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# Portraits Through the Lens of Historicity: The American Family as Portrayed in Ladies Home Journal 1950-1959

Nancy Patton Mills

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“Portraits Through the Lens of Historicity: The American Family as  
Portrayed in Ladies’ Home Journal 1950-1959”

Presented to the Faculty  
of the Communication and Rhetorical Studies Department  
McAnulty College and Graduate School of Liberal Arts

Duquesne University

in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

by

Nancy Patton Mills

June 12, 2006

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## Abstract

The problems associated with communication and the American family have often been the subject of academic research projects. The 1950s family is unique and offers the researcher a complex web of interwoven narratives and situational hermeneutics that have affected the American family. In an attempt to understand what was happening in the 1950s, it is imperative that an understanding of the historical moment and its significance be explored.

This dissertation examines the American family through the lens of several interpersonal communication paradigms and theories to generate a conceptual framework for understanding the “story” of the family told through its communicative structure as expressed in historical documents and artifacts and in portrayals in *Ladies’ Home Journal*. These paradigms will help explain the narrative of the family: “Portraits through the Lens of Historicity: The American Family as Portrayed in Ladies Home Journal 1950-1959. The magazine’s series “How America Lives” appeared in *Ladies’ Home Journal* from 1940-1960; this thesis looks at all of the articles from 1950-1959.

The interpersonal theories of Martin Buber, Seyla Benhabib, and Mikhail Bakhtin help to interpret the information derived from the artifact. This conceptual framework provides the key for the interpretive methodology of the dissertation, which is a textual analysis employing terms drawn from interpersonal theory. In addition, the social constructionist approach to rhetoric and philosophy will be explained and incorporated into the study. Peter Berger, Ferdinand de Saussure, Jacques Derrida, Edmund Husserl, and Martin

Heidegger join the conversation to help explain the complexities of the 1950s and the American family.

Special emphasis is given to the 1950s family and how they were influenced and persuaded by the popular media including television, and most importantly, the contributions from women's magazines. The work of Nancy Walker is continued by exploring the indepth and multilayered conversation of the "real American family, as depicted in *Ladies' Home Journal*, with the magazine's readers and the magazine's editors. This dissertation concludes by offering suggestions on how the 1950s American family may be interpreted by considering all facets of American culture, including the postwar era, the cold war, and the creation of the nuclear family situated and embedded in the newly created suburbs.

## Chapter I: Introduction

The intent of this project is to examine the portrayal of the family in *Ladies' Home Journal* from January, 1950-December, 1959. The series "How America Lives" will be the focus of this dissertation. Women's magazines have often been the source of information to assist women in their daily lives. *Ladies' Home Journal* was and is an important magazine in the lives of women in America. The monthly series "How America Lives" focused on an individual family and gave an in-depth portrayal of that family.

Debates about domesticity and about the role of home and family in personal and national life can be traced to the early part of the century (Walker, 2000). Whether a woman is working in the home or is a full time homemaker, the publishers of magazines for popular culture have always been available to give advice or criticism in the form of a public rhetorical act directed to a specific audience. *Ladies' Home Journal*, *Good Housekeeping*, *Woman's Home Companion* and other important publications offered assistance with cooking, cleaning, child rearing, and other informative topics (Walker, 2000). This interpretive project will employ a constructive understanding of narrative structure (Lyotard, 1984) to explore the portrayal of the 1950s American family within one mediated context situated within a particular historical moment. This moment can be seen both as "calling forth," "responding to," and "resisting" that portrayal. Such a conceptualization of a particular "individual" social unit and the larger society can be viewed through the lens of interpretive interpersonal communication theory to offer new understandings of the mutual influence of these human interactions.

The problems associated with communication and the American family have often been the subject of academic research projects, and the uniqueness of the 1950s family provides a complex communication experience. Mintz and Kellogg (1988) state that the American family has been shaped by both movies and television. Their scholarship reveals that the images of the family conveyed by television were certainly caricatures, but like many stereotypes, contained elements of reality (Mintz & Kellogg, 1988). In addition, the 1950s families were products of the cold war and were used to convey a “frontline” message against communism (Coontz, 1992). A review of the literature will focus on the American family and their ideological perception of the 1950s postwar era; the life styles of the families, with special emphasis on the American housewife; influences of the broadcast and print media on the family; suburbanization and the psychological and sociological impact on the family; and the discontent of the family as they faced the cold war era. This research identifies elements of the historical moment important to the interpretive project.

Arnett and Makau (1997), *Communication Ethics in an Age of Diversity* and Arnett and Arneson (1999), *Dialogic Civility in a Cynical Age*, provide the framework for the decline of a metanarrative in a postmodern era. Alasdair MacIntyre (1984), in *After Virtue*, discusses a fragmented society in which all the scientists are destroyed, and the culture is left with no definitive answers. This leaves individuals with no metanarrative, no story, no sense of *sensus communis* (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1985). MacIntyre suggests that this is a perfect climate for undesirable voices to emerge in an attempt to create a new metanarrative; the emotivist, with self gratifying interests, wearing a mask of moral philosophy, may become the voice of reason. The 1950s family

followed the postwar metanarrative provided by sociologists, psychologists, and government voices. The emergence of a petite narrative was not evident but eventually emerged as the 1950s faded and the 1960s emerged ( Coontz, 1992 and May, 1954). This is affirmed by Nancy Walker (2000) as she discusses information and how the readers of women's magazines must adjust from one unitary voice to multiple voices. The idea of multiple voices is explored through examination of women's magazines and their influence on the American family.

Chapter II, Interpersonal Communication Paradigms and Theories and Historical Meanings in Autobiographies and Biographies, will draw from several interpersonal communication paradigms and theories to generate a conceptual framework for examining the "story" of the American family told through its communicative structure as expressed in historical documents and artifacts and in portrayals in *Ladies' Home Journal*. These paradigms will help explain the narrative of the family: "Portraits through the Lens of Historicity: The American Family as Portrayed in Ladies Home Journal 1950-1959."

The artifact for this project is all of the articles "How America Lives" *Ladies Home Journal* from January, 1950 through December, 1959. Martin Buber's *The Between*; Seyla Benhabib's *Conversational Model*; Mikhail Bakhtin's *Theory of Dialogism*; Peter Berger's *social Constructionist theory* and Calvin Schrag's *Communicative Praxis and Subjectivity* will be applied to further understand how the families were influenced and "constructed" by the broadcast and print medias (Coontz, 1992).

This conceptual framework provides the key for the interpretive methodology of the dissertation, which is a textual analysis employing terms drawn from interpersonal theory. The work included in this dissertation is rhetorical in nature, because it works from a bias drawn from the framework employed. Furthermore, this analysis will seek to suggest the rhetorical interplay of these mediated portrayals, the "real" American family or the magazine family as expressed through autobiographies of "ordinary" persons, and the historical moment.

The *between* for Martin Buber is the common center; life is lived in the between, between persons, events, and ideas. Buber's mystical is centered around its impact on one's attitude in daily living. The ontological alternatives are carried out in the story of a people and can go unused or be ignored. The articles in *Ladies' Home Journal* may reveal a decline of metanarrative with their individual historical standpoint, raising the question, "How can dialogue in a time of metanarrative crisis offer an alternative to the extremes of individualism and collectivism in a communicative life?" (Arnett & Arneson, 1999).

Seyla Benhabib (1992) offers several metaphors to construct her conversational model: concrete other; moral conversation; reconstruct a universal; unencumbered self; inclusive communication; concrete vs. generalized (veil of ignorance). The work of Benhabib is significant as the concrete individual is discovered through the stories told to *Ladies' Home Journal* editors.

Mikhail Bakhtin, the Russian intellectual, articulated a philosophy of what is discussed in philosophy of interpersonal communication as dialogism. Bakhtin was interested in language and thus will be important for this study. Bakhtin discusses

utterances and one's link in the chain of speech. For example, Bakhtin examines how the self negotiates dialogic reality at the boundary between inner and outer human existence. When examining Bakhtin's approach to technology, it is helpful to relate the historical significance of technology from Plato to modernity. Ong (1982) tells us that Plato argued against the technology of writing, claiming that it depersonalized human contact. In addition, McLuhan (1964) made the same point when he referred to media as "extension of man." The characteristics of dialogue help frame the questions necessary for examining the information derived from the articles in *Ladies' Home Journal* (Anderson, Cissna & Arnett, 1994).

Philosophical and phenomenological hermeneutics offer metaphorical guidance in the interpretation of texts to provide an understanding of complex social situations. Social construction reverses that approach, suggesting that we do not come to understand the world "as given," as it presents itself to us (Husserl), nor does it offer a Gadamerian understanding of a fusion of horizons (Gadamer, 1998). It suggests that we work cooperatively with others to know, interpret, and bring into being phenomena in the social world.

The historical significance of the social constructionist approach to rhetoric and philosophy will be explained and incorporated into this chapter. Social constructionism claims that knowledge is not about the world, but rather constitutive of the world (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Knowledge is not a fixed object. It is constructed by an individual through experiences of that object. Language is capable of constructing symbols that are abstracted from everyday experience and representing them as real elements in everyday life (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Individuals are active agents, engaging in their own

knowledge construction by integrating new information into their lives and by associating and representing it into a meaningful story (MacIntyre, 1984). Social constructionism is not at odds with hermeneutics but instead engages the hermeneutical entrances to construct social reality. The American family's engagement with the hermeneutical significance of the 1950s contributes to the ongoing changes in the historical moment; the family's interpersonal dialogues help build the historicity and therefore, construct their social reality through everyday experiences.

Peter Berger states that man produces himself, and man's self-production is always a social enterprise. Men together produce a human environment with both a sociocultural and psychological formation. Our perceptions are always learned interpretations, and man's social makeup is always preempted by social order. Social order is not part of the "nature of the thing" (Berger and Luckmann, 1966.). According to Berger, these vehicles together construct our world-view, our sense of how the world works, what is valuable, why things are the way they are; our sense of ourselves, our identity, purpose; and our ideologies, our sense of the appropriateness of, the structure of, and the exercise of, power, action and roles in society. The social constructionist approach is reflected in a number of interpersonal theories (e.g., Leeds-Hurwitz), and its general principles are compatible with the rhetorical action of messages on multiple levels, both public and private. For this reason, the social constructionist approach is appropriate as a general assumptive framework for this interpretive analysis.

This essay will focus on several social constructionist approaches to rhetoric and philosophy: Peter Berger, Ferdinand de Saussure, Jacques Derrida, Kenneth Burke, Edmund Husserl, and Martin Heidegger.. Calvin Schrag. Ronald Arnett and Josina

Makau call for an understanding of the historical moment and will help describe the narrative response. to better understand the historical significance of language and reality.

Calvin Schrag is associated with the term *praxis*, but Aristotle was the first to use it in the interests of a philosophical exchange of ideas. This exchange of ideas is manifested through mass media dialogues between advertisers and readers of women's magazines. Hegel, Feuerbach, and Marx sought to bolster and revitalize the economy of praxis (Schrag, 1989). The 1950s women's magazines invigorated the economy by creating a domestic relationship to the greater economy. The Greek term "praxis," because of its rather widespread current adoption, is seldom translated when it is used in the scholarly literature of philosophy and human sciences. It is usually rendered as "practice" or "action," "performance," or "accomplishment." (Schrag, 1989) . To Aristotle, *praxis* was *theoria* connected to action. Aristotle's theory of knowledge acquired through practice is evident as one examines the acquisition of information through advertising in magazines. The first determination of the meaning of praxis in Aristotle is thus, based on considerations attentive to distinctions in our way of comprehending the world. *Praxis is different from theoria. Theoria follows the paths of episteme; that which guides this artifactual production is techne, which is assigned a role distinct from those of episteme and phronesis. Poiesis as artifactual production is an activity that produces an object that lies beyond the dynamics of the activity itself* (Schrag, 1989, p. 19).

Schrag says that discourse and action are *about* something, *by* someone, and *for* someone (Schrag, 1989). Communicative praxis displays a referential moment (about a world of human concerns and social practices), a moment of self-implicature (by a

speaker, author, or actor, and a rhetorical moment directedness to the other). The restoration of subjectivity within the praxial space of discourse and action is a new humanism. The parameters of this praxial space already mark out the presence of the “other,” displayed in a rhetoric of discourse and a rhetoric of action. Communication as a space shared by *praxis*; it is both linguistic and action oriented. Communicative praxis involves not only the texts of spoken and written discourse but also the concrete actions of individuals and the historically effective life of institutions. Its texture encompasses a wider metaphorical range than that of textuality *per se*. It includes the texture of human projects, of motivations and decisions, of embodiment, and of wider processes of social formation. Schrag indicates that the textuality of the subject contributes to the action of the speaker. A person’s embeddedness determines praxis within private and public domains. The interior and exterior of self and society are revealed within one’s fibers embedded in the texture of social practices. The meanings that they bear reside in the socialized manner or style of their performance rather than in a psychic basement of the mind as interior agency. Communicative praxis as the ongoing process of expressive speech and expressive action has neither an interior nor an exterior, viewed as separable domains (Schrag, 1989). This understanding of the ongoing exchange between individuals and the relationship between themselves and society is necessary for unraveling the complex messages of the 1950s postwar era. The messages of the representations or stories will be examined through the theoretical screen of Calvin Schrag, and this will help explain the general themes of the 1950s women’s magazines. The focus will be on the private and public lives of individuals and the embeddedness of the stories in a given historical moment.

The articles “How America Lives” in *Ladies’ Home Journal* are autobiographical and are situated in a particular historical moment. The artifact will be examined through a hermeneutical approach and will give consideration to the messages of both the author and the autobiographies of the American families. There is evidence to support the theory that the writers of these articles portray a specific demographic and a particular type of *typical* family. This will be discussed at length in Chapter III. A review of autobiographies, and horizon of subjectivity will be examined to help answer the research question (Schrag, 1989). In this chapter, special emphasis will be given to the embeddedness and shared meaning of the author, cultural discourses, and the self in a postmodern culture. In addition, the interpretive theories of Calvin Schrag, Hans-Georg Gadamer, and Seyla Benhabib will be included to provide hermeneutic entrance into the ongoing conversation between a community and the individual voices of that community. Calvin Schrag, in quoting Foucault and Derrida, states that the authors need to be “reconsidered” and properly ‘situated’ (Schrag, 1989). Benhabib discusses the position of the ‘self’ in a communicative practice (Benhabib, 1992). In addition, the ethical imperative as elaborated through the writings of Alasdair MacIntyre, Arnett and Arneson, Arnett and Makau, Michel Foucault Barbara Biesecker, Gregory Dieslet, and also articles by Greg Dickinson and Esther Schely-Newman will join the conversation on the subject of hermeneutics, subjectivity, and authorship. These texts and articles will help disclose the meanings in the artifact through examination of petite narratives and metanarratives and the authenticity of autobiographies and biographies. The dialogues between the author of the articles and the autobiographies of the individual families will be examined hermeneutically, historically, socially, and ethically. The primary texts will

help to discover the horizon of interpretations available in the writings. Also, a literature review will include theoretical implications from the following primary authors: John Stewart, Calvin Schrag, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Martin Heidegger, Charles Taylor, and Diane Bjorklund. This literature will enrich the scholarly project by offering theoretical significance to understanding the voice of the family in that historical moment.

The families portrayed in “How America Lives” tell their individual stories to the *Ladies’ Home Journal* authors. Each month a different family is featured; these families are from all regions of the United States and cover all spectrums of American society. The content of their story will be analyzed and situated within the historical moment. In addition, the dissonance or conflicts associated with families in this historical moment will be addressed. For instance, their lifestyles were changed as the birth of the nuclear family followed the postwar era. This posed new and often complicated dilemmas for the family. The implications of this dissonance, what we can learn by examining the results and the historical significance of the 1950s will be considered, and these families will be compared to today’s families for further insight, but the primary focus will be on the 1950s family.

Many of today’s families are the result of what began in the 1950s. Families became more mobile and were thus removed from extended family and familiar patterns, giving rise to new social and family practices. “How America Lives” offers the reader insight into families from all areas of America and gives one a sense of the implications of the engagement of a particular communicative social form, the family, with the historical moment. The postwar era offered opportunity to families but also complicated their lives with new innovations such as television and other media influences. Women’s

magazines became a primary influence over the 1950s family. Nancy Walker (2000), in *The World of Women's Magazines*, discusses the influence of magazine articles on the American family. Magazine articles gave advice and information; these magazines became periodicals for women, rhetorical vehicles laden with interpersonal and more general messages addressed to a particular audience. By the 1950s, both advertising and editorial content reflected the postwar emphasis on family unity and home improvement. These articles included information about cooking, fashion, gardening, and other necessary ingredients for the family structure (Walker, 2000).

Four key issues will be explored to unveil the information and the historical implications of autobiographies and biographies in an interpretive phenomenological study. Through the lens of selected interpersonal paradigms, the following topics will provide insight for interpretive engagement: authenticity and horizon of subjectivity; hermeneutics, horizon of historical meanings, metanarratives and petite narratives; embeddedness and shared meaning; and cultural discourses and the self in a postmodern culture. Several primary and secondary sources will be introduced to reveal the ongoing conversation on the subject of authorial embeddedness and authenticity and how these writings clarify or represent our impressions of historical situations. The following primary sources will be included in this section: Calvin Schragy, Hans-Georg Gadamer,, Charles Taylor, , and Seyla Benhabib, *The Situated Self*. Secondary sources by Michel Foucault, Barbara Biesecker, Gregory Desilet, "Heidegger and Derrida; and also, articles by Greg Dickinson and Esther Schely-Newman will join the conversation on the subject of hermeneutics, subjectivity, and authorship. These authors will be valuable in this study when examining private and public, inclusion and exclusion, authorial messages,

and the historical moment in which the families spoke. The text of the study is a set of biographies published in *Ladies' Home Journal* throughout the 1950s postwar era. The American families were interviewed by various authors, and the families resided in a wide geographical range across America. The situatedness and embeddedness of the authors advances the stories of the American family in the postwar era.

Also, special emphasis will be given to historical meanings in autobiographies and biographies; this information will be applied to the artifact: "How America Lives" (*Ladies' Home Journal*, 1950-1959). The voices of the families will be expressed through the author's interpretation. As these voices emerge, an analysis of their meaning in that historical moment will be the focus. Bjorklund's insights are instructive: "This larger cultural discourse furnishes not only ideas about the nature of selfhood but also evaluative standards for model selves and model lives" (Bjorklund, 1998).

Chapter III: Portrayal of the American Family on Television and Impact on the American Family, will include information on the postwar economic boom and the G. I's who came home to a thriving American culture. This chapter will include information on rhetorical hermeneutics in the 1950s; portrayal of the American family; impact on the American family, and suburbanization and the postwar economic boom. The language and its effects on the 1950s housewife and a new reality for women and the American family will explain the dissonance within the American family. In this chapter several primary and secondary texts will be included: Steven Mintz and Susan Kellogg, Elaine Tyler May, Stephanie Coontz, Karal Ann Marling, Lynn Spigel, and Ella Taylor. These scholars explain the significance between television families, actual American families, and the idea of containment, ethics, and the nostalgia of family values that still exists. By

examining these families, the families portrayed in “How America Lives” will be better understood. In addition, the beliefs about the 1950s family may be somewhat dispelled when focusing on the magazine families.

The 1950s historical moment was a complete reversal of what families had experienced in the past. For example, extended family was replaced by the nuclear family, and this change in tradition brought “rootlessness” to the American family (May, 1954). This was an important ingredient in the make-up of all families before World War II; families lived together and relied on each other for moral support, guidance, and friendship. Elaine May (1954) stated that postwar families struggled with this transition as “young adults shifted their allegiances from the old ethnic ties to the new nuclear family ideal” (May, 1954). As late as 1940, half of young adults lived with their parents, but after the war, these young people married and moved to their own homes in the suburbs (Mintz and Kellogg, 1988). The rise of the nuclear family meant that families would be “on their own” for the first time. This paved the way for a new consumerism and a community oriented society as a generation who were economically constrained during the depression and in the postwar realm now had the opportunity to buy a home (Mintz and Kellogg, 1988). The young married couples considered this move to be a renewal of family togetherness; they still felt the pain of separation that was prevalent during the war. This leads one to question whether or not the young married couples were developing a new moral philosophy or were subjects of an emotivism that was prevalent in the postwar society. Alisdair MacIntyre (1984) claims: “A moral philosophy---emotivism is no exception---characteristically presupposes a sociology. For every moral philosophy offers explicitly or implicitly at least a partial conceptual analysis

of the relationship of an agent to his other reasons, motives, portrayals and actions, and in so doing generally presupposes some claim that these concepts are embodied or at least can be in the real social world ” (MacIntyre, 1984).

The 1950s American family faced new and sometimes insurmountable sociological obstacles as they attempted to adjust to the postwar economic boom and the external influences from the print and broadcast media, and in particular, the newly adopted family entertainment center, television. Television programming provided an image of reality that was similar to the suburban family; the television families became their identity, and the entertainment and consumer information flowing from these programs created a sense of security for the often floundering young families as they adjusted to their new surroundings (Mintz & Kellogg, 1988). Although the American family was often portrayed and influenced by the film industry, television permeated their living rooms and influenced their morals, virtues, and values; in many situations, television became their mentor. “It was during the 1950s that television emerged as the nation’s dominant form of entertainment” (Mintz & Kellogg, 1988). Mintz and Kellogg discuss the comparison between the television family and the American family. Television provided viewers with a glimpse of families who projected images of masculinity and femininity, parenthood, and childhood and adolescence to millions of viewers. Although these families were caricatures, they do reveal what families were striving to become in the postwar era. Many of the popular television shows contained the message of “good neighborliness.” *I Love Lucy*, *the Honeymooners*, *the Goldbergs*, *the Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet*, *Leave It to Beaver*, *the Donna Reed Show*, and *Father Knows Best* were produced for the pleasure of the American family. Stephanie

Coontz discusses the American families and the nostalgia trap and how one reflects on the 1950s family. Often the television family is compared to the one seen in television reruns (Coontz, 1992). The structure of the television family was similar to the postwar family as they enjoyed economic improvements, new housing, and an increase in ownership (Coontz, 1992).

This social content and social context is often associated with a morally fragmented society in which one common voice is not heard; in contrast, many individual voices are presented as the authority and true word of the historical moment (MacIntyre, 1984). This era of mixed virtues that was presented in the 1950s altered the familiar narrative and thus, many voices were presented to the family through the broadcast and print media, social scientists' texts and the American government. This mixture of narratives can be confusing and dangerous to the well-being of the characters living in a postmodern society; the American family did not hear one clear voice of authority as they sorted through and adjusted to the complex messages delivered by the print and broadcast media, but instead, were inundated with several voices from advertisers, popular culture, the government, and other influential voices. The familiar voices of authority that originated in extended family were replaced by outside influences. "Science and technology seemed to have invaded virtually every aspect of life, from the most public to the most private. Americans were looking to professionals to tell them how to manage their lives" (May). The birth of the nuclear family created a "spending boom" as each new family required household goods, and most importantly, a household. Stephanie Coontz reports, "Food spending rose by only 33 percent in the five years following the war, and clothing rose by 20 percent; household furnishings and appliances climbed 240

percent.” Coontz continues: “Nearly the entire increase in the gross national product in the mid-1950s was due to increased spending on consumer durables and residential construction...most of it oriented toward the nuclear family.” The messages emanating from television became the new meta-narrative for the family. The influences of the broadcast media were realized as families compared their lives to those of television’s portrayal of the fictitious American family. It was often difficult for blue-collar families, struggling to make ends meet, to relate to their television counterparts. The families portrayed on “Ozzie and Harriet” and “The Donna Reed Show” did not share the everyday problems that the real American families faced each day. Monetary struggles were not evident as we observed Donna Reed kissing her husband good-bye in the morning while wearing high heeled shoes and a fancy dress. According to Coontz, “Such families were so completely white and Anglo-Saxon that even the Hispanic gardener in “Father Knows Best” went by the name of Frank Smith.” Coontz continued to contrast the television family to the real family by stating that television networks did not reflect the streets of suburbia that saw a major transformation in the ethnic composition of America. Prior to the war most blacks and Mexican-Americans lived in rural America, but after the war, moved to the inner cities. The Donna Reed and June Cleaver roles were not available to 40 percent of the families in America. In contrast, twenty-five percent of American women were heads-of-household; the poverty rate for two parent black families was fifty percent; migrant workers were deprived economically; and relocation and termination policies were employed against Native Americans. There did not seem to be an economic crisis or a mixed virtue issue within the fabric of the

television family. Housewives patterned their lives after the sit-com family's interpretation of reality (Mintz & Kellogg, 1988).

The communication problems of the 1950s family were unique; the development of mass communication was in its infancy. Lynn Spigel (1992) states: "Popular television, of course, cannot be said to reflect society, nor should this be its role." The fantasy level of television may reflect an ideology that depicts certain social problems and the solutions necessary for solving these problems, particularly those relating to the disintegration of families and the instability of our private lives. This phenomenon will be explored through an examination of Martin Buber's inclusion/exclusion theory and the implications of overlapping the public family with the private family. It is interesting to surmise that the private lives and public lives of families were becoming one. The media portrayed the family in various configurations: *I Love Lucy* and *The Honeymooners* featured rebellious females in a pre-feminist society while Donna Reed and June Cleaver conformed to the realism of the American housewife living in suburban America (Sigel). Lucy and Ethel (*I Love Lucy*) and Alice and Trixie (*The Honeymooners*) represented female friendships and resistance to their middle-class situations and husbands. Donna Reed and June Cleaver restored the unity of the family; although Donna Stone was somewhat rebellious, she did not contrast drastically with the real American housewife's image of self.

Chapter IV: Women's Magazines and their Influence on the American Family will focus on the portrayal of the American family and magazines and their influence on the American family. This chapter will include women's magazines prewar and postwar; women's magazines and consumerism; women's magazines and domesticity; women's

magazines: sociologists, psychologists, and other experts; and women's magazines and femininity. In addition, articles appearing in women's magazines from the 1940s will help explain the 1950s historical moment. The prewar articles explain the sociological climate of the 1940s and the effects of the war on the postwar American families. Also, emphasis will be given to the influence of sociologists, psychologists, and government and how they influenced the formation of the American nuclear family.

This chapter will include information on the nuclear family of the 1950s and the influence of the print media on the family, a history of how the nuclear family was created. Special emphasis will be given to the influence of magazines and the 1950s family including the topics of domestication, containment, and consumerism. Several primary authors will be included to better understand the historical moment: Nancy A Walker, Alan Nadel, and Betty Freidan will join the cultural conversation. A brief description of what was happening before the 1950s will be addressed to better situate the historical moment hermeneutically. Magazines printed especially for women carried many mixed messages for the American housewife. Nancy Walker, discusses the significance of the American family in the world of women's magazines; this text enriches the focus of the American magazine families in "How America Lives." Walker gives a background on the influence of women's magazines and the formation of the nuclear family and the relationship between the family and the larger culture. Walker addresses the subject of the domestication of World War II and states that "How America Lives" provided a transition from Depression years to the war years. She also states that one of the themes of the series was socioeconomic as the families were profiled each month were categorized by income level. "The rhetoric of the articles tied the family

directly to the nation as the series strove to introduce disparate people to one another as ‘neighbors’ who had much more in common than their differences in geography, social class, and, to some extent, ethnicity might suggest” (Walker, 2000). For example, *Harper’s Bazaar* focused on the beauty of the woman, and *Good Housekeeping* focused on the practicality of running an efficient home. These magazines help the reader understand how the 1950s family became an institution for democracy and ultimately, a counterbalance for communism. Nancy Walker’s text will be the primary source for this chapter.

Chapter V: The Magazine Families: “How America Lives” 1950-1959 will be examined to better understand the real American family. This chapter will be divided into Part I: 1950-1954; and Part II; 1955-1959. Through interpretive analysis and rhetorical screens, the American family will be examined in the magazine articles “How America Lives.” Much of the information for the dissertation was included in my master’s thesis; this research included thirty-five families (*Ladies’ Home Journal*) randomly selected from the 1950-1960 publications. The dissertation will be a cultural conversation with *Ladies’ Home Journal* “How America Lives” January 1950-December 1960. In this chapter, all of the articles for the decade 1950-1960 will be included. An exploration of quotes from real families or magazine families, the structure of the families, the hopes and dreams of the families, and communication dilemmas of the families will be included to offer texture to the story of the American family appearing in this publication in this historical moment.

### Methodology

The methodology used for the purpose of this thesis is an interpretive analysis of

the prevailing literature on the subject of the American family in the 1950s postwar era. This rhetorical analysis will focus on the American family's ideological perception of the 1950s Postwar Era and will focus on: the portrayal of the American family in the 1950s, including the influences of television, film, and the print media; the transitions and expectations of American men and women and how they were impacted from outside influences; the dissonance created by such impacts; and the implications of this dissonance and what we can learn from the 1950s American family which will help us understand the 1990s family. This research will attempt to answer the question: "Portraits through the Lens of Historicity: The American Family as Portrayed in Ladies' Home Journal January, 1950-December, 1959."

This thesis will examine the discursive or written or spoken language of the 1950s postwar era as revealed in prevailing literature on the subject. The data will be evaluated to further understand and interpret the relationship between the American family and the print and broadcast media. Through this process, a general understanding of the nature of the artifact will be derived. A social historical perspective will be applied to the artifact to unravel the dialectic messages. Baxter and Montgomery's text will be utilized for this evaluation. Several primary texts will become an integral component of the main artifact ("How America Lives), and through this investigation, a dialectical conversation will emerge. An initial examination of these artifacts suggests many complex ideologies taking place in one historical moment; further research reveals a rich body of literature available on the topic. A rich resource was found in *Ladies' Home Journal*; "How America Lives" was an ongoing series of articles that featured a different American family each month. Issues from January, 1950 to December, 1960 will be explored for

the purpose of this thesis; this paper will focus on all of the articles. Each month a different, unique, American family was interviewed, photographed, and portrayed in *Ladies' Home Journal*. These families shared many of the same demographics, but each was significantly different. Most families shared the same values with a keen interest in family and more specifically, children. The mothers were primarily “stay at home” homemakers with few resources and many obstacles in their lives. The articles presented in this paper are a contrast to the television families of the 1950s. Although they were primarily patriarchal like their television counterparts, the similarities were often lost in the dissimilar manifestations of the real family.

The print media included articles about the family; in particular, women were portrayed in an extremely traditional role by most women's magazines. Several articles from *McCall's Magazine*, *Ladies' Home Journal*, and other related writings will be included in this research as contextual elements of the rhetorical information environment relevant to the family system. The portrayal of women greatly influenced all members of the family and how they related to their positions in the home and in the community. A search of pertinent articles about these roles will be included in the paper. *The Feminine Mystique*, by Betty Friedan included many references to articles which may have manipulated the role of the American housewife. Social scientists, government agencies, and the popular print media were all influential in molding the American home as we nostalgically remember it in the 1990s.

## **Chapter II Communication Paradigms and Theories and Historical Meanings in Autobiographies and Biographies**

Several philosophical and interpersonal communication paradigms and theories will be utilized to generate a conceptual framework for interpreting the “story” of the American family. This story is examined through its communicative structure as expressed in historical documents and artifacts and in portrayals in *Ladies’ Home Journal*. These paradigms will help explain the narrative of the family: “Portraits through the Lens of Historicity: The American Family as Portrayed in Ladies’ Home Journal 1950-1959.”

The artifact for this project is all of the articles “How America Lives” that appeared in *Ladies’ Home Journal* from January, 1950 through December, 1959. This chapter will focus on the following interpersonal communication and rhetorical theories to help unravel the complex issues of the 1950s postwar era and its affect on the 1950s family: Martin Buber’s *The Between*; Seyla Benhabib’s *Conversational Model*; Mikhail Bakhtin’s *Theory of Dialogism*; Peter Berger’s “social constructionist” approach to communication and rhetoric, and Calvin Schrag’s *Communicative Praxis*. This thesis will examine the discursive or written or spoken language of the 1950s postwar era as revealed in the prevailing literature on the subject. The language portraying the family will be evaluated to further understand and interpret the hermeneutic relationship between the American family and the print and broadcast media. Interpersonal communication theories provide conceptual resources to understand the particular ways in which textual material reveals tensions inherent in and developmental processes understood to be constitutive of intimate human relatedness in a particular historical moment as portrayed in these *Ladies’ Home Journal* Articles. “How America Lives” was an ongoing series of articles which

featured a different American family each month. Along with first-hand accounts of the 1950s era, the American family's voice revealed many conflicting and sometimes unique stories about the family. Together, these stories offer a glimpse of the "contested terrain" of family relationships encountering a changing historical moment with uncertainty and conflicting expectations about the roles of men and women in marital relationships.

Seyla Benhabib's *Conversational Model* and Mikhail Bakhtin's *Theory of Dialogism* provide a rich framework of interpersonal theory by which to analyze these artifacts from the standpoint of the author. The articles "How America Lives" in *Ladies' Home Journal* are autobiographical and are situated in a particular historical moment. The artifact is examined through a hermeneutical approach and gives consideration to the intent of both the author and the autobiographies of the American families. Authorial intent, authenticity, and horizon of subjectivity are examined to help discover the meanings of the portrayal of the family in the 1950s articles (Schrag, 1989). Special emphasis is given to the embeddedness and shared meaning of the author; cultural discourses; and the self in a postmodern culture.

This conceptual framework provides the key for the interpretive methodology of the dissertation, which is a textual study employing conceptual material drawn from interpersonal and rhetorical theory. The nature of this dissertation is rhetorical, because it works from a bias situated within the framework employed. Furthermore, this analysis will seek to suggest the rhetorical interplay of these mediated portrayals, the "real" American family as expressed through autobiographies of "ordinary" persons, and the historical moment.

Martin Buber: "The Between" and "Inclusion and Exclusion"

Arnett and Makau (1997) discuss Buber's concept of inclusion and exclusion. The metaphor of inclusion assumes a narrative context of people within a community, their religious beliefs, and their ethnic connection. Nancy Walker says that "*The Ladies' Home Journal's* long-running series "How America Lives," which began in 1940, is central to the creation of the domestic world at mid-century in its embodiment of a paradox: while it promised to reflect the diversity of American life, the editors tended to define diversity within fairly proscribed limits; more importantly, the *Journal* insisted on a community of shared values that crossed economic lines: hard work, morality, the centrality of family life, and aspirations for a better future" (Walker, 2000).

The articles in *Ladies' Home Journal* are a dialogue between the families and the readers; this dialogue is best understood through the conceptualization of Martin Buber. According to Arnett, Buber's dialogic voice reminds us of the *other*; Buber suggests that dialogue is lived between persons, between persons and events, between persons and ideas, even in crisis (Arnett & Arneson, 1999). The *between* is the common center where life is lived between persons. Arnett and Arneson asks the question: "How can dialogue in a time of metanarrative crisis offer an alternative to the extremes of individualism and collectivism in a communicative life?" As the story of the American family as portrayed in *Ladies' Home Journal* unfolds, it will become apparent that many narratives were present and often, extremes of individualism existed and affected the family and community. Buber's idea of *meism* is evident as the family became autonomous and isolated from their extended families; they looked for, and joined, the larger conversation for the purpose of finding a common center or community with the *other*.

The Ladies' Home Journal articles are a dialogue between persons, between person and event, between person and idea, and according to Buber, "dialogic life is lived *Between Man and Man* (Arnett & Arneson, 1999, p. 128). Buber's metaphor of *the between* is explained as the fundamental fact of human existence as human beings turn to one another in order to communicate in a sphere which is common to them but which reaches beyond the special sphere of the individual (Arnett & Arneson, 1999). The *between* is at the *common center* and offers an alternative to unconcerned individualism. The *between* is ontological or part of being human; humanness provides the vehicle to come together with *the other* in *the between*. Buber explains that the life of a human beings does not exist in a world of verbs or activities; a human perceives, feels something, imagines something and thinks something. The *between*, for Buber, is central to his existential phenomenological world view. The human story is participation and community, independence, but interdependence and our involvement in the human story.

Martin Buber's understanding of the *between* was precipitated by Edmund Husserl's pure phenomenological approach to culture (Arnett & Arneson, 1999). For Buber, phenomenology was a reaction to the overuse of psychological interpretations. Husserl described intentionality as both the process and the place where one's focus of attention is gathered; Husserl says that intentionality is not in the person or in the object under review, but *between* person and phenomenon by the subject (Arnett & Arneson, 1999). "The non-psychological perspective represented by the phenomenological view of 'intentionality' was central to the work of Husserl" (Arnett and Arneson, 1999, p. 132). Buber refers to Husserl and says that man's essence is not found in isolated individuals but within the bonds of generations and society. We must define what these bonds really mean if we want to know the essence of man. The bond with

community or isolation may determine the true essence of man (Buber, 1970). Buber understood phenomenon grounded in the concrete historical moment; a phenomenon is not abstracted from life's events (Arnett & Arneson, 1999).

The 1950s American family's phenomenon was immersed in the disintegration of a metanarrative and sometimes insurmountable sociological obstacles as they attempted to adjust to the postwar economic boom and the external influences from the print and broadcast media, including the newly adopted family entertainment center, the television. Bakhtin discusses the messiness of language-in-use. The language of the 1950s was a "living thing" residing in each and every utterance (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). Bakhtin argues that dialogue and voice are both metaphorically and literally significant. The utterances of language are positioned in the place where the multivocal interplay between *centripetal* and *centrifugal* take place. A person's identity is constructed through social cognition and not that of a psychological nature. This concept is not original to Bakhtin, but is significant for understanding the phenomenological implications of the 1950s language and identity. Their identities evolved through their perception of advertising and television families, and although the American family was often portrayed and influenced by the film industry, television permeated their living rooms and influenced their morals, virtues, and values. In many situations, television became their mentor or voice of authority (Mintz & Kellogg, 1988).

The shift of identity from the familial, community, and work structures to a lifestyle structure and the fragmentation and globalization of postmodern culture engenders in many a nostalgia for the past. The engagement between traditional rhetorical concepts and postmodern problems leads to an reevaluation of memory to better express the issues associated with self. In

particular, the concepts of memory, invention and style, where memory becomes the language of self performance (Dickinson, 1997). Social options are often the center of discussion in a postmodern and identity crisis debate; the fragmentation of beliefs joins the lack of metanarrative to define the social conditions of a society.

Seyla Benhabib: “Conversational Model” and “Standpoint of the Other”

Julia T. Wood (1993) discusses people’s diversity and cautions us not to overlook the commonalities in diverse peoples’ orientations within relationships. Common needs and goals are shared within a culture, and similarities form a “backdrop for noticing differences that arise out of race, class, gender, affectional preference, and other dimensions of identity” (Arnett and Makau, 1997). One’s standpoint is a position that is established by material and symbolic circumstances; reality is inevitably mediated symbolically and constrained by discourses available in a given time and place (Wood, 1993d, 1994c). Standpoint theory is essential for understanding the language of the 1950s and the American families featured in this thesis.

Each family brings its own standpoint or demographics along with a common thread that is running through the culture. Nancy Walker states that “American Culture in the postwar period was far more diverse in tastes, values, political philosophies, and economic levels than the popular media of the time projected” (Walker, 2000, p. 110). Walker discusses the “common thread” concept as she explains the conception of the series “How America Lives.” She states that while the articles were supposed to have individual standpoints, the families were carefully chosen to reflect the larger culture. The metaphor of the “common thread” will often conflict with the individual standpoint. The demographics of some of the featured families went against the grain of the typical American family. Some of these families will be examined in Chapter V.

Wood states that standpoint theory reminds us that tensions in friendships often stem from failure to realize that individuals from diverse social groups operate by different understandings about friendship. Wood's example of friendship is applicable to larger groups of people relating individual stories to "friendly" listeners or readers as is the case with the *Ladies' Home Journal* articles, "How America Lives." The standpoint of the authors and the standpoint of the families will be interwoven in to a common story or narrative of 1950s America.

Seyla Benhabib discusses the standpoint of the *concrete other* versus George Herbert Mead's standpoint of the *generalized other*. The standpoint of the concrete other requires one to view each and every rational being as an individual with a concrete history, identity and affective-emotional constitution (Benhabib, 1992). The concept of the generalized other implies that every individual is entitled to the same rights and duties we should want for ourselves; we thus assume the individuality and concrete identity of the other. "We assume that the other, like ourselves, is a being who has concrete needs, desires and affects, but that what constitutes his or her moral dignity is not what differentiates us from each other, but rather what we can expect and assume from him or her" (Benhabib, 1992, p. 159). The "generalized other" predominates in our contemporary universalist moral psychology and moral theory. As we study the voices of the 1950s family, Benhabib's standpoint will be the major focus; each family's standpoint with a concrete history, identity and affective-emotional constitution will be considered when interpreting the gestalt formed by these messages. To generalize about common facts, histories, and messages would impair the understanding of the message. Under a "veil of ignorance" the *other* as different from the self disappears (Benhabib, 1992). To understand the message of the *other* or those other than particulars within a culture, one must examine the standpoint of the

*other*. This is explored in the study of the *LHJ* articles as situated within the larger culture, main culture, or generalized other.

Seyla Benhabib discusses the feminist historical perspective to language and writing by examining the writings of Jane Flax, *The Death of Man*; Flax claims that postmodernists wish to destroy all essentialist conceptions of humans and nature. Flax follows the French tradition in stipulating the *death of the subject*, and in addition claims that “philosophy as the privileged representative of the Real” has not been changed but instead, has died off. The question concerning the relationship of historical narrative to the interests of present actors in their historical past presents a conflict in interpretation (Benhabib, 1992).

Benhabib discusses the focus will be directed to the *death of history*, as it best represents the discussion of metanarrative and petite narrative, and how this may ultimately apply to the subject of autobiographies and biographies. Benhabib claims that the death of history thesis is interpreted as the end of “grand narratives” which is so attractive to feminist theorists.

Benhabib discusses feminism as situated criticism and concludes that no single set of criteria can be used to determine one’s situatedness. This directly addresses the position of the American homemaker in the 1950s articles “How America Lives” faced with confictions with traditions, ethical and political views, religious beliefs, and scientific institutions. In the discussion of social criticism, *hermeneutic monism* of meaning would mean that our narratives are universal and uncontroversial, but in fact, social criticism *needs* philosophy because the narratives of our cultures are so conflictual and irreconcilable. The principles from which one speaks, or embeddedness, need to be clarified to understand what is guiding one’s choice of narratives. Another defect of social criticism is explained by Benhabib: “...is to assume that the

constitutive norms of a given culture, society and tradition will be sufficient to enable one to exercise criticism in the name of a desirable future” (p. 226). Theorists such as Michael Walzer, Jean-Francois Lyotard, and Richard Rorty have this usage in mind. Benhabib disagrees with these theorists stating that “this group of contemporary authors does not assume however that there can be ‘transcendent criticism’ or an ‘Archimedean point of view.’” (p. 227). In fact, these petite narratives *do* contribute to the choices made in the situation, culture, society, or tradition. The standpoint of *interactive universalism* or interaction between petite and meta narratives is defended as Benhabib explains that this interactive universalism is situated within the hermeneutic horizon of modernity.

