsibilities, and over the years a pattern of sharing has evolved that's comfortable for both of [them]." The author quotes sociologist Joseph Pleck's research showing that husbands who participate the most in familywork have higher rates of marital adjustment and happiness. She also quotes a psychiatrist who says that he and his patients are "grappling with the issue" of what it means to be a father, and that "[n]obody ever says they're sorry they didn't spend more time at the office."

Woman As Other

When reading historical documents, it is difficult to put aside the perception of a modern reader. To say that these articles, by today's standards, seem "insulting to women," says nothing about their content. Much of what is "insulting to women" today was likely not perceived that way forty years ago. Therefore, the content element that contributes to that impression would have to be captured by a theme that holds time constant. The woman as Other theme holds time constant because it doesn't require putting oneself into the mindset of a woman from another era.

Articles that cast women into the role of Other characterize women as having certain traits, propensities or skills that define them as a group or type and, most importantly, set them apart from men. Not only are sex and gender differences asserted, but women are seen as mysterious, different and strange. These
characteristics might very well be considered as positive by both men and women in other contexts; but in the Parents Magazine articles where the woman as Other theme is present, these traits and characteristics are negatively valued and discussed derisively.

There is a significant association between articles that depict woman as Other and decade $x^2(6)=23.76$ $p < .001$, and between Other and half-decade $x^2(12)=29.95$ $p < .005$. Figure 4.4a illustrates a sudden three-fold increase in the proportion of Other articles between the forties and the fifties. The sixties have the greatest proportion of this type of article, followed by rapid decline in the seventies, further decline to zero in the eighties, and an increase to 10% in the nineties. The fifties, sixties and eighties might be seen as variations from a “baseline” or constant of 9% for the entire period. These findings are consistent with other findings about the sixties and the eighties. The sixties, especially the early sixties (see figure 4.4b) again emerge as a period where the depiction of parents’ roles and family life was especially hostile to women. The eighties emerge overall, as a less misogynist period, though variations within the decade have been noted, and will be discussed further in Chapter 6. Figure 4.4b allows for a more detailed analysis by dividing time into half-decade intervals. It is interesting that the proportion of woman as Other articles for the early nineties approximates that of the forties, and exceeds that of the thirties. Women were discussed relatively favorably in the early forties, during the war, when they also wrote more articles and wrote more assertively -- and there were fewer representations of gendered families. The early seventies, the period of greatest “women’s lib” activity, had no woman as Other articles.
The woman as Other theme is exemplified in an article from October 1937 (#47), in which a father “speaks his mind about the cautious maternal urge to protect children from the risks so dear to every adventurous heart:”

...there have been times when I have been sorely tempted to forget my scruples about a split in the parental high command....when I have heard a mother, a maid or any female given temporary authority over a child, take him vehemently to task for something as harmless as sitting atop a tower of piled boxes and gently rocking....I stress ‘a mother, a maid or any female given temporary authority’ because women, in particular, are guilty of such action....They bite clenched knuckles. They search frantically for a suddenly vanished breath to scream their horror, and are never very long in finding sufficient wind in an odd corner of the lungs to shrill: ‘Junior, get down from there at once before you kill yourself!’...another seed of timidity planted in [the child’s] fresh and fear-ignorant brain....Short-sighted, unsympathetic females! Can’t they see...that love of danger and dangerous situations is dear above all other things to the masculine heart?

In some cases, the characterization is intended as a compliment, but is nevertheless condescending. In this article from June 1944, a father talks about how he “was drafted to take over for mother” and “spent his day off as a domestic,” which included some meal preparation:

Cleaning vegetables is a task which admits of no finesse known to man. Woman might have ways with them, but to a man I feel that the vegetable must ever remain a necessary and mysterious evil.

Speaking about women in an alien manner was not limited to wives, but included daughters, too. There are several articles, like this one from November 1946, that describe how a father had to “take over” when mom was in the hospital having a baby. (It is interesting to note that this was before the days of “drive-through deliveries,” when, at the other extreme, new mothers were hospitalized for two weeks for an
uncomplicated delivery.):

....she wanted to comb her hair, put on a pretty dress, and in her own small way perform the mysterious rites that ladies always seem to perform, and take hours in the performance, behind closed doors.

This father also noted that in his wife’s absence, his eight-year-old daughter “blossomed out like a little mother herself. She was the one who knew where things were and when the others should go to bed.”

The “otherness” of mother, along with the greater importance of father, was suggested in a co-authored male/female article from October 1951 titled “Father’s Changing Role,” which begins:

Mothers are not always sufficiently aware of the tremendously important part fathers play in shaping a child’s personality. In many ways, it is even more vital than the mother’s role. Mother stands for home. She symbolizes protection and comfort. But father represents the great outside world beyond the safe shelter of the roof-tree and the intimate circle of the family group.

Later in this article, the authors discuss fathers’ role in discipline:

A mother who is tender and devoted may not be able alone to raise peaceful, self-controlled children. Their aggressions often find undesirable outlets which are beyond the control of a gentle mother. There is need for father’s assistance to help divert them into constructive channels.

Again, the Nature--Culture distinction is suggested. The mother, who is aligned with Nature, is unable to control children’s aggression or to impose self-control. Father, who is aligned with Culture, is the parent who ultimately civilized the child.

An article from September 1952 discusses the “seven sins of maternity” that prevent fathers from being more involved with their children and home. The idea that mothers somehow discourage men from being engaged with their families is a theme
that comes up over and over again over the 66 years. In this article, the author says that “[b]earing children is, after all, a women’s biological destiny and nature has written it deep in her body and emotions. No matter how brilliant she is intellectually or how important a career she may have, she doesn’t feel completely fulfilled unless she has a child.

This premise is then used against mothers, as the author explains:

Sometimes the ego-satisfaction she gets out of homemaking and motherhood makes her reluctant to share her importance in these provinces with her mate. She may even be a little competitive toward her husband where the affections of the children are concerned. Without being conscious of it, she sometimes wants to matter more to them than he does. She tends to hover over her young ones like a mother hen, cackling with cautions when their father approaches....then later this steal-the-act-mother complains that ‘Bill was just never much of a family man.’

Some articles define women’s otherness in terms of their unique concerns with petty and trivial matters. In June 1960, a father talks about his experience when his wife decided on “natural childbirth”:

That evening Rose came home with books and pamphlets and diagrams and pictures and a schedule of classes she had to attend -- and most horribly, with a schedule of classes I had to attend. I call them classes, but a more accurate word would be klatches. Most of her weekly or bi-weekly junkets seemed to be as much concerned with the exchange of recipes and discussions of maternity clothes as with more important aspects of pregnancy.

In “I’m Glad I’m a Father...most of the time” (#136) from February 1968, the author-father says of his wife, “Like most women, she is something of a scorekeeper. I’m sure she has figured out how many early dog walks and hours of weekend playground sitting are equal to how much kitchen cleaning and ashtray dumping.” He later points out, “women and children have a long-standing conspiracy to move things about when men aren’t looking.” Of course he is writing in a humorous tone, but he
reifies and keeps alive the stereotype of women being shrewd and devious. The author is implying that women and children conspire and “team” against fathers. The two teams at play are Nature and Culture. Nature uses its power to move things around and undermine man’s best efforts and intentions; Culture battles with nature for order and predictability.

The special connection between mothers and children, with fathers on the “outside” is a theme that comes up often in these articles. And in fact, for most of the time frame under consideration, women and children shared a space and a set of activities from which men were for the most part absent. Mothers are in one relationship with their children, a different relationship with their husbands, and a third relationship as manager of fathers’ relationship with children -- performing the necessary transformations and links between nature and culture. Referring again to the 1952 article that discusses the “seven sins of maternity,” the author advises: “A mother should not act as a buffer state between her husband and children. Rather, she should be a bridge across which they pass freely to each other” (#108, p. 77). To say that she should be a bridge suggests, not only that she allow them to walk over her, but that their relationship is her responsibility and without her they would not be connected. It is mother’s job to maintain the father-child(ren) relationship and to monitor its quality.

**Fatherhood is Emotionally Satisfying/Self-Actualizing/Fun**

In reading through these articles in the earliest phases of this project, I noticed that fatherhood is often described as fun, self-actualizing and emotionally satisfying. While I would not necessarily expect articles about fathers to discuss mothers’
experience of parenthood, there is in fact very little discussion of motherhood being “fun” -- in these articles or anywhere else in the culture. Motherhood is more often implied to be a duty, a responsibility, or a choice. Motherhood may be presented as emotionally satisfying, but it is not offered as an avenue to self-actualization or personal growth. Parenthood is not “hyped” to mothers -- as it is to fathers -- as a fun thing to do. Further, it implies that fathers have a choice. A woman reader is told that her husband might enjoy active fathering, and evidence is offered that many men do. Like snowboarding or golf, fathering is something he is urged (through her as messenger) to try because it may be exhilarating.

Almost half of all articles imply fathering can be emotionally satisfying/self-actualizing or fun. A slightly greater proportion of male authors than female authors express this (46%, 41% respectively) and only four women (1.6%) say this in a first person voice. These findings are not surprising, since it makes sense for men to talk about what is or is not fun for them. But when looked at in relation to other variables, almost one quarter (23.4%) of all the articles can be described as men speaking directly and personally to mothers about how much they enjoy fathering and how satisfying it is. Of this emotionally satisfied group, close to half (47.3%) are using a boastful tone, and half of the articles with emotionally satisfied referent fathers (50.8%) also suggest that the referent father had an insight/conversion experience. Twenty-two percent use a boastful tone and describe having had a conversion experience.

Looking at the articles that say fatherhood can be emotionally satisfying, there has been considerable change over time. There is a significant association between this
theme and all the periodizations ($p < .01$). Figure 4.5a shows that 20% of articles imply fathering is emotionally satisfying or fun in early thirties, and this proportion

**Figure 4.5a**

*Fatherhood is Emotionally Satisfying, Self-Actualizing and/or Fun*

**Figure 4.5b**

*Fatherhood is Emotionally Satisfying, Self-Actualizing and/or Fun*

*By Sex of Author and Half-Decade*
increases four-fold by the 1970s. It is striking that there are no articles describing fatherhood as emotionally satisfying in the early sixties, yet in the next interval, half the articles express this theme. It is interesting, too, that despite the peaks in the seventies, the proportion of articles expressing that fatherhood can be emotionally satisfying is the same in the early nineties as it was in the late sixties.

Figure 4.5b separates the proportion per half-decade by author sex, revealing that women contribute more than men to the sudden increase in the late sixties. That more women authors than male authors in the late sixties write about how fatherhood is emotionally satisfying seems consistent with other findings that those years seem to be the low point for men speaking positively about family life and about women. The gap between men and women expressing this theme is narrowest in the mid-to-late seventies, representing an increase for women but a decrease for men, as compared to earlier in the decade. There has been a slow but steady decline in the proportion of articles espousing the joys of fatherhood since 1979, due primarily to fewer women-authored articles expressing this theme.

An early example of a father expressing his satisfaction with fatherhood is author of Parents Magazine's first ever “For Fathers Only” (#12) column from June 1932. This man “didn’t count on sharing [his] wife’s rapturous joy over [the baby] for the first year.” He continues:

In fact, I was sure the first year would be the hardest for me. My wife, of course, thought, talked and lived for the baby. Where I had been in the limelight after dinner, I suddenly found my anecdotes and events of the day constantly interrupted by ‘guess what Peter did today’?
Cautioning the reader that he has “no intent of subtly proselytizing for a sixteen-hour shift -- eight at the office and eight by the crib,” this father shares his insight with the reader:

If you can’t learn to swim without getting in the water how can you be sure there’s nothing amusing in giving the baby his bath? Well the fact is you can’t! And what is quite as important is that you can’t fully appreciate or love your baby until you begin to do something personal for him. Maybe that’s why mothers really enjoy young babies so much more than fathers do. They make *personal sacrifices* for them, while most of our contributions are abstract and impersonal -- paying the bills, for instance.

This father then goes on to describe in humorous detail how to give a baby a bath, beginning with the instruction “lock door to avoid mother’s advice.” Then he shares his thoughts about 2 A.M. feeding, favorably comparing the “kick” of that “bottle” and “party” with being at a smoky, crowded nightclub at 2 A.M., with its parties and bottles:

Give the baby his bottle? Not on your life, you say. Well I’ll admit there’s nothing alluring about crawling out of bed at 2 A.M. in mid-winter, getting the bottle out of the refrigerator, heating it, picking up a twelve-pound warm, wet bundle, unraveling it, redressing your future heir in a dry one, getting a nipple that has the right size hole in it, and finally sitting for fifteen minutes while he has his after-the-theater nip.

He offers more of his insights, ostensibly, to male readers:

Of course some of us young fathers are just hopeless. Somehow we’ve gathered the idea that it’s effeminate to do anything for a young baby. ‘That’s women’s work,’ I’ve heard young fathers say. And that, gentlemen, is the prize fallacy. Taking care of a baby entails pure manual labor....But along with the labor of lifting, bathing, powdering, dressing, tucking in, and so on, far into the night, goes an immense amount of sheer fun which you can neither appreciate nor enjoy without doing a little personal butlering for the old boy yourself.
This father’s urging other fathers to “get into the game” (like golf or snowboarding) seems progressive for 1932. In “A Hike With Bill” (#52) from April 1939, the author-father describes in detail how he and his son spend hours talking and learning together on their walks. When they get home, there are always many answers for them to look up together. He doesn’t tell his son to look them up himself because he fears this will make him stop asking the questions. He shares with the reader his “selfish motive” of “seeing life through Bill’s eyes” which allows him to “live again the delights of [his] own youth.”

In “Attention: New Fathers” from May 1946 (#85), a father describes how like many fathers in uniform, he “returned home and met a complete stranger — a new baby!” In about five different passages, this father expresses amazement and delight about “how easy the practical side of child care has become compared...to the old methods,” using words like “simplicity,” “modern” and “ease.” Now that he is home, he realizes that his wife’s letters, with references to his “future part in things” were not just meant to “build [his] morale or satisfy [his] male ego.” He says that all new fathers need to learn what he has learned, “that babies are not only wonderful to have, but richly rewarding, downright fun and not a bit more trouble than they’re worth.” He realizes that “fathers can have an active share in them even in the earliest months.”

These fathers base their urging that other fathers get involved with the care of their children because it is fun and fulfilling for them. This author-father, writing in September 1951 (“It’s a Man’s Job, Too! #105) bases his case on the fun he gets out of fathering and the importance of his involvement for his daughter:
Our daughter needs both a mother and a father so that she will not become a one-sided individual. After all, she is not going to grow up into a world made up of women only. She needs a dependable man in her life right from the beginning of it.

He also bases his case for father involvement on its benefits for the husband-wife relationship. In what is definitely one of the clearest statements of father involvement having a positive impact on the husband-wife relationship of all 243 articles, this author says

I feel by helping my wife to raise our daughter I am getting a double share of pleasure. Not only do I have the thrill of sharing in the small day-to-day growing changes in the baby but, because my wife knows she can depend on me, she is even more of a companion than before. I have tried to give her some freedom from constant child care. The woman who has all the responsibility for home and children is apt to become a household drudge....The free time that my wife spends continuing her interests in the world outside our home helps make her not only our daughter's mother...but still my wife!

While this author doesn't acknowledge that his wife might want to pursue her own interests for the person she is in her own right, he does expresses a systemic understanding of family life and fairness that is absent from many later articles.

The author-father of “Daddy Tells a Story” (#139) from June 1971, talks about how creating and telling his children bedtime stories is rewarding and fun; and the author of “Confessions of A Favorite Father” (#155) from February 1980 gets so involved in fatherhood and finds it so much fun that he becomes more free and childlike himself. Playing with children is one of the familywork tasks that fathers most often do, both in Parents Magazine and in the real world (Gerson, 1993; Moen, 1992; Stearns, 1991). It is not surprising then that there are quite a few articles, more

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recently, that depict a father so consumed in play with his children that he actually
regresses and becomes more childlike, by his own admission. Fathers’ tendency to
regress or become reflective when they enter childrens’ worlds suggests Nature’s power
to undermine Culture.

This final example of fathers “selling” involved fatherhood (to mothers) on the
basis of its being fun also exemplifies the regressed father -- even describing
experiences at a playground. Unlike the fathers writing in the thirties and forties
however, this fun-filled father writing in 1994 cloaks his emotional satisfaction in
sarcasm and “woman as other” humor. In “Laws of the Jungle Gym” (#242) from
November 1994, the author smugly observes differences between mothers and fathers
at the playground:

In contrast [to the fathers, who “traveled light”], each mom showed up
toting a bottomless carryall much like the one Mary Poppins had.
Instead of five-foot coatracks, however, these bags disgorged diapers,
juice, milk, rash cream, powder, a change of clothes, bandages for
imaginary ‘owwies,’ and usually enough snacks for everyone in sight.
What is it, I wondered, that makes mothers come to the playground
equipped to spend the night if necessary, while dads aren’t good for
much more than the time it takes to play a game of hopscotch?

He notices many other differences in “playground decorum” between mothers and
fathers: mothers talk with each other, “share intelligence” and “even swap phone
numbers” while fathers were

either on playground totally immersed in games of kickball or tag, or
else on the sidelines equally immersed in newspapers....kids were asking
their mothers to help them up to the highest bars; the dads, however,
were asking the kids for help....I came to a conclusion: A funny thing
happens to fathers on the way to the playground. We regress, become
kids again ourselves....The women were perfectly content to sit on the

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benches around me, chatting calmly with one another, letting their 2-
year olds get on with their own exploration. But with all those slides
around for [my daughter] (and me) to conquer, sitting on that bench felt
about as natural to me as wearing diapers.... [my daughter] had it right
when she called us 'big boys.'

Unable to actually say he enjoys fathering, this author takes the "anthropological
stance" that many of these male authors do when they write about family life—
analyzing, comparing, observing and offering objective descriptions that serve to
distance them from what they are describing.

Perhaps it is appropriate that men "monopolize" the conversation about fathers.
Discussions about the fun and emotional satisfactions of fatherhood should come from
men. However, these articles are read by women, not men. Women are offered
descriptions of fatherhood and male familywork behavior that may be vastly different
from their own experiences. Men whose familywork behavior is depicted as exceptional
in a positive direction raise the standard and may leave readers discontented. The
depiction of men whose familywork behavior is below expectations (which very few
are) may make women feel better about their own situations. This will be explored
further in the conclusion section.

Advice

More than two thirds (67.4%) of the articles offer advice. Figure 4.6 shows that
throughout the thirties, forties and fifties, 81% to 90% of articles offered advice. The
decline which began in the fifties continued, until the proportion offering advice fell to
64% in the sixties, remained there through the seventies, fell to 46% in the eighties and
down to 42% in the 90s ($r= -.95, p < .001$). Yet, it is generally believed that parenting has become more difficult over the last few generations, (Kain, 1990; Koch and Freeman, 1992) and there may be a greater need for advice than ever before.

Male and female authors offer advice articles in proportion to their overall numbers, 72% and 24.4% respectively. While 29% of all the articles have boys as the referent child and 23% of all the articles use girls as the referent child, these numbers become much more skewed when looked at with reference to articles offering advice. About half (51.8%) of articles offering advice have a sex-neutral reference child; of the remaining 48.2%, 31.7% referred to boys, and 16.5% referred to girls. In other words, the ratio of son-advice articles to daughter-advice articles is approximately two to one, a significant difference, $x^2(1) = 7.9 p < .005$.

Figure 4.6

Proportion of Articles Per Decade
Offering Advice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decade</th>
<th>Percent</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>60-69</td>
<td>85</td>
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<tr>
<td>70-79</td>
<td>90</td>
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<tr>
<td>80-89</td>
<td>81</td>
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<tr>
<td>90-94</td>
<td>64</td>
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When use of humor and author gender are considered, the advice picture changes again. Male authors are significantly less likely to use humor when offering advice regarding boys, \( x^2(1) = 25.32, p < .001 \). Forty-five percent of male-authored advice articles using humor are about daughters; twelve percent of male-authored advice articles using humor are about sons. Of women-authored articles that use humor and offer advice -- of which there are only six -- one refers to a boy and five refer to sex-neutral children. None refer to girls. Figure 4.7 shows that these humorous advice articles about daughters follow a similar pattern to articles that treat women with sarcasm and “otherness” (which will be discussed in chapter 5): they increase after the war and are especially high in the sixties. Like many articles that are offensive to women, they increase again in the nineties. During the sixties however, boys and girls were referred to in a humorous context in equal proportions.
Son-advice articles outnumber daughter-advice articles two to one, yet, daughters are
four times more likely to be discussed in a humorous context in male-authored advice
articles than are sons. Does this mean that these authors are somehow less concerned
about their female children, or that they don’t take girls seriously? Perhaps, but the
difference is more subtle than that.

In male-authored advice articles about sons that use humor, the child does not
necessarily have to be male for the article to make sense. The child happens to be a
boy, but could have been a girl. The articles about daughters that use humor are about
girls per se, not children who happen to be female. The child’s femaleness is an
integral part of the piece. Girls are cast as Other just as women are. For example, a
“For Fathers Only” column from January 1933 (#11), begins

Have you ever heard a young pre-father enthusiastically proclaim ‘I hope
it’s a girl?’ I never have. The ancient law of the primo-geniture still
remains indelible in the masculine mind, if not upon the statutes. The
King must have his son.

This father goes on to describe his initial disappointment:

It would be quite untrue if I denied the fact that I apprised friends of her arrival
in other than a most apologetic manner. One, whose appreciation of my
dilemma had been broadened by a family of daughters, dropped me a
comforting note to the effect that it would not be long before we would have all
the boys at our house anyway. I was frankly disappointed. Yet, in confessing
my early misapprehensions, I do not feel that my reactions differed from the
natural ones of most first-time fathers whose sons arrive as daughters.

This father comes to realize that daughters are special in their own ways, and he offers
advice and consolation to other men in his situation. While in the end he comes to
accept and even appreciate his daughter, he legitimizes the age-old male preference for
In a “For Fathers Only” column from December 1932 (#18), the author offers fathers advice about what it means and how to react when an adolescent daughter starts becoming critical of Dad. He says “Daughters often manifest their affection for their fathers by trying to reform them.” Toward the end of the piece, he says that “most men are somewhat stubborn...it takes something more than a Christmas present to change our habits.” He continues:

Fortunately our daughters do not find it an easy matter to divert us from our accustomed paths. If we tried to accede to all of their wishes, what fools we would make of ourselves! If we permitted them to, they would select for us our newspapers, our clothes, our sports, our friends, even our sins! Despite the complaints of the gentler sex, masculine inertia is probably a good thing for the race.

He is ostensibly advising fathers with critical daughters to “cheer up” and wait out their critical phase -- but he is writing to and for mothers.

In “Dad and Daughter Cook” (#60) from February 1941, the author notes that there are so many opportunities for fathers and sons to get together and do household tasks such as carpentry, “electrical tinkering” and lawn care; but hardly any such opportunities for fathers and daughters, except cooking. He offers a humorous guide for men who would like to use cooking as a leisure activity with their daughters. The sidebar of “The Day Dad Stayed Home” from June 1960 (#122), reads “He tried a new recipe for taming quarrelsome little girls.” In a fairly lengthy piece, this author-father recounts numerous details from a day of petty quarrels between his daughter and her friend. The arguments are about who will be the hostess at the pretend tea party, who

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will go to the pretend fancy party and who will wear which dress up clothes. There are a lot of disagreements over color, fabric and style. Every few minutes, father needs to go in and resolve a dispute. He “beams inwardly” when the girls take his advice. This article could not have been written by a mother because the situation described is such an integral part of her experience that it is not “newsworthy.” And a father would probably present two boys fighting over tools or baseball bats in a very different light.

In “No Daddy! Only Mommy” from April 1992 (#221), a father explains how he solved the problem of his daughter being too “mommy-oriented.” He describes the scene that used to take place when he came home from work:

I walk in the door, exhausted from a long day at the office, but cheerfully chirp, ‘Jennifer, sweetheart, I’m home!’ The apple of my eye, the object of my dreams, responds, ‘Daddy, go away!’ It is tempting at this juncture to remind her that I just spent ten hours working my tail off to keep her in designer overalls while all my clothes are twice as old as she is.

He realizes that his early thinking about his daughter was wrong, recalling that he would know how to teach a son everything a boy must know: “...how to throw a football, pretend to play rock guitar, or find an all-you-can-eat ribs place. But a daughter? What did I know about putting on make-up, shopping without intending to buy anything, or playing Barbie?” This father continues to express his disappointment through sarcastic humor:

...aside from not having breast-fed Jennifer or taken a three-month maternity leave, I have another major disadvantage: I stay at the office later than my wife does. This gives her a big head start. After being with the babysitter all day, Jennifer is delighted to see her mommy walk through the door. By the time I come home...her attention is on something else. Let’s face it, Ozzie Nelson and Ward Cleaver never had this problem.
Like the father from January 1933, this father comes to appreciate having a daughter and figures out ways to connect with her. He wants other fathers to benefit from his wisdom. However, like the father writing 61 years earlier, this man keeps alive the perception that men want sons, not daughters.

**Father's Choice**

The theme of fathers having a choice about their level of involvement in familywork is present in 68.7% of the articles. The theme of mothers having primary responsibility for familywork was present in 41.1% of the articles. Just over one third of the articles (36.2%) had both themes. The “mother has primary responsibility” variable is negatively correlated with year (r=-.1861, p < .01); as is the “fathers have a choice” variable (r=-.1928, p < .01). Although these were originally defined and conceptualized as two different themes, they are similar enough to be treated as one variable, and will be referred to in this discussion as “father-has-a-choice,” with the understanding it includes the concept “mothers have primary responsibility.” These two themes are two sides of a coin, and each implies the other. One of the themes may be made explicit in an article, and one not, but if either one is said the other is implied. Figure 4.8a shows that these two themes vary together, and that except for a brief period in the late forties and early fifties, fathers can choose was a somewhat more dominant theme. There was a great deal of questioning of the father role during the 1948-1954 period, and less explicit affirmation of his freedom to choose his involvement in the family would be consistent with that.

These two themes are very important to this project for several reasons. In
everyday life, as in a text, the father-has-a-choice assumption may be operating implicitly. It is only under close analysis that it becomes explicit. Once parties in a relationship, or readers become aware that these assumptions are operating, other behavior and other information takes on other meanings and must be reprocessed.

When the father-has-a-choice assumption operates, it silently undermines movement toward less gendered parenting. Men may be depicted changing diapers, feeding babies and speaking genuinely. However, if the father's prerogative assumption is operating, less gendered or egalitarian parenting behavior is undermined.

As can be seen on figure 4.8b, there is a great deal of variation in how often the combined theme appeared. For example, from 1960 to 1964, no articles imply this, but the period from 1965 to 1969 had the greatest proportion saying that fathers are free to choose their level of involvement in familywork. Given what we have seen
about the early sixties, it may be that men felt they didn’t have a choice at this time. There is a significant negative correlation between the father’s prerogative variable and year \( r=-.1625, p<.01 \), suggesting overall that referent fathers perceived they had less choice in the more recent periods.

Ironically, two-thirds of the father’s prerogative articles (64.8%) also imply that fathers need to change some aspect of their familywork behavior and refer to a father whose attitude toward familywork is better than fathers-in-general. In other words, they can choose their level of involvement with familywork, their attitude is better than most, and, during certain intervals, such as 1964-1970, they do not need to change. These articles may be implying that referent fathers have a choice, which is how it should be, and men can ignore the pressure to be “new Fathers”, especially because their attitudes are already better than most; or, they may be saying that fathers should
"choose to change" and depict referent fathers who are examples of alternatives. Yet, there is a negative correlation between year and articles implying fathers need to change ($r = -0.1800, p < .01$; see figures 4.8c and 4.8d). Overall, these articles seem to suggest that parents need to change some aspect(s) of their familywork behavior.

Figure 4.8c
Fathers Need To Change Some Aspect(s)
Of Their Familywork Behavior

Figure 4.8d
Residual of Observed/Expected
Implying Fathers Need To Change

Parents Magazine Periodization
$x^2(9) = 22.48, p < .01$
approve and affirm fathers' behavior and attitude more strongly in the 64-78 period, while strengthening the perception that men can choose their level of involvement in familywork. Approval of fathers during the 1968-1978 period is interesting since this is the very period when gender roles in the family were subject to most questioning. Whatever these fathers have or have not chosen to do, it is acceptable because they are doing it with a better attitude than fathers-in-general; there is no need for them to change.

A “For Fathers Only” column from August 1933 (#25) exemplifies the call for fathers to be more involved. The article is one of the few “For Fathers Only” columns written by an authority, E.S. Rademacher, M.D., a child psychiatrist. He talks about seeing many more mothers in his office than fathers, unless the problem is the father’s concern that his son is becoming “a sissy.” He notes that this concern is more of a problem in families where a father tries to “harden” his son, necessary because his discipline, care and training have been “left to the mother.” He goes on to say

There are many instances in which fathers, from the very moment of the baby’s arrival, have been completely divorced from any share in the care of the child. It is not surprising...that these fathers, in self-defense and to cover up their hurt pride, should become rather indifferent toward the child’s progress.

He quotes from one of his young patients, “I’d rather play with my tools, read, or play with girls because they don’t use such rough language and, anyhow, I have a better time.” Dr. Rademacher explains that such boys are neither uncommon nor abnormal, but they do need help. The help “must be given in such a way that it does not increase the youngster’s realization of his weakness.” The rest of the article is devoted to how
to teach a sissy to play baseball, and urges fathers to get more involved. This article does challenge the father-has-a-choice assumption to some extent, but the rationale -- preventing one's son from becoming a "sissy" -- may seem quaint by today's standards. This article exemplifies the theme of fathers' importance for children's character development, especially that of sons. Fathers' importance for character development will be discussed in a later section.

An article from November 1951 (#107) called "I Had No Help and a New Baby" also exemplifies father-has-a-choice and a father whose attitude is better than fathers-in-general. It is a new mother's account of how her "wonderful husband decided to pitch in when [she] needed him most, even if it meant sacrificing his vacation to the cause." This family, now with five children, a new house and new appliances, could not afford a "practical nurse" or "cleaning lady," and their families were too far away to help. This woman "couldn't feel too sorry for [her]self because the girl who shared [her] hospital room wasn't having any help either," and it was from that "girl's" husband that the author and her husband got the idea.

It is pretty clear that the plan for father to take his vacation time immediately after the birth of the baby is being presented as a new trend. The millions of new mothers who were stranded in suburbia in the early fifties who could no longer afford household help -- by the time the fourth or fifth child comes along -- need not feel ashamed, sorry for themselves, or guilty that their husbands are giving up their vacations. Surely their husbands would "sacrifice" their two-week vacations to "the cause," too.
This mother-author goes on to describe the detailed schedule that she worked out for herself and the other family members. This author legitimizes lower standards of housekeeping, saying “We cut the housework to even less than what we had previously considered a minimum....If fingerprints got on the woodwork, they stayed there for the time being.” Her husband did “the marketing twice a week” with the list [she] gave him.” She says she tried to get as much rest as possible, which was a “precaution” that really paid off because she was able to “get back to being a full-time cook and bottle washer” by the end of her husband’s two-week vacation. In closing, she says, “My husband will have other vacations but never one that will contribute more to family happiness than this.”

This article does not question the father-has-a-choice assumption. Rather, it depicts a situation where the father made “the right” choice during a particularly difficult time. Even during this two-week “crisis” period, the mother was fully responsible for seeing that everything that had to be done got done. The article depicts a husband with an exceptionally good attitude, implying that his behavior should be normative. The spirit of “we did it, others do it, and you can too” runs throughout the piece. The call for a change in fathers’ behavior is subtle, but it is there. However, the change is limited to extraordinary circumstances.

In “Every Day Is Father’s Day” (#129) from June 1965, author Ashley Montagu observes that fatherhood has “fallen into low esteem.” He says

Father may be called head of the family, but too often he is the head in name only. He still serves as chief breadwinner, but when it comes to making family decisions or guiding his children, he has let the reins of authority slip out of his
hands....the whole family suffers.

Father suffers because he “finds little gratification from parenthood...he feels he is respected little and consulted less.” These feelings lead to further withdrawal and less participation. Montagu describes the problems father’s feelings create for the mother:

With father less involved, mother, too, is forced into a confusing and disturbing position. We expect her, somehow, to assume the governing role which father previously played, and, at the same time, to remain a feminine and compliant wife. Not sure of the range of their responsibilities and limitations, many women have found themselves unnaturally domineering, then guilty and resentful about it.

Montagu says the children suffer most when fathers are excluded from family life, and he refers to research on boys which shows the cause of underachievement, nervousness, moodiness and depression are “a disturbance in fathering.” He says that fathers should pay attention to babies in order to “establish a warm relationship” and “lighten mother’s tasks”; but the real work of the father begins at age four when “father can begin to civilize the youngster, instilling in him a sense of the family’s values.”

Montagu calls for a change in fathers’ familywork behavior, but not in any way that challenges the father-has-a-choice assumption. He does not mention the daily, recurring tasks of familywork, i.e., the “women’s work.” Rather, he tells fathers to get involved with discipline, teaching children about politics, playing games and teaching a sense of fair play, sharing hobbies, such as woodworking, and helping children establish good study habits when they start school. Like Dr. Rademacher’s article from 1933, this article emphasizes the importance of father for character development, a theme that was present in more than a third of all the articles (35.8%).
It urges father involvement, but in traditional, gendered ways.

Eleven years later in “The Power of Positive Fathering” (#148) from April 1976, “involved father” has a new, fuller meaning. Like the suburban father in 1951, the father referred to in this article used vacation days after his daughter was born “in order to share with [his wife] the responsibility and the joy of looking after their newborn infant.” This article, written by the baby’s paternal grandmother at the granddaughter’s first birthday, provides an interesting account of what early parenting was like for families in the previous generation.

It wasn’t like that when I was a young mother. When Michael was born, most mothers were the sole homemakers, fathers the sole breadwinners....the advice I read was addressed only to mothers. So I quickly assumed the role of the important parent in our son’s life. Rarely did my husband even get to hold the baby, though Michael’s father, like so many others, I’m sure, would have liked to play a more active part in fathering. But most men in those days were embarrassed to ask in the face of their wives’ discouragement.

