

Organizing Their Lives

Women, Work, and Family, 1950–2000

On January 25, 1971, Ida Phillips heard the good news: the justices of the United States Supreme Court had ruled unanimously that the Martin Marietta Corporation broke the law when it refused to hire her into a factory position in Orlando, Florida. When applying for the job, Phillips told the company that she had seven children and that the youngest child was in a day nursery. In response, Martin Marietta told Phillips that its policy was not to hire women with preschool-age children, even when the job involved building the monorail for a child's paradise: Disney World.

Ida Phillips, at age thirty-five, was not a feminist firebrand, but she told a reporter for the *Ladies' Home Journal*, "It's not just for myself that I'm doing this; it's for all mothers." Along with her husband, a truck mechanic, Phillips was working to support her family, and the simple fact was that assembly-line jobs at Martin Marietta paid twice what she earned in her waitressing job. When Phillips found out that the company hired men with preschool-age children for those assembly-line jobs, she filed a complaint with the Equal Employment Opportunities Commission (EEOC). The commission's purpose is to investigate charges that employers have violated Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, the portion of the law that prohibits employment discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, or sex. Phillips's 1970 complaint launched the first sex discrimination case under Title VII to reach the Supreme Court.

Phillips's victory in the case, which came with the support of President Richard Nixon's Justice Department, marks just one moment in American women's ongoing struggle to integrate their income-earning and child-rearing responsibilities. By tracing that struggle over the last five decades of the twentieth century, we can begin to appreciate its practical challenges and cultural complexities.

Women and Work, 1950–2000 (Females aged 16–50)



Figure 1 Women and Work, 1950–2000 The percentages in these charts were compiled from IPUMS-USA, which offers carefully designed samples of anonymous information on individual American households drawn from the U.S. Bureau of the Census. The sample size for the 1950–1970 data is 1 percent of the U.S. population, yielding a 0.2–0.3 percent margin of error; the sample size for the 1980–2000 data is 5 percent of the population, yielding a 0.1 percent margin of error. Source: Steven Ruggles, J. Trent Alexander, Katie Genadek, Ronald Goeken, Matthew B. Schroeder, and Matthew Sobek, *Integrated Public Use Microdata Series: Version 5.0* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2010), <http://usa.ipums.org/usa>.

Born in 1935, Ida Phillips was in elementary school at the end of World War II, that watershed in U.S. labor history when married women first outnumbered single women in the workforce. She grew up in a postwar world in which American wives and mothers, across class and across race, persistently participated in paid labor. Between 1940 and 1960, the number of working mothers increased by 400 percent, and by 1960, one third of all female workers had children below the age of eighteen (see Figure 1). This economic trend is remarkable because it unfolded in a cultural climate that claimed to disapprove of mothers working for pay outside the home. In 1950, for example, when almost one-third of all U.S. wives were employed, a *Fortune* magazine poll reported that two-thirds of its middle-class respondents opposed wives working. Such attitudes were often reflected in television shows and advertising campaigns of the era, and yet the trend of workforce participation by wives and mothers continued upward, especially among middle-class women.

Contrary to our image of the 1950s as a time of stress-free gender conformity, the reality is that the decades between 1945 and 1965—between the end of World War II and the start of the modern feminist movement—were a time of genuine conflict over the American mother's role. At the ideological extreme, Freudian theory claimed that any woman who sought paid employment suffered



Figure 2 Working Mothers and Their Children, 1952 The end of the day at a child care center looks very much the same today as it did in 1952. Although mothers of preschool children were far less likely to work in the 1950s than they are today, those who did work relied on private child care providers, neighbors, or family members, especially grandmothers, to take care of their children during the work day.

Source: Nina Leen/The LIFE Picture Collection/Getty Images.

from “penis envy” and a “masculinity complex,” while Cold War rhetoric insisted that the American man’s success at supporting his wife and children with an individual “family wage” was proof of capitalism’s superiority. In the eyes of these conservative critics, mothers who took paid jobs were either neurotic or subversive. More mainstream opponents of maternal employment simply ignored the economic need to work. They emphasized the social importance of women’s child rearing and insisted that modern labor-saving devices did not render homemaking obsolete.

Defenders of mothers’ employment in the 1945–1965 era agreed on the importance and the difficulty of child rearing and housekeeping. But working moms and their supporters challenged the idea that a single “family wage” was adequate to provide an American standard of living and upheld a woman’s right to pursue work outside the home. In labor union meetings and in the pages of

popular magazines, in women's organizations and in political party conferences, advocates for working mothers called for profamily reforms like maternity leave (without loss of seniority), flexible hours, and childcare centers that would allow women to better perform all their responsibilities to their families.

In the competitive Cold War climate of the 1950s and 1960s, U.S. policymakers began to voice their own concerns about full-time female domesticity. They worried that household duties were depriving society of women's economic contribution. According to a 1957 report by the National Manpower Council, women performed vital service as teachers, nurses, and clericals in the sex-segregated labor market, but a postwar pattern of early marriage and early childbearing was taking too many women off the track to these female jobs. Since many women were in their early thirties when their youngest child started school, the Manpower Council recommended that society provide ways for these youthful mothers to move into these vital, traditionally female occupations. It also observed that women with five or more years of postsecondary school were twice as likely to be in the workforce as women with no high school degree, but these women were often underused by being denied promotions and excluded from traditionally male jobs. How could the United States compete with the Soviet Union, asked the Manpower Council, if our best and brightest women were systematically confined to the kitchen and the typing pool?

Amidst this debate over women's roles, President John F. Kennedy bowed to pressure from women in labor unions and, in 1961, appointed a Presidential Commission on the Status of Women to study the barriers and opportunities for women in American society. The commission's 1963 report, showing a national pattern of sex discrimination against women in all walks of life, launched a wave of female organizing that triggered the feminist movement of the 1960s and 1970s. This modern movement is often referred to as the "second wave" out of respect for the "first wave" woman suffrage movement, a seventy-two year struggle that culminated in the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920. In contrast to the first-wave women's movement, the second wave gained grass-roots popularity with dizzying speed. Its rise in popularity was so rapid in part because the second wave included a wide array of viewpoints, from the members of the National Organization of Women, who sought gender equality within the existing political and economic systems, to more radical feminists who sought salaries and Social Security for all homemaker-mothers or who envisioned communal rearing of test-tube babies.

For millions of women and men, however, riding the second wave of feminism in the 1970s meant agreement on three basic principles. First, that "gender," not "sex," defines our social roles—that is, culture, not biology, dictates who rears children, who tends the house, who makes the money—and gender roles are quite malleable. Second, that the personal is highly political; our individual freedom in organizing our households, our families, our work lives, our sex lives, and our reproductive lives is profoundly shaped by the nation's public policies. And third, men as well as women should be engaged in the socially important work of child rearing and housekeeping. Although some vocal members of the more radical "women's liberation movement" defined domesticity

and motherhood as oppressive to women, the vast majority of second-wave Americans agreed with the position most consistently articulated by African American feminists that both work and motherhood are empowering for women and that disregard for either is simply unrealistic. Across gender, race, and class, feminists in the United States found common ground on the same issue that had fueled debate in the 1950s: how to design public policies that will allow for the integration of paid employment and family life.

The economic troubles of the 1970s and 1980s created a climate that was both hospitable and hostile to feminism. On the one hand, the tripling of federal, business, and personal debt, the rise in oil prices, and an unfavorable balance of payments in foreign trade meant "stagflation": prices went up, unemployment went up, and real earnings went down. Husbands and wives did not have to become card-carrying members of the National Organization for Women to recognize that a family's economic security demanded that both parents work and earn as much as possible. Ida Phillips was not alone in calculating that sex discrimination in employment materially injured her family and that antidiscrimination laws were needed to remove that injury. It was a mix of feminist conviction and economic need that fueled the expansion of mothers' workforce participation: in 1970, only 10 percent of mothers of preschool children worked full time; by 1990, almost 30 percent did so. Similarly, in 1970, 25 percent of mothers of school-age children worked full time; by 1990, 40 percent did so. Over the course of these twenty years, feminist activism brought improvements in the jobs these mothers could get and the pay they received.