#### Mikhail Bakhtin: “Theory of Dialogism”

Bakhtin’s idea of identity formation is similar to Mead’s discussion of the “I” and the “me”; or a person’s subjective reflection on the self. For Bakhtin, “I-for-myself” is the reflection on the self; the “I” is possible only in reflecting on the “me,” or the other’s perceptions of oneself (Baxter and Montgomery, ). An important concept of Bakhtin’s is that people are located concretely in time and space; each person exists in a unique *chronotopic* location. Bakhtin suggests that in order to understand the horizon of the other, one should consider the location in time and space; one’s own location in time and space cannot alone suggest the horizon of the other. An expression on the face shows “extralocality” that cannot be obtained from a fixed location of the other (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). By chronotype, Bakhtin meant the sense of time and space that is present in a novel or other large unit of discourse and that defines primary features of the world of the work (Stewart, 1981). The chronotope is the place where knots of narrative are tied and untied (Raudaskoski, 1997).

Several scholars have observed that Bakhtin's work has different meaning for different people; no two "appropriations of dialogism are identical" (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). According to Bakhtin, the self is constructed of two forces: the centripetal and the centrifugal; the self is possible only in fusion with another (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). Bakhtin worked to develop a philosophy of language that he discussed as grounded in an interplay of communication (Davis, 1998). One of the most significant contributions of Bakhtin is his view on communication between two people; Bakhtin claims that the essence of dialogue is its simultaneous differentiation from fusing with another. According to Bakhtin, to enact a dialogue, the parties need to fuse their perspectives while maintaining the uniqueness of their individual perspectives. These two different voices bring unity to the conversation but only through two clearly differentiated voices; this is the difference between monologue and dialogue. Dialogue is multivocal with the presence of at least two distinct voices. "Bakhtin regarded all social process as the product of 'a contradiction-ridden, tension-filled unity of two embattled tendencies,' the *centripetal* (i.e., forces of unity) and the *centrifugal* (i.e., forces of difference). The multivocality of social reality is constituted in the contradictory interplay of centripetal and centrifugal forces" (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996, p. 25).

Baxter and Montgomery believe that communication in personal relationships is a dialogue between the centripetal, given, closed, and finalizable, and the centrifugal, new, indeterminate, and unfinalizable. In addition, Baxter and Montgomery conclude that the dialogic response to monologic certainty parallels Bakhtin's reaction to the work of Saussure and other linguists; Bakhtin was critical of other efforts to study language as an abstract and closed system. He argued that this procedure ignored the indeterminates of language (messiness) or what he

called *heteroglossia*. In particular, he criticized Saussurian effort to privilege *langue*, that is the abstract system of language, over *parole*, that is, language-in-use (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996).

Bakhtin's early work concentrated on developing a philosophy of language "grounded in the interplay of communication" (Davis, 1998). In "Problems of Dostoevsky's Art," Bakhtin defended the *utterance* as a dialogic process involving both the speaker or writer and the implied or actual listener or reader; the dialogic process is necessary for understanding the utterance. As a language philosopher and literary theorist, Mikhail Bakhtin affirmed similarly that "the utterance (speech product) enters into a new sphere of speech communication. An utterance does not describe or define in the terms of linguistics or semiotics, "especially because semiotics deals primarily with the transmission of ready-made communication using a ready-made code; in live speech, communication is first created in the process of transmission, in essence, no code" (Stewart, 1995, p. 105). All utterances are heteroglot in that they are functions of a matrix of forces that are nearly impossible to recoup; therefore, they are impossible to resolve.

*Heteroglossia* is as close a conceptualization as is possible of that locus where *centripetal* and *centrifugal* forces collide. These clashes provide the tension between the *centripetal* and *centrifugal* themes, beliefs, ideologies, and values of the historical moment. (Bakhtin, 1981).

Reacting against Saussure's 'objectivist' linguistics, but critical of 'subjectivist' alternatives, Bakhtin shifted attention from the abstract system of *langue* to the concrete utterances of individuals in a particular social contexts. "Language was to be seen as inherently 'dialogic': it could be grasped only in terms of its inevitable orientation towards another" (Eagleton, 1996, p. 101). Bakhtin claimed that language was a field of ideological contention,

not a monolithic system; without signs no values or ideas could exist. “Moreover, since all signs were material---quite as material as bodies or automobiles---and since there could be no human consciousness without them, Bakhtin’s theory of language laid the foundation for a materialist theory of consciousness itself” (Eagleton, 1996, p. 102).

Bakhtin affirmed a closely related view of the irreducibly speech-communicative nature of language that has been written by Wittgenstein, Heidegger, Davidson, and Rorty. “Bakhtin insisted that any philosophy of language must begin from the recognition that its subject matter is not an abstract system, because ‘language is realized in the form of individual concrete utterances by participants in the various areas of human activity’” (Stewart, 1995, p. 111).

Everything that pertains to me [i.e., my world] enters my consciousness, beginning with my name...through the mouths of others (my mother, and so forth), with their intonation, in their emotional and value-assigning tonality. I realize myself initially through others; from them I receive words, forms, and tonalities for the formation of my initial idea of myself...Just as the body is formed initially in the mother’s womb (body), a person’s consciousness awakens wrapped in another’s consciousness” (Stewart, Bakhtin, “Notes”, 1995, p. 111).

Bakhtin compared language to all art by stating that language is an exchange or clash of values between a work and its audience. This definition is sociological poetics that views language as both “determining and determined by historical components of particular utterances” (Con Davis, 1996). This is in direct conflict with theories which claim that a text is “static”, purely linguistic, or vulgar. Marx defined texts as determined entirely by their creator and reader. *Artistic form is largely influenced by ‘extra-artistic’ reality* (Bakhtin, “Discourse in Life and Discourse in Art”). John Stewart says that Bakhtin divided *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language* into three parts; the first is designed to substantiate the significance of the philosophy of language for Marxism as a whole and *to bring out the position that the philosophy of a*

*language occupies in the Marxist worldview*. “Without signs, there is no ideology” (Stewart, 1995). Stewart continues that part two is an attempt to resolve the basic problem of the philosophy of language and the actual mode of existence of linguistic phenomena; part three continues the book’s progression from general to particular by focusing on the problem of reported utterance or speech about speech. This is what occurs in a novel when the narrator reports what a character has said (Stewart, 1995, p. 167).

According to Bakhtin, the novel consists of the endlessly interacting utterances whereas poetry suppresses heteroglossia. Bakhtin says that there are two forms of discourse: the poetic and the novelistic. For Bakhtin, poetry can be novelistic, and he argues that *Paradise Lost* is a hybrid poem whereas, novels are less hybrid form when the author strives to implant his/her particular points of view into the reader’s mind. Bakhtin would predict that this process is fruitless, in the sense that the many voices of the novel frustrate the author’s intention. For the purpose of interpreting better understanding the messages and conversations contained in the articles “How America Lives”, it is imperative that they be read and comprehended from the standpoint of the story or narrative that is being told. Bakhtin’s discussions about interaction, utterances, and authorial intention will add texture to the discovery.

#### The conception of Language and Styles for Social Dialogue

Authorial speech, the speeches of narrators, is inserted genres, the speech of characters are merely those fundamental compositional unities with whose help heteroglossia (*raznoreie*) can enter the novel; this enables the novel to have a multiplicity of social voices and multiple links and interrelationships within a dialogue (Holquist, 1981). According to Bakhtin, “These distinctive links and interrelationships between utterances and languages, this movement of the

theme through different languages and speech types, its dispersion into the rivulets and droplets of social heteroglossia, its dialogization —this is the basic distinguishing feature of the stylistics of the novel” (Holquist, 1981, p. 263).

Combining of languages and styles into a higher unity is unknown to traditional stylistics; there is no method for approaching the social dialogue among languages that is present in the novel. The novel as a whole must be considered by its subordinate stylistic unities. The traditional scholar judges the novel by standards set for another genre; the novelistic style is analyzed by something entirely different. “He transposes a symphonic (orchestrated) theme on to the piano keyboard” (Holquist, 1981, p.263). In the majority of poetic genres, the unity of the language system and the unity of the poet’s individuality as reflected in his language and speech are indispensable prerequisites of poetic style. In contrast, the novel does not require these conditions but makes “of the internal stratification of language, of its heteroglossia and the variety of individual voices in it, the prerequisite for authentic novelistic prose” (Holquist, 1981, p. 264). In the majority of the cases, the novel compared to the concept of “epic style”, and traditional stylistics are applied to it. “The profound difference between novelistic and purely epic modes of expression is ignored. Differences between the novel and the epic are usually perceived on the level of composition and thematics alone” (Holquist, 1981, p. 264).

Bakhtin offers a solution to this dilemma: either to acknowledge the novel ( and all artistic prose in that direction), an unartistic or quasiartistic genre, or to radically reconsider that conception of poetic discourse in which traditional stylistics is grounded and which determines all its categories (Holquist, 1981). An additional solution is one that does take basic concepts into account: “one need only consider often neglected rhetoric, which for centuries has included

artistic prose in its purview. Once we have restored rhetoric to all its ancient rights, we may adhere to the old concept of poetic discourse, relegating to ‘rhetorical forms’ everything in novelistic prose that does not fit the Procrustean bed of traditional stylistic categories” (Holquist, 1981, p. 267). This idea was of particular interest to Formalists’ position that places the formal method in poetics; Formalist rhetoric is a necessary addition to Formalist poetics.

Social constructionists have influenced our way of thinking and the actions projected from conceptualization. Social constructionists claim that “communication re-represents relationships as people go about being social selves attuned to motives, emotions, beliefs, personal histories, and relationship progressions” (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996, p. 40). Baxter and Montgomery continue to explain that what is experienced as real is constructed and reconstructed again and again. Berger and Luckmann continue the conversation of the connection between the families of the 1950s and their reality, relationships, emotions and beliefs situated in the historical moment.

#### Peter Berger: “Social Constructionist Theory”

The "social constructionist" approach to communication and rhetoric (Berger). This provides a way to understand the way the role of the American family was constructed through the media in 1950s America (Coontz, 1992). Social constructionism views that knowledge is not *about the world*, but rather, constitutive *of the world* (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). It is significant to emphasize that knowledge is not a fixed object, but instead is constructed by an individual through experiences of that object. Language is capable of constructing symbols that are abstracted from everyday experience and representing them as real elements in everyday life (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Berger and Luckmann explore the significance of the self in

relationship to society and state that “the same social processes that determine the completion of the organism produce the self in its particular, culturally relative form.” This is essential in understanding the influence of culture over biological predispositions of individuals within their culture. Individuals are active agents, engaging in their own knowledge construction by integrating new information into their lives and by associating and representing it into a meaningful story (MacIntyre, 1984). Berger and Luckmann continue to explain that the common development of the human beings and the human self in a socially determined environment is related to the human relationship between humans and the self.

A similar process of social construction can be seen at work in the family of the 1950s. The 1950s American family often faced a conflicting social content and social context while existing in a morally fragmented society. Many individual voices were presented as the authority and true word of the historical moment (MacIntyre, 1984). The clash of competing narratives can result in confusion; the American family did not hear one clear voice of authority as they sorted through and adjusted to the complexities of various media and government voices presenting different visions of the “good” for the family. “The claims of the social constructionist position are not new. Nascent elements can be seen in classical rhetorical theory and philosophy.

According to Aristotle, human knowledge is action; human action assimilates knowledge into a framework of their social interaction and activities. Beginning with the Sophists, knowledge is no longer a cosmological question, but is temporal through interaction and action; this situatedness of knowledge is manifested through what have called cultural relativism in the temporal world is where humans are aware of their historicity (MacIntyre, 1984). According

to MacIntyre, Plato believed that knowledge was cosmological, and in addition, that justice and truth were made possible by the destiny of the soul. For Plato, the soul carried all of the knowledge and was only available to those who were philosophers. The Sophists, who were travelers and thinkers, delivered a message quite the opposite of Plato; they believed that human knowledge was available to all and absolute truth was not possible. Aristotle believed that knowledge is available to all individuals based on their actions and is not innately placed within the soul of the individual; MacIntyre defends the theory of the *tabula rasa* or blank slate, which suggests he agrees with the concept of phenomenological influences and knowledge. Since this conceptualization of knowledge and human interaction is at the heart of rhetorical argument, it is significant to include it in this analysis. As the portrait of the American family is revealed, the “lens of historicity” will be better understood through the exploration of the influence of society on conceptions of the self and human relationships through processes of social construction.

Since man produces himself, and man’s self-production is always a social enterprise, individuals together produce a human environment with both a sociocultural and psychological formation. According to Berger (1966), these sociocultural and psychological vehicles construct our world-view of our immediate environment and that beyond, our sense of how the world works and how we fit into that world, what is valuable to our well being, and why things are the way they are. In addition, we construct our sense of ourselves, our identity, our purpose, our ideologies, our sense of the appropriateness of, the structure of, and the exercise of, power, action and roles in society. The social reality of everyday life is “apprehended in a continuum of typifications, which are progressively anonymous as they are removed from the ‘here and now’ of the face-to-face situation” (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 33).

Since man produces his own reality, it is imperative that a transition from Berger and Luckmann be bridged to Derrida. Berger claims that man creates himself, including language, and thus changes his own reality. Derrida looks to the language itself, and concludes, that without language, man could not create his existence. The conceptual contrasts between Berger and Luckmann and Derrida are discussed by Barbara Biesecker as she claims that Derrida's *difference* is rooted in Saussure's *Cours de linguistique generale*. Derrida conceived that language is a system of signs whose identity is the effect of difference and not of essence; Saussure claims:

In language, there are only differences without positive terms. Whether we take the signified or the signifier, language has neither ideas nor sounds that existed before the linguistic system, but only conceptual and phonic differences that have issued from the system. The idea or phonic substance that a sign contains is of less importance than the other signs that surround it (Lucaites, Condit, and Caudill, 1999, p. 236).

Derrida argues that *différance* effects a link between deconstruction and the analysis of rhetorical texts by supplying rhetorical critics with a tool to specify the rhetoricity of a text. Derrida states:

What we note as a *différance* will thus be the movement of play that 'produces' (and not by something that is simply an activity) these differences, these effects of difference. This does not mean that the *différance* which produces differences is before them in a simple and in itself unmodified and indifferent present. *Différance* is the nonfull, nonsimple 'origin'; it is the structured and differing origin of differences (Lucaites, Condit, and Caudill, 1999, p. 237).

Biesecker says that in *Linguistics and Grammatology*, Derrida claims *différance* does not depend on any sensible plentitude, audible or visible, phonic or graphic...it permits the articulation of signs among the articulation of speech and writing-in the colloquial sense-as it founds the metaphysical opposition between the sensible and intelligible, then between signifier and signified, expression and content." Ferdinand de Saussure's *Structuralism* and Jacques

Derrida's *Deconstruction of Language* (a reaction to de Saussure) are often debated to interpret the hidden meanings within the written word. The articles in *Ladies' Home Journal* are best understood by examining the expression and content of those impacted by popular culture, and in addition, understanding what was actually happening to the 1950s postwar American family in the historical moment. Saussure claims that the meanings of their message are merely symbols; Derrida argues that the contextualization of their message reveals the meaning of the message and are influenced by the hermeneutical input.

At this juncture, it is imperative that the differences between modernism and postmodernism be addressed as the 1950s is a transitional point between the two. In the modern worldview, the universe is a relatively simple, stable, highly ordered place, often described as one that has absolute formulas that hold across contexts (Lucaites, Condit, & Caudill, 1999). . Disagreement is described as ignorant or irrational; the solution for social discord is therefore greater research, less passion, more rationality, and more education. In contrast, postmodernism's interpretation is over scientific study because it operates with the assumption that all knowledge is subjective and /or intersubjective, morally culpable, and local. In a postmodern world, the universe is ever changing and highly complex; each scenario must be described in its own context (Lucaites, Condit & Caudill, 1999).

MacIntyre (1984) claims that the changes in and fragmentation of morality which accompanied modernity creates the stage for the emergence of selfhood; this is a concept of self whose unity resides in the unity of a narrative which links birth to life to death as narrative beginning to middle to end. MacIntyre explains that the setting predisposes the answers to questions of what one is doing in a given time period. The word setting may be an institution , a

practice, or various other activities of human kind. The setting has a history with individual agents, situated in such a way that the individual agent and his changes through time will be unintelligible (MacIntyre, 1984). MacIntyre continues to explain that narrative history turns out to be the basic and essential genre for the characterization of human actions.

In addition, MacIntyre observes the connection between man and his setting, and Kenneth Burke looks to man's interpretation of his setting through his view of the world through his own limitations. This interpretive lens supports MacIntyre's link between man or the agent and the hermeneutical input. Burke claims that we use symbols to shape and change human beings; symbolic inducement pays particular attention to how we define ourselves, the rhetorical nature of meaning, and the perspective that rhetoric plays in our motivation and action. Burke used the term *symbolic inducement* to mean *rhetoric, use of the symbol to shape and change human beings*. In addition, he introduced the term *terministic screen* to describe the rhetorical position of both a speaker and the subject of the speaker's attention. Burke states: "Every set of terms or symbols, thus, becomes a kind of screen through which we perceive the world" (Herrick, 1997). Burke divides rhetorical situations into five constituent elements in his pentad and asks this question: What is involved when we say what people are doing and why they are doing it? The five key terms are:

1. The *act*: what was done or is being done
2. The *scene*: the location of the act, its setting
3. The *agent*: the person performing the action
4. The *agency*: the means by which the agent performs the act
5. The *purpose*: the reason for the action, the intended goal.

Both MacIntyre and Burke place special emphasis on the setting and the action of individuals within the setting or scene. America in the 1950s created a unique scenario within a fragmented society. In an attempt to understand what was happening in the 1950s, it is imperative that an understanding of the historical moment and its significance be explored. The demographics of this era show that Americans were eager to have families; the baby boom was produced with birthrates higher than they had been for a hundred years; families were building bomb-shelters to protect themselves from nuclear warfare with the Soviet Union; the country returned from World War II with a renewed peace, prosperity, and traditional gender roles; and the private lives of the family became public and part of the larger political culture (May, 1954).

#### Calvin Schrag: “Communicative Praxis”

Schrag says that discourse and action are *about* something, *by* someone, and *for* someone (Schrag, 1989). This defines the 1950s family and the stories as related in popular publications; the narratives, advertisements, and editorial extractions complement the premise put forth by Schrag. Communicative praxis displays a referential moment (about a world of human concerns and social practices), a moment of self-implicature (by a speaker, author, or actor, and a rhetorical moment directedness to the other). The restoration of subjectivity within the praxial space of discourse and action is a new humanism. The parameters of this praxial space already mark out the presence of the “other,” displayed in a rhetoric of discourse and a rhetoric of action. Communication as a space shared by *praxis*; it is both linguistic and action oriented.

Calvin Schrag is associated with the term *praxis*, but Aristotle was the first to use the term in the interests of a philosophical exchange of ideas. The Greek term “*praxis*,” because of

its rather widespread current adoption, is seldom translated when it is used in the scholarly literature of philosophy and human sciences. It is usually rendered as “practice” or “action,” or “performance,” or “accomplishment.” To Aristotle, *praxis* was *theoria*. Praxis is in the guise of a practical wisdom; Aristotle’s term for this is *phronesis*, which although distinguished from the contemplative knowledge of pure theory is a type of knowledge more broadly conceived. The first determination of the meaning of praxis in Aristotle is thus based on considerations attentive to distinctions in our way of comprehending the world. *Praxis is different from theoria. Theoria follows the paths of episteme; that which guides this artifactual production is techne, which is assigned a role distinct from those of episteme and phronesis. Poiesis as artifactual production is an activity that produces an object that lies beyond the dynamics of the activity of itself* (Schrag, 1989, p. 19).

Communicative praxis involves not only the texts of spoken and written discourse but also the concrete actions of individuals and the historically effective life of institutions. Its texture encompasses a wider metaphorical range than that of textuality *per se*. It includes the texture of human projects, of motivations and decisions, of embodiment, and of wider processes of social formation. Schrag indicates that the textuality of the subject contributes to the action of the speaker. A person’s embeddedness determines praxis within private and public domains. The interior and exterior of self and society are revealed within one’s fibers embedded in the texture of social practices. The meanings that they bear reside in the socialized manner or style of their performance rather than in a psychic basement of the mind as interior agency. We have disassembled the philosophical use of the dichotomy of interior and exterior. Communicative praxis as the ongoing process of expressive speech and expressive action has neither an interior

nor an exterior, viewed as separable domains (Schrag, 1989). The actions of the authors of the Ladies Home Journal articles and the biographies they present will be examined through the theoretical screen of Calvin Schrag. The focus will be on the private and public lives of individuals and the embeddedness of the author.

John Stewart discusses Schrag's phenomenon in communicative praxis includes language and speech and the ultimate discourse and action that eventually textures or enriches understanding (Stewart, 1995). Stewart continues to explain that this distinguishes Schrag from others; for example, Heidegger often interrogated Being or the language of poetry, and Gadamer was primarily interested in written texts, but Schrag "attends closely to living speech communication". Stewart and Schrag differ in their overall interests but draw on similar literature; both are influenced by Heidegger and Gadamer: Stewart comes from a rhetorical and communication theory background; and Schrag approaches the subject as a philosopher and then a philosopher of communication. Both address the postmodern issues and those who directly impact postmodern thought, but Schrag positions himself "between" modernity and postmodernity; both works represent an interpretation of an event in a living dialogue which is central to philosophy and communication theory. These concepts include the status of the human subject, the role of rationality, and the nature of language (Stewart, 1995).

#### Authorial Intent, Authenticity, and Horizon of Subjectivity

Diane Bjorklund addresses the significance of moral performance and autobiographies by stating that although autobiographers recognize that they are different from other authors, they remain true to their authentic-self. This need for an authentic stand became a moral objective and thus, meant resisting demands for conformity imposed by society through socialization and

recognized community norms and values (Bjorklund, 1998). Authorial intent is the focus of Calvin Schrag as he claims that the speaker, author, and agent are not foundations of *communicative praxis*, but “rather implicates of it, emerging within its history and modified by its changing scenes” (Schrag, 1989). The author speaks from a language which is embedded in a background of textuality, and therefore, the author is the agent of the “communal patterns in which he acts.” Schrag’s position emerges as a voice for recognizing the impact of cultural nuances on a subject and how this impacts an author’s language and standpoint on writing. Calvin Schrag states in *Philosophical Papers* that narratives are always interpreted through social history and are the texts with which the self and social understandings proceed. They define the textuality of communication praxis and how our social practices are bound or marginalized. Schrag claims that narratives are open-ended texts; these texts remain open to a multiplicity of interpretations. Some interpretations are agreed upon, and others conflict (Schrag, 1994).

The vagueness of shared meaning and universality is discussed by Charles Taylor as he explains inescapable frameworks that individuals share, such as the way we walk, move, gesture, and speak when we are in the public space with others. Taylor states that frameworks are problematic because the term points towards a relatively open disjunction of attitudes, and what is common is that no framework is shared by everyone, can be taken for granted or go unquestioned (Taylor, 1989). The autobiographical sketch of self may be implicated as one’s dignity, self-sufficiency, power, or being liked and looked to by others becomes the center of attention (Taylor, 1989). One’s sense of dignity may be portrayed by an author or self, and Taylor adds the following as an example: “But very often the sense of dignity can ground in

some of the same moral views [...] my sense of myself as a householder, father of a family, holding down a job, providing for my dependants; all this can be the basis of my sense of dignity” (Taylor, 1989, p. 15). Taylor’s assessment adds to the conversation and opens-up the text for new questions for clarity: since we do not all share the same background, how can we assume that an author is addressing the issue without bias or his own standpoint? The historical significance of a subject is embedded in the framework of the writer. In addition, the problems associated with power, dignity, and personal recognition add to the cultural dilemma that the author faces.

Schrag indicates that the textuality of the subject contributes to the action of the author. (Schrag, 1973). According to Schrag, no author is an island unto himself, but in contrast, the route to the subject is fraught with hermeneutical self-implicature. This is not to be confused with self-reference or an interior mind; the author does not merely relate action out of the mind to the text; the relationship between the author and the text reveals an exteriorization of internal feelings and ideas which are part of the whole person. External issues contribute to the final outcome of the writing and the overall expression of the author. Schrag continues to explain that “the trace of the signature is so serpentine, winding its way through a multiplicity of profiles, illustrating various vectors of indebtedness to other subjects and an appropriation of that which has already been spoken and written in the tradition” (Schrag, 1973). This combination of internal and external is expressed in language which is common to the traditional and cultural norms of the author. The authenticity of the author and the authorial intent may be revealed by looking at history through a phenomenological, temporal, and a non-universal perspective.

Gadamer discusses full hermeneutical significance and the fact that tradition is essentially verbal; this becomes clear in the case of a written tradition. Language is detached from speaking because it can be written (Gadamer, 1989). In the form of writing, language is contemporaneous with the historical moment; it involves a unique co-existence with present time and is no longer dependent on retelling the story. A literary tradition (rather than an oral tradition) establishes a world with a whole new and deeper dimension; writing opens opportunity to change and widens its horizon (Gadamer, 1989). The interpretation of the author is thus manifested in his writing and incorporates the *story* as it exists within a given tradition or cultural atmosphere. Through interpretation, the author or historian focuses on various dimensions at once and can only point the reader in the direction of understanding. For Gadamer, communication centers on the activation of an already shared understanding between the story author and the culture (Desilet, 1991).

Gadamer refers to Wilhelm Dilthey and addresses the problem of a transition from a psychological to a hermeneutical grounding by examining autobiographies and biographies in the human sciences. Dilthey's work distinguishes relationships in the historical world from the causal relationships of the natural world. The structure is not merely a psychological fact but the phenomenological description of an essential quality of consciousness; every conscious is conscious *of* something, and every relation is a relation *to* something. For Dilthey, autobiographies and biographies are reflections of historical experience and knowledge; the real historical problem is less *how* coherence is generally experienced and known than how a coherence that no one has experienced *can* be known (Gadamer, 1989). Dilthey finds that

significance is not a logical concept, but in contrast, is an expression of one's life and life experiences.

Schrag says that it is against this background of human actions, configured with habits, skills, customs, and institutions, that the question concerning the "who" of the subject becomes relevant (1973). "Who is writing?" exemplifies the disappearance of the writing subject; the writing subject, along with the speaking subject, has entered the "twilight zone" of contemporary criticism and theory of literature (Schrag, 1973). Schrag quotes Michel Foucault who claims that writing creates an opening where the writing subject endlessly disappears. "Who is speaking?" is addressed by Derrida as he claims that this is a question that is always deferred: "Who is writing?" seems to suffer the same fate as does the question "Who is speaking?" (Schrag, 1973). In addition, the speaking subject is deferred, and therefore, the intentions the author's mind or embeddedness cannot be determined. According to Derrida, there is no meaning in the object of the writing or the meaning in the subject who writes. There is only writing. Schrag suggests that "we need to consider whether a new portrait of the subject and a new *horizon of subjectivity* might make their appearance in the wake of the current, proliferating deconstructions and dissolutions, which have become so familiar to us all" (120).

The identity and authenticity of an author is addressed by Michel Foucault in "What is an Author?" The models for examination include the author's objects of discourse, grammar, logic, and the relationship of the author to these discursive properties. The situation and *function* of the author and the privileges of the subject are Foucault's focus and are stated in the following: "I realize that in undertaking the internal and architectonic analysis of a work (be it a literary text, philosophical system, or scientific work), in setting aside biographical and psychological

references, one has already called back into question the absolute character and founding of the subject” (Con Davis and Schleifer, 1998, pp. 369-70).

Foucault discusses the three functions of an author: first, discourses are objects of appropriation, codified for many years, and discourse historically was an action; the second characteristic changed over the years as texts were accepted as authentic whether scientific, anonymous, real or imagined; and the third characteristic of the author-function is that it does not develop spontaneously as the attribution of an individual (Con Davis & Schleifer, 1998, pp. 369-70). In addition, Foucault questions the ideological status of the author by asking how one can reduce peril which is the great danger that *fiction* threatens in our world. Foucault’s answer states that the author reduces and is less prolific as a creator of work, and expresses functional principles. Foucault claims that “the author is therefore the ideological figure by which one marks the manner in which we fear the proliferation of meaning” (Con Davis and Schleifer, 1998). This embeddedness and situatedness of the author, the function of the author, and the author’s decision to include or exclude information will be addressed in the following sections. In relationship to Foucault’s position that the subject of history is but the product of apparatuses of power and knowledge, Barbara Bisecker adds that “rhetoric has adopted Foucault because his work makes it possible for us to respond to a generalized pressure in the humanities to update or postmodernize our orthodoxies while preserving, in however a veiled fashion, our disciplinary identity (1992). Foucault’s theory of social change offers a definition of power and the discourse of power should be offered to undermine the authority of power in social relations.

Foucault’s discusses the relevance of studying discourse and says that “perhaps it is time to study discourses not only in terms of their expressive value or formal transformations, but

according to their modes of existence” (Con Davis & Schleifer, 1998, p. 374-75). Foucault’s discussion is applicable to this study and helps examine the manner in which the articles are articulated according to social relationships and also, the privilege of the subject. Also, Foucault discusses the ‘ideological’ status of the author which is relevant to the authenticity of the texts. We are accustomed to saying that the author is “the genial creator of a work he deposits” (p. 375); this does not necessarily position the author with an indefinite source of “significations” or the final answer to the reality of the situation. In fact, as represented by Foucault and other scholars, the author approaches the subject with the same limitations as anyone else who is telling the story in real time, in a real situation, with real voices.

Work by a number of scholars writing in the area of authorial intent and authenticity in biographies provide additional insight for understanding the rhetorical complexity of the *Ladies’ Home Journal* articles. In philosophical hermeneutics the term *medium* connotes an encompassing environment of symbolic conditions within which people experience and live their realities. Jeffrey Bineham discusses the hermeneutic medium: 1) it is fundamentally linguistic in nature; one cannot speak of a medium without consideration of how it is constructed and sustained in language; language is the medium, 2) the medium embodies history; living with the medium is living with a particular historical tradition and to be guided by the mores and assumptions of that tradition (Bineham, 1991). If hermeneutic medium is language, it is also social, for language is a fundamentally social phenomenon; any medium is always shared.

The language of an authorship or narrative is explained by Gadamer who states that the situation we find ourselves in determines how we interpret historical traditions. Hegel calls this phenomenon *substance* because it underlies all subjective intentions and actions, and thus, this

phenomenon prohibits understanding the historical situation in its alterity (Gadamer, 1989). Gadamer defines this concept as “horizon” which encompasses the range of vision seen from a particular vantage point and offers the following conclusion: “Since Nietzsche and Husserl, the word has been used in philosophy to characterize the way one’s range of vision is gradually expanded. A person who has no *horizon* does not see far enough, and hence over-values what is nearest to him.” Bineham (1991) continues to explain the position of Gadamer and states that “one’s experience of any event, any physical or emotional stimulus, is interpretation, and that interpretation constitutes reality” (Bineham, 1991, p. 5). The conclusion one might make is that a person who has an horizon knows and understands the significance of everything within this horizon; the hermeneutical situation means acquiring the right *horizon of inquiry* when encountering the tradition. The phenomenological approach to understanding one’s *horizon of significance* is further explained by Schrag as he claims that *textuality* takes the place of *world*. This particular explanation opens-up the conversation and prompts the reader to take a closer look at textuality or petite narrative in relationship to world or metanarrative.

There are two sides of the story when attempting to understand social praxis. The first restores the relevance of the question the “who” of discourse; discourse exhibits an intersubjective world, with a multilayered text, which implicates a speaking and authorial subject within these worlds. The other side of the story, includes the textuality of the subject; the purposive action, social practices, and institutional involvement (Schrag, 1973). Whether an author is engaging in *practice* or *praxis* may be examined in the relationship of the author to the text and what the motivations of the author are in relationship to the text. The author is subject to the changes in textuality of the story situated within the historical moment. The motives of the author must not

be held in higher regard than the subject or subjects and their relevance to the story. The *Ladies Home Journal* articles are the “who” of the discourse; the stories they tell represent the dialogue between their own (petite) narrative and the narrative of the larger culture (metanarrative).

### Embeddedness and Shared Meaning

Gregory Desilet discusses the conflict between hermeneutics and deconstruction and states that “by separating interpretation of meaning from intended meaning, these approaches enable communication and rhetorical theory to shift focus from authorial intention to shared meaning” (1991). Desilet continues to explain that this move is not to suggest that meaning is unintentional but rather, it is not particularly intentional. Hermeneutics assumes that there is a sharing of meaning by the pervasiveness of the shared language; this sameness of intersubjectivity in the self/other relation upsets the balance in the individual/collective relation. As discussed earlier, Charles Taylor claims that no framework is shared or can be taken for granted by everyone. Taylor continues to explain that frameworks provide background, explicit or implicit, for our moral judgments, intuitions or reactions, and therefore, a framework provides us with our moral responses (Taylor, 1989). Esther Schely-Newman said that “ethnographic writing always involves tension between self and other, but an ethnography of one’s own culture requires greater reflection about the relationship between self and community and between self as native and self as ethnographer” (Schely-Newman, 1997, p. 8). This brings us to the discussion of embeddedness and moral framework in relationship to authorship or conversation.

Alasdair MacIntyre claims that “the importance of the concept of intelligibility is closely related to the fact that the most basic distinction of *all* embedded in our discourse and our practice is *that* between human beings and other human beings (MacIntyre, 1984). MacIntyre refers to

“conversation as actions” as *enacted narratives*; narrative is not the work of poets or fiction and is not “disguise or decoration”, but as indicated by MacIntyre, narrative is *real* language in *real* situations spoken or written by *real* people. Narrative histories are comprised of the individuals who tell their stories and the settings in which they act and suffer. The concept of self in a narrative story is explained as correct conceptual insights about human actions and selfhood to show how natural it is to think of the self in a narrative mode (MacIntyre, 1984). MacIntyre uses the word “setting” when referring to an institution, a practice, or some other kind of human action. It is central to understanding that a “setting has a history, a history within which the histories of individual agents not only are, but have to be, situated, just because without the setting and its changes through time, the history of the individual agent and his changes through time will be unintelligible” (MacIntyre, 1984, p. 206).

The context of the narrative may be described as semi-private narratives or those which are told within a community or to a community; they tell about its past, relevant to its future in that they maintain communal values and vitality in their world (Schely-Newman, 1997). This explains the notion that not all narratives are told to all audiences or are intended to be so. For this reason, it is important to understand the position of Schrag who explains the embeddedness of narrative stories and their relationship to their historical significance. Schrag says that the narrative story is embedded within a sociohistorical formation process in which the subject already understands himself, if not perfectly, as the one who is speaking. Schrag continues to explain that the “I” is not a speech act, not a class concept but is an indicator that points to the “who” of the saying: “The ‘I’ as the one who is speaking is implicated in the saying” (Schrag, 1973). MacIntyre claims that “we all live out narrative in our lives and because we understand

our own lives in terms of the narratives that we live out, the form of narrative is appropriate for understanding the actions of others. Stories are lived before they are told---except in the case of fiction” (MacIntyre, 1984, p. 212). One crucial characteristic that coexists and makes a narrative unpredictable is its teleological characteristic. MacIntyre states that we live out our lives, both individually and in our relationships with each other, in the light of certain conceptions of a possible shared future.

This conception is evident in verbal interactions in small groups where narrative events take place; the audience is heavily involved in the performance, roles are not defined, and each participant may initiate the interaction. In such story-telling rounds, challenges to the accuracy of the report may arise, but authority of the reporter of events is rarely challenged. Esther Schely-Newman (1997) stated the following: “When I began studying local historical narratives, I found older people eager to share their experiences and younger people eager to listen...conversations included stories at different degrees of development, ranging from reference to events to full-fledged stories by one narrator” (Schely-Newman, 1997, p. 4). MacIntyre’s views may be incorporated into the unraveling of the authorial intent and embeddedness by the following statement: “Now I must emphasize that what the agent is able to do and say intelligibly as an actor is deeply affected by the fact that we are never more (and sometime less) than the co-authors of our own narratives. These narratives are formed and portrayed by authors who have determined what we are, what we have become, and how we got there (Taylor, 1989 ). Charles Taylor refers to Alasdair MacIntyre’s idea that life is a quest such as where one will be within the next five minutes and understanding a narrative of ones life. MacIntyre suggests that as one

moves forward, they project a story, a future story with a direction of one's whole life. This sense of life as having direction captures the idea that life is seen as a quest (Taylor, 1989).

Arthur C. Danto says that chronicles may be described as *plain narratives* and history proper would be expressed in *significant narratives*. Danto suggests that whatever piece of historical writing one chooses as an example of a chronicle, it must do something more than satisfy the following two necessary conditions for any piece of history: Any piece of history must report events which actually happened, and report them in the order of their occurrence, or, rather, enable us to tell in what order the events did occur (Danto, 1985). These necessary conditions are not controversial as they state the very least we expect from a piece of history. This is offered as data in an autobiographical piece and signifies the authenticity of the historical evidence in a writing. The analysis of historical narratives raises questions of history, memory, and accuracy as history and memory are interrelated. These two perspectives may be contradictory, but they simultaneously shape each other. According to Esther Schely-Newman, memory is not necessarily a clear recollection of the past, but may be influenced by a selective process of self manipulation of truth. Personal narratives have individual memory which makes them relevant to the narrator's life and environment. Narratives which are focused on local history use the resource of collective identity, providing justification for beliefs and practices within the historical setting (Schely-Newman, 1997). The personal narratives included in *Ladies' Home Journal* tell a local history and explain the hermeneutic connection to the historicity of their lives. Whether, or not, the author influences the outcome of the articles is explored through Diane Bjorklund's scholarship.

Bjorklund's definition of autobiography is adopted from literary critic Paul Delaney (1969): literary works are primarily written to give a coherent account of the author's life, or of an extensive period or series of events in his life, and are composed upon reflection form a unified narrative (Bjorklund, 1998). Bjorklund adds that this definition includes memoirs which concentrate on external events and introspective autobiographies; this definition does not declare the extent to which the writing should be truthful. Diaries and journals were excluded, and in addition, oral histories which usually involved another person were excluded because the perspective changes. In autobiographies, in contrast, we can see what persons themselves choose to talk about and how they put together the narrative.

The *Ladies Home Journal* articles were a combination between the two ideas; the families were carefully chosen, but in contrast, their stories were not manipulated by the authors. Bineham discusses Gadamer's assertion that language is not a tool, but an ontological *medium* but reality happens within language. Language encompasses phenomenon and everything that becomes an object for a human. Thus, language is not a medium between subjects and objects, but it is a medium within which subjects and objects exist together. Language is limitless and carries everything within it, and consequentially, not only the history of the culture (Bineham, 1995)

In keeping with this theory, feminist critics have focused on the way in which the dominance of male voices within the autobiographical tradition illustrates the marginalization of female experience; women's personal narratives can be thought of as apart of a dialogue of domination. Bjorklund claims that we can make the same claim about other marginal groups which are explored through various ideologies and political frameworks. "What voices and

values are legitimated in autobiography and how the genre of autobiographies may serve as rhetoric for political or economic interests in society are other topics to be considered” (171). Bjorklund preferred autobiographies not written by a ghost writer, since ghostwriters may not have the same concerns of self-preservation. This exploration of authorship in autobiography presents an additional dilemma for examining authorial intent in biographies. Although the biography may examine the life of the subject(s), the problem of the ghost writer may be applicable and therefore, diminish the preservation of self which would be present if the author were writing about self.

#### Cultural Discourses and the Self in a Postmodern Culture

Calvin Schrag refers to the postmodern notion of the end of philosophy and metanarratives, the bankruptcy of grand theory, and the incommensurability of discourses and questions the traditional vocation of philosophy as the guardian of reason. Schrag argues the interpretation and the telling of story, and interpretation, narrative, and rationality come together within the texture of communicative praxis (Schrag, 1994). This conversation opens up new perspectives on the issue while interpreting neither as theory or as practical application of a theory but rather as a feature of dynamic discourse and action within the space of *communicative praxis*. Greg Dickinson (1997) says that “in a postmodern, fragmented world, where identities and selves are reflexively organized, rhetorical invention must be expanded to include not just the invention of linguistic arguments but the stylized invention of the self...the invention, the inventor and the subject become entangled in one fundamentally rhetorical process. Jean-Francois Lyotard’s *The Postmodern Condition* is discussed by Seyla Benhabib; Lyotard’s text became the central text for the philosophical and literary discussions of postmodernism. Benhabib adds that “enlightenment

and modernity, and what those principles and metanarratives are to which we should bid farewell is by no means clear.”

Schrag claims that Lyotard has sketched a “pragmatics of narrative knowledge” that is designed to provide its own strategies of legitimation. Discourses and social practices do not need to tell big stories, but must relate grand narratives that have been a part of modernity and postmodernity. According to Lyotard, this is defined as “incredulity toward metanarrative (Schrag, 1994).

The situation of the subject is further explored by examining historical language; Danto relates that “language stands to reality merely in the part-whole relationship: it is amongst the things the world contains, and is merely a further element in the order of reality. In this relationship, language stands as an external relationship or outside reality; the inventory of reality must include the external and internal elements of language and reality (Danto, 1985). Danto continues to explain that semantical values, such as true and false, and pictures, maps, concepts, ideas double relationship in the world. One’s description of the world, language included or represented, represents one’s reality; the relationship between language and the world “is exceedingly treacherous, as the entire world of philosophy confirms” (Danto, 1985, p. 307). Truth and existence or representation or reality become remarkably puzzling when they are treated as though they were ordinary or even special descriptive concepts.”

Danto says that historical sentences and historical beliefs are one and what one believes to be the case is mapped with sentences. To believe that an historical sentence is to believe that the event happened anterior to the belief which satisfies the sentence. Danto adds the following concepts to determine whether a sentence has an *historical truth*: it is not relevant by *is or was*,

or whether the event referred to is in the present tense or the past tense. However, time of the utterance *is* one of the conditions for truth; sentences should be *in* history, be in definite historical relations to the described event. Temporal information may be implied through the logical structure of historical sentences; and the time that the sentence is uttered in relationship to the time of the event is irrelevant (Danto, 1989). Danto adds that historical language is external to historical reality, and historical reference is reference to a temporal event.

