

CAN WOMEN REALLY HAVE IT ALL? A TEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF THE
PORTRAYAL OF MOTHERS IN *GOOD HOUSEKEEPING*, *WOMAN'S DAY*, AND
FAMILY CIRCLE

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ABSTRACT

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.

Introduction

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. In addition, the various layers and proponents of feminist ideology affix further confusion as to the roles women should hold in society. One of the most significant of these roles to examine is motherhood. "Mothering, in all its diverse forms, remains an important aspect of many women's lives and the decisions about whether, when, and how to mother continue to face almost all women" (DiQuinzio, 1999, p. xi). This includes feminists, who desire and support the desire to have children. Thus, "feminism cannot claim to give an adequate account of women's lives and to represent women's needs and interests if it ignores the issue of mothering" (p. xi).

In 1963, Betty Friedan upset the contemporary social order by suggesting that women across the country were unfulfilled by a life of domesticity in which they were relegated to caring, selflessly, for the family (Friedan, 1974, p. 16-24). This change in sociological perspective also applied to motherhood. For example, during the 1970s Adrienne Rich famously argued that motherhood could be viewed as both an 'experience' and 'institution.'

I try to distinguish between two meanings of motherhood, one superimposed on the other: the *potential relationship* of any woman to her powers of reproduction and to children; and the *institution* which aims at ensuring that that potential—and all women—shall remain under male control (as quoted in Eisenstein, 1983, p. 70).

Now, in the third wave of the feminist movement, motherhood is often viewed as a valuable life experience that women should not have to forgo as a result of personal beliefs in the equality of the sexes. “Perhaps in no other area of contemporary American society has social change been so rapid and far-reaching as women’s roles, attitudes, and self-awareness,” (Roland, 1979, p. 15).

In order to analyze such change, this study will seek to explore the differences in mediated messages concerning women’s roles related to motherhood from the 1970s and today. Specifically this study will look at the portrayal of mothers within the pages of women’s magazines, which play a key role in delivering and perpetuating social cues to the public and are thus an important subset of cultural phenomena to analyze and interpret. One of the questions this study will ask is whether forty some years later, in a time of greater social awareness of gender roles and stereotyping, mediated messages have incorporated the effects of the modern women’s movement?

As an influential contender in the field of American media, women’s magazines are powerful vehicles of communication. According to the Audit Bureau of Circulation, of the 40 titles classified under the genre women’s magazines, the top three most circulated in the U.S., *Good Housekeeping*, *Woman’s Day*, and *Family Circle* (in that order), had a combined total paid and verified circulation of 12,520,605 for the last six months in 2008. *Good Housekeeping* alone had a circulation of 4,684,811 (Access ABC.com, 2009). Because these magazines reach a large-scale audience, their potential influence in society is consequently great. Also, based on Berger and Luckmann’s (1967) theory on the social construction of reality, which explains that social norms are

constructed by society itself, it is important to study the most circulated, and potentially influential, titles within the genre that is being researched.

In a study on uses and gratifications of magazine readership, Payne, et al. (1988) found that a significant motivation of readership of consumer magazines, such as *Good Housekeeping*, *Woman's Day*, and *Family Circle*, is diversion, or an escape from the realities and complexities of daily life. An easy read, with little to no expertise required, women's magazines, are therefore attractive to a large section of the consumer market. Additionally, in order to succeed in the industry, women's magazines must market to the largest target audience possible, and subsequently maintain the status quo, which promises enhanced security in an often volatile market. The status quo, however, is often riddled with stereotypes and preconceived ideals about individuals' roles in society. An awareness and understanding of such stereotypes may encourage contemporary editors and designers of these magazines to make better-informed decisions in the portrayal of women. Also, by understanding that the text of women's magazines perpetuates stereotypes and unrealistic ideals, magazine consumers can take a critical approach to their consumption and question such attitudes. With awareness, comes the ability to advance a greater social critique and disregard of disparaging stereotypes.

In its heyday in the 1970s, the lifestyle magazine dominated newsstand sales within the genre of women's magazines. The "Seven Sisters": *Redbook*, *Ladies' Home Journal*, *Woman's Day*, *Family Circle*, *McCall's*, *Good Housekeeping*, and *Cosmopolitan/Better Homes and Gardens* (these titles are often substituted for one another depending on the source), were the go-to guides for women on raising families and caring for the home (Taft, 1982). Today, only six of the "Sisters" are still on

newsstands; *McCall's* eventually folded in the mid-90s. In order to examine evidence of shift in the perception of women's roles as demonstrated through these magazines, this study will look at editorial content within several issues from the 1970s as well as the content within the same titles in 2008. In 1978, Phillips pointed out that "Clues to changing norms and values in American society may be revealed via a comparison of the current crop of nonfiction heroines with magazines heroes and heroines of a past era" (p. 119).

Good Housekeeping, *Woman's Day*, and *Family Circle* are also the three most circulated women's magazines targeted to women with families. For instance, *Good Housekeeping* states that it tries to help women "save time, money and hassle as they manage their homes, their families, and their busy lives" (IMS Web Services, 2008). *Woman's Day* "is designed for how we live now—with a strong voice that serves up simple, but sound ideas about health, food, family, relationships, home and style" (Hachette Filipacchi Media U.S., 2009). And, *Family Circle* "celebrates today's family and champions the women at its center. Every page provides smart, practical solutions to help moms raise happy, healthy families" (Meredith Corporation, 2008). Thus, these magazines are particularly relevant to this study's analysis of the portrayal of mothers and the impact of feminist ideology on such portrayals over the span of thirty-five years.

Review of the Literature

Social construction of reality

An understanding that reality and its constructs, for example the roles of women, are socially constructed is an integral component to the study of the portrayal of mothers in women's magazines. Berger and Luckmann (1967) first introduced this theory in the mid-1960s. The two sociologists stated that most individuals take their 'reality' or 'knowledge' for granted — the average person does not theorize about reality unless specifically asked about some aspect of it (p. 2). Also, realities can differ depending on the context, so the validity of one person's, or multiple people's, 'reality' or 'knowledge' is irrelevant; Berger and Luckmann (1967) give the example of a Tibetan monk and an American businessman who clearly view the world differently, and who might make equally valid observations and conclusions from dramatically different environments (p. 3).

Social construction of reality and the media

Contingent to this theory is the idea that “all human 'knowledge' is developed, transmitted and maintained in social situations” (Berger & Luckmann, 1967, p. 3). The media then plays a critical role in establishing a reality. Baran and Davis (2000) point out that “active audience members use the media's symbols to define their environments and the things in it, but those definitions have little value unless they are shared by others” (p. 237). For example, the stereotype that women should be relegated to the home is an idea

perpetuated by some media outlets, and consumers of this message can use it in the construction of their reality. In their book *Mass Communication Theory*, Baran and Davis (2000) include a passage by Dennis Jaehne in which he relates this concept to “sensemaking.” The words and concepts presented by the media are the “flashlight” people use to see through the dark, or to make sense of their worlds, according to Jaehne (p. 236).

Also, Tan (1981) notes that “The crucial question is not so much how the media affect specific attitudes or behaviors but how they affect audience conceptions of social reality” (p. 253). Gallagher (1981) further argues that “the mass media as a cultural force do not simply reflect, but subtly and indirectly help to shape social reality” (p. 35). Thus, this study will not look at the effect that the presentation of women roles has on reader behavior, but instead will examine the messages within women’s magazines that can influence readers’ perception of society and its paradigms.

Writers and editors who are constructing reality based on socially prescribed standards play a key role in shaping such conceptions of existence. Because a magazine’s staff has control over the word choice, themes, tone, and voice of feature articles in women’s lifestyle magazines, it can determine what values and ideas will be presented to the reader and will eventually influence the reader’s conception of society. However, editors are often constrained by public opinion and financial responsibilities when determining editorial content. Editors must consider newsstand and subscription sales, which is reliant on the tastes and opinion of the overall public who will buy or not buy the magazine (Woseley, 1969, p. 206). Not to mention the opinions and preferences of advertisers, who serve a “crucial role in the fiscal survival of these magazines,” and thus

place an enormous amount of pressure on editors to please them (McCracken, 1993, p. 4). Thus, the editorial staff is in control of content in so far as they can sell the magazine and maintain advertising sales.

Yunjuan and Xiaoming (2007), for example, performed a study in which they questioned “whether mass media are agents of social change or reinforcers of the status quo” (283). The researchers looked at the portrayals of Chinese women over a 50-year period on covers of *Women of China*, China’s only English language women’s magazine that also serves as a publicity publication used to promote China’s gender ideology (p. 286). Yunjuan and Xiaoming (2007) found that the portrayal of women evolved over the years to fit the changing social climate. For example, there was a change in the presentation of women from masculine, de-feminized workers during China’s revolutionary era to more feminine individuals during the market-economy era (p. 294). Although this study presents interesting limitations, such as the magazine’s use as a tool to spread communist ideology, the researchers found that “the party ideology alone does not determine the content of *Women of China*, which is also conditioned by changes in the political, economic, and social structures of the Chinese society” (p. 294). Also, the magazine’s editorial staff, though given guidelines on what subject areas to highlight or downplay, reported that there was a significant amount of freedom in determining how content would be delivered to readers (p. 294). Therefore, even within governmental dictatorships, magazine editors have control over the manner in which information is presented and subsequently over the nuances and implicit messages that are transmitted to the public. On the other hand, these editors might exhibit self-censorship to conform to the status quo themselves.

Overall, the system is circular: members of society form an ideal that is used to construct a reality in which the media, drawing on that ideal, reinforces it through broad transmission. “To attract their audience, media need to reflect social reality in their content” (Yunjuan & Xiaoming, 2007, p. 294). Yet, the media is also responsible for transmitting messages back to society that are capable of reinforcing the status quo.

Gender Roles

Gender itself is more than an anatomical identification. It is a culturally constructed idea of what it means to be female or male (Ivy & Backlund, 2000, p. 7). “Culture, with its evolving customs, rules, and expectations for behavior, has the power to affect your perception of gender” (Ivy & Backlund, 2000, p. 7). For example, “Through mass media and other communication systems, women are currently inundated with material encouraging them to bear children” (Hooks, 2000, p. 136). Women bombarded with positive images of motherhood might be encouraged to have children despite a previous indifference or aversion to the role. Ivy and Backlund (2000) also give the cultural example of common gifts given to expectant parents — baseball mitts for boys and dolls for girls. It is ingrained within the social culture that boys, who are thought to be more active and aggressive, play sports, while girls, who are more nurturing and calm, practice to become mothers. Girls who deviate from this pattern are termed “tomboys,” where as the inherent maleness of boys who play with dolls might become suspect. This example supports the ideas of modeling and reinforcement. Gauntlett, 2002, p. 34) explains modeling is the imitation or adoption of behavior that people “observe in

same-sex role models,” whereas reinforcement is continued behavior as a result of social approval (p. 34).

As earlier mentioned, many scholars such as Ivy and Backlund (2000) believe that the concept of gender transcends inherent biological differences between men and women (p. 6-7). Although part of the concept of gender is a masculine or feminine identification, gender “also involves psychological makeup; attitudes, beliefs, and values; sexual orientation; and gender-role identity” (p. 7). These scholars often term the biological differences between the sexes as sex—“the biological/physiological characteristics that make us female or male” (p. 6).

Roles

For centuries gender has been defined, to a certain extent, by particular responsibilities and characteristics that society assigns to each sex. This idea of roles, “or the typification of one’s own and others’ performances” (Berger & Luckmann, 1967, p. 72), is integral in understanding the social construction of reality. Individuals rely on typified behavior to define the society within which they live. According to Berger and Luckmann (1967), “This implies that one shares with others specific goals and interlocking phases of performance, and, further, that not only specific actions but forms of action are typified” (p. 72). In other words, individuals within a category, women, for example, are considered to have certain roles pertaining to that category, e.g. childcare. Also, certain actions, such as taking care of the home, may become representative of all individuals in a category, so women in general become categorized as homemakers.

These roles help to define appropriate forms of behavior in society. “It can readily be seen that the construction of role typologies is a necessary correlate of the institutionalization of conduct” (p. 74). An individual’s socially determined function delineates the behavior necessary to uphold that society’s governing system — in America it is a system of capitalistic patriarchy. As long as men subscribe to their roles as the dominant breadwinners and women embody their roles as caretakers of the home and children, with or without the added responsibility of a career, a society steeped in male hegemony ensues. “By playing roles, the individual participates in a social world. By internalizing these roles, the same world becomes subjectively real to him” (p. 74).

Stereotypes

Such archetypes are comforting to people; appealing to the status quo alleviates uncertainty. If, however, individuals start to veer from the norm, i.e. working mothers and stay-at-home dads, the transmission of information, or communication, helps to quell uncertainty about new roles (Ivy & Backlund, 2000, p. 14-16). On the other hand, communication can facilitate social stereotypes. People use and communicate information to make sense of their world, and often the ideas that are being communicated are the most pervasive or widely believed views in society.

Ivy and Backlund (2000), for example, cite communication as the primary vehicle through which humans are socialized, or become inducted into society. Communication through “social institutions such as the family, religion, and education provide training grounds for ‘how to be’” (p. 69). Part of “how to be,” of course, is the idea that there are specified roles, or modes of behavior, for men and women, and all aspects of society play

a part in defining the appropriate roles for each gender. In women's magazines, women are often portrayed as passive and beautiful; these magazines depict "women whose broad characteristics are (mostly) white-skinned, thin, and young" (Byerly & Ross, 2006, p. 49).

A broad, over-generalization, or the "perpetuation of normative and impossible renditions of perfect femininity," (Byerly & Ross, 2006, p. 51), applied to everyone within a group of persons is also the definition of a stereotype, however. These social constructs may make it easier to create reality, but stereotypes are not applicable to every individual within a group and can be confining and restrictive.

Women's place is in the home

One of the most common stereotypes in American society is that of the woman as homemaker. From the early nineteenth century until the 1960s, "motherhood, in the United States, was considered a full-time job," (Seaman, 1979, p.11) which is ironic considering that parenting was considered a job shared by the entire family in most cultures in the time before the Industrial Revolution. The economic and logistical systems of the Industrial Revolution introduced the "The Cult of Domesticity" in which upper class women stayed at home to care for the children while the father worked outside the home and supported the family financially (p. 12). Seaman points out that "Of course, there were still mothers who worked outside the home, but the ideal in this country for some 130 years was to be a fulltime mother and manager of one's own children" (p. 12).

Much of the basis behind “The Cult of Domesticity” can also be attributed to biological differences between the sexes. For example, Shulamith Firestone describes four elements that helped form the foundation of this system:

(1) the physical dependency of women on men for survival, because of the debilitating effects of childbirth . . . ; (2) the long period of dependency of human infants; (3) the psychological effects of this ‘mother/child interdependency’; and (4) the division of labor between the sexes, based on the ‘natural reproductive difference’ between them (as quoted in Eisenstein, 1983, p. 16-17).

Women were, thus, relegated to the home, or private sphere, while men became associated with the public sphere – “the workplace, politics, religion in its institutional forms, intellectual and cultural life, and in general terms, the exercise of power and authority” (p. 20). This division of environments eventually became “a major, even universal characteristic of how men and women, maleness and femaleness, were viewed” (p. 20).

Changing roles

Perceptions of gender can change, however, with the introduction of new information (Ivy & Backlund, 2000, p. 7). As already noted, “Perhaps in no other area of contemporary American society has social change been so rapid and far-reaching as women’s roles, attitudes, and self- awareness” (Roland, 1979, p. 15). For example, an increasing number of women over the last half of the twentieth century are choosing careers over, or in addition to, the more typical role of housewife and mother. In 1970 the percentage of married mothers working outside the home was 39.7 percent; in 1995 that number rose to 70.2 percent (Gorman & Fritzsche, 2002, p. 2190). This is not to say that in choosing careers, women abandon typical female roles, but rather “they expand their

options and find new ways of seeing themselves in relation to others” (Ivy & Backlund, 2000, p. 8).

Sociologist Jessie Bernard famously claimed of feminism: “Once you ‘catch it,’ it makes all the difference in how you see the world” (Bannister, 2009, n.p.). Women in the twentieth century became privy to a greater wealth of knowledge and understanding about the possible roles women can have in society and began to demand change. For example, in the 1970s, working outside the home became a “solution to the oppressive confinement of domesticity and to the dependent situation of women in families” (Tilly & Scott, 1978, p. 2). Not to mention the economic necessity for women to enter the work force as U.S. became a de-industrialized nation. The feminist movement changed many women’s view of society and encouraged them to venture outside of previously prescribed social behavior.

It is important to note, however, the kinds of jobs women were taking outside of the home. In 1975, Deckard noted that women dominated domestic, clerical, and service (other than domestic, mostly waitresses) work. Deckard (1975) also points out that most women in the 1970s were elementary school teachers, waitresses, secretaries, domestic servants, or bookkeepers. Men, on the other hand, dominated the “well-paying occupations,” such as managers, proprietors, and foremen. (p. 87). “Almost all jobs sex-typed ‘for women only’ are low status, low pay, and dead-end in that experience brings little or no reward” (p. 87). Also, the work women did inside the home was not considered valid because “a product or service is only really ‘worth’ something if it is bought and sold for money in the market,” which is why women’s housework was not

included in the Gross National Product, though it was estimated in 1918, 1928, and 1968 as one fourth of the GNP (p. 77).