It is not clear what she means by “wives’ discouragement” although she seems to be evoking the “mothers refuse to give up control” argument. She is an authority, a wise old woman. She is a new mother’s mother-in-law fantasy.

She discusses many benefits of fathers’ early involvement. Children benefit from “having a tender relationship with two parents,” fathers benefit because “their paternal feelings will develop readily” and they won’t feel “left out or jealous as many new fathers do. And for mothers, the benefits are immense.” The author speculates that there would be less post-partum depression if husbands shared these early experiences of “ups, downs, joys and blues.” In a statement that is quite candid for
popular parenting literature, this grandmother says, "...women would no longer feel the isolation so many do as they realize their lives have changed forever, and they are responsible, really responsible, for the existence of another human being."

She ends the piece by offering specific "suggestions," each a separate paragraph, numbered one through five. She is clearly advocating fathers' hands-on involvement in familywork, not just the character development and hobbies discussed only eleven years before. This article comes closest to raising the father-has-a-choice and mother-has-primary-responsibility themes for the purpose of challenging or negating them.

A recent example of these themes is from June 1990, called "When Only Mom (or Dad) Will Do" (#208). This article is interesting in that it addresses a problem less often faced by previous generations: conflict that arises when children develop a preference for a particular parent doing a particular child-related task. Mom and Dad may like to think of themselves as interchangeable, but the child may have preferences that parental convenience or parental time budgeting precludes. This women-authored article acknowledges that it is usually the mother who "provides most of the day-to-day care" and so she is often the preferred parent. There are times, however, when Dad is preferred, such as for play and fooling around. (Eleven percent of all the articles have the theme that fathers are playmates/mothers are caretakers; and over a quarter (26.3%) of all articles depict or refer to a father playing with a child.)

The author talks about Dad's inevitable hurt feelings, and like Montagu in 1965, cautions against the downward spiral by which the father spins further and further away.
from the family (although Montagu didn’t talk about Dad’s feelings). This article seems to question the father’s prerogative assumption; yet on a more subtle level, the author upholds the status quo and implies that mothers are the “default parent.”

Fathers having a choice about their level of involvement in familywork seems to be the way many families actually operate (Gerson, 1993; Moen, 1992). Perhaps a greater proportion of women-authored articles imply that familywork is a father’s prerogative because they are describing the reality they see. Men are less likely than women to say they have a choice for two reasons: first, they may genuinely believe that they don’t have a choice because they feel they are already doing more familywork than they want to; and secondly, it would sound inappropriately selfish for men to say they have a choice, even if they thought they did, or should.

Men are more likely to boast about the familywork they do do, talk about how fatherhood has changed their lives, and to offer witty perceptions about life with children. The question of why men have a choice will be explored further in the conclusion section.

Mothers Have Primary Responsibility for Familywork

A persistent theme in discussions of household division of labor, very much related to the choice issue above, is the assumption that men are helpers or volunteers but that women have the primary responsibility for familywork. This theme is present in 41% of the articles. Analysis by decade (see figure 4.9a) shows that the theme of mothers having primary responsibility for familywork was present in 82% of articles in the fifties; dropped by half to 41% in the seventies, and decreased by more than half again.
--to 18%-- by the 1990s. Looking at some selected time intervals (see figure 4.9b) reveals that the smallest proportion of articles said mothers are primarily responsible is not in the most recent period, but the period from 1978 - 1984. The steady decline after the fifties "disappears" with different time punctuations.

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Fathers and Socialization

Just over one third (36%) of the articles suggest that fathers are especially important to children's social and moral development. Figure 4.10 shows that the interval with the greatest proportion of articles discussing fathers' importance for socialization is 1964-1970. This was a period of enormous social and cultural change, much of it spearheaded by young people. Young people were questioning the behaviors and values of their parents, their teachers, and their national leaders. It is not surprising, therefore, that the peak period for articles discussing father's important role in children's moral and character development would be in this late sixties interval. The magazine seems to have been attempting to shore up father's status as a moral authority and teacher of values at the moment when all "father figures" (i.e. authorities) and the institutions they ran were being broadly questioned. Depicting

Figure 4.10

Fathers Are Especially Important for Socializing Children

![Bar Chart]

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fathers as moral authority figures may be a reaction to fifties criticism of fathers, that they need to be more involved. Emphasizing men’s importance as a moral authority to the family may also be an attempt to dissuade readers who may be contemplating divorce. As will be shown in the next chapter, this is also the period when referent fathers express the most hostility toward women and family life.

The large increase in the proportion of articles between 1948 and 1963 discussing fathers’ importance to the socialization process coincides with television’s assuming an important position (literally and metaphorically) in the home, the emergence of rock’n’roll as a cultural force, and a rapid rise in single-parent families. At a time when there was a great deal of evidence of the family’s decreasing authority over young people’s lives, fathers’ importance was emphasized. Consistent with this finding is that the combined 1948-1963 interval has the greatest proportion of articles suggesting fathers need to change (see figure 4.11). Overall, there is a significant

Figure 4.11

Fathers Need To Change Some Aspect(s) Of Their Familywork Behavior

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negative correlation between year and articles discussing fathers’ importance for socialization ($r=-.1231, p<.05$).

As with other findings that show various types of discrimination between sons and daughters, articles that discuss the importance of fathers to the socialization process are significantly more likely to have male than female referent children, $x^2(1)=6.25, p<.01$, and, there is a negative correlation between year and articles focusing on the father-son relationship ($r=-.3206, p<.001$). The decline over the 66 year time period of articles defining fathers as agents of socialization and in articles focusing on sons per se and sons as socializees may suggest a fundamental redefinition of father’s place in the family. Perhaps related to this is the correlation between year and articles distinguishing mother as caretaker and father as playmate ($r=.1632, p<.01$) -- which then raises the question of who or what has taken over the socialization function.

**Mothers Need To Change**

Twelve percent of the total articles suggest mothers need to change some aspect of their familywork behavior. The greatest proportion of these articles appeared in the fifties; there were no articles in the seventies that said mothers need to change. This theme is significantly more likely to be expressed by women authors (26.4%) than male authors (7.6%), $x^2(1)=12.14, p<.001$.

**Dads and Diapers**

The depiction of fathers’ diaper changing behavior is noteworthy for several reasons. Parents have very little control or choice over when this task gets done. It

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can also be one of the most unpleasant of childcare tasks because of the sensorially unpleasant nature of the tasks itself and also because a parent must stop whatever he or she is doing to change a diaper; it is almost always an interruption. Babies vary in their degree of cooperation with diaper changing. When fathers in *Parents Magazine* describe their familywork, they typically preface changing diapers with a phrase such as "Yes, I even..." or they talk about not admitting to other men that they do this. There is some shame or embarrassment about a man changing diapers -- implying it is something that men should not do -- perhaps because it is a woman's job -- perhaps because she is somehow more suited to dealing with interruptions and having her senses violated. There is also an implication that a man who changes diapers is pushed around by his wife and that she has lowered his status. (An analogy could be drawn between diaper changing and cleaning toilets, often considered the least pleasant of all household tasks.) Day after day and month after month of mother and infant communicating through vocalization and locked gaze of infatuation on the diaper changing table, followed by the child's renewed feeling of comfort comprise an important part of the early mother-child connection. There is a nurturant, caretaking dimension of diaper changing that is overlooked.

The attitude of men toward changing diapers can be understood within the context of Ortner's Nature-Culture framework. In addition, many cultures associate women with various kinds of polluting matter, including human waste; and many cultures associate such impurities with low status (Kitzinger, 1978). Diaper changing is a child care task which clearly exemplifies mediation between the impurities of
nature and cleanliness culture -- with all their symbolism and ritual.

There was a great deal of variation over time in the proportion of articles depicting men changing diapers. As can be seen on figure 4.12, fathers are most often depicted changing diapers in the late fifties and late seventies. There is a significant association between the depiction of men changing diapers and all time intervals \( (p < .05 \), or better), and referent father changing diapers and year are positively correlated \( (r = .1402, p < .05) \).

Fifteen percent of male authors depict fathers changing diapers, compared with 37.7% of women authors who depict fathers changing diapers -- this is a significant difference \( \chi^2(1) = 10.11, p < .001 \). For the 66 year period, women authors were more than twice as likely as male authors to depict a father changing a diaper. Perhaps a
man changing a diaper is a representation of reality that is more appealing to women than to men.

Referent Fathers v. Fathers-in-General: Doing Familywork

By offering a perspective on the familywork fathers-in-general do, the articles offer an implicit three-way comparison between fathers-in-general, the articles' referent fathers, and the readers' husbands. According to exchange theory, a "comparison level is a standard by which a person evaluates the rewards and costs of a given relationship in terms of what she feels she deserves" (gender changed, Thibault and Kelly, 1959:21). Thibault and Kelley further identify a "comparison level for alternatives" (1959:21) to which one's own situation is compared.

F. Ivan Nye (1979) has used exchange theory to explore issues in family sociology such as mate selection and marital dissolution. Yet, exchange theory and Nye's application of it to family issues suggests a useful framework for explaining how women's perception and evaluation of their husbands as familywork participants can be affected by popular culture. The referent fathers in Parents Magazine provide readers with a standard for their own husbands, i.e. Thibault and Kelley's "comparison level." The fathers-in-general provide the "comparison level for alternatives." In articles where the referent father does more familywork than fathers-in-general, the reader's husband is a "father-in-general" and the referent father becomes an attractive though hypothetical alternative to which he is compared. In articles implying the referent father does the same amount or less family work compared with fathers-in-general, the reader might evaluate her situation favorably and feel contented.
Almost half the articles (47%) suggest a referent father who does more family work than fathers-in-general, and over a quarter (28%) suggest a referent father who does family work with the same frequency as fathers-in-general. Only 3.7% suggest a referent father who does less family work than fathers-in-general. The remaining 21% either have no referent father or the referent father does no family work.

Figure 4.13a shows the per decade comparison of referent fathers and fathers-in-general regarding doing family work. The greatest difference between referent fathers and fathers-in-general is in the fifties and seventies, offering an impetus and a model for change. Women readers during these decades may have perceived their own husbands less favorably, and/or their desires for their husbands to do more family work were affirmed. In the sixties, there is no difference in the proportion of articles implying referent fathers do more family work and those implying fathers-in-general do.

![Figure 4.13a](image-url)
the same amount of familywork.

By the 1990s, a shift occurred, and a majority of articles imply referent fathers do familywork with the same frequency as fathers-in-general. In the sixties and the nineties, the two periods where “does same amount” does not exceed “does more,” referent fathers were less often presented as “superhusbands” as compared with fathers-in-general. In the sixties, there is a balance, which is consistent with other findings about sixties fathers -- a period of dormancy before a change. By the nineties, “does same” exceeds “does more,” suggesting that a new standard was established.

Referent Fathers and the Familywork They Do

Figure 4.13b shows the percentage of articles depicting fathers who do the ten most familywork tasks that are most salient in the articles. Overall, the tasks referent fathers do with the greatest frequency are the least labor-intensive and the most pleasant. Fathers' most frequent tasks are least likely to interfere with one's personal time or space and allow the most flexibility as to when (or if) they get done. In sum,
The tasks most frequently done by fathers are also the most abstract or intangible and cannot be assessed or evaluated on a day-to-day basis. If a child’s diaper is not changed, if the child is not fed, or given a bath, the result is immediate and obvious and has a negative impact on everyone sharing a space with the child...not just the child. However, the results of not sharing a hobby or playing a game are much more subtle and long-term. These tasks may even be considered optional. The results of parents not socializing children properly or spending time together are certainly negative, but in the day-to-day whirlwind of family life, these are things that could, for better or for worse, not be considered priorities. These “optional” tasks comprise the familywork that men are most likely to do.

Referent Fathers v. Fathers-in-General: Attitudes About Doing Familywork

Almost 60% of the articles (58.4%) depict a referent father doing familywork more willingly than fathers-in-general. This does not necessarily mean he does a lot of familywork -- just that when he does familywork he does it more willingly. So, for example, if an article from the 1950s depicts a father enthusiastically boasting about “babysitting” his children for two hours every Saturday afternoon so his wife can go shopping, (“we’ve worked out this great system and you can, too”), that would be coded as “more willingly than fathers-in-general” because of the comparison implicit in the way he sets himself apart as special. Analogous to figure 4.13a is 4.13c which shows the decade breakdown of the proportion of articles depicting referent fathers doing familywork more willingly or as willingly as fathers-in-general.

The nineties pattern for “attitude” about familywork (4.13c) is similar to that...
for “doing” familywork (4.13a). In other words, the proportion of “just as willingly” exceeds the proportion for “more willingly,” just as “does more” exceeds the proportion for “does same.” These patterns suggest the perceived attitude of fathers-in-general has improved, since the positive, willing referent fathers are no longer claiming to “better” than them.

These numbers add more support to the interpretation that the seventies representations may have been the strongest force for change, in that 82% of the articles suggested the referent father has a better attitude toward doing familywork than fathers-in-general; 0% said his attitude is about the same as fathers-in-general.

There is a negative correlation between year and referent father’s attitude toward familywork vis a vis fathers-in-general \((r=-.2530, p<.001)\). This gradual decline in referent fathers’ claims of better attitude further supports the interpretation.
that the overall depiction of the attitude of fathers-in-general has become more positive. Referent fathers’ with willing or enthusiastic attitudes were no longer that different from fathers-in-general, and there was less need to imply superiority.

Associations Between Attitudes and Behavior Regarding Familywork

There is a statistically significant association \((p < .05)\) between all the periodizations and the articles’ assumptions about fathers-in-general doing familywork. However, the association between time and attitude with which fathers-in-general are assumed to do housework is not statistically significant. In other words, throughout the 66 year time frame, the assumption of fathers-in-general doing familywork became increasingly normative, but there is no evidence that the attitude with which they do familywork is related to the passage of time. The attitude with which fathers-in-general do familywork seems to vary independently of time.

The next two sections explore fathers’ familywork activity in more detail. What specific tasks do referent fathers do, how often they do the familywork they do compared with fathers-in-general, and their attitude towards it compared with fathers-in-general are looked at separately for housework and child care tasks — the components of familywork traditionally considered “women’s work.”

Fathers-in-General: Doing Familywork

Figure 4.14a compares the proportions of articles per decade implying fathers-in-general do housework rarely, once in a while, and routinely. In the first interval, 1929-1934, there were no articles that mentioned housework. Over the next twenty years, there was a gradual increase in the proportion of articles implying fathers do
housework -- although they do it rarely. All articles about fathers that mentioned

Figure 4.14a How Often do Fathers-in-General Do Housework?
According to Father Articles in Parents Magazine

Parents Magazine Periodization

housework in the 1948-1954 interval implied that fathers-in-general do it rarely. In the next interval, there were more articles mentioning housework, and the dominant assumption changed to *once in a while*. *Rarely* re-emerges in the 64-70 interval at the same level as *once in a while*, and establishes a steady downward trend, until a slight upturn in the 1992-1994 period. *Once in a while* begins to dominate at the 55-63 interval, despite its downward trend over the next twenty-two years. *Once in a while* peaks in 1978-1984, and then plateaus at about half the 1978-1984 level.

*Rarely* and *once in a while* are equal relative to each other in the 1964-1970 and the 1971-1977 intervals. More articles fathers discussed fathers and housework during 1964-1970, but this thirteen year period represents no change in the dominant message, suggesting a transitional or dormant period. This dormant period is followed by a surge of once-in-a-while in 1978-1984, suggesting that a transition had indeed

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occurred. Again, there is a trend of waiting to see which way the wind blows, then taking a stand.

There are no articles implying fathers-in-general do housework routinely until the 1985-1991 interval. This proportion doubles in the next interval, reaching about 10%. In the most recent interval, once in a while and routinely have the same proportion, and there is an increase in the proportion of rarely. There is a positive correlation between the frequency of fathers-in-general doing housework and year \( r = .2394, p < .001 \), and also between routinely and PMP \( r = .6507, p < .05 \).

What Housework Do Fathers Do in Parents Magazine

Fathers in Parents Magazine are depicted doing two housework tasks: cooking and cleaning. Figure 4.14b shows the proportion of articles depicting fathers cooking and/or cleaning during each interval. The important information to be gleaned from this graph is not so much the difference between the two tasks, or even the actual percents, but rather, the pattern that they follow.
The most obvious finding here is that throughout the time frame, cooking is a much more common depiction than cleaning, except for 1992-1994 when they are the same. It is interesting that discussions of men cleaning declines from 23% to 8% between 1955-1977, and then increases suddenly in the 1978-1984 period to 33%. From 1978 to 1991, discussions of men cooking decline by more than half, from 50% to 22%. Chi square tests show no evidence of an association between cooking and cleaning, suggesting different phenomena are driving them. Further chi square tests show no evidence that articles discussing fathers cooking are disproportionately distributed throughout the time frame, and further, there is no evidence that cooking is related to time. In contrast, articles discussing fathers cleaning are positively correlated with PMP ($r = .6582, p < .05$), decade ($r = .7881, p < .05$) and year ($r = .1751, p < .01$).

The results of these statistical tests and the overall greater proportion of cooking than cleaning suggests that while both these tasks are "housework," they may each have had different meanings in Parents Magazine -- for most of the time frame. When done by fathers, cooking was presented, as a hobby or diversion, or as a response to an anomalous situation, such as when mother had to be away from home or was overwhelmed with the burdens of a newborn. Referent fathers cleaned in response to anomalous situations, too, but never for fun. That the proportions for cook and clean are equal in the most recent period suggests that the meaning of cooking changed at some point, perhaps in the late seventies.
Attitude of Fathers-in-General Toward Housework

Figure 4.14c looks at what the articles imply about the attitude toward housework of fathers-in-general. Only three articles out of 243 (1.2%) imply fathers-in-general do housework willingly and enthusiastically (1939, 1968, 1992). All three are written by women. Just as rarely evolved into once in a while in figure 4.14a, reluctantly evolves into neutrally in figure 4.14c. However, the transition comes somewhat later for the attitude than for the behavior.

The patterns described above suggest a lag between behavior and attitude, with attitude leading. It seems that, beginning around 1955, the dominant message regarding fathers-in-general and housework in Parents Magazine was that they were consistently doing familywork once-in-a-while, but their attitude was mainly reluctant until around 1971, when it changed to neutral. This finding is consistent with the
hostility expressed during the sixties and the efforts to define a new role for fathers, such as moral guide or playmate. There is a positive correlation between neutral attitude toward housework and PMP ($r = .7710, p < .01$). The equal (though low) proportions of willing and neutral in the late sixties is noteworthy, and may suggest a transitional period. Indeed, by 1971-77, willing and reluctant both melded together into an increased neutral.

Just as rarely increases slightly in the nineties, reluctantly also increases, to a level equal with neutrally. Neutrally dominates in the 1978-1984 interval, and once in a while becomes dominant over rarely for the most recent twenty-three years. There is a positive correlation between the attitude of fathers-in-general and year ($r = .1949, p < .01$).

When the information from these two graphs are considered together, a composite picture of fathers' behavior and attitude can be drawn, and its genderedness for various intervals can be ascertained. I transformed the three categories for behavior frequency and attitude into an ordinal scale. Rare and reluctant were each given a value of one, once in a while and neutral were each given a value of two, and routinely and willingly were each given a value of three. For each interval, the dominant message for behavior and for attitude was scored. If there were two equally dominant messages, they were both scored. Intervals when routinely or willingly were greater than zero were given an additional .5. Finally, the mean for each interval was found, then multiplied by a constant of ten.
As can be seen in figure 4.15, there has been a trend for articles in *Parents Magazine* to assume that fathers-in-general do housework more frequently and more willingly/enthusiastically over time \((r=.6645, p<.05)\), moving toward less genderedness, though gradually. Like any data reduction, this combined variable obscures some details, such as the increase in *reluctantly* and *rarely* in the nineties. However, the plateau at the end of the time frame suggests countervailing forces.

Figure 4.15 suggests that the period of greatest change in the representation of fathers’ overall relationship with housework occurred sometime between 1977 and 1984.

**Fathers-in-General: Doing Child Care Tasks**

Figure 4.16 shows the proportion per interval implying fathers-in-general do child care tasks rarely, once in a while, or routinely. *Rarely* dominates through the 1948-1954 interval, then *once in a while* becomes dominant and remains so. There is
an increase in *rarely* during the 1971-1977 interval, but this is offset by a re-emergence of *routinely*. Except for a conspicuous absence of *routinely* during the 1948-1970 period, it hovers under 10% for most of the time period, and exceeds 20% in the most recent period. Perhaps there was no discussion of fathers doing child care tasks routinely during the 1948-1970 period because this was a period of change or retreat from the past; a time for searching for a new role for fathers, and also for the expression of hostility -- perhaps due to fathers' feeling confused about their role.

There were no articles in either the 1978-1984 or the 1992-1994 intervals implying that fathers-in-general do childcare tasks rarely. There is a positive correlation between fathers-in-general do child care tasks once in a while and PMP ($r=.6553, p < .05$), and between fathers-in-general do child care tasks routinely and PMP ($r=.6206, p < .05$). There is a negative correlation between fathers-in-general do child care tasks rarely and PMP ($r=-.8651 p < .001$). Over time then, the dominant message is that more fathers-
in-general are doing child care tasks more often, and that fewer fathers-in-general are doing child care tasks rarely.

**What Child Care Tasks Do Fathers-in-General Do?**

As discussed above, child care tasks can be categorized or analyzed according to their tangibleness, labor intensiveness, how much personal time and space is required, and how spontaneously the tasks must be done. The seven child care tasks discussed in the articles can be divided into two groups: Active -- those that are high on the above criteria; and passive -- those that are low on the above criteria. It was shown above that referent fathers more often do the passive child care tasks. Figure 4.17 and 4.18 show the proportion of articles per PMP interval in which the referent father does the active and passive child care tasks, respectively.

Looking at figure 4.17, it is noteworthy how prior, during and immediately after World War II, there was not much variation among the proportion per interval

![Figure 4.17](image-url)
with a referent father doing these tasks. Beginning in the 1948-1954 interval, there starts to be a great deal of variability and divergence, with comfort being the most frequently depicted active child care task. Of all the active tasks, this one might require the most spontaneity, but, depending on the age of the child, may not occur with great frequency. Also, although it is an active task, the thoroughness or completeness with which a child is comforted is not knowable and there are no standards. For example, if a parent has tried several different strategies over the course of, let’s say, a half hour, and an infant is still crying, many a parent will calmly and reassuringly return the crying baby to its crib rather than continue in frustration, possibly exacerbating the problem. Another parent in the same situation may have given up after ten minutes, and another might have tried for two hours. One parent might listen attentively, with eye and body contact, to a distressed preschooler
describing the evils of playground politics; another parent in the same situation might, say, “oh, don’t worry about it.” These are all comforting strategies, but they use different amounts of emotional energy and attention. That referent fathers in *Parents Magazine* doing active child care tasks do disproportionately more comforting \( (x^2(1)=19.97, p < .001) \) throughout the time frame is consistent with fathers’ doing the more passive and less tangible child care tasks.

Referent fathers are significantly less likely to be depicted putting children to bed \( (x^2(1)=4.45, p < .05) \). Fathers may not be home to do this task, or they may opt out of it. In any case, it has not been presented as a task that fathers typically do. It must be done every day, more or less at a particular time, with consistency. Putting a child to bed is a labor intensive and time consuming task requiring interaction between two tired people who are at cross-purposes. Parents often look forward to children’s bedtime because the house quiets down and parents have some time to themselves. Yet for children, bedtime means saying goodbye to parents and lying alone in the dark for ten hours. Depending on a child’s age, putting a child to bed includes interrupting their activity, locating and changing clothes, changing diapers or taking the child to the bathroom, washing up, brushing teeth, locating transitional objects (e.g. teddy bears, blankets) and agreeing on a special activity or book. Even in the most pleasant of circumstances, it is not an event, but a process, and it involves a series of decisions and negotiations. Elaborate rituals often develop around bedtime -- jointly constructed by both child and parent -- perhaps to alleviate some of the tension. Going through this
process with a child (or children) at the end of every day requires the exchange of huge amounts of both positive and negative energy, out of which a strong emotional connection is built. In two-parent families, parents and children benefit from parents sharing this task.

It is important that this is the child care task referent fathers are least likely to do in *Parents Magazine* because it reinforces the assumption that this is a mothers' job. There is no opportunity for readers to question this assumption or develop an alternative vision. If fathers putting their children to bed -- not just reading a story but the entire process -- was a more common representation in our culture, it is possible that it would more readily become identified as a task that fathers do routinely, thus creating the possibility that more fathers in the real world will do it. Fathers and children would then share in the strong emotional connection that bedtime rituals foster.

It is noteworthy, too, that women authors are disproportionately more likely to depict a referent father doing all the active child care tasks: putting a child to bed ($\chi^2(1)=9.94, p<.001$); changing diapers ($\chi^2(1)=10.11, p<.001$); giving a child a bath ($\chi^2(1)=19.78, p<.001$) and comforting a child ($\chi^2(1)=3.78, p<.05$). And, when these tasks are combined, the authors are significantly more likely to be women than men, $\chi^2(1)=4.21, p<.05$.

Looking at the passive child care tasks (see figure 4.18), spending leisure time and playing with children are the two passive child care tasks men most often do. Referent fathers spending leisure time with their children is disproportionate among the
passive tasks $\chi^2(1)=35.29, p < .001$) and also among all the child care tasks, $\chi^2(1)=18.66, p < .001$. Depictions of a referent father involved in his children's education is the least likely, $\chi^2(1)=77.35, p < .001$, and as figure 4.18 shows, represents a rather small part of the big picture. The increased depiction in the most recent periods after forty years of decline may be the most significant aspect of the education variable. (Referent fathers involved with education are disproportionately distributed by decade and half decade, $p < .001$ and $p < .01$, respectively.)

Men and women are equally likely to depict a referent father playing with or engaging in leisure with a child, but male authors are significantly more likely to depict a referent father involved with his children's education, $\chi^2=4.90, p < .05$. When the passive tasks are combined, there are no significant author sex differences. In other words, male and female authors are equally likely to depict a referent father engaged in the passive child care tasks, but, as shown above, women authors are significantly more likely to depict referent fathers doing active child care tasks.

Figures 4.19a - 4.19c compare some of the active and passive child care tasks. On figure 4.19a, leisure and comfort are extremely far apart until the late post-war period, at which time they start to vary together, although leisure is a greater proportion for every interval. At the 1985-1991 interval, referent fathers are depicted engaging in leisure with their children and comforting their children at equal proportions, about 38%. However, after 1991, they begin to diverge again. This pattern suggests that in the late forties to early fifties, a change occurred and more
Comparison of "Leisure" and "Comfort:

Most Frequent Passive and Active Child Care Tasks

Figure 4.19a

Comparison of the Child Care Tasks Fathers Are Least and Most Likely To Do

Figure 4.19b

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hands-on fathering was depicted, though not for the more active tasks. Figure 4.19b and 4.19c confirm this trend, in that there is a gradual decline in depictions of fathers putting children to bed -- a labor intensive task -- along with an increase in fathers changing diapers -- an active task with a great deal of symbolic value. However, the symbolic value of fathers changing diapers is undermined by almost every mention being prefaced or followed by an excuse or explanation. The increase in diaper changing to a level equal with leisure lasted for the 1948-1955 period, then slowly declined until the early seventies.

![Fathers Spending Leisure Time with Children compared with Fathers Changing Diapers](image)

With the exception of the 1948-1955 period when fathers were depicted doing the active tasks in greater proportions, there seems to be an overall trend of fathers more often in the presence of children, but not in fathers doing the active child care tasks. Diapering is depicted somewhat more, but is explained away. There is an
extreme difference for the 1964-1970 period between the frequencies with which referent fathers put children to bed and spend leisure (figure 4.19b) time with them. This striking difference is consistent with other data showing very few nongendered or egalitarian families during this period.

**Attitude of Fathers-in-General Toward Child Care Tasks**

The dominant message in *Parents Magazine* regarding the attitude of fathers-in-general to child care tasks is neutral (see figure 4.20). It is not until the 1985-1991 interval that *willingly* appears consistently, although it did represent a small proportion during the thirties, forties and late fifties and seventies. Not surprisingly, there were no articles during the twenty-year period from 1971 through 1991 that implied fathers-in-general do child care tasks reluctantly. Also not surprising is that the 1955-1963 period has the highest proportion of articles implying reluctance. Although some of the

![Figure 4.20: What is the Attitude of Fathers-in-General Toward Child Care Tasks?](image)

According to Father Articles in Parents Magazine

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findings are consistent with other findings related to time and tasks, overall, there is no evidence of an association between the attitude of fathers-in-general toward child care tasks and time.

A composite picture of behavior and attitude regarding child care tasks was created using the same method as described above for the housework composite. Figure 4.21 shows the changes over time in the behavior and attitude of fathers-in-general to child care tasks. In 1994 -- after approximately thirty years of public and private questioning of gender roles -- Parents Magazine’s assumptions about the frequency and willingness with which men do child care tasks was the same as it was in mid-to-late thirties. Like the housework composite, the child care composite shows a plateau for the last two intervals. However, unlike the housework composite, which was positively correlated with time, there is no evidence of an association between the...
child care composite and time.

**Summary and Discussion**

Some of the important findings of this section have to do with the “pattern of patterns” within *Parents Magazine* itself and the implications of those patterns for *Parents Magazine*’s function as an agent of socialization into the mother and father roles. Overall, there was a great deal of fluctuation over the decades regarding the themes explored. While some themes were more constant than others -- such as fathers being able to choose their level of involvement in familywork -- most of them seemed to be associated with time, with a few important exceptions to be discussed below.

Some themes remained the same for more than one consecutive time interval, and these plateaus may be interpreted as periods of “wait and see” or dormancy or transition, especially where there had been a lot of variation prior to the plateau. In many cases, the plateau was followed by a surge, continuing the pre-plateau trend in a way that appears to “make up for lost time.” In other words, the plateau is followed by a sudden huge increase, at or above the level it would have reached had it been moving constantly, without the plateau. In other cases, the plateau was followed by a reversal.

As discussed in earlier chapters, all conclusions drawn from this analysis must be informed by the fact that *Parents Magazine* is a commercial entity, depending on advertising revenue for its survival. Advertising revenue is determined not only by numbers of readers, but also by who the readers are and whether the content of the magazine puts them in a frame of mind to buy the advertisers’ products (Steinem,
1990). There is always an effort to offend neither reader nor advertiser. Thus, there is a conservative force built in to the whole process of what articles actually say, despite the magazine's progressive roots. The plateaus discussed above, including when they occur and how they end, seem to illustrate this conservatism. So does the fact that there are so many mixed messages regarding fathers' role in the family. Presenting mixed messages is a safe strategy if public opinion and social structural reality about the subject matter are constantly in flux. The dominant message *seems* to follow the changes in broad cultural trends, but there is an undertow, a subtext, that results in a "three steps forward, two and a half steps back" posture.

Looking at the housework and child care tasks that referent fathers actually do and the attitude with which they do them illustrates the "three steps forward, two and a half steps back" posture. It was shown that at all time periods, referent fathers do the more passive tasks -- those requiring less surrender of personal autonomy. Over time, there are more depictions of fathers doing these tasks, and more endorsement of their doing them. This creates the impression that changes have taken place. Yet the familywork that men actually do maintains their peripheral involvement, regardless of how much it they do it. Further, the tasks fathers most often do allow them to maintain their prerogative of doing it or not. It is not surprising then, that fathering is depicted as fun and self-actualizing. Fathering can be presented as fun and self-actualizing because men are given permission to select their child care tasks from a pre-selected pool of the least burdensome tasks. What does it mean that these messages and images are consumed by women, not men?

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This project has shown that women readers are presented with fathering behavior that is in fact quite circumscribed. Fathers perform a very narrow range of tasks, and they do so relatively infrequently. The tasks they do most often are the easiest to do and impose the least on their time, space and autonomy. Yet, these referent fathers are celebrated -- and celebrate themselves (i.e., boast) as though they are engaged in all aspects of care. To the extent that this discourse contributes to women's expectations about their own mates' behavior, these expectations would be inflated because the overall impression is a distortion of what fathers in the magazine as well as in the real world actually do. These distorted or inflated expectations would, as discussed earlier, contribute to poorer adjustment to parenthood. In fact, typical fathers are probably quite similar to the men in the magazine, task for task. So the magazine is not "lying;" there is no conspiracy -- but there is "much ado about nothing."

Another important finding of this chapter is that changes in the depiction of fathers doing housework are more closely tied to the passage of time than changes in child care tasks. In other words, there has been more consistency over time in how Parents Magazine presented men engaged in fathering behavior than in men engaged in housework. Fathering per se is not new, but doing housework is. And for both child care and housework, there has been more change in behavior than attitude. Even when referent fathers are doing housework and child care tasks, they seem to be doing it because it has become normative -- i.e. fathers-in-general do it -- but they tend to do it neutrally and reluctantly, not willingly.
There are many significant differences in what male and female authors say about these issues, and these differences transcend time. Women authors are more likely to say the marriage is improved when men are engaged with familywork, and that gender roles have changed but should change more and faster. Women authors are significantly more likely to depict a referent father changing diapers, putting a child to bed, and cleaning. Women authors make up only about a quarter of the sample, and their contributions have a definite point of view. This raises important questions about the fact that women do not produce a representative proportion of cultural messages -- not only in Parents Magazine but on the evening news, in Hollywood and on Madison Avenue. These findings strongly suggest that the “message landscape” would likely be quite different if more women were involved in cultural production.

Male authors are more likely to depict women and girls as objects of humor. In addition, they depict females of all ages as concerned with trivialities and better suited than males for menial tasks and taking care of others’ needs. Daughters are often discussed in terms of their ability to manipulate their fathers -- just as adult women are noted for their manipulativeness, excessive sentimentality and peculiar ways of doing things. Several articles assert a clear preference for sons.