How the *self* is determined in a postmodern society may be further explained by examining the research of Diane Bjorklund. Bjorklund explains that *truth* in autobiographies may be a complex proposition as they (autobiographers) attempt to establish moral credentials of sincerity and truthfulness through rhetorical strategies, and therefore, an author attempts to make it clear that they are not deliberately falsifying or embellishing the story. Bjorklund adds that most readers still expect autobiographers to be making a good faith effort to tell the truth as they see it. Such rhetorical declarations depend on whether the autobiographers see their task as a simple matter of recollection or a creative act; for the latter, they may be freer in their expression of reality and the facts (Bjorklund, 1998).

The theorists examined in this chapter will join the cultural conversation and engage the hermeneutical moment, women's magazines and their relationship to the 1950s American family, and ultimately, help to unravel the complex messages in the *Ladies' Home Journal* articles "How America Lives" from 1950-1959. The following chapter: Portrayal and Impact on the American Family, gives the reader a sense of the hermeneutical moment in the 1950s postwar era, the economic boom that was generated by the war, the portrayal of the family on television,

and the impact that these forces had on the American family as portrayed in “How America Lives.

### **Chapter III: Women's Magazines and their Influence on the American Family**

*We live our lives, both individually and in our relationships with each other, in the light of certain conceptions of a possible shared future, a future in which certain possibilities beckon us forward and others repel us, some seem already foreclosed and others perhaps inevitable (MacIntyre, 1984, p. 215).*

#### **Women's Magazines Prewar and Postwar**

In the 1940s and 1950s in America, women's magazines reflected the cultural values that redefined American domestic life during and after World War II. Nancy A. Walker discusses the role of magazines as businesses; as advisers on readers' personal, social and family lives; as expressions of editorial philosophies; and as sources of entertainment and information and argues that in the period from 1940 to 1960, women's magazines conveyed not a unitary but instead a multivocal concept of the domestic during a period when that concept was being contested and expanded. Magazines often celebrated women's primary role as a homemaker and at other times subverted that ideology (Walker, 2000, p. viii-ix). With this conceptualization in mind, Walker explores the interaction between periodicals and other elements within the culture, including politics, the economy, technology, demographics, and psychology and social science.

Michael Kammen discusses the 1950s American family, immersed in the transition between popular culture and mass culture. Kammen claims that the relationship propelled the family from one of participatory and interactive to one of passivity and privatization (Kammen, 1999). The rising incomes of individuals in the postwar era created a culture of "want" rather than one of "need" and raised an interesting dilemma as goods were scarce during the war. While cars

and clothing were in short supply, people spent disposable income on entertainment such as films, nightclubs, murder mysteries, and self help books (Walker, 2000).

Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*, says that the housing industry had been almost dormant since the early 1930s, and it took time for the country to turn from war production to the needs of peace. The number of homes sold was: 114,000 in 1944, rising to 937,000 in 1946, 1,183,000 in 1948, and 1,692,000 in 1950. Most homes built in the postwar years were affordable for the middle-class, and the suburbs were economically and racially homogenous. Women's magazines featured house plans with an emphasis on affordability, privacy and family living (Jackson, 1985).

There were several arguments about the role of women and the war effort; women joined the labor force and thus, did a "man's job" creating a controversy about the "relative merit and morality of domestic versus public employment" (Walker, 2000, p. 67). Women's magazines targeted their primary audience during the war years to promote national involvement, and after the war, continued the ongoing discussion of woman's cultural role and her relationship to the domestic world.

Through the 1940s, articles portrayed women in a patriotic role; "Portrait of a Patriot" *Good Housekeeping*, 1944, included a photograph of a smiling woman stocking her pantry with homemade jams and jellies. Preserving food is easier to justify than buying cosmetics, and thus advertisers transformed advertising into national defense (Walker, 2000). Women were portrayed as preserving the national interest while performing traditional roles as homemakers. Walker discusses Graebner's idea that the first half of the decade was public, nationalistic, and pragmatic, while the second half was private, familial, idealistic, and domestic. The American

family as depicted in *Ladies' Home Journal's* "How America Lives" will reinforce this concept. Chapter V is a review of one hundred twenty families, from all walks of life, with emphasis on the roles of men and women within the family structure.

Many critique women's magazines by arguing that by featuring articles and material goods for the maintenance of the home and the family, the magazines encouraged a separate women's sphere not unlike that idealized in nineteenth-century rhetoric. In an effort to explain the years prior to 1950, Walker argues that "not only have the magazines frequently addressed issues beyond the private sphere, but there is also ample evidence ...concern with home, family, and all that is commonly associated with the domestic was by no means the sole province of women but instead permeated American culture" (Walker, 2000, p.xi). Women spent the decade recognizing the needs of men and capital, working in factories, and then after the war, "soothing the fragile male ego, doing housework, and heading the family's department of consumer affairs" (Walker, 2000). Graebner also states that women's lives were primarily private, familial, and domestic throughout the decade, even as women were described as patriots. This was reinforced through advertisements that depicted women endorsing domestic roles. In Feb., 1944, *Woman's Home Companion* included this segment: "What to tell your husband if he objects to your getting a war-time job" (Walker, 2000).

The family's ideology became a product of the cold war, and this created anxieties: "A normal family and vigilant mother became the front line of defense against treason; anti-communists linked deviant family or sexual behavior to sedition" (Boyer, 1985). These attitudes and perceptions of the family added to the pressures felt as they pioneered the suburban communities. Boyer continued, "The FBI and other government agencies instituted

unprecedented state intrusion into private life under the guise of investigating subversives. Gay baiting was almost as widespread and every bit as vicious as red baiting.” Coontz added, “Conservative families warned children to beware of communists who might masquerade as friendly neighbors; liberal children learned to confine their opinions to the family for fear that their father’s job or reputation might be threatened (Coontz, 1992).

Magazines consistently supported the war effort by reinforcing the role of women and national issues; women were encouraged to plant victory gardens, volunteer in hospitals, and write cheerful letters to servicemen. The portrait of the American homemaker in World War II was often conflicted between private issues and public concerns as women were continuously striving to be patriots for work accomplished in their kitchens and living rooms. Walker discusses “Portrait of a Patriot” and the domestication of World War II and claims the years immediately preceding the war “were crucial to establishing the women’s magazines’ central role in creating a complex and enlarged understanding of domestic life at mid-century” (Walker, 2000, p. 66).

Women’s magazines also faced the complexities of the cold war with articles that continued to engage women and the family with the nation. The Soviet Republic’s launching of “Sputnik”, the Soviet satellite, engaged the American public in a unique war. Don DeLillo published the story “Sputnik” in *The New Yorker*, September 8, 1997. In this article, DeLillo refers to the Cold War challenge represented by Sputnik; DeLillo’s article insists on the manufactured quality of the 1950s middle-class and reminds us of both the media presentation of consumer goods and the political construction of the middle-class home as “the bastion of democracy” (Walker, 2000).

Jell-O salads, vegetable crispers, rubberoid gloves to wash dishes, dishwashers, or your son's sexuality all are ingredients to thwart the Sputnik threat.

#### Women's magazines and consumerism

Although the mid-century women's magazines were not as influential as television became by the 1960s, they did contribute to the transition period between popular culture and mass culture. The women's magazines guided and led readers into a consumerism that ultimately described how to bake a cake, choose a new brand of soap, voting in an election, and also, introduced a new communication of interaction between editors and readers (Walker, 2000). In 1920, issues of *Ladies Home Journal* stressed individual social development with new personal aspirations; this often included social class distinction, political theory, and an ideal of social status and an introduction to society.

Karal Ann Marling, *As Seen on TV*, points to the popularity in the 1950s of photographs of American families surrounded by all the groceries they would use in a typical year in a *Life Magazine* end of year article; she contrasts the victory gardens to the consumerism of the postwar era. "Like the endless shots taken in well-stocked supermarkets, such photos celebrated abundance, insisted on its reality, and served to ward off whatever threatened America's kitchens of tomorrow, crammed with instant mashed potatoes and ready-to-heat-'n-eat, home styled, frozen Salisbury steaks" (Walker, p. 192, 2000). Marling continues to critique *Life* by engaging the underground kitchen which was America's symbolic front line of defense against the bombs concealed in the Russian satellites. Advertising was mixed with "all the old rhetorical strategies with renewed fervor and added a few new ones as well" (Walker, 2000, p. 193).

*Ladies' Home Journal* offered advice on cooking, cleaning, child rearing, and reflected trends within culture that had begun much earlier. By the 1940s, World War II created a “profound” change in the lives of men and women in America; most evident is the change of gender roles and women’s lives for many years into the future. World War II changed the economy, made “unprecedented claims on women and men” and in addition, disrupted social arrangements on a “broad scale” (Walker, 2000). As mentioned above, the most drastic change was that of women into the labor force to fill the gap vacated by men who had gone to fight in the war; this was most dramatically manifested by the image of “Rosie the Riveter.” Women were described by Betty Freidan as heroines with career aspirations; this image was reflected by women’s magazines and reinforced in articles within publications. Women’s magazines also provided information about the postwar era by advertising and displaying images that would occur when the war ended. Although women were encouraged to return to their original role as homemaker, the prewar wages and roles were not the same; women returned to college in great numbers, and women’s wages never dropped back to prewar level. This influenced the role of magazines, and they were forced to recognize and accommodate women as the 1940s turned into the 1950s (Walker, 2000).

As women’s magazines continued to domesticate the war effort, there were conflicting messages about women’s roles during war time. “As both the government and the media declared home production and consumption of food to be decidedly political and patriotic (or in the case of hoarding and buying on the black market, unpatriotic) activities, wartime food rationing campaigns collapsed the boundaries between women’s public and private lives. In

these campaigns, the family dinner became a weapon of war, and the kitchen a woman's battlefield" (Walker, 2000, p. 71).

In anticipation of the end of the war, magazines featured plans for postwar housing, published articles on how to deal with returning servicemen, and predicted a "rosy domestic" future that would contrast significantly with the prewar Depression Era. Companies like General Electric entered the conversation by promoting the new home that your war bonds would buy. Messages of convenience were included for women returning to their inherited role of homemaker (Walker, 2000). "How America Lives" featured in the November 1945 issue of *Ladies' Home Journal* the article: "Meet a Demobilized Housewife."

When the war ended, a combination of government and business policies and public opinion favored men to return to the industrial jobs, and thus, return women to the traditional role of homemaker. Women's wages dropped 26% after the war, and also, public attitudes that could countenance women in military positions during the war could not do so in peacetime; thus, women left the armed forces. These female veterans were considered dependents rather than providers in their homes, and were not entitled to veterans' benefits that were available to their male counterparts (Walker, 2000). In addition, the federal day care centers closed and therefore, made it difficult for women to work outside of the home.

The Depression and World War II paved the way for the shift in class and consumerism at mid-century; citizens bought consumer goods in a state sponsored guarantee of private consumption (Walker, 2000). From victory gardens to consumerism, the postwar economic boom created an atmosphere for advertisers to capitalize on private consumer goods discussed in public. Franklin Roosevelt's identification of one of the "four freedoms" as freedom from want

and later in Richard Nixon's domestic consumer debate with Nikita Khrushchev, the pages of the women's magazines is where the domestic world was portrayed as material. "Readers were told to both buy and budget, to strive for improved class standing yet maintain certain core values, to respect America's ethnic diversity but emulate the white middle class" (Walker, 2000). Richard Nixon's vision in the 1959 Kitchen Debate was one in which the suburban home "obliterated class distinctions and accentuated gender distinctions" (Walker, 2000, p. 129). Nixon's vision was the ideal of home ownership diffusing two potentially disruptive forces: women and workers. In homes with appliances, working-class as well as business breadwinners could fulfill the new work-to-consumer ethic; home ownership would lessen class consciousness among workers and thus, they would be comfortable with middle-class ideals.

The *Journal's* "How America Lives" series advocated a consistent set of moral values regardless of socioeconomic status; readers were presented with a set of values and social aspirations. The magazines insisted on standards of behavior associated with the family, woman as the effective center of the family, duty and self sacrifice, hard work, and consideration for others. (Marling, 2000). Marling continues to explain the concept of "togetherness" which and that the magazines were intended for the "whole of domestic existence" (p. 137) featuring children, manners, and etiquette. This reinforced the home as the school for proper behavior and prepared readers to deal with the new social setting.

Joanne Meyerowitz's collection *Not June Cleaver* argues that the previous tendency to define the postwar period in terms of the white suburban homemaker "obscured the lives of women who were immigrants, labor organizers, rebels against convention, and marginalized by race and ethnicity" (Walker, 2000, p. 102). In December 1940, the "How America Lives" series was

introduced to establish a new message about the American family. The editor's goal was to counteract the ideology of an American aristocracy and replace it with the ideal of equality: "America is proud to have no aristocracy" (Walker, 2000, p. 5). The rhetoric of the articles tied the featured families to the nation and "strove" to introduce families to one another as "neighbors" and thus, unify them with a core of shared values that could be considered middle class. These families, regardless of income level, were praised for being industrious, unpretentious, civic-minded, moderate in their political views, and devoted to home and family (Walker, 2000).

#### Women's magazines and domesticity

Women's magazines at mid-century reflected an ongoing debate between domesticity and the role of home and family in personal and national life. October 1954, *Ladies' Home Journal*, a story entitled "Liberty and Conformity in America" describes the influences of ethnicity in America and the relative ease to enter America. The author, Dorothy Thompson discusses the deterioration of relationships with the rest of the world and how America is in danger of being isolationistic. Thompson states that multiple ethnic structure gives America its variety, vitality and the outward appearance and reality of nonconformity. One can think and say anything that one wants to say as long as it is not aiding or abetting the activities of a hostile nation or overthrow the Constitution..."the frame that holds so many disparate elements together, and that, in America, is crown, traditional and 'togetherness'" (*LHJ*, Oct., 1954, p. 200).

In the beginning of the century, household goods were made within the home; after the invention of electricity, the dismissal of drudgery and homemaking were replaced by conveniences. Magazines gave advice on home décor, and "genteel behavior" as related in

*Godey's Lady's Book* (Walker, 2000). As more and more household appliances became available, magazines "touted" their usefulness. Walker states that consumer themes such as holiday entertaining became popular and magazines provided the reader with articles such as November 1959 *Good Housekeeping*: "In Kitchens Like These: It's Thanksgiving Every Day." In November 1950 *Good Housekeeping* described the steam iron in "More Small Electric Appliances That Work For You." *Woman's Home Companion* had a similar section "Home Equipment." *McCall's* included product endorsement and recommendation in "Better Living" suggesting a link between household appliances and quality of life. The February issue claimed that consumers preferred recognized brand names; by 1960, washing machines, waffle irons, electric blenders, and other products were common to the American home (Walker, 2000).

In August, 1953 *Ladies' Home Journal*, an advertisement for Spry shortening covered two pages and was presented as a feature story. The title "To the Woman who thinks it is too hot to cook!" "You will spend less time in your kitchen if you use these modern short-cuts-New methods only possible because Spry is homogenized" (p. 12). The ad continues in text form to explain how to make Fried Chicken, Mondamin; Eskimo Chocolate Cake; Beefburger Toasties; and summertime Sherbert Cake. The ad shows a housewife draped over a refrigerator door, exasperated by the heat of the day.

Gimbel's department store ran this ad: "What's college? That's where girls who are above cooking and sewing go to meet a man so they can spend their lives cooking. The postwar era was a time when women chose homemaking and housework over a college education; these women became the target for media advertisers. Nearly half of women were married as teenagers; two out of three did not finish college; and 60 percent left college to marry, fearing

that they would not have another chance (Mintz and Kellogg, 1988). The power of the print media was evident as magazines reinforced the idea that marriage was important for happiness; this ideology was also echoed by psychologists, educators, and journalists. Gimbel's ran an ad which read: "What's college? That's where girls who are above cooking and sewing go to meet a man so they can spend their lives cooking and sewing" (Mintz and Kellogg, 1988). March, 1952 *Ladies' Home Journal*, included articles on Listerine antiseptic and why *Sweet Sixteen's* first party was so wonderful. An article, "Why Can't Americans Sleep?" informed readers of the availability of sleeping agents and the possibility of psychological addiction (habit forming). There were several articles dealing with the successful marriage and child-rearing: "Making Marriage Work"; "What's the Matter with Parents?"; "Diary of Domesticity"; and "You Can't Let the Children Down" (*LHJ*, March, 1952).

Mintz & Kellogg refer to a speech given by Adlai Stevenson, 1955, at Smith College in which he said that a woman's role in life was to "influence us, man and boy, to restore valid, meaningful purpose to life in your home," and "to keep their husbands 'truly purposeful' (Chafe, 1986). This rhetoric, along with that which was viewed on television, became the model for the 1950s family and impacted their actions, values, virtues and economic standing." This ad echoed the prevailing language of society; women should forsake college and education for a life in the home (Mintz and Kellogg, 1988).

Product advertising was another way that magazines contributed to the domestic way of life as one of patriotism and national connection. Mark H. Leff says that the advertising industry received a "much needed boost" at the start of the war when the War Advertising Council, composed of advertising agency executives, "turned the industry into the largest single purveyor

of domestic propaganda for the war effort by fostering the inclusion in advertising space of exhortations to buy war bonds, conserve food, and donate blood” (Walker, 2000, p. 67). The industry benefited in two ways: manufacturers bought ads to keep brand names, even rationed items, before the public during the war, businesses to deduct advertising revenues from taxable income” (p. 67). Advertisers were responsible for defining the domestic war effort (Walker, 2000).

Public opinion polls concluded that one-fifth of marriages were unhappy; and the image of domestic tranquility was a myth. There were “call girl rings” made up of housewives on Long Island; physicians reported excessive use of alcohol, barbiturate and tranquilizers in Connecticut; wife swapping was prevalent in San Francisco, and The University of Colorado reported 302 cases of battered children (Mintz and Kellogg, 1988). In addition to these polls, popular magazines reiterated these facts and reported on the restlessness of the American women. A story in *Life Magazine* 1949, added: “American women suddenly and for no plain reason---are seized with an eerie restlessness.” In 1956, *Ladies’ Home Journal* ran the following: “The Plight of the Young Mother,” and in 1960, *Redbook* carried this story: “Why Young Mothers Feel Trapped” (Coontz, 1992). February, 1957, *Ladies’ Home Journal* in “Making Marriage Work” asked the question: “Why Repeat Mistakes?” The article offered this quiz to readers: What Faults Has My Husband? No husband is perfect, neither is any wife. In the list below, check only those faults that you feel have adversely affected your love for your husband or the satisfaction of your marriage. Does your Husband:

1. Smoke excessively?
2. Use extreme, unforgivable profanity?
3. Gamble, or take serious financial risks?

4. Blame you for everything that goes wrong?
5. Try to prevent you from having friends?
6. Keep you upset and uneasy much of the time?
7. Have an ungovernable temper?
8. Ridicule your standards and ideals?
9. Lack acceptable table manners?
10. Belittle you in public?
11. Compare you favorably with other wives?
12. Spend too much money on himself?
13. Have crude or vulgar habits?
14. Treat you rudely and disrespectfully? (*LHJ*, Feb., 1957, p. 48).

There were several cultural shifts in domesticity as explained by Michael Kammen.

Kammen claims that the commercialization of culture accelerated rapidly after World War II and the 1950s marked the true beginning of mass consumption as we know it...mass markets swiftly became a real fixture in national life (Walker, 2000). The traditional values were associated with the white middle class, and the language of advertising engaged in mid-century debates about the nature of the domestic. The memory of servants was evident in the images of “Uncle Ben” rice in *Ladies’ home Journal* in 1949; the traditional values were those of the white middle class. The ideology presented was not that of a more efficient, mechanized household, but in contrast a home where the family’s needs were ministered to by servants or ladies of leisure. *Ladies’ Home Journal* emphasized a reduction of time and effort on housework and that the product would make her a better housekeeper.

Owning the proper equipment was often equated with possessing skills and organization. Helen W. Kendall made this statement about brides: “No wonder this bride can bake a perfect lemon pie!” In September 1950, Kendall wrote: “It Takes a Good Range to Make a Good Cook!” The magazines’ ideal middle-class woman served her family by purchasing certain

products and appliances that promised to keep her from “lower class drudgery” (Walker, 2000). *McCall's* sponsored “Second Congress on Better Living” and the magazine promised women leisure with down to earth dream homes, minimum size eight rooms, with two and a half baths, a family room, and appliances with recognized brand names. The article noted that the family income was \$8500 and their average number of children was 2.4. The article also stated that “on a whole, they are in love with their appliances” and most “endorsed” the idea of buying on the installment plan for major appliances, furniture, and cars (Walker, 2000).

#### Sociologists, psychologists, and other experts

“Tell me Doctor” was a regular feature in *Ladies' Home Journal* in the 1950s. Henry B. Safford, M.D. answers reader's questions each month and offers expert advice. In the October, 1952 issue, Dr. Safford answered this inquiry: “I've always had some trouble every month...with pain and backache. Can anything be done to help me?” The doctor advises readers with questions dealing with women's issues, and this month, he stated: “The cause of your trouble is apparent. You have a backward displacement of the uterus, somewhat above second degree, and less than third” (p. 38). In the same issue of *Ladies' Home Journal*, Dr. Benjamin Spock answered this question: “What's she got that I haven't?” Housewife or career girl...who should envy the other...who has the better life...who should get her reward right here on earth?” The article shows a housewife in high heels, holding a baby with another child tugging at her dress. The caption reads: “She's loved out loud. The only tie clock in her life is the one on the range in her kitchen. Her schedule is subject to her mood. She'll never get fired.” The opposite page shows a woman in a hat with small veil over half of her face, wearing a business suit with a string of pearls, sitting at a desk, talking on the telephone. The caption says:

“She works five days a week, eight hours a day, period. Her pay is in a tangible, spendable form. Vacations are real live experiences for her.” Dr. Spock discusses the exciting careers “held up” to women: psychology, journalism, medicine, law, merchandising, the arts. “To be sure, there are classes in school in cooking and sewing, but they seem to be side dishes, like gym.” “Most colleges seem to consider parenthood no fit subject for study.” Dr. Spock defends the need for “how to” advice for women who have become homemakers and mothers, and of course, teaches them how to accomplish this (p. 56-67).

During the middle and late 1950s, sociologists, psychologists, architectural critics, novelists, and popular social commentators generated literature about the American family living in the suburbs. In such books as *The Organization Man*, *The Crack in the Picture Window*, *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit*, *How the Bough Breaks*, *No Down Payment*, and *The Split-Level Trap*, they charged that the suburbs “fostered” conformity, isolation and matriarchy (Mintz and Kellogg, 1988). These texts echoed the messages that were featured in women’s magazines. Mintz & Kellogg continue to explain that the suburban family was female dominated and pro-child and at the same time, dealing with the father’s absence. This situation forced mothers to assume both roles; not only was the mother responsible for playing with the children, but also, disciplining them. The children were “coddled” from birth, chauffeured to friends homes, piano lessons, and the doctor. The suburban family was dominated by the needs of children. This opened the door for magazine articles dealing with such expertise as raising children. Child rearing and child disciplining were essential to the family ideal; Dr. Benjamin Spock was presented as an expert on the subject of children. Dr. Spock counseled parents on how to discipline children by encouraging permissiveness with less punishment. For Dr. Spock, the key

to successful child rearing was a mother's love (Mintz and Kellogg, 1988). Dr. Spock advised parents not to be persuaded by writers in popular magazines; ironically, Spock became one of those writers as he wrote a regular column for *Ladies' Home Journal*, beginning in July 1954 (Walker, 2000).

Women's magazines also offered advice on food preparation, nutrition, and an overall guide to being a better homemaker. There was a renewed emphasis on proper nutrition after hearing stories of malnutrition in the armed forces. In contrast, food rationing was considered a threat to a healthy diet. A typical article was "Making the Meat Go Farther" in the May 1944 *Good Housekeeping*, which provided recipes for ham pie using canned "spam", chili made with ground chuck and soybeans, and a stew made with diced bologna and potatoes. The January 1944 *Good Housekeeping* offered substitutions for butter, including bacon drippings. These 1940 articles were followed in the 1950s with *Betty Crocker's Picture Cook Book*, published by the General Mills Corporation which produced the Betty Crocker cake mixes. "The *Picture Cook Book* was the best possible advertisement for the brightly colored boxes of cake mix stacked high on the grocer's shelves (Lovegren, 1995). Marling comments on convenience foods and claims that they give the homemaker a combination of novelty and prestige; "she hints that social-class aspirations embodied in the magazines' food advice (Marling, 1994).

By the mid 1950s, women's magazines advised readers about their various domestic responsibilities and recognized the growing genre of domestic humor that began with McDonald's best seller, *The Egg and I*. Many writers satirized the standards of perfection in magazine articles and advertisements; "heroines were beset by falling soufflés, naughty children, malfunctioning appliances, and husbands who had never heard of 'togetherness'" (Walker, 2000,

p. 186, ). Cook books that followed were *The I Hate to Cook Book*, by Peg Bracken; Bracken questions matching china to food and large productions for Thanksgiving, bigger enough for an Irish wake.

#### Women's magazines and femininity

In the February 1957, *Ladies' Home Journal*, there were eight pages devoted to a woman's fashions for spring. "Look Ahead To Spring" featured eleven pictures of women in various hats and five photos of shoes. "A hat full of pink roses...felt by Lilly Dach...white cloche...big puff of silk rose petals...pillbox with new height and texture...shirred white organdy...and the freshest hat of spring is white straw, white lilacs and green leaves by Hattie Carnegie, young and charming and almost everything." The journals "Gem of a wardrobe" includes a coat, shirtwaist dress, flannel suit, and a printed sheer dinner dress, all referred to as "feminine fashions" (p. 66-73).

Women's magazines also featured articles with expert advice; this was the era of science and scientific studies to promote an ideal. There were experts on domestic life offered by university professors from various departments, bureaus, and institutes in fields such as psychology, sociology, nutrition, and child care as well as by corporations through product advertising. "The most basic and comprehensive kind of advice the women's magazines provided, of course, dealt not with specific tasks or purchases but with how to be a woman" (Walker, 2000, p. 153). Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, points to the cultural assumption that women must be instructed in womanhood: "We are exhorted to be women, remain women, become women" (Walker, 2000, p. 153). She continued to argue that women, to be considered woman, must engage in that mysterious and threatened reality known as femininity.

Betty Friedan researched femininity and women's magazines and presented her questionnaire to 200 Smith College graduates from 1942. These women were asked questions about their lives as suburban housewives and their perceptions of being a woman in the 1950s. Friedan stated: The insights, interpretations both of theory and fact, and the implicit values of this book are inevitably my own. But whether or not the answers I present here are final---and there are many questions which social scientists must probe further---the dilemma of the American woman is real. Friedan readily admits her own ideology which she brings to the text, but as one analyzes the research, it is evident that her in-depth discovery from popular culture is valid. Her historical analysis included writings done before the 1950s on feminism; magazine articles about women; social scientists' evaluation of women; and government statistics on the status of women in the 1950s (Friedan, 1963).

Friedan gives many examples of the dialogue of the postwar era and how these symbols affected women in the 1950s. Images were created by *womeness* magazines, advertisements, television, movies, columns, and books by experts on marriage and the family, child psychology, sexual adjustment and by those who popularize sociology and psychoanalysis. One spokesman for a women's magazine summarized the interests of women readers: "Our readers are housewives, full time. They're not interested in the broad public issues of the day. They are not interested in national or international affairs. They are only interested in the family and the home. They are not interested in politics" (Friedan, 1963, p. 37).

Joanne Meyerowitz argues that Friedan's study did not include other popular magazines published in the 1950s. She argues that Friedan's study of the repressive image of women as reflected in women's magazines may be part of the total story. Meyerowitz refers to the now

standard historical account that women returned to the home after the war with a short lived independence is an endorsement of subordination and domesticity. “When I first began research on the postwar era, I accepted this version of history. But as I investigated the public culture, I encountered what I then considered exceptional evidence---books, articles, and films that contradicted the domestic ideology” (Meyerowitz, 1994, p. 230). Meyerowitz continued her investigation with a study of several other magazines published in the 1950s; the study included nonfiction articles on women in several categories. Meyerowitz looked in “middlebrow” magazines: *Reader’s Digest* and *Coronet*; “highbrow” magazines *Harper’s* and *Atlantic*; magazines aimed at African Americans, *Ebony* and *Negro Digest*; and those aimed at women, *Ladies’ Home Journal* and *Woman’s Home Companion* (Meyerowitz, 1994).

Her findings reveals a somewhat different interpretive approach than Friedan’s; Friedan’s interpretation of the postwar culture of women is “one piece of the postwar puzzle” (p. 231). Meyerowitz claims that popular magazines show women with individual achievement; these articles appeared with frequency throughout the postwar era. In addition, they constituted more than 60 percent, or 300, of the 489 nonfiction articles sampled. The articles focused on a woman’s life, telling her episode in her life, with 33 percent focusing on unusual talents, jobs, or careers. 29 percent focused on prominent entertainers; typically, they related to public success punctuated by a lucky break, a dramatic comeback, a selfless sacrifice, or a persistent struggle to overcome adversity. Meyerowitz refers to an example in *Ladies’ Home Journal*, “How America Lives”; Moreover, by the second half of the 1950s, the *Ladies’ Home Journal* began to defy its own domestic formula. In 1958, for example, the *Journal* included a laudatory story about a

housewife who, through ‘an act of sheer self-assertion,’ enrolled in medical school and became a physician” (Meyerowitz, 2000, p. 235).

Meyerowitz continues to explain the magazine articles do not reveal the responses of readers, and magazine’s who published responses were not responses to these articles. The *Ladies’ Home Journal* articles, “How America Lives” did include reader’s responses as introductions to the articles; this will be discussed further in Chapter V. The opinions of Stephanie Coontz and Betty Friedan are shown in the following discussion.

Sexual activities were the responsibility of the women in the 1950s. Women were expected to “draw the line” as far as sexual activity was concerned. *Ladies’ Home Journal* put in a 1956 magazine that “sex suggestiveness” was here to stay, but insisted that it was up to women to “put the brakes on” (Coontz, 1992). This type of public discourse created an ambiguity which permeated the private lives of women; the public discourse encouraged sexual activity, but the expectation was to discouraged sexual activity in private life. Therefore, language had conflicting messages in the forming of the sexual roles played in the real 1950s. The public-private dichotomy was further confused when one observed television sit-coms; in contrast to the real American families, the television families showed no sexual activity. Most of these shows demonstrated the language of domestic bliss with men and women in traditional roles without sexual tension.

The language of women’s magazines changed in the 1950s and therefore, women’s reality changed according to the language. In 1939, women’s magazines portrayed women as new, independent, and determined with strength of character. Friedan claimed that “there was a definite aura that their individuality was something to be admired, not attractive to men, that men

were drawn to them as much for their spirit and character as for their looks.” For example: “A Dream to share,” *Redbook*, January, 1939 was an article in which the heroine fell in love while working at an ad agency (working woman). “Mother in Law,” *Ladies’ Home Journal*, June, 1939 was about a nurse, independent, on her own. “Sarah and The Seaplane,” *Ladies’ Home Journal*, February, 1949 was about a woman who secretly learned how to fly a plane and did not live her life pleasing others. In the story, she adjusted to being alone and felt a sense of competence as she faced life by saying, “I can do it.”

Betty Freidan claims that the prototype of the new woman: “Occupation Housewife” started to appear in the women’s magazines, and these messages were heard throughout the 1950s (Friedan, 1963). “I’m just a housewife” was the repeated theme in articles about women. This new mystique which was created through language and symbols is the theme of the text, *The Feminine Mystique*, Freidan said: But the new image this mystique gives to American women is the old image: “Occupation: housewife.” The new mystique makes the housewife-mothers, who never had a chance to be anything else, the model for all women...it simply makes certain concrete, finite, domestic aspects of feminine existence---as it was lived by women whose lives were confined, by necessity, to cooking, cleaning, washing, bearing children---into a religion, a pattern by which all women must now live or deny their femininity (Friedan, 1963, p. 43).

Freidan claims that the transformations reflected in the pages of the women’s magazines were visible from 1940 through the 1950s. Some titles of articles which exhibited this language are: “Femininity Begins at Home,” “It’s a Man’s World Maybe,” “Have Babies While You’re Young,” “How to Snare a Male,” “Should I Stop Work When We Marry?” “Are You Training

Your Daughter to be a Wife?” “Careers at Home,” “Do Women Have to Talk So Much?” “Why GI’s Prefer Those German Girls,” “What Women Can Learn from Mother Eve,” “Really a Man’s World, Politics,” “How to Hold On to a Happy Marriage,” “Don’t Be Afraid to Marry Young,” “The Doctor Talks about Breast-Feeding,” “Our Baby was Born at Home,” “Cooking to me is Poetry,” and “The Business of Running a Home” (Friedan, 1963). Each of these articles are important texts to be examined in a more elaborate and in-depth evaluation of America in the 1950s postwar era.

According to Ewen & Ewen, women’s clothing ideals in the fifties were close to the specific prescriptions of Victorian womanhood. “Leisure, delicacy, and at times, the preponderance of cloth were marks of suburban womanhood.” Women wore Bermuda shorts, sports shirts, and a massive leisure wear industry began. Skirts were underlined with a layer of crinoline, pastel colors “provided a symbolic immunity from the proximity of grime and work, as it did from exotic hues of shameful sensuality.” Ewen & Ewen continued: “Sweaters, push-up bras, and girdles conspired together, focusing their effects on the reproductive components of a woman’s body...the high heeled shoes presented American womanhood as being hobbled; women were reduced to a primarily sexual identity of a child. Makeup, deodorants, and other visual and olfactory barriers were set up to protect womanhood from personhood. Identity was by prescription no more than the assembling of self” (Ewen and Ewen, 1979, p. 237).

## **Chapter IV: Portrayal and Impact on the American Family**

### Rhetorical Hermeneutics and the 1950s

In an attempt to understand what was happening in the 1950s, it is imperative that an understanding of the historical moment and its significance be explored. The demographics of this era show that Americans were eager to have families at the end of World War II; the baby boom produced birthrates higher than they had been for a hundred years; families were building bomb-shelters to protect themselves from nuclear warfare with the Soviet Union; the country returned from World War II with a renewed peace, prosperity, and traditional gender roles; and the private lives of the family became public and part of the larger political culture (May, 1954). The postwar era provided many challenges and opportunities for veterans returning from the war. Colleges and universities grew as veterans took advantage of the G. I. Bill; nearly half of the returning veteran population, over six-million, entered colleges, universities, and other training programs. College enrollments increased for women also but not at the same rate as men (May, 1962). A college education for both men and women provided opportunities for personal growth and mobility. In addition, before the war, most colleges forbid married individuals to attend, but after the war, the GIs with wives needed places to live and forced the universities to provide living accommodations for married students. Women dropped out of college to have children because most postwar Americans believed that the happiness of men and women depended on marriage. Women supported their husbands aspirations for education and occupation and adjusted their own aspirations to suit their husbands (May, 1954).

Individuals did not accidentally become involved with a family-centered culture, and families did not conclude that moving to the suburbs was a good idea. Elaine May stated that

they were influenced by outsiders who created this unique historical era. May has drawn on a wide range of sources, including evidence from popular culture, especially movies, mass-circulation periodicals, and newspapers; the writings of professionals in numerous fields; and the papers and statements of those who influenced and formulated public policies (May, 1954). May also included information from the Kelly Longitudinal Study (KLS) which consists of surveys of 600 white middle-class men and women who formed families during these years. May explores the literature published in the time frame; by putting oneself in the historical moment to interpret the cultural conversation taking place, and therefore, have a more profound understanding of the discourse and its effects.

In the 1930s and 1940s, women were considered to be career minded; in movies this perception was often glamorized; women were making money and experiencing independence. Brett Harvey, *The Fifties: A Woman's Oral History*, explained why this was worrisome to government leaders and social scientists. She stated: "The response of government, aided by social scientists and the media, was a massive effort to channel all these disturbing energies into one safe harbor: the family" (Harvey, XIV). Harvey interviewed ninety women who discussed their involvement and life styles in the 1950s, and thus, joined in the cultural conversation from a first-hand position. The many conversations that she related reminded one of the Burkean Parlor and the reader's attempt to join into the conversation (Burke, 1945). Harvey included this quote from Elaine Tyler May and her research for *Homeward Bound*; she explains that the home was the perfect vehicle for domestic containment:

*Within its walls potentially dangerous social forces of the new age might be tamed, where they could contribute to the secure and fulfilling life to which postwar women and men*

*aspired...More than merely a metaphor for the cold war on the home front, containment aptly describes the way in which public policy, personal behavior, and even political values were focused on the home (Harvey, XIV).*

On television, Sociologist David Marc (1989) discussed how the normal families of the 1950s all moved to the suburbs. In this same time-frame, President Richard Nixon insisted that “American superiority in the cold war rested not on weapons, but on the secure, abundant family life of modern suburban homes.” One visual which affected American families was Nixon hosting Khrushchev on a tour through a model home. Nixon called attention to a built-in panel-controlled washing machine and stated: “In America, these are designed to make things easier for our women...I think that this attitude toward women is universal...we want to make things easier for our women” (Coontz, 1992, p. 18). The differences between Soviet Union women and American women were discussed by Nixon and Khrushchev and the American implication was that our women had it easier. The language of this exchange was the foundation for the ongoing belief that the American family was the best defense against the Communist ideology. Popular journalists reinforced this belief as they wrote about “The Kitchen Debate.” “A home filled with children would create a feeling of warmth and security against the cold forces of disruption and alienation...although baby-boom parents were not likely to express conscious desires to repopulate the country, the devastation of thousands of deaths could not have been far below the surface of the postwar consciousness” (May, 1959, p. 23).

#### Portrayal of the American Family

Many Americans' perception of the 1950s family is limited to television re-runs, old movies and faded magazine articles (Mintz and Kellogg, 1988). One may nostalgically view Donna Reed as the typical 1950s mother on *The Donna Reed Show*; June Cleaver as the supportive wife and mother on *Leave It To Beaver*; or Lucille Ball as the unpredictable wife of Desi on *I Love Lucy*. These women, along with their children, husbands, and neighbors depicted what some believe to be the average, and often enviable, 1950s nuclear family. One of the most popular films of the 1950s was *Marty*, which won the Academy Award for Best Motion Picture in 1955, and was first produced as a television play in 1953. Marty had a deep conviction for his ethnic heritage, but in the film, he made the transition from extended family to nuclear family. The audience accepted this transgression from the constraints of the older generation to the emancipated suburban ideal (May, 1954). The voices of the media created a vision which the real families attempting to follow; the birth of the nuclear family happened simultaneously with many of the family themes portrayed in popular culture. Television became the cookie-cutter community which the American family envied in the 1950s and continues to envy today. "Television provided an illusion of the ideal neighborhood---the way it was supposed to be" (Spigel, 1992, p. 129).

In great numbers, there was an exodus from the inner-cities and small towns in America to the suburbs. Television became an integral part of the lives of the 1950s family as they left extended family behind and developed the nuclear family, and in conjunction with this decentralization, television became a persuasive vehicle for advertisers and their potential consumers. The American family in the postwar 1950s era was influenced by the language of the new American narrative was delivered on television and in the print media. The antics of

Ralph Kramden on *The Honeymooners* and Lucy's pregnancy on *I Love Lucy* reached a large audience; the images on television were caricatures, but like many stereotypes, they contained elements of reality. The 1950s family emulated the television family's images of reality as millions of viewers altered their conceptions of masculinity, femininity, adolescence, childhood and parenthood (Mintz and Kellogg, 1986).

Lichter, Lichter, and Rothman relate an event that happened in 1953; Dwight D. Eisenhower was sworn in as the nation's president in the first coast-to-coast broadcast of a presidential inauguration. This was considered to be a "hint of television's ability to create a town meeting" (p. 149). Lichter, et. al. continue that millions of viewers were still recovering from the "really big show" of the night before. The largest audience in television's brief history was there to congratulate Lucy Ricardo on the birth of Little Ricky. In a television and domestic coincidence, Lucille Ball was unable to attend the celebration because she was recovering from a "real life experience", the birth of her son, Alberto Arnez IV that same night (1994).

Many of the popular television shows were popular on the radio since the Depression (*The Goldbergs, Amos 'n Andy, Life With Luigi*); the theme of "good neighborliness" during difficult times was often brushed aside by the more consumer-oriented suburban culture. Even the newer type of television families emphasized a need for neighbors and friendship. Madelyn Pugh Davis, a head writer for *I Love Lucy* said that neighbors were included for storytelling purposes (Spigel, 1992). The suburban television families legitimized the mass exodus of the family to the newly constructed suburban neighborhood, and the urban sit-coms "helped legitimate the cultural transitions of the postwar society by linking its consumerist values to nostalgic memories of a more authentic urban and ethnic culture" (Spigel, 1992, p. 130).

Stuart Ewen said that “the suburbs themselves were, in many ways, the embodiment of what corporate modernism had been calling for. While surfaces expressed a return to a simpler, pre-industrial way of life, the underpinning of the new image was industrial mass production with a vengeance.” These television shows became a valuable vehicle for advertisers as they created a new consumerism in the American culture. The cultural conversation between the viewers and advertisers was obvious to most researchers, but the actual context of the ads and their intent should be the focus to better interpret the intention and meaning (Ewen, 1984).

The neighborly atmosphere of the television families paralleled the neighborliness of the 1950s family as they migrated to their newly constructed tract houses. The postwar economic boom made it possible for Americans to marry, move into their own home, and abandon their often overcrowded lifestyle in the urban community. Setting up a separate household was encouraged and now affordable (Mintz and Kellogg, 1988). The real American family was ready to embark on a journey that no one could have predicted would be the envy of generations to follow: the suburban 1950s family. Levittown was the American family’s ideal community; the tract house and the exodus to the suburbs will be addressed in the section: Impact on the American Family.

The wholesome housewife persona was firmly established by such long-running “mother figures” as Margaret Anderson of “Father Knows Best,” Ozzie’s wife Harriet, and Beaver’s understanding mother, June Cleaver. Others within the same mold were characters like Donna Stone, Dr. Alex Stone’s wife on “The Donna Reed Show” and also, the mothers on “Make Room for Daddy” and “The Dennis the Menace” shows (Lichter, Lichter, and Rothman, 1995).