Deviating from the norm can cause social disapproval, however (Ivy & Backlund, 2000, p. 69). Gorman and Fritzsche (2002) looked at the public perception of working mothers among a group of 192 (135 females and 57 males) undergraduate students with a median age of 19 (p. 2193). The participants were asked to rate the commitment to motherhood and communality of women who either stopped working to raise children, interrupted a career to raise children, or continued working while raising children. Results showed that participants gauged the continuously employed mother as the least committed. Mothers who quit working for a time to raise children were not perceived as less committed or more selfish than mothers who stopped working permanently, which suggests that a motherhood mandate “remains in effect, but maybe to a lesser extent than it has in the past” (p. 2198). Also, dissatisfied working mothers were perceived as more committed to motherhood than satisfied working mothers, suggesting that, “a good mother stays at home or wishes that she did” (p. 2199). This study is limited in scope, however. More than two thirds of the participants were female, and the age range was limited to undergraduate college students. A sampling of older individuals, equally male and female, would most likely give a more accurate representation of the social perception of working mothers. Although, it can be argued that college students who are on the cusp of choosing a career, additional schooling, or possibly neither, and who have been socialized under ever changing gender constructs, are prime targets for such research.

In a similar study, Cooper, Arkkelin, and Tiebert (1994) studied the changing perceptions of career and marriage aspirations in relation to changes in gender roles. The researchers found that with a growing number of lifestyle options for men and women, the choices become more complex; specifically that gender roles are an important factor in career and marriage aspirations (p. 67). For example, individuals (both men and women) who measured high on a masculinity spectrum were associated with a greater need for achievement and dominance. Individuals who ranked higher on the femininity spectrum, on the other hand, were more closely associated with needs for equity, gender issues, and interpersonal sensitivity and expressiveness (p. 67). Although this data was used to suggest that a marriage between two highly masculine individuals has a higher rate of failure than perhaps a marriage between a more masculine individual and a more feminine individual, it is evident that scholarly research is attempting to explain the complexities of gender role identity, which is not limited to an individual role for each sex.

Feminism

Feminist theory encompasses numerous areas in the arts, humanities, and sciences, but at its core “Feminist theory seeks to analyze the conditions which shape women’s lives and to explore cultural understandings of what it means to be a woman” (Jackson & Jones, 1998, p. 1). This study will be looking at the cultural comprehension of womanhood specifically through women’s magazines. What nuanced messages do these magazines send regarding mother’s roles?

An important facet of feminist social theory is the idea that women's roles in society are partly determined by the reproduction process. In other words, a woman's genetic ability to gestate and give birth confines her to the home, where she will continue to nurture and raise the child. "The cult of domesticity, Darwinism, doctrines of sexual liberation and psychoanalytic theory successively defined woman's nature and capacities in such a way that for her to pursue a career was regarded as unnatural, doomed to failure, a guarantee of personal unhappiness, or all three at once" (Harris, 1979). Simone de Beauvoir argued that the female "reproductive capacity" alienated or separated the sex from men. De Beauvoir also famously coined this phenomenon "the Other" (Donovan, 1985, p. 122-123). "De Beauvoir speculates that woman's identity as Other and her fundamental alienation derive in part from her body — especially her reproductive capacity — and in part from the prehistoric division of labor dictated by the child bearing and rearing function" (p. 123). Women are constrained by their reproductive role, whereas "the male is not tied down by such inherently physical events" (p. 123). The second wave of the feminist movement, however, began to seriously question women's socially prescribed role as housewife and in turn began to legitimize women as individuals capable of success beyond raising a family.

Second and third wave feminism

The feminist movement of the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries is commonly divided into three time frames called waves. This study is concerned with the second and third waves, which originated during the 1960s and the early 1990s respectively, though exact dates are ambiguous within the literature. There is much scholarly debate over the

ideological differences between these two waves, and even within the waves. Some scholars state that third wave feminism is a reaction to the rigid ideals of the second wave (Snyder, 2008, p. 176). Others point to the obvious generational differences as a main cause for ideological disparity. For example, women of the third wave, who “face a world colonized by the mass media and information technology” are more interested in cultural representations rather than a political critique of the female role (p. 178). Snyder (2008) argues, however, that third-wavers commonly “overemphasize their distinctiveness” (p. 181). That in actuality, these two factions of the same movement share many of the same fundamental ideals. Nevertheless, both waves contain specific nuances, which are important to the purposes of this study.

The second wave

The second wave evolved during a time of great social upheaval including the civil rights movement, gay activism, and the peace movement. “It was a period of incredible energy and excitement generated by an optimistic belief in the possibility of radical social change” (Jackson & Jones, 1998, p. 3). The contentious social environment was not only an influence of the women’s movement it was also evident within the movement itself. There were several factions of feminism during this time period; from radical feminism to Marxist feminism, supporters of the overall movement throughout the Western world held various views as to the nature and tone the movement should take (p. 4). At the core of most of these splinter groups, however, was a desire to invalidate the ideas of sexual difference that confined women to the home. Friedan wrote about “the problem that has no name,” or the dissatisfaction that many housewives of the 50s and

60s felt toward their wifely duties (Friedan, 1974, p. 19-20). In 1962, the results of a Gallup poll showed that 90 percent of surveyed housewives did not want the same life for their daughters (Deckard, 1975, p. 324).

In 1963, the year Freidan published *The Feminine Mystique*, Congress passed the Equal Pay Act, and the President's Commission on the Status of Women was publicized. This report was instrumental in its call for equal opportunity in employment but impractical in that it did not list methods to enforce such policy. The report also stated that the ERA was not necessary because the Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments provided ample foundation for the equality of women (Deckard, 1975, p. 326). Although the 1960s continued to see passage of federal law in favor of women's equality, its enforcement was lax, and in 1966 the National Organization of Women (NOW) was formed as a response (p. 328-329). "NOW is generally classified as a moderate, 'establishment' women's group, and most of its members seem to be respectable, middle-class women" (p. 330). However, the organization suffered internal bureaucratic contention, and many women broke off from the group to promote a more radical movement (p. 331).

Despite some discontent within the movement, equal rights for women became a pervasive idea throughout the 1960s and 70s. Women publicly disparaged the assumption that members of their sex were, "'natural' mothers, wives, cooks, and housekeepers" (Garskof, 1971, p. 2). Instead, women deserved a place in the world along with men, and proponents of the women's movement called for a change in social conditions that would subsequently allow every individual, man or woman "develop their full human potential" (p. 3). In other words, women believed themselves capable of achieving success outside

the home and family, and that the biological qualities that separate women from men may in fact benefit society.

Also, the debate over the passage of the ERA provided a public platform in which to discuss women's rights, something the third wave lacks despite the benefits of technological advances and social networking. Even women's magazines published articles supporting the ERA after *Redbook's* editor Sey Chassler convinced other editors to band together in promoting the campaign (Critchlow, 2005, p. 232). For ten years, supporters and critics of the ERA disputed the passage of the amendment, which was eventually ratified by thirty five of the requisite thirty eight states, and therefore never added to the Constitution (Nicholas, Price, & Rubin, 1986, p. 19).

The third wave

The term "third wave" became part of popular feminist lingo after the publication of Rebecca Walker's article "Becoming the Third Wave," which appeared in *Ms.* in 1992. The article was a reaction to the Anita Hill and Clarence Thomas hearings and the subsequent public discussions about feminism in America. *The Encyclopedia of Third-Wave Feminism* marks 1991 as the year this wave of the feminist movement began (Heywood, 2006, p. xv-xxiii).

Research on the overall movement is contentious, however. As earlier mentioned, it is debated whether the third wave is a reaction to the second wave or simply reinvigoration of the movement with variations in ideology and message to accommodate the changing social climate (xv). Part of this debate stems from the fact that "third-wave feminism has never had a monolithically identifiable, single-issue agenda that

distinguishes it from other movements for social justice” (p. xx). Gender equality is just one of the issues that the third wave addresses; many followers of the movement believe that the environment, economy, and social justice cannot be ignored for the sake of women’s and gender issues (p. xx). Also, as earlier mentioned, the third wave has never had a unifying principle, like the passage of the ERA, to champion or to help publicize its agenda.

Heywood (2006) states that the third wave can be divided into three stages: early third wave, from approximately 1991-1995; third wave during the dot com era, from 1995-2000; and the third wave today, from 2000 to present day (p. xv-xxi). Currently, however, it is often undesirable to be labeled a feminist (Ivy & Backlund, 2000, p. 10). Contemporary young women do not want to be associated with the “angry, radical, bra-burning, man-hating, humorless, masculine women storming out of the headquarters of the National Organization for Women (NOW) to try to gain superiority over men” (p. 10).

Jenen, Winquist, Arkkelin, and Schuster (2008) found that in testing people according to the Implicit Association Test (IAT), in which participants are timed in their responses to word associations, there was an implicitly negative and masculine bias towards feminists (p. 14). Jenen et. al. (2008) had the 68 participants (45 women, 21 men, and two of unreported gender) categorize typically feminine and typically masculine related words under the categories traditionalist or feminist, or participants matched good (happy, peace, joy) or bad (evil, awful, nasty) words with the two categories. The researchers found that the participants were faster at pairing bad words with the category feminist rather than good words with that category. Also, participants were quicker to

pair good words and words with feminine connotations with traditionalist than they were to pair traditionalist with bad words and words with masculine connotations. This study demonstrates the implicit social negativity towards feminism and the subsequent desire of individuals to distance themselves from a feminist label. “People are generally unwilling to associate themselves with a marginalized social group because they fear this would put them at a social disadvantage” (p.15).

This idea contributes to the modern paradox that many women today may subscribe to and endorse feminist ideology, but they are apprehensive to call themselves feminists. However, Jenen et. al. (2008) point out that “This incongruity of simultaneously endorsing feminist ideals while avoiding self-identification as a feminist is a serious impediment to achieving the goals of feminism” (p. 14). When individuals detach themselves from an ideology they believe in, those beliefs become diluted and less powerful.

Thus, although feminists today are still concerned with promoting ideology of the movement, these individuals are more conscious of and careful in their methods of doing so. “What really differentiates the third wave from the second is the tactical approach it offers to some of the impasses that developed within feminist theory in the 1980s” (Snyder, 2008, p. 175). For example, feminists of the third wave are more inclined to exhibit signs of their femininity and to declare themselves the equals of men — they embrace cultural “girlie” icons rather than scorning them as tools of the patriarchy. “In contrast to their perception of their mothers’ feminism, third-wavers feel entitled to interact with men as equals, claim sexual pleasure as they desire it (heterosexual or otherwise), and actively play with femininity” (p 179). This idea is important when

examining mediated images of women in the twenty-first century. Images and editorial content that look like antiquated, post-war feministic portrayals may actually be a result of this acceptance of femininity as power.

Another key difference between the third-wavers and their predecessors is their emphasis on the individual. Rather than focusing on the collective experience of being a woman, proponents of the third wave are keen to analyze individual experiences, which accommodate a greater variety of gender issues, i.e. homosexuality and transgenderism. “Because it responds to a fragmented postmodern world that has moved beyond grand narratives like Marxism and radical feminism, third-wave feminism does not attempt to present a unified vision with which every woman can agree” (p. 188).

Also integral to this study, is the difference in views on motherhood between second and third wave feminists. A popular argument during the second wave was that motherhood could often be construed as a means by which the dominating patriarchal society could subjugate women (Eisenstein, 1983, p. 71). Many third wavers, however, are now apt to deem “mothering as a strength rather than a weakness of women” (Arneil, 1999, p. 201). For example, Arneil (1999) quotes a third-wave feminist who states that there is more to motherhood than a means of domination:

‘For me, that ‘something more’ means being part of another tradition, the eternally connective tradition of motherhood. For me, having this child won’t be an impediment, but a channel through which I feel connected to other women, other mothers, other wives who have placed family at the head of their self-concept without feeling they’ve lost themselves’ (Arneil, 1999, p. 202).

Public figures such as former vice presidential candidate Sarah Palin are also changing the image of motherhood. For a mother of five to run on a presidential ticket, illustrates

the advancement that mothers have made in the past thirty-five years, especially because a large component of Palin's appeal to many in America was the fact that she was a working mother. However, Palin was still challenged by many who questioned her ability to raise five children and manage the responsibilities of vice president, a question that, no doubt, would not be asked of her male counterparts.

Feminism and the media

The feminist movement has been greatly influenced by the media (Tuchman, Daniels, & Benet, 1978, p. v). Gauntlett (2002) argues that media influences are significant because of the vast proliferation of TV, magazines, the Internet, movies, etc. throughout society; for example, "people in Europe and the USA typically spend three or four hours per day watching TV. That's a lot of information going into people's heads – even if they don't see it as 'information', and even if they say they're not really paying much attention to it" (p. 2). Gauntlett (2002) also argues that the media provides examples of behavior, which "could hardly fail to affect our own way of conducting ourselves, and our expectations of other people's behavior" (p. 2).

Contingent on these ideas, is Gallagher's (2001) argument that "In a world in which the media increasingly provide the 'common ground' of information, symbols and ideas for most social groups, women's representation in the media helps to keep them in a place of relative powerlessness" (p. 3). In relation to women's magazines, however, many scholars argue that this medium has incorporated feminist ideology, but they still "offer a confusing and contradictory set of ideas" (Gauntlett, 2002, p. 205). In an email survey of women's magazine readers, Gauntlett (2002) found that "most readers agreed that the

magazines communicated a picture of assertive, independent women,” but the magazines’ emphasis on women’s image and appearance harkened back to traditional portrayals of the sex (p. 205-206).

Scholars also acknowledge that discrepancies in feminist ideology among generations of women may result in paradoxical representations of women in the media today. For example, Gauntlett (2002) points out that “since feminism ‘has become both common sense and a sign of female adult authority’ ... the young female readers and writers have ‘a desire to be provocative to feminism’” (p. 207). In other words, younger generations of women are challenging established feminist doctrine just as earlier feminists challenged the patriarchal status quo.

Similarly, during the late 1960s and early ’70s, the movement received much attention in the mass media, and “much of the media’s coverage of the movement was critical” (Carden, 1974, p. 32). However, “the publicity caused many women to look into the movement” (p. 32). Thus, despite the idea that “The societal need for continuity and transmission of dominant values may be particularly acute in times of rapid social change,” many women in the ’60s and ’70s were ironically introduced and influenced by the media’s castigation of feminist ideology (Tuchman, 1978, p. 3).

Representations of women in the media

With more outlets than ever before, mediated representations of women have become an increasingly important aspect of the study of women’s role in society (Byerly & Ross, 2006, p. 18). Also, because, as many scholars believe, “the mass media as a cultural force do not simply reflect, but subtly and indirectly help to shape social reality”

(Gallagher, 1981, p.35), representations of women in the media are influential in people's construction of gender roles. Another popular theory suggests that the media reinforces traditional beliefs and views because of the patriarchal system behind most media conglomerations (Byerly & Ross, 2006, p. 75-78). The "pressure to deal in known and accepted images and contents" and wide audiences, with equally wide points of view, compel media outlets to gear their messages and products toward the broadly established status quo in order to survive as a viable entity (Gallagher, 1981, p.36).

For instance, now, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, though news and feature stories about women are more broad and encompassing, "there are worrying trends" (Byerly & Ross, 2006, p. 37). Byerly and Ross (2006) cite the commodification of women's bodies as a growing dilemma in the portrayal of women in the media. Depicting the "appropriate" female build, or "the 'proper' ways of looking and being female," is an implicit system to instill and continue gender inequalities (p. 37). Pressures to be thin in order to succeed in a career or love are uniquely female; in an increasingly weight-conscious society men may face body image insecurity, but idyllic body types are more pervasively focused toward women. On the other hand, some scholars argue that the developments of the feminist movement have transcended in the media: "there are indications that even in the most traditional magazines there is some hesitant recognition of feminist aims and issues, and that alternatives to domestic images of women are being gradually incorporated into traditional formats" (p. 43). Such disagreement is ripe for further research and analysis.

Women's magazines

In terms of their content, women's magazines are often considered fluff, with information on shopping, fashion, dieting, and other ostensibly trivial subjects. Because of their wide appeal, and because "women's magazines are, of course, all about the social construction of womanhood today" (Gauntlett, 2002, p. 187), these magazines, as well as the messages that they present to readers, are important vehicles of communication to research and analyze.

Since its inception, the genre that is women's magazines has "traditionally fallen short of providing empowering images of women" (Hardin, Lynn, & Walsdorf, 2005, p. 106). Instead these magazines, for the most part, have reinforced 'sexual difference,' which is premised on the idea that the media perpetuates disparities between the sexes in order to reinforce a patriarchal society (p. 106). Phillips argued in 1978 that women's magazines, unlike men's magazines, are more homogenous in terms of their themes and subject matter. "Magazines edited primarily for men run the gamut of leisure-time and work interests, from *Sports Illustrated*, *Motor Trend*, *Gun World*, *Popular Mechanics*, *Fortune*, *Playboy*, and *Esquire* to adult publications such as *Stag*," Phillips (1978) said. "But women's magazines remain largely in the narrow fashion-food-home mold" (p. 117); thus, suggesting that women were pigeon holed by the media into stereotypical representations.

Betty Friedan famously challenged the construction of women's magazines in *The Feminine Mystique*. Friedan upset the contemporary social order by suggesting that domesticated housewives were unhappy and unfulfilled with their roles — what she coined the "feminine mystique" (Friedan, 1974 p. 16-24). However, Friedan went even

further in suggesting that “the central culprit in the construction and maintenance of the feminine mystique is the popular women’s magazine” (Aronson, 2000, p. 111).