At the same time, however, a new movement of Christian conservatives and limited-state libertarians was coalescing, partly in response to feminism but also in reaction to the 1960s counterculture and the government spending of President Lyndon Johnson's Great Society programs. As early as the election of Richard Nixon to the presidency in 1968, advocates for the "New Right" aimed to improve the economy by reducing government programs. So, just at the moment when feminists sought to expand public support for child care, the economic downturn and the New Right were exerting joint resistance to such expensive entitlement programs. Conservatives predicted that a reduction in government spending and taxes would produce such prosperity that Americans would be able to afford their own, private solutions to their child care needs or, better yet, mothers would be able to stay home with their children. Those predictions did not prove accurate, however. A survey of readers by *Better Homes and Gardens* in February 1982 found genuine anger that the New Right's Reagan Revolution had not made it possible for middle-class families to either afford high-quality private day care or survive on one parent's income.

Throughout the conservative Reagan years and into the more liberal years of the Clinton presidency, Americans continued to struggle with competing sets of values and goals. On the one hand, they accepted the feminist view that women have the need, the right, and the ability to operate as breadwinners for their families. On the other hand, they accepted the libertarian view that individuals, not tax-supported programs, should manage the costs associated with child care, which can consume more than 35 percent of a single parent's

income. For example, the welfare reform act of 1996 ended the federal government's six-decade commitment to aid single mothers. Called the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act, this legislation embraced the feminist idea that women are capable workers but not the feminist call for universal state-subsidized child care as an extension of public school.

Throughout all the swings in the political pendulum in the second half of the twentieth century, mothers in the United States kept on raising their kids and going to work. Sometimes the government, the culture, and the economy assisted mothers in performing these dual roles; sometimes mothers persevered in the face of resistance. Despite dramatic changes in women's access to occupations they were once denied, despite real increases in women's income, and despite general acceptance of the reality of maternal employment, Americans still struggled to find individual, affordable, responsible solutions to the conflict between earning an income and child rearing.

Using Multiple Sources on Women, Work, and Family, 1950–2000

Social attitudes and social realities are, by definition, interactive and dynamic. To analyze social attitudes in the past, multiple sources from multiple social positions must be considered. Using only situation comedies from the 1950s, for example, to analyze social attitudes toward working mothers leads to the conclusion that all American mothers worked at home and were delighted to do so. That conclusion is not only wrong, it is boring and unrealistic. Multiple readings from multiple sources over time give us the complicated, conflicted, contradictory picture that we all know, from our own experience, to be the real story of social attitudes.

Up to this point in the second volume of *Going to the Source*, we have concentrated on the advantages and disadvantages of just one type of historical source per chapter. We have explored visual and printed sources, public and private sources, and primary and secondary sources. In addition, we have focused on particular places and moments in post-Civil War U.S. history, such as the Blackfeet Indian reservation at the beginning of the twentieth century, the 1894 Pullman rail strike, Japanese internment during World War II, and economic decline in the 1970s. In this chapter, we apply lessons learned along the way to analyze a range of different source types over a longer span of time.

What Can Multiple Source Types Tell Us?

All historical analyses draw on multiple types of sources to tell the story. A book on the New Deal's post office murals might put the visual evidence at the center of the analysis, but it would also have to draw on Treasury Department

press releases and policy papers, letters between artists and local communities, and newspaper reports on new murals to place the murals in historical context. Similarly, a complete analysis of the Senate speeches during the filibuster of the Civil Rights Act would have to use government records of previous civil rights bills, biographies of Senate members, presidential memos, letters, and tape recordings, national and local polling data, and both print and film news reports on the civil rights movement to explain the content of the speeches and the outcome of the filibuster. Close analysis of one source type is necessary in historical analysis, but never sufficient. Multiple sources are needed to provide a fully furnished view of any moment in time.

Examining a range of sources rather than a single source type can produce a more complete picture and a broader perspective on a historical episode, but tracking down a wide variety of sources can be a challenge. Staying focused on a specific research question and limiting the scope to a meaningful time period are critical in preventing the research task from becoming overwhelming. For this chapter, our goal is to present different positions as expressed in different types of sources, allowing you to draw on the analytical skills acquired from previous chapters to construct your own argument about women, work, and motherhood in the United States in the second half of the twentieth century.

You will find, for example, that a presidential veto message can be analyzed like Senate speeches: it may not tell you what the person in power actually thought, but it will tell you what arguments that person regarded as most persuasive with his or her constituency, and that in itself serves as a window on public opinion. Public opinion polls, of course, give us the most direct access to information on attitudes and can provide surprising evidence of the gap between what people say they believe in and what they actually do. For example, a majority of poll respondents may say that they do not approve of mothers working for pay even though objective data on employment shows that a majority of mothers do, in fact, hold paying jobs.

Cultural products, like songs or cartoons, can also be used as a gauge of popular opinion. The creators of these products, like the federal sponsors of the post office murals, hope to appeal to a broad audience, but they also want to express a particular view of the world. When creative works, including children's songs or comic strips, become very popular, historians can conclude that their creators were in sync with the culture's dominant values. They do not, of course, represent everyone's views, but they can be used as evidence of what was marketable, popular, and mainstream at a particular moment in time. Articles from mass-marketed magazines seek to strike a balance, offering enough individual viewpoints to be interesting for readers but presenting those views in a way that will not offend a broad readership. They can give us a sense of what is acceptable to discuss, but we cannot conclude that every reader agreed with each article's position.

When we turn to sources like labor union debates, political newsletters or position papers, government reports, and even letters to the editor, we know that the views expressed are those of the individuals or organization members who hold particular ideological positions. Their aim is to persuade others, but

their views are not necessarily those of the majority of Americans. From such sources, historians can round out their understanding of the society's discussion of a topic like work and motherhood, bringing in the voices of those who might not sell a lot of products or recordings but who are actively engaged in influencing social attitudes and who may signify a passing stage or the next stage in those attitudes.

All historical sources, of course, must be read with sensitivity to the cultural and political climate in which they were created. However familiar the issues of motherhood, housewifery, and employment may sound, debate on these issues in the 1950s took place in a world where both the technology of domestic life and scientific assumptions about sex differences were different from today's. Housewifery did, objectively, take more time in an era that offered fewer time-saving food and cleaning products than are available today, and unsophisticated research on sex differences did promote now-disproven beliefs about intellectual and "temperamental" differences between men and women. Although the issues under debate have persisted, the social and material context has changed considerably. A housewife arguing for the value of her domestic labor was not as old-fashioned in 1956 as she would be today.

Source Analysis Table

The various sources included here represent a range of views expressed in public discussions of women, work, and motherhood in the years between 1955 and 1998. This chapter is your opportunity to review the principles of source analysis that we have been developing throughout *Going to the Source* and then build on your source analysis to develop your own interpretation of the sources. For that reason, the table on pages 324–25 operates as your Checklist questions to ask of each source. Completion of this table will help you sort out the array of sources; identify differences and similarities in the purposes, audiences, points of view, and biases in these sources; and work toward building your own argument about the pattern, meaning, and significance that you find in this material.

The Sources: Documents on Women, Work, and Family, 1950–2000

1

Meeting of Union of Auto, Aerospace, and Agricultural Implement Workers of America (UAW-CIO)

Public debate. March 27–April 1, 1955

The members of this UAW affiliate were debating a resolution that upcoming contract negotiations include the requirement that employers end customary discrimination in hiring and wages based on sex and marital status.