Television shows, such as *I Love Lucy*, *The Honeymooners*, *The Goldbergs*, *The Adventures of*

*Ozzie and Harriet*, *Leaver It To Beaver*, *The Donna Reed Show*, and *Father Knows Best* were produced for the newly created nuclear family's pleasure. Of course, their similarities were obvious as reality in the American home often imitated art, but the gender issues being presented were not discussed. Andrea Press discussed the lives of Lucy Ricardo (Lucille Ball) and her neighbor Ethel Mertz (Vivian Vance) who were often attempting to escape their roles as wives of Ricky Ricardo (Desi Arnez) and Fred Mertz (William Frawley). Lucy and Ethel were viewed week after week conspiring to "break out" of their roles as housewives and become members of Ricky's show business world. At the end of each episode, Lucy and Ethel reluctantly returned to their familiar and safe roles in the home, and Ricky and Fred were proven to be the undisputed heads-of-household: the true patriarchal figures with reasonable views.

*The Honeymooners*, Ralph and Alice Kramden (Jackie Gleason and Audrey Meadows) were the opposite of Lucy and Ricky. Ralph was a blue-collar worker, and Alice was a homemaker who made all of the important decisions in the family. Ralph was often portrayed as a bumbling fool who always had to admit that Alice was "right after all." Although *The Honeymooners* was a segment of *The Jackie Gleason Show*, the Kramdens have emerged as a force in early television's depiction of the American family. Both of these television sit-coms portrayed husbands and wives in a gender rivalry; Lucy and Ethel against Ricky and Fred, and Ralph and his best friend, Ed Norton (Art Carney) against Alice and Ed's wife, Trixie (Joyce Randolph). In *I Love Lucy*, the male gender was dominant and reasonable; in *The Honeymooners*, the females revealed common sense and logic over their male rivals. Lucy and Ethel and Alice and Trixie were alike in many respects: they were neighbors living in the same

building; they were allies against their husbands; they were full-time housewives and subservient to their husbands demands; and they were *neighborly* (Press, 1991).

The American family was being taught how to be *neighborly* by the antics of their television counterparts. As the young families left their extended families behind, being good neighbors was essential to their well-being and peace-of-mind. Most of the residents of the newly created suburbs were newlyweds or young couples between the ages of twenty-five and thirty-five (Mintz and Kellogg, 1988). Although the independence offered by suburban ideology took young people away from the careful scrutiny of close family members, it did not remove them from the scrutiny of their neighbors (Ewen, 1984). The television families were portrayed in a similar fashion; they too were making their way in life without extended families or the scrutiny of family members. Ethel was often seen as Lucy's logical, motherly, reminder of how she should behave; in contrast, Alice mothered and scrutinized every move that Ralph made or contemplated making. On *I Love Lucy*, the Ricardos and the Mertzes, their downstairs landlords, were always together as Fred and Ethel played surrogate parents and eventually, grandparents to little Ricky and Lucy. Although these families had not migrated to the suburbs, the suburban families identified with them and their antics; mostly they were amused, entertained, and reassured by their portrayals.

Although *I Love Lucy* and *The Honeymooners* shared some of the familial problems that the real American family was encountering, they were not the typical American suburban households, and therefore, should not be the envied as the real family. *The Donna Reed Show*, *Leave It To Beaver*, and *Father Knows Best* portray the American family ideal; they are all suburban, middle-class families with strong family values and traditional roles. Politicians and

social scientists often compare the families of later decades to those of the 1950s suburban sitcoms. “*Leave It To Beaver* (a sitcom that was first aired in 1957) opened with the Cleaver family exiting their suburban home, while the final credits showed Beaver and Wally Cleaver walking down the tree-lined streets of their beautiful suburban town” (Spigel, p. 130, 1992). June and Ward Cleaver were the epitome of what parents should be; June’s adherence to Ward was consistent as they raised their two sons, Beaver and Wally. Ward made all of the final decisions and followed through with the disciplinary actions necessary when raising two mischievous sons.

*In the early years, family comedies were a major force in television, and many of these shows came to dominate the world of television comedy. “In shows like these, families lived in harmony and were seemingly undisturbed by major problems. Parents faced minor family strife with gentleness and easy humor. Impetuous, curious children suffered through relatively benign childhood traumas that could always be resolved in a half hour. It was the golden age of innocence and inconsequence (p. 120).*

In prime time, female characters are less evident than males, and “in many ways are portrayed as the weaker sex” (Lichter, Lichter, and Rothman, 1994).

#### Impact on American Family

The American family was impacted by: television portrayals of the ideal family structure; films which often included depictions of the typical family; magazine articles written to mold the character and values of the family; government agency attempts to conform the economic structure of the family; and sociological and psychological writers who reinforced the overall changes in the American family format.

These young families were the focus of advertisers in the print media and also on television: “In clothing, in automobiles, in appliances and home furnishings, suburbia provided an ideological template for the shaping of a uniform, national market” (Ewen and Ewen, 1988). Magazine articles reflected the new “togetherness” of the American family. An article in *McCall’s Magazine*, Easter, 1954, depicted a family centered around children and home (Freiden, 1981). This ideology was not born overnight; many sociological factors contributed to the needs and desires of the American family.

According to Kara Ann Marling, “Togetherness legitimated the new, postwar suburban family—affluent, isolated, reared on a bland diet of TV and TV dinners—by stressing the compensatory benefits of a greater paternal role in the household” (Marling, 1994). Marling added that this new togetherness required fathers to become “full domestic partners with their wives” and also participate in all of the household and parenting chores; shopping, changing diapers and vacuuming were part of the new togetherness. The family car reflected the life style of the family; it was large enough for “outing with Daddy at the wheel, Mommy right beside him, and the children squealing with anticipation in the spacious backseat. We’re going to Disneyland!” (Marling, 1994, p. 96).

Mary Desjardins’ essay, *Lucy and Desi: Sexuality, Ethnicity, and TV’s First Family* reveals an additional dimension to the television sit-com’s influence on the American culture. She said that “the contradictions and negotiations of gender, marriage, work, and ethnicity norm” were incorporated into the shows plots; these were evident in the episodes and also in their personal appearances on such shows as *The Ed Sullivan Show*. Lucy’s desire to be in Ricky’s

place of work, her imaginative masquerades and her defeat by Ricky's punishments are evident as one watches the show.

The deprivations of the Depression and World War II were still vivid memories as television emerged and television families appeared before the real American families. Ewen related that mass magazines had, throughout the war, "whetted the public appetite for something better than it has been used to. Houses for the people as presented in magazines, were filled with new products (televisions, washing machines, and so on) and were framed by contemporary design ideas" (Ewen, 1984).

#### Suburbanization and the Postwar Economic Boom

The 1950s was also a period in our history which was influenced by threat of the atomic bomb. "Under the immeasurable weight of impending doom, a consolidation of commercial power and the growth of consumer industries gave shape to a way of life" (Ewen and Ewen, 1984). A backlog of needs and desires were reflected in the postwar economic boom as an "American way of life, permeated by the democracy of images, took hold for unprecedented numbers of people." In conjunction with this new way of life, "Material circumstances changed; the architecture of daily life assumed new forms; new and uniform symbols moved beyond marks of prosperity, to being marks of loyalty" (Ewen and Ewen, 1984). The notion of individualism promoted "Keeping Up With the Joneses" among suburban families. Presentability imposed itself with manicured lawns and manicured people. "Americans were expected to dress a certain way...magazines; film; advertisements; and the new information bomb, television supplied constant reminders. Doris Day, *Father Knows Best*, Betty Furness,

Ronald Reagan for General Electric---these were the voices and imagistic role models of suburbanization” (Ewen and Ewen, 1984). Harry Henderson said, “What the group does, thinks, and wears is very important. Often it leads to a kind of super-conformity. For instance, if the dominant members of the group think that Plymouths are the best buys, then Plymouths are what they have” (Henderson, Dec., 1953).

The masculine ideal was reflected by fashion; men wore business suits in gray flannel or pin stripe to signify hard work, dedication to family and society. Advertisers not only targeted adults in the 1950s; shows such as *Howdy Doody* focused on the youth of America. They bypassed parents and promoted products directly to the younger market. In this historical moment, advertising and consumerism became saturated with sex. Children in the 1950s were expected to emulate their parents, and many of the young girls were commonly referred to as a “clotheshorse.” Her wardrobe exhibited her father’s success in life and his ability to provide for the family. Ewen and Ewen claim that the suburbs were a “watershed in the unfolding of Americanization and consumption.” The suburban lifestyle was one in which consumption was a patriotic duty and separated from the world of work. This created a backlash with the youth in America; these images were eventually attacked by a new rhetoric in the form of music, poetry, and political chants. This newly constructed language often shook the status quo of the American ideal.

In 1954, *Esquire Magazine* called working wives a menace; *Life Magazine* referred to married women who worked as a “disease.” Men who deviated from traditional roles were categorized as immature, infantile, narcissistic, deviant, or even pathological. A family expert, Paul Landis argued: “Except for the sick, the badly crippled, the deformed, the emotionally

warped and the mentally defective, almost everyone has an opportunity to marry” (Coontz, 1992, p.33, ). These popular culture magazines suggested that the media’s language and symbols of normalcy encouraged the life style of the American male and thus, persuaded a unique reality. Coontz stated that “working-class and ethnic men on television had one defining characteristic: they were unable to control their wives” (p. 33).

Before the postwar era, the best educated and most prosperous Americans lived in the nation’s cities. The postwar economic boom created a need for housing as Americans began moving to the suburbs: “Millions of young adults ceased waiting to marry or to have a family and abandoned cramped apartments for brick and frame houses located in America’s burgeoning suburbs” (Cherlin, 1981). The exodus of the family from the cities to the suburbs was a relief from the anonymity and density of the urban existence (Ewen, 1984). The family abandoned concrete and stone for grass and trees; A *Ladies Home Journal* article quoted one woman: “We have been keeping a scrapbook of ideas for our postwar home. We have visions of nothing else but one of these homes after the war” (Ewen, 1984). Suburban plots of land offered families more than shelter; a new way of life was born. Far from the noise and corruption of the metropolis, family life was elevated to a safe and private reserve (Ewen, 1984). A Cape Cod or a ranch? This was the new dilemma for the American family. The impact of the postwar era and the influences from the print and broadcast media were taking hold with all members of the family.

The government contributed to the growing needs of the family by offering education benefits, housing loans, highway and sewer construction, and job training. This assistance made it possible for families to move to the suburbs and create the autonomy which they desired. The

buying power of the family was also enhanced with an increase in wages: “During the 1950s, real wages increased by more than they had in the entire previous half century” (Bowles, 1983). As the economy expanded, both people and businesses sought new space and location. Many of the nation’s factories left the cities and moved their operations to rural areas. The expansion of the nation’s highways made it possible for industry to join the suburban population (Mintz and Kellogg, 1988).

William J. Levitt opened up a sales office on the morning of March 7, 1949. This was the beginning of what we now take for granted, the suburban home. Levitt developed a tract of homes in a potato field in Nassau County on Long Island. The success was immediate as 1000 young couples waited in the cold weather to buy a 25 x 32 foot house for \$6,999, financed by the government with no money down. Levittown, a community of identical tract houses, was built in the same manner as Henry Ford’s automobile; the assembly line was established to fill the growing demand for housing. Houses were produced with the same efficiency and cost saving devices built into their construction. Though the houses were more expensive than estimated, Levittown and other developments were close to what was listed as his basic requirement for a “land of plenty” (Ewen and Ewen, 1988). This was the beginning of a new capitalism and consumerism born of the postwar era; Levitt stated that “no man who owns his own house and lot can be a Communist. He has too much to do” (Ewen, 1988). Levittown was often criticized for its monotony and lack of individuality, but in spite of the repetitive design, 17,500 families moved to Levittown; a second development in Philadelphia housed 70,000 people (Mintz and Kellogg, 1988).

When the new families arrived in their new communities, they were likely to find their ideal quite different from the images portrayed in magazines and advertisements. For example, the houses were close together and offered no privacy from each other. This was often referred to as the “goldfish bowl” effect as one house’s picture window looked into the living room of another’s picture window. This togetherness became a cause and effect unrivaled between neighbors; keeping up with the Joneses was the theme for many young families (Spigel, 1992).

Harry Henderson was one of the first journalists to write the suburban phenomenon; he observed that “the suburbs seemed to offer a new physics of existence, one where all ties to familiar understandings of the past had been severed” (Henderson, 1953). Henderson’s articles appeared in *Harper’s Magazine* in 1953; these timely accountings are valuable for interpreting the cultural conversation which took place in the 1950s. Henderson interviewed many housewives and visited them in their newly constructed homes: “Since World War II, whole new towns and small cities, consisting of acres of near-identical Cape Cod and ranch-type houses, have been bulldozed into existence on the outskirts of America’s major cities” (Henderson, Nov. 1953). Henderson further explained that the new communities were built on open farmland to house people quickly, cheaply, and profitably; these newly created suburban communities were developed in conjunction with credit extended to veterans.

Henderson observed that the new communities “have neither history, tradition, nor established structure---no inherited customs, institutions, socially important families, or big houses.” This new stratification of the American family was emphasized by the fact that the neighborhoods were good and outwardly there did not appear to be either rich or poor.

Henderson also stated that there were no older people, teenagers, in-laws, family doctors, big shots, churches, organizations, schools, or local governments” (Henderson, Nov., 1953).

Eventually, the family’s needs demanded the development of church and community. In order for the members of the family to be noticed, they learned a new form of communication within their churches, schools, and communities. The family quarreled over money, child training, religious values, the responsibilities of husband and wife and sexual maladjustments. Family members substituted clergy for extended family members (Henderson, 1953). Making friends through group or children’s activities was done on a tribal or religious basis. Since the communication problems within the family were sometimes monumental, the church played a significant role; ministers contributed to the family’s well-being by helping with counseling. This therapeutic communication helped achieve a balance between the private and public speakers within the community---individuals who have authority and are willing to protect others is paternalism, and those who know more are considered to be mentors.

Levittown, a community of identical tract houses, was built in the same manner as Henry Ford’s automobile; the assembly line was established to fill the growing demand for housing. “Through prefabrication, a complete, basic, domestic machine will be made available at a popular cost, just as the low-cost cars provided basic transportation” (Teague, 1947). Though the houses were more expensive than Teague estimated, Levittown and other developments were close to what was listed as his basic requirement for a “land of plenty” (Ewen and Ewen, 1984).

The promotion and advertising of Levittown reiterated the opinion projected in popular magazines. John Liell, an early student of Levittown’s development remarked that “Levitt’s sales department substituted salesmanship for craftsmanship.” Liell added, “Kitchens were designed to

correlate with magazine advertisements and illustrations; sales materials were replete with artist's drawings which suggested spacious, relatively secluded houses surrounded by lush foliage."

Liell's opinion of this phenomenon was that "the masses are asses" (Ewen, 1988).

Suburbanization of the American family had a profound impact on the socialization and psychological well-being of its members. Most of the residents of the newly created suburbs were newlyweds or young couples between the ages of twenty-five and thirty-five (Mintz and Kellogg, 1988). Although the independence offered by suburban ideology took young people away from the careful scrutiny of close family members, it did not remove them from the scrutiny of their neighbors. Ewen said, "The vertical configuration of the city was made horizontal, but the seclusion of the land was illusory. Consistent with the world of appearance and display, images were deceptive." The ideology of individualism spawned social competition; thus, "Keeping up with the Joneses" became the cliché of suburban living" (Ewen, 1984).

Sociologists, psychologists, architectural critics, novelists, and other popular social commentators generated critical literature dealing with the suburban family. The new suburbs created an environment of conformity, isolation and matriarchy (e.g., Mintz and Kellogg, 1988, Henderson, 1953). Some families were blue-collar and others were middle-class; both faced challenges never before experienced by the American family. Transience, isolation, and population turnover were common obstacles that the postwar family faced. Atlas Van Lines reported that the average family moved 14 times; this created a lack of stability within the family structure. This rootlessness made it possible and easy for families to relinquish relationships held previously, and therefore, a lack of intimacy prevailed (Mintz and Kellogg, 1988).

Harry Henderson's rhetorical criticism of the American family appeared in *Harper's Magazine* in November and December, 1953. Henderson made his observations in six suburban communities including Levittown, Long Island and Park Forest near Chicago. He stated: "While each community is different, certain common patterns exist, although their strength varies in accordance with two factors; screening and size." Screening affects the fixed criteria of the community: the economic, social, and cultural life of the inhabitants; the make-up of the population tends to become narrow. Size affects the community in another way; "The construction of fifty or a hundred new homes on a common plot immediately beside a suburb of 5,000 merely results in their becoming part of that community, adopting its social structure." Henderson says that when the houses are the same size and a new development creates houses of another size, "new ways of living emerge with greater force" (Henderson, Nov. 1953).

Since all of the homes were identical in size and architectural configuration, family members strived to overcome the conformity and monotony of their surroundings: "The standardized house also creates an emphasis on interior decorating. Most people try hard to achieve 'something different.' In hundreds of houses I never saw two interiors that matched---and I saw my first tiger-striped wallpaper. "The only item that is endlessly repeated is a brass skillet hung on a red brick wall" (Henderson, Nov. 1953). Henderson claimed that the decorating ideas came primarily from national magazines: "Nobody copies an entire room, but they take different items from different pictures." Most women said, "Well, moving into a new house, you want everything new...Nearly everybody is new...I mean, they are newly married and new to the community. They don't feel too certain about things, especially moving into a place where everyone is a stranger. If you've seen something in a magazine---well, people will nearly, always

like it.” Henderson referred to this phenomenon as “approval insurance.” Visually, the new suburban houses and communities were monotonous regardless of varieties of trim or color. The individuality of the family was lost in standardization and repetition, and the exception was only notable in the interior design choices made for each house.

The newlyweds and young residents of the suburban community suffered from loneliness; they had left the bustle of the city life to join the pastures of the new suburban environment. Henderson may have brought his own ideology to the interviews, but the information he gained is valuable when studying this time frame in American history. One such exchange was expressed in this exchange. Many women said, “I wish there was some place close by to walk to, like the candy store in the city.” Another woman expressed this: “Your husband gets up and goes off in the morning---and you’re left with the day to spend. The housework is a matter of minutes. I used to think I had been brought to the end of the earth and deserted.” Another said, “I used to sit by the window...just wishing someone would go by” (Henderson, 1953).

In contrast to the loneliness felt by the women, the men commuted to work, and therefore, had little time to spend with the family. They spent their evenings watching television or relaxing; some puttered around the house or mowed the lawn. The women, on the other hand, wanted to go out and socialize to break the monotony of being home all day. Since their husbands were tired from commuting long distances, the women spent their evenings together, visiting or going to the movies. According to Henderson, many couples credit television with having brought them closer together. Their favorites were shows like *I love Lucy* or other comedies about young couples like themselves. They spoke of television as something they could

share and as “bringing romance back” into their lives. One woman said, “Until we got the TV set, I thought my husband had forgotten how to neck” (Henderson, 1953).

Henderson added that “these are the first towns in America where the impact of TV is so concentrated that it literally affects everyone’ life. Organizations dare not hold meetings at hours when popular shows are on.” The interviews conducted by Henderson are part of the cultural conversation of the 1950s postwar era; the text of these articles helps understand the idealism and realism prevalent in numerous articles written about the time frame. Henderson’s articles do not reflect on the era; they are, in fact, part of the era. The impact of television on the American family became a catalyst that bound them together and gave the whole community a common experience. Another such cohesive force was the coffee klatch; this institution shifted from house to house and tended to go on all day long. This was one time that the women could engage in adult conversation and escape the tensions created by children.

The suburban attitude toward pregnancy was quite casual. “It is often called our major industry,” or someone will say, “That’s the Levittown Look,” or “It must be in the water; you don’t see any men around.” These conversations with Henderson were a reflection of the customs and values in the new communities. Their attitudes toward pregnancy were quite different than those of their mothers and sisters.

One prevailing problem faced by the 1950s family was one of transience. Henderson said, “A marked feeling of transience pervades everything, from shopping to friendships.” Because of this, most residents consider this as their first home: “They insist that they are young, and they confidently look forward to owning a \$15,000 or \$20,000 house some day.” Actual transience is high; business transfers and increased incomes were the primary reasons; the increase in income

permitted families to buy more expensive homes. Others moved to cut down on commuting time or because of company transfers. The new population coming into the suburbs was an older generation; most had teen-age children. Henderson said that they emphasized the absence of bad neighbors and ample play areas as reasons for moving. In addition, they liked the idea of one economic class.

#### Language: Effects on The 1950s American Homemaker

Stephanie Coontz examined articles from texts, the print media, and popular communicators to demonstrate the construction of reality which took place in the 1950s. In particular, the roles of women changed dramatically in the 1950s; women left careers or jobs behind and returned to home and family. Influential women focused on the new reality for women: “Joan Crawford, one of the brash, tough, independent leading ladies of the prewar era, was now pictured as a devoted mother whose sex appeal and glamour did not prevent her from doing her own housework...mopping floors” (Coontz, 1992, p. 28 ). This type of image created a reality for women which did not exist before the war and was compelling to them in the aftermath of the war.

The reality of the 1950s was not that of Donna Reed or June Cleaver; many Americans were poor, lacked medical insurance, and one-quarter of the population had no liquid assets. The language of television sit-coms has constructed a nostalgia for the 1950s which may have also been constructed through language. This overlapping construction of reality is more complex than the reality in the reruns or the actual reality experienced by American women. Many women returned to being a housewife because the discourse of the time encouraged women to do so and thus, encouraged men to take their prewar positions in the job market (Coontz, 1992).

The 1947 bestseller, *The Modern Woman: The Lost Sex* written by Marynia Farnham and Ferdinand Lundberg described feminism as a deep illness and accused women who sought employment or education as engaging in symbolic castration of men (Coontz, 1992). Sociologist, David Reisman said that woman's failure to bear children went from a personal tragedy in the nineteenth century to a quasi-perversion in the 1950s. Coontz stated that "conflicting messages aimed at women seemed almost calculated to demoralize." At the same time as they labeled women unnatural if they did not seek fulfillment in motherhood, psychologists and popular writers insisted that most modern social ills could be traced to domineering mothers who invested much energy and emotion in their children (Coontz, 1992).

Educators, psychologists, women's magazines, and opinion shapers all echoed the view that women's primary responsibility was to manage the house and care for children. Women were expected to marry and have children; the following excerpt from *Ladies' Home Journal*, May, 1949 reveals the mood of the era. According to May, this article complained about the perceived failure of the educated to reproduce:

*...undoubtedly has to do with the so-called emancipation of women. Every field of life and activity is open to women today, and every year thousands of women leave colleges and universities determined to make careers for themselves. They marry, but find reasons to postpone having children. Often nature, as well as birth control measures, assist them in this. Women who lead very active lives, under conditions of nervous stress and strain, often do not conceive, and when they do, they miscarry. These women are violating their own biological natures; and for this they pay a heavy price...The feminist movement was an attempt to break into*

*“a man’s world” and in the process, through envy, accepted to an alarming extent the values of men* ( May, 1954, p. 11).

Language also affected how women raised their children; Dr. Benjamin Spock’s book on child rearing stressed that children needed firm leadership, the power of love, reason, and parental example. Many child care manuals were written in the 1950s, and parents and teachers were repeatedly reminded to watch for maladjustment. Of major concern was particularly aimed at boys and whether or not they were adhering to appropriate sex role identity. Dr. Spock called on fathers to do little things to help girls develop the proper feminine identity; for example, fathers should compliment their daughters on her dress, or hair-do, or the cookies she’s made (Mintz and Kellogg, 1988, p. 190).

The happy and homogenous family that we remember from the 1950s were partly the media’s denial of diversity (Coontz, 1992). Women had retreated to housework and in many cases, this choice was not freely made. During the war, women had worked in the factories; many did not want to give up their independence after the war. Men were also pressured into acceptable family roles; bachelors were categorized as “immature, infantile, narcissistic, deviant, or even pathological” (Mintz and Kellogg, 1988).

*There's Black Magic in the Blaxide Tube  
Zenith's Amazing Television Discover*

*It's afternoon-you don't draw the shades.  
It's evening-you don't dim the lights.  
You twist one knob and Presto!  
The spectacular Glare-Ban "Black" (Blaxide)  
Tube, ...brings you television pictures with  
Startling new life-like clarity and detail,  
Free from eyestraining glare and blur!*

(March 1950, *Ladies' Home Journal*)

## **Chapter V: The Magazine Families: Part I: 1950-1954**

### *A Cultural Conversation with Ladies' Home Journal*

The "How America Lives" series began in the *Ladies' Home Journal* in February, 1940; this series introduced American families from different regions and economic levels to one another. The *Journal* editors drew connections to family and nation and between domestic and democracy. According to Nancy Walker, during World War II, the women's magazines consistently linked the home and women's responsibilities to the war effort. The domestic responsibility was evident in the planting of "victory gardens", using dress patterns that required less cloth, cooking with non-rationed foods, and avoiding black market products. "The magazines viewed readers as active participants in the national struggle and presented the war itself as having entered the home" (Walker, 2000, p. xiii).

Walker argues that the views of cultural historians and the postwar era are more diverse than the popular media of the time projected in tastes, values, political philosophies, and economic levels. "How America Lives" is central to the creation of the domestic world at mid-century: "While it promised to reflect the diversity of American

life, the editors tended to define diversity within fairly proscribed limits” (Walker, 2000, p. 111). “How America Lives” reinforces what social scientists have claimed about the 1950s family and in particular, the 1950s housewife. A majority of the women were cast in traditional roles as wife, mother, and homemaker, and the men provided financial support so that the women could maintain their family status. In addition, the majority of the men depicted in the articles were World War II veterans who were often recalled to duty in the Korean War.

Each month an American family was featured, and their varying or similar lifestyles were explored and shared with other families in America. Since these articles were published every month throughout the 1950s, the historical moment was simultaneously shared by millions of struggling families across America, and therefore, a cultural conversation was created. Husbands and wives often wrote to *Ladies’ Home Journal* to thank them for featuring families and thus creating an atmosphere in which they could exchange ideas. The editors responded directly to the young families with opening remarks or responses to their questions and anxieties. One editor wrote: “Whatever side you’re on, the Young Mothers, producing more than 2,000,000 babies a year, continue to do the 84-hour-a-week job that has to be done—but they could do with a little encouragement and if you have a pair of idle hands, some real, actual, neighborly help, right now” (Editors, *Ladies’ Home Journal*, April, 1956).

Several communication paradigms will help guide the interpretation of the messages offered in the families’ autobiographical stories. Martin Buber, Seyla Benhabib and Mikhail Bakhtin will be the primary theorists utilized to unravel the complexities of the interpersonal communication between the families and their readers.

Martin Buber offers us the metaphor of *the between* to further understand the dialogues between families and the readers; Buber's dialogic voice suggests that dialogue is between persons and ideas, and the magazine articles are between authors (families) and their readers. The ongoing conversation *between* persons is layered once again by the cultural conversation that is taking place outside of the articles. The 1950s was a decade that demonstrated a disintegration of metanarrative, and this affects the dialogue of the participants within a culture. The 1950s magazine families join the metanarrative of the 1940s and prewar years and are immersed in a web of petite narratives emerging in the 1950s. The stories in the early part of the decade reflect the phenomenological interpretations of the historical moment and thus reveal a historicity of the preceding cultural impact of the war.

Seyla Benhabib helps unravel the complexities of the language by calling attention to the standpoint of the other; each family brings its individual or *concrete* standpoint to the dialogic situation. These concrete positions are entwined with the larger messages of society, and although the standpoints are private, they actually join the arena of the public sphere. It has been established that the families were carefully chosen to portray a "certain type" of family, but in contrast, the families are diverse in personal demographics. The shared qualities of the families are that of hard work, family values, and a personal commitment for a better life (Benhabib, 1992) The texture and tension of the dialogues lies in the conversational link presented by Bakhtin; each individual response is precipitated and anticipated by those engaged in the conversational moment. The standpoint of the families is diverse, but in contrast, presents a hint of the public sphere or the historical moment of the 1950s. The standpoint of the other becomes the

standpoint of the culture as the individuals are presented in the magazine articles..

Mikhail Bakhtin joins the conversation by giving us the concepts of heteroglossia, centripetal and centrifugal, and identity formation. The families were faced with outside forces, internal identity objectives, and a renewed perception of the self. Bakhtin gives us a framework to analyze the hermeneutical situatedness of the families. According to Bakhtin, the parties need to fuse their perspectives while maintaining the uniqueness of their individual perspectives. The tensions of the hermeneutical events fuse with the tensions of the self (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). Since the magazine families are engaged in a conversation with *Ladies' Home Journal*, the boundaries of a conversation need to be addressed. For Bakhtin, a given utterance is also situated within the conversational links; these links are similar to the distal and proximal links with the utterances that are already spoken and the distal links that are those yet to be spoken. Here Baxter and Montgomery focus on the link between an utterance and the anticipated response; the link between an utterance and the anticipated response of the listener is the proximal link in the anticipated dialogue between individuals (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996).

Bakhtin's dialogism and dialectical approach is clearly applicable to the magazine family and their standpoint within the cultural moment. Bakhtin discusses the interplay of centripetal and centrifugal and says that dialogism is a member of the general dialectics with its own unique variations. Bakhtin argues that the voices are always constituted in the immediate context, and therefore, affording the voices concrete complexity and fluidity. A critic of dialogism may argue that social life cannot be reduced to a single binary opposition but is, instead, an interaction of dialogic voices

situated in concrete contexts. “Dialogic voices are thus multivocal, not binary” (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996, p. 30).

The texture of the information derived from multivocal voices provide us with the dialogic conceptualization of the 1950s family. A perspective of relational dialectics emerges through the dialogues of the family’s message. Art Bochner (1984) discusses family communication through a dialectical framework to better understand personal relationships; some of these studies have been developed in the study of family systems. Bochner and his colleagues emphasize three functional contradictions in social interaction: (1) partners are both expressive, revealing, and vulnerable and simultaneously, discrete, concealing, and protective (open and closed); (2) family members sustain unique individual identities while behaving independently, and at the same time, share a family identity and behave in interdependent ways (differentiation and integration); and (3) the family system manages to be both stable and at the same time, demands change (stability and change) (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996, p. 33). Bochner and his colleagues differ from Gerald Weeks who focused on the dialectics of family interaction and family therapy. For this study, the works of Bochner are more applicable. In addition, Irwin Altman and his colleagues contributed by looking to topics as relationship development, privacy regulation, cross-cultural relationship rituals and practices, and social psychological implications.

Bochner’s discussions of family communication help with the application of the family’s messages and how they are situated within a framework of interpersonal communication. Social constructionists have had influence on our thinking, especially about praxis; communication re-presents relationships as people go about being social

selves with motives, emotions, beliefs, personal histories, and relationship progressions. What is known as fictional and real are reconstructed over and over again. What is known as real is known within the confines of human relationships: Shotter (1993a) distinguishes three types of knowing: knowing about which is detached theoretical knowledge; knowing how which is the technical knowledge of skills and crafts; and knowing from within which is a relational knowledge born of the unique history, unfolding present, and the imaginable future of a relationship. The concept of relational knowledge is elusive, evolving knowledge that is always unfinalized and immune to objectification and generalizability; it is resistant to attempts at direct explication, is ever referenced, and therefore knowable, in the interactions, *the conversational realities* of relational partners.

The social constructionist approach helps understand what happened to the American family in the 1950s postwar era and in addition, helps explain the theories of Buber, Benhabib, and Bakhtin. Together, the *between*, the *other*, and the tensions created by the dialogues may be explained by the construction of reality within the family. Peter Berger claims that knowledge is constructed by an individual through experiences. The 1950s families engaged in a social construction process encouraged by governmental events, such as the G.I. Bill and its influences on suburbanization; portrayals of the family on television and in women's magazines; and most importantly, the renewal of domesticity in the cold war era. The relational partners within the community of the American family and the larger social structure are ever changing, non generalized, not objectified; there are what Shotter discusses as having a relational history, with an unfolding present, and an imaginable future. The changes within society in the 1950s

was multivocal within a disintegration of metanarrative structure; the families personal relationships were subjects of fragmentation, variability, and diversity, or as postmodernists see it, the messiness of language.

William Rawlins' (1992) view of friendship over the course of one's life is discussed as a dialectical perspective for investigating and situating enactment of friendships in their concrete social conditions over time. For Rawlins, the concrete situations are work, marriage, family, retirement, and tragedy. Time is defined as the life stages of childhood, adolescence, young adulthood, adulthood, and later adulthood. Rawlins interviews people of all ages to gain dialectical perspective on the "pulse" of friendships and defines two types. Contextual dialectics represents contradictions in culture-based notions, norms, and expectations that frame the way in which friendship is experienced or enacted. These include tensions between public and private and the tension between abstract ideals and actual realities of friendships. Interactional dialectics represent contradictions involved as friends manage and sustain relationships on an ongoing basis; these "communicative predicaments of friendship" include the dialectics of being free to be independent and dependent, caring for a friend as a means to an end (instrumentality) and as an end in itself (affection), with judgments and unconditional acceptance, and finally, being open and expressive while being strategic and protective (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996, p. 36).

Rawlins describes both efficient and formal cause, and much of his work seeks to describe the complex, patterned interplay among contradictions indicative of formal causation. Dialectical tensions are due to types and degrees of friendship, cultural constraints, and individual characteristics, including age and gender. Rawlins suggests

both teleological change and indeterminate change occurs when friends resolve contradictions and thus, create new ones through the process of thesis-antithesis-synthesis.

Tim Stevens relates communication and the social construction of reality in marriage to historical changes in American culture. Stevens claims that communication scholars have ignored history and the changes in its norms and values and that if we look to history, we will be able to identify the features of communication that are enduring and not merely transient. Postmodernist theory, primarily that of Lyotard (1988) have raised issues that reverberate with dialectical thinking, and in particular, Bakhtin's dialogism. Lyotard says that "metanarrative is a legitimating discourse to which other discourses are submitted for judgments; metanarratives are the taken for granted's in our scholarship, our unchallenged premises that are accepted as necessary and normal" (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996, p. 41). Bakhtin refers to the messiness in social life and says that the multivocal interplay of centripetal-centrifugal voices are substitutes for monologue. Postmodernists join Bakhtin and assert that the self is fundamentally dialogic, not monologic, in nature.

Each theorist guides us through the hermeneutical significance of the historical moment and assists in establishing the interpretive significance of the messages of the authors. Most of the articles are autobiographical in nature and, thus, are not subject to challenge from the standpoint of the individual, but instead, are interpreted from the meanings exchanged in the dialogue of the articles. The idea of shared meaning surfaces throughout the decade, and the influences of a postmodern culture frame the exchanges of dialogue between individuals with a common purpose for dialectical understanding. Each

family reveals a certain shared value based on the overall cultural standpoint or norm; some compare themselves to other families and minimize their importance in the metanarrative that they believe exists. Calvin Schrag contributes to our understanding of how these narratives in a particular historical moment contributed to the vision of family life in the public sphere through communicative praxis; discourse and action are *about* something, *by* someone, and *for* someone. The magazine families are the about, the someone, and the for someone; this is a unique perspective as the families are the topic of the magazine series; the articles are written by the families; and the articles are written for the families. All of the voices paints or sculpts: “Portraits through the Lens of Historicity: The American Family as Portrayed in Ladies’ Home Journal 1950-1959.”

*Ladies’ Home Journal*, January to December, 1950:

“Rocky King Detective” and “It’s a Wonderful Life”

The articles appearing in *Ladies’ Home Journal* are autobiographical in nature and the articles are examined from the position of the author and the input of the subjects. The articles are examined through a hermeneutical approach, which gives consideration to meaning within a particular historical moment. Along with profiling the families and their particular demographics, this analysis will seek to discover the rhetorical interplay of these mediated portrayals with already established understandings of family life. The 1950 families rhetorical conversation reveals a common narrative from each of the families (see appendix i). All of the women were homemakers and four had some college education. The men were similarly situated from the standpoint of education, but in contrast, all were employed and the sole support of the family. The male role was varied and non-predictable: a retired teacher, novelty salesman, dairy farmer, architect, and

television actor rounded out the list of characters and their roles within the family structure. Each family represents a different geographical location: Vermont, New York, Texas, Ohio, Indiana, Florida, South Carolina, California, Idaho, and Minnesota were featured in 1950. The titles of the articles tell the story of domesticity and the family ideal: “Always Room for One More”, “More Babies More Fun”, “It’s All in the Family” and “The Homesteaders 1950” suggest a community of shared values.

According to Martin Buber, dialogue is lived *between* persons, *between* persons and events, *between* persons and ideas, even in crisis (Arnett & Arneson, 1999). The 1950 articles explore several dialogues and give the reader insight to the complexities and often uncomfortable circumstances a family may encounter. Articles with a tone of crisis are represented in: “Small Town Rebel”, “Was It Cancer?”, and “Life in an Orphan Home”. Elaine May joins the discussion and discloses that the end of World War II offered the country a renewed peace, prosperity, and traditional gender roles. Also, the private lives of the family became public and part of the larger culture (May, 1954). By looking to this hermeneutical input, it is easier to understand the conflicts that a family may have to endure. This is evident as the families’ stories are told through the relied upon and consistent women’s magazines including *Ladies’ Home Journal*. The moment of crisis is addressed by Martin Buber and additional voices join that of Buber: Carol Gilligan, Paulo Freire, Sissela Bok, and Viktor Frankl, help explain the moment of crisis while Nel Noddings and Robert Bellah call us to listen to the stories of others. The voice of *the other* comes into play as we discuss the moment of crisis and focus on the content of the individual stories being told. *Crisis-informed dialogue* helps address our understanding of the postmodern moment by looking to the concrete human situation that

is central to the lived experience of the writer. Martin Buber chose the metaphor of the between, and connects the between to remind us of the importance of the self and the other (Arnett & Arneson, 1999). Although the idea of postmodernism is an integral part of this study, the stories do not ultimately reveal a postmodern ideology; the idea of a fragmented society is looked to historically but goes unnoticed in the historical moment. The family centered culture guides us through an understanding of the historical moment and is discussed by several historians.

May (1988) also claims that individuals did not accidentally become involved with a family-centered culture, and families did not conclude that moving to the suburbs was a good idea. The postwar era provided many challenges and opportunities including the G.I. Bill that provided nearly half of the returning veterans with a college education. In addition, the returning veterans were offered housing and a better life by moving to the suburbs; this is evidenced by looking to popular culture, especially movies, mass circulation periodicals, and newspapers (May, 1954). As veterans and families faced their new found transitions, they were faced with the voices of others through the print and electronic media. *Ladies' Home Journal* was one voice among many that helped the families venture into their new and autonomous environments.

Ideas about decorating, raising children, health care, and fashions were also included in the magazines. In addition, new ideas and products were shared with the families as the advertising industry began to grow. The 1950s magazines included many advertisements for consumers and in particular, the homemaker. An ad for Zenith televisions is shown in the March, 1950 issue of *Ladies' Home Journal*. The ad shows a man and woman, dressed in formal attire, entering a living room where a television

combination radio and stereo are the center of the décor (p. 261). There was only one television ad in this issue, whereas, in contrast, there were numerous ads for women's fashions, including undergarments, shoes, and fully coordinated dress and hat combinations. The television ad appears within the last ten pages of the magazine and demonstrates that the inclusion of television in the home had not begun to take "center stage." There were numerous ads for bath soaps, deodorant, home decorating, cigarettes, and home appliances. Many of the ads were for *formica* counters, steel kitchen cupboards, and manufactured flooring (asphalt tile). The following ad for a new refrigerator appeared in the March issue of *Ladies' Home Journal*:

*They're femineered! The New 1950 International Harvester Refrigerators. Women Dreamed Them...Home Economists planned them...planned with a purpose-to give you the space, storage, and service you've dreamed of! Femineered from top to bottom. Yes! Femineered to fit into every apartment, home, or farm-kitchen... giving added food space without taking extra floor space (March 1950, p. 126).*

To further understand the hermeneutical significance of the 1950s, it is helpful to take a cursory view of the content of the magazines and how they fit into the larger historical moment. The March, 1950 issue contained the following sections: Complete-In-One-Issue Novel; Fiction; Special Features; General Features; Fashions and Beauty; Food and Homemaking; Architecture, Interior Decoration and Garden; and Poetry. Special features included: "Who Cares About a Soldier?", "Tell Me Doctor-No.2", "There's a Man In the House", "How I Met My Husband" and "How America Lives: Small Town Rebel". General Features includes: "Jobs for Volunteers", "Making Marriage Work" , "Diary of a Domesticity", "The Overprotective Mother" and "Bringing

Up Parents”. Fashion and Beauty included: “Spring Costume Complete”, “A Hat to Please”, “Separates for Spring”, and “American Beauty’s \$100.09 Wardrobe”. Food and Homemaking included: “Come On, Let’s Eat!”, “Capsule Kitchen”, “Come Into My Kitchen”, “I Bake to Please my Children”, and “Quick and Easys for Two”. One feature, “Tell Me Doctor”, reveals a naivety in the question for the doctor: “Are menstruation and ovulation the same thing? I have never understood just when in the month pregnancy takes place” (p. 31). “How I Met My Husband” gives first-hand accounts and hints for future brides on how to meet a husband: “Every married woman has a story every single girl would like to know” (p. 70).

This list of contents of the March issue of *Ladies’ Home Journal* reveal the conversation taking place and provide an understanding of the discourse and its effects. The readers’ naiveté is evident in the questions asked of the specialists, and the emphasis on domesticity is more than evidenced by the titles of the featured articles on home and homemaking. For Buber, the idea of a common center and the idea of *meism* is manifested in the magazine’s features and ongoing departments. The magazines role is significant to the ongoing conversation between persons and events; the messages from the magazines do not represent a great character, but rather, engage in a dialogue while recognizing the historical moment. Also Buber’s metaphor of *the between* is explained as the fundamental fact of human existence as human beings turn to one another to communicate in a sphere that is common to them but reaches beyond the sphere of the individual (Arnett & Arneson, 1999). Buber continues to explain that understanding dialogue is not for those seeking comfort as dialogue brings us face to face with life as it is, not as we would hope it to be. Buber places dialogue at the “heart” of human crisis

and interaction while explaining the realities of public life. "...public life appears to be composed, but is also aware of what is most real of all..." (Arnett & Arneson, 1999, p. 144). Buber's focus of attention claims that dialogue guides the focus of attention between persons; technical dialogue focuses on gathered information; and monologue focuses attention upon oneself.

An interesting phenomenon was disclosed in the September, 1950 "How America Lives"; this article featured a famous movie actor, Todd Karns. Buber's focus of attention is evident in this story. The story "The Most Talented Kid In Town" situated Todd and Katherine Karns in the 1950s moment along with other American families. Todd Karns starred in the 1946 movie "It's a Wonderful Life" as Jimmy Stewart's brother Harry Bailey. Stewart had this to say about Todd in the *Ladies' Home Journal* article: "He's loaded with talent. He stands out from the crowd around here like a—like a—bonfire in the night!" Todd Karns father was a well known television actor, Roscoe Karns, who played the television detective, Rocky King in *Rocky King Detective*. Todd played the part of Sergeant Hart in *Rocky King Detective* from 1950-54. The *LHJ* article relates that the family "called" Roscoe Karns, Rocky, his television character's name. The article also discloses that "talent alone won't fill the family dinner table—and even actors like to eat." The Karns had the same difficulties making ends meet that other families shared. To meet financial challenges, Todd began to paint watercolors and was quite successful; Frank Sinatra, who was influential in the time frame, recommended him for painting projects in various nightclubs.