Different themes seem to be expressed more or less during different eras, and some of these patterns are surprising. For example, the prewar years depict more nongendered families than several later periods, and also have fewer articles that cast women as Other. There was less differentiation among the child care tasks that men did -- as though this work didn’t yet have the stigmas and connotations it would
develop later. Although this chapter looked at themes, not tones, a cynicism can be
detected from the patterns of themes after the war. Beginning in the late forties, the
gap between attitude and behavior, combined with the sarcasm -- which will be looked
at more closely in the next chapter -- suggests a male discontentedness with family life
and responsibilities.

The period from 1948 though 1970 seems to be a particularly confused time
with respect to father’s place in the family. Some articles depicted the “family man”
who changed diapers and occasionally put the kids to bed, but did so with no
enthusiasm. The sixties seem to be a reaction to the immediate postwar years and the
efforts to engage fathers in family life in the fifties. Sixties referent fathers did very
little child work or housework, were hostile to women, and never spoke of fatherhood
being fun. They didn’t change diapers and they didn’t put children to bed. The
depiction of highly gendered or male privileged households peaked in the sixties. In
the late sixties, the father’s importance as a moral guide for the family was
emphasized.

By the eighties, the nongendered or egalitarian family was dominant, yet the
child care task done most frequently by fathers remained spending leisure time with
children. The overall, surface impression from Parents Magazine is that profound
social changes have been chronicled; but on closer look, the details remain very much
unchanged.

Finally, before analyzing the various tones used in the articles, it might be
helpful to look at two final theme variables in relation to each other: the depiction of

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woman as Other and the implication that gender roles should change or change faster.

The juxtaposition of these two variables sums up many of the findings of this chapter.

Figures 4.22 (PMP) and 4.23 (decades) illustrate the countervailing forces.

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**Figure 4.22**

Gender Roles Should Change (Faster) and Women as "Other"

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**Figure 4.23**

Gender Roles Should Change (Faster) and Woman as "Other"
regarding gendered parenting that operate in *Parents Magazine*. Looking at two periodizations allows for a more nuanced look. Throughout the time frame, there have been articles calling for gender role change or for faster gender role change. This call gets louder after the war. With the exception of the late sixties, every period had at least a small percentage of articles with this theme.

Yet, the woman as Other message is much more dominant. It begins to recede in the early seventies, but by the late seventies/early eighties it dominates again. By that time, the call for role change has become “louder,” and by the mid-eighties, it is loud enough to again dominate the woman as Other message -- but only until the early nineties.

Clearly something had changed by the late seventies -- in fact, both themes reach about 12% for that decade, suggesting a transitional moment. Yet, any movement in the nongendered or egalitarian direction is offset by the persistence of a theme that demeans women and/or privileges men.
CHAPTER V
TONE

While tone is the most elusive content element analyzed, it is in many ways the most important because the tone of the article often "speaks louder" than the other content elements. The author conveys his or her attitude toward the subject matter and toward the reader through tone. Tone also establishes the author's status. By identifying the author's attitude and status, tone contributes to the overall impression of the article, above and beyond what is actually said. Seven dominant tones recur, in different combinations, within the articles.

Authoritative

Articles with an authoritative tone suggest that what the author is saying is true, important and worthy of discussion. The author of an authoritative article is perceived as credible and knowledgeable. The author's sex and profession (when known) may contribute to an article's authoritativeness, but the way the author uses language and frames his or her perceptions seems to make an even greater contribution. As will be discussed below, authors establish authority in different ways, and the criteria for establishing authority seem to vary with the author's sex.

Of articles with an authoritative tone, 70.6% of these are male-authored and 23% are female-authored -- about equal to the male/female proportions of the articles over all. As can be seen on figure 5.1, there are some striking differences between
authoritative male-authored and authoritative women-authored articles. In articles that

are authoritative, a significantly greater proportion of women authors than male authors
depict fathers: giving children baths $\chi^2(1) = 9.54, p < .01$; changing diapers $\chi^2(1) = 8.29,$
$p < .01$; cleaning $\chi^2(1) = 4.33, p < .05$; comforting children $\chi^2(1) = 3.82, p < .05$; putting
children to bed $\chi^2(1) = 13.65, p < .01$, and cooking $\chi^2(1) = 6.65, p < .001$. Women-
authored articles are also more likely to say mothers should change some aspect of their
familywork behavior $\chi^2(1) = 4.27, p < .05$ and that mothers are primarily
responsible/fathers have a choice $\chi^2(1) = 4.78, p < .05$. Women authors are more
"deferential" to fathers in that a larger proportion of women suggest that mothers
unwittingly discourage fathers' involvement.

There are statistically significant associations between authoritative articles and
decades, $\chi^2(6) = 15.57, p < .01$, five-year intervals, $\chi^2(12) = 26.46, p < .01$ and PMP,
$\chi^2(9)=16.13, p<.05$. As can be seen on figure 5.2, about two-thirds of the articles are authoritative between 1929 and 1933, drops to under half (44%) in the mid to late 30s, then slowly rises again over thirty years to just above half (54%) by the mid-60s. The number of authoritative articles drops suddenly by half, during the 1964-1967 period, and remains at about a quarter of the total for the next thirteen years (1964-1977). It is interesting that Parents Magazine has the fewest number of authoritative articles by and about men during a time when the questioning of authority and many social institutions was at an all time high. The number of authoritative articles remained at 50% or more from 1978-1991, years that saw a politically conservative shift, (though not regarding fathers and family work) and then fell again in the later period, beginning in 1992.

There are significantly more authoritative articles in the early thirties and late eighties $\chi^2(12)=72.72, p<.001$. 

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When the sex of the author of authoritative articles is considered, more details emerge. Figure 5.3 shows that there is an increase in the proportion of women-authored authoritative articles from 1955 through 1984, though for most of this period there was an overall decrease in authoritative articles. The World War II years also saw an increase in the proportion of women-authored authoritative articles, with the narrowest gap in male-female authority for the entire sixty-six years occurring during the war and from 1978-1984. The time periods with the greatest gap between male and female authority articles are 1929-1933, and 1955-1963.

**Humor**

In this study, humor refers to an informal style, where there is an attempt to be witty and entertaining. Out of 243 articles, only nine written by women that humor (3.7%); 23% of the total involve humor by male authors. Seventeen percent of all
women-authored articles use humor; in contrast, 30% of male-authored articles use humor.

Finding sex differences in frequency and type of humor is consistent with other research in gender and communication which has found that humor -- like other forms of assertive communication -- is more culturally acceptable for men than for women (Thorne and Henley, 1975; Tannen, 1990; ) Authors that use humor assert themselves and take risks; they seem to be actively engaged in the world. The ability to see and articulate the humor in everyday life is an admirable quality, and so the appeal of these articles is enhanced. Perhaps the humorist's perception requires an objectivity or distance from the subject matter that, with respect to parenting, men have and women do not. Or perhaps there would be a risk of some readers taking offense at women and mothers discussing parenting and family issues in a humorous way, as humor is often used to express hostility towards or trivialize the subject matter (Koller, 1988). In any case, the person using humor dominates the discourse, and has “fleeting power” over those who are amused (Tannen, 1990:140).

Sarcasm

If articles with a sarcastic tone are considered separately from those using humor, sex differences become more extreme. The first definition of sarcasm in Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary (1974) is “a sharp and often satirical ironic utterance designed to cut or give pain.” Webster's second definition is “a mode of wit depending for its effect on bitter, caustic, and often ironic language that is usually directed against an individual.” Sarcastic humor is a way of relieving stress and
“diffusing combative situations” (Koller, 1988:20). Humor such as irony, sarcasm, parody and caricature has been identified as “concealed malice” (Stephenson, 1951). Freud understood humor as a pleasurable event in which the ego’s comprehension of a situation enables the release of energies which the superego would otherwise repress. In this view, the pleasure of humor is actually the ego celebrating its victory over the superego (Strachey, 1960).

Almost 94% of articles using sarcastic humor are male-authored, an extreme disproportion $x^2(1)=80.05, p<.001$.

Distinguishing articles using sarcasm from those that use non-sarcastic (or, for lack of a better term, “gentle humor”), the total number of men and women using gentle humor is 78.1% and 21.9%, respectively, closely approximating their proportion in the total number of articles. But more than half (54.5%) of male-authored articles using humor also have a sarcastic tone. Overall, seventeen percent (16.9%) of male authors use sarcasm, whereas only 3.8% (two out of 243) of women authors use sarcasm. So it is not that women do not use humor, but rather, that with rare exceptions, they do not use sarcasm. Sex differences in use of gentle humor and sarcastic humor will be explored below.

**Women’s Gentle Humor and Sarcasm**

Of the seven humorous women-authored articles, one is a wartime “pep talk” that nudges women to keep up their household and personal maintenance in their husbands’ absence (July 1943); one is a lighthearted account of how the family custom of mother taking one weekend off each year has changed from when there was one
baby in the family, until, at the time she writes, there are five kids and she still takes
her weekend (November 1949); one offers suggestions on how to get men to cook once
in a while (the key is to make it fun for them; June 1951); one is a qualitative report of
survey results (and it is the quoted male respondents who are actually using humor;
September 1985), and the other three are editorials (January 1989; June 1991; April
1992). So among these seven humorous, non-sarcastic, women-authored pieces, only
one is a first-person account, two have a byline but no occupation or affiliation, and
four are by authorities -- editors of the magazine. By contrast, the male-authored
humorous, non-sarcastic pieces are 76% first-person, and their "authority" is derived
from the authors' parenting experience. This suggests that women authors can use
gentle humor if they have a high-status position and expertise to legitimize the
assertiveness of their humor; male authors can use gentle humor based on their life
experience. The three humorous "non-expert" women-authored pieces are from 1943,
1949 and 1951 -- when assertiveness and outspokenness was less acceptable for women
than it was later in the century.

The two women-authored sarcastic articles poke fun at mothers and pregnant
women, and are worth examining in some detail for several reasons. The most striking
thing about them is that although they are women-authored, their sarcastic edge and the
focus of their sarcastic humor seem to reflect a male sensibility. Through sarcastic
humor, they perpetuate cultural stereotypes about male and female parenting behavior.
This is not to say that they are not humorous or that they contain no important
information. To the contrary, they are entertaining and in their own way, informative.
Still, women expressing these ideas, in this tone, to other women is problematic. For example, in “The Baby Expert” (#169) from September, 1985, the author, who is a senior editor at Parents Magazine, realizes that her unwillingness to give up her “monopoly” on infant care is hindering the relationship between her husband and her child. She recalls how she got over this the first time around, but, apparently, has to go through the realization anew with their second child:

Perhaps I am trying to reclaim my retired title of Baby Expert. Being the Baby Expert took up a good deal of my time and effort a few years ago when my daughter was small. It meant being the only one who understood what she wanted and the only one who could properly satisfy her needs (emphasis on “properly”). As the Baby Expert, I was very quick to respond to my firstborn’s slightest noise (a cough heard two rooms away could bring me to the crib in a flash) and very quick to criticize how others responded.

I recall having a fit because my husband gave the baby leftover formula from that morning’s unfinished bottle. (“Didn’t you read the label? It says very clearly ‘DISCARD REMAINING FORMULA!’”) Somehow the baby survived the old formula. She also survived numerous other errors perpetrated by my husband -- and duly pointed out by me.

Being a first-time mother and perhaps more fearful than most, I actually believed that any mishandling of the smallest detail of my daughter’s care would result in lifelong damage. If she was given two vegetables for lunch instead of a fruit, if her pajama top was put on backwards, if she was brought home later than usual from the park --- this was all evidence that my husband could not be trusted to care for her.

My devotion to being the Baby Expert not only hindered the growth of their relationship -- it eventually became a trap for me. Our daughter quickly got the message: ‘Only Mom will do.” As time went on, only Mom could dress her, feed her, do her hair, comfort her. I hadn’t wanted to share her with her father; now she refused to share me with my husband.

This author uses sarcasm to highlight the absurdity of some mothers’ standards.
She describes herself as “having a fit” over relatively unimportant oversights. She fears “lifelong damage” will result from trivalities. She describes her husband as a “perpetrator,” a word most often used for someone who has committed a crime, implying their child is the victim. She presents herself as “The Baby Expert,” selfish and neurotic, as someone who is stuck in a “trap” of her own creation. Looking solely at content and not tone, this article might be considered progressive, helping women see how they perpetuate certain behaviors which ultimately inhibit them. But the sarcastic tone seems to color the piece with mockery.

The theme of Mom unwittingly discouraging Dad from greater involvement in familywork is absent from 1955 through 1970, but appears to some extent in all other intervals (see figure 5.4). The main concern of these articles is that mothers’ unwitting discouragement of fathers interferes with the father-child relationship; that the burden of familywork remains hers is secondary. Thus, the appeal for change is based on the importance of the father-child relationship, not fairness.
Figure 5.5a shows that almost half (47.4%) of the articles having the “mother discourages” theme are women-authored, 42.1% are male-authored, and the remaining 10.5% have mixed-sex authors. In other words, almost half the articles implicating

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**Figure 5.5a**

Sex of Author: Mothers Discourage Fathers' Greater Involvement in Familywork

- Male authors: 42.1%
- Female authors: 47.4%
- Mixed sex authors: 10.5%

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**Figure 5.5b**

First-Person, Women-Aauthored Articles as a Percent of the Total

- First-Person/Women: 6.8%
- Other: 93.4%
women as responsible for men’s lack of involvement in familywork are women-authored $\chi^2(2) = 12.28, p < .001$. Also, first-person women-authored articles make up only 6.5% of all articles (figure 5.5b), but make up an extremely disproportionate 60% of the first-person articles that say mothers discourage fathers’ involvement (figure 5.5c) $\chi^2(2) = 12.28, p < .01$. In other words, mothers write first-person essays to blame themselves for their husbands’ lack of involvement in familywork. These women-authored articles that assert the “mom discourages” theme in first-person voice almost constitute a mini-genre: the confessional. Women-authors write over half (52.9%) of all the articles with the “mom discourages” theme, which is significantly
disproportionate, $x^2(1)=9.03, p<.01$ (see figure 5.5d). The mothers' role in encouraging and/or discouraging fathers' involvement in familywork is a factor that must be considered. The author of the article excerpted above makes a valid point, and it is a point mothers should be aware of. And it may be a point made more effectively to women by women than men. However, it is noteworthy that the point is made through sarcastic, self-deprecating humor that ridicules women. There are many social structural reasons why women might unwittingly discourage their partner's involvement in familywork, and why conflicts might occur about where the line is drawn between caretaking style and poor caretaking. These articles describe familiar scenarios which women readers relate to and cannot easily dismiss; the articles are authoritative and credible. Their authority and inherent appeal make their messages acceptable to women readers, even though the reader is blamed. Other possibilities for father's
reticence are not considered.

The other use of sarcasm in a woman-authored article is “The Perfect Pregnant Father” (#240) from August 1994. In response to the “torrents of do’s and dont’s” that pregnant women receive from “friends, experts, great aunts, cab drivers and total strangers,” this author decided that men need advice on “how to be a perfect father-to-be.” Here are some excerpts from the 10 rules she offers:

...The perfect father-to-be is enthusiastic about pregnancy....He thinks that the sound of their baby’s heartbeat is the most exciting thing he ever heard. He also agrees with his wife that the doctor’s scale is ten pounds over and should be repaired immediately....

He pampers his wife shamelessly. He brings her flowers and perfume and silly or thoughtful presents -- just because he was thinking of her....He insists that she take a nap or bubble bath while he cooks and cleans the house. He just can’t do enough for her....He’d put pillows under your feet. He’d take you out to eat a lot. And he’d buy you jewelry or a silk scarf -- something that always fits, regardless of what shape your body was in....

He realizes...that sensuality involves more than sex. He may offer to paint his wife’s toenails, like Kevin Costner did for Susan Sarandon in Bull Durham, which is one of his favorite movies because it’s so sexy and romantic....

He understands that pregnancy can make his wife a little crabby at times...and when his wife does get cranky, he says, ‘Tell me what I can do to help, honey,’ not ‘this is even worse than PMS’....

If she indulges herself with chocolate-chip cookie dough ice cream or a pizza with anchovies and jalapenos, he pretends not to notice....And he certainly doesn’t nag his wife about her weight or diet...he realizes that nagging is not supportive behavior. After she has finished her third strawberry cobbler, this perfect man would never ask, ‘Are you having triplets or something?’ Rather, he would say, ‘Can I get you another dessert honey? You must be starved.
The appeal of this article is that it addresses actual points of potential conflict that might arise for a couple during pregnancy, and it does so in a humorous way. Nevertheless, many “caricatures” of what women would want and how men would be inclined to respond are drawn with a male brush. This is not to say that the article reads as if a man wrote it -- it definitely does not -- but that gender is seen through male eyes. The author offers a teasing, male view.

A pregnant woman’s fascination with hearing the baby’s heartbeat for the first time is ridiculed, as are her (male induced) concerns with her appearance and weight gain. The stereotypic male dislike for romantic movies is evoked, and a man being thoughtful and considerate is articulated as being dominated. By scripting the real (negative) and fantasized (positive) male response to hormonally induced mood changes, the female author, in this humorous context, essentially legitimizes the response that she herself codes as negative. This piece is very effective. It is entertaining and rings true because it relies on stereotypes. It turns women’s needs, fears and desires into farce.

Men’s Gentle Humor and Sarcasm

Of all male-authored articles using humor, 55.4% are sarcastic; 44.6% are humorous without sarcasm, i.e., gentle humor. There are important differences in what is being discussed and depicted in articles using sarcastic humor and gentle humor. These differences seem to reveal the very fiber and texture of the sarcastic tone.

Male authors using sarcastic humor are significantly more likely to: cast women
as Other $\chi^2(1)=7.42$, $p<.05$; have three children $\chi^2(3)=9.54$, $p<.05$; depict a referent father who does the same amount of familywork as fathers-in-general $\chi^2(2)=10.54$, $p<.001$, and depict a referent father whose attitude toward familywork is the same as fathers-in-general $\chi^2(2)=209.82$, $p<.001$. Articles using sarcastic humor are also more likely to be about the father-daughter relationship $\chi^2(1)=3.90$, $p<.05$, and twice as likely to be about a girl child than a boy child, though this is significant at the $p>.06$ level $\chi^2(1)=3.50$.

Sarcastic articles are significantly less likely to say: fathers need to change $\chi^2(1)=14.47$, $p<.001$; referent father does more familywork than fathers-in-general $\chi^2(2)=10.54$, $p<.001$; referent father does familywork more willingly than fathers-in-general $\chi^2(2)=209.82$, $p<.001$, and involved fathers will have a positive impact on the marriage $\chi^2(1)=4.28$, $p<.05$. Men in these articles are also significantly less likely to express feelings of appreciation $\chi^2(2)=5.34$, $p<.05$, and are less likely to be involved in their children's bedtime $\chi^2(1)=3.78$, $p<.05$.

In the gently humorous articles, fathers speaking or depicted are significantly more likely to: put children to bed, $\chi^2(1)=10.64$, $p<.001$; cook, $\chi^2(1)=3.79$, $p<.05$; have one, two or more than four children, $\chi^2(4)=16.19$, $p<.001$, and to have had an insight or conversion, $\chi^2(1)=5.84$, $p<.01$. Articles using gentle humor are less likely comment on changes in gender roles.

The fathers depicted or speaking in sarcastic articles seem to have behaviorally and psychologically distanced themselves from familywork more than those in the gently humorous articles.
humorous articles. Fathers in the sarcastic articles are less likely to see themselves as
different from fathers in general, and seem overall to perceive themselves as having
less impact on their families than men in humorous articles. Seeing women as Other
and using sarcastic humor more in reference to daughters than sons seems to suggest
some hostility toward females.

It is interesting that the referent fathers in the gently humorous articles are more
likely to have had an insight or conversion and are also less likely to comment
explicitly on changes in gender roles. These two differences may suggest a maturing or
mellowing on the part of the non-sarcastic referent fathers as compared with those who
use sarcasm. That gently humorous referent fathers have one, two or more than three
children and sarcastic fathers have three children may suggest a different orientation
toward children and parenting in general.

There is a statistically significant association between sarcastic articles and
decades, half-decades and PMP: $\chi^2(6)=18.51 \ p < .005; \chi^2(12)=26.07 \ p < .01; \text{ and}$
$\chi^2(9)=17.22 \ p < .05$, respectively. As can be seen on figure 5.6, close to half (43%)
the articles in the early sixties used a sarcastic tone. Over the next twenty-five years,
sarcastic articles averaged 10%, until the nineties, when there was an increase to one
third (33%). There were no sarcastic articles in the late thirties or the late fifties, and
the smallest proportion is during World War II. The huge, sudden increase in sarcastic
articles from the late fifties to the early sixties is striking, and consistent with other
findings about the early sixties.
Self-Important / Boastful Tone

While almost a quarter (23%) of all the articles have a boastful tone, it is found in only 13% of women-authored articles -- half the proportion of the 26% found in male-authored articles $x^2(1) = 28.69, p < .001$.

The findings on the use of self-important/boastful tone are consistent with the findings for humor in that the assertive and confident style is not, for the most part, used by women. A case could be made that it is "appropriate" for men to be writing about fatherhood in a boastful tone, since it is not typically discussed publicly by men and therefore those who do so are "special" and their boasting is justified.

Articles having a self-important/boasting tone are typically very enthusiastic about fathering. The enthusiasm, however, tends to focus around a particular system or mindset that the author applies to fatherhood, and so the piece tends to be about the
author and his perception of himself as clever or otherwise special, as much or more
than it is about fathering or fatherhood per se. These father-authors offer a reframing
of the father role that brings it closer to Culture; they attempt to add a layer of
technological and/or intellectual sophistication. They "rationalize" fatherhood, in the
Weberian sense.

For example, a father-author of a November 1936 piece describes how he "used
army-post tactics," complete with written orders and inspections, to "keep the
household in good order while mother took a vacation." He warns that "the system
will fail under careless or haphazard supervision." Then there are the four college
professor fathers in a December 1936 "For Fathers Only" column (#42) who
formulated "a plan" for taking regular monthly excursions with their children. The
author-father explains: "Like the British Government we fathers have an unwritten
constitution," outlining the particulars of their plan. Similarly, the father-author in a
June 1939 "Especially for Fathers" column called "Getting to Know Your Boy" (#55)
describes how since the moment a nurse allowed him a "glimpse of his son's puckered
features" in a hospital waiting room, his son has been his "absorbing interest." This
father bathes his son, changes diapers, and watches in "rapt amazement" as his son
"drains the contents" of his bottle. He then goes on to say

I am studying my son just as I would study any other problem with
which I had to deal. I am watching his character unfold and I am
keeping a written record. I have an ordinary filing box and a supply of
three-by-five cards. On these cards I set down anything that relates to
that complexity of character as I observe it. The card is then dated and
filed.

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The boy is yet too young for many cards to have been filed... but this program is going to be followed right through college. It will show whether and when he becomes interested in books and what kind of books. It will show his grades in school, in what subjects he is proficient and in what subjects he is not proficient. It will show whether or not he develops an interest in tools and woodworking and what skill he has for this sort of thing....

By means of such a card index, you should, by the time high school is finished, have a pretty definite idea what type of college the boy should attend and what courses he should take. If your indexing has been done intelligently there should be no necessity for pressure in regard to the child’s future at this point. His choice of a vocation will be made among those things for which he has shown a liking and for which he has natural talents.... If this program does nothing else, it will leads to a more satisfying relationship between father and son....

This father can do the active, hands-on child care tasks because he has enhanced the status of the work (and himself) with his “system.”

In “Little Blocks of Time” from July 1958 (#119) the author-father offers an early version of the “quality time” approach so popular in the parenting literature of the 1980s:

Just as there are people who never read a book because they can’t find the time to digest whole sections at a single sitting, there are men who don’t build healthy relationships with their children because they never seem to find large blocks of free time....the busier a father is, the more necessary it is that he free himself of this concept.

This author lays out his “building block” approach, describing in detail how without having to change his daily routine, he uses waking time, bedtime, errands, and nighttime, to find time blocks “for building a good relationship between father and child.”

In “Confessions of a Full-time Father” (#145) from May 1974, readers are
offered “[a] fascinating glimpse into the private journal of a writer-father who takes care of his young daughter while his wife goes out to work.” In journal entries covering a four-month period, this father analyzes his daughter’s behavior and his reactions to her. He philosophizes. His journal entries are reminiscent of the field notes of an anthropologist studying the ways of a primitive tribe, or of Prof. Jean Piaget setting out theories of child development by taking copious notes on his own children. This father is proud of his patience, his insights and his willingness to “feel out of place” in the world of mothers.

The men in these articles are meeting routine parenting demands, using the same creativity, borne of necessity, that mothers use. They seem to have a need, however, to enhance the perceived importance of the tasks through purposeful complication, embellishment and codification, thus adding an element of importance to the work and ennobling themselves in the process. Thus, the self-important/boastful tone.

A more recent example of this tone is in “Father Makes Breakfast” (#162) from January 1984. It is written by a single father who is proud of himself for having prepared more than 1500 breakfasts since his divorce. He sees this feat as so special and noteworthy that he wanted to give his essay the lofty title “‘Portrait of the Single Father as a Short-Order Cook’” or “‘Contemplations on a Hot-Grease Blister’.”

“Daddy Cool” (#176) from July 1986 similarly reframes the tasks of parenting into heroic feats through a boastful/self-important tone. As in “Father Makes Breakfast,” there is an element of self-deprecating humor, which softens the author’s
verbal swagger. This father describes a moment of insight when, walking along the beach, he saw himself through the eyes of a young woman:

Her eyes told the whole ugly story about what fatherhood had done to me. There was just a momentary glance, decently averted, at seeing another human being turned into a donkey. There was no second look. She couldn’t face me again. She couldn’t face the playpen I carried under one arm. She couldn’t face the basket of pails and shovels. She couldn’t face the kite, the beach umbrella, the Thermos full of grape juice. She couldn’t face the Fred Flintstone bottle sticking out of my pocket. And she couldn’t face the [Goofy] hat, that yellow-and-black monstrosity of cute....


Let’s face it, being cool is enormously important to American men....Our heroes have never been Daddies. Did Bogey ever buckle in a car seat? Did Cary Grant ever drive the sitter home? Nowhere in our pantheon is there the slightest trace of Daddy. None of them -- not Huck, not Gatsby, not Springsteen, not the Duke -- ever mashed up carrots. It’s simple. You can’t be a father and a hero. *Nature won’t allow it.* Kids steal your cool. (emphasis added.)

After more discussion of his contemplative day at the beach, describing how children transform Men into Daddies, the author comes to redefine Cool. He says it’s easy for men without children to be “in control,” “in charge” and cool (“well-rested, well-groomed”); but it is so much harder for Daddies to be cool, and that, he concludes, is the ultimate Cool:

Cool is juggling your shoes. Cool is continuing to care about a child who has just woken you up with a punch to the head. Cool is not even having to think about whether that’s Bert or Ernie. Cool is knowing where his other sandal is. Cool is catching a vase with your foot.

Both articles suggest that these men feel a loss of status that comes with Daddyhood,
and so they construct elaborate rationalizations to make Daddyhood okay. As can be seen in Illustrations 1 and 2, both of these articles are accompanied by illustrations of men who are submerged in the artifacts of familywork.

Illustration 1

A final example of the self-important/boastful tone, which also uses humor, is “Remembrance of Cheerios Past” from November 1989. The author-father of this article talks about how he enjoys eating children’s food, and how “[t]his diet crossing has unlocked for [him] a Proustian trove of food memories.” He vividly describes how, as a child, he formed forts out of mashed potatoes and used spoons as catapults to launch peas. He enthusiastically talks about reliving that joy by sharing food with his
fourteen-month-old daughter.

I eat pasta dinosaurs now. I am not ashamed. It is something that happened, and I cannot go back....[w]hatever I make for the kid -- pasta dinosaurs, ravioli, grilled cheese -- I always make extra for me....

Often Kristin and I split a box of macaroni and cheese. She takes hers straight, I like mine with ground pepper and Louisiana hot sauce....When my daughter and I eat the stuff...she gets full; I get a clear, almost photographic image of late nights spent studying [during my senior year at college]. I see myself and my three roommates converging on the kitchen....When I graduated, I swore I’d never eat it again....I’ve rediscovered graham crackers, creamed corn, arrowroot biscuits, American cheese, sweet potatoes, and soft white bread....I eat canned ravioli, too, and canned lasagna, canned spaghetti....And applesauce -- I’d forgotten how fresh and tangy applesauce could be....

We lose so much, we adults. Now and then I ask myself, when was the last time I expressed such unrestrained joy about food? With Kristin’s’s help, I’m regaining that appreciation, but there’s a point where even I draw the line: I will not squeeze ravioli between my fingers, nor will I spread pureed apricots on my scalp or pack oatmeal in my ears. There are still too many maitre d’s who just wouldn’t understand.”

Here again, self-deprecating humor tempers the self-important tone. This author is not presenting himself as a man who has been reduced to preparing and eating low quality, processed foods. He is a Daddy who enjoys rich memories of his own childhood that are so vivid and sensorial, he actually regresses (see illustration 3.) This father reframes feeding his child as a therapeutic experience for him, rather than a nurturing experience for his child. Being immersed in the world of children and their food becomes a liberating, transcendent experience, not routine, messy drudgery.

**Boasting About Fairness**

Seven of the forty-eight male-authored boastful articles also have a fairness
focus. In these articles, fathers’ involvement is neither mediated by plans, systems and schedules, nor are their behaviors rationalized as means to greater, self-serving ends. Their tone is boastful and self-important, but more genuine. They are proud of their caretaking abilities, but their focus is on the children. They recognize that fathering fosters their own personal growth, but that is not the main point of fathering, nor is it the main point of the article.

For example, in “Father Takes Care of the Baby” (#138) from February 1971, the author-father, a student married to a student, regularly spends time at home with his two sons. He explains, “All in all, it didn’t start out too promisingly and I felt guilty knowing that the boys needed more from me than I was giving, and feeling, as well, that there ought to be more in it for me.” Over time, this father discovered activities and ways of spending the days that were beneficial and enjoyable for him and his two young sons. He is direct about what the experience means for him, and doesn’t hide behind embellishments, humor or rationalizations:

I’m especially grateful for the closeness that has grown between my children and myself since I started taking care of them, and I find myself looking forward to caring for them in other ways as they grow older. I hope that the bonds between us now will make it easier for them to remain open with me as they face the problems that growing up inevitably brings. And I hope the sympathy I now feel for them will similarly stay with me when, as is also inevitable, their attitudes come to seem strange or difficult to me.

In “When Father Becomes a ‘House-Husband’” (#151) from July 1978, the author-father, a “college teacher,” takes care of the kids on the three days during the week when he is not “out of the house.” He admits that “the role of housekeeper and
full-time parent required a lot of learning.” He continues

Though I wanted to do it, I can admit now that I felt a little trapped and I had problems with my ‘image.’ Was this sort of thing proper work for a man? On more than one occasion I indulged in feeling sorry for myself, stuck unadventurously at home taking care of the baby. At times I was embarrassed. Being a ‘mother’ in the privacy of our home was one thing; outdoors it was another....

What I see as especially significant now about my feelings of embarrassment and exposure is that I was responding more to a stereotyped notion of what a man should be doing than I was to my child. My early embarrassment at being the ‘mother’ stemmed from a fear that my traditional, prized privilege of being ‘masculine’ was threatened by - of all things -- my child....I was more concerned about myself and the way others saw me than I was about [my daughter].

These articles are also similar in that both suggest the author had an insight or conversion experience, both suggest gender roles are changing, both suggest that husband and wife will have a better relationship if husbands are involved with familywork, and both suggest fathering can be emotionally satisfying. These are the only two articles -- out of 243 -- that have this particular cluster of themes. They are both from the 1970s. As shown above, there are many boastful/self-important articles after 1971 in which male authors distance themselves from and rationalize their performance of the father role. Yet the increase in this type of article, along with the few more genuine boastful ones, seems to suggest 1971-1978 as a turning point in how fathering was presented. Figure 5.7 shows the proportion per PMP of boastful articles, by sex of author. Boastful/self-important male-authored articles average about 29% per interval for the entire time frame; women-authored boastful tone articles average 3%. The peak from 1971 - 1977 also shows an increase in the number of women-
authored boastful articles, though the most boastful period for women authors is the immediate post-war years.

![Figure 5.7](Image)

**Sex of Author:**
**Boastful Tone Articles**

Parents Magazine Intervals

The women authors of these post-war boastful tone articles are sharing with readers their experience of how they were able to elicit more familywork engagement from their husbands. These articles were discussed in the previous chapter, two in the section on male privilege ("Fifty-fifty Baby" from June 1948 and "Week-end Off for Mother" from November 1949) and one in the section that explored the "father has a choice" theme. Unlike men who use the boastful/self-important tone to talk about themselves and make themselves look good, these women are not boasting about themselves, but about how they have cooperative husbands. In both cases, the object of the boast is male. One of the later women-authored boastful tone articles is an editorial. Again, the boast is not about her, but about her husband. Another women-
authored boastful tone article reports results of a survey of fathers -- again, women do not boast about themselves. The small handful of articles in which a female author says positive things about herself describe a situation where she had been doing something wrong or counterproductive, and then realized the error of her ways. She has been reformed, but she is not, like the men, extraordinary.

Expressive Tone

The proportion of male and female authors using an expressive tone is about the same (27% and 28%, respectively) and male and female authors are represented in the expressive group proportionately to their overall numbers (76.9% and 23.1% respectively). There is a statistically significant association between expressive articles and PMP, $x^2(9)=20.60, p<.01$. As can be seen on figure 5.8 half of all articles from 1971-1977 were male-authored with an expressive tone. This number drops by almost
half during the 1978-1984 period, perhaps reflecting the same cultural reaction to expressive men captured in the colloquialism "real men don't eat quiche" and the revitalization of militarism and related male posturing of the Reagan years. There is an increase in expressive articles in the late eighties, but almost half are women-authored. The increase in expressive articles continues into the nineties, with a greater proportion male-authored. It is interesting that the proportion of expressive male authors in 1985-1991, 22%, is the same that it was 51 years earlier in 1934-1940.

There is a significant correlation between expressive male authors and PMP ($r = .1851, p < .01$) — but not between women-authored expressive articles and PMP. This reflects the fact that women have always been allowed to express their emotions, and that our culture has shown increasing tolerance — indeed, support of — men expressing their emotions, in both the private and public spheres.