Representation of the female in women’s magazines

During the 1970s, the portrayal of women in women’s magazines began to reflect the change in the social climate. As the women’s movement grew stronger, women’s magazines began to include feminist ideology, if only subtly. “This, obviously, reflects the changing role of women in today’s society, with considerable reaction to the ERA and *Ms.* Movements, as well as the entry into the nation’s work force of millions of women who formerly considered their roles to be home-bound” (Taft, 1982, p. 101).

During the early 1970s, women’s rights activists stormed the office of *Ladies’ Home Journal* editor John Mack Carter and insisted the magazine devote more space to feminist ideologies. Carter agreed to eight pages of editorial space in the next issue for the women to write about their message (p. 103).

Despite these advances, many scholars writing in the 1970s were hesitant to note a dramatic change in the portrayal of women in these magazines. “All women’s magazines ultimately project a similar image of women’s feminine characteristics. Supportive of others and concerned with emotional well being, woman supposedly strives to please. When she fails to cater to the concerns of others, she is politely damned” (Tuchman, Daniels, & Benet, 1978, p. 93). In 1973, Roland Wolseley wrote that “The American female from girlhood on has been encouraged by these periodicals to believe in certain circumstances as normal and to be taken for granted — for example, that the primary goal is to be taken care of by a man, preferably through marriage” (p. 109).

Tuchman (1979) argued that though women's magazines had made strides in presenting a new image of the modern woman, this image was in reality a new way of looking at old conventions. In addition to managing the household, women during the '70s were portrayed with successful careers and breaking barriers into areas in which they were previously excluded. Tuchman (1979) noted that the desire to "climb the corporate ladder" was, and is, ironically, an extension of the very system that regards women as inferior. In rising to the top, women must yield to the dominating, or in America the patriarchal, structure that favors men. In an interesting parallel to magazines, Tuchman (1979) described that women in positions of authority at publishing companies were often unwilling to risk their jobs to subvert the patriarchal order; in other words, women were ironically perpetuating unfavorable stereotypes of themselves in order to maintain their careers.

In 1978, Phillips examined the manner in which changing social values impact the representation of women in women's magazines through a content analysis of *Family Circle* and *Ms.* Specifically, Phillips (1978) looked at the professions and social backgrounds of the represented women, whom she terms heroines, in these two magazines from 1974 to 1976 (p. 119). The research indicated that of the women portrayed in *Family Circle*, 61 percent were classified under the occupation category housewifery and mothercraft. Phillips (1978) defined these women as those "whose fame or status derives from their husband's fame or fortune (e.g., Betty Ford) and those whose claim to fame rests on domestic service to the rich or powerful" (p. 120). Twenty eight percent of the women in *Family Circle* were classified under the business and professional category. Another six percent of the women were classified under popular

arts and sport. The last six percent were classified under other, which includes “women who have attained notoriety for their feminist stands or sexual identity (e.g., Jan Morris), and a young girl who exemplified personal courage in the face of physical disability” (p. 120). The women in *Ms.*, however, were largely classified under political life and public service, at 48 percent. Nineteen percent of the women in *Ms.* were classified as having occupations in the ‘serious arts,’ 16 percent under business and professional, nine percent under other, and eight percent under popular arts and sport (p. 120).

The significant findings were that *Ms.* had zero representations of housewives or domesticated women in the two years of issues studied. Also, the relatively high percentage of women in the business and professional category for both magazines is representative of the changing social climate at the time (p. 121-122). Phillips (1978) concluded that “While the majority of *Family Circle* women remain tied to homespun activities and a narrow world of self-centered and family concerns, *Ms.*’s women think about Great Issues and participate in Social Welfare” (p. 123-124). Additionally, although *Ms.* projected progressive representations of women, the magazine was read by 95 percent fewer readers than *Family Circle*, and its readers, mostly of the upper middle class, held “a minority cultural view” (p. 124). This study presented interesting, if somewhat obvious, findings for the time. The more widely read magazine continued the status quo, while the magazine geared toward a specific subsection of the population could take risks in its representation of women.

Decades later, the portrayal of women’s roles in society is still a contentious issue and substantial fodder for academic study. “The image of a single-minded medium dead set on sabotaging the helpless dupes who keep consuming it has persisted for

decades virtually unchanged” (Aronson 2000, p. 111). Yet, some scholars argue that “of the major areas in magazine publishing, more changes have occurred within the women’s field than in all others” (Taft, 1982, p. 101). So which is it? Are some scholars oblivious to a change in the representation of women in these magazines, or are other scholars looking for progression that does not exist? Are women portrayed much differently in women’s magazines now in the twenty-first century than they were in the 1970s shortly after Friedan’s criticism of the medium? Or are contemporary representations more of the same with subtle alterations to account for changes in the social order?

As late as 1993, Doner noted that within this genre, “Many articles reinforce the idea that it’s a woman’s job to make sure that her world — including her husband, children and work — is running smoothly. By implication, they suggest that if life is not satisfactory, it’s her fault” (p.37-38). However, within the same article, Doner (1993) goes on to say that women’s magazines, overall, do not degrade women; rather many of these magazines contain feminist ideology, and subsequently help to promote such ideas in society. As earlier mentioned, feminist ideology of the ’90s hinged on the ability to progress equal rights for women while at the same time exuding a sense of femininity. For example, women’s health issues, abortion, sexual harassment, and violence against women were all topics covered by major women’s magazines in the 90s (Doner, 1993, p. 40).

Current literature suggests, however, that in framing women’s health issues, “women’s magazines reinforced and idealized traditional feminine stereotypes of women as caretakers” (Barnett, 2006, p. 1). Despite the popular belief that these magazines broach important health topics pertaining to women and thus promote knowledgeable and

empowered women in charge of their own well being, women's magazines are also accused of framing such information in manners that support the patriarchal system. In order to analyze the framing of women's health news, Barnett (2006) performed a qualitative and quantitative analysis of 10 women's magazines (*Cosmopolitan*, *Curve*, *Essence*, *Girls' Life*, *Jane*, *Ladies' Home Journal*, *Latina*, *Marie Claire*, *Ms.*, and *Redbook*), all purchased on the same day but ranging in dates from December 2000 to February 2001. Barnett (2006) found that articles about health issues comprised 12 percent of the non-fiction articles within the magazines studied. Topics discussed were, "broad and diverse, covering emotional as well as physical health, and situating health in the broader context of women's multiple roles as income-earners, homemakers, mothers, daughters, wives, and lovers" (p. 5). Sexual/reproductive health and diet and exercise were the two most common topics covered within the health articles (p. 5). The main theme within all the articles was that health is work: "Health was a quality women could attain if they were alert, knowledgeable, and proactive, and women's job was to make choices that could improve their own health as well as the health of those they loved" (p. 6).

Overall, women were portrayed as responsible for the state of their wellbeing, which in turn affects the well being of their families. On the one hand, this can be interpreted as empowering to women because it is stating that women should be given knowledge about their health and they should take control of it. On the other hand, this can be seen as an extension of traditional female roles of women as caretakers and nurturers. For example, the magazines offered advice on how women could become better caretakers, which further enforces stereotypical roles.

The findings from Barnett's (2006) study are helpful in studying the portrayals of mothers in 1973 and 2008. Are *Good Housekeeping*, *Woman's Day*, and *Family Circle* incorporating feminist ideology in current portrayals of mothers, and did these magazines do so in 1973? Or, did/do these magazines employ stereotypes of women's roles in their depictions of mothers? In order to analyze such portrayals, this study asked the following questions:

RQ1: How are the portrayals of mothers in *Good Housekeeping*, *Woman's Day*, and *Family Circle* from 2008 affected by feminist ideology?

RQ2: How are the portrayals of mothers in *Good Housekeeping*, *Woman's Day*, and *Family Circle* from 1973 affected by feminist ideology, and how do these portrayals compare to 2008?

Methodology

In order to analyze the portrayal of mothers in women's magazines, a textual analysis was conducted on articles within *Good Housekeeping*, *Woman's Day*, and *Family Circle*. Together these magazines have a total paid, verified, and analyzed non-paid circulation of 12,520,605. *GH*, *Woman's Day*, and *Family Circle* were also widely read during the 1970s and were among the popular go-to lifestyle guides for women that dominated newsstand sales during this time period (Taft, 1982). Because this study aims to examine the transmission of feminist ideology through women's magazines, it is imperative that the studied magazines be influential not only now but 35 years ago during the second wave of feminism (Jackson and Jones, 1998).

Good Housekeeping, which is published by Hearst, markets itself as "the brand women can trust." According to the magazine's mission statement:

Modern women trust *Good Housekeeping* to help them save time, money, and hassle as they manage their homes, their families, and their busy lives. We take a whole-life approach to their complex needs, delivering actionable, solution-driven content that is relevant, entertaining, inspiring, and always backed by the authority of the *Good Housekeeping* Research Institute and its iconic Seal" (IMS Web Services, 2008).

As earlier mentioned, *GH* had the highest total paid and verified circulation of any women's magazine in 2008, according to the Audit Bureau of Circulation. Also in 2008, the magazine reported 21,031,000 female readers and 2,788,000 male readers. The average age of the female readers was 51.1, and more than half of female readers were employed, which the magazine's media kit defines as either "working mother" (5,276,000) or "professional/managerial" (4,830,000). More than half of *Good*

Housekeeping female readers were also married (12,811,000), and slightly more than a third were classified as mothers (7,460,000) (IMS Web Services, 2008).

The second most widely circulated women's magazine, *Woman's Day*:

captivates more than 22 million readers by inspiring them to Live Well Every Day. *Woman's Day* is designed for how we live now — with a strong voice that serves up simple, but sound ideas about health, food, family, relationships, home and style. A streamlined look and integrated media capabilities reflect both the sensibility of our readers and our editorial commitment to fresh thinking. *Woman's Day* is truly an indispensable guide to living the best day possible (Hachette Filipacchi Media U.S., 2009).

According to the magazine's online media kit, *Woman's Day*, published by Hachette Filipacchi, had a female "audience" of 21,070,000 with an average age of 50 in 2008. Fifty seven percent of readers were employed, and 23 percent were termed "working mothers."

Family Circle, a Meredith publication, reported 19,015,000 readers, 100 percent of whom were female, in 2008. Almost 59 percent of readers were married, and about 56 percent of readers were employed either full or part time. The median age of readers was 51. Thirty three point six percent of readers were classified as "parents," which, considering the magazine's 100 percent female readership, translates to mothers.

According to the magazine's mission statement:

Family Circle celebrates today's family and champions the women at its center. Every page provides smart, practical solutions to help moms raise happy, healthy families. With a particular emphasis on the concerns and issues faced by mothers of tweens and teens, *Family Circle* fills a void as the only family service magazine. *Family Circle* delivers essential advice for tough parenting challenges; provides fun suggestions for family activities; offers healthy and delicious recipes; and showcases projects to create a comfortable home. *Family Circle* helps readers look and feel their best by delivering the latest health, diet and fitness news, and beauty and fashion tips (Meredith Corporation, 2008).

It is important to note that among all three magazines, the average reader is a working class woman at least 50 years old.

Textual analysis

At its core, “Language is a social institution, made up of rules and conventions that have been systematized, that enables us to speak (or, more broadly, to communicate)” (Berger, 2005, p.15). Thus, examining the language, or text, within women’s magazines will likely reveal the product of social constructs like gender roles. Textual analysis is “for those researchers who want to understand the ways in which members of various cultures and subcultures make sense of who they are, and of how they fit into the world in which they live” (McKee, 2003, p. 1). In other words, textual analysis allows researchers to interpret beyond the superficial meaning(s) of a text, and when combined with social context and ideology, this type of analysis can lead to significant interpretations and understandings of society. Gallagher (2001) states that, “It is usually necessary to dig more deeply to reveal the nuances that contribute to particular patterns in gender representation” (p. 123).

Thus, the research in this study consisted of an analysis of the “complexity and subtlety” of editorial content (Gallagher, 2001, p. 123). Larsen (1991) explains that writing, which is more than just a compilation of facts, carries significant meanings and underlying ideologies from the texts within which it is contained (p. 122). “Documents, then enable us to (a) place symbolic meaning in context, (b) track the process of its creation and influence on social definitions, (c) let our understanding emerge through

detailed investigation, and (d) if we desire, use our understanding from the study of documents to change some social activities, including the production of certain documents” (Altheide, 1996, p. 12).

This study, however, does not seek to prove accuracy in editorial content. Instead, this type of analysis will help “to understand the ways in which these forms of representation take place, the assumptions behind them and the kinds of sense-making about the world that they reveal” (McKee, 2003, p. 17). The purpose of this study is to analyze the content of magazine articles to evaluate and describe the portrayal of mothers.

Ideological criticism

In order to analyze the text in this study, the author also employed ideological criticism rooted in feminist theory. “In an ideological analysis, the critic looks beyond the surface structure of an artifact to discover the beliefs, values, and assumptions it suggests” (Foss, 2008, p. 209). An ideology is a set of “evaluative beliefs” that work to make sense of and promote a particular issue (p. 210). Feminism, for example, is often considered a belief system aimed at removing power structures or “relations of domination” for all people (p. 213). Scholars “employ feminist or ideological criticism to discover how the rhetorical construction of identity markers such as gender are used as a justification for domination, how such domination is constructed as natural, and how that naturalness can be challenged” (p. 213). Therefore, considering Berger and Luckmann’s (1967) social construction of reality, ideological criticism is a pertinent methodology for this study.

Foss (2008) describes a four-step procedure for analyzing artifacts using ideological criticism:

(1) identifying the presented elements of the artifact; (2) identifying the suggested elements linked to the presented elements; (3) formulating an ideology; and (4) identifying the functions served by the ideology” (p. 214).

The first and second steps in Foss’s (2008) methodology consist of identifying “the rhetorical aspects of the artifact that provide clues to its ideology” by coding for observable and suggested elements in the artifacts (p. 214-216). Because of this study’s foundation in feminist criticism, which is “ideological criticism with a particular interest in gender,” the author identified elements related to “women and men” as well as “femininity and masculinity” (p. 216). Therefore, some of the observable elements that were coded for were the sex of the author, the appearance of males in an article, and terms such as housewife and stay-at-home mom. Suggested elements, on the other hand, are more implicit and encompass such things as “ideas, references, themes, allusions, or concepts that are suggested by the presented elements;” in other words, elements that are not apparent without conceptualized questioning of the text (p. 216).

For example, while looking at gender representations in an agricultural magazine in England, Morris and Evans (2001) constructed a thematic typology to “facilitate a more critical reading of the articles” (p. 379). Morris and Evans (2001) determined one theme to be operating a business, and within this theme, it was found that women, over time, were not portrayed as influential in the business of farming. One article, for example, depicted a husband and wife who started a post office out of their farm. The post office was the wife’s idea, and it is she who runs the office most of the time. The

husband, however, is the self-described “post master,” and he handles the economics of the office (p. 383).

In formulating an ideology for this study, elements from the articles were organized into categories or overarching themes. Throughout the research, four themes became the most predominant and comprehensive when looking at the influence of feminist ideology on the portrayal of mothers: proactive mothers, father figures a role, glory of motherhood, and motherhood exposed. Each of these themes helped “to analyze the conditions which shape women’s lives and to explore cultural understandings of what it means to be a woman,” especially within the context of being a mother (Jackson & Jones, 1998, p. 1).

For example when analyzing proactive mothers, women who act and carry out plans autonomously, it was evident that in 1973 and 2008 the magazine articles were making strides to portray mothers as more independent and capable. Similarly, in exploring the roles that men, in the form of husbands and fathers, played in these articles there was evidence that sexual equality, though it was making inroads into the text, is not a completely realized concept in *Good Housekeeping*, *Woman’s Day*, and *Family Circle* as late as 2008. Also, within the glory of motherhood theme, there were striking differences in the appreciation of the role between 1973 and 2008, which made clear that feminist ideology itself changed over the 35 five years. And, when looking at the extent to which articles in both decades would expose the realities of motherhood, it became evident that mothers in 2008 are more willing to admit the negative aspects of the role.

When organizing the elements into themes, the author asked several questions of the articles.

For example:

What does the article explicitly say (i.e. what is the article's thesis)? What can be inferred from the article? Who is the article talking to (i.e. "parents" or specifically mothers)? What is the tone of the article, and how does this affect the article's address of the readers? Which characters in the article are dominant – the mother, the father, or is there a shared responsibility and influence? Who is telling the story, an "expert" or a real life mother?

Artifacts

The artifacts in this study are articles from *Good Housekeeping*, *Woman's Day* and *Family Circle*. Before beginning any in depth research, the author took a precursory look at a year's worth of issues from each magazine from 2008 and 1973 to get an idea of the format and style of the articles. The text from both 2008 and 1973 consisted of a mix of longer form narratives and shorter blurb-advice column articles.

To analyze the portrayal of mothers in these magazines, the author examined articles that were focused on mothers, parenting issues and the family. Specifically, the author examined four articles from each magazine from the years 2008 and 1973 for a total of 24 articles. The year 2008 is the most recent full year of issues to analyze, and 1973 is the first full year after Congress passed the ERA and sent the amendment to the states for ratification. Also, the first regular issue of *Ms.* magazine, "the first national magazine to make feminist voices audible, feminist journalism tenable, and a feminist worldview available to the public" (*Ms.* Website, 2008), was published in July of 1972. Hence, 1973 is the first full year that would allow for possible influences of a major feminist magazine.