The dialogue generated between the "typical" family and that of the Karns family is revealed by the shared values of even the most famous to the most mundane. Edith and

Roland Powers, farmers from Magic Valley, Idaho are featured back to back with Katherine and Todd Karns from Hollywood, California; this geographical variety gives the reader a wide-ranged public sphere with which to identify and join the conversation.

The “How America Lives” families were varied and did not appear to fit any particular stereotype, pattern, or standpoint, although Nancy Walker (2000) says that the series advocated a consistent set of moral values regardless of socioeconomic levels. For example, The Kirby’s of Vermont appearing in the January, 1950 issue were raising foster children and had retired from teaching; the Kirby’s had both attended college but had assumed traditional roles within the home. Virginia and Merrill Phillips from Walton, Indiana, faced a life of stress and anxiety as they faced cancer and other grave illnesses. The similarities included their traditional roles within the home and their commitment to family, shared values, and economic constraints.

The common center is evident as we look to the families and their messages. For Buber, the between emerged as a reaction to the overuse of a psychological world view for explaining human action. The phenomenological reference exhibited by the magazine families is substantiated by looking to Buber’s work where a call to the interpersonal importance of intentionality, an awareness of the other, is central for understanding dialogue between others. Bill and Mary Arters dialogue (appendix) with the editors demonstrates the concreteness of the other; the Karns reinforces the standpoint of the other while looking to the uniqueness of the individual. Bakhtin’s examination of centrifugal and centripetal helps us understand the outside forces and the tension created within the individual families. Benhabib reminds us of the significance of disregarding a

universal and looking to a concrete other when interpreting the dialogue between individuals.

*Ladies' Home Journal*: January to December, 1951

“A Second Call of Duty” and “The Family asks for Help”

Women's magazines reflected the cultural values that redefined American domestic life during and after World War II. In addition, the prewar magazines targeted their primary audience during the war years to promote nationalism after the war. The 1951 families faced some of the same obstacles that were revealed in the 1950 articles: all of the women's roles were that of a homemaker, and the male role remained the family “bread winner.” Five of the women attended or graduated from college, and six of the men attended or graduated from college. The families resided in California, New York, Alaska, Maryland, Massachusetts, Iowa, Ohio, Utah, Kansas, and New Jersey. The male role ranged from a plasterer to a lawyer; from a rancher to a Lt. Naval Reserve officer; and from a steel worker to a theater producer. Nancy Walker discusses the multivocal narratives of the series “How America Lives” and concludes that many voices were heard but carried a similar message. The 1950s family's phenomenon was immersed in the disintegration of a metanarrative and was influenced by the print and broadcast media.

Mikhail Bakhtin argues that dialogue and voice are both metaphorically and literally significant and that utterances are positioned in the place where the multivocal interplay between centripetal and centrifugal take place. A person's identity is constructed through social cognition and not that of a psychological nature as one explores dialogue in a phenomenological sphere (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). The

titles of the articles tell a metaphorical story while revealing the literality of their utterances: “A Home of Their Own” signifies the hermeneutical significance of the cold war era and also connotes a shared value with other readers. A shift in identity from the familial to reality is exemplified in “Fighting the Budget”; Juanita and James McCoy, from Topeka Kansas, discuss traditional rhetorical concepts and postmodern problems associated with the 1950s. These families’ realities demonstrate the multivocal texture taking place within the family structures; some families are struggling with real problems associated with the historical moment. For these families, and others that follow, the between is the focus for their ongoing participation in 1950s America; the dialogue with the magazine is an attempt to find the between. Buber claims that the between is not ontological or part of being human; our humanness comes together with others in the between. The between is relational rather than individualistic, and the interdependence of self and other, call us to participation. The between is phenomenological and dialogue is invitational; the between is a reminder of our human story, lived together, for us, not just for the collective or for me (Arnett & Arneson, 1999, p. 132).

The letters written by several families in this time frame demonstrate the significance of Bakhtin’s theory of dialogism as individuals struggle with outside and inside forces to find a common center. For the Reeds, the dialogue is between persons and persons as the boundaries of the private and public spheres are blended; Buber calls this sphere, the between. Buber continues to explain the concept of inclusion and exclusion; the metaphor of inclusion assumes a narrative context of people within a community, including their religious preferences or beliefs and in addition, their ethnic

connection (Arnett & Makau, 1997). For some families, the idea of inclusion or exclusion could be manifested by their place within the larger community and their military obligations as members of the community.

The Reeds (appendix) also face the historical moment in a difficult position as they are recalled to duty; “Second Call” tells the story of the Bryant Reeds and the obstacles they faced as the head of the household was called to return to the Navy for a second call of duty. The shift of identity from the familial to the military, shifts the family focus from the family structure to the global structure; this shift may cause an reevaluation of memory to better express the issues associated with self (Dickinson, 1997). This shift of focus is often the center of discussion in a postmodern and identity crisis debate as the fragmentation of beliefs joins the lack of metanarrative to define the social conditions of a society. Buber’s dialogic voice reminds us of the *other* as Buber suggests that dialogue is lived between persons, events, and ideas even in crisis (Arnett & Arneson, 1999).

Seyla Benhabib’s *conversational model* discusses people’s diversity and cautions not to overlook the similarities or commonalities in diverse peoples’ orientations within relationships (Wood, 1993). Benhabib’s descriptions of the concrete other must be observed throughout this interpretation, and in this story, the dichotomies of the two housewives demonstrate the concreteness, rather than the generalized other.

Two housewives , Mary Reed and Mary Bryant (appendix) have a different approach to the way they manage their households, but one thing they have in common is the desire to share their ways of life and goals with other housewives in America. The concrete other is manifested in the descriptions of their lives while the generalized other

is evident in the commonalities of the family and home in the 1950s era. According to Julia Wood, this reflects a shared value, common needs and goals, similarities and differences within a culture (Wood, 1993). One's *standpoint* is a position that is established by material and symbolic circumstance, and reality is mediated symbolically and constrained by discourse in any given time and place. Annie Lee Peterson (appendix) was anxious to reveal her dreams for the future; she hoped to become a designer for stage and screen costumes, but was willing to settle for owning her own "smart" dress shop in the suburb of an important city. Rose's goal was for her children to receive a college education and to own a home of their own. Bakhtin and Buber join the conversation to help interpret what is happening in this historical moment. For Bakhtin, the dialectical voices of ourselves and others show that knowledge is an elusive and evolving entity. Knowledge is gained through the conversational realities of relational partners with dialectical tensions manifested within the relationships. Buber claims that the narrative grounding carried in the story explains the cultural moment no longer carried in a metanarrative (Arnett & Arneson, 1999).

The dialogues engaged by several families have a shared value system but a concreteness that separates them from each other. Seyla Benhabib (1992) discusses the self in relationship to the other. Benhabib reflects on the studies of women and claims that to look at a universal model, is to miss the engagement of the story. Benhabib rejects universals and brings forth a model of fairness and caring to discuss the other, and in this particular instance, the other as portrayed in *Ladies' Home Journal*. Laura Patrello, Mary Reed, Annie Peterson, and Rose Occialinos (appendix) have similarities in their stories: they are all homemakers with their husbands filling the role of "provider" or "head-of-

household”, but universality is not the primary narrative or story being delivered. Their individual stories show their concrete *other* as Laura seeks a home of her own; Mary faces a second call of duty for her husband; Annie faces life without a college degree; and Rose claims to be “unharried” and happy as a homemaker.

*Ladies' Home Journal*: January to December, 1952

“Stevenson vs. Eisenhower” and “The Stage is Set for Love”

Nancy Walker states that the American culture was far more diverse in tastes, values, political philosophies, and economic levels than the popular media of the time projected (Walker, 2000). The 1952 families reflect this analysis as the families' stories are revealed: “We're polls apart in politics only”, “Escape to Freedom”, and “Stage set for Love” show the diversity of the families but in contrast, the similarities. Each family brings a different set of demographics, its own standpoint, and a common thread running through the culture. Seyla Benhabib discusses the standpoint of the *concrete other* versus George Herbert Mead's standpoint of the *generalized other* (Benhabib, 1992). This point is significant to this study as most suppose that the 1950s American family is one that is generally identified with the generalized other. The contrary seems to be the case as each family brings its own concrete set of values, norms, and voices to the cultural conversation. Wood states that the standpoint theory reminds us that tensions in friendships often stem from failure to realize that individuals come from diverse standpoints with separate and different understandings about friendship, and in this situation, about the historical moment.

The 1952 families are similar in demographics to the early years; all the women were homemakers except two, a teacher and an actor; all of the male roles supported the

family. From a dairy farmer to a musician; from a fireman to a university professor; and from a text book publisher to a minister, the male role shows diversity. Seven of the men went to college, and four of the women attended college. The families are from all parts of America: New Hampshire, Ohio, Washington, New York, North Carolina, New Jersey, California, Texas, and Connecticut.

The historicity of the thesis is examined through the articles and also through the supporting stories; the families shared space and also the same values as the greater story told in the magazines. The standpoint of the families and that of the authors is interwoven into a common story or narrative of 1950s America. The October, 1952 issue of *Ladies' Home Journal* had the following feature articles: "Tell Me Doctor"; "What's She Got That I Haven't?"; "Political Pilgrim's Progress: From Kitchen to Convention". As the 1950s was beginning to unfold, there were many articles on domesticity, health, fashion, and architecture, interior decoration and design. The following articles depict an evident tension between the seriousness of the time-frame and the influence of advertisements on the family. Women were particularly vulnerable as the mixed messages were delivered in a palatable fashion. An article for Playtex girdles claimed: "Only a Playtex girdle lets you feel as *free* as this..." Several ballet type movements are demonstrated in the advertisement showing a female in a girdle freely gliding and jumping into the air (p. 9). Another undergarment ad claims, "I dreamed I won the election in my *maidenform* bra." This ad shows a woman in a bra with jewelry and a red full skirt high above a convention floor, in disbelief, as she won an election (p. 31). "Imagine a nylon tricot proportioned slip by *Artemis*, perfect fit comes only from *Images* truly proportioned sizing" (p. 39). "I'll see you tonight" is the heading for a two page ad

for dresses: “Whisk the long-sleeved jersey or tailored white shirt out from under your jumper sheath and you have a dinner dress. Add the velveteen jacket to your velveteen skirt and you have a movie suit” (p. 60). An ad for home décor is entitled: “Modern with a future.” The rooms that are featured are before television and include furnishings with a sleek modern, not very comfortable design. One feature story is about Kay Strommen and her participation in politics as a Minnesota, Republican delegate. The title of the article is: “From Kitchen to Convention.” “The old guard couldn’t scare this political novice. The only way to run the Republican Party is to let everyone it.”

The November, 1952 issue of *LHJ* shows a woman on the cover wearing a red hat, gray suit, and white gloves; the cover stories are “Polls apart in Politics” “He likes Stevenson, she likes Ike” and “Christmas Dinner cooked a Month ahead”. This issue carries the same theme as previous months and includes the “How America Lives” family who differs on political ideology. The Banks of Upshaw, Texas, are shown with their political buttons displayed on their lapels with their children “split” on the subject of Stevenson vs. Eisenhower. Russell Banks is a committed democrat and a delegate for Stevenson at the Democratic convention; Catherine holds her own as a committed voter for “Ike.” This article also includes the Upshaw’s favorite recipes: Texas Chili; Stuffed Beef Ring; Upshaw Coleslaw; and Pralines.

The December, 1952 issue of *LHJ* includes special features and general features including “Our Readers Write Us,” “Diary of Domesticity,” and “There’s a Man in the House.” One advertisement is for a “Wonderful new gift idea! Pacific’s Contour Sheets--the newest in sheets” (p. 9). The *Maidenform* bra ad reads: “I dreamed I went skiing in my maidenform bra” (p. 31). The fashion section features glamorous women “at home”

clothes for the homemaker to sew; also, there are two pages of dressy cocktail and evening gowns entitled “Lovely to look at.” This ad boasts that the length is “yours to choose” whether mid calf or full length. A few pages later, a woman in a red cocktail dress is giving a carton of *Herbert Taryton* cigarettes for a Christmas gift. “Mrs. J. K. Pringle, stunning young New York socialite. Discriminating in her choice of cigarettes, Mrs. Pringle says: ‘cartons of Herbert Tareyton make such wonderful gifts in their special Christmas wrapping’” (p. 71).

The March, 1952 issue includes a feature for “A kitchen to grow in” and an ad for an “Entirely New! Completely different” Cyclo-matic Frigidaire.” This refrigerator is “the refrigerator you’ve hoped for” (p. 118). The ad shows that all of the shelves roll out, there is a levelcold feature for the freezer, and a completely automatic refrigerator with no defrosting. Also in this issue, a GE automatic washer has a new feature; a gentle cycle that does not wrinkle your clothes: “And all you do is set a dial and turn it on” (p. 121). The aforementioned articles reflect a climate where intentionality or the focus of one’s attention is *between* persons and ideas on a grand scale. Buber refers to Husserl when claiming that man’s essence is not found in isolated animals but within the bonds of generations and society. The bond is that of community and the ideology of the 1950s promotes the concept Buber’s concept of the *between* (Buber, 1970).

We assume that the “other” is similar to ourselves with the same concrete needs, desires and effects, but what constitutes his or her moral dignity is not what is different but what we can expect and assume from him or her (Benhabib, 1992). Benhabib also discusses the question concerning the relationship of historical narrative to the interest of present actors in their historical past presents a conflict in interpretation. The 1952

families begin to show dissent that is not often related when referring to or engaging the 1950s genre.

Seyla Benhabib discusses Bruce Ackerman's model of liberalism as a way of talking about and publicly justifying power with conversational constraints. The most significant conversational constraint in liberalism is neutrality as the power holder has two claims: his conception of the good is better than that asserted by his fellow citizens or that regardless of his conception of the good, he is intrinsically superior to one or more of his fellow citizens (Benhabib, 1992). Ackerman's views are based on primary groups, about what they share as primary good; he believes that citizens in a liberal state must be guided by a Supreme Pragmatic Imperative which states that they must be willing to participate in an ongoing dialogue about their conception of the good with others who are not members of their primary group.

The limitations of the liberal model of public space is that it conceives of political relations too narrow with the chief concern being the idea of dialogic neutrality. Sissela Bok's work offers four assumptions that are necessary for a realistic effort to articulate a minimal core of common values for a diverse public: (1) Basic minimal values are needed for the survival of all humans; (2) Acceptance of basic minimal values is necessary for coexistence; (3) Basic minimal values do not preclude an appreciation and respect for diversity; (4) Common ground for cross-cultural dialogue is needed (Arnett & Arneson, 1999, p. 204). Bok points to a common ground for dialogue, debate, and critique to take place; a constructivist basis for interpretation calls for common ground and an agreed upon sense of values. Bok rejects the idealism of maximal value agreement and moves in the direction of conversational ethic and understands the need

for local and translocal or particular and common ground values.

Baxter and Montgomery discuss the dialectic of couples who manage tensions by attending to their communicative behavior with others (1993); they rely on verbal disclosure to reveal information and to conceal through acts of omission and deception. The studies of Baxter, et.al. reveal that public celebrations and rituals are among the most visible of “tie-signs” that signal a couple’s identity to others. They use for example, a wedding ceremony as it broadcasts new limits on the relationship and the public participation of the marriage ceremony. The American family’s perception of public and private shifted through a mechanism of power and public, minimal values and public; and family celebrations and public.

The application of the model of *common ground* or *common values* is reflected in the one family’s link to the greater culture. The Simons (appendix) engagement with the media reflects the link with the family and television. Mintz and Kellogg discuss the perception of the 1950s family nostalgically as that of *The Donna Reed Show*, *Leave It to Beaver*, and *Father Knows Best*. The Simons are beginning to discuss taboo subjects like, divorce, low self-esteem, and not keeping up with the feminine role in the household. The Simons chose a psychological approach to solving their problems, and as stated above took the family from a private to a public sphere. Seyla Benhabib says that this particular standpoint, the petite narratives do contribute to the choices made in the situation, culture, society, and tradition. Benhabib continues to explain that the standpoint of interactive universalism or interaction between petite and metanarratives is situated within the hermeneutic horizon of modernity (Benhabib, 1992). The family’s position is not one of universal, but in contrast is concrete with a unique set of values and

circumstances. Each family presents its own set of individuality with a common center: the between. For Martin Buber, the idea of the between is life is best lived in the between, shared with others who “feel” that something happens between persons when joy for another’s accomplishment is voiced and together the partners in dialogue enjoy the moment between them (Arnett & Arneson, 1999). This opens the door for petite narratives to replace a psychological approach to viewing joyous situations or solving problems; the phenomenological situation described by sharing a common center is imperative for situating oneself within a culture, a society, or a tradition.

The universals advanced by theorists are once again disengaged as we look to another concrete family, in their own individual mold: “Always a little bit behind” is the cry of the Louis Scalas of Ramsey, New Jersey. Louis and Lorene Scala and their six children live 27 miles from New York, and Louis commutes to a mid-Manhattan bank; Lorene to nearby Oakland, where she teaches high school. Lorene finished two years of college at Iowa State University where she met her husband; Louis, an Italian American, claims that he is probably related to the Milan Scalas of operatic fame. Their spacious brown stucco home is furnished with comfortable, old, but rugged, furniture (Marcus, June 1952). Although Lorene fits the demographic of homemaker who left college, her attitude reflected in her language, separates her from the universals set forth by cultural mis-perceptions of the family (appendix).

*Ladies’ Home Journal*: January to December, 1953

“Homemakers and The Abortion Dilemma.” and “The Levittowners”

The 1953 families continued with the same demographics as in previous years with the female role as homemaker and the male role as head of household and money

maker. The families, as their predecessors, came from all walks of life, from one coast to the other, and worked in a variety of venues. Steel workers, Naval officers, carpenters, and even a professional basketball player joined the cultural conversation. As reflected before, few attended college; as a point of interest, most only finished high school; not only the women, but also the men. Their stories were reminiscent of past years but added a twist with “The Big Move” and “I Can’t Afford to Work”. The 1953 decade shows a stereotypical family in the story about Levittown and a not so stereotypical family in “Meet Mrs. \$10,000 Executive in the Home”.

Peter Berger discusses the idea of a social construction of reality and explains the role of the American family and how it was constructed through the media (Coontz, 1992). The social constructionist views that knowledge is not about the world, but rather, constitutive of the world (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Baxter and Montgomery continue to explain that what is experienced as real is constructed and reconstructed again and again (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). The fact that the 1950s families lived in a time of metanarrative decline helps understand the conflicting social content and social context while existing in a morally fragmented society (MacIntyre, 1984). MacIntyre discusses the great character being replaced by the emotivist in a fragmented culture with many voices of authority. This clash of competing narratives can result in confusion as the families look for one voice of authority and what is good for the family.

Martin Buber discusses the “unity of contraries” and his description of the “great character”; the great character is the enemy of the people and manifests as one who loves their society. It is through this description that an historical moment within a narrative background takes his or her own uniqueness to a given situation without ignoring the

larger text. A great character knows the story of the people well enough to violate it when necessary to meet the demands of the historical moment, permitting the story to continue to live and nourish a people. Buber looks to fragmented narratives with a narrative guide that identifies the *poet*, a public figure, writing to be read aloud, with others, in relationships between text and person. A communicative poet points to dialogic civility, calling us to find meaning between people, together; the crisis is met in dialogue between us in dialogic civility. This helps sort out the narratives to eliminate the confusion for members of a society, in particular, the magazine families of the 1950s.

The 1950s was a period in American history that was influenced by the threat of the atomic bomb, an abundant economic boom, and a notion of *keeping up with the Joneses*. According to Ewen and Ewen (1984), “Material circumstances changed; the architecture of daily life assumed new forms; new and uniform symbols moved beyond marks of prosperity, to marks of loyalty (Ewen & Ewen, 1984). The voices of Doris Day, Betty Furness, and Ronald Reagan were the role models of suburbanization as they advertised for General Electric. Harry Henderson discusses the conformity of the group or dominant members of society and their influences on the general audience.

The one common thread that they all shared was a return to the suburbs, the domestic ideal, and a conformity to the greater culture or metanarrative. Before the postwar era, the best educated and most prosperous Americans lived in the nation’s cities; after the war, millions of young adults left extended family behind, and deserted the cities for the new found suburban dream. The government contributed to the growing needs of the family by offering education, housing, and other governmentally funded programs. The young families left extended family and familial advice behind as they migrated to

the outskirts of town, the suburbs. Perhaps the magazine's expert advice from such scientific perspectives as the family doctor, thrived because of this missing link. The following article delivers a dilemma for the suburban family.

The following exchange between a mother and a Doctor reflects the tensions of the 1950s and as related by Mikhail Bakhtin, the *messiness* of language. It is interesting to examine this exchange in its entirety to better understand the concrete historical moment and how these messages were conveyed in 1953. The subject of abortion may have been discussed in a more forthright manner in 1953 than it is in 2006; this is in direct conflict with what we think of the 1950s era. In January, 1953, *LHJ*, the regular feature, "Tell me Doctor" was a story about a young girl who had an abortion, arranged by her mother. The story opens with the mother and daughter in the office of Henry B. Safford, M. D.: "Flo has been going around with a bunch of older girls and boys at the country club. Swimming parties at night, and that sort of thing. They've been drinking too, quite a lot. I'm informed now that it's too late. Well, there was a dance at the club on the Fourth of July, and Flo went out with one of the boys at intermission. They went and sat in one of the parked cars---it must have happened then."

Dr. Safford's response was critical of the mother for permitting her daughter to be in the company of older teenagers, and he also informed her that he *did* understand the problem with raising teenagers today because he also raised two daughters. The mother continued: "Doctor, after my daughter told me what had happened, and that she had missed two periods, you can imagine that I was upset."

The doctor commiserated with the mother, and she continued: "I took her to our family doctor, and he said she was pregnant. He wouldn't do anything about it, and then

I didn't know what to do. A friend of mine once had an operation performed for a pregnancy. I remembered the name of the man who did it, and I called him up and made an appointment. He examined Flo and said she was pregnant, but that he didn't do abortions. He knew someone who did, however, and it would cost a thousand dollars. I could pay him, he said, but it would have to be in cash."

The mother continued to explain their traumatic experience: "I drew the money out of the bank and paid it to this man, and then took Flo to the address he gave. It was out of the city, a horrible old brownstone house. The nurse put Flo on the table and did some sort of a preparation on her, and then the doctor---well, anyway, he was supposed to be a doctor---appeared. He wore a long gown and a mask that covered his entire head except his eyes, and he had dark glasses." The doctor asked if it was the same man who had taken the money, but the mother wasn't sure as the abortionist was completely covered.

"I didn't see anything of him to recognize---not even his shoes, his gown was so long. He was about the same height, however. Well, he used some instruments which the nurse brought him in a sterilizer---and that was the last I saw of him. The nurse gave Flo a big drink of whisky and called a cab and we came home. Flo bled a little, but not very much until the packing came out, when she bled a lot. Then it stopped, but she's been complaining of pain low down in her abdomen ever since. "

The mother asked the doctor if he had ever heard of such a thing, and he replied that he certainly had, many times before. The doctor then examined the girl, determined that she had an infection, and then admitted her to the hospital, all the while proclaiming that they were fortunate to now have penicillin (January, 1953, p. 19 and 158).

The dichotomy of subjects is further discussed in the following advertisements; in the same year, the ideal kitchen was evident as one read about the new gadgets and essentials for the family home. In the April, 1953 issue of *LHJ*, there was an ad for a *Motorola* television “featuring the exclusive new standout picture with miracle interlace...magnificent cabinetry...top grain woods...one knob ‘sabre jet’ tuning”. A “Make—easy Kitchen” story was included to explain that the arrangements of sink and refrigerator save steps in the kitchen. There were several ads for sterling silver flatware and stainless steel pots and pans. *Electrolux*, *Eureka*, *Quaker lace*, *Pyrex*, and *Tappan* were names to remember. Recipes for baked ham, *Jello* molds, and minute rice were popular; ads for girdles, bras, deodorants, soaps, and hair products filled the pages. Homemakers were advised on how to decorate their homes, dress to be feminine, bathe to be more attractive, raise their children, and how to cook for their families. One notable change in the ads is the increase in the height of the heel on women’s shoes. *Tweedies* shoes shows a high heel with an open toe and ankle strap.

June, 1953 continues the “I dreamed I lived like a Queen in my *maidenform bra* theme. The first ten pages of the magazine have four ads to help the homemaker smell better. The June issue feature story was on Queen Elizabeth: “Little Princess Becomes Queen.” This story tells the story of Queen Elizabeth as a child and how she was prepared to become the Queen of England. “Dinner’s in the Freezer” explains how to prepare ahead and freeze the dishes. The menu includes: Cold Shrimp Bisque with Dill; Toasted Paprika Crackers; Chicken-Ham-and-Mushroom Pies; Tomato Cups with Spinach Vinaigrette; Hot Rolls; Strawberry-Ice-Cream Cake and Coffee (p. 64). The trend toward leisure time is engaged with an ad for *Frigidaire* refrigerators: “Today’s

leisure living starts in our kitchen with your Cyclamatic Frigidaire and its New Ideas.” An ad for a Stanley Hostess Party contained the following; “You’ll love these and other wonderful feminine grooming aids featured at Stanley Hostess Parties.” *Singer Sewing Machines, Cashmere Bouquet* toilet soap, *Hardwick Gas Ranges*, and *Fels-Naptha* soap were included. There is a special feature story on Young Home Builders; the house plan includes large closets, a barbecue area, a well equipped utility room for \$10,000 (June, 1953, p. 152-53).

The November, 1953 article, “A Livingroom That Works”, featured the house that John and Lucille Bradford remodeled in Sharon, Pennsylvania. The mid-twenties floor plan was adapted to today’s (1953) young family’s living needs. According to the author the original house had an awkward corner fireplace and an old fashioned glass door leading to a porch. To improve the function of the home, the Bradfords closed in the porch and made it a playroom and positioned the family entertainment center, the television, in a spot that could be viewed from the entire living area. “The porch doorway was made into a movable TV theater. The set, hinged to the door-frame, swings to any position desired and can be viewed from the porch which has been converted into a play space for the children or the family viewing area, the living room. When the television is not being used, it pushes back against the porch wall, and the doorway becomes the usual passage between the two rooms. “How America Lives” primarily examines how the American family “copes with” or handles domestic issues; this article literally reveals *how America lives* as they adapt a living space into a more functional living area for the entire family.

William Levitt led the way in the construction of a new machine: the tract house

was his invention. Mintz and Kellogg discuss Levitt's houses as the beginning of a new capitalism and consumerism born of the postwar era. Often the families were faced with surprises as the houses didn't fill all of the images portrayed in the brochures (Ewen, 1988). Harry Henderson's articles appeared in *Harper's Magazine* in November and December, 1953. His authorship was supported by his interviews with and embeddedness with actual families who had moved to the suburbs. He reveals a sense of togetherness and in contrast, a sense of conformity and similarity to the suburban families. The houses he built were designed to "convey a nonindustrial aura, but the heart of Levitt's approach to development was mass production" (Ewen, 1984 p. 226). *Ladies' Home Journal* introduced us to a Levittown family in this article: "The Big Move" (Hoffman, Aug. 1953). After five years of marriage, Bill and Fran Calkins' total savings was \$150, and the idea of a home of their own seemed to be an impossible dream. "To an outsider, Levittown, Pennsylvania, seems like a vast mirage, a city of 4000 spanking-new ranch homes where a short year ago were acres of corn and wheat, 250-year-old stone farmhouses and red barns." A new Levitt home was erected every sixteen minutes, and by 1955, "Levittown will have 20,000 such homes, making it in three years the tenth largest city in Pennsylvania."

Levittown is more than a housing development because it was a self-contained community with its own schools, churches, and playgrounds. In addition to these family oriented essentials, Levittown promised eight Olympic-sized swimming pools, ten baseball diamonds, a town hall with an opera-sized stage and a multimillion-dollar department-store shopping center. Fran demonstrated her pride in her home as she polished the brass furnishings and admired the exterior landscaping on their 70' x 100' lot.

The landscaping was part of the original package; the young maple trees, rose bushes, grape vines, new lawn and shrubs were all included in the \$10,000 purchase price.

The idea of neighborhood and community were essential to the well being of the new home owners in Levittown. “Neighbors troop in all day to visit, young women in blue jeans with bandanas tied about their heads, trailed by one, two or three toddlers. Fran gets out the coffeepot and they settle down to swapping ideas and rumors about their pet subject of conversation– Levittown” (Hoffman, Aug. 1953). The identical tract houses are only varied by color, and it is easy to get lost. Fran related that one woman could not find her own home when she came home after dark from the hairdresser. After driving around for hours, she was rescued by her husband and a local policeman. The houses may be identical, but the people who live inside of them are not: “The nicest thing about Levittown is that the people come from all parts of the country and are in all lines of work. It was built because of the world’s largest steel plant going up in lower Bucks County, but we’ve met very few steelworkers.” The togetherness of the American family and the importance of neighborhood is evident as one is introduced to the lifestyles of the families in Levittown.

Henderson reveals that since World War II, whole new towns and small cities were created, with identical houses, in identical lot plans, all across America. This may be viewed as a social construction of reality as discussed by Berger and MacIntyre; the common development of the human being and the human self in a socially determined environment is related to the human relationship between humans and the self. We are back to a reality that permeates culture when Carolyn and Chuck Bauer of Chicago married, they got pregnant right away. “It was an upsetting piece of news. We had spent

every cent getting married and going for a week-end honeymoon. We didn't even have hospitalization insurance" (Weyl, Oct. 1953). Chuck spent three years in the Navy and received three years in postwar training. Carolyn advanced from waitress to hostess and planned on taking night courses to become a restaurant manager. She didn't consider herself a "career girl" but merely wanted to add to the family's savings. When she became pregnant, she quit her job after three months and planned on returning to work after the baby was born. "I Can't Afford to Work" tells the story of how Caroline could not afford to go back to work because her weekly income would not cover all of the expenses incurred in the maintenance of her home and the care of her child. This dilemma is an ongoing one as women historically cannot replace themselves with the money they earn. If Carolyn returned to her former job as restaurant hostess, she would earn \$43.90 a week; her weekly expenses would average \$54.25 a week. Carolyn would be in the red \$10.35 a week and lose \$538.20 a year.

*Ladies' Home Journal*: January to December, 1954

"Spies, Fiberglas, and Paris Fashions"

Since man produces himself, and man's self-production is always a social enterprise, individuals together produce a human environment with both a sociocultural and psychological formation (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). The 1954 families live up to the expectations of self production as we reach the midway point in the 1950s decade. The female role of homemaker continues and the female in this decade had one who attended college; the male role is head of household with a variety of jobs and careers. There were six males who attended college, graduated from college or participated in the military. The reality of the families is varied as one family writes about skiing, while

another asks whether their marriage can last; another discusses “The Big Wedding” while another speaks of the “Year of Crisis”. The creation of the families comes from the standpoint of an insurance agent, a service engineer, a college student, a farmer, and one who repairs air conditioners.

October, 1954, *LHJ* demonstrates not only the continuing advertising trends of 1953, but adds a dimension that moves closer to the postmodernism that one thinks of when they think about the 1950s. A feature story, “Liberty and Conformity in America” addresses the dilemma that is present in a postmodern society. Dorothy Thompson quotes former British Chancellor of the Exchequer, Hugh Gaitskell, “We have been unable to understand the anticommunist spy mania which has swept the United States in the last few years.” The author discusses the ethnic structure of the United States and its diversity; Thompson says that the United States is the only great and populous nation-state and world power whose people are not cemented by ties of blood, race or original language. “American relationships with the European nations of the noncommunist world have deteriorated during the last months. The nations that welcomed American leadership after World War II and were salvaged from their initial postwar troubles by American aid have become increasingly critical of both the foreign and the domestic policies of the United States” (p. 13).

When reading about the production of the 1950s, it is helpful to discuss the difference between the structure of language as merely symbolic and the nuances of language established through shading and texture. Saussure claims that the meanings of their message are merely symbols, while Derrida argues that the contextualization of their message reveals the meaning of the message and are influenced by the hermeneutical

input (Lucaites, Condit, and Caudill, 1999).

An interesting ad in this issue is one for a new car: Kaiser-Darrin 161 styled by Darrin of Paris! Fiberglas Body up to 35 miles per gallon. 1954 also show an increase in the height of the heel of women's shoes and also, an emphasis on fashions from Paris. Both men and women's fashions are featured in an extensive layout of very dressed-up women and men in a more casual sport coat attire. Two television shows were featured in advertisements: *Medic*, Monday Nights 9 to 9:30 EST NBC-TV; and Ozzie and Harriett selling *Jolly Time Popcorn*. The interesting fact from this ad is that the name "Ozzie and Harriett" is only mentioned in small print. The picture of the entire Nelson family eating popcorn apparently was quite recognizable.

The feature novel in this issue is *Blackboard Jungle*, the story about juvenile delinquency. Also included in this issue, is an advice column by Dr. Benjamin Spock, "Dr. Spock Talks with Mothers." The question is asked: "When should you call the doctor?" Dr. Spock refers to his book on child care and says that no two mothers are alike and there is no set formula for when to call the doctor (p. 205). As MacIntyre explains, the fragmentation of morality creates the stage for the emergence of selfhood and also, for what is going on in a given time period. The movie industry often reflected the greater culture, and the novel *Blackboard Jungle* was soon followed by the hit movie of the same name.

The postwar era predisposed the situation that the following family encountered, and the government intervention into their lives helped them solve the ongoing dilemma, a need for education. "The Pink House Bobos" (appendix) tells the life story of Dottie and Barham Bobo of Atlanta, Georgia (Freeman, Nov. 1954).

May continues to explain the role of the homemaker in the postwar era: “The fruits of postwar America could make the family strong; the family, in turn, could protect the nation by containing the frightening potentials of postwar life” (May, 1988, p. 90). One postwar husband describing this defensive domesticity claimed that his family gave him a sense of responsibility, a feeling of being a member of a group that would face its external enemies together. Nita and Jack McCloskey, “Who so findeth a wife findeth a good thin” (Sept. 1953), shows the role of the female as a self-proclaimed hostess and her husband as a workingman; while Jack coaches, Nita knits at home in front of the television.

The first half of the 1950s decade exhibits the emergence of a unique set of historical circumstances relevant to the study of interpersonal communication. Calvin Schrag discusses the speaking subject who always speaks in and from a language with a background of delivered forms of textuality, and as agent, is socialized by the communal patterns in which he/she acts (Schrag, 1989). The families who contributed to this series spoke from their own set of communicative patterns and backgrounds and joined the cultural conversation with other families of similar backgrounds. Schrag continues that intentionality of implication in hermeneutical implicature is measured at every stage of the determinations of praxis; it moves within the space of customs, skills, habits, and social practices. The different space is the hermeneutical space of discourse and action. The families’ hermeneutical influences were evident as they attempted to adjust to the postwar era and the coldwar. Elaine May (1988) gives us a portrait of the family, embedded in a culture that encouraged women to give up careers and become homemakers. Postwar women lowered their expectations and came to accept their

domestic role as the center of their identity.

Seyla Benhabib (1992) discusses the otherness of women who are portrayed as other than men: “Woman is simply what man is not; namely they are not autonomous, independent, but by the same token, nonaggressive but nurturant, not competitive but giving, not public but private” (Benhabib, 1992, p. 157). The 1950s American family as portrayed in *Ladies’ Home Journal* reflects Benhabib’s claims and is emphasized by the role and education of the females in this study. From 1950-1954, the female role is primarily that of a homemaker, and also, women in this study, either did not attend college or dropped out to become homemakers. According to May, family life would provide men with a sense of power they were likely to experience at work; at home, they could see tangible results of their efforts and achieve a measure of respect (p. 88). This is exemplified in the discussions of the family members who contributed to the magazine series.

May continues to explain the role of the homemaker in the postwar era: “The fruits of postwar America could make the family strong; in turn, could protect the nation by containing the frightening potentials of postwar life” (May, 1988, p. 90). The Peterson and McCloskey families (appendix) demonstrate this domesticity and responsibility. The McCloskeys show a line of defense against outside enemies together.

Benhabib discusses political theory and says that it is “the very constitution of a sphere of discourse that bans the female from the realm of nature, from the light of the public to the interior of the household, from the civilizing effect of culture to the repetitious burden of nurture and reproduction. The public sphere, the sphere of justice, moves into historicity, whereas the private sphere, the sphere of care and intimacy, is

unchanging and timeless” (Benhabib, 1988, p. 157). Benhabib’s discussions about political theory and public vs. private are appropriate for the interpretation of the family’s role in 1950s America.

As we approach the second half of the 1950s decade, it is significant to discuss the demographics of the first half of the decade; most of the female roles were that of homemaker; the male role was the public figure in the family; all of the families had children, and many families had more than one child. Approximately half of the male and female roles included college or some college; and they represented a wide geographic range. The years 1955-1959 are included in Part II: a theoretical situation will be offered, followed by a conclusion of the total decade.

*Ladies' Home Journal*: January to December, 1955

“Missionaries” and “Playwrights”

The voices of Martin Buber, Seyla Benhabib, and Mikhail Bakhtin join other interpersonal communication theorists to explain the dialogic tensions of the 1950s family. Although Calvin Schrag is not the primary focus of this study, his interpersonal communication theory is helpful when looking to the messages of the 1950s families. The second half the 1950s continues to tell stories about something, by someone, and for someone (Schrag, 1989). Communicative praxis provides a referential moment about a world of human concerns and social practices; a moment of self-implicature by a speaker, author, or actor, and a rhetorical moment directedness to the other. The 1955 articles are exactly what Schrag claims and the discursive discussions are both linguistic and action oriented. For the authors of the families' stories, the written word is a sign of the unspoken or non-discursive text. Schrag discusses the term *praxis*, but Aristotle was the first to use the term in the interests of a philosophical exchange of ideas.

The 1955 families tell a story of a changing culture, from several standpoints, and relate a common message. The diversity of the families remains similar as we realize that in 1955, the female role is still that of homemaker with three exceptions: one is a missionary along with her husband, another is an apple farmer, also working with her husband, and the other is a playwright, ironically, working with her husband. The male role is the primary public figure working in such careers as a retired professor, now missionary, a research and medical school professor, an apple farmer, a cook, a rancher and cowboy, and a Bluebird bus driver. The titles of their stories are enticing: “How Young America Lives at Seventy-five”, “The Vanishing Checkbook”, and “Victory-Ten

Years Later”. Schrag discusses spoken and written discourse but also the concrete actions of individuals and historically effective life of institutions. John Stewart discusses the contributions of Schrag and says that Schrag approaches the subject as a philosopher and then a philosopher of communication and situates himself between modernity and postmodernity.

John Stewart continues to explain that which is communication is about takes on special importance when understanding is incomplete. Schrag says that the hermeneutic circle begins to come into play as interlocutors turn to explanation, which consists primarily of the *analysis of elemental units* (Stewart, 1995). The determinants for interpretation are cultural, social, and contextual factors with an understanding and explanation situated within communicative praxis. One takes something as something by making it a topic of discourse, a motivation for action, a goal to be accomplished, a utensil to be used; the discourse of communicative praxis is not geared to the correspondence of word and reality mediated by representation, but instead, is a disclosure of patterns of perspectives and open horizons. Schrag does not look to an examination with a symbol model analysis, but looks to speech that is about something.

The July, 1955 issue of *LHJ* includes many familiar features. “Tell me Doctor” addresses a question from a reader: “My baby lived only two days. Does that mean the same thing would happen again?” This article, along with similar ones, opens the door to Schrag’s discussions being situated between modernity and postmodernity. The authors (doctors) give advice from a distant position, in a non-discursive monologue. The reader is engaged, and ultimately, dismissed by the author. An article, “No Men in My Life” appears and Jane Hamilton asks this question: “Can a girl whose possessive family wants

her to stay single break away to build a life of her own?" Another question is asked: "Is your family holding you back from marriage?" There is a quiz for the reader to take to answer this question to determine the influence of the family. And finally, another feature story tells the story of a woman who lost 100 pounds and "hardly knows herself" (p. 54). Asking the experts in women's magazines introduces a psychological situation to phenomenology; the actions and speech provide a communicative praxis without discourse or conversational texture.

The following ad appeared in the July, 1955 issue. *Youngstown Kitchens* have a full page ad claiming: "They're new! They're terrific! Now exciting go-together colors in Youngstown Kitchens at no extra cost." These steel kitchens are manufactured in Warren, Ohio, "And it can be yours on F. H. A. terms---with no money down and up to three years to pay! "How America Lives" features war brides, and also, there is a collection of overseas war brides and their native cooking talents. This section includes an exchange of recipes entitled "Foreign Exchange" (p. 110). The shoe ads in 1955 were a full spike heeled shoe. The gradual increase in height is evident in *Tweedies* shoe ad. The back cover of the July, 1955 issue is a full page ad for *Philip Morris* cigarettes. "More vintage tobacco makes Philip Morris so popular with younger smokers." "Gentle, more delicate in flavor...for those with keen young tastes."

The compilation of ads as they are read prepares us for a a conversation in progress; we do not engage the conversation, but merely pass through it. The above ads, from war brides to cigarettes; from shoes to kitchens; engage the conversation and place special emphasis on the setting and the action of individuals within the setting or scene. The 1950s provides such a scene with hidden meanings within the written word and

encourage us to examine the expression and content of those impacted by popular culture. In addition, an understanding of what was actually happening is significant to understanding the written word. Mikhail Bakhtin affirms that the utterance as a whole enters into an entirely new sphere of speech communication without dealing with semiotics, but in live speech, communication is first created in the process of transmission, in essence, without code (Stewart, 1995).

In “The Best Things in Life are Free,” Pat added that she satisfies her creative urges by having babies, making clothes for Starr, and trying recipes; she once wrote for a local paper as a teen and painted. “But as soon as I met Eddie, my days of hectic inconsistency were over.” On her honeymoon she began a journal; after Starr’s birth, she wrote: “My favorite career is motherhood! When you have a baby you suddenly want everything to be perfect. You want to be a perfect mother; sweet, soft-voiced, patient, understanding, firm, and beautiful in the eyes of your child.” She later added that if you do not go to college, you must find your own way to learn about things that are important. “The answer for me, the stay-at-home wife on a budget, lies in the book, art and music clubs by mail.”