In these articles, men and women describe emotionally rich moments, and offer emotional, heartfelt descriptions of the joy that parenthood brings them. About a third (33.8%) of expressive articles use humor — 24.6% gentle humor and 9.2% sarcastic. However, two-thirds (66.2%) of expressive articles describe these emotionally rich moments indirect, emotional language, without cloaking feelings in humor. In 44.6% of these expressive articles the author has an insight or "conversion experience," twice the proportion for all cases, $x^2(1)=22.1, p < .001$. This implies that these positive feelings and perceptions about the parenthood experience are expressed as "reappraisals" or "reframings" of what may have initially been a negative, or less than
ideal experience. While 47.3% of all articles are written in first-person, 83.1% of expressive articles are first-person accounts, $x^2(1)=28.44$, $p<.001$. These expressive, post-insight, first-person, non-sarcastic, non-humorous accounts of the parenting experience -- the "earnest" group, represents only 8.2% of the total, and are all male-authored. If articles coded positively for self-important/boastful tone and "it is noteworthy when men do familywork" are removed from this group, they represent a mere 5.3% of the total.

An example of a non-boastful "earnest" article is "I Became a Full-time Dad" (#58) from January 1941. This author-father discusses how, because of "doctor's order," he had to quit his job and stay home, discovering that "[t]he twelve to eighteen hours a day [he] had to put in for years in the most demanding business in the world [he] could now use for [his] family." With respect to his children, this father had been "only too glad to leave their rearing to their mother....[b]ut now everything was changed." Many lifestyle changes were necessary for this family because of the father no longer working:

Now the necessity of getting along by our own efforts stripped from me any false sense of dignity that might have kept me from sharing in household tasks. I find that fathers can operate an electric washer, iron or vacuum cleaner as skillfully as any housewife....

My wife, gaining added leisure through my help with the household tasks, was beginning to write. In realizing her creative ambition, she was much happier than ever before....In these five years I have completely changed my ideas as to what constitutes the ideal father.

Not material possessions only, for they can be taken away, but ourselves and our time -- the things that endure -- that is what our children need from their fathers.

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Poor health and retirement gave this father opportunities for insight and setting new priorities. His altered circumstances came about by chance, and so his new attitude is also a result of chance. There is an implication that he might not have had these insights if he were still working twelve to eighteen hours a day.

In “A Father Discovers His Daughter” (#73) from September 1944, overhearing a conversation between his daughter and his wife that brought about this father’s conversion:

‘Daddy always seems busy when I’m at home,’ said Bee to her mother. It was the way Bee said it; the expression in her voice, that made me put aside my work and sit there in the next room thinking about myself and my daughter.

I’d always considered myself a good father. I remembered my daughter’s birthdays, brought home surprises for her; read to her once in a while; listened to her chatter about her activities.

Of course if she had been a boy, I’d have had more fun with her. We would have gone fishing, or taken the .22 out to shoot at tin cans and stumps. But I thought girls didn’t care for such things.

During summer vacation at the lake, this father asked his daughter if she’d like to spend the day with him, as he packed the fishing tackle and the .22. “Her brown eyes were big and shiny with excitement, her cheeks pink. ‘Oh yes,’ she exclaimed. ‘And will you let me shoot?’” From then on, this father continued experiencing the pleasure of getting to know his daughter as a “friend” and a “comrade.” Now she is away at college, and he looks forward to receiving letters from her. But none of this would have happened if he had not overheard the conversation. His insight, like the father’s above, was a result of chance happenings.
In “My Baby’s Done a Lot for Me” (#117) from November 1957, the author-father begins his essay with some words a friend told him about parenthood: “The first three years are just something to get over with....[t]he less you have to do with the baby, the better off you’ll be. It’s only when they’re old enough to play ball or take to the circus that a child means anything to a father...anything good, that is.” The authors says that his daughter’s arrival in this world “seemed to confirm his worst predictions.” He explains:

Not that I didn’t feel the usual swell of pride when an improbably tiny little thing with a scowling red face and a fluff of silky hair was held up for my inspection behind the glass door of the nursery. But the pride of ownership was a mighty slim reward for the intrusion into our privacy, the upsetting of routine...and the many ruined nights that followed.

As he watched his daughter develop over the next few months, he was not surprised by the physical progress she made, or by the new things she learned, but by “the sense of excitement that came from watching her and the immense pleasure she communicated.” He describes watching her try to turn over onto her back for the first time, half succeeding, finding her arm in the way:

At last she made it...and squealed in unalloyed triumph. She was so honestly pleased with herself, so proud, so excited. To see her and to share her joy was like a vacation from adulthood with all its pleasures tinged with restraint or regret and with its polite refusal to give vent to honest, uninhibited emotion....to be pleased with yourself and to laugh out loud is a baby’s privilege. But it is also a father’s privilege to share his daughter’s pride.

Reflecting back on his friend’s words about the first year of fatherhood being “a Pandora’s box of problems,” he says that all the problems arrived on schedule, but it is not the problems that stick in his mind:
Instead, it is the look on Cathy's face the first time she climbed up on a big chair all alone and sat there, barely suppressing her vast excitement, waiting for us to come and discover her. It is the picture of her, newly able to walk, scooting around the apartment, screeching with pleasure, arms flailing and feet wide apart, missing table tops and corners by the barest fraction of an inch. It is the choked feeling of seeing the tiny child asleep in her crib, trusting the world in peaceful innocence.

For this father, there was no moment of insight that made him aware of what fatherhood means to him or what fatherhood should be; rather, he grew into it over several months. He effectively expresses his emotions in a direct, forthright manner, without a filter of humor or sarcasm.

![Figure 5.9](image)

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There were no "earnest" articles in the 1960s, and there was only one in the 70s. In fact, from 1958 to 1983, a twenty-five-year period of significant social change and evolution in gender roles, there were only two articles on fatherhood in *Parents Magazine* in which a man discussed fatherhood in this non-boastful, expressive way.
In the following year, 1984, there were two such articles, and in both cases, the father’s circumstance is somewhat anomalous. In “Father at 50: A Love Story” (#164) from May 1984, the author-father muses on being called an “expectant father,” noting that the term did not exist twenty-five years ago. Having two grown children from a previous marriage, he notices many differences in the experience this time around, including his fascination with the infancy stage:

An infant, I now discovered, is as consuming a passion as I had felt before for my children when they were older. The length of the hands and feet, the smile that must be something more than a reflex, those wandering blue eyes that seemed to run between focused awareness of a world elsewhere and a dreamy contemplation of the inner self.

This father readily admits his fears about being an older parent, and his fears about his daughter growing up in a world “where the quest for ever greater sophisticated nuclear weapons might well lead to a war by miscalculation.” This father’s political commentary is also anomalous.

The other earnest article from the 70s depicts a dad who is anomalous in that he is a stepfather. In “Instant Fatherhood: Add Kids and Shake” (#166) from October 1984, the author-father describes his attitude toward children, and his concerns about how he will feel about the two sons of the woman he is going to marry:

The truth was that I didn’t feel competent to be with children, and that made me think I wouldn’t enjoy them. The lack of competence I felt seemed to stem from my own childhood. Although I had not been a perfectly behaved child myself, I had been a bookish and decidedly non-athletic, nonadventurous child.

He had seen these two boys and their friends around the neighborhood, roaring through
halls with “more energy and deviltry than [he] ever had: “I viewed them all as ‘children’ and I kept them at an arm’s distance. Looking back I can see how uncomfortable I was with their rambunctiousness and even their good humor, and I must admit that often I was condescending.”

This father’s moment of insight came when he overheard his wife-to-be telling her two sons that he and she are romantically involved and that her sons should expect to see more of him. He was cutting vegetables at the time, and one of the boys walked in, teary-eyed, and offered to help him make dinner:

After a few minutes, he said, “Mommy told me that if I got to know you I’d like you better, and you know what? I already do....Now I was the one with tears in my eyes. I wiped my eyes on my sleeve and looked at Timothy. ‘I like you, too, ’ I said.

That was really the beginning of our relationship, as well as my first inkling that there might be something to that rumor I’d been hearing all those years about the rewards of being a parent.

Like the fathers in the articles described above, this man had an insight and then came to see children in a positive way. Six of the most recent seven expressive, non-humor, insight articles (from 1989 through 1992) also star a father in a “non-traditional family.” Two are step-dads, one is a blind father, one is the father of a handicapped son, one is a father who works full-time from an at-home office, and one is an over-50 dad with a young wife. The one article that doesn’t fit this pattern reports the results of a “dad’s writing contest” that asked fathers to “share the moments that give special meaning to fatherhood.” These winning pieces were all very expressive, very few used humor, and many described a moment of insight. There is a significant association
between anomalous families and the expressive tone, \( x^2(1) = 8.9, p < .002 \), and also between anomalous families and the composite earnest tone, \( x^2(1) = 9.3, p < .01 \).

There is something out of the norm about all these family situations. It is as though the family has to experience something extraordinary in order for the father to be able to experience and express genuine joy from children -- poor health, a conversation overheard, a second marriage, a handicapped family member. The father in "My Baby’s Done a Lot for Me, " from November 1957 is not quite as anomalous as these other fathers are, but he shares with them the experience of epiphany about fatherhood and children. Somehow he is able to see a truth he could not see before. He reappraises.

**Appreciative Tone**

Approximately one out five articles (19.7%) use an appreciative/thankful tone. This tone is present in a significantly greater proportion of women-authored (32%) than male-authored articles (16.9%), \( x^2(1) = 4.59, p < .05 \); and, men and women express appreciation about different things.

Women authors express two different aspects of appreciation for husbands who are involved in child care. First, they appreciate what they perceive as a quality father-child relationship, and secondly, they appreciate the reprieve from endless familywork that fathers’ involvement allows. In an article called “Let Father Have Fun” (#70) from December 1943, infant care is described as “fun,” and the mother-author explains
that she didn’t want to be “selfish” and not share the baby with her husband, but she found it difficult to “relinquish” the care of her baby “to a blundering and awkward father.” She describes how things changed when they started a new routine that began daily at 5:30pm when her husband arrived home:

Pete had the satisfaction of rescuing a tired, fussy, baby from a tired, fussy mother, of playing with him for a few minutes, and then watching him gradually grow satisfied and sleepy, and finally, putting him to bed. That hour was a blessing for me too, for I had time to prepare dinner leisurely, to glance at the paper while the vegetables were cooking, to comb my hair, and to present a cheerful and rested face to my husband when he arrived at the dinner table proud, and sometimes a little smug, at the thought of his son safely bedded for the night, due to his father’s efforts....Pete has developed an appreciation and understanding of my job, and it is possible for us to work out problems of all sorts together.

The mother writing in “Some Fathers Know Best” (#91) from August 1947, appreciates that her husband is both willing and skilled at doing infant care. In fact, she says that he is better at it than she is because he was the oldest of six children and she was an only child. In an article from June 1951 called “Let Daddy Take Over” (#104), the mother-author laments the lack of understanding between her husband and their children, and starts a “campaign for better understanding between husband and children.” She begins by going out to dinner one evening with some old college friends, “never feeling so guilty and uneasy in [her] life as [she] did that night.” Everybody was fine, and so she did this more often:

How did the children react to their father in his new role? It was heartwarming to see. Our daughters now shared with him the confidences formerly reserved only for me....The baby turns to his father now with all the smiles and gurgles of babyhood, with confidence that his father can make him comfortable when he is in need of something....family life has never been happier than it is now, since
every member feels his need of the others in the family group....I see
our baby smile up at his father, and my eyes meet those of my husband
over the heads of our children in mutual appreciation of all that it means
to be parents....This does not mean that a mother should go to the other
extreme and impose upon her husband. Child care is a job to be shared.

Expressing appreciation to others is important within the family and other social
relationships. The concept of "being taken for granted," so common among unhappy
mates, suggests that as behavior becomes routinized, it becomes expected and therefore
less noticeable and less likely to be the object of explicit appreciation. Person A feels
"taken for granted," i.e. not appreciated; while Person B, at some level of awareness,
expects Person A to continue behavior X. Person A may perceive no choice but to
continue behavior X, which has become expected by Person B, who might only notice
the behavior in its absence. But Person A will not stop behavior X, and therefore it
will typically receive no explicit appreciation. However, if A does X variably or
randomly, B never knows when to expect it, and is more likely to explicitly
acknowledge it with appreciation. If done variably, the definition of behavior X
changes, becoming optional for A; a favor A does for B. Thus, doing X occasionally
becomes a resource, or a bargaining chip for A.

In the daily flow of family life, couples tend not to express appreciation for
routinized behavior that their system defines as mandatory. The feeling of being taken
for granted is painful because the behaviors in question are those that the AB system
knows are essential to its survival -- but the behaviors have become invisible through
time and repetition. It is not that B is not glad A does X, or even that B doesn't care
whether or not A does X. B wants A's behavior to continue; but the expectation and

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routinization of the behavior makes it less salient and less likely to be explicitly appreciated.

Thus the matter of A being "taken for granted" can be analyzed in terms of whether A and B both define the "taken for granted" behavior as mandatory for A. Routinized behavior will be "taken for granted"; behavior done now-and-then will be explicitly appreciated. This could be called the "appreciation paradox."

Women get caught in the appreciation paradox because by expressing genuine appreciation for their husbands' engagement with familywork, they contribute to and maintain the joint perception that familywork is optional for men. Men's willingness to do familywork becomes another resource men bring to the relationship -- a source of power. However, if women do not express appreciation, men are less likely to do it. Why would anyone continue doing something they don't have to do if it isn't appreciated? Theoretically then, a woman has two choices, neither of which are satisfactory: to allow her male partner's familywork to be defined as a gift he gives to the system; or, to condition him out of doing it by lack of explicit appreciation.

One way out of the appreciation paradox would be to define familywork as optional for both or as mandatory for both. This neutralizes the power that men derive from "giving the gift" of their familywork. Appreciation would be expressed to both by the other, or to neither -- but it would be balanced. Whether familywork becomes optional or mandatory for both partners would be determined by many factors, including socioeconomic. Women of all classes get caught in the appreciation paradox, but not all women can escape it. The appreciation paradox operates in many of the
discussions of men and familywork in *Parents Magazine*.

Although the above examples of appreciative moms are from the 40s and 50s, newer examples are very similar. In an article called “Happy Father’s Day, Superdad!” (#212) from June 1991, the author, who is also the editor of *Parents Magazine*, describes recent photographs of her husband that “reveal a certain confidence-cum-resignation...a portrait of a dad happily draped in children.” She describes photos and vignettes that could be made into a video, “worthy of the following voice-over” which is immediately recognizable to any baby boomer reader:

Wiser than Dr. T. Berry Brazelton, sexier than Mel Gibson, able to clean up messy rooms in a single morning. Look! Up on the ladder, fixing that leak -- it’s a plumber! It’s a neighbor! No, it’s Superdad! Superdad, who came into your life with skills and sensitivity far greater than those of mortal men. And who, disguised as your husband, a mild-mannered executive in a great metropolis, fights a never-ending battle for the health, happiness and prosperity of his family.

She says that superdads are not distinguished by “their lightening-speed diapering skills but by their egos of steel.” In this context, “ego of steel” (play on “man of steel”) seems to mean a sense of self that is indestructible. She is saying that superdads require egos so strong that doing a fair share of familywork would not be threatening; thus implying that doing familywork is a threat to the male ego. This author expresses great appreciation and admiration for her husband, which is no doubt sincere. Yet by suggesting that such men are extraordinary and that their behavior is so praiseworthy and noteworthy, she reinforces the perception that male participation in familywork is optional. She describes mothers’ unwitting discouragement of men’s familywork as the “Kryptonite handshake.” Kryptonite, of course, is the one and only substance that can
destroy Superman's power. In other words, women have the power to transform Superdad into just plain Dad.

If expressions of appreciation were reciprocal, then familywork would not feel mandatory for either men or women, but would feel optional, based on mutual commitment and respect. But because men and women both seem to assume implicitly familywork is mandatory for women but not men, women often feel resentful, and men can feel ennobled doing token amounts of familywork. His familywork is defined as a gift he didn’t have to give. If his familywork becomes routinized such that it loses its “gift” status and comes to be seen as mandatory for him too, the appreciation paradox can be escaped.

Appreciative male authors do not express appreciation for their wives. Rather, they express appreciation for their children providing them with new perspectives on life. For example, the author-father of “I Get to Know My Boy” (#83) from February 1946, describes how he had to concentrate on repairing his daughter’s broken doll, but did not want to decline his “chatterbox” son’s invitation to help, having realized that “a child is like a sunbeam -- here for a moment and then gone somewhere else.”

Reflecting on the experience, he says

Yes, Bobby is my chatterbox comrade. For thirty or forty minutes there are no bars of any sort between us. And then there is the determined pat of little feet on the stairs. Bobby is on his way to bed. But I am very happy, for my boy once again has found Daddy a comrade. And I have found once again that being his Daddy is one of the richest experiences in life.

“On Being a Father” (#132) from December 1966 is written by a Pulitzer
Prizewinning historian who wishes to remain anonymous because “this is such a
personal account of life with his young son” -- he is sixty-one, his son is nine. This
author appreciates “the relations” between himself and his son because they have given
him a chance to learn things about “the essence of childhood” which he himself “was
not old enough to understand when [his] first child, now fully grown, was born.” It is
interesting to imagine a mother saying these things.

The author of “It’s a Bird, It’s a Plane, It’s Super-two” (#174) from January
1976 doesn’t understand all the “myths [he’s] heard about the ‘Terrible Two’s’ because
[his] two-year-old has given [him] more fun than [he] think[s] he ever had before.”

A photo-essay from June 1989 called “Fathers and Sons” (#198) offers portraits
that “are a testament to the special bond between fathers and sons.” One father says,
“Eric’s life has brought wonderment back to mine.” Another says “Becoming a father
has fulfilled me because it’s added a sense of immortality, with my life and spirit being
passed on to future generations.” Talking about his son, another fathers says “…I’m
proud of his creativity, his compassion, and his physicality. I didn’t know the power
of those feelings before becoming a papa.”

The men in these articles describe how fatherhood has enabled them to grow
emotionally, and they poignantly express their emotional attachments with their
children. Hearing fathers talk this way publicly in the real world is rare. Our culture
does not encourage men to talk about these issues in this way, and in the privacy of
family life, this type of reflection is often reserved for special occasions. In the world
according to Parents Magazine, male-authored articles with an appreciative tone make

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up a disproportionate 12.7% of all the cases, $x^2(1)=5.81, p<.01$. Just as figure 5.9 showed the peak of expressive fathers in the seventies, figure 5.10 shows the seventies peak of the appreciative father.

**Critical Tone**

A critical tone is coded present in 17.2% of articles. Of male-authored articles, 19.1% use a critical tone; 9.4% of women-authored articles use a critical tone -- thus continuing the previous pattern where women are less likely to use an assertive tone. However, there were no articles with a critical tone by men or women in the 70s. Critical tone has a statistically significant relationship with decade ($p<.01$), half-decade ($p<.01$), PMP ($p<.01$) and year ($p<.05$), but not with author sex.

Only five out of 243 articles were women-authored and had a critical tone. Four out these five were critical of fathers for their lack of involvement in their
children's lives (1932, 1940, 1957 and 1984), and the other one was critical of mothers who undermine fathers' efforts to get involved in child care (1990).

The male-authored critical articles were primarily about fathers' lack of involvement or weakening presence in the family, but the focus of the criticism, or "blame" is diverse: over half (54.2%) were directly critical of fathers, 25.7% were critical of society, 11.4% were critical of both mothers and fathers and 8.5% were critical of mothers. The articles that blamed social institutions for the state of fatherhood, with one exception, were all prior to 1935 or after 1967. Locating blame for the state of fatherhood within social institutions may reflect *Parents Magazine's* early association with the child development movement and its emphasis on social reform; and the later critical years may reflect the 1960s spirit of questioning the status quo. From 1936 through 1967, the critical articles suggest that the cause of weak, confused or uninvolved fathers lies within the individual family itself, perhaps reflecting Freudian influences and the advice of Dr. Benjamin Spock -- both of whom had enormous influence on perceptions of family life during this period, and neither of whom acknowledged the importance of the social and cultural contexts in which families are situated.

A woman-authored article that exemplifies the few that are critical of fathers is "What Are Fathers For" (#116) from June 1957. The author, a research assistant at Teachers College, Columbia University, reports on her conversations with young children who have no idea about what fathers do or how their fathers contribute to family life. She urges fathers to rearrange their schedules so that they can involve
themselves "in as many of the facets of family living as possible, and particularly in the lives of their children." She cautions against waiting to get involved until the time when the child is more "grown up" and has developed "more understanding" because by then, it is too late.

The women-authored article from May 1990 ("Helping Dads Help Out, #206) that attributes fathers' lack of involvement to mother is also locating the cause of uninvolved fathers inside the family. The author notes "a mother's readiness to remove a diaper, report to a doctor, or take on every task herself at a father's first sign of hesitancy." Not considered is that mothers may have learned from experience to "jump in" at these moments. And it may also be the case that fathers know mothers will take on the task if they wait long enough. Thus they may both be "at fault" in maintaining this systemic pattern.

Male-authored critical articles have a distinctively different voice from other male-authored articles. Only one third (34.3%) of male-authored critical articles are in first-person, as compared with 54.1% of all male-authored articles; 91.4% have an authoritative tone, compared with 48.6% of all male-authored articles $x^2(1)=31.72,$ $p<.001;$ only 17% use humor, as compared with 30.6% of all male-authored articles, $x^2(1)=3.69,$ $p<.05,$ and only 11.4% have a self-important/boastful tone, as compared with 26.2% of all male-authored articles, $x^2(1)=4.89,$ $p<.05.$ Only 5.7% of these articles have an expressive tone, compared with 27.3% of all male-authored articles, $x^2(1)=10.17,$ $p<.001.$ It seems that when male authors are critical of other men,
women and society, they write from positions of authority, without expressing their own personalities and experiences, and without humor. The male authors of critical articles are presented as serious experts, whereas museful Dads take a critical stance or express negative feelings through humor, especially sarcasm.

An early example of one of these critical male-authored articles is a “For Fathers Only” column (#20) from March 1933, whose sidebar reads “A plea for more understanding cooperation between parents and less lofty criticism from father.” A July 1933 article called “What I’ve Found Out About Fathers and Sons” (#24) is written by a dean of Princeton University, who says that “too many fathers have too little time for their sons. Such neglect has serious consequences.” A November 1935 article called “Making a Parent of Father” (#34) is written by the Director of the United Parents Association of New York City, who urges community organizations, schools and PTAs to work harder to get fathers involved in special projects. A November 1943 article called “Know Your Boy” (#69), written by a specialist with the U.S. Office of Education, talks about the importance of fathers taking their sons to work with them as a way of spending time together and getting to know each other better. In a lengthy article from October 1956 called “Fathers Shouldn’t Try to Be Mothers” (#115), author Bruno Bettelheim discusses how “father’s importance as breadwinner” is undermined by mothers and by the mass media. Thirty-eight years later in June 1994, the author of “Letting Dads Be Dads” (#239), a clinical psychologist and psychology professor, echoes Bettelheim, asserting that “fathers aren’t assistant mothers” and that “we should not encourage men to be more like women in
One Extreme of Gendered Parenting

There is a group of articles that have a similar quality, not captured by the other theme and tone categories. Reading and re-reading these articles, I noted that the one thing all these articles have in common is sarcasm. As discussed above, sarcasm is a male form of communication in Parents Magazine. When the sarcastic tone is combined with certain themes, a distinct group of articles emerges, which I refer to as the hypergendered group.

Beyond being coded positive for sarcasm, each suggests two or more of the following themes: gendered household, mothers have primary responsibility for familywork, fathers can choose their level of involvement in familywork, it is noteworthy when men do familywork, fatherhood can be self-actualizing/fun, critical tone, “woman as other,” fathers-in-general do child care tasks rarely, and fathers-in-general do housework reluctantly or begrudgingly. There are 22 articles that fit this “sarcastic plus” criterion.

Articles with two themes beyond sarcasm can be very different from those having four additional themes, which are different again from those having six. Further, these elements occur in different combinations in different articles in different time periods. An article with three highly gendered elements in 1992 will seem very different from an article with seven highly gendered elements in 1932. As a group, however, they represent, through themes, tones or both, the extreme of articles that reify distance and difference between men and women in family life. Because of this
reification of gender difference these articles might be considered most antithetical to an egalitarian family.

When dividing the time frame into round decades, the 60s have the greatest proportion of these hypergendered articles, followed by the 90s and then by the 40s. Hypergendered articles are significantly associated with decade intervals, $\chi^2(6)=12.3$, $p<.05$. Alternatively, if PMP is used, 1955 to 1963 is the most hypergendered period, followed by 1992 to 1994. There are no hypergendered articles from 1934 - 1940 or from 1978 - 1984. However, the relationship of these articles to PMP is not statistically significant. Using half decades does reveal a statistically significant relationship, (see figure 5.11) with the late 30s and late 50s having no hypergendered articles. So while these different periodizations tell somewhat different stories,
consistent across all the periodizations is that the early sixties and nineties show an increase in articles that maximize gender differences.

An early example from this group is “Every Baby Needs A Father” (#3) from December 1929. The author-father of this article is disgruntled by what he perceives as men having no place (role) with a new baby in the house. He refers to mothers’ position as “rather hovering, roving position, encompassing all territory from the catcher’s box to the far outfield and all the way stations.” He says that fathers do have to roam too, “or get run down in the frantic hubbub that greets a new baby. But when he tries to hover, makes a terrible mess of everything....there is not a single, appreciated spot where he can hover.” Expressing a theme recurrent in some form throughout the decades, this father explains what is needed for fathers:

He wants to be somewhere and do something. All negative assertions notwithstanding, a father yearns terribly to amalgamate himself into a definite niche in his baby’s existence. The age-old trouble seems to be that nobody has taken the trouble to work out his position and give him any duties. He is only a hat-holder, an errand-runner, a catch-all and sort of welcome itinerant whatnot--something to lay all the baby’s bad traits and features on--something to be ‘taken after.’

After rejecting the tasks of burping the baby after meals, this father, with increasingly self-absorbed insistence explains,

vainly I stood around, making a wretched attempt at hovering, getting in people’s way -- with the idea of pouncing upon some role I could fill, some particular thing that I only could do, something the baby would expect after she got worked in -- and would look forward to and remember with a fond glow in after life.

Noting that “everything that came near the baby must be boiled at least three minutes or sterilized with a mild solution of boric acid,” this father is reluctant to
accept the idea that fathers are “more microby than anyone else,” and while he
“couldn’t very well be boiled for three minutes, [he] could, if need be, take a cold
shower of mild boric acid.”

Believing that “if you hover long enough, you’re sure to get something” this
father was given the task of weighing the baby once a week. He did this task with
great enthusiasm, singing and talking with the baby, imitating her sounds. They
developed a game they played together, with “peep-peep noises” which he describes as
the following bit of dialogue:

...not a loud, threatening PEEP-PEEP but a tiny, intimate, cooing peep-
peep. It means ‘Great! Dad’s tickled pink to see you again. How are
they treating you?’ Nobody understand this but us -- unless They read
this and they wont [sic]. They’re too busy gobbling up serious literature
on diets, habits, clothing and so on.

Through sarcasm, self-deprecating humor and thinly-veiled insults at women,
this father expresses a great deal of hostility. He may be hostile about no longer being
the focus of his wife’s attention, he may resent the “hubbub” and chaos that come
home with a new baby, and/or he may genuinely feel that the “Licensed Hoverers” are
keeping him from getting to know his baby. These feelings are all legitimate, but they
are expressed in a manner that reifies distance and difference between men and women.
This man does not directly express his ambivalence about the baby’s presence, nor can
he straightforwardly admit that he wants to be engaged in the process of settling the
baby into the house. His mocking attitude sets him apart from the very process and
people with whom he wants to be engaged. He seems to perceive his wife, her friends,
female relatives and their nurse as a club -- or coven -- to which he has been denied
membership. He recognizes their special rituals, knowledge and powers and feels threatened. He attempts to disempower them through humor. His point, his desire, is lost in the hostility and sulkiness. He restates his position in the final paragraph, but cannot let go of the edge:

In this queer business of establishing a new, fresh baby in a household, I would make a plea that the father be included in the arrangements. He ought not to be a catch-all, an intermittent pinch-hitter....He ought to insist that he have a place in the scheme of things. Even if he has to be thoroughly boiled three minutes and sprayed with a mild solution of boric acid.

The point about the importance of including father in the daily routines of the newborn has been made many times in these articles over the years, by both male and female authors, directly and through humor. This particular article fits the “hypergendered” criteria not because of its main message, but because of its combination of tones. The multiple layering revealed in the above analysis brings up two important points, one methodological, one theoretical. It illustrates how qualitative and quantitative content analysis used together can disentangle tone from message, and then reweave them, showing how tone can dominate. Secondly, it exemplifies how popular cultural representations of men and women are often exaggerations of perceived truths. Sarcasm seems to be used as a bridge, highlighting the weaknesses of the familiar while introducing a new idea that may be a challenge to the familiar. But if the sarcastic humor is “too loud,” the point may be lost. The article discussed above, despite the progressive message at its core, is ultimately self-serving, highly gendered and conservative.

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A hypergendered article called "Unfair to Fathers" (#66) from December 1942 is similar to the one discussed above in that it tries to identify father’s role in the family. The author-father from 1929 wants to be involved but women keep him away; this author attempts to explain what father’s role is, acknowledging that “to the uneducated observer the father may be no more than an awkward hulk with two left feet who comes home at six o’clock to trample the nursery....” In addition to using sarcasm, both of these male authors mystify infant care and the mother-infant relationship. The awesome power of the mother-infant relationship is implicitly acknowledged and feelings of exclusion leak through the sarcasm.

According to this article, “father’s tremendously important part in family life is too often overlooked.” The author offers examples of father’s important role, starting from pregnancy and proceeding through stages of childhood. In all these examples, the father’s role is mediated through the mother, and, as in the article discussed above, the sarcastic tone undermines the father’s message. For example, the author notes that

Pregnancy brings special problems to the expectant father just as it does to the expectant mother. The mother’s problems are fairly well-recognized, although not always adequately. One of the gravest problems facing the expectant father, however, which so far remains unsung, is the problem of trying to avoid appearing an oaf in his wife’s eyes. For this he has his friends to thank. He discovers, as the evidence of the coming event becomes apparent to all, that his friends have an unsuspected, gazellelike agility in leaping for a glass of water at the merest flicker of his wife’s eyelash; when she comes into a room they spring out of chairs as though stung, they open and close windows and tuck her feet upon stools and walk on tiptoe. The competition thus become terrific, and the expectant father who is going to appear attentive against this vast conspiracy has his work cut out for him.

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To explain one of father's important roles in family life in the above manner is, in effect, to say he has no role.

This author goes on to observe that not so long ago, it was not uncommon for a man to deliver his own child if “vast distances or heavy snow” prevented other assistance, but today,

medical practice locks the father off in the lobby of some vast hospital, there to suffer in the frustration of his normal father impulses. He is summarily cheated out of the great emotional experience of directly participating in the birth of his own child.

However, he reasons that fathers must take some part in the birth of their child, or “why, when the doctor announces the verdict, does he go running out madly scattering cigars? If he doesn’t feel he has accomplished something, what is he so proud about, anyway?”

Considering the period of infancy, “during which the child is so characteristically dependent on its mother,” the author asks, “Is the father, in this period, no more than a clumsy lout who inappropriately drops things on the floor and scares the child out of its infant wits? No, a thousand times no; we function as fathers even then.”

Sarcastic comments like those above dominate the piece, but they are punctuated by some intelligent, thoughtful observations, such as the one above about the hospital. For example, he talks about how children need a sense of security and love “for a healthy and happy development,” and that this love must come from two parents:

But for the child, love is an electrical charge with two poles, the mother is one node, the father the other. It is when these two poles are in
balance that the child receives the most current. It is when both are
synchronized that each parent keeps a proper perspective in the child’s
mind and in his emotional development.

And he correctly observes that “most fathers, thanks to modern conditions, do not have
as much time as they want with their children.” He wants to make the argument that
fathers are important, but his humor suggests that perhaps he doesn’t believe this
himself. He talks about all the important things that mothers do, from nursing the baby
to setting the emotional tone of the home, and says that they couldn’t do all that
“without solid male affection.” When not sarcastic, his observations tend to be highly
gendered. For example, he explains,

Because of the father, the son becomes a man more easily; for he has
someone with whom he can identify his yearnings and aspirations, he has
a model for the sexual characteristics he is to develop. Because of the
father, the daughter more easily becomes a woman, since she comes to
feel that it is her feminine charms which have won for her the father’s
love, and thus the developing feminine characteristics are encouraged.

This article is accompanied by a drawing in which an uneasy father is being pushed out
of a family portrait by a contented looking mother. The caption reads, “In too many
plays, movies and books father is excluded from the family picture. He’s just the man
who marries mother” (see illustration 4). As in the article from 1929 discussed above,
the author’s tone and rhetorical style overshadow his point.

“The Care and Feeding of Spock-marked Fathers” (#113) from July 1954 offers
another example of the hypergendered articles. As the title suggests, the entire article
is a parody of Dr. Spock’s influential and unprecedented bestseller “Baby and Child
Care,” first published in 1945. The author, a father of five “thoroughly Spock-marked
In too many places, movies and books father is excluded from the family picture. It's that the man who marries mother

December 1942
children” begins by telling the reader that he “swears by” but “never at” Spock’s book, but that

he has left out an important section in his famous Baby Bible. You see, he said very little about fathers, practically nothing, in fact. Yet any woman could have told him that men are just overgrown boys. It follows that Dr. Spock should have included a section called ‘Care of Husbands.’

The word “husband” is substituted for the word “baby” in selected portions of Spock’s original text. One section the father selects for parody is “Being companionable with your baby (husband):”

Be quietly friendly with your husband whenever you are with him. He’s getting a sense of how much you mean to each other all the time you’re feeding him... holding him or just sitting in the room with him. When you hug him or make noises at him, when you show him that you think he’s the most wonderful husband in the world, it makes his spirit grow. .