DELEGATE BARRY, LOCAL 835: I urge the adoption of this resolution for the reason that . . . many women . . . are the breadwinners of the family. In the case of Negro women, if they don't work in the plant they are forced to go out and do day work [domestic service] for \$6 a day and carfare. In some instances that I personally know about some of them are taking care of crippled husbands and a lot of children that nobody else will help to support. . . .

DELEGATE CARRIGAN, LOCAL 887: In my Local there are approximately 2,000 women members. . . . Many of us have ten or more years seniority in our jobs and are still in the lowest classifications. . . . The resolution states that an average income is forty-four percent less for women than for men. This forty-four percent represents purchasing power which should be in the workers' pockets instead of in management's till. . . .

DELEGATE HILL, LOCAL 961: I rise to oppose the particular resolution on the floor at this time for the simple reason that I think our International Union is trying to create a condition whereby it will require two paychecks in every home in order that we might live like decent human beings. . . .

I am not opposed to single women and widows working in the shop, but I am opposed to married women working. . . .

DELEGATE MURPHY, LOCAL 3: Two paychecks in a family are fine. I happen to be married. My husband happens to be one of those unfortunate people with twenty-two years seniority in Hudson Local Union No. 154. Today he has no job. What would happen if I wasn't able to work? My family would be going hungry. . . .

DELEGATE RUTT, LOCAL 195: . . . as long as there are single women looking for jobs the married woman's place is in the home. . . . As long as the husband is working it is his place to provide for his wife and family.

Source: Excerpt from transcript of Meeting of Union of Auto, Aerospace and Agricultural Implementation Workers of America (UAW-CIO). Reprinted by permission of United Auto Workers.

DELEGATE SZURE, LOCAL 174: . . . Who is to say a woman should work or not? Where is our democracy in this country if a woman cannot be a free individual and make up her own mind? I think that when you start telling women you can or cannot work, you are infringing on their civil rights, which I as a woman resent.

2

Modern American Housewife

Letter to the editor.

Ladies' Home Journal, March 1956

Dear Editors: I am furious! I have just read an article in which a psychologist says that the American male has spoiled his wife and made her *useless* by the purchase of automatic equipment in the home. He then adds, "Women don't feel needed. They know the house will almost run itself."

I am one of those women lumped together as a group of nonworkers. I am an average American housewife. I have laborsaving equipment in my home. The wife of a county official, I have three children. And I have found none of these four to be a laborsaving device. I find that it is I who must change bed linens, wash clothes, hang clothes, take clothes down, iron clothes, mend clothes and put them away. No one has invented a laborsaving device for these chores, or an automatic diaper-changing device! I have yet to find on the market an automatic push-button control for picking up articles not in the proper place.

I prepare three meals a day, by the best methods revealed in the women's magazines. I make most of our pastry and our freezer has a considerable supply of fresh fruit pies ready to bake, corn on the cob, and a side of beef. All were prepared by me, usually at night. . . .

The activities one gets into to provide a happy, wholesome life for her children are all time-consuming. As mother of a boy, I was a Cub Scout assistant den mother. As mother of two daughters, I have co-led a Brownie troop. As a member of the community, I have been twice elected to our elementary-school board of trustees. . . . As a member of a church, I have taught in the Sunday school. For none of these activities am I paid. . . .

We American women need every laborsaving device there is. There are more demands on our time than it is humanly possible to fill, and we are anything but *useless*. . . .

SINCERELY YOURS, A Reader from Castro Valley, California

Source: "Modern American Housewife," letter to the editor, written by a reader from Castro Valley, CA. Originally published in the March 1956 issue of *Ladies Home Journal*,® magazine. All rights reserved.

3

Women Know They Are Not Men: When Will Business Learn This Valuable Secret and Arrange Women's Working Conditions Accordingly?

Survey report. Florida Scott-Maxwell,
Ladies' Home Journal, November 1958

In this article, Scott-Maxwell reported on the results of a survey the *Ladies' Home Journal* conducted with "hundreds of young mothers." Ninety percent of the respondents had experience working for pay; half were working outside the home when the survey was taken. Although the survey itself did not ask women for solutions to their problems, the title and conclusion of the article imply that the author thought that there were tangible solutions.

Whether they work at outside jobs or not, today's young mothers find their greatest satisfaction in home, husband and children. They realize they are not men, and they don't want to be. . . . And yet they are faced with a dilemma peculiar to women and to our times. . . . Will their families, and they themselves, be better off and happier if they work, or if they remain at home? . . .

Can a mother of young children satisfactorily fulfill her family responsibilities and hold a full-time job besides? A majority of those who are doing it say yes, though they admit the dual role produces considerable strain. On the other hand, can a young woman who has enjoyed the stimulation and contacts of outside employment find satisfaction when and if she quits to devote herself full time to home and children? Again, the answer is yes, though not without some qualifications.

All agreed that the first responsibility is to home and family. . . . Those who do not work feel that they could not earn enough to justify the added strain and expense of being away from the children while they are young. . . . Meanwhile, they sometimes feel restless, frustrated, that they are wasting special talents and training. . . .

Young mothers who now hold jobs show conflicting feelings. Nine out of ten give finances as a major reason for working, yet . . . fifty-eight percent of these women say that they prefer working at a paid job to staying at home! . . .

On the debit side of the ledger, most young working mothers suffer to some degree from the fear that they are not adequately fulfilling their duties to husband, home and children. And yet eighty-one percent say they are satisfied with the arrangements they have made for the children's care, and sixty-one percent think the children would be no better off if their mothers had more time with them. . . . The young working mother's second problem is . . . she returns

Source: "Women Know They Are Not Men: When Will Business Learn This Valuable Secret and Arrange Women's Working Conditions Accordingly?" by Florida Scott-Maxwell. Originally published in the November 1958 issue of *Ladies Home Journal*,® magazine. All rights reserved.

from work to take over the housework herself. . . . Her race with the clock goes on from Monday to Monday, evenings and weekends included. . . .

The present situation presents no problem to the young mother who never did like working and who doesn't need to. She simply doesn't work. The opposite decision is almost as simple (not quite) for the woman who is highly trained and talented in a specialized field. But for the majority of women in between the question is difficult, and the answer not likely to be entirely satisfactory. One thing is certain: if women had organized business and industry, the system would be different. And it might be better.

4

American Women: Report of the President's Commission on the Status of Women
Government report. October 1963

From 1961 to 1963, twenty-six prominent men and women with experience in labor, economics, politics, race relations, education, and social services served on the President's Commission on the Status of Women. Their deliberations were informed by research submitted by numerous subcommittees. President Kennedy appointed former First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt to chair the commission, a position she held until her death in November 1962. The final, seventy-five page report was issued in October 1963, just weeks before Kennedy was assassinated.

American women work in both their homes, unpaid, and outside of their homes, on a wage or salary basis. Among the great majority of women, as among the great majority of men, the motive for paid employment is to earn money. For some, work has additional—or even primary—value as self-fulfillment. . . . Women's participation in paid employment importantly increases the Nation's labor force: 1 worker in 3 is a woman. . . .

Because personnel officers believe that women are less likely than men to want to make a career in industry, equally well-prepared young women are passed over in favor of men for posts that lead into management training programs and subsequent exercise of major executive responsibility. . . . Reluctance to consider women applicants on their merits results in underutilization of capacities that the economy needs and stunts the development of higher skills. . . .

The Commission recognizes the fundamental responsibility of mothers and homemakers and society's stake in strong family life. Demands upon women in the economic world, the community, and the home mean that women often simultaneously carry on several different kinds of activity. If the family is to continue to be the core institution of society . . . new and expanded community

Source: *American Women: Report of the President's Commission on the Status of Women*, 1963 (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1963), 18, 19, 27, 29–30.

services are necessary. Women can do a far more effective job as mothers and homemakers when communities provide appropriate resources. . . .