The multivocal interplay of certainty and uncertainty are at work here as the wife (female role) discusses the fact that her favorite career is motherhood. Tim Stephen’s discusses the bonds of marriage and the different social contexts regarding the construction of worldviews. Stephen says that lifestyles, politics, and religious perspectives construct a unique reality. However, the more uniquely one structures one’s world, the more likely one is to feel social isolation. Long term relationships such as marriage can provide stability within constructed reality. They can also provide an

opportunity to construct a unique worldview or relational culture. In Stephen's terms, it is this condition that is called symbolic interdependence. Partners who have done this "have created a mutual interpretive framework through which they filter the data of the external world (p. 197). They react similarly and derive similar implications and significance from information; the communication process in the relationship has changed both partners, and they have created an interpretive framework and then, reinterpreted themselves within the relationship.

Charles Taylor (1989) discusses individualism and the illusions that go with it; it is particularly powerful in American culture. As Robert Bellah and his co-authors point out, Americans have built and constructed their lives based upon Puritanical ideals; in particular, in the idea of leaving home. Historically, Americans left home to establish their own relationship with God, and thus, become a member of the church. This historical perspective has grown into Americans leaving home and going their own way in the world. Taylor continues to discuss that this independence can become a mockery of independent, self-reliant individuals; the independence can become a very shallow affair, where masses of people express their individuality in a stereotypical fashion (Taylor, 1989).

Seyla Benhabib discusses the narrative structure of action and the standpoint of the concrete other. Once again, our families are universalized and generalized with their stories and lifestyles. Each family in the 1950s discusses their individual concrete otherness, but to understand it further, it is important to view the family through the lens of historicity. Benhabib offers a discussion on women and moral theory and suggests that the women's sphere is traditionally that of the private sphere in which children are

raised, human relationships maintained, and traditions handed down and continued. Benhabib says that the standpoint of the generalized other requires us to view each individual as a rational being entitled to the same rights and duties we would ascribe to ourselves. In contrast, the concrete other brings forth a being with concrete needs, desires and affects, with their own moral dignity, differentiating them from us (Benhabib, 1992).

Philip Rieff's work (1966/1987) is a public framework utilized in interpersonal communication. Rieff acknowledged the triumph of the therapeutic world view over the religious memtanarrative, and this recognition brought decay and collapse. This brings forth a question on emotive approaches to interpersonal communication. Arnett (1999) says: "Our task should not be to diminish the universe of interpersonal discourse by limiting the parameters of interpersonal communication to the private/public domain. Arnett seeks to ground part of interpersonal communication in the public domain while searching for a background narrative of dialogic civility.

This concept is brought forward by looking to public narrative in postmodernity constructively with one another, and thus support diversity and uniqueness. This is essential for looking to the families of the 1950s. Sissela Bok's notion of Common Values (1995) discusses minimal values which are situated in the moral categories of moral values. Respect for the other can be expected just as dialogic civility is sought out. In this way, we can keep the conversation going (Rorty, 1979).

*Ladies' Home Journal*: January to December, 1956

“Transients” and “Extended Family Needed”

The television images of domesticity that one thinks of when reminiscing about the 1950s includes a complete, cohesive, and smoothly run family. *The Donna Reed Show* included a mother who supervised the household chores; a father who had the last word with the house and children; and children who were healthy, well organized, and well adjusted. In contrast, some of the magazine families had a different and challenging experience. The Darners of North Dakota (appendix) were the antithesis of the television family, not because they were unhappy, but because achieving happiness was not quite as easy as one would believe. The article includes some revealing information about the structure of the family: the husband worked many hours; the wife was left to function without ongoing support; illness was an issue; and most importantly, extended family was left behind in Indiana.

The Darners exemplify how the concern for the other connects us to the world of civic space or public space and not privatized discourse. Arnett (1999) discusses the influence of Sissela Bok's idea of *Common Values* and calls attention to the wariness about absolutes in public space and the need for compromise, sociability, and concern for “us” that includes self and other. Arnett continues to explain that public space is realistic space grounded in the failings of human life. This common space or as provided by Aristotle, *phronesis* is based on the knowledge that “virtue without limits becomes terror” (Elshtain, 1993/1995, p. 123). Scholars take us to a common place for discussion on the divisions of public and private space. For the Darners of North Dakota, visiting this space was necessary for their survival in a time of crisis.

Perhaps the following family exemplifies the story advanced by Mintz and Kellogg (1988) and the influence of the postwar economic boom. “The temper of the times was conducive to marital life and domestic expansion” (p. 182). The authors continue to explain that the “hallmark of postwar prosperity was the suburban boom” (p. 182). The shift from the inner cities to the suburbs created an atmosphere of loneliness: “Many members of the growing middle class scattered into sprawling suburbs and other outlying areas to find their ranch house and a patch of lawn” (p. 183). Mintz and Kellogg explain that transience and isolation were characteristics common to the suburban family. Baxter and Montgomery (1996) discuss the dialogue between certainty and uncertainty over the history of a relationship and conclude that while dealing with certainty, other emotions enter the dynamic. Although Baxter and Montgomery are discussing life long relationships or romances, the impact of their observances plays a role in interpretation of the language of Mary Lou and Jim Field.

Baxter and Montgomery’s discussion about romance and certainty and uncertainty allows us to view the Fields from a theoretical perspective; their romance hinged on the happiness of the husband, regardless of other elements in the marriage. Werner and Baxter (1994) discuss moments of certainty and moments of uncertainty; couples who regularly punctuate their day-to-day routines with novelty often create a temporal rhythm; different dialectics are created by varying the routines of the relationship.

Benhabib’s theory of the *concrete other* (1992) is evidenced in the following story as we are informed of the overwhelming physical and emotional trials and tribulations of being a mother in 1956. Benhabib discusses the concrete history, identity,

and affective-emotional constitution of every individual and informs us that the stereotypical depictions of reality are merely fiction. The reality of 1956 shows us that The Beals (appendix) have a *concrete* story with a personal identity, unlike the one of the *generalized other* viewed on television sit-coms.

Benhabib also discusses metanarrative and petite narrative and how this may ultimately apply to the subject of autobiographies and biographies. Benhabib claims that the death of history thesis is interpreted as the end of “grand narratives.” This is interesting to feminist theorists as feminism as situated criticism has no set criteria of one’s situatedness; this is significant for the 1950s homemaker. Many young mothers or homemakers in general faced conflicts with traditions. Benhabib argues that criticism needs philosophy because the narratives of our cultures are so conflictual and irreconcilable (Benhabib, 1992). For the O’Connors, the situatedness of the household has taken a direct effect on the well-being of the family; the female role is doubled with the absence of the father; and the missing link is once again, extended family and support.

Bill Bradley’s (appendix) analysis of his wife Edith is reminiscent of Benhabib’s theory of the concrete other and Bakhtin’s discussion about the individual concrete utterances (oral and written) by participants in various areas of human communication. Bill engages Edith with a universal perspective and expects her to perform equal to his perception or anticipation of what is universally or generally expected of her. Bakhtin describes language as being reduced to a system of signs and symbols, and thus, cannot be described or defined using the terms and methods of linguistics or semiotics: “Everything that pertains to me enters my consciousness, beginning with my

name...through the mouths of others (my mother, and so forth), with their *intonation*, in their emotional and value-assigning *tonality*” (Stewart, 1995, p. 111).

The editors said that today’s young mother and homemaker works a 24 hour day in a 40 hour a week world and copes with overwhelming demands. They ask: “Are the strains on her too great in an era when families and relatives no longer live near enough to help?” (Spicer, March 1956). This comment reinforces the arguments advanced by Mintz and Kellogg (1988) as they discuss the exodus of the American family from the inner-cities to the suburbs, leaving extended family behind; the strains of the relationships are evident as we view several families who fall into their category of family. John Stewart discusses language as “the constitutive and representational-instrumental views” of human interaction; language is a way of being and being human gets in the way (Stewart, 1995).

*Ladies’ Home Journal: January to December, 1957*

“Turning the Corner” and “Mother has a Role”

The magazine families featured in 1957 are showing some movement as women are depicted in various careers other than that of homemaker: an antique dealer (along with her husband); a rancher (also with her husband); a secretary at the elementary school; a college student; and a chamber maid round out the female roles. The male roles are still the head of household and the primary money earners for the family. Four males and four females attended or graduated from college; the remainder attended high school. The question of how to unravel the messages told in the titles: “Second Marriage”, “Suddenly a Widow with 5 Children to Support”, and “Will you have enough Money

when You Retire?” may be discussed through the lens of Mikhail Bakhtin (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). Bakhtin’s theory that people are concretely positioned in time and space is relevant to the stories being told. The 1950s decade is slowly changing, and families are meeting new challenges within their communities. For example, Violet and Lawrence Allen operate an antique shop together and most importantly, are actively opening their home to 100 teenagers: “Open House to 100 Teenagers” shows a movement into the public rather than merely a private survival. Also, “Campus Romance” shows the interrelationships between two young adults and the importance of both male and female higher education. “Suddenly a Widow...” is a tragic story with obstacles to overcome; the widow does not discuss the possibility of government assistance as a choice, but instead, enters the work force at a level she can accomplish, a maid.

Calvin Schrag discusses the rhetorical turn, and this is applicable to this historical moment of the 1950s; the directedness of discourse to the other rather than for the other. The other is already situated within the discourse as the action begins; in this discourse the other is generalized rather than explicit. Schrag suggests that the rhetorical event be narrowed from *techne* to technique. This texture is displayed through expressivity of speaking, writing, and acting (Schrag, 1989). Schrag looks to shifting rhetoric from rhetoric as episteme to rhetoric of hermeneutics. This enables us to see rhetoric more broadly and better understand the human condition. This dismantling of epistemology (knowledge) does not displace knowledge but it resituates knowledge within a plurality of modes of discourse and communicative practices (Schrag, 1989, p. 188).

The following story depicts a foreign family in a not common light. The

February, 1957 issue of *LHJ* 's feature story was a first-hand account of life in Russia: "We saw how Russians live" contained everyday information about "regular" people who live in Russia. This human interest story answered questions about the Russian people: "Do the Russian people seem to have much freedom in their daily lives?" The author went to a factory and talked to the workers; went to a farmer's market; and reported on caviar. This issue also presented a young American couple: "Young Hollywood at Home" is a story about Dr. Jim McNulty and his actress wife, Ann Blyth, who are portrayed as a typical American family. The family photos include interior design and hostessing; one photo has singer Dennis Day as a guest.

The February issue shows the high heels getting higher and the appliances becoming more sleek. The featured fiction is "The Scapegoat" by Daphne du Maurier. The September, 1957 issue contains Paris fashions by *Dior, Chanel, Givenchy, Svend, Castillo-Lanvin, and Patou*. Also, there is a special article entitled "America's 10 Richest women---Who Are They?" The May, 1957 issue has a feature story that asks: "Is College Education Wasted on Women?" *Many college girls don't want what a higher education is supposed to offer.*" This survey was a scientific study done at Vassar by a research team composed of three psychologists and an anthropologist (p. 78). A full page ad for electricity asked this question: "How does your kitchen rate on the electrical living scale?" A list of electric appliances with a check mark line is rated by a scale: Just wonderful; Enjoyable; Bearable; and Roughing It. The also offer a free idea book for your electrical needs.

Schrag's account of the "about something" formulates the idea that there are two worlds: the communicative praxis world and what is is "about" world. This is significant

for discussing the world of Rosellen and Gerald Dennerlein; to further interpret their language, the discourse is seen as *constitutive* of “what they mean” rather than representational of *one* being. Schrag suggests that “the expressivity of a verbal speech act, a gesture, and a form of social behavior is the accomplishment and performance of meaning” and that “reflection will involve not a move to another standpoint but ways of moving about in our everyday engagements” (Stewart, 1995, p. 239).

The language of the Dennerleins (appendix) reflects this signification and discloses a tension in their speech; their cultural displacement has generated a hidden meaning within their accounts of their lifestyle. All five of the Dennerlein’s children go to school in Long Beach, California; two work and three study while Rosellen and Gerald “pool pay checks for family expenses.” Like many housewives in the 1950s, Rosellen works 75 hours a week, and 40 of those hours are at a job which pays her \$3000 a year. In addition to her paying job, “she washes, irons, cleans, sews for herself and three daughters, and keeps up with a nonstop husband.” The girls mentioned Gerry’s rock and roll rebellion when he hid all the Fats Domino records in the laundry; with the help of Rosellen, they found them all. Gerry complained that the six straight hours of rock and roll is difficult to handle when he has studying or research to do: “Luckily, he and his wife have the same preferences on television; they both like plays. To preserve family peace, the girls have their own set in a bedroom” (Dolson, April 1957).

*Ladies’ Home Journal*: January to December, 1958

“Billy Graham and the Beaver” “Mother is a Doctor” and “Juvenile Delinquency”

The 1958 families begin to shift focus and approach the hermeneutical

significance of the late 1950s era. As a fore-runner to the 1960s, we are able to see a change in the demographics of the families. On the other hand, it is interesting to note that the authors messages are still in a conformity mode and keep the “How America Lives” series one of interest to the average reader. There does not seem to be a hidden message, but there is a shift in narrative structure. The male roles reflect a high percentage of college preparedness; and the female roles also demonstrate a greater number of women attending college. The roles of the males are consistent with what one would expect, with the exception of Hugh Beaumont, the father on “Leave it to Beaver” and Billy Graham, the evangelist that is still recognized today. It is ironic that these two fathers, heads of household, and male role models, both appeared in the same decade. In addition, it is revealed that Hugh Beaumont was also a minister, graduated from a Methodist college; his wife, Kathy, was also an actress and minister.

Mikhail Bakhtin was critical of Saussure’s theory that language is abstract and certain; in contrast Bakhtin looked to the indeterminate or “messiness” of language and ultimately, the uncertainty of language. “A unitary language is always in essence posited—and every moment of its linguistic life it is opposed to the realities of herteroglossia...Language is a living system, then resides in each and every utterance. Every utterance serves as a site of interplay between the centripetal *langue* and centrifugal *parole*” (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996, p. 107). The following family, although quite well known to us today, was introduced in the 1958 article. Billy Graham is a household word today, but had not achieved the “iconistic” status that he holds today. The language analysis of Bakhtin and in addition, Schrag can help interpret the significance of this phenomena. When Schrag discusses the “hermeneutic reference”, he

is referring to the “taking of something as something”; what is talked about...is the world, work, experience, or even being; none of these is metaphysical or transcendental signifier or signified. “They mark out the topology of communicative praxis and circumscribe the holistic space of our expressive participation and involvement in speaking and acting...the world, work, experience...are examples of objects of reference that are referred to by talk” (Stewart, 1995, p. 243). Hermeneutical reference works with metaphorical play of language; the textuality and patterns of human action, institutional designs and historical trends transfigures the space of communicative praxis. Billy Graham’s language and historical significance is interpreted differently in the 1958 story than it would be in a 2006 story; the hermeneutical reference changes with the historical moment, and thus, the “hermeneutical reference is the display of the work-being textuality” (Stewart, 1995, p. 243).

In contrast to the Billy Graham article, the article about Hugh Beaumont raises another hermeneutical reference; Beaumont is situated in a 1958 article, but our reference of him is in 2006. The significance of this is in the interpretation of the hermeneutical significance of the story. For Beaumont, he was still uncertain about his future; for us, we know that it all worked out for him; *Leave it to Beaver* became a household word, a media icon. It is interesting to note that while reading the Beaumont article, it is apparent that the Beaumonts were just another family to the readers of the magazine. The context of the dialogue did not situate the rhetoric hermeneutically, nor did it discuss the phenomenon of the television series. Calvin Schrag discusses communicative praxis, as word and deed, as a network of inscriptions and intentionalities, about something. The Beaumonts and the Grahams were uniquely situated in a the 1950s historical moment,

and they were about something, for and toward someone. The art of ancient rhetoric is persuasion, and rhetoric as persuasive discourse is directed toward the other as hearer and reader; “Rhetoric is an integral and inaugural moment in the life of communicative praxis” (Schrag, 1989, p. 179-80).

The June and August, 1958 “How America Lives” featured two families known to most of the readers: Hugh Beaumont, “Between Jobs” and Billy Graham, “Billy Graham My Son-in-Law” included information about two men who had achieved success in television and were already members of most households. Hugh Beaumont, June, 1958, tells the story of his family, Kathy and their three children, two boys and a girl. The Beaumonts’ story is similar to that of our families as they also have to “make ends meet” in spite of the fact that Hugh is now playing the father on “Leave It to Beaver.” The television series is only part of what his career has generated; Hugh Beaumont is credited with 120 roles in films from the 1940s to the 1970s. In this article, Beaumont speaks about keeping his family separate from Hollywood and how they travel to secluded camp-like vacations to get away from work. The Beaumonts are concerned that they are always between roles with little security, although, they are encouraged by the success of “Leave It to Beaver.” One interesting exchange is when the youngest Beaumont son explains an encounter at school and says, “Yes, he got ‘gressive, so I got ‘gressive back--just like you said.” Kathy and Hugh suppressed laughter as they realized that Hugh as Beaver’s father had advised Beaver to be “aggressive back” on the television show the night before.

Billy Graham’s wife said: “If I could choose one thing to change about my life, it would be to have my husband home more often. But I’d rather see a little of Bill than a

lot of somebody else.” This story is written by Ruth Graham’s father in law who says in answer to the minister’s question: “Who giveth this woman in marriage to this man?” I replied, “Her mother and I do.” A few moments later Ruth McCue Bell had become Mrs. William Franklin Graham, Jr.---and I had become Billy Graham’s father-in-law” (p.103). The Grahams had five children and Ruth said, “Being a wife and mother is a full-time job. I consider myself a career woman.”

These two stories offer us a “heteroglossia” of language and a need to discover how they were chosen to be a part of an otherwise series of stories about average families. The messages delivered by the Beaumonts and the Grahams seemed to profess a likeness to other struggling families and at the same time, they were set apart by status and achievement. Although they shared family values, their language was mixed with certainty rather than uncertainty. They were more predictable and the dyadic relationships were less likely to be improvised during their performance. The theory of Bakhtin helps us engage the messages and the relationships to language. Baxter and Montgomery continue the discussion of relational dialectics and highlight four key themes to show this unique perspective: Bakhtin’s notions of dialogue as enacted communication, dialogue as centripetal-centrifugal flux, dialogue as chronotopic, and dialogue as distinct from monologue (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996, p. 41-42).

The multivocal interplay of certainty and uncertainty are continued in the story “Mother is a Doctor Now” as this family exhibits an the *new* is not necessarily a *given*. This story highlights the decade as we see a rhetorical shift in the role of women; this story emphasizes the multivocal interplay referred to by Bakhtin. Hugh and Frances Olsen moved to Philadelphia six years earlier so mother could study medicine. Hugh

Olsen, unlike other male, head-of-households in 1958, takes care of the children and the household chores. “He is carrying on a husbandly good deed of five years’ standing, during which time he and the children saw his wife and their mother enter medical school at the age of thirty-five, graduate four years later from Woman’s Medical College in Philadelphia with a *cum laude* degree,, and complete a year of interning at Philadelphia General Hospital. The multivocal relationships between the Olsens and also, the readers, is evident as one dissects the messages, while taking into consideration the hermeneutical significance and self impicature of their lifestyle. This publication was a legitimate vehicle for interpersonal communication and dialogue between the readers, the authors, and the families. The readers looked to women’s magazines, and in this case, *Ladies’ Home Journal* for a hermeneutical entrance into the greater culture or public sphere. “A rhetorical consciousness is stitched into the very warp and woof of the multiple forms of discourse and action, which in concert occasion a hermeneutical reference the hermeneutical self-impicature of the subject, and a disclosure of the other” (Schrag, 1989, p. 180 ).

Joshua Meyrowitz discusses the phenomenon of masculinity and femininity merging because of the influence of the electronic media. According to Meyrowitz (1985), television exposed women to many “male topics” that were not addressed by women’s magazines or other print media; television’s information is in a “presentational” form and its contents, regardless of discursive subject, was accessible to women without any prior training or knowledge. Men and women often watch television together, and this gave women credibility; they could no longer be accused of “not knowing” something vital, such as world affairs. Men did not suggest that women know nothing

about a certain subject. Meyorwitz suggests that television liberated women informationally and thereby, “planted seeds of discontent that would flower into other forms of revolt (Meyorwitz, 1985, p. 211).

“How America Lives” began to show signs of conflict and dissonance in the articles presented in the 1958s and 1960s; the themes changed to such topics as: “My Working Doesn’t Hurt Anyone” (Freeman, Oct. 1958); “Our Teen-age Drug Addicts” (Parton and MacKaye, March 1958); “No Place Like Home for Troubled Kids” (Laitin, April 1958); “Why Do They Marry So Young?” (Parton, Nov. 1958); “The Unwed Mother” (Stuart, March 1959); and “Weekend Wife Weekday Widow” (Parton, Feb. 1959). The familiar and traditional roles of family members were beginning to change as was revealed in the articles in *Ladies’ Home Journal*. This cultural phenomenon showed an emerging theme; women were beginning to return to the workplace, college, and generally, become more independent.

“How America Lives” addressed a growing problem in America: teenage drug addicts (Parton and MacKaye, March 1958). This article reveals that sixteen is the common age for becoming a drug user: “Instead of putting childhood behind them and seeking the pleasures and challenges of adulthood, they live only for the ‘next shot’.” This increase in drug abuse threatened the community as teenagers needed to support their addiction which costs them from \$35 to \$75 a week. Parton and MacKaye explained that drug addicts were generally adults in the latter part of their life span, but “today addicts are predominantly under thirty, not infrequently youths,” and they added that the medical profession, social scientists, and psychiatrists were expediting their efforts to discover the motives behind the increase in addictions and to develop treatment

programs to counteract the growing numbers of addicts. “Dope addiction” was a problem attributed to larger cities such as Los Angeles, New York, Detroit and Philadelphia, generally in their slums. They indicated that the typical “users” lives in a poor neighborhood, where family life is disrupted and where the population is deprived and disorganized. Not all addicts were previously delinquents and are not all gang members; some try drugs for “kicks” and never become addicts, but others who try “dope” find a reason for continuing. One teen-age addict said: “All we could think of was getting our next shot. We decided we were spending too much money, so we bought some heroin, capsuled it with mild sugar and started selling it around.”

The community Council of Greater New York furnished a list of signs that may indicate whether or not your teen-ager is using narcotics: “Are his school grades suddenly falling? Is he playing truant from school? Are clothes and personal belongings rapidly disappearing? Does he suffer from nausea after eating? Does he spend an unusual amount of time locked in his room or in the bathroom? Are his finger tips scorched from cigarettes?: Does he yawn too frequently? Does he have strange-looking, odd smelling cigarettes? Does he have marks on his arms or legs that could be caused by injections?” These questions and others were possible an indication that a teen-ager might be using drugs; the problems of drug and alcohol abuse are an on-going problem in society, and the 1950s postwar era was not an exception.

There were many outside influences encroaching on the American family at the end of the decade, and the media, including television, played a role in how America lived their family lives. Meyorwitz (1985) argues that television offers women direct access to the larger social environment and their “old sense of affiliation is blurred and overlapped

by an identification with others who are equally excluded from full participation in the larger perceived environment (Meyorwitz, 1985, p. 212). The following family broke away from the traditional norms of the culture and joined a new conversation with readers of women's magazines.

*Ladies' Home Journal* recognized the lives of young America and reported on the changes in life styles taking place in the late 1950s. One such article was "Why do they marry so young?" which was published in November, 1958. The growing concern was that teen-agers were marrying younger than ever before. "We've had so many marriages this last year that I can't even keep track of them," said a high school principal. He added that students were starting to go steady when they are thirteen and wearing a boy's ring on a necklace; and if they are not engaged by their senior year, they think they have failed. The principal concluded that if they become pregnant, they are expelled from high school. This is the first article that focused on teen age pregnancy and the sexual interests prevalent in the American culture. They also added that contemporary culture stimulates romantic and sexual interests, and glamorizes marriage.

Some educators indicated that early marriage was a reflection of the insecurities of the time and that many of the girls who marry young come from insecure and unhappy homes and seem to look upon marriage as an escape to a happier life style. Economic prosperity indicated that parents keep their children in school longer and thus, society is not aware of early marriage, whereas, a generation ago, parents couldn't contribute to the support of married children.

"One of the biggest single factors we've noticed is the change in sexual attitudes. Many of our high-school girls get married just because they have to get married. And an

equal number of girls in school get pregnant every year but don't get married---they just disappear for a semester and then come back without any baby" (Stuart, March 1959).

The following reports were included in this article: approximately 300,000 boys and girls under 18 are married, and by age 18, some 15,000 additional young people are widowed or divorced. Sociologist Harold T. Christensen of Purdue University contends that teen-agers are not mature enough for marriage; they make very unstable husbands, wives and parents; the younger a couple is, the shorter the marriage; and the best time for marriage seems to be the early or mid-twenties. He concludes that the marrying too young is definitely one cause of divorce. Mr. Albert Werthan of Family Service Association of America cites this record: brides under 20 and grooms under 21 account for 60 percent of the country's divorces; about one-third of these marriages end in divorce. Dr. Marion Hilliard warns: "Adolescent boys and girls are too young to cope with sex, but it fills their minds and bodies." She continued: "Movies, popular songs and television constantly portray only the passion side of human love, giving our adolescents the false impression that this is love in its entirety. Nothing could be more wrong. Modern fathers and mothers are avoiding the traditional responsibilities of parents." Dr. Hilliard's assessment of popular culture and its influence on morals and values is based upon her evaluation of the media and its influence on teen-agers. Many of the same complaints about popular music and popular culture's influence are echoed today.

*Ladies' Home Journal*: January to December, 1959

"Wither Thou Goest" and "The Unwed Mother"

Authorial intent and authenticity are addressed in this last chapter of the 1950 decade. The stories are mostly autobiographical in nature with an interaction between a

member of the family and a *Ladies' Home Journal* editor; as in the opening piece of this chapter, there is often an editorial message preceding the actual article about the family. Diane Bjorklund (1998) recognizes the significance of moral performance and autobiographies by stating that although autobiographers recognize that they are different from other authors, they must also be true to their authenticity. Calvin Schrag claims that the speaker, author, and agent are not foundations of communicative praxis, but in contrast, are products emerging from the history and modified by the changing scenes (Schrag, 1989).

Whether or not the editors are making a disclaimer for their publication or stating a hermeneutical truth is muddied by the message. The editors lay out the demographics of unwed mothers, their relationship to society, and the messages to other would-be unwed mothers in this opening paragraph. Their message comes with a list of qualifiers that give their statement authenticity, but there is no relevance to an interview with the story that follows.

The 1959 families differ somewhat from the previous years; the 1959 families exhibit a return to high school graduates with less emphasis on college. There are several articles dealing with social issues which suggests that the families are more public in their life's positions but more private in their beliefs and values. For example, the titles of the articles "My Faith Grew All Over Again", "Whither Thou Goest" and "The Country Doctor" are all families dealing with the inner strengths and physical weaknesses of the community. "The Unwed Mother", "One Armed Mother", "We Adopted a Blind Child", and "Weekend Wife Weekend Widow" all connote a series of families making social and personal sacrifices. "How to Bring Up 4 Children on \$100 a Month" promotes

the puritanical ideals of frugality and sacrifice.

## Conclusion

### **“Portraits through the Lens of Historicity: The American Family as Portrayed in *Ladies’ Home Journal* 1950-1959.”**

Women’s magazines have often been the source of information to assist women in their daily lives. This was particularly true in the 1950s as women adjusted to their new found lives as full time homemakers and consumers in a time of renewed domesticity and the influence of the mass media. Women’s magazines and television, simultaneously, found their way into the lives of the newly created suburbs and ultimately, the homes of thousands of young married couples.

Whether a woman is working in the home or is a full time homemaker, the publishers of magazines for popular culture have always been available to give advice or criticism to a specific audience. In this historical moment, the directive of a public rhetorical act is the American family, and in particular, the American homemaker. Women’s magazines framed the culture, and ultimately, framed the American home. This interpretive project addresses the rhetorical process taking place between the family and the media, and through a constructive understanding of narrative structure, explores the portrayal of the 1950s family, situated in a particular historical moment.

Several interpersonal paradigms have been examined to better understand the meanings of the messages between *Ladies’ Home Journal* and the articles “How America Lives” and the families who participated with the magazine’s authors or editors in this monthly series. Martin Buber’s “The Between” and “Inclusion and Exclusion”; Seyla Benhabib’s “Conversational Model” and “Standpoint of the Other”; and Mikhail

Bakhtin's "Theory of Dialogism help explain the complexities of the 1950s families. These philosophical and interpersonal communication paradigms and theories will be utilized to generate a conceptual framework for interpreting their "story" and how their story is constructed. The story is examined through a constructive framework as expressed in historical documents and artifacts and in portrayals in *Ladies' Home Journal*.

Martin Buber's concept of inclusion and exclusion provides a metaphoric vehicle for discovering people's narrative context within a community, their religious beliefs, and their ethnic connection. When discussing the 1950s family and the families featured in the "How America Lives" series, Buber's theory gives us the lens within which a metaphoric connection may be made. The families were immersed in a new dialogue that could be interpreted by their inclusiveness and excludedness within the community. Whether or not their values and lifestyles were similar or different than other families is revealed in the articles. *Ladies' Home Journal* promised to show a diversity of American life, but in contrast, the editors followed proscribed limits and insisted on a community of shared that crossed economic lines (Walker, 2000). The families maintained a continuity or inclusive quality that encompassed hard work, a sense of morality, family togetherness, and aspirations for a better future (Arnett & Makau, 1997).

Buber suggests that dialogue is lived between persons, between persons and events, between persons and ideas, and according to Arnett, this may occur even in a crisis. The articles provide the reader with a sense of dialogue between the magazine families and that of the "at home" reader, and although the articles possessed a dialogue lived between persons, the "persons" often presented the idea or suggestion of a crisis.

Several of the families generated a “feeling” of despair in an attempt to overcome diversity. Arnett claims that the individual communicates within a sphere which shows a commonality between persons and ideas, but on the other hand, individuals reach beyond the special sphere of individual. The between is the *common center* and offers an alternative to unconcerned individualism.

The interpretive process utilized in this thesis is one of pure phenomenology which is precipitated by Edmund Husserl and progressed by Martin Buber. The phenomenological approach is applied to the articles to better understand the historical moment and its significance and to contrast this study from that of a psychological study. Although the family was influenced by the insertion of a psychological hermeneutic, the interpretation is best served through a hermeneutical advancement of the phenomena taking place in 1950s America (Arnett & Arneson, 1999).

The historical moment may be understood in conjunction with the disintegration of a metanarrative; this is evidenced by discussing the language of the 1950s as *heteroglossia* or messiness of language. Mikhail Bakhtin argues that dialogue and voice are both metaphorically and literally significant, and thus, the *utterances* are positioned in a given time and place. Julia Wood creates a metaphor of *standpoint* and through this lens, it is apparent that the families not only look to the larger language of their culture or metanarrative, but inject their own standpoint or petite-narrative into the conversation. Nancy Walker (2000) claims that although the families were carefully chosen to give their own standpoint, they were in fact chosen to reflect the larger culture. Walker discusses the concept of the “common thread” that runs through the demographics of diverse tastes, values, political philosophies, and economic levels. This common thread

or standpoint will be interwoven through a common narrative of 1950s America (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996).

Perhaps the most vital interpersonal communication tool for interpreting the language of the 1950s American family is that of Seyla Benhabib's "concrete" other (1992). Benhabib's concrete other is opposite of the "generalized or universal" other that is often associated with the 1950s family. Benhabib's standpoint opens the door for understanding the concrete histories and the gestalt formed by their messages. The 1950s American family has often been *generalized* or *universalized* to compare the family to other families in various historical periods. As one approaches the magazine families, it is apparent that each family brings a concrete story with hints of generalization or universality, but primarily exhibits the individuality or concreteness of the family situated in the historical moment. The dialogue presented by the families reflects their needs, desires, and affects and engages the multivocal interplay of *centripetal* and *centrifugal* taking place in the historical moment. Bakhtin's theory plays an important function for understanding the significance of the phenomenological implications of the 1950s language and identity and how it affected the lives of the American family.

The 1950s postwar era is often identified as the beginning of postmodernism and the collapse of metanarrative with the emergence of a multivocal cultural phenomenon. Benhabib addresses the position of the American family and claims that no single set of criteria can be used to determine one's situatedness because the narratives of our culture are so conflicted and irreconcilable. As she criticizes social constructionist theory, Benhabib (1992) claims that social criticism needs philosophy because the narratives are universal and uncontroversial. This conceptualization gives credence to the notion of

how the families are part of the outer forces of the culture, but more importantly, carry their own set of values and concreteness. Bakhtin claims that individuals need to fuse their similarities while maintaining their individuality; the *centripetal* or forces of unity and the *centrifugal* or forces of difference join together to better understand the multivocality of social reality as constituted in the contradictory interplay of the two forces (Baxter & Montgomery, 1992).

In contrast to the belief that language is static or purely linguistic, Bakhtin compares language to *all* art by stating that language is an exchange or clash of values between a work and its audience. Bakhtin continues that language is determined by the historical components of particular utterances, and that the author's narrative strives to implant certain utterances in one's mind. For the purpose of this study, the interpretation of the portrayal of the family is the focus and not that of the intent of the author. Bakhtin might predict that the messages and conversations contained in the articles "How America Lives" will reflect the standpoint of the story or narrative being told. This theory adds texture to the discovery as the subject of authenticity and authorial intent are examined.

As we approach the *Ladies' Home Journal* articles, it is imperative to understand how the complexities of the families may have been socially constructed into a new reality or situatedness within a fragmented postmodernity. Peter Berger (1966) joins the conversation and claims that knowledge is not a fixed subject, but instead is constructed by an individual through experiences of that object. Language is capable of constructing symbols that are abstracted from everyday experiences and representing them as real elements in everyday life. For Berger, social constructionists have influenced our way of

thinking and the actions projected from conceptualization to actualization. Baxter and Montgomery explain that what is experienced as real is constructed and reconstructed *again and again* (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996).

The 1950s families were engaged in a dialogic tension between personal ideals and that of the greater postmodern culture. According to Alisdair MacIntyre (1984), a morally fragmented society is one that presents a conflicting social content and social context while existing within the larger culture; many individual voices are presented as the authority and true word of the historical moment. Thus, the clash of competing narratives can result in confusion as the culture searches for one clear voice of authority; the 1950s American family faced this phenomenon as they looked for an adjustment to the complexities of various media and government voices presenting different visions of what was “good” for the family. MacIntyre (1984) claims that the changes in, and fragmentation of, morality that accompanied modernity creates the stage for the emergence of selfhood; this is a concept of self whose unity resides in the unity of a narrative which links birth to life to death as narrative with a beginning, middle, and an end. This helps an individual deal with the realities of what is going on in a given time period. The setting has a history, with individual agents, situated in such a way that the individual agent and his changes through time will be unintelligible. This narrative history is the genre for the basic and essential genre for the characterizations of human actions.

Aristotle advanced the idea that human knowledge is action, and human action assimilates knowledge through a framework of their social interaction and activities. The actions of individuals “trumped” the idea of a cosmological delivery of knowledge;

culturalism and the social construction of one's reality were framed as an acceptable philosophy of interpersonal ideologies. The Platonic idea of an absolute truth was no longer possible for those who believed Aristotle's philosophy that knowledge is available to all individuals and is not exclusively available to philosophers (MacIntyre, 1984).

Since man produces himself, and man's self-production is always a social enterprise, individuals together produce a human environment with both a sociocultural and psychological formation. According to Berger (1966), these two vehicles construct our world-view of our immediate environment and that which lies beyond our environment; also, these vehicles give us a sense of how we fit into the world, what is valuable to our well being, and offer us an idea of why things are the way they are. Berger continues to explain that we construct our sense of ourselves, our identity, our purpose, our ideologies, our sense of appropriateness of, the structure of, and the exercise of, power, action and roles in society. Derrida joins the conversation by stating that without language, man could not create himself, and thus, could not create his existence. Derrida claims that language is a system of signs whose identity is grounded in essence; this contradicts Saussure's description of language as not having essence but merely that of a signifier and signified, with neither ideas nor sounds that existed before the linguistic system. For Derrida *differance* affects a link between deconstruction and the analysis of rhetorical texts by examining the rhetoricity of the subject (Lucaites, Condit, & Caudill, 1999).

As we discuss the 1950s American family, the subjectivity will be addressed through the hermeneutical significance of the historical moment, the historicity, and the rhetoricity to further understand the interpersonal communication of the magazine

families. The hermeneutical significance is evident through the interplay of the families with the magazine articles and the influence of the multivocality of their messages. The articles in *Ladies' Home Journal* are best understood by examining the expression and content of those impacted by popular culture and in addition, what was actually happening in the historical moment. Derrida argues that the conceptualization of a message reveals the meaning of the message and how it is influenced by the hermeneutical situation (Lucaites, Condit, & Caudill, 1999).

Calvin Schrag and *praxis* (1989) are essential for understanding how the information about the 1950s family can provide a type of knowledge that can be transformed into a meaningful application. Communicative praxis involves not only the texts of spoken and written discourse but also, the concrete actions of individuals and the historicity of the discourse. The textuality of the texts, the embeddedness of the authors, the motivations and decisions of the individual families, and expressions of speech and action will be included in the *praxis* of this dissertation (Schrag, 1988).

The rhetorical hermeneutics of the 1950s plays a significant role in defining who the American family was, why they acted the way they did, and how this can play a part in the big picture of why this makes a difference to us today. The 1950s demographics show that Americans were eager to have families after World War II, and thus, were involved with a renewed domesticity. The families searched for a renewed peace, prosperity, and traditional gender roles as the private lives of the family became a public commodity. The postwar era provided the men returning from the war with GI benefits through the G. I. Bill; the universities accommodated the returning veterans while women dropped out of college to have children (May, 1954). Women's roles were

narrowed as they returned to the home to assume the role of housewife and mother, while men re-entered the community in their traditional roles of head-of-household and college student. Betty Freidan argued that full-time domesticity stunted women and denied their basic human need to grow; for Freidan, women and men find personal identity and fulfillment through individual achievement, most notably through careers. Freidan says that without this growth, women remain unfulfilled and unhappy.

According to Elaine May, families did not accidentally become involved with a family-centered culture, and families did not conclude that moving to the suburbs was a good idea. May concluded that families were influenced by a wide range of sources, including evidence from popular culture, especially movies, mass-circulation periodicals, and newspapers. The families were inundated with information from advertisers, home builders, and other experts on the subject of domesticity. Brett Harvey claims that “the government, aided by social scientists and the media, was a massive effort to channel all these disturbing energies into one safe harbor: the family” (Harvey, XIV). Most of the literature gives us the picture that the family was created by publicly driven, outside forces who framed the American family as a “first line of defense” against communism. As the 1950s era emerged, families moved to the suburbs, and the head-of-household began a long commute to work; this of course, was the male role. The woman’s role was that of homemaker, including mother, chauffeur to the children, and as related in the literature, the member of the family who made the greatest sacrifice.

The metaphor of the 1950s family is that of *Donna Reed* and the very popular TV series, *Leave It To Beaver*. Although there were many television shows that emerged either during the 1950s or reflectively about the 1950s, *Donna Reed* and *June Cleaver*

seem to be the domestic ideals most often cited by scholarly literature. According to Spigel (1992), television became the cookie-cutter community which the family envied in the 1950s and continues to envy today. Television became an integral part of the families' lives as the exodus from the inner-cities to the suburbs took place. The depictions of the television families were only part of the hermeneutical significance of the 1950s; the primary influence may have been in the advertisements and the temptations they created. A society of "wants" rather than "needs" emerged as television became a persuasive vehicle for advertisers and their potential consumers, the American family.

There were many television shows that originated on the radio and eventually, made their way to the television studio; the theme of "good neighborliness" during difficult times was often brushed aside by the more consumer-oriented culture. Madelyn Pugh Davis, a head writer for *I Love Lucy* claims that "neighbors" were included for storytelling purposes. The urban sit-coms helped legitimize the cultural transitions of the postwar society by linking consumerist values to nostalgic memories of a previously engaged urban and ethnic culture (Spigel, 1992). The neighborly atmosphere of the television families paralleled the neighborliness of the 1950s families living in their suburban, track houses. The metaphor of *Donna Reed*, *June Cleaver* and *Lucille Ball* carried into the American family's living room where residents yearned for a replacement for extended family and a new suburban ideology.

The American family was impacted by television portrayals of the ideal family structure, films depicting the typical family, magazine articles written to mold the character of the family, government agencies attempting to conform the family; and

sociological and psychological writers who reinforced the overall changes in the American family format. The ideology was not born overnight; sociological factors contributed to the needs and desires of the family. For example, women's magazines portrayed men in gray flannel business suits while portraying women in their *Maidenform* bras, high heels, and other costumes depicting a feminine shroud. The literature supports the influx of fashions and cosmetics, while promoting the need for vinyl floors, step-saver kitchens, and new electric appliances. The perusal of women's magazines, and in this study, the examination of *Ladies' Home Journal*, reveals a mixed message of domesticity and the notion of the perfect homemaker, and the feminizing of the homemaker. The first message gives the homemaker the information necessary to decorate the home, cook for the family, and acquire the necessary attachments for the home to measure up to the national ideal. The second type of advertising includes information for bodily functions, such as soap and deodorant; fashions including bras, suits, hats, and gloves; and new recipes to keep the home interesting and modern. Often the recipes were fit into a new appliance mold, such as an electric fry pan or a pressure cooker; in many instances, the recipes were a direct result of the product being sold.

Harry Henderson's articles about the 1950s American family appear in Harper's Magazine, November and December, 1953. Henderson gives us a first hand glimpse into the 1950s family as he interviewed many "housewives" and visited them in their newly constructed, suburban, tract houses. Perhaps Henderson's account of the newly created suburbs reinforces our nostalgic perceptions of the *universalized* or *generalized* 1950s family. Henderson observed that the new communities were built on farmland, quickly, cheaply, and profitably, and the new communities had neither a history, tradition, or

established structure; there was no inherited customs, institutions, or important families in important houses. In addition, there were no old people, teenagers, in-laws, family doctors, big shots, churches, organizations, schools, or local governments (Henderson, Nov. 1953).