In response to the question “Can you spoil a husband?” the author answers, “Not by feeding him when he’s hungry, comforting him when he’s especially miserable, being sociable with him in an easygoing way.” As for the husband’s need for attention, he writes,

He isn’t a schemer. He needs loving. You’d think from all you hear about husbands demanding attention that they come into the world determined to get their wives under their thumbs by hook or by crook. This is not true at all. Your husband is born to be a reasonable, friendly human being. If you treat him nicely he won’t take advantage of you. Don’t be afraid to love him or respond to his needs. Every husband needs to be smiled at, talked to -- gently and lovingly -- just as he needs vitamins and calories, and the husband who doesn’t get any loving will grow cold and unresponsive.

This article is similar to the first one in this section (from 1929) in that both express a
man’s response to being “displaced” by his child. In all three articles discussed so far in this section, the father says “what about me?” in a manner that is in some sense self-deprecating, but is also subtly critical of mothers. The father in the 1929 piece refers to himself as an “itinerant whatnot,” “wretched” and “getting in people’s way.” The father in 1942 asserts father’s important role but offers trite and silly examples; this father (1954) proudly equates himself with a child. The whole piece is an acknowledgment of his jealousy toward the infant and its relationship to his wife. All three articles are unfriendly to men and women.

Jumping ahead to January 1990, an article called “Alone Together” (#204) also maximizes gender differences, although the latent hostility of the articles discussed above is absent. The author-father is describing his two weeks with his nine-year old son when his wife, who apparently works full-time, took advantage of an all expenses paid business trip to Australia. He was hoping that the two-week period would not be regarded as a “Big Deal,” and was annoyed when his mother and mother-in-law offered to prepare meals for them. “‘Did she leave anything in the fridge?’” his mother asked. “‘Oh sure,’ [he] lied (a box of baking soda, to be exact).” He was “confused” by their behavior because “everyone knows that [he] is just as proficient a cook as his wife.” He realized during his wife’s absence that in their “egalitarian household” he and his wife have divided up the “domestic duties” but that in her absence, he had to do some of the things she usually does. He was able to arrange play dates, cancel piano lessons, “and even, at one point, sew a button on Noah’s winter coat with enough thread to choke a pelican!” But his wife’s absence did have some
impact:

...I decided to treat these two weeks as a period of lowered standards. In our household Mom runs a tight ship, oversees the homework, and is perceived as more readily available for problem solving. Dad, on the other hand, is 'fun'. So fun it would be, I resolved, which meant that almost every evening we played video games, at the expense of piano lessons (which is why I had to cancel the lesson). Our vacation climaxed with a party on our last night, with Noah inviting two of his friends to stay over and indulge themselves in an electronic orgy. When we weren't zapping on-screen asteroids or humanoids or whatever they were, we ate popcorn on the bed, threw a little sponge football around, and made crude jokes about bodily functions. It was almost like a stag party, I realized -- a lot of fun, a lot of excess, a surfeit of male bonding, and, in the end, waiting for a good woman to come along.

This father talks about his "egalitarian family," yet he breathes new life into some of the oldest cultural beliefs about gendered parenting. In his wife's absence, he is freed from the rules and standards of the household. He regresses. At the same time, freed from his mother's caretaking and under his father's influence, the son engages in the excesses of older males, with descriptions such as "orgy" and "stag party." Their ages converge somewhere at late adolescence. Father and son both know that they can have this forbidden fun because wife/mom is not there. Missing piano lessons and eating popcorn for dinner may be inconsequential. But what is of great consequence is that they define her absence as a vacation, and she is cast as controlling and inhibiting. Yet, they happily await her return because they know they are better off with the routine and care she provides. It is her responsibility to uphold the mutually agreed upon familywork standard. She is cast as both good and evil and they are, appropriately, ambivalent. How is the father's admission of "lowered standards"
reconciled with his "egalitarian household?" He can maintain his belief in their
egalitarian household by not acknowledging that establishing routines and maintaining
standards requires huge amounts of time and energy. Children get older, their world
gets bigger, they change schools, take up new activities and enter new developmental
stages -- all requiring substantial amounts of invisible familywork.

Another Extreme of Gendered Parenting

Articles at the other extreme can be identified as well. Least gendered articles
are defined as those that: suggest a nongendered household, depict a father who does
familywork "more often than fathers-in-general" and have no negative tones. Twenty-
two cases (9%) fit these criteria (see figure 5.12). Other combinations of themes could

![Figure 5.12: Proportion of Least Gendered Articles Per Five-Year Interval](image)

have been used to define this cluster of articles, but some combinations yielded too few
articles to work with. For example, including the depiction of men changing diapers as

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one of the criteria reduces this group by more than half to only nine articles, none before 1959 and none after 1992. The earliest article to meet all these criteria is a “For Fathers Only” column from 1939. The author-father, who is a widower, talks about the importance of getting to know “the young people in your children’s social group.” He focuses on fairness between father and child, not father and mother. This father is very aware of the fact that “times have changed,” noting that a male friend of his daughter’s lent her a book which “would have argued total depravity” when he was their age. He says that “democracy rules in the home circle (except where overthrown by anarchy)” and that “the day of the patriarch is over.” The fact that there is no mother in the home of this involved father will be discussed further below.

Another article from this group, “A New Father Speaks Up” #120 (August 1959) is not only among the least gendered, but also has the first mention of “rooming-in” at the hospital and a “working wife.” The next article in this category does not appear for eleven years, and is an article discussed above (from the “earnest” group) from February 1971 (#138) called “Father Takes Care of Baby” about a husband and wife who are both students. The next article in this group, “When Dad Becomes A ‘Househusband,’” from July 1978 (#151) also discussed above, doesn’t appear until seven years later.

A lengthy feature article from February 1982 called “The New Fatherhood” (#159) includes quotations from both experts and fathers themselves and offers a broad overview of current trends in fathering behavior. While this article meets all the criteria above, it takes a deferential stance toward fathers that serves to neutralize its
otherwise egalitarian and progressive messages. For example, a great deal of emphasis is put on the importance of encouraging fathers to acknowledge their negative feelings about fatherhood, especially during their wives’ pregnancies. While the importance of men expressing their feelings had currency by then, the invitation to express negative feelings about pregnancy is rarely extended to women. To the contrary, women who express negative feelings during pregnancy would more likely be made to feel guilty about those feelings, perhaps even fearing the punishment of a difficult labor, the “failure” of a cesarean birth, or a baby with significant health problems. Similarly, the authors recognize and normalize the fact that fathers are likely “to feel some ambivalence” after the baby’s birth, feelings that are considered culturally inappropriate and unspeakable for women.

The article quotes many experts in the field of fatherhood, such as Ross D. Parke and Joseph Pleck, and cites numerous research findings. The article draws heavily on a co-authored book (Munder, Ross and Gurwitt) offering “new psychoanalytic perspectives on fatherhood.” Along with discussions of “womb envy,” fathers’ weight gain and couvade, the article offers this psychoanalytic perspective on what makes fathers happy:

...fathers are happiest about their involvement in child care if they can still manage some time alone with their wives. Furthermore, the fathers enjoyed child care more if they perceived it as a shared activity, something they did with their wives, not primarily in their wives’ absence....isolated fathering is no more fun than isolated mothering....Thus while feminists may envision the father’s practical involvement in child care as the key to improved marriages and father-child relations, this is not necessarily the case. In some instances, the father’s increased responsibility for child care can simply mean work
overload, leading to resentment of the child and a wedge between husband and wife.

Aside from being somewhat solicitous towards fathers, and recognizing that parenting can be a lonely job, this paragraph doesn’t make much sense. The conclusion, which doesn’t quite follow from the finding cited, implicates feminists in fathers’ unhappiness, resentment toward their children, and conflict between husband and wife. Psychoanalysis, including many of the newer perspectives within it, has often been noted for its male-centered view of family dynamics (see, for example, Chodorow, 1978 and Benjamin, 1988) and for casting women as Eve-like spoilers in the drama of human relationships. That an article drawing on the psychoanalytic perspective codes feminists as negative is not surprising.

Use and context of the word “feminist,” and use of a psychoanalytic perspective, were not included in the coding scheme because they were not salient and recurring. Had they been included, the criteria for selecting the least gendered messages would have been different, and this article would not have come up in that group. To have included these and other important but infrequent themes in the coding scheme would have made it extremely unwieldy and would have undermined the advantages of quantitative content analysis. This article provides a good illustration of the advantages and limitations of quantitative content analysis and the value of combining the technique with qualitative analysis.

A final point worth noting about this article is that it concludes with a brief profile of “Jim,” the most enthusiastic and involved father referred to in the article.
However, Jim and his wife have six children! This father’s extreme enthusiasm and the size of this family make for two important deviations. These two deviations work together, especially placed at the conclusion of the piece, to further undermine the superficially egalitarian themes and messages presented earlier.

Another article from the least gendered group is “Fathers Speak Out” (#170) from September 1985, a lengthy feature article by an associate editor of *Parents Magazine* that reports on a poll of fathers conducted by the magazine. The author acknowledges that their sample is biased, but says that the results are “similar to findings of other research projects with unbiased samples”, such as that of James Levine, Director of the Fatherhood Project at Bank Street College of Education in New York City. Like the overview article discussed above, this one fits the criteria of the least gendered group, but its message is an affirmation of the status quo, which the article acknowledges is highly gendered (although not in those words). And like the article discussed above, it also illustrates the importance of combining qualitative and quantitative methods.

For example, the survey results show that “wives are still shouldering most of the child care and household responsibilities” and are “more likely than their husbands to do every task listed, with the single exception of putting the kids to bed, which couples do about equally” (though not the referent fathers in *Parents Magazine*). The article notes that

a good percentage of women are still trying to ‘do it all’ themselves -- manage the home, children, and a full- or part-time job. Sometimes for many women it’s easier just to do whatever the task is then to keep

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asking for help.

In a quote with which many readers can probably identify, a mother says, "I just get tired of telling him what to do all the time. He's pretty fair and open minded after we talk and he'll be good for two weeks and then he slacks off. I get tired of nagging" (emphasis added). It is interesting how she describes her attempts, which both she and the author-interviewer believe are legitimate, as "nagging," a word never used to describe male verbal behavior, but used by males and females to describe annoying and offensive female verbal behavior. The woman quoted seems to accept the implicit though apparently contradictory message that her requests are not appropriate and not worth making.

The author draws on an expert's reaction to the above quote, who acknowledges that the area changing least is fathers' sense of responsibility for aspects of their children's lives other than actual child care (though if the referent fathers in Parents Magazine are a reflection, they don't do much of that either). James Levine, of Bank Street College's Fatherhood Project explains, "...it's not just who carries the baby in the backpack, but who carries the baby in his heart and mind as well...dad changed the diaper, [but w]ho's done the thinking about the diaper supply?"

To exemplify a fairly typical situation, the authors quote a husband who explains that planning and decision-making regarding the children was generally left to his wife. In choosing child care, for example, "Janet does the initial research and then we go over the top two or three candidates together...I'm interested in the top two or three, but starting from the ground up doesn't appeal to me." The wife is empowered
in that while she doesn’t make the final decision herself, she is the gatekeeper and therefore determines the possibilities for that decision. The power of the gatekeeper, however, is offset by the lesser value placed on the gatekeeper’s time and social intercourse. Just as the busy male CEO has a female administrative assistant who acts as a gatekeeper, this husband is protected from petty interfaces with the outside world. The “initial research” is the most time-consuming and menial. “Starting from the ground up” may not appeal to her either, but she doesn’t have the prerogative of waiting for the short list. Both the husband and the CEO might quip “she really runs the place,” but her power is derivative; and in the wife’s case, she gives up a good deal of control over her time and energy in exchange for gatekeeper power.

This article is among the 8% of the entire group that sees “maternal resistance” as an important obstacle to husbands’ greater involvement in familywork. One father says,

I enjoy helping with the baby very much. Perhaps you can tell me how to convince my wife to let me take the baby (eighteen months) and do things, go places - just the two of us. ‘I have spent a lot of time talking to my friends about this subject and they all say they have the same problem. I babysit for up to eight hours at a time and take care of the baby myself while my wife is asleep, yet she is afraid to let me take her anywhere by myself.

That this father refers to himself as “helping” and as “babysitting” suggests that, whether it is his wife’s fault or not, he has not internalized these tasks as his responsibility.

The closing paragraph of this article sums up the current state of fatherhood (1985), noting that
we may not be very close to equality in child care, whether it be specific
tasks or that grayer area of a broad sense of responsibility, but fathers
seem to feel a newfound freedom to enjoy their children, to express
affection, to be providers more than in just the economic sense, but in
every sense of the word. For fathers who feel this excited about being a
parent, who are exploring beyond the boundaries of traditional male and
female roles, there will be no turning back.

Another article in the least gendered group is “Real Men Do Change Diapers”
(#189) from September 1988. The main point of this article is that fathers who take
responsibility for child care and domestic duties are appreciated by their wives but get
mixed and discouraging messages "from friends, neighbors supervisors and even their
own parents". One father complained, “If you ask for some flexibility [at work]...they
question your job commitment, especially the older supervisors or those who have no
children. And if you want time off to support your wife and her career, they think
you’re crazy.” Another father says, “I bring my kids to the office occasionally...and
the females always say, ‘oh, you’re babysitting again.’ They’d never say that to a
woman with her child.” Another father, a widower, complains that “the women at
Girl Scouts never ask me to contribute to bake sales. It saves me time but it’s also
insulting in a way. I mean, I can bake; anyone can bake with ready-made mixes.” A
single custodial father finds that, generally, people are supportive, but that none of his
daughter’s friends are allowed to sleep over at their house, though his daughter goes to
sleep-overs at their houses. He says, “Maybe they’re sparing me the hassle, but maybe
they don’t quite trust me, either.”

This article is very sympathetic to these fathers and is subtly critical of people
who do not recognize that fathers can be and often want to be engaged in familywork.
At face value, the article is very progressive. However, of the seven fathers looked at in the article, two are divorced and one is a widower. In other words, almost half the examples are of men who have little choice but to be engaged in familywork. These fathers may have come to accept and enjoy their familywork responsibilities, but selecting this particular set of examples raises other issues and may soften the article’s overall point. It is similar to the articles discussed in an earlier section in which almost all the men who reprioritized their lives were anomalous in some way, as was the widower father from 1939 who said “that the age of the patriarch is over.” This article calls attention to the “culture lag” these men face, and many assumptions that male and female readers might hold are gently questioned. The article is supportive and encouraging of the kind of change these men represent. But because men are presented in atypical situations, their power as agents of change is undermined, and their specialness can be explained away.

A year later, in September 1989 an article called “Help your Husband Be A Great Dad” (#201) begins

There is a direct correlation between how much new fathers help and how happy new mothers are. If you are smart, you will do everything you can during the first few months after your baby’s birth to encourage your husband to be a father who takes pride in helping. (Emphasis added.)

This article uses the rhetoric of “mother’s helper” and explicitly gives mother the task of making her husband into the kind of father she wants him to be. The author points out some of the subtle patterns that new parents often establish, unwittingly, that can cause problems later. The author specifies three broad problem areas or “traps”:
becoming “The Expert and the Dumb Apprentice;” believing “Only Mother Will Do” and falling into “The Ideal Parent Trap.” This article is unique in that it is the only one to offer this warning:

During your pregnancy, both you and your husband are likely to have created idealized images of each other as the “perfect” mother or father. But after the baby arrives and you both feel the burden of round-the-clock child care, differences between expectations and reality start to emerge.

And this warning:

But be forewarned: Given our cultural upbringing, being equal partners may be harder than you think. Unless your husband is an at-home father or takes paternity leave, your partnership may fizzle out. Avoid the inclination for the mother to be the dominant caregiver by fostering both your and your husband’s strengths as parents.

The article ends with “Ten Important Tips” such as:

Give positive, specific advice when asked. Don’t criticize by saying ‘That’s not the way to hold a baby.’ Rather, be encouraging: ‘Sometimes she like it when I lay her in her stomach across my lap.’...When you give advice, don’t talk about your husband—talk about the baby. Not ‘You’re too rough with her’ but ‘she may be too young to be tossed in the air like that’....Don’t overwhelm your husband with baby-care discussions. Measure out as much advice as he can use, not as much as you would like to give.

Advice such as “don’t make your husband’s mistakes into entertaining stories to tell others” is founded on respect and consideration, as is letting him “discover his own ways to diaper, feed and bathe the baby.” But some of the “tips” quoted above are rather deferential to fathers, suggesting that mothers will be caring for two sensitive and impressionable family members, not one.

Another piece of advice in this article is “Show appreciation for your husband’s
efforts but don’t gush. Rather than conveying the idea that he’s doing you a big favor, give yourself and your husband credit for raising your child well together.” This point attempts to address the “appreciation paradox” discussed in the section above on appreciative tone.

A more recent example from this group is “A Message to Dads” (#225) from July 1992. This piece begins,

I am writing to those of you who, instead of assuming the traditional role that your own father played, have carved out a different way of being a parent. You don’t want to be the distant, often unavailable father. Instead, you view yourself as a nurturer and comforter to your child, as well as a guide in his development.

The article enumerates many chores, annoyances, conflicts and delights that come with being an involved parent, such as: the helpless feeling when a toddler has a tantrum at the grocery check-out; how scary it is to be alone with a child who has a sky-high fever; the special looks that have meaning to just the two of you, and “the sense of innocence and wonder that defies description.” The author praises fathers who share his understanding, confirms the plight of the Dads referred to in the article discussed above, and tells them they are doing something very important and that they must persevere even in the face of societal resistance.

The final article in this group is, appropriately, #243, “Remaking Fatherhood” from December 1994. It is one of several longer feature articles in the group that offer a “snapshot” of fatherhood at that moment. In this article, the author talks about “fathers’ instincts:”
Although these instincts are common to virtually all fathers, men are only beginning to find the words to describe what fatherhood makes them feel. When they do speak of the meaning that fatherhood has brought to their lives, they frequently describe *blinding moments of recognition*.... During these moments tears come into their eyes; they realize that they have lost themselves in something larger (emphasis added).

These “blinding moments of recognition” are the moments of insight or conversion so often described by author-fathers in these articles. According to this author, one of the important ways fathers can express this instinct is “by making our communities safe for our children and ensuring that on the local level, institutions are doing their best for those children. Many fathers are rediscovering that community building is a crucial dimension of their role.” The theme of father involvement in their children’s school or community is present in 11% of all articles, concentrated in the 30s. In fact, this theme is present in 25% of articles from 1929 through 1939. The relationship between the education theme and year, decade, half-decade and PMP are all significant at \( p < .01 \) or better. However, significance is lost when 1929-1939 is removed from the analyses.

The social reform beginnings of *Parents Magazine* may explain the early emphasis on father’s involvement in the community; similarly, the article from December 1994 has political, or social reform overtones as well, urging fathers to be sure our institutions are serving children's needs.

As can be seen on figure 5.12, the least gendered articles did not constitute a trend until 1970. There were a total of three articles expressing these themes prior to 1959. There were no articles fitting the least gendered criteria from 1960 through
1971. These findings support the usefulness of the PMP, suggesting that despite some false starts in the late thirties, late forties and late fifties, the trend toward representation of very low gendered parenting roles did not begin until 1971, peaked in 1984, declined suddenly in the late 80s and was still declining in the early nineties.

**Summary and Discussion**

The finding in the previous two results chapters are supported and further enhanced by the addition of tone to the analysis. Most striking are the differences in the way male and female authors approach these issues, in terms of theme, tone and the combination of theme and tone.

Women authors writing in an authoritative tone continue to describe referent fathers doing active child care tasks in significantly greater proportions than male authors, irrespective of time. Authoritative articles by women were most frequent during the war and in the late seventies/early eighties, consistent with other indices that women were more empowered privately and publicly during these periods. Authoritative women-authored articles appeared least in the early thirties and the mid-fifties to early sixties.

There were no articles between 1955 and 1970 which discussed mothers’ discouragement of fathers’ more active involvement, yet there were articles expressing this theme in all the periods before and after. This is consistent with the finding that during this period there were few calls for men to be engaged in familywork at all. Mothers are not blamed for discouraging them because there was no impetus or reason for them to be encouraged.
There are important differences in the ways male and female authors use humor in these articles. There are very few (3) articles by women that use humor. These are written by women in authority -- editors of the magazine -- and they incorporate what might be considered a male perspective into their writing. Like the male sarcasm, the sarcasm by women relies on stereotypes and "eternal verities" about women as mothers. Women and girls are often the objects of male authors' sarcastic humor, and the small handful of women authors who use sarcasm use it against women, too.

When male humor is divided into sarcastic humor and gentle humor, some interesting differences emerge, suggesting that sarcasm is one of the many filters these male-authors use to avoid direct expression -- whether negative or positive. That 43% of articles in the early sixties use sarcastic humor is further evidence of discontentedness or bitterness on the part of fathers during this period. Referent fathers in articles using gentle humor are more likely to be involved in their child's lives, and are more likely to have had an insight or conversion experience.

As alluded to above, male authors seem to acknowledge their involvement in their children's lives through several different kinds of filters. In other words, they reframe their experience in a way that distances them from it, often through the use of humor. In addition to sarcasm, many fathers use the therapeutic frame, which focuses on them rather than their children, and how the fathering experience has been self-actualizing. Many fathers use the complicating frame, which seems to be an attempt to elevate intellectual or technological components of the child care tasks such that doing these tasks does not mean a loss of status. Even the conversion experience is distancing...
in that it seems to have been completely serendipitous, out of their control. So while
the conversion experience allows them to be more expressive and enjoy fathering, they
claim to have had no control over the experience happening. Finally, there is the
anomalous frame, in which involved fathers or their children are defective in some way
or their situation is atypical.

There are very few articles in which fathers do express genuine, unfiltered
volition about their fatherhood experiences, and most of these are since the eighties or
before World War II. There are as many expressive male authors in 1985-1991 as
there are in 1934-1940.

Appreciation is a particular form of expressiveness, and women authors are
much more likely to express it. Women authors express appreciation toward their
husbands; male authors express appreciation toward their children. Similarly, there are
significantly more male than female authors writing in a boastful or self-important tone.
The few boastful articles by women are concentrated during the immediate post-war
period, and they are boasting about their husbands. Men use the boastful, self-
important tone to talk about themselves, and these articles are distributed throughout
the time frame. In general, women receive more blame than praise; men receive more
praise than blame.

Women-authored articles frequently express appreciation for their husbands’
choosing to do familywork, resulting in what I call the appreciation paradox. The
appreciation paradox, in real life and in these articles, maintains and enhances the
belief that housework and child care tasks are women’s work.

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When the articles are analyzed to identify those that most reflect gendered parenting (hypergendered) and those that least reflect gendered parenting (hypogendered), some interesting patterns emerge. Figure 5.13 shows that these articles were in balance in the immediate post-war years and in the early seventies.

![Proportion of Articles Per Half-Decade](image)

Figure 5.13

From the mid-seventies to the mid-eighties, there were no hypergendered articles, but they returned in the mid-eighties and by the early nineties, outnumbered hypogendered for the first time since the late sixties.

There is an interesting symmetry in the period from 1960 through 1984, with the 1970-1974 interval as its fulcrum. In this twenty-four year period, there was a change from 40% hypergendered to 40% hypogendered, with a balanced transitional moment in the middle.

Although the articles at the extremes were identified through quantitative
analysis of dominant themes and tones, qualitative analyses of these articles shows that these articles contain very mixed messages. If sarcasm and other rhetorical devices are stripped away from the hypergendered articles, their core message often advocates less gendered parenting roles. Similarly, many of the hypogendered articles, upon closer analysis, seem to hold a conservative, gendered view of parenting roles.

The next chapter synthesizes this chapter and the two previous results chapters with research in family sociology, popular culture, and historical data, illustrating how Parents Magazine might reflect and affect expectation formation and changes in gendered parenting.
CHAPTER VI

DADS ACROSS DECADES: SUMMARIES AND DISCUSSION

The previous three chapters described, illustrated and discussed how the presence, absence and frequencies of particular themes and tones changed over time. To get a more diachronic view, this chapter summarizes and interprets the major findings for each time period. For organizational simplicity, these summaries are presented in decades. However, as discussed many time throughout this analysis, punctuating time by decades is arbitrary and may obscure useful information. When the Parents Magazine Periodization revealed more nuanced patterns, those are discussed as well.

To provide some social context in which to place Parents Magazine's depictions of gendered parenting, events and cultural developments of each period were culled from The Columbia Chronicles of American Life: 1910-1992 (Gordon and Gordon, 1995). The Columbia Chronicles offers a "spectrum of what was popular or considered important at the time" (1995:ix) and "trends that were part of the general public awareness each year" (1995:x) in politics, books, theater, film, music, radio, television, science and technology, economics, fashion, sports and advertising. (For a detailed explanation of the criteria and reliability procedures used to assemble The Columbia Chronicles, see Gordon and Gordon, 1995:ix-x.) Events for 1993 and 1994...
were selected from the year in review issues of *Life Magazine* and *The New York Times*. I selected items for each decade that seem to have relevance for family life and changing cultural definitions of men and women. The phenomena selected do not have equal relevance or importance for understanding gender and family issues, and some items may seem rather peripheral to these issues. However, the discussion section following each period explains how these events might be related to the core issues of this project.

The value of using the *Colombia Chronicles* is that it offers raw historical data, not yet processed or framed for the purpose of supporting a particular analysis. These historical events are removed from any context other than when they happened. They are not interpreted or explained. Their context-free presentation makes them a valuable ingredient for historical and sociological analyses because they are not pre-viewed through an analyst's lens. It is difficult if not impossible to know how the people who lived through these events processed them and what meaning they ultimately derived from them. But these chronologies enable the researcher to see the array of events and developments that could have been impacting people at a particular moment. Thus, these facts can be used in conjunction with other data to inform a historical analysis. Additional context is provided by looking at the sociological literature for each period. Connections between *Parents Magazine* and the cultural climate for each era are explored.

*Parents Magazine, 1929-1939: Summary of Major Themes and Trends*  
- Largest number of articles about fathers and fatherhood
Least number of women authors
- Fathers cook once-in-a-while; rarely do child care tasks
- Very little discussion of fathers and housework
- No talk of fathers’ involvement improving the marriage until 1934
- No sarcastic articles
- Combined behavior and attitude for housework same as 1978-1994
- Same proportion nongendered (egalitarian) as late 70s and 80s
- No hypergendered in late thirties
- A smaller proportion of articles said mothers were primarily responsible than at any time until the 1970s.
- A smaller proportion of articles said familywork is a father’s prerogative in the thirties than immediately after the war; not this low again until seventies.

Although the depiction of male privileged families outnumbered egalitarian depictions in the thirties by more than two to one, only 6% of articles depicted hypergendered families, and those were in the first half of the decade. Perhaps these hypergendered articles during the depression are an attempt to reassert the status so many men lost along with their breadwinner role. Between 1929 and 1933, the unemployment rate climbed from 3.2 to 24.9% (McElvaine, 1984). It is interesting that there were no hypergendered articles during the latter half of the decade, and 15% of the articles during the latter thirties were actually hypogendered. That there were similar proportions of egalitarian articles in the late thirties as there were in the late seventies and eighties suggests that there were periods when relatively egalitarian parenting was depicted before gender issues entered popular discourse. (Statistically, there is a positive linear relationship between egalitarian depictions and year, though this is due to the rapid increase after the mid-fifties.) A small proportion of articles in the early thirties assumed familywork is a father’s prerogative -- lower than at any other period until the early seventies.
There is a kind of casual father involvement in these articles. That is, fathers are involved in familywork, but it is not talked about. Further, the absence of sarcastic and hypergendered articles suggests no explicit discussion of gender politics: “who does what” was not yet problematized.

The sheer number of father articles during this period may reflect Parents Magazine’s progressive roots and ties to the child development movement, both of which would support a central place for men as fathers in the family. Indeed, family experts and commentators affiliated with the child study and parent education movements, such as Angelo Patri, Ernest and Gladys Groves, Ernest Mowrer, Ernest Burgess and Sidonie Gruenberg disagreed with the widely held view that bread-winning alone fulfilled a man’s parental responsibilities. In their view, the quality of family interaction would determine individual happiness, psychological adjustment, and ultimately, the maintenance of social order. Thus, by the early thirties, fathers had affective and psychological responsibilities (Griswold, 1993).

In the early thirties, the depression and the social dislocations it created affected the fiber of everyday life. In the mid to late thirties, Americans watched the rise of fascism around the world and lived with the increasingly real possibility of the United States getting involved in the war in Europe. The chasm between rich and poor grew, and labor unrest further threatened a weak economy. The following events and developments, all occurring between 1929 and 1939 provided the cultural landscape on which these depictions of fatherhood were presented. Some items reflect economic conditions, other events concern safety/security issues, and others indicate or might
contribute to gender convergence and an increase in openness about sexuality. Some events are relevant to more than one set of factors and appear under more than one heading.

**ECONOMIC FACTORS**
Stock market crashes; within a few weeks, unemployment rises from 700,000 to 3.1 million (29)
Seventy-five percent of all cities ban the employment of wives (31)
More than 1300 banks close by the end of 1930
Wages drop 60% since 1929; white-collar salaries down 40%; suicide rate rises to 17.4 per 100,000, up 30% from the twenties (32)
Unemployment reaches 15 million, five times the 1931 level (33)
One out of four households is receiving government support of some kind; 750,000 farms foreclosed since 1930 (35)
Marriage rate is down 20% from the 1920s level (33)
The Sears and Roebuck catalog begins to list contraceptive devices (34)

**SAFETY/SECURITY CONCERNS**
More than 1300 banks close by the end of 1930
Wages drop 60% since 1929; white-collar salaries down 40%; suicide rate rises to 17.4 per 100,000, up 30% from the twenties (32)
Unemployment reaches 15 million, five times the 1931 level (33)
One out of four households is receiving government support of some kind; 750,000 farms foreclosed since 1930 (35)
A wave of kidnappings and kidnapping threats of prominent people (29)
Extensive media coverage of government agents fighting gangsters and other "public enemies"

**GENDER CONVERGENCE AND/OR OPENNESS ABOUT SEXUALITY**
Marriage rate is down 20% from the 1920s level (33)
The Sears and Roebuck catalog begins to list contraceptive devices (34)
First woman elected to the United States Senate (31)
Use of the word "syphilis" in newspapers and other public media became permissible (32)
Francis Perkins becomes the first female cabinet member (33)
"Unmarried husbands and wives" in Hollywood receive a lot of media attention (34)
A code for movies is established: no long kisses, double beds, naked babies, exposure of breasts or suggestion of seduction or cohabitation; wrongdoing is not to be treated sympathetically (34)
A poll in *Fortune Magazine* shows that 67% of Americans favor birth control (36)
The American Medical Association recognized birth control as a legitimate professional concern (37)
A *Fortune Magazine* poll shows that 50% of all college men and 25% of all college women have had premarital sex (37)
Americans spend an average of 4.5 hours a day listening to radio (37)

The events above suggest economic hardship and tension around changing sexual mores. Dramatic criminal activity at home and the threat of conflict abroad may have made the world seem violent and dangerous. Basic necessities such as food, clothing and shelter could become unavailable at any time. Fears about the instability of life and lifestyle might be assuaged by the security of the family.

In light of the social and economic instabilities of the period, it is not surprising that family life was depicted as tension-free and cooperative. Families in the thirties were gendered, and there was barely a hint of opposition to this. There were no articles using sarcasm, and relatively infrequent use of the women as Other theme. Evidence of minor friction starts to appear after 1934, when the “involved father improves the marriage theme” emerges, and more than half the articles suggest fathers need to change some aspect of their familywork behavior. Consistent with this, there is a 25% decrease in the proportion that say fathers-in-general do child care tasks rarely, and an increase in the proportion saying once-in-a-while and routinely, after 1934. The theme of familywork as fathers’ prerogative was less frequent than in many subsequent periods.

These changes in representation may be related to the fact that the percent of married women in the labor force jumped from 9.0 in 1920 to 15.2 in 1940 (Moen, 1992) -- despite the fact that the employment of wives was banned in many municipalities during the depression. In other words, the increase of women into the
labor force was accompanied by cultural messages about parenting which more often depicted fathers involved in child care, and less frequently depicted fathers removed from this aspect of family life.

The minor role friction that begins to appear around 1934 corresponds with the PMP, the first two intervals of which are 1929-1933 and 1934-1940. This early friction around gender roles corresponds to the concentration of events and developments suggesting more sexual openness between 1934 and 1940 (see Appendix C for events from the Columbia Chronicles listed according to the Parents Magazine Periodization). More open sexuality, in turn, may be interpreted as more freedom and perhaps more empowerment for women. Especially noteworthy is that in 1934 the Sears and Roebuck catalog began listing contraceptive devices. This was a very important development because it meant that in a manner unprecedented in both medium and message, women all over the country were presented with an option for control over a defining area of their lives. Public opinion polls -- the results of which were publicized -- showed that greater reproductive choice was endorsed by a majority of Americans and by the American Medical Association. Contemporaneous trends such as freer sexuality depicted in film (so much so that a censorship code had to be formulated), premarital sex becoming normative and publicized as such -- both in Hollywood and on college campuses, male loss of status due to massive unemployment and movement of women into the labor force may have all been incentives for a subtle power shift in the family. Access to the outside world through radio for hours a day put men and women into a shared informational arena, which may also have
contributed to gender convergence (Meyrowitz, 1985).

In sum, the depictions of fathers in the thirties suggest an overall sense of harmony between parenting roles despite their genderedness. Events that could contribute to women gaining power within the family began to emerge in the early-mid thirties—around the same time as minor friction regarding familywork began to emerge in *Parents Magazine*. However, there were no women authors during the thirties, and as was discussed earlier, women authors present a significantly different vision of family life than do men.

In an article in *Sociology and Social Research* from 1933, the author agrees with the then current notion that the ideal family form is a “democratic partnership” (p. 12) but cautions that:

[I]f any enterprise is to function successfully with two heads, there must be a division of labor between them. Military forces headed by two leaders with equal authority have been notorious failures. If husband and wife feel that there is no difference in their functions, it will be difficult for them to operate as a unit unless one of them assumes leadership.