Child care services are needed in all communities, for children of all kinds of families who may require day care, afterschool care, or intermittent care. In putting major emphasis on this need, the Commission affirms that child care facilities are essential for women in many different circumstances, whether they work outside the home or not. It is regrettable when women with children are forced by economic necessity or by the regulations of welfare agencies to seek employment while their children are young. On the other hand, those who decide to work should have child care services available. . . .

The gross inadequacy of present child care facilities is apparent. Across the country, licensed day care is available to some 185,000 children only. In nearly half a million families with children under 6 years, the mother is frequently the sole supporter. . . . Failure to assure such services reflects primarily a lack of community awareness of the realities of modern life.

5

Should Mothers Work?

Advice column. Dr. Benjamin Spock,

Ladies' Home Journal, January–February 1963

Dr. Spock was an American pediatrician whose child-rearing manual, *The Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care*, first published in 1946, is the seventh best-selling book of all time. He regularly delivered advice to mothers in the pages of popular magazines in the 1950s and 1960s. The subhead for this column stated, "A drastic change has taken place—half of our mothers have given birth to their last child by the age of twenty-six."

For years I've shied away from writing on the subject of working mothers. It has so many prickly aspects that there is no simple way to tackle it. But the proportion of mothers working has risen steadily, especially since the beginning of World War II, so there's no use my trying to dodge the topic. . . .

If it's essential from a financial point of view for a mother of a young child to work, she is spared some of the doubts and guilt that are apt to trouble the woman who wants a job primarily for her own adjustment. For guilt about leaving a child will cut down on the satisfaction she receives from working, and it will complicate the mother-child relationship. . . .

Quite a few mothers say that they work to help meet the payments on the house and its equipment, or to give their children special advantages, even though their husbands are earning ordinary salaries. . . . [These mothers]¹ seem to be saying that the things they can earn are more important for their

¹ Bracketed text has been added by the editors to fill in a gap.

Source: "Should Mothers Work?" Advice column by Dr. Benjamin Spock, *Ladies Home Journal*, January–February, 1963. Originally published in the January–February, 1963 issue of *Ladies Home Journal*,® magazine. All rights reserved.

children than taking care of them themselves. This line of thought doesn't make too much sense to me unless the mother is referring to a very temporary financial emergency, or unless her real reason is that she would be miserable taking care of her children all day long. . . .

Most of us who are fairly well adjusted—men as well as women—have an enjoyment of accomplishment. The real question is why one job gives it and another does not. In most parts of the world women feel thoroughly fulfilled in having motherhood as their main career. . . .

I'm one of those who believe that women are basically different from men in temperament as well as in anatomy and physiology. In some cultures and in some periods in history these differences have been exaggerated. I think that in America they have been unnaturally minimized. How is this process carried out in the rearing of each generation? Lots of girls from infancy are dressed like boys, encouraged to play like boys. Their mothers don't think of giving them a sense of pride and distinction in being female. . . . There are very few teachers who emphasize or even hint that motherhood (or fatherhood) is potentially, in itself, an exciting and distinguished career. The academic focus is all on the work of the world that exists outside the home. . . . Then when these young women's feminine instincts lead them into marriage and child rearing, they feel shut out of the world they envisioned. Never having thought of motherhood as demanding high skills or bringing rich rewards, knowing that any uneducated female above the age of fourteen can enter into it with no credentials at all, they may come to regard it more as a chore than as a challenge. . . .

I am not trying to dissuade any woman from having a career in addition to child rearing. I am only expressing the opinion that since most women will spend at least fifteen years of their lives mainly rearing their children, they themselves should be brought up and educated in such a way that they will derive the maximal satisfaction and enjoyment from it, even if they have other strong aspirations in addition.

6

Why Feminists Want Child Care

Position paper. National Organization for Women (N.O.W.), 1969

The National Organization for Women was founded in 1966 in Washington, D.C., during a national conference of members of state commissions on the status of women whose task was to extend the work of the presidential commission. When conference participants learned from Representative Martha Griffiths (D-Michigan) that the Equal Employment Opportunities Commission (EEOC) was not investigating the thousands of sex discrimination complaints it was receiving, they decided to form a nongovernmental lobbying

Source: Position Paper, "Why Feminists Want Child Care." Position paper. National Organization for Women (N.O.W.) 1969. (New York City Chapter, Paper, Box 10, Tamiment Library). Reprinted by permission of NOW-NYC.

organization, made up of both men and women, to press for compliance with existing laws and passage of new laws aimed at equal rights.

A basic cause of the second-class status of women in America and the world . . . has been the notion that woman's anatomy is her destiny . . . that because women bear children, it is primarily their responsibility to care for them and even that this ought to be the chief function of a mother's existence. Women will never have full opportunities to participate in our economic, political, cultural life as long as they bear this responsibility almost entirely alone and isolated from the larger world. A child socialized by one whose human role is limited, essentially, to motherhood may be proportionately deprived of varied learning experiences. In a circular fashion, the development of children has been intimately influenced by the development of women.

N.O.W. believes that the care and welfare of children is incumbent on society *and* parents. We reject the idea that mothers have a special child care role that is not shared equally by fathers. Men need the humanizing experiences of nurturance. . . .

Developmental child care services are a right of children, parents, and the community at large, requiring immediate reallocation of national resources. In general, existing day care programs are a national disgrace in quality and availability. Therefore, the National Organization for Women, Inc. (N.O.W.) proposes the following. . . .

- Comprehensive child care and developmental services available to all children whose families seek it. . . .
- Government support of a coordinated network of developmental child care services as an immediate national priority. . . .
- Major responsibility for planning and operating the services must be a function of local control. . . .
- Developmental child care service is to be interpreted as including family child care, group home child care, child care centers, home visiting programs, and other innovative approaches to be developed in the future.

N.O.W. is committed to work for universally available, publicly supported, developmental child care and raising the national consciousness to public investment in this national priority. As interim steps, we support flexible fees, if any, to reflect the urgent needs and various resources of families now.

7

Veto of the Comprehensive Child Development Act

Presidential message. President Richard M. Nixon,
December 9, 1971

The Comprehensive Child Development Act sought to make prekindergarten programs available to all children, as a matter of right, regardless of economic status. Programs were to be free to families earning less than half the median U.S. income; other families would pay according to a sliding scale based on income. Its across-class design conflicted with President Nixon's Family Assistance Plan, which proposed a guaranteed annual income and child care for the nation's poorest families. In late 1971, heading into a reelection campaign, Nixon needed to appeal to right-wing members of his Republican Party. They were concerned about the Family Assistance Plan and about Nixon's friendly overtures to communist China. For that reason, Nixon's veto message argued beyond the practicalities of fiscal restraint and appealed to anticommunists' cultural devotion to the self-supporting, male-headed nuclear family.

I return herewith without my approval S.2007, the Economic Opportunity Amendments of 1971. . . .

The most deeply flawed provision of this legislation is Title V, "Child Development Programs." Adopted as an amendment to the OEO¹ legislation, this program points far beyond what this administration envisioned when it made a "national commitment to providing all American children an opportunity for a healthful and stimulating development during the first five years of life."

Though Title V's stated purpose, "to provide every child with a full and fair opportunity to reach his full potential," is certainly laudable, the intent of Title V is overshadowed by the fiscal irresponsibility, administrative unworkability, and family-weakening implications of the system it envisions. We owe our children something more than good intentions.