The nostalgia associated with the 1950s family is viewed through the lens of *Ladies' Home Journal* and in particular, the series "How America Lives." The families were chosen by the editors to suggest a common thread or generalization that the magazine wanted to project to its readers. Suburbanization of the American family was exhibited by the articles, but also, the magazine families lived in the larger cities in America. The literature shows that the new suburbs created an environment of conformity, isolation, and matriarchy (Mintz & Kellogg, 1988). In fact, most of the families fit into this mold; there was an overall image of conformity, and in many situations, isolation, and most households were dominated by the female as homemaker.

Harry Henderson refers to the newly married couples and their position in the suburbanization process and claims that the individuality of the family was lost in standardization and repetition, and the exception was only notable in the interior design of the homes. The magazine families were often young couples, struggling for individuality while maintaining a national character or virtue. Often Henderson's homemakers complained of having too much time and not enough to do: "I used to sit by the window...just wishing someone would go by" (Henderson, 1953). Many of the magazine families complained of the opposite and said that there was never enough time to complete every chore and complete one's responsibility. This contrast of values is also exhibited by the male counterpart who, unlike Henderson's "male role" of the absent

father, the magazine fathers (males) contributed to the family in every possible way. For example, many of the magazine males were not living in the suburbs commuting long distances to work but were working close to home in a variety of occupations.

As Henderson's American families relied on television for information and inspiration, the magazine families looked to *Ladies' Home Journal* for advice on many subjects, including how to become the family most admired in America. There were several leading women's magazines that influenced the lives of the American family. Nancy Walker discusses the messages in women's magazines from the pre-war era to the post-war era and provides a foundation depicting the American family as patriotic, self-sacrificing, and homogenized. Walker argues that women spent the decade recognizing the needs of men and capital, working in factories, and then after the war, "soothing the fragile male ego, doing housework, and heading the family's department of consumer affairs" (Walker, 2000). As we look to Henderson's account of what was actually happening with the 1950s family, another argument emerges as to the happiness and impact on the family.

Several themes permeated women's magazines, but some issues were popular than others. The magazines faced the complexities of the cold war with articles that engaged women and the family with the nation. The "Sputnik" threat was thwarted with ads for vegetable crispers, rubberoid gloves to wash dishes, dishwashers, or a son's sexuality. Don DeLillo of *The New Yorker* insists on the manufactured quality of the 1950s middle-class and reminds us of both the media presentation of consumer goods and the political construction of the middle-class home as "the bastion of democracy" (Walker, 2000).

By the 1940s, World War II created a profound change in the lives of men and women in America, and this is most evident in gender roles. Women were described by Betty Freidan as heroines with career aspirations, and these images were reinforced by the women's magazines. The women returned to their prewar jobs of homemaker realizing that the wages and roles were not the same. Although women returned to college in great numbers, their wages never returned to the prewar level (Walker, 2000). The postwar policies and public opinion favored the role of men over women, and thus women's wages dropped 26% after the war ended. The female veterans were considered dependents and did not receive veterans' benefits.

*Ladies' Home Journal's* "How America Lives" series advocated a consistent set of moral values regardless of socioeconomic status, and readers were presented with a set of values and social aspirations. The magazine's standards in relationship to the family featured women as the effective center of the family, filled with self-sacrifice, hard work, and consideration for others (Marling, 2000). Marling, along with many scholars, refers to the "togetherness" of the family; the metaphor of *togetherness* carries the message of the whole of domestic existence including children, manners, and etiquette. The new series was introduced to establish a new message about the American family. The editor's goal was to counteract the ideology of an American aristocracy and replace it with the ideal equality. Walker explained that America is proud to have no aristocracy. The rhetoric of the articles tied the family to the nation and introduced families to one another as *neighbors*; this unified them with a core of shared values that could be considered middle-class. The families were praised, regardless of income level, for being

industrious, unpretentious, civic-minded, moderate in their political views, and devoted to home and family (Walker, 2000).

Domesticity and femininity were the main themes in women's magazines; this may seem obvious as one focuses on women's magazines rather than magazines in general, but the messages included in the magazines carried these messages exclusively. The ideology of women fulfilling other roles was not evident until the late in the 1950s, and the message of inclusion for women in the workforce was not presented until 1958. In every other year, the woman was at home, working within a framework of domesticity with a propensity for femininity. The magazines included all the information that one would need to create the perfect home for the family with all of the right attributes. The advertising industry received a much needed boost after the war as the industry focused on domesticity. Walker claims that advertisers were responsible for defining the domestic war effort.

There is some evidence that all was not well on the home front as women became bored and unhappy in their marriages and their newly created domestic bliss. Mintz and Kellogg discuss the beginning of "call girl rings" and other abuses such as alcohol and barbiturates entering the family circle. There were plenty of experts available to help the young families through their troubles; doctors advised them about health issues, including Dr. Spock who was the leading expert on child rearing; sociologists and psychologists attempted to unravel anxieties; and architectural critics joined novelists and popular culture commentators to generate literature on the suburbs. Women's magazines offered advice on food preparation, nutrition, and an overall guide to being a better homemaker.

This was an era of scientific studies from various experts; college professors joined other institutions to give expert advice on domestic life and child care. Betty Freidan researched femininity and women's magazines and concluded that the magazines provided images that were created to be *womenness*. Once again a metaphor for the description of women in the 1950s emerges. Joanne Meyerowitz (1994) argues with Freidan's study and claims that she did not look at all popular culture magazines, but instead, focused on a few women's magazines. Meyerowitz looked to *Reader's Digest* and *Coronet*; *Harper's* and *Atlantic*; magazines aimed at African Americans such as *Ebony* and *Negro Digest* and also, *Ladies' Home Journal* and *Woman's Home Companion* (Meyerowitz, 1994).

In 1956, *Ladies' Home Journal* said that it was up to women to "put the brakes on" in sexual relations even though "sex suggestiveness" was here to stay. For women, the public-private dichotomy was fused into discourse on sexual activity coupled with ads to make women more beautiful and desirable. The language of women's magazines changed in the 1950s, and therefore, women's reality changed according to the language. Betty Freidan refers to an ongoing series entitled: "Occupation Housewife" which appeared from the 1930s through the 1950s. This series is also of interest to scholars on the subject of the postwar American family. The language included in this series was directed to the homemaker specifically as a domestic; in contrast, Ewen and Ewen discuss the mixed messages delivered through the fashion industry. According to Ewen and Ewen, clothing was reminiscent of the Victorian era with crinolines, push-up bras, girdles, and high heeled shoes that presented American womanhood as hobbled.

Makeup, deodorants, and other visual and olfactory barriers were set to protect womanhood from personhood (Ewen & Ewen, 1979).

The magazine families featured in “How America Lives” reveal similar lifestyles while maintaining individual socioeconomic levels; this is revealed as the families shared an historical moment and a rhetorical shift from a grand narrative to one of a fragmented cultural message. The editors of *Ladies’ Home Journal* engaged the families in a cultural conversation by receiving their letters, interacting with them through a public vehicle, and printing their stories to demonstrate a conversational exchange between them and other similar families. The communication paradigms reviewed earlier have been instrumental in this historical interpretation of the autobiographies of the families. Martin Buber’s *the between* and Mikhail Bakhtin’s *centripetal and centrifugal* forces are of particular interest when reading the articles. In addition, it is important to understand the ancient arguments dealing with Platonism or Aristotelean positions when examining the messages of the families.

The families were influenced by a society that had shifted from the philosophy of Aristotle to a more Platonic philosophy, and the families were directly affected by this shift; the government knew what was best for the family, and a dialogue to determine one’s destiny was discouraged. In many respects, the American family was situated similarly to the theoretical community in *The Republic*. The rhetoric of the 1950s family joins the narrative structure of the hermeneutical moment and the result is somewhat predictable. Whether or not the family is a universal or generalized other or a *concrete other* is debatable. The 1950s American family is nostalgically remembered as the ideal American family, and often is generalized as to their values and structure; the father of

the house was portrayed as the head-of-household; the mother's role was that of a feminine domestic. Although these roles are often challenged as myth, the articles in *Ladies' Home Journal* substantiate this claim. The demographics of the magazine families are similar to those of the 1950s ideal; in contrast, they were not similarly aligned with their television counterparts.

Two arguments are presented: Were the magazine families closely related to the 1950s ideal family? and Were the magazine families similar to the television families? The 1950s magazine families were chosen to resemble the image desired by the government, the social sciences, and other experts. The similarities to the ideal family are evident, but the similarities to the television families were not as obvious. The families were similar to the general structure of the television family, with the father going to work, and the mother staying home with two-three children. The families diverged from the universal, nuclear structure, to a family system often riddled with adversity and self-sacrifice. The television families did not share this commonality, but instead, were most often comfortable, happy, without maladjustment or strife.

Different programs have different affects, but the impact is not easily recognized in this study. It is apparent that "Leave It to Beaver" depicted a conservative nuclear family with the father as head-of-household. Whether or not the magazine families were directly affected by this show or others is not revealed in this study. The information disclosed by the authors, printed in the magazines, and shared with the readers gives us a glimpse of the 1950s family. The articles also reinforce some of the easily recognized "universals" associated with the 1950s postwar era. The families at the beginning of the decade are quite similar to the families at the end of the decade; traditional roles prevail.

The artifact for this study the *Ladies' Home Journal* "How America Lives" magazine articles from 1950-1959; all one hundred twenty families are included in this research project. There were very few exceptions to the roles of the family: the male role is patriarchal with the father working outside the home; the female role is that of homemaker, mother, and one that gives emotional support to the entire family. The female role is often the focus of research projects because the role of homemaker reflects the hermeneutical influences of the 1950s postwar era. Many of the magazine homemakers worked before they were married and gave up their careers for domesticity. It is not evident from the literature that this was a "bad thing" for them or the culture. In contrast, the females defending and "shouted their praises" for their role in society.

All of our families put emphasis on children and the home, and many had more than four children and as many as nine. Most fell into the category of the nuclear family predictions of two or three children. The occupations of the males were quite varied as some were still in the military, others were veterans returning to college, and most were working within a modest, middle-class structure. There were, however, several well known fathers who had achieved success beyond that of the average middle-class male. There were two actors and one television evangelist among other notable men who worked as athletes, college professors, doctors, or lawyers.

How or why this information is significant for academic research is of the utmost interest for this study. The American family is often the focus of social scientists who look to certain segments of history to find the answers for today's problems or interests. The 1950s family falls into this category as researchers have been enthralled with the 1950s from many different perspectives; sociologists, psychologists, and anthropologists

have looked to the 1950s for answers to complex questions and dilemmas occurring in later decades. This research project approaches the 1950s American family from a unique interpersonal communication perspective and looks to the dialogue taking place within the historical moment of the 1950s postwar era. Although other projects have contributed to this thesis, the actual families included in “How America Lives” have never been at the center of the study. The interpersonal communication scholars help unravel the complex messages of the families in their dialogic discourse with other families living in the historical moment. The multivocal qualities presented by the families opens the door for further research and an expansion on this dissertation.

Joshua Meyrowitz (1985) asks the following: “Why and how do technologies that merely create new *connections* among people and places lead to any fundamental shift in the structure of society or in social behavior?” (Meyrowitz, 1985, p. 23). Meyrowitz suggests that the answer to this question is in the ways in which disconnectedness, the separation of social situations and interactions, ultimately shape reality. The 1950s family’s reality was shaped by many outside forces, including the influence of television and the print media. Meyrowitz discusses situational determinants of behavior and the electronic media and suggests that through separation of situations, the situationists offer a framework that can be adapted to study the effects of new patterns of interaction brought about by new media. Although this thesis looks to the relationship of individuals and electronic media, the answer to the question “why” is not fully understood. The inclusion of advertising within the television programming provides the most direct connectiveness to the family’s direction, but the actual affects from the content of the programming is less clear.

June Cleaver or Donna Reed are reflections of an ideal American homemaker; they were not in place to directly influence the homemaker in “real time”, but instead, were offered as evidence of a more perfect time in American history. The inclusion of television families is necessary to this study, but leaves many unanswered questions as to their input to the family’s well being or direction. Women’s magazines seemed to be the voice of authority for the family as they patterned their lives after those who were in the public venue, bridging the gap from the private sphere to the public. The metaphor of inclusion or exclusion seemed to permeate the families as they strove for acceptance from a greater voice, that of the public.

The importance of this study is to demonstrate that the 1950s family was not what historians or media producers claim; in contrast, the 1950s family was not “universal” but was “concrete” and individual. Each family represented in “How America Lives” had its own set of values, norms, and ideals intertwined with a “universality” suggested by the authors and the general public. The families were carefully chosen to represent an ideal, but still maintained their own “concrete other”. This subject material is significant for scholars with emphasis on the American family, the 1950s, the postwar era, the coldwar era, and the subjects connected to marketing, advertising, and public relations. In addition, this study will be significant for popular culture as it situates the family in “reality” and not merely as a nostalgic subject.

The next phase of this study will include “How America Lives” from 1940-1960 in an attempt to include what led to the 1950s phenomenon. Some of that information is included in this project, but a more indepth study will follow. Perhaps the families in *Ladies’ Home Journal’s* “How America Lives” can join the conversation with the

already published families in “Can This Marriage Be Saved?” Both tell the story of American families and their connectiveness and disconnectiveness within the greater American culture within the framework of postmodernity.

## Appendix: “How America Lives” 1950-1959

### 1950 families

The family oriented series “How America Lives” appeared in *Ladies’ Home Journal* throughout the 1950s; the emphasis of these articles was on the diverse American family and how they attempted to face their individual family needs and challenges in the postwar era. “How America Lives” reinforces what social scientists have claimed about the 1950s family and in particular, the 1950s housewife. A majority of the women were cast in traditional roles as wife, mother and homemaker, and the men provided financial support so that the women could maintain their family status. In addition, the majority of the men who were depicted in the articles were veterans of World War II and often recalled to duty in the Korean War.

Each month an American family was featured, and their varying lifestyles were explored and shared with other families in America. Since these articles were published every month throughout the 1950s, the historical moment was simultaneously shared by millions of struggling families across America, and therefore, a cultural conversation was created. Husbands and wives often wrote to *Ladies’ Home Journal* to thank them for featuring families and thus creating an atmosphere in which they could exchange ideas. The editors responded directly to the young families with opening remarks or responses to their questions and anxieties. “Whatever side you’re on, the Young Mothers, producing more than 2,000,000 babies a year, continue to do the 84-hour-a-week job that has to be done—but they could do with a little encouragement and if you have a pair of idle hands, some real, actual, neighborly help, right now” (Editors, *Ladies’ Home Journal*, April, 1956).

The response to the articles was not exclusively that of the American housewife; many husbands joined in the cultural conversation by writing to the editors. One such husband was Bill Arter from Worthington, Ohio. Bill and Mary were featured in *Ladies Home Journal* after Bill wrote the following letter:

*“Dear Editors: After everyone had gone to bed tonight I picked up the Journal and started riffling pages. It isn’t that I’m self-conscious about reading a woman’s magazine with the family around. The Journal was the only thing within reach. On the other hand, it seems always to be at the time the family has retired that I read your most worthy magazine. Maybe I am a little afraid of seeming unmanly” (“More babies more fun,” April 1950).*

After raising Mary Beth, 14, and a 17- year-old Bill, the Arters started a second family. Bill shared that his wife Mary was married at 16 and left high school while he finished college; she went to work in the foundry when the older children started school, but after years of gardening and canning vegetables, Mary discovered that she did not have as much discretionary time as before; she gave it all up for fast-food and a second family. Two-year-old Casey and three-month-old Baby Beth were welcome additions to the already complete family unit. Bill, an advertising man, teaches at two universities, works nights, and in spite of his efforts, cannot keep up financially. “Things started piling up on me at the office. I’d work nights to catch up, only to slip farther behind.” The Arters faced many obstacles, including a move to a new home which exhibited the average home owner pitfalls; several unexpected household failures created additional monetary stresses. In an attempt to be more efficient, all four children were put on

schedules, and with all the confusion of running a home, Mary somehow found time to play bridge and belong to the Salvation Army Women's Club. The family and personal values of the Arter family are evident as one examines their lifestyles; all members of the family contribute to their own and the well-being of the entire family. The sacrifices made by Mary initiated the idea that she wanted more for her own children and hoped that they would marry later in life than she did and, perhaps, have a better quality of life (April 1950).

John and Laura Petrello of Mr. Vernon, New York, both worked to save \$4000 to buy a house. "Laura also worked, adding to John's average yearly income during this period of \$4000 to \$5000, another \$1500 from a job in a neighborhood dress factory" ("A Home of Their Own" Feb., 1951). She spoke with pride when she declared that "the house is their darling and their dream." Laura's sister called her "Patchy Laura" when she was going through this time frame because she refused to buy new clothes for herself or even a new apron. She primarily shopped for her new home which was a white frame house, set on a shady street in Mt. Vernon, New York. The idealistic residence had a front patch of green lawn, and a porch; in the back yard there was a garage, a small yard with a swing, a table and some chromium chairs. Inside on the first floor, she combined the living room and dining room and was particularly proud of her kitchen with venetian blinds and blue curtains. "There was scarcely a moment when she was not either bringing home something new, shopping for it, or trying to decide what it should look like." Johnny, a plasterer, also was enthralled with the idea of a home of his own: "I worked on other people's houses and worried about getting one of my own. Now I worry about keeping it."

Laura gave up a career playing the cello to marry Johnny; she never played the cello again and ultimately disappointed her father who believed that she had a special talent. Laura and Johnny met when she was acting at a children's birthday party where Johnny was a guest. They were married when John was 24 and Laura was 19; the future looked rosy as John was earning \$82.50 a week, work was steady, and he had saved enough to buy "a snazzy Chandler roadster" and enough to pay for a honeymoon trip through Lake George, Lake Placid and Saratoga Springs. When they started housekeeping, they moved into a half of a two-family house which was close to the Vivo (Johnny's family) home. "Laura, like any good Italian bride, brought with her—linens, china and silverware."

Laura, who had learned dress-making in the eighth grade, went back to work eagerly to help make ends meet. Their day began at 7:00 when Laura got up and packed John's lunch box; the family ate breakfast and John left for work. Daughter Connie and son Joey left for work at the same time; the family combined their incomes to achieve a common goal. The combined incomes were \$600.00 a month (\$145.00 a week); the mortgage was \$49.00 a month; installments on the television were \$14.32 a month; the G.E. washing machine was \$18.32 a month; and the total for food was \$200.00 a month. The chores were also divided among the family members: after dinner and after John and Laura linger over coffee, Connie or Ida did the dishes, Joey took out the garbage, and Laura got up and did the pots and pans. "When dinner finally adjourns, it is usually so the family can watch television programs, or, in the summer, sit outdoors with the neighbors or relatives."

## 1951 families

Many American families shared their concerns and distinct problems with *Ladies' Home Journal*; one such family, the Bryant Reeds, wrote this letter to the editors, May 1951: "*What We Believe In*"

*Dear Editors: When we first realized that Bryant was going into the Navy for an indefinite period, our first worry was the effect it might have on the children. We tried to adjust our sense of values to meet the circumstances. We could have stayed in Boston, and Bryant could have been with us a few more times there. But the uncertainty of Bryant's assignment, and the fact that we would have to change all our regular ways for irregular ones, made up our minds. We decided to move in with Mother and Father Reed in Troy, where the children would have a regular way of life, even if it meant more and longer separations.*

*We haven't regretted this decision, even though many of our friends told me I could never take care of my children. Mother Reed has a big heat---bigger, I guess, than anyone's except my own mother's---and whenever we get on each other's nerves the least bit I have my own upstairs sitting room to go to. It is really our own room, for so many of Bryant's boyhood things are still there and the window looks out over the R. P. I. campus where he and I got to know each other.*

*As far as the children are concerned, we hope to teach them to realize and accept their responsibilities; do their own thinking and for us to act merely as a guide and counsel.*

*No, I'm glad we're here, for in time of distress I turn to family love and consultation. I keep so busy I don't have time to feel sorry for myself. Whenever I see Roger charging around the lawn, with his daddy's baby sailor suit on, or watch Marcia rolling in her play pen while the sun streams in the windows, I know that is the best for them too.*

*Mary E. Reed (Butterfield 5, 1951).*

“Second Call” tells the story of the Bryant Reeds and the obstacles they faced as the head of the household was called to return to the Navy for a second call of duty. Bryant and Mary lived in Newton Highlands (near Boston), MA. Bryant’s first call was in 1943 after graduating from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (R. P. I. ) as an engineer; he was ambitious and industrious as he spent evenings reading chemical literature for his own advancement and writing checks in advance to pay the family’s bills. When his second call arrived, Bryant made detailed notes for Mary on how to manage finances in his absence; Mary was not familiar with this end of the family business. In response to his call to duty, he said: “Maybe we can’t stop wars, but we can try to keep them far enough away so our kids can grow up.” The Reeds saved for a dream home while raising two small children; they had to wait for their dream of a workshop for Bryant and a flower garden for Mary. Before they were married, Mary worked as a secretary in Pittsburgh Hall (R. P. I.) where she met Bryant who was a student. They went to fraternity parties, basketball and football games, and enjoyed the campus life; after dating and getting to know each other, it was Mary who informed Bryant that it was time to get married.

These normal images of home and security were interrupted as the Reeds faced an

emotional and physical challenge and began to adjust to the idea of a second call to duty (Butterfield, May 1951). Their family's comfortable way of life was interrupted by war, but like many other families in the 1950s postwar era, they adjusted by moving in with extended family to save money and provide security for the children.

*Ladies' Home Journal* stated that their mailbox recently received letters from two mothers who do all their own housework and child care. The first was from Annie Lee Peterson, a harassed housewife who never has a moment to herself; the second is a letter from Rose C. Occhialino, an unharried housewife who claims to have her life and that of her family's organized and structured. The Occhialinos, of Poughkeepsie, New York wrote this letter in August, 1951 to *Ladies' Home Journal*.

The cultural conversation continued with the following letter from Annie Lee (Algy) Peterson who wrote to *Ladies' Home Journal* in July, 1951; the definition of a good mother is the theme as Algy reveals her most guarded secrets about motherhood and her own well-being. "Help Wanted" is the cry from Akron, Ohio:

*Dear Ladies' Home Journal:*

*I have been watching your How America Lives articles for years to see if you've ever come across another family like ours. So far, I don't believe you have.*

*I seem to have everything anyone would want (with the exception of freedom from worries) and yet I'm tense and cranky and a good example of everything a mother shouldn't be. Instead of enjoying each day and each event, I find myself looking forward to evening, the peace and quiet and freedom to pursue pleasures of my own choosing, although*

*even in the evening there seems to be enough work left over that I can't do with the children around in the daytime that it's bedtime before I can have any fun—fun being reading, knitting, making a scrapbook of seldom-used recipes, or a garden scrapbook, or painting.*

*The children are two, three and five years old, require constant watching, and get what seems to me an unfair amount of nagging, scolding, spanking, and shouting from me—and they shout right back. After a certain length of time I simply go to pieces for a few minutes—then the cycle begins again. Does a girl just simply live through this horrible stage when her children are shouting, destructive, disobedient aborigines and finally become a calm, mature individual, or does she remain a shrew? Is it something temporary or permanent? A psychiatrist might help, but would be too much of a luxury.*

*I can see now why marriage courses should be urged so strongly. I was prepared for many things in school, but not for the idiosyncrasies of small children. I was never taught how to get along with them or how to sacrifice so much of my time and so many of my desires, willingly, for them. I was not taught how to do everything that must be done for both children and a home without becoming frustrated and cross about the insuperable quantity of work and thought involved.*

*Of course my children are ideal—healthy, beautiful and smart—and I love them, but wish I had time to be a nicer mommy and didn't let them get under my skin. The oldest is a girl; the two others are boys.*

*Those are some of my burdens. One of my largest worries is that my attitudes will be reflected in the children as they grow.*

*Sincerely,*

*Mrs. A. J. Peterson (Hoffman, July, 1951).*

The second letter in this series was received from Rose C. Occhialino, the opposite of Algy Peterson:

*Dear Editors: I love reading How America Lives section of your magazine. You tell about such interesting housewives---harassed women who keep working from morning till nights, but who never seem to get caught up. After reading one of these articles, I always realize how lucky I am.*

*You see, I'm quite the opposite. I have a husband and two sons (8 years, and 4) to take care of, and I do all the work, including washing and ironing, in a five-room flat. Yet I have lots of time to read all the latest books and magazines, see all the good movies, gallivant around in the car, and even take a nap every afternoon ( I have tuberculosis, and this last is a "must"). My work is always caught up, and my house is always spick-and-span. My husband brings home \$72 a week--he's service manager in the shop of the oldest automobile dealer in America--and I save \$10 every week, faithfully. Our new car was paid for in cash, and we have a couple of thousand dollars in the bank.*

*It's all a matter of routine, and budgeting. Sometime, if you would like to do an article on a homemaker who has lots of free time, I'd love to*

*tell you all about it.*

*Sincerely yours,*

*Rose C. Occhialino* (Hoffman, August, 1951).

These two housewives have a different approach to the way they manage their households, but one thing they have in common is the desire to share their ways of life and goals with other housewives in America. Annie Lee was anxious to reveal her dreams for the future; she hoped to become a designer for stage and screen costumes, but was willing to settle for owning her own “smart” dress shop in the suburb of an important city. Rose’s goal was for her children to receive a college education and to own a home of their own.

Annie Lee graduated 9<sup>th</sup> in a class of 200 from high school and received honors from Wooster College and Syracuse University where she was an outstanding art student. She was invited back to be a member of the faculty, but chose to work for a large department store doing fashion art work, copy writing, and editing the store’s magazine. Andy, in contrast, graduated from Ohio University and became an engineer for Goodyear. Their goal to have a Cape Cod home was compromised when they bought a \$20,000 concrete block house and furnished it with the necessary appliances and interior furnishings.

*Ladies Home Journal* published this article “Help Wanted” to express the overwhelming responsibilities that a young mother faced in 1951. The editors said that “young mothers are doing their best to play a variety of conflicting roles—wife, mother, housemaid, civic doer, and loving companion to their husbands—and above all, to instill attitudes of confidence and well-being in their children in these bewildering and deeply

fearful times.” Algy added while being interviewed for this article that she feels that this hectic period she is living through is only temporary (Hoffman, July 1951).

Mario Occhialino is thirty-four and is a foreman of the service department in an automobile dealership. When he comes home at night, he puts aside the worries of the day. “If I didn’t, I’d quit and start digging ditches tomorrow.” Mario also said that “a man is never wealthy until he is married...I mean by wealth a home, wife and children.” Mario’s statements about his wife and children seem to indicate that family is the most important element in his life. This was also reflected in the optimistic statements and bright outlook of his wife Rose in her letter to *Ladies’ Home Journal*. The information she shared must have been frustrating to many of the over worked and often overwhelmed readers of this popular series of articles. The important issue is that the families believed in *Ladies’ Home Journal* and trusted the familiar narrative which appeared in each issue. This reveals that the young families were in need of support and structure to better understand their roles and contributions within our culture.

#### 1952 families

The complex messages and variety of families is evident as we are introduced to Betty and John and their three children. “To live a rich life, the Quimbys add vitality and spiritual strength to low income” (White, Jan. 1952). The Quimbys live in a 200 year old farmhouse in Fremont, New Hampshire, and the home is always in need of repair. This problem doesn’t seem to affect the quality of the the Quimbys’ life as they live a rich, vital and spiritual life. The children share the farm chores with their parents and enjoy afternoons playing with their friends under the giant maple trees in the front yard.

Betty substituted as a teacher at Ellis Elementary School: “We never do anything that isn’t necessary.” She makes many sacrifices for her family as is demonstrated by her demanding schedule; her work day begins at 7:00 in the morning and continues for the next 16 hours until 11:00 at night. The Quimbys always have extra people at their dinner table and revealed that they would like to operate a children’s camp in the future. One late night chore is keeping the family’s books; in contrast to other housewives, Betty monitors what Jonathan is spending because she is the better financial manager. She practices what she preaches as she hasn’t bought anything new for herself since her marriage eight years ago.

Jonathan works 16 hours a day bottling and delivering milk from their dairy; they bought their 350 acre farm for \$18,000, and Jonathan, his brother and father share the responsibilities of the farm both physically and financially. The ten-room New England farmhouse is stately in spite of the obvious need for repairs. The Quimbys have neither time nor money to spend on the upkeep of Mistwold Farm. Their budget of \$25.00 a week includes: \$2.05 (life ins.); \$.30 (accident ins.); \$1.30 (fire ins.); \$2.11 (blue cross); \$3.84 (clothes); \$2.30 (fuel); \$1.40 (church); \$.50 (newspaper and magazines); \$11.20 (food, inc. toiletries). Betty and Jonathan are deeply religious, and spend much of their time engaged in church activities. Betty entered the Hartford Seminary School of Missions when she graduated from Simmons in 1940; after a year, she was commissioned a missionary and assigned to a mission school in Angola, West Africa. The Quimbys have parties for any reason they can think of, and Jonathan plays the fiddle; last year he placed second in the New Hampshire fiddlers’ contest with the tune, “The Crooked Stovepipe.” This unique family exemplifies the intense differences in the

American family in the 1950s (White, Jan. 1952).

Arvella and Dick Weir live in the Scandanavian section of Seattle, Washington where Dick is a fireman. When they were first married Dick went every where with Arvella, and then the surprise of a life time, the triplets were born. Arvella, a teenage bride, assumed the role of mother of three babies but still hopes to go to college when the triplets are grown. "I'm twenty-one, the mother of triplets. I'm often ask, 'How do you manage?'" When a stranger comes to the door, they often have to wait for Arvella to reach the door; she is frequently asked: "Is the lady of the house in?" or "What lovely children! Whose are they?" The fact that Dick is a fireman increases Seattle's interest in the Weir triplets. For example, a milk company presented them with a years supply of canned milk; this was a significant savings as the children drank twenty-one bottles of milk a day. A baby-food manufacturer gave them a two-year supply of baby foods; a vitamin company furnished them with free vitamins; the store where they bought the layette matched the goods with two more layettes; and the hospital bill (\$850 because of the incubators) was paid for by the firemen. The Weirs have received plenty of help from extended family: grandparents, aunts and uncles have made themselves available to the young couple. In addition to caring for the children, they are buying a new home for \$7950; the home has six large, sunny, well-proportioned rooms on one floor and a pleasant back yard (Hoffman, March 1952). Their Chevrolet has a ten-year chassis but a newer motor; their brand new television was a gift from parents. Dick, now 26, enjoys his job with Seattle's 830 man fire department. The pay is not high enough, but the security is real in terms of pension, medical and health insurance.

Arvella met Dick when she was seventeen, and when they became engaged, no

one had any difficulty with their decision to marry. All through high school Arvella starred in dramatic productions and maintained a B average; she earned all her clothes and spending money as a salesgirl at a bakery. About five months before they were married, the young couple managed to save \$500, borrowed another \$500 and made a down payment on a home of their own. The Weirs manage to raise three children and make ends meet on a budget of \$300 a month. \$54.00 (house payment); \$110.00 (food); the remainder is spread out for insurance, pension, income tax, firemen dues, clothes, car, and utilities.

A family with a quite different background is presented in May, 1952: "A Right Happy Place" tells the story of the Stallings family. When they were married in 1938, Rosebud and Dave Stallings of Henderson, North Carolina, earned \$16.00 a week. Out of this small amount of money, they managed to save enough to buy a walnut-veneered bedroom suite and other items with which they began housekeeping. Their first apartment, two rooms in a mill-owned home, cost \$.50 a week. Both of their families live in the isolated and clannish cotton-mill community. Rosebud and Dave quit high school at 14 and 17 and were married at 17 and 19 on Christmas Sunday. They purchased a home for \$500 in 1941, and the home appreciated in value to \$5000 in 1952. Dave works in the town's mill and after his seven-to-three shift, "spruces up" and then meets with friends at a local grocery store for a daily "talk fest." Rosebud, who went to ninth grade, plans on returning to mill work when the three children are raised. Their home is modest; one enters through their bedroom, which also has a crib, and walks through to the kitchen behind the bedroom. Along with all of her other chores, every day Rosebud makes lunch for her husband and delivers it to the mill (Butterfield, May 1952).

Not all of the marriages were filled with bliss; some had marital problems which they were willing to share with readers: "They Learned to Love Again" appeared in *Ladies Home Journal*, October, 1952. Richard and Eugenia Simons, of Los Angeles, faced marital failure and refused to surrender to it. One evening, while watching television, Richard confessed that he did not love Eugenia any more. "I don't love you. I haven't for some time, and I want a divorce." Eugenia was surprised by this confession, but was not willing to give up on her marriage. Richard is a salesman for Kingan & Co., pork packers, and earns about \$5000 a year. "Eugenia is thirty-nine, has a slim, youthful figure, an attractive mobile face; friendly, vivacious, high-strung, she talks much more than her husband, is likely to dominate a conversation" (Marcus, Oct. 1952). The Simons have two children; Mary is eleven and quite talented in art and music, Richard Lee (Buzzy) is six and an adopted child. Eugenia often accuses her husband of favoring Buzzy over her and disregarding her plans; she feels that she plays "second-fiddle" in Dick's life and holds resentment toward her children.

Genie did not agree to Richard's assessment of their marriage and ultimately, a divorce. They engaged in conversation about their problems, and coincidentally, watched Dr. Paul Poenoe, director of Los Angeles' American Institute of Family Relations on television one evening. They both agreed, "We'd better go." Ultimately, it was revealed that Richard and Genie both had problems which could be solved through therapy. In this article, the subject of low self-esteem was mentioned, and Dick, in reference to Genie, said that "she has been in revolt against domesticity...at least partly because it was forced on her at home." She felt that being tired and incompetent in her household duties would win Dick's sympathy; this was a technique she utilized to

establish a relationship with her husband rather than attempting to win his admiration. Genie's extreme jealousy was manifested because of her low self-esteem which had always been at a very low level. She believed that all women were superior to her and would be able to take away her husband (Marcus, Oct. 1952). "Always a little bit behind" is the cry of the Louis Scalas of Ramsey, New Jersey. Louis and Lorene Scala and their six children live 27 miles from New York, and Louis commutes to a mid-Manhattan bank; Lorene to nearby Oakland, where she teaches high school. Lorene finished two years of college at Iowa State University where she met her husband; Louis, an Italian American, claims that he is probably related to the Milan Scalas of operatic fame. Their spacious brown stucco home is furnished with comfortable, old, but rugged, furniture (Marcus, June 1952).

Lorene left Iowa to be closer to her fiancé and to get as far away as possible from her father's wife and her step-mother. The Scalas suffered one disaster after another; the major problem arose when a forged check for \$80.00 crossed Louis' desk, and he honored it in good faith. The bank used Louis as an example and cut his salary from \$55.00 a week to \$25.00 a week. It took them 18 years to recover from this financial crisis. After the depression, they lost their home, sold their furniture, and cashed some bank stock they had bought. The family remained close and supportive of each other. "It's been hard work; a lot of the time...but the children were always the spur." The children claim that Lorene was the family disciplinarian: "Pop" has never learned to say "no" to his brood. The family survived on resourcefulness as they wore hand-me-down clothes, attended church, and generally put aside their dreams. The dream of Mrs. Scala would be to travel, study poetry and music; Mr. Scala would probably buy a farm, and

“let his green thumb have a field day” (Marcus, June 1952).

### 1953 families

The November, 1953 article, “A Livingroom That Works”, featured the house that John and Lucille Bradford remodeled in Sharon, Pennsylvania. The mid-twenties floor plan was adapted to today’s (1953) young family’s living needs. According to the author the original house had an awkward corner fireplace and an old fashioned glass door leading to a porch. To improve the function of the home, the Bradfords closed in the porch and made it a playroom and positioned the family entertainment center, the television, in a spot that could be viewed from the entire living area. “The porch doorway was made into a movable TV theater. The set, hinged to the door-frame, swings to any position desired and can be viewed from the porch which has been converted into a play space for the children or the family viewing area, the living room. When the television is not being used, it pushes back against the porch wall, and the doorway becomes the usual passage between the two rooms. “How America Lives” primarily examines how the American family “copes with” or handles domestic issues; this article literally reveals *how America lives* as they adapt a living space into a more functional living area for the entire family.

John and Lu loved their first home, a small chalet, and did the necessary remodeling jobs to make it a home. “John’s power-saw stayed in the living room day and night.” They finally had to succumb to the reality that the chalet did not meet their needs when their first child was on the way. Today, the Bradfords look back on their six years of marriage with amazement. Five jobs...five houses...three children. “When I think

about it,” says John, “Our past was pretty exciting.” Now, John is off to work at Bird Machine Company at 7:45; he rides with a co-worker and takes his lunch and coffee in a thermos. Lu wishes that she could get up at 6:00 to get a head start on her daily chores, but this is impossible as she concedes that she needs seven hours of sleep. “If I had more free time, I think I’d garden. I’d like masses of color along the stone wall, flowers I can bring into the house.” Right now, the children are too small to consider such a luxury. Once again, the family’s theme is echoed: family and home come before individual pleasures, and consequently, sacrifices must be made to achieve the family’s expectations.

When there are no club meetings, visitors or parties, John delves into his workshop and Lu heads for the sewing machine or begins a painting project. Their need for creativity was obvious as they remodeled their home; John drew up elaborate renderings of his ideas to help Lu visualize the final project. John proudly stated that “she was convinced.” In addition to the television room, they recently completed a “highly individualized room for three-year-old Daniel.” This room included a hand painted mural with leprechauns and elves. Still in the planning stages is a covered terrace extending from the back steps to the corner of the garage; a drafting room for John; and improvements for their own bedroom. Lu and John’s priorities seem unique as one examines the trials, tribulations, and concerns of many 1950s families (McAdoo, Nov. 1953).

“Nita and Jack McCloskey, of Haddonfield, New Jersey, rediscover in 1953 terms what Proverbs summed up long ago: ‘Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing’” (Daly, Sept. 1953). Nita McCloskey’s role as a wife and mother is complex and diverse as she

demonstrates that she is much more than just a housewife. Nita had to fill out a form to complete a business transaction and in answering the questions, gave the interviewer the following information: "I am a dietician. Wait a minute, don't write yet, I am also an interior decorator." She continued to describe herself the owner of a small clothing factory (she makes her children's clothes); a custodian of her eight room house; a tutor; a social secretary for the whole household; and a purchasing agent. She stated, "I am the official hostess, the glamorous character without a care in the world, who entertains so graciously. Or else." The interviewer ask, "Or else, what?" She answered, "Or else I hear about it later." When the interviewer told her that she was a housewife, she concluded that he was a "workingman" and not a Junior Personnel Consultant. This resistance to being labeled merely a housewife was reinforced as *Ladies' Home Journal* itemized the duties of a housewife and totaled the cost of the services provided by a housewife. Nita's pay of \$200.00 a week would actually cost her husband \$263.25 a week if he had to hire someone to handle all of her duties or replace her. "Meet Mrs. \$10,000 Executive in the Home" told the story about Nita and Jack McCloskey and explained why she was more than a housewife (Daly, Sept. 1953).

Jack is a teacher at Collingswood High School and plays professional basketball for the Sunbury Mercuries; sometimes he drives 360 miles in a night to get back to teach at 8:30 in the morning. The basketball season lasts from November to February, with 30 games. Jack and most of his teammates are high school coaches and physical education teachers with master's degrees in education. These men with young families play basketball to add to their family's income. Jack's current salary is \$3800 a year and an additional \$50 a game adds \$800 to his annual income. This has enabled Jack and Nita to

buy a Cape Cod style home which Nita manages while Jack is working long nights.

Nita spends evenings knitting by the light of the television; she naps an hour a day and is “freshly groomed” when Jack gets home. She attended Penn, and Jack came to Penn when the war ended; after she and Jack were married, she worked for a year and then became a full time housewife. Now, Nita, among other duties, is a beautician for her 2 1/2 year old child; a cook and hostess for Jack’s basketball team, and among other jobs, she describes herself as “a plumber fishing toys out of the toilet.” She added this information: “After cleaning, I finish up one extra project a week. But sometimes I balk. Then I take off for a movie.” Nita comes from a well-to-do family but believes that every child has the right to “peace of mind.” Nita’s labeling is not one of dissatisfaction but of fact; she is a \$10,000 executive in the home because it would cost her husband \$10,000 a year to replace her in her many jobs. This attitude is more rebellious than that of other housewives in the 1950s. Nita was not content with the label of housewife and insisted on being recognized as more than “just a housewife” when the information was public rather than private.

William Levitt led the way in the construction of a new machine: the tract house was his invention. The houses he built were designed to “convey a nonindustrial aura, but the heart of Levitt’s approach to development was mass production” (Ewen, 1984, p. 226). *Ladies’ Home Journal* introduced us to a Levittown family in this article: “The Big Move” (Hoffman, Aug. 1953). After five years of marriage, Bill and Fran Calkins’ total savings was \$150, and the idea of a home of their own seemed to be an impossible dream. “To an outsider, Levittown, Pennsylvania, seems like a vast mirage, a city of 4000 spanking-new ranch homes where a short year ago were acres of corn and wheat,

250-year-old stone farmhouses and red barns.” A new Levitt home was erected every sixteen minutes, and by 1955, “Levittown will have 20,000 such homes, making it in three years the tenth largest city in Pennsylvania.”

Fran was originally from Upper Montclair, New Jersey where she went to dancing school, played piano and cello, and studied art at Averett Junior College in Virginia; she got her first job in New York City as a file clerk with Western Electric. She felt that she was catching up on all that she had missed when she finally arrived in New York: “Those were the gay days—I was always leaving my desk to meet the Air Corps at the Astor or the Navy at the Biltmore.” At this time, her future husband Bill was “slogging his way through the Vosges Mountain campaign in Northern France as a lineman with the 411<sup>th</sup> Infantry.” Bill returned to Drexel Institute in Philadelphia after the war and completed a degree in business administration. He still had 6 months of college to finish when Bill and Fran married and agreed to live on Fran’s salary and his GI allowance of \$90 a month. The future was bright for Bill and Fran, but the elusive dream home was far from being a reality—but then there was Levittown.

Levittown is more than a housing development because it was a self-contained community with its own schools, churches, and playgrounds. In addition to these family oriented essentials, Levittown promised eight Olympic-sized swimming pools, ten baseball diamonds, a town hall with an opera-sized stage and a multimillion-dollar department-store shopping center. Fran demonstrated her pride in her home as she polished the brass furnishings and admired the exterior landscaping on their 70' x 100' lot. The landscaping was part of the original package; the young maple trees, rose bushes, grape vines, new lawn and shrubs were all included in the \$10,000 purchase price.