On average, each issue of *GH*, *Woman's Day*, and *Family Circle* from 2008 and 1973, consisted of about 30 articles and included topics such as food, gardening, needlework, fashion, health, diet, travel, and marital relationships. In order to establish a broad range of issues and topics regarding mothers, relevant articles were chosen as they appeared throughout the year. For example, from 2008, the author chose four articles from the January, February, April and June issues of *Good Housekeeping* because this selection allowed for the greatest variety in subject matter.

Analysis

As already noted, once a preliminary examination of the articles was completed, the author analyzed the articles more rigorously and began to code the text for overarching themes. During this period of analysis, three article/story archetypes were established: 1. problem-solution; 2. family improvement; and 3. exemplary mothers. The problem-solution articles usually begin with a dilemma and throughout the story or article a solution will arise. For example, in the April 17, 2008 issue of *Family Circle*, an article entitled “Bad company” begins with a mother’s brief personal account of her apprehension over one of her son’s newest friends Kyle, who is “sullen, avoids eye contact” and smokes cigarettes (Westen, 2008, p. 48). The narrator and mother is uncertain whether she should maintain her “open-door policy” with her son’s friends or whether she should become “a guardian at the gate,” which she fears will anger her son and create distance between mother and son (p. 48).

What follows is a series of paragraphs or blurbs with advice from experts and university studies as well as the mother’s continuing narrative of how she dealt with her dilemma. The blurbs have subheads like “Remind yourself your kid can hold his own” and “Go with the flow, Mom.” In the end, the mother follows the advice of the experts, and both she and her son are better for it; everything is seemingly resolved, or at least the mother now knows how to handle this type of situation should it come up again. Several articles from 2008 include the same reassuring tone and empathetic attitude. A number of

problem-solution articles from 1973, on the other hand, incorporate tones rife with condescension.

The second type of article focuses on family improvement often in the form of guides and how to's. Topics covered anything from bringing the family closer together with family dinners to the beneficial impact of mothers going back to school. The primary thesis of these articles was to demonstrate methods to enhance a family's well being. For example, in the April 1973 issue of *Woman's Day*, an article entitled "The most important things a parent can teach a little child" listed 10 "skills" every child needs before "he" begins school (p. 44). The article is written by Eda LeShan, a "family life specialist," who became "increasingly alarmed" at the manner in which parents were preparing their children for school, so she lists a series of skills that she believes are more important for children to master before they enter a classroom (LeShan, 1973, p. 44). Articles within this second category are often closely related to the problem-solution type of article, and similar differences in tone are also evident.

The third type of article generally focuses on one particular mother and is often a third-person narrative about a celebrity mother popular at the time or a non-celebrity mother who has overcome some tragedy or adversity. It is implicit that the women in these articles are role models for the women reading the magazines. Just like "Many periodicals featuring fashions, home furnishings, food, housekeeping, hobbies, sports, architecture and other interests have had an influence upon people's dress, eating habits, and leisure-time use," magazine articles on celebrities and influential everyday people can influence readers' behavior (Wolseley, 1973, p. 109). One article in this category, for example, profiles Diana Ross and is entitled "Diana Ross grows up." The article appeared

in a 1973 issue of *Good Housekeeping*, and it details the new stage in Ross's career in show business. More importantly, however, this article showcases the dichotomy between Ross as a career woman and Ross as a "housewife" determined to enjoy taking care of her husband, children and home despite the fact that her true passion is her job as a singer/actress (Bell, 1973, p. 92-185).

What these three archetypes reveal, however, is the various manners in which the articles "talk" to readers, which says much about how the writers/magazines view the audience. In many of the problem-solution articles, for example, experts are quoted throughout the text, and, as the author will demonstrate, depending on the year, these experts address readers in different tones. Family improvement articles are similar to problem-solution, but there is not always a tangible problem to be solved; often in these articles there is an idea or a plan that leads to stronger familial relationships for no reason other than to better the family. These articles do vary, however, in the manner in which specific topics and issues are broached and discussed. Articles about exemplary mothers also demonstrate a variety of ways in which readers are addressed but are slightly different in that these articles are usually more narrative. Thus, the revelation of messages is more implicit.

Within these three article archetypes, are four overarching themes that transcend problems and solutions, family improvement, and exemplary mothers. All four of these themes (proactive mothers, father figures a role, glory of motherhood, and motherhood exposed), once explicated, help explain the portrayal of mothers, as well as the effects of feminist ideology on such portrayals, in *Good Housekeeping*, *Woman's Day* and *Family*

Circle. In addition, an analysis of these themes reveals many of the similarities and differences in the portrayal of mothers from two different generations.

Proactive mothers in 2008

Ten out of the 12 articles analyzed from 2008 have some example of a mother making and carrying out plans; the two articles that do not specifically illustrate proactive mothers are both improvement articles directed to parents in general and therefore do not showcase one particular mother. Over and over again mothers were shown in situations where they are the primary decision makers concerning a family issue or acting independently of a spouse. These portrayals are reflective of the idea that “third-wave feminists generally see themselves as capable, strong, and assertive social agents (Krolokke & Sorensen, 2006, p. 15). Also, although mothers are portrayed as caretakers, there is less emphasis in 2008 on an all-consuming worry over individual family member’s desires, feelings, likes and dislikes; instead, mothers are portrayed as confident decision-makers concerned about the overall wellbeing of their families. This idea contradicts Tuchman, Daniel, and Benet’s (1978) theory that a “woman supposedly strives to please. When she fails to cater to the concerns of others, she is politely damned” (p. 93). These mothers in 2008 also sift through the endless barrage of parenting advice to create routines and enforce discipline that benefit the family, as well as to fulfill personal dreams and successfully handle family crises. Whether these findings are a sign of feminist progression, however, is a matter of careful interpretation.

One example of a mother taking the initiative to better her family’s wellbeing can be found in an article from *Good Housekeeping*, in which the mother and narrator

discusses the importance of family dinners. This article could be categorized under the family improvement archetype because the author, Kingsolver (2008), gives advice on how to cope with the fast-paced lifestyle of the twentieth century and bring a family closer together: “Slowing down can be the fastest way to create the family life you want,” says Kingsolver (2008, p. 75). Implicit within the article is the fact that it is Kingsolver’s (2008) idea to create a routine around family dinners in order to cement a stronger familial bond. “If I were to define my style of feeding my family, on a permanent basis, by the dictum ‘Get it over with, *quick*,’ something cherished in our family life would collapse” (p. 75). The proliferation of the first-person pronoun in statements like, “I’d say 75 percent of my crucial parenting effort has taken place during or surrounding the time our family convenes for our evening meal. I’m sure I’m not the only parent to think so,” demonstrates that Kingsolver (2008) herself took the initiative in establishing this routine with her family (p. 75). The only mention that anyone besides Kingsolver cooks the meals is Friday night pizza night when her kids can choose their own toppings.

Furthermore, faced with unhealthy food options outside the home, Kingsolver (2008) explains that “Cooking at home lets you guard the door, controlling not only what goes into your food but what stays out” (p. 77). Her use of the word “guard” implies that Kingsolver (2008) feels she is responsible for protecting her family’s wellbeing, a more masculine role than is stereotypically associated with mothers. It can also be argued, however, that Kingsolver is portraying herself as a nurturer and caregiver, responsible for her family’s wellbeing. As earlier mentioned in conjunction with Barnett’s (2006) study on the portrayal of health issues in women’s magazines, such roles can be considered a traditional, stereotypical female role. However, it can be argued that Kingsolver (2008) is

aware of traditional stereotypes, and her article transcends the ideas that women are natural born caretakers and a woman's place is in the kitchen. For example, Kingsolver (2008) acknowledges that mothers have "earned the right to forget about stupefying household busywork" (p. 76). *Cooking for Kingsolver* (2008) is less about the menial duty and more about the benefits of good food and time spent with family.

Women as nurturers and caretakers is a controversial debate within the feminist movement. Some scholars argue that this is a negative stereotype meant to keep women in subordinate roles to men. Others argue, however, that mothers who can nurture their families and overlook criticism for doing so is an important advancement of the feminist movement (Eisenstein, 1983, p. 70). Arneil (1999) points out that "It is the denunciation of motherhood that some third wave feminists have take (sic) exception to, while embracing the writings of bell hooks (sic) and Jean Bethke Elshtain, who see mothering as a strength rather than a weakness of women" (p. 201).

'For women to affirm the protection of fragile and vulnerable human existence as the basis of a mode of political discourse, and to create the terms for its flourishing as a worthy political activity, for women to stand firm against cries of "emotional" or "sentimental" even as they refuse to lapse into a sentimental rendering of the values and language which flow from (sic) "mothering" would signal a force of great reconstructive potential' (as quoted in Arneil, 1999, p. 201-202).

Thus, a nurturing mother is not necessarily subscribing to a patriarchal ideology, and, even under male control, motherhood contains "the potential for great creativity and joy," which is exactly what Kingsolver is exercising by way of her nurturing (p. 71).

Another sign of Kingsolver's (2008) independence is her unwillingness to pander to individual family member's desires at the expense of the greater family's wellbeing.

For example, the author does not cater to her husband's rigid meat and potatoes diet, which is a central theme in a 1973 article on family meals (Hines, 1973, p. 79).

Kingsolver (2008) states that "required participation from spouse and kids is an element of the equation" for successful meals and, by extension, family bonding (p. 76). The article thus demonstrates that the portrayed mother prefers the nutritious and familial benefits that stem from family dinners rather than the desires of individual family members.

Also, Kingsolver conveys a "you can do it, too" attitude to her readers. Despite the article's format as somewhat of an advice column, Kingsolver (2008) does not preach to her audience; she is able to project a matter-of-fact tone free of condescension by empathizing with her readers. For example, the author admits to choosing convenience in the form of fast food or restaurants over family dinners at home; she acknowledges that there are people with multiple jobs and/or a lack of resources that cannot afford to put this method into practice (p. 75-6). The recurrence of "we" throughout the text also reveals that this is an article written by a mother for other mothers, not a philosophical exposition by a parenting expert. By relating to her readers, Kingsolver suggests that family dinners are a routine that most, if not all mothers, can adopt and benefit from. "If I can do it, you can do it," Kingsolver seems to be saying to her readers, therefore encouraging them to act.

In another family improvement article, "Will work for money," four moms share how they created allowance systems for their kids. The article begins with a mother who only wanted to "inspire her two children to get ready for school on time," so she paid them (Pofeldt, 2008, p. 109). The mother's method proved successful and she declares

that it was “the best money I ever spent” (p. 109). There is no mention of this mother’s husband or any male figure, but the author does mention that “some parents” are aware of kids’ enthusiasm for earning money, and, “in today’s tough economic times, many moms and dads like the idea of teaching kids that money comes attached to obligations” (p. 109). The author, thus, is ostensibly addressing parents, which is also evident through her interviews of “three very different families,” but the only voices heard throughout the article are those of mothers (p. 109).

For example, one mom, Stacey Kaiser, wanted “to make sure her two daughters understand the financial demands of the real world” (p. 109). While another mom, Jan Malone, wanted her sons to learn greater responsibility (p. 111). And yet another mom, Pamela Eyring, wanted her kids to help around the house and “develop a strong work ethic” (p. 110).

Although there are references to husbands/fathers later in the article, their role is insignificant compared to the moms’. Kaiser is divorced, which explains the lack of a father figure in her vignette, but, though she is more financial strapped than her counterparts in the article, she “doesn’t want her girls to feel deprived, so she came up with an ‘allowance-plus’ plan whereby the kids get the money they need and she gets the help around the house that she needs” (p. 110). Kaiser’s plan proves successful, and the quoted expert, money coach Mary Hunt, is “pleased” with Kaiser’s strategy, thus enforcing the idea that mothers can make decisions for their family independently of a spouse.

Malone and Eyring are both married, however, and while the article mentions their husbands, it still places the emphasis on the mothers. For example, the article states

Eyring wanted to discover a way to motivate her kids, and it is Eyring's idea, which is based on the method she uses to run her business, that becomes the basis for their allowance system. "Searching for a way she and her husband could motivate [the kids], she thought of how she runs her business," the author states (p. 110). Thus, Eyring's husband is mentioned but in a passive context and as a collective with his wife: i.e. "the Eyrings" or "mom and dad" (p. 110). Similarly, Malone's husband is never referred to unless it is in conjunction with his wife. For example, Malone does state at one point that "our goal," referring to herself and her husband, is to avoid making her son take an outside job during the school year, and when her son asks for a car, "his parents agreed" and "the Malones offered to pay his monthly premium" for his insurance (p. 112). However, unlike Eyring's husband, Malone's is not mentioned at all in the decision to create an allowance system for the kids (p. 111-112). It is Malone who "wanted them to take on more responsibility around the house. She also hoped they would learn to plan their spending and to allow for financial responsibilities" (p. 112). Although the husbands might have had an influence on creating these allowance plans, there is no mention of this in the article; thus portraying the mothers as the active parties behind these systems. Yes, the article states that the husbands wanted to help motivate their kids along with their wives, even if in a passive context, but they are not portrayed as having any involvement in the creation of a method in which to do so.

In a more self-serving display of proactive mothers, an article from *Family Circle* addresses a mother's decision to go back to school and how that decision affects her family. After considering the future financial and career benefits as well as her personal goals of achieving a higher degree, Brigitte Cogswell determines that the financial

burdens as well as the time that will be spent away from her family are worth returning to school for an MBA (Parlapiano, 2008, p. 65-66). A common topic among mothers in the twentieth century, returning to school while balancing a job and family is difficult and requires sacrifices from both the mother and her family. Inevitably there will be times when a mother will have to put herself and her commitments to school before those of her family.

Cogswell's motivations for going back to school are not all self-interested, however. The mother of two believes she will teach her daughters the value of education as well as increase her earning potential, which will inevitably benefit the family as whole. What Cogswell didn't count on, and which the article highlights, is the positive affect going back to school has on her husband and her children's "enthusiasm for learning" (p. 66). Cogswell inspires her husband to go back to school to finish his B.A., and the closing sentence of the article addresses Cogswell's oldest daughter's new desire to attend medical school (p.66). Thus, in pursuing more education, Cogswell not only fulfilled a dream but she ostensibly enhanced her family's wellbeing by setting such an auspicious example. These positive consequences suggest that Cogswell's decision to return to school, and thus her proactive behavior, is a productive and commendable characteristic. Here is woman who is able to "have it all," and "it" is quite good.

Even in problem-solution articles, where there is a more concrete issue at hand, mothers are portrayed as taking the initiative. For example, an article from the April 17, 2008 issue of *Family Circle* describes one mother's apprehension over her teenaged son's "sketchy" friend and her struggle to determine the best method for handling the situation (Westen, 2008, p. 48). In the article's introduction, the author, Westen (2008),

contemplates whether she should prohibit her son's friend from their house or whether doing so will push her son away (p. 48). Although Westen (2008) faces a difficult parenting decision, she handles the situation head on; she does not wait until her husband gets home or wallow in denial. In fact, there is no mention of Westen's (2008) husband in the article at all. Instead, Westen (2008) considers the advice of several experts in order to resolve the situation herself. "With [the advice] in mind, I decided to have a gentle conversation with Gabe during dinner one night," says Westen (2008, p. 50). The first-person pronoun is again rife throughout the article. With statements such as "I decided," "I suspect," and "my tactical decision," it is clear that Westen (2008) is suggesting that she was the sole arbiter of this problem.

Westen's dilemma is ultimately an example for other mothers, a sort of road map for real moms faced with similar situations, which is evident by the article's plethora of advice. The text is riddled with reassuring suggestions from experts aimed at assuaging the author's and, by extension, the readers' fears, as well as advice from "other moms" and teens. Westen (2008) at one point acknowledges that such advice helped to calm her nerves (p. 50). This is an article meant to demonstrate appropriate behavior on the part of mothers, and it is ultimately demonstrating an independent, confident approach to parenting.

Based on the ideas of the social construction of reality, this article, as well as the previous articles in this section, helps to establish the idea that mothers can take the initiative in family situations, and they do not need to rely on their husbands or spouses. However, these articles may also be a reflection of 'second shift' mothers, who manage "all or most responsibility for child rearing and domestic work while also meeting the

demands of paid work” (DiQuinzio, 1999, p. xi). For many women, promotion and success in the work place only meant an increase in their responsibilities and roles at home because childcare and domestic responsibilities still largely fall on the matriarch of the family. “The conflict between professional careers and the woman’s role within the family has been a persistent theme in the history of American women ever since women demanded access to the professions over a century ago” (Harris, 1979, p. 26). Although it was not specified in all of the articles analyzed under this theme whether the depicted mothers have careers, the articles still demonstrate that mothers are in charge of a majority, if not all, of the decisions regarding the home and family. Hence, women are still tied to domestic roles, only now they are able to take on additional work and fulfillment outside of the home, which only adds to their responsibilities.

Father figures a role in 2008

The possible explanations for the portrayal of independent and self-assertive mothers in 2008 are also instrumental in analyzing the role men, as husbands and/or fathers, play in magazine portrayals of these women. Although magazines may be depicting more independent mothers because of a loosening of patriarchal dynamics in the home, another plausible explanation is the idea that “feminism’s demand for women’s equal access to and participation in paid labor and public life has been much more widely accepted and put into practice than the corresponding demand that men take greater responsibility for child rearing and other domestic activities” (DiQuinzio, 1999, p. xi). “If men did equally share in parenting, it would mean trading places with women part of the time. Many men have found it easier to share power with women on the job than they

have in the home” (Hooks, 2000, p. 137). These theories would also explain why mothers are often juggling the majority of domestic responsibilities as well as their careers or outside work. Regardless of the root cause, fathers, who are included in some form in 10 of the articles from 2008, are either portrayed as supporting characters to mothers, addressed in conjunction with mothers, e.g. as parents, or they are the catalyst for some conflict, which the wife and mother resolves.