We cannot and will not ignore the challenge to do more for America's children in their all-important early years. But our response to this challenge must be a measured, evolutionary, painstakingly considered one, consciously designed to cement the family in its rightful position as the keystone of our civilization. . . . Specifically, these are my present objections to the proposed child development program:

¹ The Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) was a federal agency created in 1964 as part of the Great Society programs of President Lyndon B. Johnson's administration. Its original focus was on improving economic opportunities for Native Americans (such as the Blackfeet profiled in Chapter Two of this volume). Soon, however, the OEO was charged with administering other Great Society Programs, including the Job Corps, the Community Action Program, and Head Start. In 1974, three years after delivering this message, Nixon dismantled the OEO, transferring oversight of its programs to other federal agencies.

Source: John T. Woolley and Gerhard Peters, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=3251>.

- neither the immediate need nor the desirability of a national child development program of this character has been demonstrated.
- day care centers to provide for the children of the poor so that their parents can leave the welfare rolls . . . are already paid for in H.R. 1, my workfare legislation.² . . .
- given the limited resources of the Federal budget, and the growing demands upon the Federal taxpayer, the expenditure of two billions of dollars in a program whose effectiveness has yet to be demonstrated cannot be justified. . . .
- for more than two years, this administration has been working for the enactment of welfare reform . . . to bring the family together. This child development program appears to move in precisely the opposite direction. . . .
- good public policy requires that we enhance rather than diminish both parental authority and parents involvement with children—particularly in those decisive early years when social attitudes and a conscience are formed, and religious and moral principles are first inculcated. . . .
- for the Federal Government to plunge headlong financially into supporting child development would commit the vast moral authority of the National Government to the side of communal approaches to child rearing over, against the family-centered approach.

²Nixon was referring to his Family Assistance Plan (FAP), which would have guaranteed a government subsidy to any family earning less than \$2,960, rewarding those who worked at low-paid jobs with the incentive of government assistance and free child care, while promising mothers of preschool children that they did not have to work to get the subsidy. For a variety of political reasons, including the Watergate scandal, Nixon and the Democratic Congress never passed the FAP.

8

What's Wrong with "Equal Rights" for Women? Political newsletter. *The Phyllis Schlafly Report*, February 1972

Phyllis Schlafly has been a prominent conservative since the mid-1960s. A lawyer, author, public speaker, and mother of six, Schlafly has advocated for the preservation of women's private domestic role throughout her long public career. In 1972, she founded the Eagle Forum, a lobbying and fund-raising organization, and started publishing her newsletter, *The Phyllis Schlafly Report*, which is now published online. In her successful STOP ERA campaign, Schlafly articulated her beliefs that women in the United States had a

Source: "What's Wrong with 'Equal Rights' for Women?" by Phyllis Schlafly, February, 1972. Reprinted by permission of the author.

guaranteed right to economic support from their husbands and that the Equal Rights Amendment would abolish that right.

Of all the classes of people who ever lived, the American woman is the most privileged. We have the most rights and rewards, and the fewest duties. . . . We have the immense good fortune to live in a civilization which respects the family as the basic unit of society. This respect is part and parcel of our laws and customs. It is based on the fact of life—which no legislation or agitation can erase—that women have babies and men don't.

If you don't like this fundamental difference, you will have to take up your complaint with God because He created us this way. The fact that women, not men, have babies is not the fault of selfish and domineering men, or of the establishment, or of any clique of conspirators who want to oppress women. It's simply the way God made us.

Our Judeo-Christian civilization has developed the law and custom that, since women must bear the physical consequences of the sex act, men must be required to bear the *other* consequences and pay in other ways. These laws and customs decree that a man must carry his share by physical protection and financial support of his children and of the woman who bears his children. . . . The family gives a woman the physical, financial, and emotional security of the home—for all her life. . . . American women are . . . the beneficiaries of a tradition of special respect for women . . . the traditions of the Christian Age of Chivalry. In America, a man's first significant purchase is a diamond for his bride, and the largest financial investment of his life is a home for her to live in. . . .

Under present American laws, the man is *always* required to support his wife and each child he caused to be brought into the world. . . . By law and custom in America, in the case of divorce, the mother always is given custody of her children unless there is overwhelming evidence of mistreatment, neglect, or bad character. This is our special privilege because of the high rank that is placed on motherhood in our society. Do women really want to give up this special privilege and lower themselves to "equal rights." . . . ? I think not. . . .

Women's libbers are trying to make wives and mothers unhappy with their career, make them feel that they are "second-class citizens" and "abject slaves." . . . If women's libbers want to reject marriage and motherhood, it's a free country and that is their choice. But let's not permit these women's libbers to get away with pretending to speak for the rest of us. Let's not permit this tiny minority to degrade the role that most women prefer. Let's not let these women's libbers deprive wives and mothers of the rights we now possess.

9

Parents Are People

Children's song. Carol Hall for
Free to Be You and Me, 1972

Free to Be You and Me is an album of eighteen original children's songs produced and performed by profeminist artists. Actress Marlo Thomas organized the project to raise funds for the Ms. Foundation, an offshoot of Ms. magazine, that funds educational programs for women and girls. As of 2006, the album had sold more than half a million copies. In 2010, the Target company used the title track in children's clothing advertisements. To hear "Parents Are People" (performed by Marlo Thomas and Harry Belafonte) and other selections from the album, visit <http://www.freetobefoundation.org>.

Mommies are people, people with children
When mommies were little, they used to be girls
Like some of you, but then they grew
And now mommies are women, women with children
Busy with children, and things that they do
There are a lot of things a lot of mommies can do

Some mommies are ranchers, or poetry makers
Or doctors or teachers, or cleaners or bakers
Some mommies drive taxis, or sing on TV
Yeah, mommies can be almost anything they want to be

Well, they can't be grandfathers, or daddies

Daddies are people, people with children
When daddies were little, they used to be boys
Like some of you, but then they grew
And now daddies are men, men with children
Busy with children, and things that they do
There are a lot of things a lot of daddies can do

Some daddies are writers, or grocery sellers
Or painters or welders, or funny-joke tellers
Some daddies play cello, or sail on the sea
Yeah, daddies can be almost anything they want to be

They can't be grandmas or mommies

Parents are people—Parents are people
People with children—People with children
When parents were little, they used to be kids
Like all of you, but then they grew
And now parents are grown-ups—Parents are grown-ups

Source: "Parents Are People," by Carol Hall from *Free To Be . . . You and Me*. © 1972 Free To Be Foundation, Inc. Used by permission.

Grown-ups with children—Grown-ups with children
Busy with children, and things that they do
There are a lot of things a lot of mommies
And a lot of daddies, and a lot of parents can do

10

Ms. Magazine Cover (next page)
Illustration. Miriam Wosk, Spring 1972

Ms. magazine was the mass media face of the feminist movement in the 1970s and 1980s. For this cover of the preview issue in the spring of 1972, artist Miriam Wosk adapted the image of the multiarmed Hindu goddess Kali to the modern image of the multitasking American mother. The hugely successful preview issue included articles that have become icons of feminist literature, including "The Housewife's Moment of Truth," "Down with Sexist Upbringing," and "De-sexing the English Language." Indeed, the magazine's title referred to a long-standing movement to confer a title on women that, like the title "Mr.," indicates gender but not marital status. *Ms.* magazine is still published today and continues to advocate for feminist reform around the world.

Source: *Ms.*, Spring 1972.

**Gloria Steinem
On Sisterhood**
**Letty Pogrebin
On Raising Kids
Without Sex Roles**

SPRING/72 PREVIEW ISSUE \$1.50

Ms.

THE NEW MAGAZINE FOR WOMEN

**Sylvia Plath's
Last Major Work**
**Women Tell
The Truth About
Their Abortions**

Jane O'Reilly on The Housewife's Moment of Truth



Source: Reprinted by permission of Ms. Magazine, © 1972.