Unfortunately, the trend of education for the last generation, under feminist aspiration, has been toward proclaiming the “equality of the sexes” and interpreting this to mean likeness. Biologically, talk of the “equality of the sexes” is absurd. Equality does not exist in Nature; it is an abstract concept. The sexes differ in every possible way. They are, however, complementary and mutually dependent. It would be more profitable to emphasize this fact and the differences between them, and to call them equivalent rather than equal (pp. 15-16).

The author goes on to observe that “The dream of the feminists, who look forward to a society in which men and women shall work shoulder to shoulder at common tasks without regard to sex, has as little basis historically as it has biologically.” His point
about complementarity and mutual dependence has been made many times throughout the past sixty years by nonfeminists and feminists of various schools. He concludes that “the future development of marriage will be marked by increasing differentiation of the two sexes.” Shortly after this article appeared, evidence of its erroneous conclusion began to appear.

**Parents Magazine, 1940-1949: Summary of Major Themes and Trends**

- Fathers doing more housework and child care tasks, but with greater reluctance
- 80% male privileged in early forties, drops to 13% after war; no egalitarian in early forties, only 4% after war
- Proportion of expressive and direct fathers same as 85-94; least boastful
- Emergence of women authors saying mothers discourage fathers’ involvement
- Emergence of women using boastful tone in late forties
- Steady increase of women authors saying fathers’ involvement improves the marriage
- One fifth (20%) used sarcastic tone in early forties; quick and extreme decline in late forties
- One quarter of the articles were women-authored in 1940-1944; increase to 43% for late forties
- Continued increase in “fathers need to change”
- The father’s prerogative theme is at fifty percent at the beginning of the forties, rapid decline through the decade.
- Increase in authoritative articles by women
- Increase in employed referent mothers, but not mothers-in-general
- No nonintact families in late forties

The large increase in women-authored articles during these years starts to reveal some important differences between the male and female visions of men’s role in the family. Women authors depict men doing more and different familywork than do male authors. Also, World War II seems to be a transitional moment for variation in what male and female authors express, suggesting differences in how men and women responded to the war. As has been noted often and is supported by this analysis of
Parents Magazine, many disruptions that occurred during the war were empowering for women. But there was a change in how men were depicted as well. There was a sharp increase in the proportion of directly expressive fathers in the early forties. However, the depiction of expressive fathers declined to zero after the war. There was a drastic decline in the depiction of male privileged families, yet there was not much of an increase in egalitarian depictions. Also, women authors were calling for men to become more engaged in family life and familywork.

These trends suggest a great deal of ambiguity around gender roles and power distribution, especially after the war. As Grace Reeves, Director of the Division of Home Economics at the Hampton Institute points out in an article in Marriage and Family Living from 1946, “The American family has had some of the props of custom knocked from under it and at the moment it is floundering, looking for a new design of living. We must draw the new designs charting the course of the new family in war time” (Reeves, 1946). The postwar period seems to mark the beginning of more explicit tension and controversy around male and female roles, including the roles of father and mother.

The developments below offer a historical context in which to ground the depictions of parenting roles in the forties. Some events indicate or could contribute to greater sexual equality, sexual openness or gender convergence; others indicate or could contribute to conservative trends and efforts to understand the “nuclear age” and reduce some of the confusion and upheaval it seems to be heralding. Some of the
events below are relevant to both categories.

SEXUALITY EQUALITY, SEXUAL OPENNESS / GENDER CONVERGENCE

“Rosie the Riveter” becomes the emblem of the American woman working in defense industries (41)
Sales of women’s trousers are five to ten times greater than in 1941 (42)
Eleanor Roosevelt broadens the role of the First Lady
Public service advertising targets women to get involved in the war effort in a variety of ways (43)
Both women’s and men’s fashions feature broad shoulders and pointed lapels, often called the “football player look” (44)
3.5 million women are working on assembly lines (44)
Women auto workers in Detroit, laid off because of returning war veterans, stage a march with posters saying “Stop Discrimination Because of Sex” (45)
Women wear bikinis on American beaches (48)
Kinsey’s Sexual Response in the Human Male indicates that 85% of those married have had premarital sex, and 50% have had extramarital sex (48)

CONSERVATIVE RESPONSE / SEARCH FOR MEANING

Life Magazine reports on the growing popularity of Jean-Paul Sartre’s existentialism (46)
Philip Wylie’s A Generation of Vipers offers a scathing view of American mothers (42)
Bible sales increase 25%, and books with religious themes, such as The Robe and Song of Bernadette are popular (43)
Postwar trend toward femininity in fashion, with emphasis on slightly idealized figure (46)
Birth rate increases 20% over 1945 (46)
Dr. Benjamin Spock’s Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care is published (46)
Ferdinand Lundberg and Marynia Farnham publish Modern Woman: The Lost Sex
Four million returning GI veterans take advantage of the GI Bill and its broad opportunities for education, housing and business (47)
Kinsey’s Sexual Response in the Human Male indicates that 85% of those married have had premarital sex, and 50% have had extramarital sex (48)

Many post-war events and developments seem to maximize differences between men and women, in both physical appearance and social role. These exaggerated differences suggest efforts to reestablish normal life and “normal” gender roles after the disruptions of the war. Sudden resurgence of interest in religion may be a conservative trend. However, interest in religion combined with an interest in
existentialism may suggest a search for meaning and a way to understand the unprecedented horrors of the war. As discussed above, the war created disruptions in daily life, but many of these disruptions resulted in increased power for women. Within the private and public spheres, women had opportunities to prove their competence during the war. In the private sphere, women were successfully managing households and children with reduced resources, and making decisions that were typically made by their husbands or other male relatives. In the public sphere, women demonstrated their interest and capacity for various types of paid employment. The proportion of wives in the labor force increased by half from 1940-1944 (Moen, 1992). After the war, many opportunities for women in the public sphere were rescinded, and their role in the private sphere was emphasized.

Developments in the immediate postwar period such as layoffs and closing of day care centers were real and symbolic evidence that the cultural expectations for women changed. Spock’s *Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care* and Lundberg and Farnham’s *Modern Woman: The Lost Sex* may be viewed as companion volumes, together functioning to define the postwar woman. Spock tells her how to be a mother, and Lundberg and Farnham tell her how to be a woman. Both books suggest an American woman who is the antithesis of Rosie the Riveter. The *Parents Magazine* Periodization ends an interval at 1947, about the time the immediate postwar tumult regarding gender issues was subsiding. The next interval, 1948-1954 begins the cold war period and an exaggeration of sex and gender differences; it ends with the articulation of rock’n’roll, the dawn of the youth culture and the zenith of the double

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standard for male/female interaction.

In a 1946 article called “The Returning Father and His Family” in *Marriage and Family Living*, sociologist Reuben Hill acknowledges the war’s disruption of the genderedness of family life. In the opening paragraph he writes,

Realists assert that fathers are becoming increasingly ‘expendable’. Nor has the pruning of patriarchal authority ceased. War separations have accelerated the centralizing of authority in the hands of women. Upon the husband’s return the wife relinquishes some of her authority, but not all -- the assumption of leadership being a habit that feeds upon itself. World War I gave many mothers their first responsibility in directing family affairs; the subsequent depression with its prolonged unemployment of the father further challenged his indispensability, and today, in World War II millions of families are again operating without the benefits of fathers (p. 31).

Hill reviews the many important functions father still serves in the family, and discusses what should happen when husbands return home from the war:

The well adjusted wife and mother faced with the necessity of mastering the combined job of father and mother has frequently grown as a result of the separation. The lore of masculine culture has been opened to her; she has been treated to a liberal and a technical education in the ways of a ‘man’s world’. Indeed, men have become dispensable as wives have mastered the traditional masculine duties of repairing light and plumbing fixtures, mowing lawns, filing tax statements, meeting mortgage installments and insurance payments, renewing automobile licenses, and meeting other responsibilities great and small for which men have claimed a special talent. Dr. Therese Benedek predicts women’s newfound self-sufficiency will prove a threat to the returning father, who will want to resume his role as head of the house and will find a competitor in a working wife, a self-sufficient wife. But many so-called self-sufficient wives long to be dependent again, and will all too gladly resume the role of wife and mother (p. 32).

Hill’s use of the word “competitor” seems appropriate. Changes in family life brought about by the war, and confusion about what family life should look like after
the war seem to have set male-female relationships on a different, more conflicted course, clearly reflected in *Parents Magazine*. Women authors were more prevalent, were writing more authoritatively and saying that fathers should become more engaged with their families and familywork for the sake of the marriage. There were less sarcastic articles poking fun at women, and fewer articles that assumed familywork was fathers prerogative. Yet by the end of the decade, women had given up much of the freedom and empowerment they experienced during the war, though perhaps not as "gladly" as Hill predicted.

**Parents Magazine, 1950-1959: Summary of Major Themes and Trends**

- No nonintact families
- 82% say mothers primarily responsible for familywork, but declines over the decade
- Over two-thirds suggest familywork is fathers' prerogative involvement in early fifties; slight decline over decade
- Three times as many fathers changing diapers in 1950-1954 as in 1944-1949; continued increase through the decade
- Continued increase in women saying involved fathers improve the marriage; more than doubled since forties
- One third male privilege; zero egalitarian in early fifties; both at 14% in late fifties
- Continued decline in male privileged referent families, especially regarding housework
- Increase in reluctant attitude toward familywork, especially housework, in the late fifties
- Late fifties begin a long plateau of male privileged and egalitarian depictons - all at 14%; the plateau continues through 1964 - suggesting a transition
- No sarcastic articles in late fifties
- In late fifties, more than 50% of referent fathers change diapers - more than in late seventies
- Continued steady and rapid increase since 1945 of men changing diapers
- Threefold increase in woman as Other since the forties
- Referent fathers attitude and behavior most superior to fathers-in-general, 1955-1959

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The ambiguous representations during the forties seem to have been temporarily and superficially resolved in the direction of less gendered parenting in the fifties. While the assumption of women having primary responsibility and fathers' prerogative are still dominant, there is an increase in the familywork behavior of referent fathers and fathers-in-general. However, there is also an increase in negative or reluctant attitude. In other words, it has become more normalized for men to be doing these tasks, but they are doing them reluctantly. Perhaps this explains the continued rapid increase in a woman as Other articles: it is no longer a secret that men and women can have similar competencies, yet women are discouraged from participation in the public realm, and there is pressure from women on men to be more engaged in familywork. Male authors describing women as Other is a way of reasserting male difference and dominance, and perhaps expressing their resentment at being asked to participate more at home. The three-fold increase in women as Other articles might be interpreted as the expression of their reluctant attitude. Although increasing numbers of women were entering the labor force -- almost a quarter (24.8%) of all married women were employed as early as 1950 (Moen, 1992) -- father still had the primary responsibility of supporting the family. In addition, he was now expected by both his wife and the family experts to do familywork in the evenings and to spend his weekends in family "togetherness."

The fifties are often described as a time of renewed emphasis on domesticity and celebration of the nuclear family. (Coontz, 1992). This is the family that, at least superficially, fits Talcott Parsons' functionalist model of the family, with its separate

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and distinct instrumental and expressive roles for men and women (Parsons and
Bales, 1955). The fifties family, as presented in Parents Magazine, maintained a male
privileged gender ideology and gendered assumptions about parenting, typifying what
we now call the traditional nuclear family. It is the family that has been seared into our
consciousness by the early fictional families on television.

Yet during this period, Parents Magazine exhibited a great deal of gender
convergence regarding the actual performance of familywork. On one level, fathers
were changing diapers and using their two-week vacations to relieve the burdens of the
postpartum mother. They were doing more familywork, perhaps subscribing to the
increasingly dominant viewpoint — disproportionately espoused by women — that
father’s increased involvement in familywork improves the husband-wife relationship.
Referent fathers were much more involved in familywork than fathers-in-general,
implying change within the magazine and suggesting alternatives to readers. However,
there is evidence of men doing these tasks unwillingly and of men attempting to
reassert gender differences. This is especially clear in the sudden increase of woman
as Other articles.

The depictions of gendered parenting in Parents Magazine during the fifties are
consistent with renewed cultural emphasis on domesticity. Historian Elaine Tyler May
(1988) has noted that fear of communism and fears of female sexuality in the fifties
came together into what she calls a “a policy of containment.” In other words, “literal
and figurative boundaries were important in the fifties, a period in which distinctions
between “them and us” flourished (Breines, 1992). Similarly, in Running Time: Films
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of the Cold War, Nora Sayre (1978:25-26) has noted that the films of the fifties expressed “uncertainty about the nature and location of our enemies:”

the communist who operates behind the scenes, the delinquents who lurk around the next corner, the prehistoric monsters reactivated by the atom tests of science fiction or the neighbors who’s brains are manipulated by Martian technology, seem to be part of a vast mosaic of ambiguous fears. What was threatening was right in our midst -- the subversive who belonged to the Parent Teacher Association or the dinosaur that reared up in one’s backyard.

The fifties’ emphasis on conformity, the “us versus them” mood and an emphasis on traditional notions of masculinity and femininity, can be discerned from the events and developments below, selected from the Columbia Chronicles (Gordon and Gordon, 1995). Some development suggest conformity and conservatism, some suggest non-conformity, rebellion and the appeal of novelty -- some suggest both.

Many cultural development of the period are consistent with an “us versus them” view of the world and the necessity of identifying enemies. And, as throughout previous decades, sex and gender issues are becoming more culturally salient:

US V. THEM: IDENTIFYING ENEMIES

National anxiety about the cold war and the race with the Soviets for weapons of mass destruction created national anxiety.

Sen. McCarthy’s pursuit of Communists in the State Department, Hollywood and academia, along with exposure of widespread organized crime, and North Korea’s invasion of South Korea added to the national anxiety about security

Bomb shelter plans, such as the government pamphlet You Can Survive, become widely available

Talk about flying saucers and “man from Mars” theories proliferate

Edward Teller, “father” of the H-bomb says “It is necessary to provide every person in the United States with a shelter”

Seventy percent of Americans polled think it is important to report to the FBI relatives or acquaintances suspected as Communists

Bestsellers include The Holy Bible: Revised Standard Version and The Power of Positive Thinking by Norman Vincent Peale
President Eisenhower modifies The Pledge of Allegiance from "one nation indivisible" to "one nation under God, indivisible" (54)

Seventy percent of Americans polled think it is important to report to the FBI relatives or acquaintances suspected as Communists (54)

Bestsellers include The Holy Bible: Revised Standard Version and The Power of Positive Thinking by Norman Vincent Peale (54)

CONFORMITY AND CONSERVATISM

President Eisenhower modifies The Pledge of Allegiance from "one nation indivisible" to "one nation under God, indivisible" (54)

Arkansas National guard blocks black students in Little Rock (57)

A Look magazine poll on moral attitudes reports a moral relativity based on group acceptance: one should do whatever he wants to do as long as it would be accepted by the neighbors (59)

David Reisman's Lonely Crowd describes how individualism has given way to the search for peer group approval (51)

Seventy percent of Americans polled think it is important to report to the FBI relatives or acquaintances suspected as Communists (54)

Weekly church attendance is 49 million adults, half the total adult population (55)

In The Organization Man, William Whyte describes how corporations force their officers to conform (56)

Ed Sullivan vows never to allow Elvis Presley's vulgar performance on his show; he later pays Presley $50,000 for three appearances; the last is televised only from the waist up (56)

The Everly Brothers' "Wake Up Little Susie" is banned in Boston (57)

Eighty-six percent of the population owns a television; the average person watches forty-two hours a week (59)

NONCONFORMITY, REBELLION AND NOVELTY

A priest, minister and a rabbi are consulted, and sanction the appearance of Lucille Ball's pregnancy on television (52)

Elvis Presley makes his first commercial recording (54)

Disc Jockey Alan Freed plays what he calls "rock'n'roll" on radio station WINS, and it becomes number one immediately (54)

San Francisco's City Lights Bookstore becomes a gathering place for the beat generation and poets like Allen Ginsberg and Lawrence Ferlinghetti (54)

Ed Sullivan vows never to allow Elvis Presley's vulgar performance on his show; he later pays Presley $50,000 for three appearances; the last is televised only from the waist up (56)

The Everly Brothers' "Wake Up Little Susie" is banned in Boston (57)

SALIENCY OF SEX AND GENDER

Buxomness in fashion was symbolic of both femininity and maternal potential

A priest, minister and a rabbi are consulted, and sanction the appearance of Lucille Ball's pregnancy on television (52)
An advertisement for Max Factor lipstick reads, "To bring the wolves out -- Riding Hood Red" (53)
Another Max factor lipstick advertisement reads, "Looking for trouble? Wear 'See Red'...the maddening new lipstick color....and careful -- don't start anything you can't finish" (54)

In Your Marriage and Family Living, author Paul H. Landis writes, "College women in general have greater difficulty in marrying...Men still want wives who will bolster their egos rather than detract from them" (54)

Dr. Alfred Kinsey's Sexual Behavior in the Human Female concludes that women have less sex drive than men and engage in less forbidden sexual activity (53)

Female college attendance dropped below the level of the 1920s
One in ten households is headed by a woman, who number 21 million in the nation's 64 million workers (54)

Confidential Magazine has a circulation of 4.5 million readers (55)

Life Magazine writes, "Of all the accomplishments of the American woman, the one she brings off with the most spectacular success is having babies"

Proctor and Gamble produces disposable Pampers after discovering that babies' diapers are changed 25 billion times a year (56)

Seventy-seven percent of college educated women marry; 41% work part-time; 17% full-time (56)

To combat television's popularity, Hollywood makes more risque films like Pillow Talk, Some Like It Hot, North by Northwest, and Anatomy of a Murder (59)

Edward Teller's remark about the necessity of providing every person with a shelter captures the containment mood discussed by May (1988) both literally and metaphorically. The resurgence of interest in religion provides an avenue for easy conformity, and allows Americans to see themselves as very different from the atheistic communist "them."

The depiction of more involved fathers in Parents Magazine during this period may at first seem to contradict the some of the dominant moods of the period and the persistent black and white image of the fifties television family. However, more fathers inclined to do more familywork, with mothers' encouragement, so that the marital relationship will be improved is consistent with the fifties emphases on family "togetherness," sharing, and the celebration of domesticity. Family and children thus
became a project for husband and wife to share. The more children, the more there is
to share -- and there certainly were more children. At the peak of the baby boom in
1957, the birth rate reached 27.2 per thousand people (Chafe, 1977). This represents
an average increase of over one and one-half children per woman since 1935
(Teachman, Polonko and Scanzoni, 1987). After a decade of depression and four years
of war, as well as a postwar economic boom, Americans were anxious to enjoy the
perceived security of a strong family life (Cherlin, 1981). But strong family life
seemed to mean more than children. Each family having its own “shelter” filled with
the latest consumer goods of questionable necessity was becoming an increasingly large
part of the definition of a strong family life. (In 1957, at the height of the baby boom,
moral and ethical concerns about the manipulative techniques of advertisers leading to
unnecessary consumption were made public in Vance Packard’s Hidden Persuaders.)

Depictions of more involved referent fathers and a decrease in male privileged
referent families during this period is consistent with the family research of the time.
In an article called “Traditional and Developmental Conceptions of Fatherhood” in the
Summer 1949-1950 issue of Marriage and Family Living, author Rachel Ann Elder
notes that

The traditional conception of the family holds that the father is head of
the house, that the mother is entrusted with the care of the house and of
the children, and that in return for the unselfish devotion of the parents
to their duties, the children owe their parents honor and obedience.
Today, these value are being discarded by those who are creating
developmental families, based on inter-personal relations of mutual
affection, companionship, and understanding, with a recognition of
individual capabilities, desires and needs for the development of each
member of the family, be he father, mother or child (p. 98).
The fathers in *Parents Magazine* during the fifties appear to be members of what Elder would call developmental families. Given that family experts from psychology, sociology and social work were contributing articles to *Parents Magazine*, it makes sense that the findings of the current social science literature would be reflected as prescriptive text in the magazine. However, as Elder and other family scholars of the era (e.g. Duvall, 1946) conceptualize the developmental family, it is ideologically different from the call the “traditional” family. In other words, fathers who do more family work because their wives want them to or because they perceive cultural pressure to do so may be performing these behaviors reluctantly, with no real ideological change. It is usually assumed that ideological change comes before behavioral change; but it may be that regarding men’s involvement in family work, the behavior change happens first.

Elder interviewed men whom she later categorized as “developmental,” and apparently developmental fathers were depicted in *Parents Magazine* in the fifties. Yet there is no evidence that the necessary change in gender ideology -- implied by the concept of the developmental family -- accompanied the observed superficial changes in behavior. Elder found that “70% of developmental fathers said they should help regularly” (p. 100). *Should* help doesn’t mean they *do* help -- and *help* implies they do not see it as their responsibility. Three important issues remain ambiguous about Elder’s research: Were the men she interviewed giving what they perceived to be socially acceptable responses; were these men in fact doing more family work, and did
these men experience an ideological shift. As discussed above, the analysis of Parents Magazine for this era shows fathers doing more familywork. However, the magazine implied they were doing this work reluctantly, and, there is evidence of growing resentment towards women during these years. In other words, there does not appear to be an ideological shift.

In sum, the dominant message about fifties fathers in Parents Magazine was of the very involved father, the happy helper. These fifties referent fathers offered readers a vision of what family sharing could look like. However, assumptions about gender roles were tenaciously held, and cultural trends exaggerated gender differences. At the same time, there was enormous pressure to conform. Women who were dissatisfied with family life were culturally inhibited from expressing their feelings.

When these attitudes are looked at in light of perceived threats to the American way of life from real and imagined enemies, a dilemma emerges for the readers of Parents Magazine: On one hand, these referent fathers -- more different from fathers-in-general than at any other period -- might very well elevate expectations and suggest a new vision for the family; on the other hand, trying to turn that vision into reality might require some complaining or nagging, i.e., troublemaking. Surveys at the time showed that women recognized and appreciated the status and benefits associated with the role of wife and mother (May, 1988), therefore efforts to turn alternative visions into reality would have violated aspects of their own belief systems. Instigating change would have also challenged their own belief in the importance of conformity and companionship. As May (1988) points out, the appearance of a happy marriage was
more important than a happy marriage. Concern with appearances would naturally result in women assuming everyone else was happy, or at least happier than she was, and whatever discontent she might feel was her own fault. The reality she was experiencing would likely have been at odds with the expectations *Parents Magazine* and other cultural agents helped create. At the same time, women had neither the permission nor the outlets to express their frustration. There were many cultural constraints against troublemaking and nonconformity. A few years into the sixties, this would be referred to by Betty Friedan as “the problem with no name” (Friedan, 1964).

It is not surprising that articles calling for more male involvement in housework and child care tasks were so disproportionately written by women.

As mentioned above, the content of *Parents Magazine* in the early sixties was quite different from the late sixties, and also quite different from the late fifties. This dramatic contrast between the early and late sixties suggests that they be discussed as two distinct eras.


- No egalitarian articles during the entire decade

1960-1964:

- No women authors
- No fathers changing diapers
- No articles suggesting fatherhood is fun/self-actualizing, after remaining steady since 1940
- No articles saying involved fathers will improve the marriage
- Referent fathers and fathers-in-general have the same attitudes and behavior regarding familywork
- Greatest proportion of male privileged articles, after 0% the previous half-decade
- Greatest proportion of woman as Other
- Greatest proportion of sarcastic articles
Smallest proportion saying gender roles should change
No articles saying father can choose his level of involvement

1965-1969:
- 70% say fathers can choose their level of involvement
- Sudden steep decline in sarcastic articles - plateaus until surge in early nineties
- 40% women authors
- 50% of articles say fatherhood can be fun/self-actualizing - equal proportions men and women
- Women authors make up 40% of all articles
- 60% depict male-privileged families
- Mean length of articles begins to decline

The Early Sixties

That the early sixties were the peak for woman as Other and sarcasm suggests that the gender ideology disguised by the depiction of involved fathers in the late fifties was unmasked in the early sixties. Fewer referent fathers were depicted doing familywork, and their attitude about familywork remained negative. There was a great deal of hostility expressed toward women. Unlike the fifties, however, there was consistency between gender ideology and behavior. In the fifties, men were depicted doing more familywork but still maintained that it was women’s responsibility and households were primarily male privileged; in the early sixties, fathers were much less frequently depicted doing familywork, male privilege was reasserted, and fathers expressed hostility toward women and familywork. This period seems to be a backlash from the apparent movement toward change of the forties and fifties. Consistency between ideology and representation may have allowed for consistency between expectations and reality.

This reactionary period of Parents Magazine is especially interesting considering
the early sixties cultural climate. All the events and developments below occurred during the brief five year period from 1960-1964 (Gordon and Gordon, 1995). Several of these development suggest changes or pending changes in the relationship between social groups in American society and throughout the world. Many of these phenomena are technological or scientific developments that alter our perception of the relationship between human beings and the world. This is when the now commonplace vision of the world as a “global village” was first articulated by media theorist Marshall McLuhan. Phenomena with relevance for gender issues and social constructions of sexuality are also prevalent.

CHANGING RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN SOCIAL GROUPS
Aggressive efforts to desegregate the south; Martin Luther King rises to prominence Passage of “Great Society” legislation Four thousand servicemen are sent to Vietnam as advisors (61) Kennedy appoints a commission to study the status of women (61) *Sex and the Single Girl* is a best seller (62) *The Feminine Mystique* by Betty Friedan (63)

TECHNOLOGICAL AND SCIENTIFIC DEVELOPMENTS
Civil Defense officials distribute 22 million copies of the pamphlet *Family Fallout Shelter* (61) President Kennedy advises the “prudent family” to have a bomb shelter (61) Russians send first man into space (61) Ninety percent of American households have television (62) The first American (John Glenn) orbits the earth (62) Bell Labs directs a laser beam at the moon’s surface and 2 ½ seconds later receives its reflection (62) *Silent Spring* by Rachel Carson (62) Moscow and Washington establish “hot line” (63) The first oral contraceptive is marketed (60)

GENDER AND SEXUALITY
Kennedy appoints a commission to study the status of women (61) *Sex and the Single Girl* is a best seller (62) *The Feminine Mystique* by Betty Friedan (63)
The Beatles appear on national television (64)

These events may appear unrelated to each other and to this analysis. However, that they all occurred within a span of five years is important because it underscores the observation that the early sixties were a time of rapid social change. These events can be organized on the basis of different kinds of significance, as was done above. However, they all demand that we acknowledge possibilities for human relationships and connections that did not exist before. Attempting to integrate this much novelty into our working definition of the world is, literally, disorienting.

*Parents Magazine* seems to have reacted to the disorientation of the early sixties by attempting to affirm the world as it was before. The sharp contrast between the superficially egalitarian orientation of the late fifties and the male privileged, hostile orientation of the early sixties seems to be a reactionary response. The trend toward less gendered parenting was not merely halted in the early sixties, but was reversed and reacted to with hostility. Although the basic underlying gender ideology had not changed much in the late fifties, role changes were depicted and superficially embraced. By the early sixties, these depictions and the superficial embrace were abandoned. These early sixties articles express male hostility -- or at least intense ambivalence -- toward family life.

The pressure in the fifties for real fathers to do be more involved with their families continued into the early sixties, still fueled by growing numbers of women in the labor force, which had increased to almost one third (32.7%) of all married women.
by 1961 (Burgess, et al., 1963). A very salient popular image of an engaged father in the early sixties is that of the young President Kennedy -- surely a very busy man -- frolicking with his children in the Oval Office and on the beaches of Cape Cod. Early sixties referent fathers in *Parents Magazine* were reacting with hostility to suggestions and demands to be more involved in family life, and were depicted as less involved. In other words, referent fathers in *Parents Magazine* in the early sixties were defying the demands, and many of the male-authored articles provided an outlet for male complaints.

These depictions and their contrast with mounting real world demands is interesting in light of research in the late fifties and early sixties which looked at the father role as an index of family integration (Nye, 1958; Landis, 1962). While popular culture was depicting an uninvolved, disgruntled father, family sociologists were emphasizing the importance of the father-child relationship to family integration and successful child socialization.

It is possible that the sharp contrast between the late fifties and early sixties could be due to editorial or policy changes or advertiser influence at *Parents Magazine*. This issue will be explored further in the next chapter. However, even if what seems to be an aberrant period was caused by events other than evolving social phenomena, that would not have altered a reader’s perception of the text at the time, nor should it alter an analyst’s perception of the text in the future. In other words, the idiosyncratic viewpoint of one “loose cannon” editor is still part of the body of discourse, and whatever its impact might have been would not be changed by its aberrance.
The Late Sixties

In the late sixties, basic gender ideology is reaffirmed in that 70% of articles suggest fathers can choose their level of involvement, and 60% depict male privileged families. However, the reaction of the earlier part of the decade seems to have been tempered. The hostility disappears, and there are women authors. Suddenly, a third of the articles depict a man changing a diaper, and half say that fatherhood can be self-actualizing. By the late sixties, Parents Magazine was taking a different stand toward the social changes happening outside their pages.

Earlier portions of this analysis demonstrated that Parents Magazine was following social trends rather than leading. This is supported by the content changes of the late sixties. It is as though Parents Magazine came to understand the changes of the early sixties not as aberrations, but as genuine social structural change. Again, it is illuminating to look at the cultural climate, this time of the late sixties (Gordon and Gordon, 1995). Many technological or social development of this period may or may not be directly related to gender or family issues, yet they augment the perception that social and physical reality as we know it is in flux. These developments suggest questioning and abolition of traditions. There continued to be many cultural indicators of changes in gender construction and increasing sexual openness.

NEW PHYSICAL AND SOCIAL REALITIES
Discoveries in space lend support to the "big bang" theory of creation (65)
Fourteen thousand National Guards are called out to quell rioting in Los Angeles (65)
Continued development of the space program throughout the decade culminates with a man walking on the moon (69)
The Supreme Court rules unconstitutional state laws against interracial marriage (67)
Masters and Johnson’s *Human Sexual Response* asserts that women possess at least as much sexual energy as men (66)

**NEW CONSTRUCTIONS OF SEX AND GENDER**
The Supreme Court eliminates state and local film censorship (65)
New York Stock Exchange admits first women members (65)
The birth rate falls to 19 per 1,000 people, the lowest since 1940 (65)
Ads for men’s cologne’s and face lotions increase eightfold since 1960 and body-building ads virtually disappear (65)
Masters and Johnson’s *Human Sexual Response* asserts that women possess at least as much sexual energy as men (66)
National Organization for Women founded (66)
Co-ed dorms open at many colleges across the country (67)
Changes in men’s fashion include unrestrained use of color and turtlenecks for formal and casual wear (67)
Yale admits women (68)
Celibacy of the priesthood becomes an issue in the Catholic Church (68)
Pope Paul’s ban on contraception is challenged by 800 theologians (68)
A cigarette is marketed exclusively to women (68)
Feminists picket the Miss America contest (68)
A human egg is fertilized outside the mother’s body (69)
Unisex look in fashion (69)

The disorientation of the early sixties continued through the decade. This continuing disorientation meant that growing numbers of individuals, social groups and institutions were affected, and the fundamental nature of some of these changes could not be dismissed as mere fad in music or fashion. Again, what might first seem to be a hodgepodge of unrelated events and developments are linked by continued demands that we alter some of our fundamental perceptions of the social and physical world. The sixties began with social, technological and political developments that demanded new ways of seeing. The late sixties continued this demand, but also started to put some of these new perceptions into practice. Most of the events chronicled for the late sixties are quite explicitly gender related. The continued overall softening of the gender
dichotomy and explicit exploration of sexuality and its assumed importance to the quality of life portends convergence in parenting roles. The *Parents Magazine*

Periodization interval 1964-1970 begins with the appearance of the (then) androgynous Beatles on American television, and ends with a woman jockey riding in the Kentucky Derby for the first time (see appendix C).

By the late sixties, *Parents Magazine*'s earlier reactionary response evolved into an accommodation and reflection of the changed times. The magazine's response was delayed, but it happened. Gender ideology may not have changed, but the hostile humor of the early sixties abated, and fatherhood is presented as fun and self-actualizing. The late sixties planted the seeds for the sensitive and emotional father, who appeared again in the seventies after a twenty-five-year absence.

*Parents Magazine, 1970-1979: Summary of Major Themes and Trends*

- Male privileged families decrease by almost two-thirds over previous decade
- Proportion of egalitarian representations during 70-74 were double that of the previous five years (65-69)
- Equal proportions male privileged and egalitarian during early seventies
- Early seventies saw postwar low in depictions of fathers changing diapers, rises to 50% in the late seventies
- 80% depict referent fathers doing familywork more willingly than fathers-in-general
- Dominant attitude of fathers-in-general toward doing housework and child care tasks is neutral
- Familywork gap between referent fathers and fathers-in-general same as 1950s
- Proportion of articles in the early seventies saying familywork is fathers' prerogative was less than half the proportion of the previous five years; continued decline through seventies
- Same proportion said mothers were primarily responsible for familywork as in 1929-1939
- Close to 90% said fathering is fun and/or self-actualizing- huge increase over previous decade
- Significantly more women than male authors say involved fathers will improve
the marriage

- No women as Other articles in early seventies - 1/3 the frequency of the sixties
- Continued decline in use of sarcastic humor
- No advice articles with humor
- Between 1971 and 1977, one third of male-authored articles used a boastful tone
- Between 1971 and 1977, one third of male-authored articles expressed appreciation
- There is a plateau of nonintact families through the seventies, not reflecting the dramatic increase during this period

According to this analysis, there was really no “new father” until the seventies. During this decade, the hostility of the sixties practically disappeared, and fathers were talking about the joys of fatherhood and boasting about how involved they were in family life. There was a significant decrease in the depiction of male privileged families. The seventies were fundamentally different from all other periods since 1940 in that there was a decline in articles expressing the prevailing gender ideology -- that mothers are ultimately responsible for familywork and fathers have a choice. This is not to say that a different ideology replaced it, but that the dominance of that message declined and was accompanied by significant increases in depictions of nongendered behavior, including expressiveness and diaper changing. The implied dominant attitude of fathers-in-general toward familywork went from the sixties’ “reluctant” to “neutral” in the seventies. However, research on real world changes in men’s housework and child care from the mid-sixties through the mid-seventies showed that there were no significant changes in men’s mean housework and child care time (Coverman and Sheley, 1986; Sanik, 1981). The depictions in Parents Magazine during this period were reflecting changes in expectations but did not reflect the reality of family life.