For example, although Kingsolver (2008) does mention “moms and dads” as well as her own husband in her article, husbands and fathers take a back seat (p. 76). As earlier mentioned, Kingsolver’s (2008) article is by a mother for mothers as evidenced by statements like “We’ve earned the right to forget about stupefying household busywork,” which is clearly directed towards other mothers (p. 76). Six articles from 2008 [“Celebrating family all year round,” “Amazing Grace,” “Will work for money,” “Independence day,” “Recipe for Closeness,” and “Home alone”] merely mention husband and/or fathers, or refer to them as a unit with their female counterparts (i.e. parents), and fathers do not figure at all in two of the articles from 2008 [“Top 5 mom myths” and “Bad company”]. The four articles that included men playing a substantial role are described below.

In Parlapiano’s (2008) article “Live and learn,” however, Cogswell’s husband plays a more active role, but Cogswell herself is clearly the main character. When Cogswell tells her husband, Richard, that she is interested in going back to school, he is “very supportive” (p. 66) Because Richard gets off work at 3 p.m., he is able to take care of the Cogswells’ daughters after school. “Without Richard, I could never have pulled this off” Cogswell says (p. 66). This begs the question, however, that if Richard was able

to take care of the girls after school because of his schedule, why did he not do so before? It reads as if Cogswell had to go back to school for her own and her family's benefit on top of holding down a full-time job before Richard pitched in, which provides evidence for the idea that feminism's push for women's access to opportunity did not parallel men's increase in responsibility at home. "Women and society as a whole often consider the father who does equal parenting unique and special rather than as representative of what should be the norm" (Hooks, 2000, p. 138).

Another article in which the husband and father plays a larger role is "The color of love" from *Woman's Day*. In the article, the author, Andrea King Collier (June 2008), tells the story of Angela and Larry Hughes and their journey through adoption. Collier writes:

For as long as she can remember, Angela Hughes, 43, had dreamed of being a mother. When she married Larry, also 43, a wireless communications manager in 1988, they both assumed it was just a matter of time. 'It was the natural progression of things,' says Angela. 'You got married and then you had a family' (Collier, 2008, p. 20 and 24).

The couple could not conceive a baby, however. "I couldn't understand why other women were getting pregnant and having babies but I wasn't. The pain was so deep ... " Angela says (p.24). After which Larry is quoted as saying, "Through it all, I tried to be as supportive as I could" (p. 24). Larry also tried to comfort Angela, saying "God works on his own timetable, not ours," but, he admits, he had to convince himself as well (p. 24). Thus, Larry is, at the beginning, portrayed as a sympathetic husband to his grieving wife. As the article progresses, however, Larry becomes less supportive and more antagonistic to Angela's plan for having a child, which ultimately turns to adoption.

Although Angela seems to come to the realization “that she didn’t have to give birth to be a mom,” rather quickly, Larry is much slower to accept the idea (p. 24). Worried about possible issues with the adopted child’s background, Larry came up with a “must-have list” of preferences for a newborn (p. 24). Angela is described as acknowledging Larry’s fears and concerns and “patiently” trying to convince him otherwise (p. 24). Within two paragraphs Larry becomes the antagonist in the story, who is out to dampen the dreams of a woman desperate for a child. Angela, on the other hand, “patiently” tries to alleviate, what appear to be, his petty fears that an adopted child will not biologically resemble him. Of course Larry’s apprehension is compounded when a friend of the couple, who is white, asks them to adopt her 18-year-old daughter’s newborn son, who is also white. ““The number of African-American children who need loving homes is so great, I had a hard time justifying adopting a baby of another race” Larry says (p.25). Also, Larry was worried about the difficulties a white child with black parents might encounter, but mostly Larry was worried what other people would think of a black father with a white son. “What if he had to discipline the child in public? How would other people react?” (p. 25).

Larry and his apprehension over adoption, thus, quickly become the central conflict in the story. As the strong, rational character, Angela is portrayed as a confident antithesis to Larry’s anxiety. ““I knew everything would work out just fine,” Angela says (p. 25). The author uses words like “patient” and “calm” to describe Angela, where as “Larry wasn’t quite as relaxed” (p. 26). Full of “worries,” “fears,” and “misgivings,” Larry is the greatest impediment to his wife’s lifelong dream of being a mother. In

contrast to Angela, Larry is weak and dependent on her to come to a resolution to their problem

Eventually, however, Larry realizes that his wife was right, and when a miraculous pregnancy forced Angela into bed rest shortly after their white son Geoffrey was adopted, Larry “stepped in and took over Geoffrey’s care” (p. 27). This statement assumes that Angela was in charge of Geoffrey’s care before her mandatory bed rest, and only after she is incapacitated does Larry “step in.” Thus the author implicitly recognizes the mother, Angela, as the child’s primary care taker and Larry’s pitching in as extraordinary.

Fathers as the catalyst for family dilemmas, as well as the corresponding theme of resilient mothers, is further explored in another article from *Woman’s Day* entitled “Back from the brink.” The article profiles Diana Crabb who “seemed to have the perfect life” (Roberts-Grey, 2008, p. 36). Crabb, her husband and four children, lived a comfortable life in Illinois and enjoyed “the nicer things in life” (p. 36). Her husband took care of the family’s finances, “and Diana was more than happy to let him do it” (p. 36). Crabb who was too scared to manage the family money relinquished this responsibility to her husband. Even when Crabb started to notice bounced checks and late payments, she trusted her husband’s explanations out of what she later admits was denial. When the family’s finances took an even worse turn, Crabb admitted that “It was too stressful to think about, so I didn’t” (p. 40). Even after her husband makes financial mistake after financial mistake, Crabb continues to believe her husband’s reassurances that the family still had enough money to live on, until the day she mentions buying a dog and her husband admits they cannot afford it (p. 40).

If Crabb is portrayed as submissive and delicate in the first half of the article, she is anything but in the second. Facing repossessions and past due payments, “Diana realized that she was just as culpable as John for their situation. So instead of burying her head in the sand again, she did what she’d always dreaded: took over managing the finances” (p. 40). From this point on in the article Crabb takes complete control of the family’s budget; she chose cheaper food options, sold some of the family’s furniture, and waited in line at government-subsidized agencies. “It was embarrassing, but I was desperate,” Crabb said of waiting in line for money (p. 44). In this second half of the article, Crabb’s husband, John, is mentioned twice. Once, because Crabb is able to receive government assistance as a result of her husband’s status as a veteran, and, again, because John eventually finds a temporary job. There is no mention of “we” throughout the article, but “she” appears over and over. Again, the male figure in this article is portrayed as creating a situation that the wife and mother must solve. Although she is passive at the beginning when her husband is making huge financial mistakes, Crabb is ultimately responsible for correcting the family’s crisis.

The article repeatedly mentions that both Diana and John Crabb were to blame for their fiscal problems. Relying on her husband to handle all of the financial decisions and remaining in denial when the situation began to worsen was as much to blame, according to Crabb herself and “financial experts,” as John’s money mishandling (p. 44). Even if this is correct, why did John not contribute to the solution? If he did, readers could assume it would be included in the article, but Diana Crabb is the only person shown to handle the financial decisions after John’s admission that the family does not even have enough money to buy a dog. Yes, there might have been equal share in the blame, but the

resolution was strongly one-sided and demonstrates to readers again that the wife/mother is a problem-solver. If Crabb had not recognized her denial of the situation and had not stepped in to rectify the situation, where would the Crabb family be?

Fathers, however, are not always depicted as weaker counterpoints to their wives. Of the 12 articles from 2008, two consider fathers an equal to mothers by addressing parents rather than just mothers. A family improvement article in *Good Housekeeping*, for example, discusses the benefits to staying calm when children are misbehaving. This article is also the only text analyzed from 2008 written by a male author, Hal Runkel, a marriage and family therapist. Runkel (2008) uses gender-neutral nouns and pronouns throughout the article to address both mothers and fathers; e.g. “parent(s),” “someone,” “grown-ups,” “they,” “their,” “adults,” “others,” and “your” (p. 133). The author clearly assumes his advice is relevant to both mothers and fathers. “I’ve met hundreds of couples who are worried about their kids and the choices they make. These adults are all anxious, but they react to their feelings in different ways,” says Runkel (2008, p. 133). The fact that Runkel (2008) is a male most likely influences his address of parents rather than mothers.

The magazine’s editors, on the other hand, seem to be addressing mothers with this article. For example, the end of the article contains a question and answer section between Runkel (2008) and a mother of five. Although Runkel (2008) does not cater any of his answers or earlier advice solely to mothers, it is interesting that most of the article’s design and non-narrative elements are directed to mothers.

Another article that remains gender-neutral throughout the text lists 12 steps for bringing a family closer together. “Recipe for closeness” by Inara Verzemnieks (2008)

uses plural nouns and pronouns to create the idea that the text is just as much for fathers as mothers. Each step listed in the article can apply to both parents; e.g. “make everyday moments matter,” “watch your words,” “have one-on-ones with your kids,” “live your values,” and “reach out and touch” (p. 24-28). The one clue that might suggest a gender bias is the use of the word nurture in the introduction. “Consider these 12 tips your go-to checklist for nurturing your family bond” (p. 24). The word nurture, as well as associated words like tender and care, are notoriously associated with motherhood, while fathers and fatherhood are usually associated with words like responsibility (Hooks, 2000, p. 138). Therefore, despite the article’s efforts to address parents, or both mothers and fathers, there is still evidence that the text is addressing one parent – mothers – and that parent is responsible for carrying out the “Recipe for closeness.”

As earlier mentioned, the role fathers play or do not play in the home directly relates to the portrayal of mothers. Women, for the large part, are still considered primarily responsible for issues involving the home, including childcare. Harris argued in 1979 that “The same set of assumptions that defines women as mothers defines men as workers and reduces fatherhood to a peripheral male role” (p. 27). And, the articles analyzed within this theme from 2008 demonstrate fathers are still not adopting greater domestic responsibilities. If anything, men are often creating more work for their female counterparts by mismanaging the family finances or resisting the adoption of a child. “Only the woman who consciously resists this division of labor and is willing to spend time and energy bringing her husband around to her point of view avoids this trap” of sole domestic responsibility (Harris, 1979, p. 27). However, a more equalized portrayal

of parenting in women's magazines would, no doubt, help to develop a new social construction of motherhood.

Glory of motherhood in 2008

Two of the articles from 2008 make an overt glorification of motherhood that stems from either the deep desire to have a child or the joy of being a mother. Unlike many second-wave feminists who argued that motherhood is an institution rooted in patriarchy meant to keep men in a position of power (Eisenstein, 1983, p. 70-71), these articles depict women who are either desperate to partake in the institution or who find motherhood a blessing. Hooks (2000) argues that "To some extent, the romanticization of motherhood by bourgeois white women is an attempt to repair the damage done by past feminist critiques and give women who mother the respect they deserve" (p. 136). However, as already noted, explicit evidence of this theme was found in only two of the articles surveyed from 2008.

In the *Woman's Day* article "The color of love," for example, the protagonist, Angela Hughes, expresses a strong desire to have children. "For as long as she can remember, Angela Hughes, 43, had dreamed of being a mother" (Collier, 2008, p. 20). Having children was the "natural progression of things," says Hughes (p. 24). Although it may be biological, the basis for this testimony most likely speaks to the socially constructed value of motherhood.

In Western, industrial capitalist societies like the United States, the nuclear family in which women have primary responsibility for child rearing ... is a crucial component of social organization and individual development. The nuclear family and female child rearing sustain other structures of these societies, and persons' experiences of being mothered in this sort of family are pervasive and powerful.

Thus, being a mother and being mothered are both imbued with tremendous social, cultural, political, economic, psychological, and personal significance (DiQuinzio, 1999, p. viii).

Also, in 1975, Deckard argued that “there is no evidence that women have a biological need for children. ... If there were such a biological need, the motherhood-is-bliss myth and all the social pressures on women to become mothers would be unnecessary” (p. 70). Thus, Hughes’s desire for a child is seemingly a consequence of the significant social value placed on having children, which is also evident by the nine years of countless fertility treatments she undergoes. In addition, the fact that after nine years of trying, adoption is Hughes’s last option, and she is only resolved to this option because she cannot afford in vitro fertilization, greatly speaks to the extreme value placed on bearing biological children.

This theme is also evident in a *Good Housekeeping* profile of TV personality Nancy Grace. In the article, the “tough-talking newswoman” discusses her relatively new husband and newborn twins, who are described as “her miracles” (Coyne, 2008, p. 156). The article’s title, “Amazing Grace” connotes that this is a story about an exemplary mother, a celebrity mom to be emulated. Upon close reading of the text, however, there are a plethora of implicit suggestions as to why Nancy Grace would be considered “amazing.” Is it because she struggled through the loss of her fiancé decades ago and is now happily married and a mother of two at the age of 48? Is it because she went through a “grueling and life threatening” pregnancy (p. 157)? Or, is it because she is ““a mother who is completely in love with her babies, and a professional who is tough and tenacious”” (p. 159)? Most likely it is a combination of all three. Nancy Grace is a

“tough” career woman and a model mother, who endured a painful, life threatening pregnancy for the benefit of her children, and who is consumed with love for those children.

Grace’s joy at being a mother is effusive. ““Oh, I’m so sorry’ she says, sniffing. ‘I just ... I still can’t believe they’re here, you know? I can’t believe they’re mine and that this is my life. I just never believed this could happen to me’” (p. 156). Like Hughes, Grace experimented with fertility treatments, though she does not explicitly state how many or which ones: ““It is my firm belief that what happens between your legs is nobody’s business but your own” (p. 156-157). Unlike Hughes, however, Grace tried to conceive a child in her late 40s, an age that even Grace admits makes conceiving children much more difficult. In her 20s and 30s, Grace went to law school and established a lucrative career in TV. Although she does not describe why she wanted to have children, Grace clearly felt a desire or she would not have undergone costly fertility treatments and a risky pregnancy. An expressed desire to become a mother is an important tenet of third wave feminism. For example, Hooks (2000) notes:

While work may help women gain a degree of financial independence or even financial self-sufficiency, for most women it has not adequately fulfilled human needs. As a consequence, women’s search for fulfilling labor done in an environment of care has led to reemphasizing the importance of family and the positive aspects of motherhood. Additionally, the fact that many active feminists are in their mid- to late-thirties, facing the biological clock, has focused collective attention on motherhood (p. 134).

This statement provides an interesting comparison to earlier feminist ideology, which stressed the importance of women seeking fulfillment in a career or work outside the

home (Rossi, 1971, p. 146). Now, as some scholars argue, work is not enough, and many women are seeking satisfaction through careers and motherhood.

Another significant implication of this article is the idea that Grace's characteristics as a mother are different than those of her work persona. For example, the author compares Grace's "tough and tenacious" work ethic to her "tender, bighearted" style of mothering (Coyne, 2008, p. 159). In other words, Grace's children allow her an outlet to show her softer side, which would ostensibly be inappropriate and unproductive at work. This disparity in Grace's persona is similar to the division of labor spheres; in private, at home, Grace is a loving and emotional mother, but in public, in the workplace, Grace adopts more stereotypically masculine characteristics. This article, thus, maintains traditional sex role divisions.

Both the articles discussed in this section illustrate the current generational desire to become a mother. Motherhood in 2008, at least in these two articles, is a validation of womanhood. The evidence of fertility treatments, risky pregnancies, and adoption all support the idea that some women today are desperate for children, most likely because of the social value placed on being a mother. Innumerable scholars argue that the desire to have a child is not biological, but rather a socially conscribed yearning, which harkens back to traditional stereotypes of women. In 1975, Deckard noted that one of the popular "myths" of the time was that women could attain complete happiness by having a child (p. 55).

These articles, however, could also indicate evidence of a newer generational acceptance and regard for motherhood. Scholars like Hooks (2000) and DiQuinzio (1999) point out that motherhood is now often considered an important aspect of the female

experience for many, but not all, women. Motherhood in 2008, thus, elicits different emotions and reactions from third-wave feminists than their predecessors.

Motherhood exposed in 2008

The ostensible, overwhelming joy of motherhood is also challenged in several articles from 2008, which portray a willingness on the part of mothers to admit that the role is difficult and sometimes far from the images depicted in popular culture. Of the 12 articles analyzed, three acknowledge that being a mother or parent is difficult. These articles attempt to chip away at social stereotypes and stigmas that mothers use to compare themselves in an effort to reassure women that they are not “bad” mothers if they do not measure up. Exposing the realities of motherhood is nothing new. Much of the foundation of feminism is based on women’s condemnation of the “cult of domesticity.” What is different, however, is the mainstream media’s recognition of such realities.

In the most blatant of these articles, the author attempts to expose the “Top 5 mom myths.” The article begins with a harried mother at her wits end with her two sons. “Finally, she snaps at them, ‘I don’t like you very much right now!’” And, “The minute the words escape her lips, Meryl is consumed with guilt, calling herself a ‘bad mom’” (Solimini, 2008, p. 48). The author, Solimini (2008), and several psychologists then embark on an explanation of “‘mythic’ images” to which mothers constantly compare themselves (p. 48). “‘The whole Superwoman idea has gotten stronger and is more oppressive than it has ever been,’” a health expert for the American Psychological Association is quoted as saying (p. 48). This is more of an issue with mothers than fathers

Solimini (2008) also points out. “Mothers, much more than fathers, are supposed to know the ‘right’ stroller, or ‘best’ school, or ‘most enriching’ activities. And if we don’t, we worry that we’re going to mess up our kids” (p. 48 and 52). Each of the five myths, such as “A good mom likes her children all the time” and “A good mom bonds with her children immediately,” includes the phrase “good mom” in an ostensible effort to dispel the idea that “good mothers” cannot express exhaustion or resentment, enjoy time to herself, or do everything herself.