11

The Second Stage, Book. Betty Friedan, 1981

Betty Friedan was the author of *The Feminine Mystique*, a best-selling 1963 book that was instrumental in launching the second-wave women's movement. Friedan was a founding member and first president of the National Organization for Women and continued to be an outspoken feminist until her death in 2006. In *The Second Stage*, Friedan focused on the needs of the family and reported, in one section, on the 1980 White House Conference on Families, held at the end of President Jimmy Carter's administration, which brought together activists from both feminist and antifeminist organizations.

Though the women's movement has changed all our lives and surpassed our dreams in its magnitude, and our daughters take their own personhood and equality for granted, they—and we—are finding that it's not easy to *live*, with or without men and children, solely on the basis of that first feminist agenda. I think, in fact that the women's movement has come just about as far as it can in terms of women alone. . . . And yet the larger revolution, evolution, liberation that the women's movement set off, has barely begun. How do we move on? What are the terms of the second stage? . . .

I believe that feminism must, in fact, confront the family, albeit in new terms, if the movement is to fulfill its own revolutionary function in modern society. . . . To the degree that feminists collude in assuming an inevitable, unbridgeable antagonism between women's equality and the family, they make it a self-fulfilling prophecy. In fact, the media, which take that antagonism for granted now, reported about the White House Conference in those terms, and missed the significance of what really happened. For when we feminists broke out of our own rhetoric and dealt with women's most basic concerns within the larger family context, we were able to bridge that polarization and win overwhelming majority support for second-stage solutions. . . .

The most strongly supported demands of the entire conference, along with action to counter drug and alcohol abuse, were "the development of alternative forms of quality child care, both center and home based" (547 to 44), and "creative development" (by business, labor, and government) of "policies that enable persons to hold jobs while maintaining a strong family life," including "such work arrangements as flex-time, flexible leave policies for both sexes, job-sharing programs, dependent-care options, and part-time jobs with pro-rated pay and benefits," which passed 569 to 21.

Source: *The Second Stage*, by Betty Friedan. Copyright © 1981. Reprinted by permission of Curtis Brown, Ltd.

12

Should We Expect Black Women to Be Supermothers? Magazine article. Claudia Tate, *Ebony*, September 1984

Ebony has been a successful monthly magazine since its founding in 1945. It is directed at the African American audience, both male and female. When this article was published, Claudia Tate was a professor of English at Howard University.

The label "supermother" refers to . . . an extremely competent working mother, who both works and mothers with a singularly high degree of proficiency. She always seems in control of the situation, whether she's fixing breakfast and applying mascara after four hours of sleep, or preparing dinner after working eight hard but successful hours, or engaging in stimulating conversation with her husband after checking homework and tucking the children in their beds. . . . But no one is "super" successful on one front, let alone so many, without making difficult choices and paying high prices. That simply is the way of the world. Although the role of the working mother, let alone "supermother," is a difficult one filled with stress and exhaustion, the degree to which she is even moderately successful may dictate whether many households survive, let alone prosper. . . . [But] is the supermother image a nurturing one for Black mothers and the Black community?

First, the mythic supermother is very destructive, for it promotes the erroneous belief that Black women (who are ready victims for both racial and gender discrimination) have somehow "got it made." Consequently, many people mistakenly believe there is no need to eliminate racial and gender discrimination for Black women because they are already free as women and free as Blacks. This myth . . . makes Black women, as a group, appear to have social and economic advantages they do not, in fact, possess.

Second, the mythic supermother image is self-destructive because it is a delusion. It sets Black women up for defeat by encouraging them to believe that they can provide for their families alone, when most of them can do nothing more than contribute to the growing number of poor households. Before a Black woman (or any woman) decides to maintain a household alone, she'd better check her resources as well as her emotional needs. To leap before checking is foolhardy. . . .

But the demythologized supermother, known as the hardworking, working mother, is an exemplary figure in the Black community. She is not only real, she is someone we must support if the Black community is to prosper. We must celebrate her success, applaud her ambition, acknowledge her hard work, comfort her pain, and provide her willing assistance.

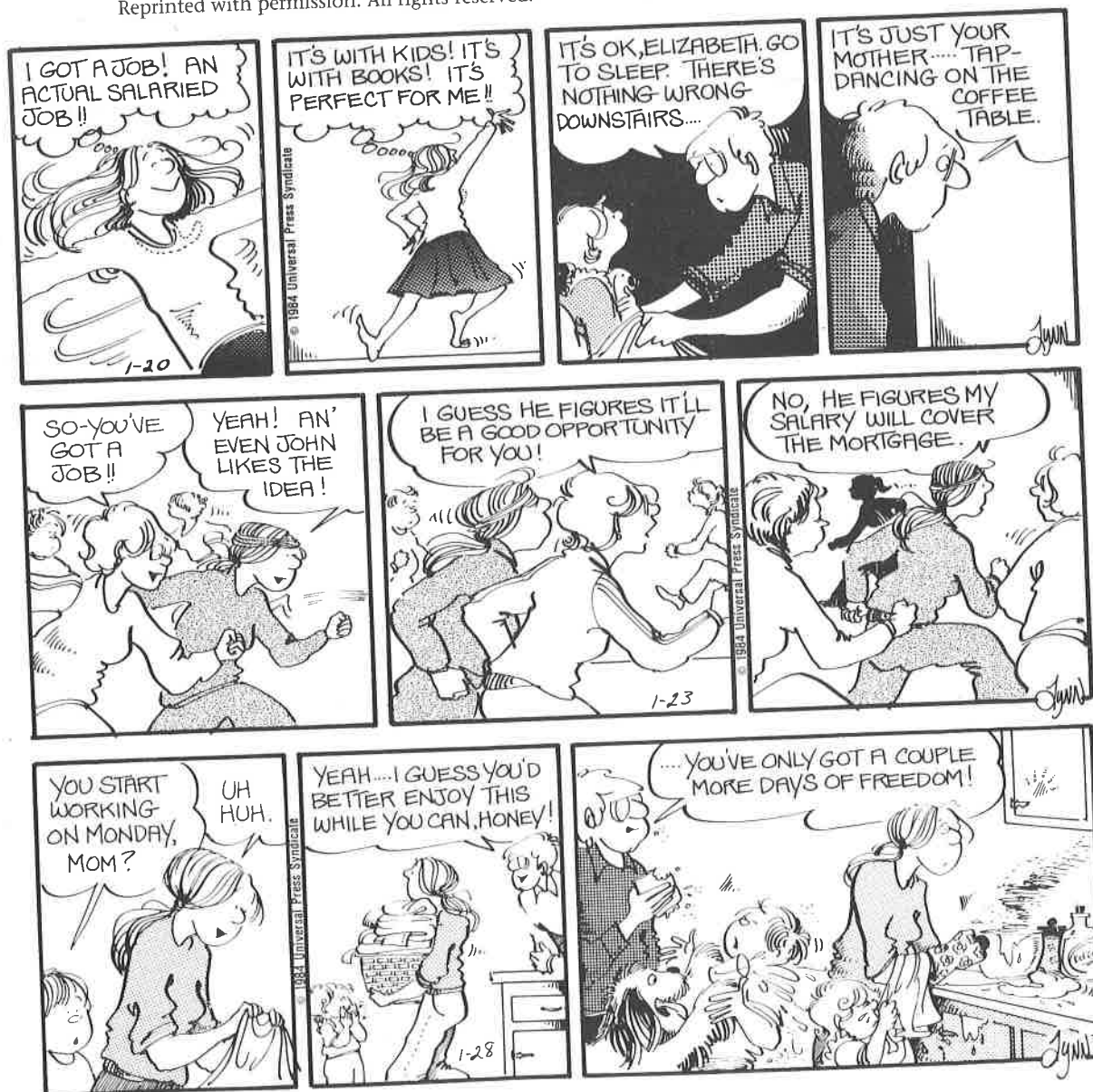
Source: From "Should We Expect Black Women to be Supermothers?" by Claudia Tate, *Ebony*, September 1984. Used by permission of the author's estate.