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As with previous periods, looking at cultural context provides more insight into these representations. Every entry in the chronology below represents a change or impending change in the social construction of gender. Some of these changes may directly or indirectly affect family life.

**CHANGES IN THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF GENDER**

The Bureau of Census reports that 143,000 unmarried couples live together, compared to 17,000 in 1960 (70)

A woman jockey rides in the Kentucky Derby for the first time (70)

Billie Jean King becomes the first female athlete to earn $100,000 in one year (71)

*Esquire* magazine describes a "peacock revolution" in male fashion, including colorful prints and display of chest hair (72)

Margaret Thatcher is elected first woman British Prime Minister (79)

Best Picture of Year Award goes to *Kramer v. Kramer*, a film that explores the conflict between parenthood and self-actualization; the "new father" arrives in Hollywood (79)

Congress passes Title IX, which entitles women to participate equally in all areas of sports (72)

The American Psychiatric Association revises its categorization of homosexuality; it is no longer considered a mental disorder (73)

The Supreme Court establishes a narrower definition of pornography and allows the use of local, not national standards to define what is obscene (73)

*The Total Woman* by Mirabel Morgan, a reactionary discussion of sex and gender differences, becomes a bestseller (74)

AT &T, the world's largest private employer, bans discrimination against homosexuals (74)

Harvard changes its five to two male-female admissions policy to equal admissions (75)

The arrest rate for women since 1964 has risen three times faster than the rate for men (76)

Barbara Jordan becomes the first woman and the first black to deliver a keynote speech at the Democratic National Convention (76)

First women admitted to NASA training programs for astronauts (76)

The television program *Charlie's Angels* which features three beautiful and powerful women controlled by a disembodied male voice, becomes a huge success (77)

**CHANGES IN THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF GENDER WITH DIRECT RELEVANCE TO FAMILY LIFE**

Supreme Court rules all first-trimester anti-abortion laws unconstitutional (73)

It is estimated that one out of three meals is consumed outside the house (73)

The Supreme Court rules that employment ads cannot specify gender (73)

The Massachusetts Supreme Court rules unconstitutional the law prohibiting the sale of...
contraceptives to single persons (72)
The Equal Opportunity Act forbids discrimination based on sex or marital status (74)
The nuclear family with working father, housewife and two children represents only 7% of the population (75)
The Supreme Court rules that employers are not required to give paid maternity leave (76)
One out of five children now lives in a one-parent home; three out of five marriages end in divorce (76)
In his revised Baby and Child Care, Dr. Benjamin Spock redefines the sex roles: “The father’s responsibility is as great as the mother’s” (76)
Unmarried couples living together number 1,137,000; up from 523,000 in 1970 (78)
23% of the population lives alone (78)
A New York Times poll reports that 55% of the population sees nothing wrong with premarital sex, double the number in 1969 (79)
The divorce rate increases 69% since 1968, with the median duration of marriage 6.6 years (79)
Nixon vetoes approval of the Child Development Act, which would authorize federal funding of child care centers (71)
A Yankelovich poll shows that 34% of the population believes marriage is obsolete, up from 24% in 1969 only two years earlier (71)

The emergence of the “new father” in Parents Magazine during the seventies corresponds with many other cultural changes reflecting new understandings of sex differences and gender roles. These differences were felt in the daily lives of families. The increase in meals eaten outside the home and the ruling against employment ads specifying gender are part of the same trend as the female NASA trainees and liberalized abortion laws: women are encouraged to re-evaluate their private roles while their public roles and personal control over their own lives expanded. But what about men?

Of all the events and developments listed above, Dr. Spock’s revision of the father role and the enormous appeal of the film Kramer v. Kramer are the only concrete, direct cultural indices of the “new father.” Both of these popular cultural messages encompass ideas about fathers that had been circulating since at least the late

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fifties, and that started circulating more densely in the sixties. The revised edition of
Spock's unparalleled best-seller and Kramer v. Kramer are important cultural moments
in recent family history in that they codify the new father. In other words, this book
and this film, both very widely consumed, collected cultural murmurings and distilled
them into a clear message that is qualitatively different from what came before.

To the extent that men became "new fathers" in the seventies, they were not
necessarily doing this by their own choices or deliberate decisions. It seems that men
were forced to become "new fathers" in response to changes in women's economic
and social opportunities. Workplaces and universities opened many previously closed
doors to women. Increasing marital instability, increases in the cost of living, and a
desire to be fully engaged in the world contributed to women wanting to walk through
these previously closed doors. Men were thus forced to rethink their own roles within
the family.

One event during this period that would later prove to have important negative
consequences for women and families was President Nixon's veto of the Child
Development Act. This runs counter to the other changes made by the federal
government during these years that support gender equality, such as Title IX, the Equal
Opportunity Act and Supreme Court decisions regarding abortion and employment
advertising. Overall, however, the seventies continued putting into practice the new
perceptions that postwar period and the sixties made possible.

The referent fathers in Parents Magazine in the seventies were extremely
different from fathers-in-general, both in attitude and behavior. In other words, they

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were presented as extraordinary. The gap between referent fathers and fathers-in-
gen-eral was also great during the fifties. However, the new vision offered and the
expectations raised in the seventies would not have been as frustrating for readers as in
the fifties because the conformist and containment ethos of that period were gone.
Women more free to express their frustrations. This expressive freedom, combined
with more economic opportunity and choice about bearing children, empowered women
not only to complain or question gender roles in their marriages but to end the
relationship if they were discontent. In the fifties, frustration over the discrepancy
between expectations and reality planted the seeds for the feminism of the sixties. In
the late sixties and throughout the seventies, frustration over the discrepancy between
expectations and reality contributed to the new high in the divorce rate and the rapid
increase in cohabitation into the eighties. There were new options regarding family life
for women and men.

The new father’s codification in the seventies did not result in big changes for
several reasons. First, women were more exposed to representations of the new fathers
than were men. The new father quickly became a cliché and a marketing gimmick.
Secondly, there were no structural supports such as paternity leave or flex time to help
make the new father a reality. Thirdly, upon closer inspection, the “new father” was
still doing the passive, least personally disrupting child care tasks, thus not really
challenging gender ideology about who does the hands-on, messy and unpleasant
familywork.

The new father talked about enjoying fatherhood and may have changed a few

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more diapers. He saw the role of women in the public sphere changing in many ways, but did not change his behavior in the private sphere accordingly. His willingness to do familywork remained a gift, and the "superwoman" of the seventies had just enough energy left by the end of the day to thank him -- and remain in the appreciation paradox.

The six year period from 1978-1984 is the least gendered of the *Parents Magazine* intervals. There was a decline in articles saying mothers are primarily responsible and fathers can choose their involvement, and the proportion of referent fathers changing diapers peaked during this period. For the first time, the proportion of articles calling for gender roles to change exceeded the proportion of articles with the woman as Other theme. This period begins a plateau for the least gendered behavior and attitude toward housework and child care tasks.

During the 1978-1984 period, there were many publicized models of men and women in the real world and in film and television performing roles traditionally associated with the other sex, from Margaret Thatcher to "Mr. Mom." In 1982, new attitudes about gender were reflected in *Roget's Thesaurus*, which eliminated "sexist categories" (Gordon and Gordon, 1995). This period also saw the first woman Supreme Court justice, the first woman graduate from the Annapolis Naval Academy, surrogate conception, a child born from a frozen embryo, the reaffirmation of abortion rights, and a doubling of the number of cohabiting couples since 1970. There were changes in the real world as well as in the pages of *Parents Magazine* that might have contributed to women in the real world having high expectations regarding men’s
involvement in family life. By the mid-eighties, however, this trend seemed to reverse.


- No male privileged articles; greatest proportion of egalitarian articles - more than double the proportion of the early seventies
- Expressive articles with no humor reappear and peak after a twenty-year absence
- Greatest proportion of articles saying involved fathers will improve the marriage - said disproportionately by women authors
- Greatest proportion of articles saying gender roles should change faster - disproportionately women authors
- No women as Other articles
- In early eighties, sudden and continuing decline in proportion saying fatherhood is fun
- In early eighties, only 8% say familywork is fathers’ prerogative
- Fathers can choose their level of involvement increases to 39% in late eighties
- Sudden drop of involved father improves the relationship in late eighties
- Referent fathers changing diapers at a rate only slightly higher than the early forties, by late eighties
- Differences between referent fathers and fathers-in-general become smaller

It is clear from the above that during the eighties the depictions of parenting in Parents Magazine became more gendered. Women were no longer depicted as Other or derided through sarcastic humor, but the steady and rapid decline in articles saying fatherhood is fun, and an increase in articles asserting that familywork is a father’s prerogative suggests a change from the seventies. The hostility and anger of the sixties is not there, but neither is the joy of the seventies Dad. By the late eighties, there is a sense of disillusionment coming from the “new father”.

Below are many cultural events and developments of the eighties that are relevant to gender issues and to the family (Gordon and Gordon, 1995).
DEVELOPMENTS WITH SPECIAL RELEVANCE FOR GENDER AND THE FAMILY

The divorce rate has grown from one in three marriages in 1970 to one in two (80)
Unmarried couples are up 300% since 1970 (80)
First women graduates from Annapolis Naval Academy (80)
First woman head of a major film studio (80)
First woman Supreme Court Justice (81)
Homosexuals, blood product users and Haitian immigrants are identified as major AIDS sufferers (82)
Roget’s Thesaurus eliminates sexist categories: mankind > humankind, etc.
The popular film Tootsie explores issues of gender and identity in the context of a comedic love story (82)
The films Mr. Mom and Yentl explore the restrictions placed on people by gender roles (83)
The Supreme Court reaffirms its 1973 (Roe v. Wade) decision for a woman’s constitutional right to abortion (83)
The television program Cagney and Lacey wins critical acclaim for its portrayal of two women police officers who are tough, professional, and do not look like fashion models (84)
Androgynous fashions gain popularity; as do androgynous performers (84)
A child is born from a frozen embryo (84)
Surrogate conception (conceived in one womb, carried in another) (84)
The film Fatal Attraction explores the dangers of casual sex for a married man (87)
The film Three Men and a Baby show the nurturant side of three single men (87)
The Supreme Court rules that states may require all-male clubs to admit women (87)
Sixty percent of kitchens have microwave ovens (87)
Forty percent of the food dollar is spent eating out (87)
Pakistan elects the first female leader of a Moslem country (88)
Ninety percent of corporations report sexual harassment complaints (88)
Women account for two-thirds of all graduating accountants; one-third of MBAs; one fourth of lawyers and physicians (up 300% in ten years) (88)
Two-parent families account for 27% of the population, was 49% in 1970
The television program Roseanne features an assertive, sarcastic, earthy lead character, played by Roseanne Barr, and is a huge success (89)
First births are up more than 400% for women between 30 and 39 (89)

Fathers in Parents Magazine during the eighties were no longer the boastful and extraordinary “new fathers” that they were in the seventies. Eighties referent fathers were more similar to fathers-in-general because the standards had changed. By the time the new father was a mass media stereotype, being a “new father” was no longer
“special” and was less likely to be described as fun or self-actualizing. The themes of father involvement improving the relationship and the call for gender roles to change faster still dominated, but the novelty and fun of new fatherhood had worn off. Referent fathers changed diapers at the same proportion in the late eighties as they did in the early forties. Traditional gender ideology and disaffection with the father role might be inferred from these trends, yet there were more egalitarian articles than at any other period. These two opposing trends might be a manifestation of what Hochschild has called “the stalled revolution” (1989). On one hand, less gendered cultural representations of men and women have been normalized, and these issues are being explored publicly in the mass media. Parenting is less gendered than at any other time, and there are calls (from women) for further change. On the other hand, traditional gender ideology is expressed. The prerogative of male parenting is reasserted just when there are fewer depictions of fathering as fun. There is an impasse. More mothers are in the workplace, many as professionals. Sixty percent of kitchens have microwave ovens and 40% of the food dollar is spent eating outside the home (Gordon and Gordon, 1995). Men may be doing a bit more familywork, but their overall role mix has not changed as much as women’s. Despite slight evidence to the contrary, men remain resistant to taking on half the responsibility for familywork, and there is a 50% divorce rate.

Readers of Parents Magazine found many depictions of the new father, in Parents Magazine and in other eighties mass media as well. But by the late eighties, more subtle media messages reasserted male privilege, thus making the “new father” an
empty cliché. Michael Steadman, the father on the late eighties television program *thirtysomething* may have changed a few more diapers than Ricky Ricardo, but the gender ideologies of *thirtysomething* and *I Love Lucy* are not as different as the passage of time and superficial lifestyle differences might suggest. Unlike Michael, Ricky felt no pressure to change diapers. But Michael could not ignore all the public discourse on gender that he consumed while growing up, so he felt some pressure to *choose* to change diapers once-in-a-while. He changed diapers just often enough to keep his wife Hope in the appreciation paradox. The few times Hope allowed her career aspirations to surface, and acted upon them, the family was thrown into upheaval.


- Twice as many woman as Other articles as in the early forties
- More egalitarian articles than in the late eighties, but fewer than in early eighties
- Three-fold increase in male privileged articles since late eighties; more male privileged articles than egalitarian
- Resurgence of sarcastic articles
- Peak in proportion of expressive and direct articles by fathers
- Smaller proportion of referent fathers changing diapers than in 65-69; only slightly higher than the early forties
- Proportion of articles saying fatherhood is fun is the same as 65-69
- For the first time, referent fathers do same amount of familywork as fathers-in-general - he’s no longer presented as extraordinary
- For the first time, more referent fathers have the same attitude as fathers-in-general - “more willing” is no longer the dominant message

The depiction of gendered parenting in the early nineties continues the eighties spirit of disillusionment with the father role. In addition, male privileged depictions dominate egalitarian depictions, and there is an increase in women as Other articles and use of sarcastic tone. Referent fathers are no longer more egalitarian than fathers-in-
general in terms of the amount of familywork they do and their attitude about doing it. The proportion of articles depicting fathers changing diapers is about the same as it was in the forties.

This period is similar to the early sixties in that there is consistency between behavior, attitude and gender ideology. As in the early sixties, women readers would have been less likely to come away from these representations with inflated expectations than during certain other periods, such as 1978-1984. The familywork behavior of referent fathers is comparable to but no longer better than fathers-in-general, and referent fathers have a neutral to negative attitude. These depictions, plus the increase in misogynist elements would likely not result in inflated expectations for readers wanting greater involvement in familywork from their mates. There is a re-emergence of the early sixties tension around gender roles in the family.

The selections from *The Columbia Chronicles* below show that there was a great deal of tension around gender roles outside the family, too. All the entries in the chronology below are relevant to gender and family roles. Several of these phenomena clearly imply tension or hostility between men and women.

**CULTURAL EVENTS WITH DIRECT RELEVANCE TO GENDER AND FAMILY ISSUES**

51% mothers with children under one work; 56% with children under 6; 73% with children between 6 and 17 (90)

*Iron John: A Book About Men* by Robert Bly, explores needs of men that are not being met by modern society, including their relationships with their fathers (91)

*Fire in the Belly: On Being A Man* by Sam Keene also explores the nature of the male role

The number of single parents is up 41% from 1980 (91)

The number of unmarried couples living together is up 80% (91)
EVENTS SUGGESTING PUBLIC AND PRIVATE HOSTILITY BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN

One in nine college women experiences date rape (90)
_Thelma and Louise_, a female “buddy movie” generates great controversy about gender roles and male/female relationships (91)
_Backlash: The Undeclared War Against American Women_ by Susan Faludi, claims that many social and economic developments in the eighties and nineties were a reaction to the supposed gains women have experienced since the seventies (91)
Twenty-six percent of all newborns are born to single women (91)
Boxing champion Mike Tyson is sentenced to six years for rape (92)
Thomas-Hill hearings (92)
Widespread criticism of Hillary Clinton - that she is playing too large and too “nontraditional” a role as First Lady (92-94)
Twenty-four year old manicurist Lorena Bobbitt cuts off her husband’s penis; she says, after years of abuse -- the incident draws widespread attention and commentary (93)

It would be logical to assume that the most recent period would have the smallest proportion of male privileged depictions and offer the most egalitarian depictions of parenting. As was shown above, this is not the case. The events above and the depictions in _Parents Magazine_ for the 1990-1994 period suggest dissatisfaction and reaction on the part of men. These depictions of familywork may be consistent with readers’ actual experience, yet the combination of these depictions of less involved fathers and the cultural events of the period suggest harsh reaction on the part of men and disappointment for both men and women in their family lives. The one good thing that can be said about discrepant expectations is that despite the frustration,
disappointment and other negative outcomes, there might also be a sense of hope or optimism. When expectations and reality are in synchrony but neither holds the promise for fulfillment, the situation would feel hopeless and individuals might react with depression, anger, or violence.

Looking at the 1992-1994 interval of the Parents Magazine Periodization reveals the recent conservative or reactive trend even more clearly. This period has the smallest proportion ever of articles suggesting fathers should change some aspect of their behavior. The dominant message regarding child care tasks is that fathers do it routinely but neutrally, with slight reluctance. Housework is done by referent fathers at a level equal to 1941-1947, and they are doing it less willingly. There is a greater proportion of articles casting women into the role of Other than articles calling for gender role change. The proportion of articles suggesting fatherhood is fun and self-actualizing has declined to the late sixties level. This supports the impression that the seventies saw the ascendency of the “new father,” the engaged father predominated in the 1978-1984 period, and in the 1985-1994 period, perhaps into the present -- there is a suggestion that fathers are disillusioned.

The next and final chapter concludes this analysis with a discussion of how Parents Magazine and similar media may contribute to expectation formation. The conclusion chapter also steps back and explores the questions this analysis has answered and raised regarding the relationship between popular cultural messages, the family, and the individuals who live in them.
CHAPTER VII
CONCLUSION: ILLUSIONS OF CHANGE

Fathers, Familywork and Persistent Asymmetry

Over the past six decades, there has been a great deal of variation in the degree to which Parents Magazine presented their predominantly female readers with depictions of engaged fathers. Contrary to what might be expected, there is not a linear progression over time in the frequency of nongendered parenting depictions, nor is there steady progression in the depictions of men as involved parents, investing in the father role. In fact, many depictions of fathers over the past seven years or so have been of men who find little joy in fatherhood, operate under the assumption that familywork is their prerogative but ultimately their wife's responsibility, and express hostility toward women. They change diapers only slightly more often than referent fathers did in the forties, and the magazine implies that they are typical of fathers-in-general. The early thirties, in contrast, which we might expect to be more "traditional," have the same proportion of egalitarian articles as the late seventies, and no hypergendered articles.

While there has been a great deal of variation over time, an important element that has changed very little is the assumption of fathers' prerogative. That is, it is implied throughout the time frame that fathers can pick and choose the familywork in which they will participate, and the degree to which they will participate. When fathers
do participate, it is typically in the tasks that least require them to surrender personal autonomy. Regardless of the variations in the frequencies with which particular tasks are performed or in the themes of the articles, the fathers' prerogative assumption is always operating. Even during periods such as the early thirties or late fifties, when the frequency of articles calling for greater father involvement has quite high, the call was undermined by the persistence of the assumption that fathers really do have a choice about their level of involvement with their families.

The call for fathers to become more involved has varied in frequency, but, perhaps more importantly, the apparent rationale behind this call has been different at different times. Since 1934, with the first hint of the problematized father's role, articles in *Parents Magazine* began calling for greater father involvement. At different historical moments, these calls were based on different reasons, yet all concerned benefits to the children, to the marriage, or to the father himself. Occasionally, an article might mention that it is good to give mothers a break. But there were no articles that explicitly called for fathers to share equally in familywork out of fairness or justice.

The absence of the justice argument becomes more curious with the passage of time. This is because the validity of the argument should become stronger over time as the rate of women's labor force participation continues to steadily increase. There is growing asymmetry in the family, and this asymmetry is never directly addressed in *Parents Magazine*. Increases in working mothers are acknowledged, and, as previously discussed, there are superficial changes in how fathers are depicted. But, with very
few exceptions, the connection between these two phenomena is not made. Mothers are told that fathers should get involved in family life and participate in familywork for many reasons, none of which concern fairness, justice, or restoration of symmetry.

All the arguments used to support the call for greater father engagement, whether offered by male or female authors, are based on the presumed benefits to his family or to himself that will derive from his actions. Thus framed, his actions remain a choice; he can bestow this benefit when and if he is inclined to do so. Any negative impact of his not choosing to be engaged at particular moments or periods are intangible. If fathers' participation in familywork is something he does primarily for his children or for himself, and occasionally for his wife, he does something extraordinary every time he does it. And because he only has to do it rarely to be extraordinary, there are natural limitations to how much and how often he will participate. When he does choose to engage in familywork, he does the most pleasant and least intrusive tasks -- at all time periods.

Fathers' participation in familywork is never expected and never assumed, and therefore he is never built into the "parenting infrastructure." The reasons Parents Magazine offers to support the view that fathers should be more involved in familywork serve to maintain the "appreciation paradox" and to keep fathers from becoming more integrated into the family.

If the call for fathers' greater involvement was rationalized on the desirability of restoring symmetry to the adult roles in the family, the point could not be as easily ignored. If the rationale for greater father involvement in familywork was that it is the
fair or just thing to do, it may evoke a less evasive response. The only way to refute these appeals would be to explicitly assert male privilege and female subordination. Therefore, for Parents Magazine to have invoked these more abstract, ethical principles may have been too confrontational. Because mothers are the target of these messages, they have to convey the message to their mates or offer them the article to read -- and this may not be easy to do. If a men's magazine, for example, presented the argument that it is not fair to women that men have the freedom to pick and choose the housework and child care tasks they will do and how often they will do them, the male reader could accept or reject that argument, think about it in privacy, or discuss it with male friends. However, messages in Parents Magazine are directed to women to convey to men, and this would be the case if the message were the “fairness argument” as well. If a woman decides to act on the implicit responsibility she has been given of socializing her husband into the father role by asking him to read an article, for example, conflict or disappointment could result. She is taking a risk by attempting to open discussion about the fairness issue because it poses questions that forces each person to examine his or her deeply held assumptions -- assumptions they may not even realize they hold. Rationalizing fathers' involvement using arguments that serve to maintain his prerogative precludes these conversations from taking place, and never asks readers or their mates to examine deeply held assumptions. The “well-being” arguments seem to ask for a change in men's behavior, but ultimately they preserve the status quo.

The particular arguments offered were appropriate to their time in that they
reflected ongoing societal concerns or moods. For example, the “new father” of the 1978-1984 period was encouraged to make fatherhood a self-actualizing, fun experience in the “me-decade.” The fathers of the thirties were important for moral development in an era of crime and fascism. Parenting roles were cooperative and free of tension during the depression, when the importance of interdependency of support was obvious. The late fifties father was an important male role model at a time when gender differences were exacerbated. But at none of these times or at others in between -- as women continued to share men’s role in greater numbers -- did *Parents Magazine* assert the symmetry or justice argument.

The increasing number of women in the labor force in the real world throughout the time frame seems to be followed by increases in tension and conflict in the depiction of parenting roles in *Parents Magazine*. So while the magazine was, in effect, responding to the growing asymmetry, the response was neither direct nor explicit. This analysis suggests that the call for father involvement trailed the trend for female empowerment, so it was in some sense a response. But the response was couched in arguments that never actually acknowledged female empowerment and the resulting need for gender role realignment.

Arguments relying on intangible benefits for family members lack imperative and could be easily dismissed -- especially by men who may be less attuned to psychological and emotional concerns to begin with. They are suggestions based on emotional appeals rather than demands for an ethical response based on reality and experience. The rationale that would be difficult to refute, the final rationale or “best
argument" for greater father involvement in familywork was never offered.

Popular cultural messages calling for greater father involvement might contribute to inflated expectations no matter how the case was made. This is especially true because greater opportunities for women in the real world are consistent with that call for role realignment and work in tandem with these depictions to inflate expectations further. The end result of the “well-bing” rationale offered by *Parents Magazine* and the more confrontational fairness rationale would appear, superficially, to be the same, i.e., an involved father who is engaged in familywork. However, the underlying dynamic and the meaning of his involvement would be quite different and would suggest a very different ideology. More active fathering for the purpose of improving the marriage or self-actualization is different from more active fathering because it is fair and just. The former is done at fathers’ convenience and is a gift he gives; the latter would represent a shift toward gender symmetry and gender equality. And because these appeals are ultimately ineffective, the changes they represent are illusions.

An illusion of change exists not only because of the rationale used to attempt to change fathers’ behavior, but as was shown throughout this discussion, the actual changes have less impact on women’s day-to-day experience than a casual reading would suggest. This becomes especially clear when the child care tasks are divided into active and passive tasks. But even at the most manifest level, the change is an illusion because fathers in the real world are not as engaged in familywork as the men in *Parents Magazine*. And even if they were, the resulting impact on mothers would
not be as dramatic as it might seem because of the particular tasks they elect to do.

**Expectations**

Readers bring idiosyncracy to a text. Moreover, posing questions of impact across time adds the additional cognitive filter of historical context. This analysis attempted to take this filter into account by considering the psychological and social demands of (new) motherhood in the context of the contemporaneous cultural climate. Readers also vary in the depth of their decoding, which is more difficult to take into account. However, this analysis suggests that these messages are conflicted and could contribute to inflated expectations upon close or casual reading. Casual reading implicitly asks women to compare their own situations to those depicted. At the same time, decades of research on family division of labor has shown that her experience would less pleasing than those depicted. Close reading asks women to accept rhetorical smoke and mirrors as substantive change, challenging her perception of reality. Close readers may find it absurd to celebrate fathers' spending leisure time with their children, changing a diaper now and then, or serving popcorn for dinner when mom is out of town. But in order to make sense out of the absurdity and restore cognitive balance, they might need to lower their own standards. They may need to rethink what they can reasonably expect. Expectations informed by these depictions would not be conducive to a prepared transition into the mother role, nor to continued development within the role. More accurate or realistic depictions might lessen the “role shock” of motherhood. “Role shock” describes what happens when cultural messages that inform expectations are inadequate, erroneous or in some other way misleading. Role shock
would result in poor adjustment and feeling overwhelmed. It might also engender feelings of resentment or confusion because the forces that contribute to maladaptive expectations are the same forces that create the desire to take on the role in the first place.

Lack of preparedness and disappointment diminishes the quality of life for a new mother and her infant. However, from a macro, long-term perspective, role shock may function as an engine for social change. In other words, the more widespread certain kinds of role shock become, the more likely those experiencing it will make their condition obvious and the greater likelihood that structures will be established to address it. For example, the parent education movement of the past twenty years may be a response to role shock, made obvious by child abuse and poor “self-esteem” and “lack of discipline” in children. Similarly, the premarital counseling required by many churches and the co-parenting workshops required by many courts following a divorce might be responses to role shock. These interventions may be slow to bring about real change because they are often provided by groups or power centers that are ultimately stakeholders in the status quo. Nevertheless, concerted efforts to produce and disseminate cultural messages that will diminish the discrepancy between expectations and experience may be a response to widely articulated role shock. Role shock requires remedial socialization, or a relearning of what one needs to know in order to successfully fulfill the responsibilities that the role entails.

Readers bring different filters to a text, and so it follows that the meanings they derive from it will vary. At the same time, the text itself is said to be “polysemic” (268).
Fiske, 1986), open to different interpretations. More specifically, deconstructive criticism attempts to identify places in the text where its own logical system is contradicted. According to this view, "[B]ecause language cannot express a flawless ideology, the contradiction or surplus of meaning in a dominant message can allow people to resist that message (Blix, 1992:57). This "semiotic excess" occurs at contradictions or fault lines in the presentation of what seems to be the dominant ideology, enabling the "culturally subordinate [reader] to use [a text] for [her] own cultural-political interests." (Fiske, 1986:403).

There are many moments of internal contradiction in the mother-directed fatherhood discourse in *Parents Magazine*. In other words, there is much semiotic excess and opportunity for "resistance" or oppositional reading. It may be that the excess -- contradictions within the text -- work as an engine for social change in the same manner as the contradictions between the text (expectation formation) and the individual (experience). But exactly how would a reader use her awareness of these contradictions for her own "cultural-political interests?" Role shock and semiotic excess may both be part of a dialectic that brings about change, slowly. But both may be assuming more power on the part of the reader than she may in fact have. The contradiction and the oppositional readings they foster would make the incongruity between expectations and reality salient and pique women's discontent, but what is she to do with these feelings? Because the reader is given no blueprint for social action, either for herself or for women in general, the change process is slow, and is dependent on other cultural phenomena. The fantasy or wish-fulfillment function of the
discourse, discussed below, may come into play at these politicized moments.

However, we know that negative outcomes for families are associated with discrepant expectations. And regardless of whether a mother becomes politicized or depressed, her perception of contradiction must be processed in some way in order to restore equilibrium. Two possible ways of reading *Parents Magazine* and managing resulting disequilibrium are summarized below.

**Three Levels of Reading**

**At a casual or superficial level,** fathers are depicted as involved to a degree that does not conform to most women's experience. There are theoretical reasons, discussed above, why these depictions could contribute to inflated expectations and thus to poorer adjustment to parenthood. Readers' own mates might appear lacking because of the superdads in *Parents Magazine*. This was true for the entire time frame, with the exception of the early sixties. During this period, growing tension between men and women was reflected in the articles, and there was a setback even in the continued illusion of change.

**Closer reading** makes it clear that fathers are doing the tasks that keep them peripheral to day-to-day parenting. These are the tasks that least relieve mothers' burden and that least restore symmetry. Yet, these fathers are celebrated in the text *as though* their involvement is greater than it is, as though it approximates the ideal.

There are two responses that women might have to this confusing message. One response might be to lower her own standards and accept the fact that this level of involvement may be "as good as it gets" and may indeed be worth celebrating.
Another possible response at this level is that a reader perceives the contradictions in
the text and is sufficiently aware of the contradictions or absurdity so as to become
more assertive in her own relationship and attempt to reach a new understanding with
her mate. She may attempt to renegotiate particular chores and alter their schedules in
some way. This response has become more plausible throughout the historical period
looked at because women’s negotiating position has been, overall, steadily improving.
This is the level where women seek information in books and articles such as “tips” for
balancing work and family or for planning a family meeting to negotiate important
changes. In other words, women are told “the problem is real, and it can be solved by
you.”

At the closest level of reading the underlying assumption of male privilege becomes
visible. It is at this level that a reader might articulate her response to the text as the
simple but essential “that’s not fair.” Although contradictions within the text were
always there, they become more visible as women’s circumstances in the real world
changed. At this level, renegotiation of previous patterns and agreements might have a
greater sense of urgency than at the previous level. Articulating the lack of justice
becomes a political act, i.e., the personal is political. This involves more than
renegotiating chores and posting a weekly calendar on the refrigerator -- it represents a
fundamental challenge to the system.

When contradictions in the text become visible and reading becomes
oppositional, the text functions as an agent of social change. At this level, a reader is
aware that this is ultimately not a problem she herself can solve, but is a social issue
that must be addressed on a social structural level. This dilemma illustrates sociologist C. Wright Mills’ concept of “personal problems” and “social issues;” that they are ultimately indistinguishable.

Differences in Male and Female Depictions of Family Life

One of the most striking findings to come out of this analysis is the difference in how male and female authors depict referent fathers and the familywork they do. It may be an overstatement to say that women authors express a parenting utopia, but they are significantly more likely than male authors to depict fathers doing more familywork and doing it with a better attitude. Women authors are also significantly more likely to depict referent fathers doing the tasks that male authors are least likely to present them doing, such as changing diapers and getting children ready for bed. Women authors are also more likely to express concern about children-in-general than about particular children. They are also less likely to use humor and sarcasm, and more likely to assert that men’s involvement in familywork will improve the marital relationship.

This analysis strongly suggests that a greater proportion of women authors might have resulted in a very different discourse. That discourse would be less realistic, more filled with contradiction, and provide more opportunity for oppositional reading. The perceived difference between the referent fathers and the men in the readers’ lives would be even greater. To the extent that these messages do provide raw material for expectation formation, expectations informed by women-produced cultural messages would be even more discrepant with experience than that offered by male authors. To the extent that these messages inform expectations and that inflated
expectations lead to negative outcomes, there is a paradox in that what may be a worse outcome for women would result from their having more input in the production of cultural messages.

*Parents Magazine as an Agent of Change*

However, *Parents Magazine* and other media may have important functions beyond their impact on individual women. That is, while there are reasons to assume that the visions of female authors and other unrealistic depictions might inform expectations that are discrepant with reality, these visions also keep the political issues salient. Inflated expectations might result in depression or dissatisfaction for individual women, but may be necessary for social action and social change. And, it would not be preferable for families to be depicted as more overtly gendered and male privileged. Thus, by inflating expectations, the magazine -- and other media -- may be functioning as agents of change.

If we extend the findings here to film, television and other media that depict family life, it follows that many of our cultural messages would be different if women had a greater role in their production and in the decision-making processes about what will be produced and distributed. To the extent that women's vision of the family -- and perhaps of other arenas of social life -- is more of a challenge to the status quo, it may be more difficult to get the corporate support necessary for these visions to be produced. This may be the motivation for the many women in the entertainment field who have started their own production companies over the past few years: Mary Tyler

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Moore; Barbra Streisand; Goldie Hawn; Madonna; Sally Field, and Roseanne, to name a few.

It is difficult to predict the impact of more female presence in the popular culture industries. This is especially true in light of the fact that women are products of this culture and their perceptions of gender are informed by male vision. Femaleness per se does not constitute a world view. However, women have had a very small role as cultural producers throughout most of human history — as least as far as we know. This is especially true since the industrial era. Women have been produced (i.e., made into products) and are consumers, but have not been producers. This analysis suggests that more gender-balance among cultural producers would foment conflict in the short term, out of which slightly accelerated incremental change would occur.