The article’s reassuring tone is evident through its use of the second person, plural pronoun, “you,” throughout. Instead of addressing mothers in general, the author and quoted experts speak to “you,” which creates a sense of solidarity and understanding between the author, experts, and the readers. The advice in this improvement article is not condescending or patronizing; it is empathetic and encouraging, which suggests a general recognition of the difficulties of motherhood.

The issue of public disapproval, social stereotypes, and “good moms” appears again in an article about a mother learning to appreciate her children’s burgeoning independence. In the article from *Family Circle*, Sarah Mahoney, a mother of two, talks about the difficulty of letting her kids grow into independent individuals. Part of Mahoney’s (2008) dilemma is the judgment she receives from other people. For example, Mahoney (2008) was “scolded” by an acquaintance when she let her 16-year-old daughter get a driver’s permit. “In a heartbeat I went from feeling like a good mom, responsibly guiding my daughter toward an important milestone of independence, to a reckless parent” (p. 62).

Mahoney (2008) argues that such public disapproval leads to “hyperparenting – that 100% involvement in every aspect of our kids’ lives” (p. 62). “We live in an era when parents are judged by how many fundraisers we chair, how involved we are with our kid’s research projects and how carefully we police MySpace pages,” says Mahoney (2008, p. 62). The author admits that she herself is “lousy at letting go,” but ultimately it is for her and her children’s best interest that she encourage their independence. Children with over involved parents can become “self-centered kids who have minimal problem-solving skills” (p. 64). And, “Overparenting isn’t just bad for kids, it also hurts parents,” notes Mahoney (2008, p. 64). One of the psychologists quoted in the article points out that parents who are too involved in their kids lives are more likely to suffer from depression (p. 64).

Another of the possible side effects of “hyperparenting,” which may subsequently lead to depression, is the parent’s loss of identity. This idea is the premise behind a *Family Circle* article entitled “Home alone,” in which a mother faces the challenge of “letting go” of her only child as she leaves for college. The mother in the article, Elizabeth Wrenn, is portrayed as having a somewhat seamless transition into this new phase of motherhood, however. Although there were slight setbacks, like her daughter’s absence from the dinner table, “Starting a new way of life wasn’t as hard as Elizabeth feared. In fact it was fun” (p. 38).

The difficulty of “letting go” is a issue often associated with motherhood. In 1975, Deckard wrote:

For most full-time housewives, the children's leaving home means a loss of function and, often, of identity. The woman frequently feels that no one needs her any more, and because she has based her life on satisfying others' needs, she now sees herself as superfluous (p. 61).

In this respect, Wrenn is an improvement on the stereotype because she is excited and eager to learn more about herself and her own interests when her daughter moves away.

What is also interesting to note in this article, however, is Wrenn's admission that she is no longer guilty for enjoying such personal pursuits as a two-hour workout at the gym, and, because she is no longer "preoccupied" with her daughter's schedule, Wrenn has more time and energy to invest in things she wants to do (p. 38). The article, thus, demonstrates that Wrenn felt she could not partake in these activities before, when she was a "capital-M mother," at least without guilt. But now that she is a "lowercase mom" she is free to enjoy such activities guilt free. In other words, when her child was at home, and Wrenn was a "capital-M mother," she felt she needed to focus first and foremost on her daughter, and it is not until her daughter has successfully left home that Wrenn is free "to learn about" herself (p. 38).

Despite Wrenn's portrayed ease at letting her daughter go, the mention of her new status as a lowercase mom, implicitly suggests that Wrenn is less important without a child at home, which still lends support to Deckard's (1975) theory that mothers might feel a "loss of function" when their children leave home (p. 61). But, Wrenn disproves the second half of Deckard's (1975) prophecy by demonstrating that mothers can grow and indulge in their own interests after their children are grown and independent.

By exposing popular “myths” about motherhood, as well as acknowledging the importance of developing a sense of self, the articles analyzed in this section show evidence of feminist ideology. Although they include slight throwbacks to traditional stereotypes, such as the mother who feels guilty about indulging in personal activities, these articles openly acknowledge and critique conventional tenets of motherhood. The fact that an article like “Top 5 mom myths” exists is a progression from earlier days, before Friedan’s famous disclosure, when those myths were not considered myths but reality. These articles not only illustrate an appreciation for the difficulties of motherhood, but they also try to reassure readers that such difficulties are normal and should not be the cause of self-doubt or guilt.

Proactive mothers in 1973

During the early 1970s, several women’s magazines began to reflect the ideology of the feminist movement within their publications. In 10 of the 12 articles analyzed from 1973, mothers are shown proactively taking part-time jobs as a means of staving off the doldrums of housework, or taking a philosophical stand on antiquated and anti-feminist television programming, or managing a family as well as pursuing personal interests. But, as late as the 1980s, “the veneer of modernity” is sometimes “quite thin” within these magazines (McCracken, 1993, p. 178).

For example, McCracken (1993) points out that many articles from *Family Circle* and *Woman’s Day* in the 1980s attempted to portray confident, assertive women but did not completely eradicate evidence of stereotypical female roles. McCracken (1993) gives the example of an article from *Woman’s Day* in 1983, in which a woman saves her

husband's life by administering CPR after he has a heart attack and still manages to get the cheese torte in the oven when the paramedics arrive to take over. "The article defines woman's role as that of nurturer, caregiver, lifesaver, and most of all, cook" (p. 180).

Also, "In its 50th anniversary issue (1 September 1982), *Family Circle* recounts its own modernization decade by decade, also showing inadvertently how the magazine buttressed the dominant ideology in each period" (p. 178). The magazine stated, for example, that in the 1960s, "'more women were finding an escape from that trapped housewife feeling in part-time jobs, but for many, a woman's place was still in the home'" (p. 178). As earlier mentioned, stereotypes, such as the happy housewife, can be comforting to people in their construction of reality; therefore, "This delicate balance between traditional and modern messages enabled [*Family Circle*] to reassure readers who felt threatened by social change, while simultaneously allowing them the sense of being up-to-date" (p. 178).

Considering the magazine's pride in its ostensible modern leanings, it is no coincidence that *Family Circle* published two of the most openly feminist articles from 1973 analyzed in this study. In the first, published in February 1973, the author all but steps on a soapbox to advocate the benefits of mothers and housewives working part time. Important to note is the article's blurb on the author, Caroline Bird, who "is author of the well-received book *Born Female* and has written scores of magazine articles, many of them pertaining to the status of women" (Bird, 1973, p. 14). The editors most likely considered this a progressive article and wanted to ensure readers were aware of this slant, or else they would not have made such an explicit note of it.

In the beginning of the article, Bird (1973) describes a mother who works 25 hours a week as a school bus driver, “and she likes the work and the money so much that she kept driving up to two weeks before William [her son] was born, and took her route back eight weeks after he arrived (with seeming consideration for the school calendar)” (p. 14). Although her husband believes she should quit, this mother, Beverly Thatcher, does not like to stay home all day; she gets the housework done faster and feels better about spending money that she earned herself (p. 14). Later, Bird (1973) states that:

Working is so good for mothers that child-care specialists no longer urge all women to stay home with their school-age children. Studies of working mothers reviewed 10 years ago by Dr. Lois Wladis Hoffman show that the children of mothers who are working full-time *because they want to*, are better adjusted than the children of mothers who are staying home with them only because they *think they ought to* (p. 14).

Within Thatcher’s vignette, Bird (1973) implicitly encourages mothers to take up part-time work by noting that keeping “children’s hours” is easier and more attainable than most women think. Mothers like Bonnie Weiss, who “has two children under four and a ‘part-time’ job that fits an entirely different kind of life” can have “the best of both worlds,” according to Bird (1973, p. 14).

These types of part-time jobs for women also benefit employers, argues Bird (1973). Some employers like Hallmark, found that housewives working part-time shifts were more accurate than their younger counterparts and more likely to stay at the company than men (p. 172). Hence, according to this article, working part-time is a win-win situation for mothers and employers. Mothers can explore interests outside of the home, as well as increase their “self-worth” by making their own money, and still take

care of their children when they get home, while employers gain an efficient and loyal work force.

The mention of taking care of the children, however, demonstrates that although this article is progressive in its support of working mothers, there are slight throwbacks to a patriarchal ideology. Women are encouraged to take part-time jobs, so that they can return home just in time to meet the children after school. As already noted, Bird (1973) mentions that Weiss has “the best of both worlds” working a part-time job that utilizes her higher education and getting “out in time to shop and spend several hours alone with the children” (p. 14). Also, if a woman’s part-time work interferes with her husband’s work, his comes first. For example, Audrey Saphar employed her skills as a journalist and established a notable career in New York public relations. However, when her husband was transferred to Rochester, “a tight company town with few openings for women,” Saphar had to start over and find odd jobs to try and break in (p. 170). It is important to note, however, that Saphar eventually creates a successful business “funneling” part-time editorial work to other women in the area; her business became so successful in fact that Saphar’s husband quit his job (p. 170). Saphar’s flourishing business is an exception to Bird’s (1973) thesis about part-time work, however, and for most of the women in this article work is more akin to a hobby than a career; something to keep them busy while the children are at school.

A more modernized portrayal of a mother that is ultimately rooted in tradition is also evident in an article from *Good Housekeeping*, which profiles a wheelchair-bound wife and mother of two. Despite her relative immobility, Fay Ward is an active and independent housewife. “She concentrated on perfecting the art of keeping house from a

wheelchair” (O’Rear & O’Rear, 1973, p. 144). Ward wanted more than just learning how to make a bed, however, so she and her husband Jim concocted ways that Ward could join her family on white-water running, ski-touring, and bike trips. This is not a woman paralyzed by her condition. Instead, Ward makes the best of her situation and completes extraordinary tasks in her wheelchair, such as giving birth to a second child. Of course, to further prove that this is a strong, resilient woman, it is mentioned that Ward gives birth with only the aid of her squeamish husband because she could not get to the hospital in time (p. 144).

The authors also note that “It would have been easy for Fay to have become a TV addict herself and to have relied on a playpen and TV to confine and occupy her children,” but she did not (p. 144). The article illustrates to readers that if this woman can overcome her tragedy and manage a household and two kids, so can they. However, the authors are still portraying a mother whose main job is homemaking. Also, Ward states that one of her biggest interests in life is children; “Mothering and helping them to develop is exciting to me,” says Ward (p. 144). Ward’s children are portrayed as responsible and helpful around the house, and the authors note that when “distraught mothers” ask Ward how to handle the terrible twos, she says they don’t exist. “She believes that you get only what you expect from a child and that if you just trust in their capabilities they’ll amaze you” (p. 144). Thus, as much as this is an article about a woman’s triumph over adversity, it is also about a mother who by her own admission loves motherhood and employs a matter-of-fact approach to her style of mothering. This article is most likely a comment on the opinion of many feminists of the time, who argued motherhood was a means of patriarchy. By portraying a strong, confident mother

who also happens to love mothering, the authors are in effect demonstrating that motherhood does not have to be a life-sentence to submission and passivity as a housewife.

A similar idea is evident in the *Woman's Day* article "The child molester," in which a mother confronts and ostensibly heals a supposed child molester. In the beginning of the article, the author's daughter is almost lured away by Mr. Swenson, a local shop owner who was previously accused of molesting a young neighborhood girl. Upon hearing of her daughter's ordeal, Lois Mark Stalvey (1973) is furious and "overwhelmed with hatred" (p. 106). "I felt a strangling rage at Mr. Swenson," says Stalvey (1973, p. 52). Because inviting a child into a car or store was not a crime, the Stalveys could not expect the police to arrest Mr. Swenson, instead the Stalveys confront the man. During the confrontation, Stalvey (1973) describes her husband as a man "not inclined toward physical violence, but for a moment he looked as if he were aching to smash his fist into Mr. Swenson's face" (p. 106). While her husband stands "with fists clenched at his sides," Stalvey (1973) herself speaks harshly to the man, who pleads a weak heart (p. 106). "If you even *look* at our daughter again, I will do everything I can to *give* you a heart attack," says Stalvey (1973, p. 106).

That night, however, after her husband quickly falls asleep, Stalvey (1973) stays up worrying about the possibility that Mr. Swenson could be a danger to other neighborhood girls. Thoughts of forcefully purging the man from her neighborhood lead nowhere, however, and Stalvey (1973) admits:

The shock of how my actions could affect other children may have been what cleared my head. Or perhaps I had just traveled the route of revenge to its inevitably unsatisfying end. I remember vividly a sense of reversal; Mr. Swenson

could not be arrested and I could not chase him into some unsuspecting neighborhood. But I could not stand by and do nothing, either. What could I do? (p. 106).

What Stalvey (1973) decides to do is confront Mr. Swenson and encourage him to seek psychiatric help. “I began to feel genuine pity for any man forced to commit such degrading acts. Could my sympathy, rather than my anger, persuade him to seek help,” asks Stalvey (1973, p. 108). Thus, although she wants to take action and fix a problem, Stalvey (1973) realizes that a more sympathetic and emotional approach is more effective than threats and physical violence.

When she goes to confront Mr. Swenson, Stalvey (1973) instead finds his wife. Stalvey (1973) tells Mrs. Swenson that she is concerned for other children’s safety as well as the wellbeing of her husband (p. 108). Gone is the rage and fury that Stalvey (2008) felt towards Mr. Swenson in the beginning of the story; now the author feels pity and worry for this man whom she wants to help “heal” (p. 108). Although Stalvey (1973) is portrayed as taking action to ensure other children’s safety, the manner in which she does so is riddled with stereotypes. Unlike her husband, who in the beginning, is depicted as angry and yelling at Mr. Swenson with fists clenched, Stalvey (1973) calmly approaches the man’s wife and convinces her to confront her husband.

Mr. Swenson eventually calls Stalvey (1973) and thanks her for telling his wife and says he is going to see a psychiatrist. During the conversation, Stalvey (1973) tells Mr. Swenson that he is strong and she wishes him good luck; again illustrating a dramatic shift in Stalvey’s (1973) earlier demeanor. By the end of the article, Mr. Swenson has sought help and is ostensibly “healed” and Stalvey (1973) is at peace with her decision, which demonstrates that handling a problem, even if dangerous and possibly life-

threatening, in a calm and sympathetic manner is effective, more effective, in fact, than hostility.

A strikingly different type of mother is portrayed in an article from the January 1973 issue of *Woman's Day* entitled "I feed five people on \$430 a month." In the article, the author, Jo Boyd Hines, expresses a great sense of pride at feeding her family food that they enjoy even if it is expensive and somewhat wasteful. Hines (1973) is in charge of planning and orchestrating family meals, but she defers to what her family wants. Hines (1973) knows that if she did scrimp and save on food, "nobody would eat" (p. 78). Her husband, Charles, for example, grew up on a meat and potatoes diet, and "he simply doesn't know how to eat any other kind of meal. Furthermore, only certain meats, potatoes and vegetables will do" (p. 79). Hines goes on to say that she could never serve him a certain kind of dish.

He would break out in a rash just looking at it! Besides, I adore him, so what he likes is what I cook. I wouldn't think of imposing my political or religious views on him, so why should I force my eating preferences down his throat (Hines, 1973, p. 79).

Although Hines (1973) is proactive, she exhibits traditional and stereotypical characteristics in carrying out the action. "I probably work just as hard at spending money in the grocery store as [a thrifty mom] does saving it," says Hines (1973, p. 78). She also says, "My children's likes and dislikes are part of their personalities, and my goal is not to shape their personalities into replicas of my own" (p. 90). Although, the article illustrates a mother who accomplishes her goals, in this case, keeping her family happy, her rationale is contradictory to feminist ideology.

The portrayals of proactive mothers in 1973 are not always couched in traditional stereotypes. For example, in the *Family Circle* article “Heel, Maude!” the author, Jessica David Freeman, questions the clichéd messages in contemporary TV shows. For example, Freeman (1973) wonders if her children, after watching the TV series *Maude*, expect her to obey her husband’s command “like a cantankerous but essentially loyal old hound” like the matriarch on the TV show (p. 10). “The idea that they might be using these shows as yardsticks against which to measure their own parents gives me the shivers,” says Freeman (1973, p. 10).

The author does acknowledge, however:

that there is one TV show that really does come close to reality. *The Mary Tyler Moore Show* depicts women as fully functioning individuals, neither dependent on nor subservient to men – and men as fully functioning individuals who can stand on their own two feet without being propped up by a faithful mother-wife geisha (p. 134).

Throughout the article, Freeman (1973) scrutinizes the possible effects of outdated and stereotypical television models, and she clearly expresses a pro-feminist argument by supporting shows, like *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*, that depict real women who are independent and assertive.

Here is a mother speaking out on, what she believes are, outdated and anti-feminist portrayals of women and by addressing these issues, is calling for change. “Don’t think I’m advocating censorship – banning a show only makes it more alluring. Do try to have a look at the shows your children watch, so you’ll know what to zero in on” (p. 134). Freeman (1973) says that parents can help “by actively contradicting the negative values shown” in TV programs (p. 134).