13

For Better or For Worse, Cartoon strip. Lynn Johnston, 1984

Johnston began publishing her widely read comic strip about the Patterson family in 1979 and followed the family's development in real time until 2008. In the early 1980s, Elly Patterson, married mother of three, took a job outside the home. Johnston chronicled that change in the family's life in her newspaper comic strip and published portions of that chronicle in her 1984 collection, *Just One More Hug*, from which these examples are taken.

Source: FOR BETTER OR FOR WORSE © 1984 Lynn Johnston Productions. Dist. By UNIVERSAL UCLICK. Reprinted with permission. All rights reserved.



14

National Opinion Research Center Poll: Women, Work, and Family

Survey data. 1972–1998

From 1970 to 1998, researchers conducted a survey about women, work, and politics; Figure 1 shows the results. The solid line, “Women should take care of homes,” reflects the percentage of people who agreed with the statement “Women should take care of running their homes and leave running the country up to men.” The dashed line, “Disapprove of married women working,” reflects the percentage of people who said they disapproved “of a married woman earning money in business or industry if she has a husband capable of supporting her.” The dotted line, “Would not vote for woman for president,” reflects the percentage of people who answered “no” to the following question: “If your political party nominated a woman for president, would you vote for her if she were qualified for the job?”

Source: Tom W. Smith, Peter Marsden, Michael Hout, and Jibum Kim, *General Social Surveys, 1972–2010* (Chicago: National Opinion Research Center, 2011).

Figure 1
Responses to Questions about Women's Employment

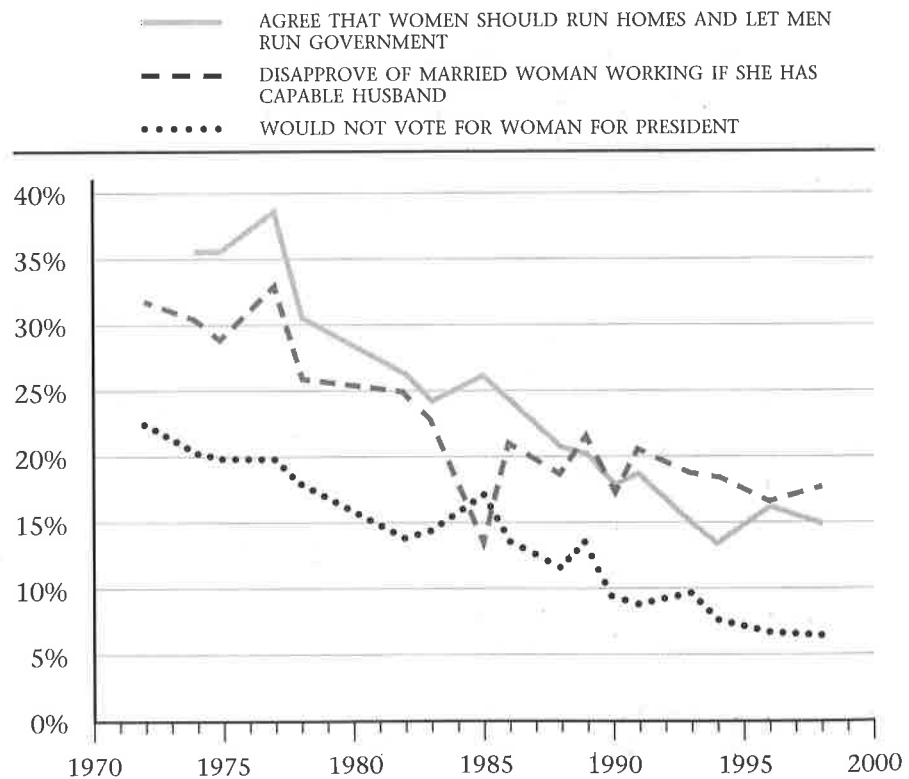
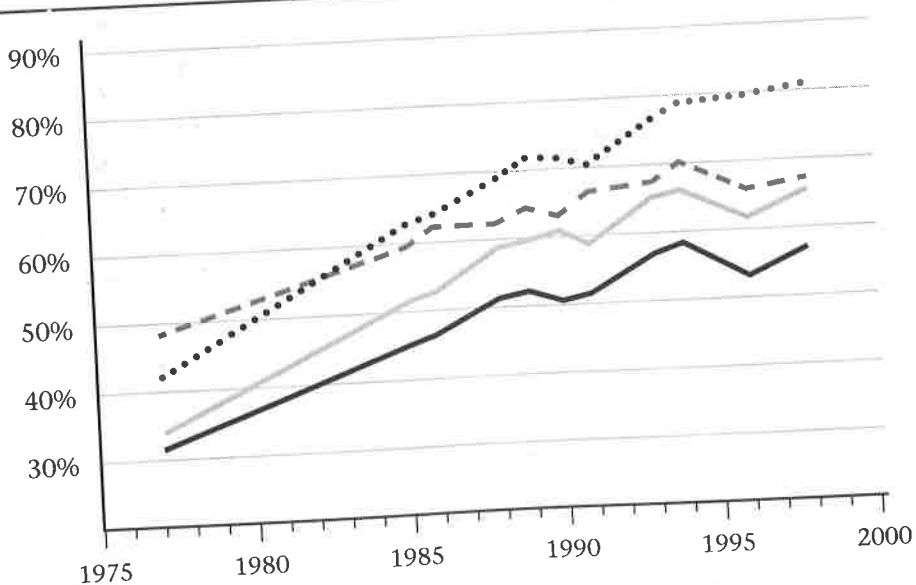


Figure 2 shows the results of a survey conducted from 1975 to 1998, in which researchers asked respondents about women, work, and home life. The dotted line, "Not more important for wife to help husband's career," reflects the percentage of people who disagreed with the statement, "It is more important for a wife to help her husband's career than to have one herself." The dashed line, "Working mothers can establish warm relationships with their children," reflects the percentage of people who agreed with the statement, "A working mother can establish just as warm and secure a relationship with her children as a mother who does not work." The solid bold line, "Preschooler is not likely to suffer if mother works," reflects the percentage of people who disagreed with the statement, "A preschool child is likely to suffer if his or her mother works." The solid light line, "Not necessarily better for everyone if man achieves outside the home," represents the percentage of people who disagreed with the statement, "It is much better for everyone involved if the man is the achiever outside the home and the woman takes care of the home and family."

Figure 2
Responses to Questions about Women Combining Work and Family

- DO NOT AGREE THAT HUSBAND'S CAREER IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN WIFE'S
- - - - - AGREE THAT WORKING MOTHERS CAN ESTABLISH WARM RELATIONSHIP WITH CHILDREN
- DO NOT AGREE THAT PRESCHOOL CHILD WILL SUFFER IF MOTHER WORKS
- DO NOT AGREE THAT FAMILY IS MUCH BETTER OFF IF MAN WORKS AND WOMAN STAYS HOME



15

The Politics of Fatigue*, Newspaper article.*Richard Morin and Megan Rosenfeld,*****Washington Post*, April 20, 1998**

Men and women have declared a cease-fire in the war that raged between the sexes through much of the last half of this century. In its place, they face common new enemies—the stress, lack of time and financial pressure of modern life.

A new national survey has found that after nearly a generation of sharing the workplace and renegotiating domestic duties, most men and women agree that increased gender equity has enriched both sexes. But both also believe that the strains of this relatively new world have made building successful marriages, raising children and leading satisfying lives ever more difficult. . . .

Surprisingly, although men and women agreed they should have equal work opportunities, and men said they approve of women working outside the home, large majorities of both said it would be better if women could instead stay home and just take care of the house and children. . . .

