

Public Abstract

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Title:CAN WOMEN REALLY HAVE IT ALL? A TEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF THE PORTRAYAL OF MOTHERS IN GOOD HOUSEKEEPING, WOMANS DAY, AND FAMILY CIRCLE

Nearly half a century after the second wave of the feminist movement, women are still bombarded with stereotypical messages about the female's role in society. One of the most significant of these roles to examine is motherhood. In order to analyze the media's portrayal of mothers, a textual analysis was conducted on department and feature articles from three women's magazines: Good Housekeeping, Woman's Day, and Family Circle. Employing Berger and Luckmann's (1966) theory of the social construction of reality as well as ideological criticism rooted in feminism, this study sought to explore the influence of the feminist movement on the portrayal of mothers both today and during the 1970s.

The results indicate that the articles from 1973 were incorporating feminist ideology in the portrayals of mothers, but the trend among these articles was to balance progressive ideology with traditional stereotypes. The influence of feminism was more obvious and pervasive in the articles from 2008. Thirty-five years later, mothers are more independent and illustrated with a greater degree of authority in the home. However, there is still room in these magazines for a more accurate reflection of contemporary perceptions of both motherhood and parenting, which would ultimately further the status of women. With awareness, comes the ability to advance a greater social critique and disregard of disparaging stereotypes.