Among all of the articles analyzed within this theme from 1973, it is evident that women's magazines, at least *Good Housekeeping*, *Woman's Day*, and *Family Circle*, were balancing modern and traditional portrayals of women during this time period. The articles in these magazines make an effort to illustrate proactive mothers seeking jobs, chastising stereotypes, healing child molesters, etc. But, in most of these articles, the depictions of strong, independent women are hindered by traditional sex stereotypes. This phenomenon is most likely representative of the magazines' difficulty in juggling what their readers want with promoting progressive ideology, all while maintaining those readers and keeping the magazine fiscally viable. Howard Allaway, the editor of *Popular Science Monthly* during the 1950s and '60s phrased this dilemma as such:

Publishing is a business. Sure, we want to save the world; but the first responsibility of any magazine or newspaper is to survive, to stay alive, to come out again tomorrow or next month. If we can't do that, certainly we can't help to save the world. And to survive, any publisher must print enough of what some public wants, whether his public is a selected magazine audience or the whole population of a one-newspaper town (as quoted in Wolseley, 1973, p. 70-71).

Thus, according to such beliefs, it is in their best interests for magazines and other forms of information targeted to large-scale audiences to "avoid alienating" too much of their readership when introducing new ways of thinking (p. 74).

Father figures a role in 1973

Fathers play an important role in several articles from 1973; they are mentioned in all but one of the articles from this year, and the manners in which fathers and husbands are portrayed is important to the study of the depiction of mothers. A strong father figure, for example, might suggest a patriarchal structure within the home. Or, equal

responsibility in taking care of the family and home might be indicative of an incorporation and transmission of modern ideology.

For example, Lamb (2004) argues that “Feminists in the 1970s insisted that fathers participate equally in child rearing as part of an egalitarian relationship between husbands and wives” (p. 42). In other words, many fathers were expected to assume an equal responsibility in raising children, which is a marked difference from earlier generations of women who wanted fathers to participate in child rearing, but not necessarily share an equal hand in the job (p. 42). There is a debate among scholars, however, over the reality of this ‘new father’ figure in the 1970s. Some sociologists, for example, argue that depictions of more involved fathers in the media during this time did not always match reality. But other scholars argue that such research uses outdated data, and that fathers were taking on more responsibility as parents in the 1970s (p. 43). Regardless of the validity of such depictions, the concept of “good” or “bad” fathers suggests that the role fathers play in mediated messages is related to feminism and its presence in such messages (p. 44).

Influential father figures are illustrated in two *Good Housekeeping* articles from the magazine’s section “My problem and how I solved it.” In the first article, which is entitled “Should we turn our son in?” the title alone, with its use of the first person plural pronoun, demonstrates assumed co-parenting. However, as the article progresses, the power dynamic between husband and wife becomes more evident, and the husband is clearly the dominant authority in the household. When the mother featured in the story finds white pills in the pockets of her son’s pants, she says, “My first reaction was to get rid of the pills: Flush them down the toilet, tell myself I’d never seen them. . . . My next

thought was almost instinctive too: David musn't find out!" ("Should we turn," p. 16). David is the narrator's husband, who she describes as a "good man and a good father" but with "a stern side" (p. 16). This woman is afraid of her husband, afraid of his reaction to their son's possible drug use, which is further portrayed through her rationalization of her husband's "hard sense of right and wrong that can't be bent, even to protect his own children" (p. 16). "Perhaps it's because he himself grew up fatherless, spoiled and confused by a doting mother," the author ponders (p. 16). Regardless, this mother's fear of her husband is palpable and eventually eclipses the issue of the son's drug use.

The mother's fear lends to her portrayal as a weak, self-doubting character. The author's first instinct is to pretend she never found the pills in her son's pocket, therefore she will not have to confront her son or her husband with this problem. Furthermore, she rationalizes her husband's, somewhat maniacal, sense of right and wrong, and she questions if she is "strong enough to handle this crisis alone" (p. 16-22). She does confront her son, however, her "eyes brimming with tears," and she gets her son to talk about how he discovered the drugs and why he was taking them. At the end of their discussion, the son fearfully asks his mother if she is going to tell her husband about the pills, again portraying the father as a feared and dominant character (p. 26).

The author is spared of her "private hell," however, when she discovers her neighbor's part-time work as a youth drug counselor. The neighbor begins to work with the author's son, and only after her son has promised he will not use drugs anymore, does the mother tell her husband about what has been going on. Of course, when the father does find out he is furious and threatens to go to the police until his wife convinces him to talk with their son's counselor. Thus, the husband is not physically present in the

article until the end, once the son has ostensibly “healed,” but the father’s authority was present from the beginning. It is the mother who helps heal her son by introducing him to the youth counselor, and it is the mother who creates harmony in the home by suggesting the counselor talk to her son and husband. However, the dilemma is not fully resolved until the father is satisfied that his son will no longer use drugs, again, further demonstrating this man’s power in the family.

What is also interesting to note is that the author never intended to turn her son into the police, the entire conflict of the story is the mother’s fear that if she tells her husband about the pills, he will turn the son in, yet the title of the article is “Should we turn our son in?” The title, thus, falsely suggests that the mother is of somewhat of the same opinion as the father, or that the two parents are together considering whether to turn their son in. Because the author most likely did not write the title, it seems as if the magazine is attempting to pull readers into a story about a family dilemma, which the mother and father work together to solve, but by the end of the article the mother in effect found a resolution, and the father, once pacified, has really done nothing to solve the issue at hand.

The second “My problem and how I solved it” article from *Good Housekeeping* illustrates a similar problem-solution, but this time, the mother and father work together to resolve the dilemma. Again, the title includes the first person plural pronoun, “Our son was uncontrollable,” and the inclusion of such plural pronouns does not stop at the title. For example the dek states, “Chris’s defiant, disruptive behavior had us at our wits’ end until – finally – we discovered a way to help him” (“Our son,” p. 16). The issue in this article is a couple’s inability to discipline their 11-year-old son, who is acting up in

school. When the mother, who is also the narrator, discovers her son's unsatisfactory report card she confronts him, but when her son challenges her by asking what she is "going to do to" him, she replies, "we'll decide when Dad gets home" (p. 16). This is quite a different response from that in the 2008 problem-solution article "Bad company" in which the mother does not even mention a father figure. The mother in this article says, "We had tried it all, Pete and I – reasoning, scolding, withholding privileges, isolation" but nothing seemed to work (p. 16). The article even illustrates a specific occasion when Pete, the father, was trying to discipline his son, and the author describes the dilemma as an "us against him" battle in which the "us" is herself and her husband (p. 18).

Unlike the previous 1973 *Good Housekeeping* article, however, it is the father who comes up with the solution. "We need help" Pete tells his wife, "We're in a university town with a child guidance center, and it's time we used it" (p. 21). Although his wife is at first resistant to the idea, Pete manages to convince her that seeking counseling for their son will be worthwhile. All three of the family members attend counseling together, and both the mother and father are illustrated as working with the psychologist to determine ways to better discipline their son as well as implementing those methods. This is evident through such statements as "we told him," "we also allowed," and "we remained silent" (p. 24). Pete also installs a basketball hoop and takes his son on a camping trip as part of the positive reinforcement system the parents have implemented.

Pete's parental influence in this article could be evidence of several scenarios. The article might be demonstrating a more equalized division of labor within the home

with the mother and father sharing responsibility for their son's wellbeing. However, considering that feminist scholars, as late as 1999, argue that an increase in men's responsibility at home did not correspond to women's success outside the home (DiQuinzio, 1999, p. xi), a more likely explanation is that this article portrays what is ultimately a patriarchal structure within this family. Tuchman argued in 1978 that by portraying men enacting traditional female roles television programs were trivializing women. "According to sociological analyses of traditional sex roles, men are 'instrumental' leaders, active workers and decision makers outside the home; women are 'affective' or emotional leaders in solving personal problems within the home" (p. 14). Therefore, by portraying Pete as the problem solver to the emotional situation at home, the article is trivializing the wife and mother, who then appears incompetent.

The father and husband figure also plays an equal role in an article in *Family Circle* about a young couple who, together, become debt free. "They worked their way out of debt" profiles Barbara and Frank Parfume, who unlike the Crabbs from the 2008 article "Back from the brink," are portrayed as collectively making poor financial decisions and amounting a considerable amount of debt. The author, Sidney Margolius (1973) states that "Barby had started to buy on installments even as a teenager," and Frank, instead of repairing his car, financed a new one (p. 38-40). Barbara and Frank are described as "buying everything" during their first year of marriage, including furniture for their new apartment and lavish Christmas gifts for family (p. 40). The bills began to mount, and when Barbara quits work after becoming pregnant, the Parfume's money situation becomes worse.

Also unlike the Crabbs, the Parfumes are portrayed as working together to erase their debt. They seek the help of a credit counselor who advises them to cut back on their spending and increase their income. “Once they saw a workable plan for getting out of debt, Barbara and Frank went to work on it like the energetic team they are” (p. 63). Frank took a second job at a dairy store, and Barbara found a job at a discount store, though she quits after discovering she is pregnant again. To cut back on expenses, Frank begins to repair his car on his own rather than taking it to the shop, while Barbara dramatically decreases her clothing budget (p. 63-64). Although the article contains stereotypical sex role allusions, such as Barbara’s staying home after the birth of her children and Frank being the primary breadwinner, neither husband nor wife was left to fix this problem alone, and neither character was assigned more of the blame for their predicament. This portrayed equality between husband and wife could be a result of *Family Circle*’s attempt to incorporate modern ideology (McCracken, 1993, p. 178). However, as earlier mentioned, men are stereotypically portrayed as family breadwinners, so the father’s involvement in the family’s finances is not extraordinary. The Parfume’s “team” effort, however, seems to suggest that the husband and wife are equal in their responsibilities to the family, which, if anything, supports the idea that mothers in 2008 are taking on more responsibility both outside and within the home.

Equal responsibility in parenting and family issues is also evident in a family improvement article from *Woman’s Day*. In “The most important things parents can teach a little child,” Eda LeShan, family-life specialist, lists 10 values and lessons she believes parents should instill in their children before they begin school. Like Runkel (2008) who wrote “Screamfree parenting,” LeShan addresses parents as a collective rather than

simply mothers. “I’ve become increasingly alarmed over the number of parents who think ... that preparation for school is a matter of memorization and mental skills,” says LeShan (1973, p. 44). The article, also like Runkel’s (2008), is filled with first and second person plural pronouns, and LeShan (1973) illustrates hypothetical examples and scenarios throughout the article that incorporate both mothers and fathers.

Along with “Our son was uncontrollable,” LeShan’s (1973) article suggests that fathers play an integral role in parenting. And similar to “Our son was uncontrollable,” this assumption might be evidence of a patriarchal ideology. Much of the relevant literature about this period states that fathers were not assuming equal responsibility in the home, which begs the question of why husbands and fathers were portrayed as equally important and relevant figures as mothers. Again, one possible explanation is that the importance of fathers in these articles is serving as a disparagement of women. If a man is capable of handling responsibilities outside the home as well as within the home, which is stereotypically a woman’s domain, he is that much more powerful and more significant than a woman.

The glory of motherhood in 1973

Three of the articles analyzed from 1973, openly glorified motherhood, which is similar to 2008 in which two articles featured mothers who overtly expressed their joy at being a mother. In 1973, Fay Ward admits that she loves being a mother to her two daughters, children are her passion, and the mothers in Bird’s (1973) article enjoy getting home from work in time to take of their kids in the afternoon. The most explicit glorification, however, is evident in a *Good Housekeeping* profile of Diana Ross. “Diana

Ross grows up,” which is written by male author, Joseph N. Bell, and describes Ross’s new combined role as housewife and career woman.

This article is different, however, because the central mother is more reluctant to express enjoyment at being a wife and mother. It is the author, Bell (1973), who continually strives throughout the article to paint a pretty picture of motherhood. In a study of the magazine during the 1980s, McCracken (1993) notes that “*Good Housekeeping* presents lengthier and more numerous features about stars,” and “these features usually offer occasions for voyeurism that ultimately reinforce the predominant social order” (p. 185). Based on this idea as well as the article’s thesis that motherhood and caring for her family are Ross’s most important duties as a woman, Bell (1973) promotes the idea that motherhood is more important than a career.

The article begins by describing “the most important night of [Ross’s] professional life” while she is waiting to hear the reviews of her first performance as a professional actress. “Diana couldn’t go to the premiere because she was about to give birth to her second child,” says Bell (1973, p.92). The author then quotes Ross as saying, “I hated missing the premiere, but Tracee came first, even before she was born” (p. 172). Yet, Bell (1973) quickly notes that “in a less reflective mood on the day before the premiere, Diana had appeared ‘annoyed’ at Tracee’s ill-timed birthday and admitted to a reporter that she ‘hadn’t really planned it this way” (p. 172). Bell’s (1973) quick explanation of this contradiction is as patronizing to Ross, who at the time was 28 years old, as it is to all mothers. The author states Ross’s disappointment at not being able to attend her movie premiere stems from a “little-girl desire to be out playing with the other kids,” and “on that night, Diana turned a corner in a process of growing up that has been

accelerating since her marriage three years ago” (p. 172). This statement articulates the idea that Ross’s responsibilities as a mother are much more important than her career ambitions, and because she is now “grown up,” Ross will make, ostensibly correct, decisions based on the needs of her family.

Bell (1973) also quotes Ross’s husband, Bob Silberstein, who says that ““Two years ago, Diana’s career was the most important thing in her life. Now it’s not. Now her family is. She’s suddenly become aware of life. Now she knows what children are all about; experiencing these things brought about changes in her”” (p. 172). Interesting to point out, however, is that Bell (1973) immediately follows Silberstein’s quote with the statement: “Diana agrees with most of that assessment” (p. 172). Both Bell (1973) and Silberstein assign the role of wife and mother and its accompanying responsibilities to Ross, who is less inclined to assume the necessary sacrifices the role requires.

Bell (1973) repeatedly mentions how having a husband and children has forced Ross to “grow up,” while Ross on the other hand is quoted several times as saying that it is her career, especially her work as an actress, that has helped her become a more attuned and conscientious woman (p. 172). And, although Ross is quoted as saying she will always put her family before her career, there is a obvious tension in the article between Ross’s attempts at homemaking “to make her marriage work” and her “ambivalence” towards the role of housewife (p. 176). Despite the evidence that Ross does not enjoy “homemaking as a way of life,” Bell (1973) continually brands Ross as a more mature woman now aware of her responsibilities as housewife and mother.

This article, no doubt, illustrated to readers that being a wife and mother requires a mature sense of self-sacrifice and devotion that even the famous and wealthy were

subject to. Here is a woman who has reached a pinnacle in her very successful career, yet, according to the author, it is the responsibilities of motherhood and being a wife that stimulated her maturity and subsequently validate her as a model woman. Motherhood and homemaking, then, become much more worthwhile and commendable jobs for women than a job/success outside of the home.

Motherhood exposed in 1973

The complexities and potential downsides of motherhood, though not a prolific theme covered in the text from 1973, are broached in three of the articles studied, including the Diana Ross profile. For example, in an article from *Woman's Day* entitled “‘When can I take my new baby out?’ ‘You brought him home from the hospital, didn’t you?’” author Virginia E. Pomeranz, M.D., with contributions by Dodi Schultz, acknowledges that mothers are subject to “advice and criticism” from others. “Do not despair,” the authors say; instead, “ask yourself three questions: Am I happy? Is my husband – or wife – happy? Is the baby happy?” (Pomeranz & Schultz, 1973, p. 16). If yes, “then whatever you are doing or not doing is right,” according to the authors (p. 16).

Throughout the article Pomeranz & Schultz (1973) attempt to comfort readers by demystifying common myths that can make parenting difficult, which is similar to the 2008 article “Top 5 Mom myths.” Pomeranz and Schultz’s sarcastic tone also helps create a sense of humor around what can be a difficult topic of discussion. For example, the authors state that “Remarks such as, ‘I wouldn’t put my hand in the carriage if I were you; painted fingernails seem to drive him crazy and he bites,’ will also discourage advances” (p. 106). The major difference between this article and “Top 5 mom myths” is

the intended audiences. The title infers that “Top 5 mom myths” are for mothers, and its text notes that the idea of being a perfect parent is more relevant to mothers than fathers (Solimini, 2008, p. 48-52). Pomeranz and Schultz (1973), on the other hand, address their article to parents, and the authors illustrate their thesis through the use of examples and scenarios that employ both mothers and fathers.

Despite the humor in the authors’ tone, there is also evidence of an authoritative attitude within the text. Similar to LeShan’s (1973) article, the authors of this text repeatedly make use of the first person singular pronoun as well as commands. For example, the article, which is written from Pomeranz’s, the doctor’s, viewpoint, states such things as, “I think rapport with your child should take precedence over some the purely mechanical chores,” and “Say what you mean and say it precisely” (p. 120). Also, both the authors of this article and LeShan’s (1973) are both “experts,” one a doctor and one a family life specialist, and there is no advice in the article from real life mothers or fathers. Although Pomeranz (1973) does state that readers should never take advice if it goes against their “grain” (p. 106), this finding seems to suggest that real mothers, with no professional experience studying childcare or parenting, like many of the authors of similar articles in 2008, are not relevant sources for parenting advice

The realities of motherhood are also exposed in a *Family Circle* profile of reality television star Pat Loud. In the article “What TV didn’t reveal about ‘An American Family’s’ Pat Loud,” the author, Colette Dowling (1973), follows the difficult self-discovery of “a woman long protected by and dependent upon her husband and her childhood fantasies of the safety and permanence of marriage” (p. 38). The protagonist in the article, Pat Loud, along with her husband and five children, was featured in a reality

television show that filmed the family for seven months. Once the show aired, however, “A good deal of criticism, implicit and explicit, was aimed at Pat. She was described, both privately and in the press, as cold, noncommunicative, a ‘martyr’” (p. 38). Dowling (1973) sympathizes with Loud, though, and attempts to explain Loud throughout the article.