Most men in the polls said they were happy to share child care and domestic chores with wives who work outside the home. Yet household duties remain sharply divided along gender lines. Working mothers still do twice as much housework as their husbands, and more than half of all women questioned expressed at least some dissatisfaction with the amount of help their husbands provide around the house. . . .

But rather than emphasizing their differences and blaming life's problems on each other, men and women share a sense of conflict and confusion about how to make it all work under today's pressures. To a large extent, the politics of resentment have become the politics of fatigue. . . .

In important ways, the survey suggests that we have yet to find new patterns of living that recognize the real workloads of two-career couples with children, and some resentment, nostalgia and fatigue are reflected in the survey results. . . .

Age, more than sex, shapes attitudes toward the changing roles of men and women, the survey suggests. Younger men and women are far more likely than their elders to say the change in gender roles has made their lives better. . . .

"There's too much pressure on everyone, period, whether they're men or women," says Karen Mapp, a 42-year-old Ph.D. candidate and researcher in Boston.

In response to those pressures, four in ten of those surveyed said it would be better to return to the gender roles of the 1950's, a dimly remembered world of television's *Ozzie and Harriet* and their blithe suburban existence.

"I definitely think it would be good to go back," says Rose Pierre-Louis, 40, a social worker in Brooklyn, N.Y., who was among those interviewed in the poll. . . . But just as many Americans say they aren't eager to go back—particularly young people, who do not bear the burden of their parents' nostalgia. . . . "I think a lot

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of the problems we hear of now are because we have raised our standards," says Christopher M. Moeller, 22, a radio reporter in Des Moines. "We're more involved in each other's lives. . . . We value equality, we value everybody wanting to have self-esteem, to get everything they want, and I don't see where imposing a limit on more than half of our population accomplishes that."

Analyzing Sources on Women, Work, and Family

1. In Source 15, "The Politics of Fatigue," people surveyed in 1998 expressed nostalgia for the less-exhausting 1950s. How would the authors of the documents from the 1950s included in this chapter respond to this nostalgia?
2. A union debate, a presidential commission report, a children's song, and a comic strip are very different types of sources. What do we gain by including them all in one analysis?
3. In creating an argument that captures key themes in the debate about women, work, and motherhood, what are the potential problems with incorporating evidence from very different types of sources?
4. "An American housewife" extolled the importance of the family in the 1950s, and Claudia Tate did the same in the 1980s. The two women are also similar in their use of a very personal voice in their writing. How are their assumptions about women's family role different, across the divide of thirty years?
5. Gender politics often produces strange alliances and disagreements. Dr. Benjamin Spock was a liberal Democrat, Phyllis Schlafly is a conservative Republican, and President Richard Nixon was a moderate Republican. How were these very different individuals similar in their beliefs about the role of mothers? Why do you think their views did not prevail in recent U.S. history?
6. Write a three- to five-page historical analysis, using the documents presented in this chapter, to argue *either* that the second-wave women's movement significantly altered the American discussion about mothers and employment or that it had no significant effect on that discussion. If you do not find either of those positions consistent with the evidence from the 1955–1998 documents, develop an alternative argument.
7. Write a two- to three-page policy paper in which you draw on these documents to argue for or against the use of tax dollars to support a national, publicly funded child care system. To persuade your modern American audience of your position, you must reconcile these historically competing desires:
 - to achieve full adult employment
 - to encourage female economic self-sufficiency
 - to pay less in taxes
 - to nourish healthy child development regardless of economic status
 - to allow for individual rights to choose a life path

The Rest of the Story

Books directed at mothers, talking about paid work and child rearing, have been a staple of the publishing world since the 1940s. But since the 1980s, such books and their authors have achieved blockbuster status because Americans are so eager for advice on "the balancing act" (a title used more than once for such books) or so hungry for bitter diatribes about the deficiencies of working moms or the failures of fathers and the government to help working moms. Top sellers in the mommy market since 2000 have included such titles as *The Motherhood Manifesto*, *The Mommy Myth*, and *The Price of Motherhood*.

The blogosphere is now a gathering space for mothers seeking personal advice and opportunities to influence public policy. **MomsRising.com** is one of many Web sites devoted to telegraphing the voices of women who agree with the concluding lines of the 1958 *Ladies' Home Journal* article: "If women had organized business and industry, the system would be different. And it might be better." According to the headline of a 2009 *New York Times* article on these maternal blogs, "Mom's Mad. And She's Organized." Time will tell if these Web-linked moms can enact their belief that American society should better serve families in the twenty-first century through some mix of affordable child care, accommodating the schedules of working parents, and making it easier for one parent to temporarily step out of the workforce for child rearing.

Today, most families in the United States rely on the tax-supported public school system for the bulk of their child care needs. Well over half of the mothers of preschool children are employed, however, and they turn to private providers and receive a child care tax credit from the federal government at the end of the year. Although the average annual cost of child care in the United States is more than \$8,000 per year, the tax credit is capped at 30 percent of no more than \$2,400 per child, and low-income workers who pay for child care but owe no taxes do not receive this credit. As middle-income taxpayers felt the burden of their own child care bills in the 1980s and 1990s, many were increasingly resentful of public welfare that paid enough for poor women to stay at home but not enough for them to work and pay for child care. The welfare reform enacted during President Bill Clinton's administration, known as the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, did not go as far as the Family Assistance Plan envisioned by President Nixon insofar as it did not guarantee every family a base income, nor did it go as far as the Comprehensive Child Development Act of 1971 and make publicly subsidized child care available to all Americans. Instead, welfare codified the expectation that mothers work to support their families, including the 15 percent of families with children in poverty. Key to this expectation is access to child care, which can consume more than 35 percent of a single parent's income. Consistent with President Nixon's vision, the federal government now provides a subsidy to families who are employed but whose low wages put them below the poverty line so that they can purchase child care on the open market.

As for accommodating the schedules of working parents or making it easier for one parent to step out of the workforce for a period of time, Americans' efforts are too scattered, too individualized, and too dependent on employers' largesse or families' incomes to allow for generalization. The second stage of women's liberation that Betty Friedan called for in 1981 is yet to be enacted. The Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 guarantees that a full-time employee can take up to twelve weeks of unpaid leave for personal health reasons or to care for a new child in the family or a family member who is seriously ill, but beyond that, workers must negotiate their own arrangements with employers, either as individuals or through their labor unions.

In the last decade, the upper-middle-class media has devoted considerable attention to whether mothers with high-paid spouses are "opting out" of the workforce because full-time, at-home motherhood is less stressful and more satisfying than work as, say, a corporate lawyer. The current employment data demonstrates, however, that most mothers do not have the luxury of opting out full time. Two-parent working-class families cannot afford the immediate loss of one income, and two-parent professional families cannot risk the effect of extended time out on a woman's lifetime career earnings. Every year, tens of thousands of mothers, and a few thousand fathers, trade job security, promotions, health benefits, and seniority to work part-time while their children are young, often jeopardizing the family's long-term economic mobility for children's real and immediate needs. Moreover, evidence is now emerging that employers still evaluate job applicants and employees differently if they know that they are mothers than if they do not know, largely because they assume that mothers are less committed to the workplace and face more demands on their energies outside of work.

Americans find themselves in a serious dilemma in the second decade of the twenty-first century. Culture, politics, and economics have normalized attitudinal support for the working mother while, at the same time, normalizing a citizen resistance to tax-supported national programs like child care, after-school care, and parental leaves that child advocates define as the solution to the family-work tension. The economic recession has, at the same time, created such a competitive workforce climate that employees are afraid to ask for any accommodation to their parental duties for fear that they will be relegated to the dreaded "mommy track" or, worse, the unemployment line. Indeed, on the day this chapter of *Going to the Source* was completed, the *New York Times* published an article on the job market with the headline, "A Market Punishing to Mothers."

To Find Out More

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