**Fantasy and Wish-fulfillment**

An alternative hypothesis regarding how women process this discourse is that it functions as fantasy or wish-fulfillment. The appeal of fantasy is that it provides temporary escape into another reality where different things are possible and different rules operate. The parenting roles in *Parents Magazine* may have this appeal, sometimes providing a sharp contrast between what is and what could be. These parenting fantasies are idealized caricatures of how alternative worlds could look; glossing over the contradictions within these depictions and in their underlying assumptions.

Fantasy is “the power or process of creating especially unrealistic or improbable mental images in response to a psychological need” (Webster’s New
Collegiate Dictionary, 1974:415). Fantasy is enjoyed because it stimulates the imagination, provides a fleeting, entertaining escape from reality, and may provide insight about the human condition. The phenomena depicted and described in fantasy are not expected to chronicle reality, yet journalism and other nonfiction media content seem to claim an inherent correspondence with reality. However, if this assumption is set aside for a moment, Parents Magazine's can be reconceptualized as fantasy. However, upon closer reading, even the "reality of the fantasy" is not as appealing as it might seem at first. Upon closer reading, even the fantasy is a disappointment.

In Why Viewers Watch, Jib Fowles explores how television fantasies serve viewers. He equates television content with dream fantasy in a manner applicable to this analysis. Fowles notes that dreams often closely resemble the real world, and that this high degree of familiarity enables the dreamer to engage with the fantasy; "[her] presence and feelings are woven into the dream's texture (1992:41). It is not the smack of reality that the viewer [or reader] wants from such programs [or articles], it is stories which are familiar enough that it is emotionally easy to enter into them" (Fowles, 1992:54). Fowles observations about television as teacher can be applied to Parents Magazine. He notes, "since television entertainment [Parents Magazine] does little to teach about the real world, and much to compensate for it, then it's reasonable that the characters [referent fathers and mothers] would oblige fantasy needs and not instructional ones" (1992:51).

If parenting roles in Parents Magazine are conceptualized as fantasy or wish-fulfillment material, the representations of fathers in Parents Magazine should not
change in either direction: it is vital to the fantasy work that they be unrealistic -- but not so unrealistic as to lack familiarity; yet, if the depictions become more representative of real life, they would lose their fantasy appeal. Understood as fantasy, the fatherhood discourse provides a relief or safety valve that makes the asymmetries and inequalities of parenting roles and more tolerable. *Parents Magazine* probably fulfills wish-fulfillment needs and informational or socialization needs. Further research could explore how readers use this and other parenting media.

Previously unrelated literatures (reviewed in chapter 1, pages 3-9) have established that women’s expectations about shared familywork are inflated and that mothers and expectant mothers engage in information-seeking behavior. This project fills the gap between these literatures by analyzing the raw material that goes into those expectations -- the information sought when engaged in information-seeking behavior. It may be that inflated expectations and their resulting distress are vicariously relieved to the extent that the discourse fulfills fantasy needs. In other words, this discourse simultaneously creates the need for fantasy and fulfills it. And, while functioning as entertainment and information, this discourse fuels women’s optimism regarding cooperative and just family roles.

**Limitations, Caveats and Possibilities for Future Research**

The goal of this project was to analyze cultural messages and suggest hypotheses about what their impact might be. Although progress has been made toward this goal, many questions have remained unanswered and new ones have been raised.

As discussed in chapter II, this project focused on *Parents Magazine* not as
Parents Magazine per se, but as an indicator of cultural messages and standards regarding parenting and gender. While this use of the magazine is justified, future research could sample articles from other women's magazines as well. Of particular interest would be whether other women's magazines also called for greater father involvement over these decades and the rationales used to support the argument. It may be that Parents Magazine actually saw itself as an agent of change early on, and that other women's magazines may have presented fathers to mothers differently.

Related to this is the question of variations in editorial policy. It may be that peculiarities found in certain historical periods reflect the particular ideology or attitude of the editor at that period. Changes found in the frequency of certain themes could be related to editorial changes or other internal dynamics at the magazine's offices, including the influence of advertisers. It is important that the current project and its results be understood in light of these considerations. For example, Parents Magazine had the same editor from 1926 to 1955. Between 1956 and 1977 there were three different editors. These transitions are not central to this analysis because these messages, whatever they might be, would still play a role in the expectation formation process. If these messages were extremely peculiar or idiosyncratic, they would not have reached the mass marketplace. However, it is important to understand how decisions are made by the handful of people who ultimately determine the articles, films, television programs, toys, etc. that people consume. It is also important to understand the processes whereby decision-makers and cultural producers arrive in those powerful positions. Future research should explore the interaction of forces that
result in particular messages being made available at a particular time.

In addition to the institutional issues raised above, future research on expectation formation should look at a very important element left out of this analysis: the audience. It is a mistake to assume that audience members have no awareness of how they use cultural messages and how they may be affected by them. For example, interviewing mothers and mothers-to-be who are actually seeking information about parenting might shed light on the specific information they seek, the information they find, and how they process it. Recognizing the expertise and validity of the interviewees responses, questions such as “do you think this is realistic” or “do you think this is how it will be for you” “and why” can be asked. Some time later, or at intervals later, these same women could be interviewed again, and asked to describe various aspects of their experience, and to comment on their previous responses. Research such as this could not tell us about the specific impact of any particular kind of information or source, but it could tell us how women process the information. Subjects whose experience is discrepant with their expectations could be asked how they might have been better prepared, or the kinds of thoughts or situations they find most troubling. Audience analyses should also consider socio-economic variables that might be related to information-seeking and processing.

Many of the analyses of the Parents Magazine articles focused on the assumptions and dynamics underlying gendered parenting. These behavior patterns can be analyzed in the real world, too. Borrowing Jessie Bernard’s notion of “his and her marriage,” “his and her familywork” can be explored -- not the familywork per se but
how each partner perceives his or her responsibilities and why. This could be done through separately conducted interviews with couples who are experiencing a great deal of conflict around familywork. Their “definitions of the situation” could be compared for similarities and differences. Understanding the patterns of information-seeking behavior of fathers across the transition to parenthood might shed some light on the question of expectations and the decline of marital quality after husbands and wives become parents. If parenting and family life is to become more satisfying, identifying what contributes to dissatisfaction for men and women is important.

The parenting experience is central to the lives of most adult men and women. The quality of that experience will play an important role in how the family continues to evolve. It is crucial, therefore, that we understand the parenting experience and the social forces that affect it. Research that allows us to understand the meaning family members give to words, situations and other cultural phenomena that enter their daily lives will be most useful for understanding the individuals that make up families and the families that make up our society.
EPILOGUE:

THE FUTURE OF FATHERHOOD: CONFLICTING TRENDS

"The American workplace has a new problem employee: the devoted dad," according to an article on the front page of the Wall Street Journal (6/13/95). The article describes the growing trend of fathers demanding shorter work weeks, time off to spend with children who are ill, and less interest in business travel. The main point of the article is resentment among co-workers and other workplace tensions result from these new attitudes. The "devoted dad" is problematized. The article points out the surprising "undercurrent of resentment among some working mothers, noting that many of these women feel "New Age fathers can wear their parental duties like a badge while they, nervous about looking unprofessional, must play down their role as mother." "Some fathers cause a slow burn among childless co-workers by exploiting their status as New Age dads," the article continues, and offers an example of how this tension plays out on the workplace:

About two years ago, while chief executive of [the market research firm] Yankelovich Partners in Norwalk, Conn., James A. Taylor arrived 40 minutes late for a crucial client meeting with six Volvo executives in suburban New Jersey. Though he was the session's lead speaker, the auto executives instantly forgave him when he explained that his teenage daughter had gotten into trouble at school. 'It would have been more difficult for a woman to use that excuse,'
Mr. Taylor admits. 'But it’s au courant and fashionable for a guy to walk into a meeting late and say, “I’m sorry, I had a problem with my kid.”' The excuse, he boasts, showed that ‘I’m a ’90s kind of dad.’

Ann Clurman, a Yankelovich partner without children, says she admired his gutsy honesty at the Volvo meeting. But she is bothered that a mother giving the same excuse probably would have gotten a different reception, most likely rolled eyes.

Like many of the referent fathers in the Parents Magazine articles, he is extraordinary and noteworthy because he plays an active role in his child’s life. Even within their roles as parents, men are given preferential treatment over women. At the same time, within the discourse of the business world, the attitudes and behaviors of the “new father” are problematized. The article offers no solution to this problem but quotes upper level managers making comments such as “intensive commitment to fatherhood could derail advancement.”

The Wall Street Journal uses the term “New Age” as an epithet -- especially derogatory when referring to a man. This may be read as a subtle value judgement, which questions these men’s priorities; implying these values are at odds with the mainstream (i.e. Wall Street) values. That such men are willing to jeopardize their power and success to spend time with children is clearly framed as problematic and eccentric. It is a significant cultural message when an above-the-fold article on the front page of the largest circulation newspaper in the world defines the trend toward engaged fathers and new priorities about work and family as a problem, and caricatures men who hold these priorities. These are the changes family advocates and feminists of both sexes have been waiting years to see. And while this trend is not always problematized, it is
presented as unusual and noteworthy today just as it was a generation or two ago. Like many of the articles in Parents Magazine, the article referred to above is embedded with contradictory messages and invites oppositional reading. An oppositional reading of the above article suggests the problem lies in the priorities of the workplace, not the father.

This trend toward men having a more central place in family life is balanced by other trends which suggest increasing superfluousness of fathers to family life. An article called “When Buying A House, Who Needs A Man?” (The Wall Street Journal, 2/9/96) reports that according to the National Association of Home Builders, single women own twice the number of homes as they did twenty-five years ago. The continued rapid increase in single-motherhood by choice at all socio-economic levels is a clear indication that the role of the father is in question and that increasing numbers of women want a family -- but with no husband/father.

The mother-child family was recently showcased in the Disney film “Toy Story.” The story is about a conflict between the two favorite toys of a comfortable middle-class boy named Andy. The decor of Andy’s bedroom has attractive wallpaper, color-coordinated with a fashionable bedspread. His shelves and closets are filled with every toy and game imaginable. His clothes are de rigueur for 7-12 year-old American boys. All this, but no Dad. Neither Dad nor his absence is ever referred to. This is the happy American family of the nineties à la Disney. Andy, it seems, is the son of Murphy Brown. Fathers’ place in the family -- in the real world and in popular culture -- continues to be a question.
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5. "My Son and I Go Fishing." Henry C. Fulcher, May 1930, p. 32
7. "Do Men Want Children (response)." Floyd Dell, November 1930, p. 14
9. "Are You Fit To Be A Father." William E. Blatz and Helen M. Bott, June 1931, p. 33
10. "I Am A Week-End Father." Henry B. Lent, September 1931, p. 17
12. "For Fathers Only." Charles P. Pelham, June 1932, p. 6
13. "For Fathers Only." Mary Elisabeth Overholt, July 1932, p. 4
15. "For Fathers Only." Anonymous, September 1932, p. 6
16. "For Fathers Only." Raymond Francis Yates, October 1932, p. 8
17. "For Fathers Only." Hiram Motherwell, November 1932, p. 4
18. "For Fathers Only." John R. Scotford, December 1932, p. 4
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20. "For Fathers Only." L.C. Moore, March 1933, p. 8
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33 "How Good A Father Are You?” Frank Howard Richardson, June 1935, p. 36
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APPENDIX A

Answer sheet with intercoder reliability values (Pearson R)

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APPENDIX B: CODING SCHEME

1. Approximate age of child or children referred to in article: [AGE]
   1 - prenatal or perinatal
   2 - newborn (0-6 months)
   3 - infant (6 mos -1 year)
   4 - toddler (1 - 3 yrs)
   5 - baby (0 - 3)
   6 - preschool (3 - 5 yrs)
   7 - young child (2 - 6)
   8 - 7 - 12
   9 - teen
   0 - can't tell/any age/ no particular child(ren) referred to

   New age recode:
   #s 1-5 = 1 age 0 - > 3
   #s 6-7 = 2 age 3 -> 6
   #8 = 3 age 7 -> 12
   #9 = 4 teen
   0 = 0 can't tell

2. Sex of child or children referred to in article:
   1 - male
   2 - female
   3 - can't tell/both/either/no particular child(ren) referred to

   [NEWSEX 1=boys/girls 2=neutral]

3. Number of children in family
   1 - 2 [NUMKIDS]
   3 - 4 (or more)
   0 - can't tell/not applicable/no particular family referred to

4. Family composition primarily assumed or implied [FAMCOMP]
   1 - intact family
   2 - single mom
   3 - single dad
   4 - step family
   5 - can't tell/or not applicable
   [Recode 2 -> 5=other]

5. This article assumes or implies that most fathers, in general,
   1 - work full-time outside the house
   2 - work full-time from at-home office
   3 - work part-time outside the house
   4 - work part-time from at-home office
   5 - are unemployed; looking for work
   6 - are unemployed; not looking for work
   7 - are or were recently in armed forces
   [WFATGEN Omitted]

6. The article assumes or implies that the father speaking or exemplified in this article [FTHISW]
   1 - works full-time outside the home
   2 - works full-time from at-home office
   3 - works part-time
   4 - is unemployed
   5 - is or was recently in armed forces
   6 - refers only to fathers in general
   (not *1st person,: no examples)
7. This article assumes or implies that most mothers, in general [WMOM]
1 - work full-time
2 - work part-time
3 - are unemployed; looking for work
4 - are unemployed; not looking for work (are full-time mothers)
5 - some work/some don't/some work part-time (can't generalize)

8. This article assumes or implies that the mother speaking or exemplified in this article [THISMA]
1 - works full-time
2 - works part-time
3 - unemployed; not looking for work (are full-time mothers)
4 - can't tell/no mention of mother, or refers only to mothers in general

9. This article assumes or implies that most fathers, in general, do housework [DADHWRK]
3 - routinely; on a regular basis
2 - once in a while
1 - rarely, in an unusual circumstance
0 - housework is neither mentioned nor implied

10. This article suggests or implies that when most fathers, in general, do housework, they do so [FAATHW]
3 - willingly and enthusiastically
2 - willingly but not enthusiastically (matter-of-factly; neutral)
1 - reluctantly or begrudgingly
0 - housework neither mentioned nor implied/can't tell

11. This article suggests or implies that most fathers, in general, do childcare tasks [FAGNKF]
3 - routinely; on a regular basis
2 - once in a while; now and then
1 - rarely; in an unusual circumstance
0 - child-rearing tasks neither mentioned nor implied

12. This article suggests or implies that when most fathers, in general, do child care tasks, they do so [FAKIDAT]
3 - willingly and enthusiastically
2 - willingly but not enthusiastically (matter-of-factly; neutral)
1 - reluctantly or begrudgingly
0 - child-rearing tasks neither mentioned nor implied/can't tell

Which of the following family work do(es) father(s) speaking, exemplified or referred to in this article do?
1 = yes; 0 = no

13. cooking/feeding
14. cleaning/laundry/shopping
15. comforts/soothes child
16. change diapers
17. bathe children
18. play with young children
19. ready kids for bed/tuck/story
20. get involved with child's education
21. tries to socialize/mold behavior
22. spend leisure time/hobbies/sports
23. How would you describe the frequency with which the father(s) speaking, exemplified or referred to in this article do(es) the family work they do?
1 = more often than fathers in general
2 = less often than fathers in general
1 = about the same as fathers in general
0 = no father(s) speaking or exemplified

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in article or father(s) speaking or exemplified do(es) no family work

24. How would you describe the attitude with which the father(s) speaking, exemplified or referred to in this article do(es) the family work (t)he(y) does?[ATTFW]
3 - more willingly than fathers in general
2 - less willingly than fathers in general
1 - about the same as fathers in general
0 - no father(s) speak or are exemplified in the article or father(s) speaking or exemplified do(es) no family work.

#25 - 45: yes=1; no=0

25. Author offers reader advice, offers positive examples, or implies self as positive example

26. Author has an insight or comes to a realization; a "conversion experience"

27. Author states or strongly suggests that male and female parenting roles (expected and appropriate behaviors for fathers and mothers) are changing; acknowledges a pattern or trend

28. Author states or strongly suggests that gendered parenting roles should change or change more; faster

29. Author states that mothers, as a group, should change some aspect of their family work behavior

30. Author states that fathers, as a group, should change some aspect of their family work behavior.

Author’s tone
31. humorous; light-hearted
32. sarcastic; sharp edge
33. self-important/boastful
34. appreciative/thankful
35. authoritative
36. sentimental
37. critical

38. Which of the following best describes the power distribution among family members suggested in this article?
1. husband/father is privileged
2. neither/can't tell
3. egalitarian

#39 - 57: According to this article...
1=yes; 0=no

39. Mothers have primary responsibility for the daily routines of parenting and housework; fathers participate as helpers or volunteers when the need or request arises.

40. Without realizing it, mothers may prevent or discourage fathers from being active participants in routine parenting and/or housework

41. Ultimately, fathers can choose whether or not and the degree to which they spend time with babies and children (caretaking, supervising, playing, etc.) and/or on housework.

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42. Early attachment between father and child is just as important as early attachment between mother and child.

43. Compared with mothers, fathers tend to be less familiar with and/or less competent at household and child care routines.

44. Fathers are especially important to the social and moral development (character development) of children.

45. Husband and wife will have a better relationship if the father is actively involved in childcare and/or housework.

46. Father is/should be head of the household.

47. Men can discover their emotional sides and their caretaking skills through fathering; and/or it is self-actualizing; and/or it is fun.

48. It is somewhat out of the ordinary and therefore special when fathers spend time with children or on routine family work such as cooking, cleaning, or getting children ready for bed.

49. Fathers provide important role models for sons; and/or they teach daughters what men are like.

50. Fathers tend to be playmates; mothers tend to be caretakers.

51. Father's behavior is described as "babysitting."

52. Article focuses on father-son relationship.

53. Article focuses on father-daughter relationship.

54. Father is ridiculed, criticized or "put down."

55. Woman is characterized as "Other."

56. It is noteworthy when men do family work or experience "women's reality."

57. Men are competent at family work.
APPENDIX C

Events Occurring Between 1929 and 1994 With Potential Relevance to Gender Issues
From the Columbia Chronicles of American Life (Gordon and Gordon, 1995),
Life Magazine, and The New York Times

1929-1933

• Stock market crashes; within a few weeks, unemployment rises from 700,000 to 3.1 million (29)
• A wave of kidnappings and kidnapping threats of prominent people (29)
• The automobile is quickly becoming an integral part of American life (29)
• Extensive media coverage of government agents fighting gangsters and other “public enemies”
• More than 1300 banks close by the end of 1930
• The longest suspension bridge in the world, The George Washington Bridge, is built (31)
• First woman elected to the United States Senate (31)
• Seventy-five percent of all cities ban the employment of wives (31)
• Wages drop 60% since 1929; white-collar salaries down 40%; unemployment is more than three
times that of 1930; suicide rate rises to 17.4 per 100,000, up 30% from the twenties (32)
• World’s largest movie theater, Radio City Music Hall, opens with 6200 seats (32)
• Use of the word “syphilis” in newspapers and other public media became permissible (32)
• Francis Perkins becomes the first female cabinet member (33)
• The first magazine for men, Esquire, begins publication (33)
• Unemployment reaches 15 million, five times the 1931 level (33)
• Marriage rate is down 20% from the 1920s level (33)

1934-1940

• The Sears and Roebuck catalog begins to list contraceptive devices (34)
• “Unmarried husbands and wives” in Hollywood receive a lot of media attention (34)
• A code for movies is established: no long kisses, double beds, naked babies, exposure of breasts or
  suggestion of seduction or cohabitation; wrongdoing is not to be treated sympathecically (34)
• One out of four households is receiving government support of some kind; 750,000 farms
  foreclosed since1930 (35)
• A poll in Fortune Magazine shows that 67% of Americans favor birth control (36)
• The American Medical Association recognized birth control as a legitimate professional concern
  (37)
• A Fortune Magazine poll shows that 50% of all college men and 25% of all college women have
  had premarital sex (37)
• Americans spend an average of 4.5 hours a day listening to radio (37)
1941-1947

- "Rosie the Riveter" becomes the emblem of the American woman working in defense industries (41)
- Philip Wylie's *A Generation of Vipers* offers a scathing view of American mothers (42)
- Sales of women's trousers are five to ten times greater than in 1941 (42)
- Eleanor Roosevelt redefines the role of the First Lady
- Bible sales increase 25%, and books with religious themes, such as *The Robe* and *Song of Bernadette* are popular (43)
- Public service advertising targets women to get involved in the war effort in a variety of ways (43)
- Both women's and men's fashions feature broad shoulders and pointed lapels, often called the "football player look" (44)
- 3.5 million women are working on assembly lines (44)
- First atomic plutonium bomb is exploded in the New Mexico desert, its power exceeds expectations (45)
- Women auto workers in Detroit, laid off because of returning war veterans, stage a march with posters saying "Stop Discrimination Because of Sex" (45)
- Postwar trend toward femininity in fashion, with emphasis on slightly idealized figure (46)
- Birth rate increases 20% over 1945 (46)
- *Life* Magazine reports on the growing popularity of Jean-Paul Sartre's existentialism (46)
- Dr. Benjamin Spock's *Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care* is published (46)
- Ferdinand Lundberg and Marynia Farnham publish *Modern Woman: The Lost Sex*
- Four million returning GI veterans take advantage of the GI Bill and its broad opportunities for education, housing and business (47)

1948-1954

- Women wear bikinis on American beaches (48)
- Kinsey's *Sexual Response in the Human Male* indicates that 85% of those married have had premarital sex, and 50% have had extramarital sex (48)
- National anxiety about the cold war and the race with the Soviets for weapons of mass destruction created national anxiety.
- Sen. McCarthy's pursuit of Communists in the State Department, Hollywood and academia, along with exposure of widespread organized crime, and North Korea's invasion of South Korea added to the national anxiety about security
- Bomb shelter plans, such as the government pamphlet *You Can Survive*, become widely available (51)
- David Reisman's *Lonely Crowd* describes how individualism has given way to the search for peer group approval (51)
• Buxomness in fashion was symbolic of both femininity and maternal potential
• A priest, minister and a rabbi are consulted, and sanction the appearance of Lucille Ball's pregnancy on television (52)
• Talk about flying saucers and "man from Mars" theories proliferate (52)
• An advertisement for Max Factor lipstick reads, "To bring the wolves out -- Riding Hood Red" (53)
• Another Max factor lipstick advertisement reads, "Looking for trouble? Wear 'See Red'...the maddening new lipstick color....and careful -- don't start anything you can't finish" (54)
• In Your Marriage and Family Living, author Paul H. Landis writes, "College women in general have greater difficulty in marrying...Men still want wives who will bolster their egos rather than detract from them" (54)
• Dr. Alfred Kinsey's Sexual Behavior in the Human Female concludes that women have less sex drive than men and engage in less forbidden sexual activity (53)
• Female college attendance dropped below the level of the 1920s
• Seventy percent of Americans polled think it is important to report to the FBI relatives or acquaintances suspected as Communists (54)
• Elvis Presley makes his first commercial recording (54)
• Disc Jockey Alan Freed plays what he calls "rock'n'roll" on radio station WINS, and it becomes number one immediately (54)
• San Francisco's City Light Bookstore becomes a gathering place for the beat generation and poets like Allen Ginsberg and Lawrence Ferlinghetti (54)
• One in ten households is headed by a woman, who number 21 million in the nation's 64 million workers (54)
• Bestsellers include The Holy Bible: Revised Standard Version and The Power of Positive Thinking by Norman Vincent Peale (54)
• President Eisenhower modifies The Pledge of Allegiance from "one nation indivisible" to "one nation under God, indivisible" (54)
• A Gallup Poll reports that a family of four can live on $60 per week, and that 94% of Americans believe in God (54)

1955-1963
• Weekly church attendance is 49 million adults, half the total adult population (55)
• Confidential Magazine has a circulation of 4.5 million readers (55)
• "Smog" or "poisoned air" becomes a public concern (55)
• Life Magazine writes, "Of all the accomplishments of the American woman, the one she brings off with the most spectacular success is having babies"
• Ed Sullivan vows never to allow Elvis Presley's vulgar performance on his show; he later pays Presley $50,000 for three appearances; the last is televised only from the waist up (56)
• In The Organization Man, William Whyte describes how corporations force their officers to conform (56)
• Increasing numbers of lower-middle-class people move to the suburbs (56)
• Proctor and Gamble produces disposable Pampers after discovering that babies’ diapers are changed 25 billion times a year (56)
• Seventy-seven percent of college educated women marry; 41% work part-time; 17% full-time (56)
• Arkansas National guard blocks black students in Little Rock (57)
• The Everly Brothers’ “Wake Up Little Susie” is banned in Boston (57)

• Edward Teller, “father” of the H-bomb says “It is necessary to provide every person in the United States with a shelter” (59)
• A Look magazine poll on moral attitudes reports a moral relativity based on group acceptance: one should do whatever he wants to do as long as it would be accepted by the neighbors (59)
• Eighty-six percent of the population owns a television; the average person watches forty-two hours a week (59)
• To combat television’s popularity, Hollywood makes more risqué films like Pillow Talk, Some Like It Hot, North by Northwest, and Anatomy of a Murder (59)
• The first oral contraceptive is marketed (60)
• Kennedy becomes the youngest US President (60)
• Aggressive efforts to desegregate the south; Martin Luther King rises to prominence
• Passage of “Great Society” legislation
• Supreme Court prohibits school prayer (61)
• Intrauterine device (IUD) is produced (61)
• Four thousand servicemen are sent to Vietnam as advisors (61)
• Civil Defense officials distribute 22 million copies of the pamphlet Family Fallout Shelter (61)
• President Kennedy advises the “prudent family” to have a bomb shelter (61)
• Russians send first man into space (61)
• Kennedy appoints a commission to study the status of women (61)
• Ninety percent of American households have television (62)
• Sex and the Single Girl is a best seller (62)
• The first American (John Glenn) orbits the earth (62)
• Bell Labs directs a laser beam at the moon’s surface and 2 ½ seconds later receives its reflection (62)
• Silent Spring by Rachel Carson (62)
• Moscow and Washington establish “hot line” (63)
• The Feminine Mystique by Betty Friedan (63)
• President Kennedy is assassinated (63)

1964-1970
• The Beatles appear on national television (64)
• Discoveries in space lend support to the “big bang” theory of creation (65)
• The birth rate falls to 19 per 1,000 people, the lowest since 1940 (65)
• Ads for men’s cologne’s and face lotions increase eightfold since 1960 and body-building ads

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• Virtually disappear (65)
• Fourteen thousand National Guards are called out to quell rioting in Los Angeles (65)
• The Supreme Court eliminates state and local film censorship (65)
• Growing interest in the I Ching and other eastern philosophies (65)
• New York Stock Exchange admits first women members (65)
• Masters and Johnson's Human Sexual Response asserts that women possess at least as much sexual energy as men (66)
• National Organization for Women founded (66)
• Changes in men's fashion include unrestrained use of color and turtlenecks for formal and casual wear (67)
• The Supreme Court rules unconstitutional state laws against interracial marriage (67)
• Co-ed dorms open at many colleges across the country (67)
• A cigarette is marketed exclusively to women (68)
• Yale admits women (68)
• Feminists picket the Miss America contest (68)
• Celibacy of the priesthood becomes an issue in the Catholic Church (68)
• Pope Paul’s ban on contraception is challenged by 800 theologians (68)
• A human egg is fertilized outside the mother’s body (69)
• Unisex look in fashion (69)
• Many universities make ROTC optional or abolish it (69)
• Dr. Benjamin Spock’s conviction for encouraging draft evasion is reversed (69)
• Continued development of the space program throughout the decade culminates with a man walking on the moon (69)
• Most liberal abortion law in the United States takes effect in New York (70)
• The Bureau of Census reports that 143,000 unmarried couples live together, compared to 17,000 in 1960 (70)
• A woman jockey rides in the Kentucky Derby for the first time (70)

1971-1977
• Nixon vetoes approval of the Child Development Act, which would authorize federal funding of child care centers (71)
• A Yankelovich poll shows that 34% of the population believes marriage is obsolete, up from 24% in 1969 only two years earlier (71)
• Billie Jean King becomes the first female athlete to earn $100,000 in one year (71)
• Esquire magazine describes a “peacock revolution” in male fashion, including colorful prints and display of chest hair (72)
• The Massachusetts Supreme Court rules unconstitutional the law prohibiting the sale of contraceptives to single persons (72)
• Congress passes Title IX, which entitles women to participate equally in all areas of sports (72)
• Supreme Court rules all first-trimester anti-abortion laws unconstitutional (73)
• It is estimated that one out of three meals is consumed outside the house (73)
• The Supreme Court rules that employment ads cannot specify gender (73)
• The American Psychiatric Association revises its categorization of homosexuality; it is no longer considered a mental disorder (73)
The Supreme Court establishes a narrower definition of pornography and allows the use of local, not national standards to define what is obscene (73)

_The Total Woman_ by Mirabel Morgan, a reactionary discussion of sex and gender differences, becomes a bestseller (74)

The Equal Opportunity Act forbids discrimination based on sex or marital status (74)

AT &T, the world's largest private employer, bans discrimination against homosexuals (74)

Harvard changes its five to two male-female admissions policy to equal admissions (75)

The nuclear family with working father, housewife and two children represents only 7% of the population (75)

The Supreme Court rules that employers are not required to give paid maternity leave (76)

The arrest rate for women since 1964 has risen three times faster than the rate for men (76)

Barbara Jordan becomes the first woman and the first black to deliver a keynote speech at the Democratic National Convention (76)

One out of five children now lives in a one-parent home; three out of five marriages end in divorce (76)

In his revised _Baby and Child Care_, Dr. Benjamin Spock redefines the sex roles: "The father's responsibility is as great as the mother's" (76)

First women admitted to NASA training programs for astronauts (76)

The television program _Charlie's Angels_ which features three beautiful and powerful women controlled by a disembodied male voice, becomes a huge success (77)

1978-1984

- Unmarried couples living together number 1,137,000; up from 523,000 in 1970 (78)
- 23% of the population lives alone (78)
- Margaret Thatcher is elected first woman British Prime Minister (79)
- Best Picture of Year Award goes to _Kramer v. Kramer_, a film that explores the conflict between parenthood and self-actualization; the "new father" arrives in Hollywood (79)
- A _New York Times_ poll reports that 55% of the population sees nothing wrong with premarital sex, double the number in 1969 (79)
- The divorce rate increases 69% since 1968, with the median duration of marriage 6.6 years (79)
- The divorce rate has grown from one in three marriages in 1970 to one in two (80)
- Unmarried couples are up 300% since 1970 (80)
- First women graduates from Annapolis Naval Academy (80)
- First woman head of a major film studio (80)
- First woman Supreme Court Justice (81)
- Homosexuals, blood product users and Haitian immigrants are identified as major AIDS sufferers (82)
- _Roget's Thesaurus_ eliminates sexist categories: mankind > humankind, etc.
- The popular film _Tootsie_ explores issues of gender and identity in the context of a comedic love story (82)
- The films _Mr. Mom_ and _Yentl_ explore the restrictions placed on people by gender roles (83)
- The Supreme Court reaffirms its 1973 _Roe v. Wade_ decision for a woman's constitutional right to abortion (83)
- The television program _Cagney and Lacey_ wins critical acclaim for its portrayal of two women police officers who are tough, professional, and do not look like fashion models (84)
- Androgynous fashions gain popularity; as do androgynous performers (84)
- A child is born from a frozen embryo (84)
- Surrogate conception (conceived in one womb, carried in another) (84)
- Male bunnies at Playboy Club (84)
1985-1991

- Bill Cosby's *Fatherhood* is a bestseller (86)
- The film *Fatal Attraction* explores the dangers of casual sex for a married man (87)
- The film *Three Men and a Baby* show the nurturant side of three single men (87)
- Humorist Erma Bombeck's *Family: The Ties That Bind...and Gag!* is a bestseller (87)
- The Supreme Court rules that states may require all-male clubs to admit women (87)
- Sixty percent of kitchens have microwave ovens (87)
- Forty percent of the food dollar is spent eating out (87)
- Pakistan elects the first female leader of a Moslem country (88)
- Ninety percent of corporations report sexual harassment complaints (88)
- Women account for two-thirds of all graduating accountants; one-third of MBAs; one fourth of lawyers and physicians (up 300% in ten years) (88)
- Two-parent families account for 27% of the population, was 49% in 1970
- The television program *Roseanne* features an assertive, sarcastic, earthy lead character, played by Roseanne Barr, and is a huge success (89)
- First births are up more than 400% for women between 30 and 39 (89)
- One in nine college women experiences date rape (90)
- 51% mothers with children under one work; 56% with children under 6; 73% with children between 6 and 17 (90)
- Dieting becomes a $33 billion industry (90)
- *Thelma and Louise*, a female "buddy movie" generates great controversy about gender roles and male/female relationships (91)
- *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against American Women* by Susan Faludi, claims that many social and economic developments in the eighties and nineties were a reaction to the supposed gains women have experienced since the seventies (91)
- *Iron John: A Book About Men* by Robert Bly, explores needs of men that are not being met by modern society, including their relationships with their fathers (91)
- *Fire in the Belly: On Being A Man* by Sam Keene also explores the nature of the male role
- The number of single parents is up 41% from 1980 (91)
- The number of unmarried couples living together is up 80% (91)
- Twenty-six percent of all newborns are born to single women (91)
- Cartoon character Blondie (age 60), wife of Dagwood Bumstead, announces her need for a career (91)

1992-1994

- Boxing champion Mike Tyson is sentenced to six years for rape (92)
- Female condom is marketed (92)
- Over 500,000 march in Washington, DC for abortion rights (92)
- Thomas-Hill hearings (92)
- Judge Ruth Bader Ginsburg becomes the second woman to sit on the Supreme Court (93)
- Janet Reno becomes first woman U.S. Attorney General (93)
- The Food and Drug Administration announces that the French "abortion pill" RU-486, barred from the United States under Presidents Reagan and Bush, will be tested in clinical drug trials (93)
- Twenty-four year old manicurist Lorena Bobbitt cuts off her husband's penis; she says, after years of abuse - the incident draws widespread attention and commentary (93)
- Citadel military college in South Carolina admits female student, under court order (94)
- Widespread criticism of Hillary Clinton - that she is playing too large and too "nontraditional" as role as First Lady (92-94)