Maybe it’s because I’ve been through a separation myself. Maybe it’s because I’m acutely aware of the problems of real communication with my own children. Whatever it was, I felt a certain kinship with this cool woman in sunglasses who at least seemed to respond to things so differently than I do (p. 38).

Dowling (1973) describes a woman who was born into a “typical family” in Oregon and by the age of 23 was happily married to a man she had known all her life. Loud is quoted as saying, “the future seemed settled. I thought – I guess a lot of women think – that when you get married that’s it” (p. 38). Loud’s husband, Bill, though he had to travel a lot for work, provided her with “a lovely home and swimming pool as compensation – as well as the job of raising five kids” (p. 38). When Loud discovers her husband is having an affair, however, her pleasant life in the suburbs of Santa Barbara dramatically changes. “Pat contemplated a divorce at that time, but the prospect of living on her own was too awful” (p. 40). After living with a growing resentment, Loud finally confronts her husband during the taping of the TV show, which is eventually aired on national television.

More than Loud’s story, Dowling’s (1973) exposure of a woman battling between her own “Victorian hangups” and a new generation’s ideology is what marks this article as progressive (p. 40). Dowling (1973) acknowledges that Loud faced a large amount of public backlash once the TV show aired as a result of her apparently complacent naivety.

And, by profiling this woman, Dowling (1973) attempts to explain to the public who criticized Loud and who seemingly hold more progressive ideas on the status of women, why Loud exhibits ostensibly antiquated female behavior.

For example, Dowling (1973) includes a telling description by Loud of her mother.

‘My mother is very different from me. Mostly she’s concerned with housework, maintaining the home properly. Everything’s always in perfect order in her house, but that’s all she thinks about. ... I’m so sick of feeling guilty about it. I wish I could be the person that she thinks I am and wants me to be. No, I don’t I really couldn’t stand being that person. But I wish I could make her happier’ (p. 40).

This is a woman obviously troubled with the roles that were impressed upon her as a child as well as her sense of self, which apparently does not conform to those roles. By exposing this dichotomy, however, Dowling (1973) is implicitly demonstrating that women, who were generally appalled by Loud’s persona on TV, are themselves evolving beyond traditional sex roles.

This article highlights the downsides of playing the dutiful, passive housewife as well as it illustrates the benefits of living an independent life. “‘I’ve been working for seven months, and my days are filled with good, active things ... I have to think, and I get a sense of achieving something worthwhile. I’ve done it on my own merits and nobody has helped me’” Loud says of her life post divorce (p. 42). And, although Loud still exhibits yearnings for a more traditional role, like when she is quoted in an author’s afterword as saying, “‘I don’t know what it is, exactly. I just feel as if I’m the type of woman who ought to be married,’” the article attempts to showcase a woman who is adapting to a more modern idea of what it means to be a woman.

In her article on Pat Loud, Dowling (1973) attempts to explain the rationale behind a woman the public views as antiquated and submissive, which illustrates the idea that motherhood and being a wife is difficult and not always fulfilling. This theme was evident in several articles from 1973, and just like in 2008, the recognition of this fact is evidence of feminism's influence. And, although not as explicit as in 2008, *Good Housekeeping*, *Woman's Day*, and *Family Circle* all broached this topic, which indicates the realities of motherhood was becoming a fairly pervasive idea in 1973.

Conclusion

The results of this study provide evidence for several conclusions about the portrayal of mothers in *Good Housekeeping*, *Woman's Day*, and *Family Circle* and how those portrayals have changed or stayed the same from 1973 to 2008. Many of these conclusions are not black and white, however, and lend themselves to a variety of explanations. For example, are mothers more individual and independent in 2008, or do present-day magazines portrayals reflect an imbalance between the advancement of women outside the home and the need for increased male responsibility at home? Or do the findings suggest a combination of both?

Overall, the results show 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. Also, only two articles from 1973, "Heel, Maude" and "What TV didn't reveal about 'An American Family's' Pat Loud" directly and openly criticized traditional sex role stereotypes. The other 10 articles from 1973, though they might have included an implicit influence of feminism, all contained subtle, and at times obvious, references to a patriarchal ideology.

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 within these contemporary portrayals of mothers for a greater degree of equality between the sexes in terms of domestic responsibilities. This study, thus, ultimately demonstrates that feminism has

impacted the portrayal of mothers in magazine articles as late as 2008. The change in the role of mothers in the articles examined is indicative of a changing social conception of motherhood.

Yet, there are signs that feminism has not completely revamped the way mothers are portrayed, at least in women's magazines. The desire for independence and equality has most likely contributed to the portrayal of mothers doing it all – taking care of the home and family while balancing a career or personal endeavors. For there to be true equality in these articles, there should be a larger inclusion of men in the discussion of parenting issues. One sex should not dominate or outweigh the other in domestic responsibilities or authority. In terms of the literature, this study illustrates feminism's inroads into the mediated portrayal of mothers in *Good Housekeeping*, *Woman's Day*, and *Family Circle* over the span of thirty-five years. The study also demonstrates the opportunity for a more equalized portrayal of parenting in magazines geared towards mothers.

Conclusions from 2008

While *Good Housekeeping*, *Woman's Day*, and *Family Circle* are still primarily organized around traditionally female interests such as cooking and crafting, there are implicit inclusions of feminist ideology within the text. Based on the articles examined from 2008, it is evident that mothers more often than not are portrayed as the primary decision makers about parenting and family issues. Mothers act independent of a spouse or male figure, or with little input from a spouse, and, at times, resolve problems for which their spouse was the cause. Whether instituting family dinners as a means to

encourage a stronger familial bond or returning to school to earn an MBA, mothers in 2008 are also proactively pursuing the wellbeing of their families as well as themselves. Mothers do not “wait until Dad gets home” or resist making decisions for fear their husbands will disagree. Instead, these women “guard” (Kingsolver, 2008, p. 77) their families and pursue personal goals.

The portrayed independence of mothers in 2008 might speak to the “uneven progress of feminism,” which leaves women having to do it all (DiQuinzio, 1999, p. xi). As earlier mentioned, some scholars argue that the women’s movement progressed faster than the correlative need for men to assume more responsibility at home, so women are now expected to succeed outside the home while maintaining a happy, healthy home and family. Mothers doing it all is also most likely a result of social constructs. As earlier mentioned, DiQuinzio (1999) argues that “being a mother and being mothered are both imbued with tremendous social, cultural, political, economic, psychological, and personal significance” in capitalist societies (p. viii). The importance of motherhood in societies such as the United States, then, continues to relegate women as the primary domestic caretakers. Women can pursue work outside of the home as long as they maintain their domestic responsibilities.

In relation to this idea is the argument that changes in the socially constructed reality of fatherhood have not been adopted by these magazines. In a recent study, Duckworth and Buzzanell (2009) found that fathers acknowledge the need to balance their work and family responsibilities, and all the fathers interviewed prioritized ‘family first’ (p. 569). “From colonial times when good U.S. fathers made sure that their children could quote scripture and not be a burden to communities, fatherhood has shifted to being

breadwinners, masculine role models, involved parents, and nurturing caregivers” (p 569). If this study is a true measure of the realities of fatherhood in 2008, then *Good Housekeeping*, *Woman’s Day*, and *Family Circle* are furthering stereotypical portrayals of father figures who are less involved in family responsibilities and ultimately leave women to “do it all.”

Another theory behind the portrayed independence of mothers in regards to their counterparts is the idea that contemporary women do not view motherhood as a means of male domination. A striking difference of opinion between some second and third wave feminists is the role of motherhood in a patriarchal society. It is common for third wave feminists to argue that being a mother is not a life sentence to subordination. One such third waver, Allison Abner, argues that motherhood is a complex and rewarding role. “For me, having this child won’t be an impediment, but a channel through which I feel connected to other women, other mothers, other wives who have placed family at the head of their self-concept without feeling they’ve lost themselves” (as quoted in Arneil, 1999, p. 202). Hooks (2000) further argues that “Even feminist theorists who have emphasized the need for men to share equally in child-rearing are reluctant to cease attaching special value to mothering” (p. 138).

Similarly, there is evidence in the articles analyzed from 2008 of what, upon first glance, looks like a reversion to antiquated depictions of women as natural caretakers and mothers. Upon closer examination, this glorification of motherhood might be reflective of current feminist ideology, which extols the “‘joys of motherhood,’ the special intimacy, closeness, and bonding purported to characterize the mother/child relationship” (Hooks, 2000, p. 135). Arneil (1999) quotes a young feminist writer as saying, “‘I now know that

it is not necessary to shun marriage and family. Instead we must redefine these concepts and break the narrow traditional encasings ... We (sic) can make the roles fit our identity instead of deriving our identity from these labels” (p. 202).

However, some feminist scholars note that “positive feminist focus on motherhood draws heavily on sexist stereotypes. Motherhood is often romanticized by some feminist activists as it was by the nineteenth-century men and women who extolled the virtues of the ‘cult of domesticity’” (Hooks, 2000, p. 135). This theory is evident in such articles as “Amazing Grace,” in which the profiled mother expresses tremendous joy and gratitude for her children, or in “The color of love,” in which the mother’s number one desire in life is to have children.

The exposure of common myths and misconceptions about motherhood, however, suggests that there is an openness and willingness to express the, sometimes harsh, realities of this role. Also, the inclusion of this subject in women’s magazines indicates a progression from the 1960s when Betty Friedan blamed these magazines for promoting false images of happy housewives that glorified motherhood. There are also no “superficial” dismissals of mothers’ occasional discontent (Friedan, 1974, p. 22). Instead, first-person testimonials and experts explain that there is no such thing as a “good” mother or “bad” mother and dissatisfaction with mothering is normal.

This evolution in the portrayal of motherhood, as Hooks (2000) notes, “has positive and negative implications for (sic) feminist movement” (p. 135). On one hand, the continued study and evaluation of this traditionally female role will help to introduce ideology that can further gender equality. Continued romanticizing of motherhood, however, risks reinforcing stereotypical ideas about the role and women. In order to

promote female equality, at least in terms of domestic responsibility many scholars argue that the dialogue glorifying motherhood needs to adopt new “terminology” that does not “suggest that women are inherently life-affirming nurturers” (p. 136).

Outside the pages of these magazines, women are working to end government policies that make it difficult for both mothers and fathers to work and care for their children (Wood, 2009, p. 88). And, as already mentioned, fathers are prioritizing their families and organizing their work lives around family time. Thus, there is room in the pages of *Good Housekeeping*, *Woman’s Day*, and *Family Circle* to incorporate a more equalized portrayal of parenting responsibilities that reflects the changes in the social construction of motherhood and fatherhood, which will inevitably serve to advance the status of women.

Conclusions from 1973

The results of this study demonstrate that the portrayal of mothers in 1973 was most of the time a balance of modern ideology with more traditional ideas of women’s roles. Articles that advocated the benefits of part-time jobs for mothers and those that provided a space for mothers to openly question the archaic and ant-feminist themes in television shows demonstrate the attempts to incorporate and disseminate changing views of women’s roles. However, articles that portrayed passive and complacent mothers like Jo Boyd Hines, who believes in feeding her family only food that they will enjoy, illustrate the reticence to completely abandon traditional female representations, most likely as an effort “to reassure readers who felt threatened by social change (McCracken, 1993, p. 178).

Of the three magazines studied, *Family Circle* contained the most articles with a more modern ideological slant in 1973, which provides evidence for McCracken's (1993) theory about the magazine's pride in its own modernization (p. 178). *Family Circle* included articles on mothers working part-time, a mother's objection to anti-feminist messages in TV shows, a husband and wife working as a "team" to abolish their debt, as well as the article revealing the public condemnation of Pat Loud's antiquated passivity and complacency. Dowling's (1973) article on Pat Loud and Freeman's (1973) article on outdated television shows both contain explicit acknowledgment of women's changing roles and women's demand for a societal disavowal of stereotypical representations of the sex. Margolius's (1973) article on the Parfumes implicitly demonstrates equality between husband and wife, especially when compared to a similar article from 2008, "Back from the brink." Unlike the 2008 article in which the wife and mother is portrayed as resolving the family's financial plight by herself, Barbara and Frank Parfume are partners who work together to contribute to the family's income and decrease the family's spending. The comparison of the two articles, also supports the idea that women and mothers in 2008 are left to "do it all" as a result of the unequal progression of feminism and men's increased responsibility at home.

Bird's (1973) *Family Circle* article on working mothers, however, contains the most evidence of traditional women's roles among the articles analyzed from that magazine. Although the author promotes working outside the home as a way for mothers to gain a sense of self-worth, she is also only promoting part-time work, which ensures that the mothers are home in time to take care of the children after school. Bird (1973)

indicates that working full-time is undesirable to most women, and those who seek full-time work do so because they are dependent on the income (p. 170).

Woman's Day contains similar implicit, as well as explicit, references to conventional sex roles in its articles from 1973. From the mother in "The child molester" who confronts her daughter's almost assailant with sympathy and a desire to heal, to the mother who would never think of imposing her beliefs or "eating preferences" (Hines, 1973, p. 79) on her husband, *Woman's Day* depicts women who are awash in stereotypical characterizations. The authoritative advice from experts in the two advice articles from this magazine, also indicate a preservation of traditional treatment of women. However, the acknowledgment of Pomeranz and Shultz (1973) that parenting is difficult and often ripe for criticism is indicative of a feminist influence, and the mother in "The child molester" did make a proactive decision despite the stereotypical manner in which she carried out that decision.

The articles analyzed from *Good Housekeeping* also demonstrate an attempted balance between progressive and established ideology. For example, although the magazine includes a profile of a strong mother who overcomes tragedy and defeats the odds, the mother admits that her passion is kids and she loves being a mother. And, in the profile of Diana Ross, the author continually tries to portray the famous singer and actress as a newly matured woman as a result of her relatively recent attempts to put her children and family before her career. Ross's repeated protestations otherwise are also quickly covered with trite, and somewhat patronizing, reassurances by her husband and the author that she is in fact maturing into a responsible woman who puts family first.

The two articles from *Good Housekeeping's* section "My problem and how I solved it," are the most indicative of conventional ideology within this magazine. In one of the articles, the family dilemma of a son flirting with drug addiction is eclipsed by the mother's fear of her husband and his reaction to the situation. Although she eventually happens upon a solution to her problem, it is not until the woman's husband is pacified that the dilemma is fully resolved.

The second article from this section poses a contradiction to the section's title because the mother does not solve the problem. It is the father, who is portrayed as an equal in parenting, who convinces his wife that the family should seek a therapist to help discipline their son. Thus, although the title of the section explicitly suggests that the featured mothers are taking control of a situation and solving a problem, this mother's deference to her husband proves otherwise.

Implications for the future

If, as some scholars argue there is a current glorification of motherhood that draws on stereotypical sex roles, then developing a new terminology in which to express the positive qualities of the role is important to furthering the feminist movement. And, incorporating this terminology into the mass media will help present such ideas to society, which will in turn use such new views on mothering in its construction of reality. Also, as has been alluded to throughout this study, an increase in the portrayal of fathers, in terms of their responsibilities in the home, would also help to advance equal status for women. Magazines that portray shared responsibility between parents might also help to illustrate more equalized roles in the home. Even if men do not read this type of

magazine, by depicting equal responsibility and involvement, mothers are presented with a different message – that they don't have to do it all.

Further research and limitations

In order to further the study of the portrayal of mothers, a quantitative analysis of the data might add more objective findings, which would help to solidify the results. Qualitative textual analysis is subjective, and its findings are prone to interpretation and possible bias (Barnett, 2006, p.5). Although qualitative textual analysis is able to uncover subtleties and nuances within the text that quantitative analysis might overlook, quantifiable results might add greater validity to the overall research.

Another aspect of further research might involve an analysis of magazines primarily focused on parenting. Performing a similar analysis on magazines such as *Parents* and *American Baby*, might prove fruitful in examining the portrayal of mothers. For example, despite its gender neutral title, “*Parents* is a celebration of today’s mother,” according to the magazine’s mission statement (Meredith Corporation, 2009). The inconsistency in the magazine’s title and target audience, alone, is ripe with possible implications for the portrayal of mothers. Have “parents” come to mean mothers? Also, because “feminist studies of media reception has dealt with genres popular among women such as soaps, romances or women’s magazines, neglecting other genres such as news or sports,” (van Zoonen, 1994, p. 9) an analysis of mothers in the media beyond magazines targeted to women would also, no doubt, prove fruitful.

An investigation of the design of these magazine articles would also, no doubt, add to the analysis of this study. The photographs, pull quotes, sidebars, and other design

elements within magazine articles are influential in the reader's absorption and processing of the presented information. The images, for example, can suggest a certain tone or audience for an article. I.e. an article about parenting that features photographs of women only implies that "parenting" might in fact mean "mothering" in that article.

Another limitation of this study is that social construction of reality theory does not aim to answer how the media affect people's behavior, but rather, how the media help shape people's ideas of reality. Thus, this research did not look at effects on the behavior of women's magazine readers. Further analysis on the portrayal of mothers in the media, might, therefore, benefit from an analysis of its effects on readers.

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