The idea of neighborhood and community were essential to the well being of the new home owners in Levittown. “Neighbors troop in all day to visit, young women in blue jeans with bandanas tied about their heads, trailed by one, two or three toddlers. Fran gets out the coffeepot and they settle down to swapping ideas and rumors about their pet subject of conversation– Levittown” (Hoffman, Aug. 1953). The identical tract houses are only varied by color, and it is easy to get lost. Fran related that one woman could not find her own home when she came home after dark from the hairdresser. After driving around for hours, she was rescued by her husband and a local policeman. The houses may be identical, but the people who live inside of them are not: “The nicest thing about Levittown is that the people come from all parts of the country and are in all lines of work. It was built because of the world’s largest steel plant going up in lower Bucks County, but we’ve met very few steelworkers.” The togetherness of the American family and the importance of neighborhood is evident as one is introduced to the lifestyles of the families in Levittown.

When Carolyn and Chuck Bauer of Chicago married, they got pregnant right away. “It was an upsetting piece of news. We had spent every cent getting married and going for a week-end honeymoon. We didn’t even have hospitalization insurance” (Weyl, Oct. 1953). Chuck spent three years in the Navy and received three years in postwar training. Carolyn advanced from waitress to hostess and planned on taking night courses to become a restaurant manager. She didn’t consider herself a “career girl” but merely wanted to add to the family’s savings. When she became pregnant, she quit her job after three months and planned on returning to work after the baby was born. “I Can’t Afford to Work” tells the story of how Caroline could not afford to go back to

work because her weekly income would not cover all of the expenses incurred in the maintenance of her home and the care of her child. This dilemma is an ongoing one as women historically cannot replace themselves with the money they earn. If Carolyn returned to her former job as restaurant hostess, she would earn \$43.90 a week; her weekly expenses would average \$54.25 a week. Carolyn would be in the red \$10.35 a week and lose \$538.20 a year.

#### 1954 families

“The Pink House Bobos” tells the life story of Dottie and Barham Bobo of Atlanta, Georgia (Freeman, Nov. 1954). Every morning, Barham and Dottie get out of bed at 3:00 to begin their work day; Barham travels over 90 miles on his paper route each morning. Barham decided to go back to school full time, counting on the paper route plus GI allowance to support the family. This decision was a financial sacrifice for the family, but a necessary one for Barham’s educational future. His college career was interrupted by the war, and when he returned from the army, he took a job with Carrier Air Conditioners. Now, he supports his family, while going to Georgia Tech for mechanical engineering by delivering the *Atlanta Constitution*. His GI allowance is \$170 a month; his salary with Carrier was \$400 a month.

Dottie gets up with Barham at 3:00 and cheerfully makes him breakfast. Barham takes the family’s only car and leaves Dottie to clean her home, bake cookies and attend numerous church and social functions. All of her meetings or discussions must be over before her husband comes home because Barham “can’t stand to hear women chatting on the phone.” She is chairman of her circle at North Avenue Presbyterian Church, belongs

to a garden club, and rolls bandages for *The White Cross*. Dottie gloats over her new vacuum cleaner, “When Barham gave it to me he apologized; can you imagine?” She complains about her washing machine and dreams about new plans for interior decoration... “perhaps a row of bright geraniums on the Dutch-door shelf.”

In 1941, the Bobos met at a fraternity party, but they got to know each other at church. Dottie had quit school to work at the Fulton National Bank and was making only \$90 a month; Barham could only add \$26 a month. They were both only nineteen and Barham had enlisted in the Army; they were married April 2, 1943, in a simple ceremony in North Avenue Presbyterian Church. “Barham had optimistically given Dottie an enormous ham for a wedding gift, and she cooked it with an eye on the oven and an ear at the phone--- ‘I called Mommie for instructions’” (Freeman, Nov. 1954). They had their first child in October, 1944; finally in 1946, they were out of the army and looking for a home. This was a difficult task because of the housing shortage at the end of the war. They had almost given up when they saw an advertisement for a model home designed by Royal Barry Wills and constructed in nearby Marietta, by U. S. Homes.

Dottie says, “Once a friend of ours said she’d gladly scrub floors for a husband like Barham. Well, I feel like that---though I haven’t had to scrub floors yet.” Dottie and Barham are committed to their church and tithe both time and money. “He’ll take care of you; anyway, nine tenths goes further than ten tenths.” So, Dottie does church work for both of them as Barham works and goes to school. Over ten years have passed since their honeymoon, but she still runs to refresh herself when she hears his car in the driveway. “Barham makes me feel like a glamor girl; that’s important.”

Hildegard Dolson writes about “The Scrambled Housewife” in August, 1954.

Dorothy and William Canner live in Beechhurst, Long Island, New York. Bill works in New York as an investigator for an insurance firm and makes \$6700 a year. He often brings his wife coffee in bed and grabs a gulp himself as he is backing his car out of the driveway at 7:30 in the morning. "Some nights I come home and Dorothy's looking so done in I tell her, Oh, go play bingo. Go out and live. Live dangerously!" He explained that bingo was the stimulus of frustrated women... "that silly dumb gambling game" (Dolson, Aug. 1954).

Dorothy buys eight or nine magazines a month, and reads all the articles on child rearing, and once read that a hot cereal is a must for growing bones; she was intent on giving the children cereal for the next several months. Magazines play an important role in Dorothy's life: "I read so many different opinions I get all mixed up." Dorothy continued, "Life without kids would be very shallow. Once we left them all with my mother overnight, and Bill and I came home and the place seemed so deserted and lonesome we hated it." In addition to being a mother to her four children Lynne, Phyllis, Billy, and baby J. P., Dorothy has gone out fund raising for the Girl Scouts and the polio drive; Bill is a member of Civilian Defense where he often helps unfortunate families affected by storms or other disasters. "My mother can do anything in the world," Lynne said. In response, Billy said, "She can't lift a piano." "With so much loving faith behind her, a harassed young mother of four can lick a lot of problems, and maybe---who knows?---even end up lifting a piano."

Dell Smith wrote to the editors of *Ladies' Home Journal* and voiced the following concerns:

*Dear Editors:*

*I have mixed reactions toward the Ladies' Home Journal. I honestly feel that it is the most educational and entertaining magazine published. But, it is also the most frustrating! Inevitably, I turn to How Young America Lives and I always feel so inadequate.*

*Your young people are all so hard-working, so efficient, and really inspiring. I consider my husband and me to be average, hard-working people, but I don't think we'd inspire anyone. Please, oh please write just one article about a couple with some limit to their strength and patience, so I won't feel so terribly inefficient.*

*We're happy and we're in love and we have packed a lot of living into five and a half years, but we haven't had time to do anything extra or be clever or sophisticated or handy about-the-house.*

*So please let's have a How Young America Lives couple who are a little more the Smiths' speed---slow.*

*Sincerely,*

*Dell Smith (Mrs. Roy. W.)(Hoffman, Feb. 1954).*

Dell and Roy Smith of Minneapolis, Minnesota felt inadequate as they read about other young families featured in *Ladies' Home Journal*. Dell voiced this in a letter to the editor, and in turn, became one of the featured families in "How Young America Lives." Roy and Dell list their big needs: "More money, more time, more vitamin pills!:" Dell used to collapse into bed at night and pray for the strength to get through just one more day." Roy sells real estate and graduated from the University of Minnesota with a degree in Business Administration; he served four years in the Pacific in the U. S. Navy. Dell

maintains the home and takes care of their three children who were born in four years: David, 10 months; Sandra, 2; and Steve, 4 1/2 Dell said, "Roy is a pillar of strength. Once a week, I tell him he is wonderful." "Our social life was totally nil---and added to that, Roy was working at least three nights a week, and Saturdays and Sundays selling real estate."

Dell complained to *Ladies' Home Journal* that she and her husband were not "clever" like other young American families. "I'd let the house cleaning pile up all week until Friday and Saturday; then I'd knock myself out washing all the windows and all the woodwork, hanging every rug out on the line; scrubbing all the Venetian blinds, as well as the regular cleaning. Roy remarked last Mother's Day, after she had turned down his invitation to take her out to dinner, "You're living just for the children." Dell's dilemma of juggling husband, a household, and children on \$30 weekly (more if she needs it) is overwhelming. She tries to leave the children with a baby sitter one afternoon a week and socialize with Roy, at least one evening a week. "I just hope that our children learn sooner than I did that every person has to live with his limitations. I know now that Roy and I can't work sixteen hours a day and not get run-down and sick...We just don't have the stamina that goes with homemade patios and hand-built cabinets and all that extra work." Roy added: "Would you mind passing the vitamins?" (Hoffman, Feb. 1954).

#### 1955 families

The following letter was written by Pat Gorrie of Ridley Park,  
Pennsylvania:

*Dear Journal Editors: Even though we are not newsworthy and will*

*probably never grace your lovely pages, I just had to write you a fan letter after all these years. My husband loves you too and I don't think there's a printed word we miss...*

*We haven't any outstanding problem, nor are we outstandingly clever or ambitious or unique. (We are, however, outstandingly happy and in love.) We like each other so much too! We find so much pleasure in each other's company; we're the homebody type. Even before our Baby Starr arrived, we didn't go out much. We haven't had spending money anyway, because we've done such a heap of saving, but we haven't minded it in the least.*

*I don't do anything proficiently, but force myself happily to try just about everything. If you can think of some new ideas to keep me from being a dull housewife, please write and tell me.*

*Sincerely, Pat Gorrie (Haffy, Sept. 1955).*

In "The Best Things in Life are Free," Pat added that she satisfies her creative urges by having babies, making clothes for Starr, and trying recipes; she once wrote for a local paper as a teen and painted. "But as soon as I met Eddie, my days of hectic inconsistency were over." On her honeymoon she began a journal; after Starr's birth, she wrote: "My favorite career is motherhood! When you have a baby you suddenly want everything to be perfect. You want to be a perfect mother; sweet, soft-voiced, patient, understanding, firm, and beautiful in the eyes of your child." She later added that if you do not go to college, you must find your own way to learn about things that are important "The answer for me, the stay-at-home wife on a budget, lies in the book, art and music

clubs by mail.”

After graduating from high school, Eddie joined the Air Corps in 1945. In March of 1945 he was sent to Tinian in the Marianas as a waist gunner on a B-29. A month later, on the fifth mission, his plane was hit by anti-aircraft fire over Tokyo. As the plane spun, the crew were pinned to the walls inside, unable to move. Suddenly Eddie found himself floating down in his parachute over Tokyo: “Just three of us got out,” Eddie remembered. The three were taken to prison where Eddie and fourteen others lived for four months in a tiny cell. “Every night I dreamed about bacon and scrambled eggs.” He suffered from jaundice, malnutrition and diphtheria and went from 150 pounds to 90. After spending long months in the hospital he was released in 1946; for recreation, Eddie turned to ice skating; for six weeks Pat and Eddie “courted on skates.” This fondness for skating became part of their lives and continued after their marriage.

Lack of an entertainment fund doesn't keep the Gorries from recreation. In the winter they skate; in summer they attend outdoor free concerts at Philadelphia's Robin Hood Dell, or take long rides in the car. The Gorries attend the Presbyterian Church in Ridley Park, and twice a month Pat attends the meeting of her circle. Neighborhood wives get together at the various houses over coffee and cake. “But I don't know how anyone can complain about being a housewife---marriage is the best job there is. There's no reason to get dissatisfied, restless, even if you don't have a cent of money. Books are free...you can keep on meeting people...and everyone can find some hobby or outlet.” Pat concluded: “Happiness? I guess it's what Eddie and I have right now. We don't want anything else...except more children!”

Not all of the families were born and raised in America; many of the 1950s

American families were a product of the war. Vanna Phillips article, "War brides 10 Years Later" was part of the series, "How Young America Lives" in July 1955. The war brides were from Belgium, France, Japan, England and Italy. Monique Ruzette and Major Henry Lee Munson from Cragmoor, New York, met at a dance in Belgium; Henry claimed that women in Europe were more dependent and relied on relatives' input into their lives, especially with babies. Monique, Henry and the four children live close to the spot where Henry's parents used to spend summers. The big house includes a parlor for Monique's embroidering and a living room for family activities. Leisure for the Munsons is spent reading, listening to good recorded music or in conversation.

The Garlan Glovers of White Plains, New York met at a Red Cross Club dance in France. On the morals and manners of Americans, Miche believes that "there seems to be no real intimacy of comprehension between mothers and daughters or fathers and sons, but everyone spills all the little facts of life to a psychiatrist or a perfect stranger at a wild party." The writer also adds that "it is puzzling to her, too, that many an American follows the principles of religion closely, but divorce---just another way of calling a change of mates---is an accepted fact."

The Stewart Scheuers, of Rego Park, Long Island began to know each other in the course of their work in Japan. U. S. Lieutenant, Stewart Scheuer went to Columbia Business School and later took courses at the East Asian Institute; this was useful in the Education division of SCAP established by U. S. Headquarters in the Japanese capital. Noriko Nakano and Stewart were married after receiving permission from the governments in 1947. Vanna Phillips revealed that of all the war brides, she has the most optimistic view of children in America. "A wonderful country for them. Here they are

wanted and surrounded by kind people. I think that with proper discipline this type of life can bring out the best in them. Too many parents let their children drift, and unlimited freedom so often leads to trouble.”

The Lyn Lockes, of Cornwall, Connecticut met on a September evening in 1944, at Elizabeth Secombe's estate in Lustleigh, Devonshire. “The sight of American soldiers was common, scarcely a country lane that was not jammed with U. S. trucks and ammunition in that year of the invasion.” Elizabeth's father stopped to “chat with a group of GI's bivouacked nearby, noticed a six-footer as sandy-haired and ruddy-cheeked as a Scotsman...” Her first impression of him was that he was tall, blond, handsome, and carried a carton of cigarettes, two boxes of cigars.” They married and returned to America: “Having no language barrier, I was probably much better off than most other war brides, but there were so many puzzling new customs to be learned.” White revealed that like other war brides, Elizabeth has definite ideas on child raising. “I think so many American children are sadly lacking in manner, allowed to stay up too late, are sometimes insolent to parents and grandparents and allowed their own way too much.” She added, “Our children will be spanked when they need it, and learn to value money by not being given too much.”

Our last war bride is from Italy; Rutilia and Arthur Burck, of Staten Island, New York, met after the liberation of Rome. Arthur Burck had gone eight ranks to Army major after a B. S. and LL.D at the University of Minnesota. At a party at Princess Caracciolo's, where introductions became official, Rutilia fell in love gradually, but Arthur admits he never quite recovered from his first encounter with Rutilia during a blackout, singing serenades in one of the tiny squares in Rome. As a war bride, she too

found the New World “a vast change from the Old, agrees that in Europe young marrieds are usually much closer to the family unit, especially to the bride’s family.” On the subject of children, Rutilia added: “The average American child’s manners are poor...with too much freedom and too little supervision accounting for it...but from m new country my children will gain, I hope, frankness and independence and a mind they can make up on their own to a reasonable point. Abroad, a child’s mind is often made up for him.”

Merle and Roberta Lawrence of Ann Arbor, Michigan claim that they are “Broke on \$11,200 a Year.” G. M. White wrote in February, 1955, that the Lawrences have all the electrical appliances, a station wagon, good food, good clothes, a good mortgage and the generosity of good natured people. Roberta wrote this to the editors of *Ladies’ Home Journal*:

*Dear Editors: My husband has a gross yearly income of \$11,200 and we cannot save a cent! In fact, we just barely manage to squeeze through each month. For the life of me I cannot figure out how other couples with children (we have three) can live so inexpensively. Every month we have extras which never seem to appear in the budgets you publish. For instance, last month we had five invitations to birthday parties to which our children had to take presents, \$7.50 for an adult-night-school furniture-refinishing course, \$10.32 for a television-repair job, a new tire for Linda’s bicycle, two costumes at \$6.25 each for the two girls to wear in the Ann Arbor Figure Skating Club Ice Carnival, \$5.00 for Robin’s violin lessons, a new windowpane to replace the one Jimmy threw a snowball through, a new handle and bowl for my mixer,*

*and a veterinarian's bill for treatment of the dog's injured leg. It goes on and on like that, month after month. We never have simply the ten or twelve standard monthly expenditures. A year and a half ago, we purchased a small new ranch house for \$13,350. It's a nice little house, but the roof leaked, water oozed up through the tile on the floor, the front door warped, nails worked out at the ceiling and many other dismal little things happened our first winter in the place. These things all have been repaired at considerable expense to us, but new repairs crop up constantly. We will be lucky if the house is still standing in twenty years, let alone paid for!*

*Most Sincerely,*

*Robert Harper Lawrence (White, Feb. 1955).*

Merle works in a physiological acoustics research laboratory for the Institute of Industrial Health and is an associate professor in the University of Michigan Medical School. His background included his military service as a Lieutenant Commander in the Naval Reserve during WWII and The Korean War. He was formerly an associate professor at Princeton University. Roberta attended Stuart Hall, a private secondary school and Miss Fine's School in Princeton, New Jersey; she also attended Trenton Business School for one year and worked as the assistant editor of the Trenton Times. During the war, she was a chauffeurette for an aircraft company. Even though Roberta led a varied and fulfilling life, her inner most thoughts are revealed in this statement: "The greatest thrill of my life was giving my husband a son after we had had two daughters." Roberta admits that she favors the male sex because she had four

brothers and has a handsome husband.

Merle leaves the family bill paying entirely up to Roberta; they have no budget plan for expenses. In light of Roberta's earlier complaints, it is ironic that she is in charge of the family's financial responsibilities. His salary is deposited in a checking account and she writes the checks when they are needed. Much of their family financial crisis can be blamed on their house; they paid \$13,350 for a house that did not have a garage, three miles from town, landscaping, or an approved street. They put \$3500 down and paid an assessment of \$450 for street improvements and built a garage for \$800. Last year they spent more than they earned; they claim that they will be out of the woods in a year.

#### 1956 families

Rae and Bob Darner and their five children live in Fargo, North Dakota. Rae met her husband, Bob, when he was home on leave but they did not marry until a year later. Rae was working as a secretary in Lincoln, Nebraska before their marriage and gave up her job to become a full-time mother and homemaker. Many letters came into *Ladies Home Journal* in reference to the articles concerning the American family: "I'm so glad, at last, someone is praising us instead of scolding us. Just to know someone cares that we young mothers are alive (half alive, anyway) has spurred me on." Rae is no exception and claims that managing her household with a husband and five children takes 100 hours a week. Her husband Bob said "that being organized was not an option---disorganization was the ultimate goal." In response to inquiries about her daily routine, Rae figured how many steps she climbs in a year and discovered that her 31,000 steps were 2000 feet higher than Mt. Everest. Like many other 1950s housewives, Rae does not have a car

and her husband Bob picks up the groceries on Saturday (Sharpe, April, 1956).

Eileen Sharpe wrote this introduction to "Strangers in Town": *Who are the new people across the way? Today the leisurely, neighborly visit can seldom be made by those confined to the care of small children. For a young mother, a difficult hurdle can be the matter of meeting friends---how? Where? When? There is never any question about the why. As Mary Lou Field discovered, a new house in thriving land can be one of the most solitary spots in the world. To bring community and homemaker closer together---one of the problems of our day---is one of the goals of this series on the young mother* (Sharpe, Aug. 1956).

Mary Lou and Jim Field, Farmington , New Mexico were married when Mary Lou was 16. They left the security of their home and extended family in Indiana and moved to New Mexico to begin a new life. Jim took a job as a comptroller of a newspaper and ultimately, lost that job. "Jim's so busy he works every night to make headway in his accounting job, and we're so new here we aren't very well acquainted yet." When Jim leaves for work, Mary Lou is "marooned for the day in an adobe-colored house under a burning blue sky." They moved to New Mexico with a new baby, and soon after the move, Mary Lou became ill with a second pregnancy and needed help with her responsibilities in the home. In addition to this complication, their child became sick and required specialized treatment for her illness. The hospital in Farmington was not adequate, and the child had to be moved to Denver for treatment. At this time, Mary Lou's mother made the trip west to help the family in their time of need.

Farmington, New Mexico grew from 3,000 inhabitants to 12,000 and nearby oil and gas and uranium strikes have made it the "hub of the busy San Juan basin." In light

of this rapid development, the civic facilities have not been able to catch up; there are no public buses, and a trip to the center of town costs \$1 by taxi. For Mary Lou, the ringing of the phone is a pleasure; the local hospital needs her help. “The hospital is like a second home and family to us now.”

When Mary Lou was growing up in Indiana, she decided to marry Jim and finish high school after their marriage; the school gave Jim permission to sign her report cards. “I married her young because I wanted to train her my way. If she has any faults--- they’re my faults.” The sixteen-year old bride felt closer to the hospital staff where she did volunteer work than she did her former high school friends. The Korean war demanded them to separate for the first time when Jim was recalled to active duty. After the war, Jim returned to his work with the newspaper where he progressed until their move to New Mexico. After the trials and tribulations of their move, Mary Lou conceded that seeing her husband happy at his work is reward enough for her and makes up for any lack of companionship she may have to endure (Sharpe, Aug. 1956).

The editors of *Ladies’ Home Journal* prefaced the article “mama gets too tired” with this declaration:

*Never before in the history of the world did so much depend upon the young mother as today. She is having more children closer together. For her there are no helpers to do all the jobs that need to be done for babies. In these swiftly moving busy times, when even grandmother is likely to be employed, rarely is she able to call upon relatives to share the daylong, sometimes nightlong care of her home or of her children.*

*And, in most cases, she wouldn’t if she could. As never before, the young mother*

*is the fountainhead of the family---continuously outgiving, replenished mainly by love. But because she is a woman, she is practical too. She knows that she sometimes becomes too tired to be patient. What if one of her children should become sick; can she take the other toddlers along to the doctor---to the hospital? What if she should become sick herself? And who will care for her babies while she is having another?*

In this series the Journal explores the problems of the young mother, asks whether society is giving her the help her important contribution merits ( Spicer, May 1956).

Ruth and J. D. Beal and their three children, Birmingham, Alabama discovered that even the young can push themselves too far. Ruth admitted, "I literally crawl out of bed some mornings---by ten o'clock I have to lie down." J. D. works the morning shift at Tennessee Coal and Iron company as a junior engineer; he gets home from work by 5 p.m to help Ruth out in her busiest hours. "He takes right over, has charge of problems, can even cook."

J. D. met Ruth when she was almost sixteen; he thought of her as "the prettiest girl I'd ever seen." After ten years of marriage, he still thinks so. Mary said, "What I wanted most in life was to be married to J. D. and have a family, and my dream came true." The Beals like many other young families are often over extended both physically and mentally. With no difficulties during her pregnancies, Ruth's problems came after the children were born. Kenny David Beal was born right away after they were married; when Kenny was well past the baby stage, the second baby Carolyn came along; but when Carolyn was only 10 months old, the third baby was born. Some how Ruth discovered that there were not enough hours in the day to do all that needed to be done. "I

never got through washing. With two babies in diapers, the washer and dryer were always running.” Ruth was running too and soon found herself feeling weak, shaky and seriously under weight; Ruth collapsed and had to be hospitalized. For Ruth, and other young mothers, the responsibilities can be overwhelming and often physically painful.

The editors of *Ladies' Home Journal* in the article “Heaven sent but not always angels” stated the following:

*Yesterday's woman could shoo her children to unpaved roads or treed back yards, or with her husband's help oversee them at chores. For Jeanne O'Connor and today's young mother, the scene has changed. As houses shrink on land surrounded by arteries of speeding cars, as household work is performed by machines too complicated for children to operate, motherhood has become more complex, though nonetheless rewarding. The next generation, its sense of values, its faith, fortitude and failings, will write our history as a nation. How today's young mother faces age old demands against a background of new problems is the question behind the Journal's present series of visits (Stuart, July 1956).*

Jeanne O'Connor does not know how to drive and her husband Jay is gone at least eleven hours of the day, six days a week, with the family's 1950 station wagon. Her entire life is inconvenient as she must travel 3 miles to the super market, six miles to church, and on an average day, Jeanne often does not speak to anyone over 8 years old. She has six children: 8, 6, 5, 4, 2, and a new baby (Stuart, July, 1956). Jeanne optimistically stated, “Jay and I think alike on everything that's important.” Every evening, Jeanne and the family sit in front of the television and say the rosary together.

“The Plight of Young Mothers” (*Ladies' Home Journal*, March, 1956) continues

to tell the story in their series: "How America Lives." Bill and Edith Brady, Wilmington, Delaware, have four children under four, and Bill, an insurance salesman, complained: "I don't see why women can't organize their homes and children the way men organize their business." The editors stated that there are strains on young mothers as they cope with this era when families and relatives no longer live near enough to help. *Ladies' Home Journal* is actually making a plea for help for young women and the tribulations that surround their duties as a wife and homemaker. In keeping with this trend, Edith related that hanging clothes on the line gives her time to think. Her every day responsibilities include doing dishes three times a day, seventeen "tubs of laundry" a week, and working 14-16 hours a day to complete her life as a homemaker and mother. Bill responded, "I'm sorry if I blew up, Fats." He still calls her "Fats" as a reminder of her weight when they married. Bill often works in the home because his life as an insurance salesman requires him to make phone calls and do paper work in off hours; this is often impossible because of the noise and confusion within the home.

The editors said that today's young mother and homemaker works a 24 hour day in a 40 hour a week world and copes with overwhelming demands. They ask: "Are the strains on her too great in an era when families and relatives no longer live near enough to help?" (Spicer, March 1956).

#### 1957 families

Gloria and Jim Wortman were a unique family as they ventured out of their familiar surroundings on an adventure. They planned and executed a camping trip from St. Louis, Missouri to California; they traveled for \$15 a day and visited relatives along

the way. Gloria was a home economics major and Jim was an art director for an advertising agency. Gloria said, "I'm just a housewife and mother and that's the way I want it" (Wortman and Stuart, May, 1957). Jim, a Marine Corp pilot during WWII, was recalled to active duty during the Korean war. The Wortman's story was different from the other young families in America. Although they felt the same pangs of war and returning to duty, they somehow faced their postwar life with vitality and vigor and a sense of adventure.

Jim Wortman explained: "When I was a boy in St. Louis my father used to take my mother and my brother and sister and me out camping in Missouri state parks." He reminisced about his childhood with family and said that he was "bitten early, and the responsibility for encouraging camping in my family must rest with me." His wife was not at all interested as she had never camped in her life; her attitude was summed up in two words, "no bathrooms." She changed her feelings as she conceded: "I don't know how I got involved. It just comes. You suddenly realize that the fun of it overbalances everything else." Their trip across the country was a challenge, and *Ladies Home Journal* published their itinerary, what they spent, and their check list and how they packed it. This article showed the historical reader that not all of the families were willing to stay in the mold, but rather, some were adventurous and creative.

Rosellen Dennerlein from Long Beach, California wrote this letter to the editors in April, 1957:

*Say! How about the plight of the not-so-young mothers? What about us who had our several babies during the years 1935-45---before television, sans baby sitters? I'll tell you where a lot of us are now: working outside*

*the home trying to boost the family income to meet added financial demands---expenses of orthodontia, glasses, illnesses, music lessons and higher education.*

*Our girls are 19, 15 and 12, attending college, high school and juniorhigh. To top it off, my husband is a high-school teacher, and I work as a secretary (Civil Service) in an elementary school. Boy! Are we education-minded! We manage to scrape through the school year (narrowly) financially, so that the two summer months can be spent pursuing our special interests---and we swim and swim and swim. But this is a year-round vacationers' paradise---Long Beach, California, 40 miles below Los Angeles. Best of all is our little peninsula. Can you imagine living three houses from a lovely bay and one very short block from a beautiful ocean beach.*

*We live in a little six-room Spanish stucco house which badly needs fixing, furnishing and paying for. (How do we spend the money we earn? If I just write necessities, you have it in a nutshell.) I'm afraid we'll never have a fancy family room or a dreamy kitchen, but the place will always be running over with people, swim suits, driftwood and sand, sand, sand (Dolson, April, 1957).*

Rosellen left Los Angeles college in her sophomore year because of her mother had a stroke; Gerry was originally from Baden, Pennsylvania and moved to California to have an opportunity to play high school football; this move proved to be lucrative as he received an athletic scholarship when he attended college. Gerald graduated from St.

Mary's College near San Francisco and eventually went east to play professional football for the New York Giants. This required a four month separation for the young couple: "...but he wrote me every other day, and his letters were so long and full of just everything he was doing. They meant so much to me that if I ever had to give them up it would be like tearing off a piece of me." Gerry returned to California to finish his master's degree and continued to play professional football for the Los Angeles Bulldogs.

All five of the Dennerlein's children go to school in Long Beach, California; two work and three study while Rosellen and Gerald "pool pay checks for family expenses." Like many housewives in the 1950s, Rosellen works 75 hours a week, and 40 of those hours are at a job which pays her \$3000 a year. In addition to her paying job, "she washes, irons, cleans, sews for herself and three daughters, and keeps up with a nonstop husband." The girls mentioned Gerry's rock and roll rebellion when he hid all the Fats Domino records in the laundry; with the help of Rosellen, they found them all. Gerry complained that the six straight hours of rock and roll is difficult to handle when he has studying or research to do: "Luckily, he and his wife have the same preferences on television; they both like plays. To preserve family peace, the girls have their own set in a bedroom" (Dolson, April 1957).

#### 1958 families

"How America Lives" began to show signs of conflict and dissonance in the articles presented in the 1958s and 1960s; the themes changed to such topics as: "My Working Doesn't Hurt Anyone" (Freeman, Oct. 1958); "Our Teen-age Drug Addicts" (Parton and MacKaye, March 1958); "No Place Like Home for Troubled Kids" (Laitin,

April 1958); “Why Do They Marry So Young?” (Parton, Nov. 1958); “The Unwed Mother” (Stuart, March 1959); and “Weekend Wife Weekday Widow” (Parton, Feb. 1959). The familiar and traditional roles of family members were beginning to change as was revealed in the articles in *Ladies’ Home Journal*. This cultural phenomenon showed an emerging theme; women were beginning to return to the workplace, college, and generally, become more independent. Sally Shannon returned to work and defends her decision by claiming, “I’m a better wife for Donald because I work and keep up with things” (Freeman, Oct. 1958). Sally said that she works because she *likes* to and not because she *has* to; this defense is often heard as the explanation for women returning to the workplace. “Does that mean I’m not a good mother? Is it wrong to leave a three-year-old son and a year-old daughter with a nursemaid all day when you don’t have to? Some of my friends think so.” Her older friends predict that she will have regrets when the children are older and she no longer has the option to share more of their lives. Sally and Donald Shannon live in Georgetown, and it is not uncommon to see a variety of lifestyles in their neighborhood. “A wife can stay home all day and bake cookies to her heart’s content---or she can dash out of the house at 8:20 every morning, leaving a husband and two very young children behind her.” Sally works for the United States Information Agency and Donald works as a reporter for the *Los Angeles Times* in the Washington Bureau. Sally added, “If I thought John and Susanna suffered because of my working, I’d stop in an instant. But my salary added to Donald’s gives us about fifteen thousand dollars a year, so we can afford reliable nurses” (Freeman, Oct. 1958).

“How America Lives” addressed a growing problem in America: teenage drug addicts (Parton and MacKaye, March 1958). This article reveals that sixteen is the

common age for becoming a drug user: "Instead of putting childhood behind them and seeking the pleasures and challenges of adulthood, they live only for the 'next shot'." This increase in drug abuse threatened the community as teenagers needed to support their addiction which costs them from \$35 to \$75 a week. Parton and MacKaye explained that drug addicts were generally adults in the latter part of their life span, but "today addicts are predominantly under thirty, not infrequently youths," and they added that the medical profession, social scientists, and psychiatrists were expediting their efforts to discover the motives behind the increase in addictions and to develop treatment programs to counteract the growing numbers of addicts. "Dope addiction" was a problem attributed to larger cities such as Los Angeles, New York, Detroit and Philadelphia, generally in their slums. They indicated that the typical "users" lives in a poor neighborhood, where family life is disrupted and where the population is deprived and disorganized. Not all addicts were previously delinquents and are not all gang members; some try drugs for "kicks" and never become addicts, but others who try "dope" find a reason for continuing. One teen-age addict said: "All we could think of was getting our next shot. We decided we were spending too much money, so we bought some heroin, capsuled it with mild sugar and started selling it around."

The community Council of Greater New York furnished a list of signs that may indicate whether or not your teen-ager is using narcotics: "Are his school grades suddenly falling? Is he playing truant from school? Are clothes and personal belongings rapidly disappearing? Does he suffer from nausea after eating? Does he spend an unusual amount of time locked in his room or in the bathroom? Are his finger tips scorched from cigarettes?: Does he yawn too frequently? Does he have strange-looking, odd smelling

cigarettes? Does he have marks on his arms or legs that could be caused by injections?” These questions and others were possible an indication that a teen-ager might be using drugs; the problems of drug and alcohol abuse are an on-going problem in society, and the 1950s postwar era was not an exception.

The traditional housewife role was also challenged toward the end of the 1950s as more and more women were returning to school and to the work place. Hugh and Frances Olsen, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, have faced many adversities as Frances went back to school to become a medical doctor. For six years Hugh Olsen has taken on the role of mother and father to help his wife complete her education. “He is carrying on a husbandly good deed of five years’ standing” during which time he and the children saw his wife and their mother enter medical school at the age of thirty-five, graduate four years later from Women’s Medical College in Philadelphia with a cum laude degree, and complete a year of interning at Philadelphia General Hospital (Stuart, May 1958). This role reversal began when their youngest child was in second grade and the oldest was eleven. She will soon start a private practice, \$4000 in debt, with four children to put through college.

Six years ago Jack Shaw, of Beaumont, California, brought home a boy with an 80-page police record (Laitin, April 1958). Jack Shaw, a forty-three-year-old who had been “cop” for less than six months, brought home his first arrest. “Your Honor, this boy needs love and understanding and companionship. My wife and I can give it to him. I’d like to take him home with me.” Jack brought the boy home without consulting with his wife; he arrived wearing filthy clothes, and Ava hoped that Jack wasn’t going to ask the boy in. She did not know that she was about to become his new mother; Ava claimed

that she was scared to death that night. After the first week, he began making his own bed and helping with the other children; then he asked whether he could help with the dishes. This family made a sacrifice, not only for the boy, but for the community and their culture. This change in norms was a preview of the attitudes of young America and how America lives.

*Ladies' Home Journal* recognized the lives of young America and reported on the changes in life styles taking place in the late 1950s. One such article was "Why do they marry so young?" which was published in November, 1958. The growing concern was that teen-agers were marrying younger than ever before. "We've had so many marriages this last year that I can't even keep track of them," said a high school principal. He added that students were starting to go steady when they are thirteen and wearing a boy's ring on a necklace; and if they are not engaged by their senior year, they think they have failed. The principal concluded that if they become pregnant, they are expelled from high school. This is the first article that focused on teen age pregnancy and the sexual interests prevalent in the American culture. They also added that contemporary culture stimulates romantic and sexual interests, and glamorizes marriage.

Some educators indicated that early marriage was a reflection of the insecurities of the time and that many of the girls who marry young come from insecure and unhappy homes and seem to look upon marriage as an escape to a happier life style. Economic prosperity indicated that parents keep their children in school longer and thus, society is not aware of early marriage, whereas, a generation ago, parents couldn't contribute to the support of married children.

"One of the biggest single factors we've noticed is the change in sexual attitudes.

Many of our high-school girls get married just because they have to get married. And an equal number of girls in school get pregnant every year but don't get married---they just disappear for a semester and then come back without any baby" (Stuart, March 1959).

The following reports were included in this article: approximately 300,000 boys and girls under 18 are married, and by age 18, some 15,000 additional young people are widowed or divorced. Sociologist Harold T. Christensen of Purdue University contends that teenagers are not mature enough for marriage; they make very unstable husbands, wives and parents; the younger a couple is, the shorter the marriage; and the best time for marriage seems to be the early or mid-twenties. He concludes that the marrying too young is definitely one cause of divorce. Mr. Albert Werthan of Family Service Association of America cites this record: brides under 20 and grooms under 21 account for 60 percent of the country's divorces; about one-third of these marriages end in divorce. Dr. Marion Hilliard warns: "Adolescent boys and girls are too young to cope with sex, but it fills their minds and bodies." She continued: "Movies, popular songs and television constantly portray only the passion side of human love, giving our adolescents the false impression that this is love in its entirety. Nothing could be more wrong. Modern fathers and mothers are avoiding the traditional responsibilities of parents." Dr. Hilliard's assessment of popular culture and its influence on morals and values is based upon her evaluation of the media and its influence on teen-agers. Many of the same complaints about popular music and popular culture's influence are echoed today.

The editors of *Ladies' Home Journal* included the following statement in the article, "The Unwed Mother" which appeared in March, 1959:

*The problem of illegitimate pregnancy increases yearly. We are accustomed to thinking of it as belonging to the lower depths of society---for many of us decently out of sight and out of mind---but such a view is at least ten years out of date. Reported illegitimate births are now nearly 200,000 a year. No one pretends that these known births tell the whole story. There are no statistics on forced marriages, although a leading churchman is on record with his guess that every tenth bride he marries is already pregnant. No one knows how many abortions are done annually in this country, although one official estimate is 1,200,000. Another, based on the limited records of a few exposed abortionists, is that the real number may be astronomical. The heartache of an incompatible marriage, the terrors of a secret abortion come after the event. So do our tax dollars for dependent children, and the devoted work of our social agencies. It is before the event that the great work of prevention must be done. No one else can accomplish this task so gently, so steadily or so well as a young person's own family. No one else's understanding will accomplish so much (Stuart, March 1959).*

The issue of unwanted pregnancies and the unwed mother was the issue in this article. The Journal published many letters which they received after publishing an article "When is Love Wrong" in December, 1957. Most of them had things to say that

they hoped might help others. Neal Stuart was sent to visit some of the writers of these letters, to try to find out a little more about the persons who wrote them, the experiences they had lived through, the mistakes they made in the past and how those mistakes could have caused irreparable damage.

The following statements are taken from those letters: "I am 21 and learned my lesson early. I also had been to college, and was well on my way to seeing a career in dancing---a lifelong dream---materialize." Jacqueline continued that she had moved to New York and gave birth to an illegitimate child who she only saw once, just after he had been delivered. "Whatever his future holds, I know God will protect him and help him find happiness." Another writer said: "I wonder if you ever heard of a grandmother who gave up her grandchild?" This woman wrote that she refused to give consent for her underage son to marry and therefore, relinquished her rights to become a grandmother. A more pleasant letter was received from Sylvia K. who said: "Yes, I faced the misery of finding myself pregnant, but I fought every step of the way and won." Sylvia got married to the baby's father before their son was born. "I only hope that some other girl who must someday face this same trouble will benefit by knowing that even a shotgun wedding can succeed. And why shouldn't it? For God takes care of us all" (Stuart, March 1959).

Ed and Betty Rogers of Winchester, Virginia face another dilemma; they are separated during the week while Ed travels for his business. Betty is lonely in this article, "Weekend Wife Weekday Widow" and concludes that "Ed's wonderful, but I'll never be happy till he's home every night." The Rogers were not alone, as many husbands were working for companies who required travel from their employees. Ed is a traveling

salesman who is gone from home five days and four nights every week, and Betty hates this life style as much now as she did when she was a new bride. Now, during the quiet hours of afternoon when the three tiny children are napping and during the lonely evenings, Betty has been doing a lot of thinking. Betty concludes that she loves Ed too much to demand that he take another job because he would be unhappy in an office job. "I've got a good job with a good company...I earn six to seven thousand a year, after taxes and expenses, and the job offers a real future."

Betty's week is much different from that of her husband: On Sunday Betty says that "all week I go through the motions one must in taking care of the house and children. It's only on weekends that I'm a human being again." Monday when Ed leaves, Betty usually cries a little... "Oh this awful loneliness which grabs me the minute he goes;" Tuesday, after supper Betty does chores and talks to herself: "I should roughhouse with the children. Ed does when he's home." Wednesday is the turning point of the week, but Betty laments, "If only someone came home at night---to wipe one face, tie one shoe." By Thursday, Betty can see light at the end of the tunnel as she says: "Daddy will be home tomorrow." She now takes time to joke with the children, to shine up the house, to wash and curl her hair, to anticipate the home-coming. And then the week starts all over again.

*Ladies' Home Journal* addressed another family problem in "How to bring up 4 children on \$100 a month" (Hayes, May 1959). Joyce Hayes of Florence, Oregon said that "bringing up three boys and a girl without the help of a husband is a full-time job. This article was furnished by the author to demonstrate the life style of a single-parent family, the victim of a divorce. "The broken home is very much a part of America

today. I am divorced and have the sole care, morally and physically, of four children. Her problem is that she must furnish all of the affection, security, and a nutritious diet on a minimum of money. Joyce concedes that she may marry again, but she believes that she is limited by having four children.

Every year she cans 400 quarts of produce for her family; she trades her work for the material for her own and the children's clothes. She lives on a strict schedule to accomplish all of her duties including ironing on Saturday night to keep from being lonely; "she bakes on Mondays and Fridays, cleans the house and scrubs the kitchen floor while bread and pastry are in the oven. She has three tubfuls of wash a day, and twice a day sweeps a full dustpan of sand off the floors."

Joyce has aspirations and goals for herself as she hopes to be a writer and spends several hours every day at her typewriter. She does some writing now for the Florence Civic Theater productions and wrote and directed *The Rhodo Follies* of '58, a variety show put on at rhododendron festival time. "Editors have given me some encouragement about my writing, along with the inevitable rejections. I often get up early in the morning to write before the children waken." She often sacrifices her own writing schedule for the sake of her children. "But I believe in a schedule for the children. They want it and need it for a sense of security."

1950	Name	Location	Title	Male Role	Female Role	Children	Male Education	Female Education
Jan. 1950	Martha & Ed  Kibby	Claremont  Vermont	“Always Room for One More”	Retired  Teacher	Teacher,  Post  mistress	5 foster children, 1child	College	College
Feb.  1950	Bob &  Peggy  Coleman	New York,  New York	“Ten Thumbs on Each Hand”	Novelty  Salesman	Home-  maker	2 children	College	Attended  Brooklyn  College
March  1950	Maurine &  Ray  Rylander	Buda,  Texas	“Small Town Rebel”	Dairy  Farmer	Home-  maker  Farmer	5 children	College	College
April  1950	Bill & Mary  Arter	Worthing-  ton  Ohio	“More Babies More Fun”	Advertising & University Professor	Home-  maker	2 teenagers  2 babies	College	High School  While married
May  1950	Virginia &Merrill  Phillips	Walton,  Indiana	“Was It Cancer?”	Electrition  And  Plumber	Homemaker	1 child	High school	High School
June  1950	Zenon  And Luba	Castle Creek,	“We Live Again”	Architect	Homemaker	3 children	College	n/a

	Hazdewyzezes	New York						
July, 1950	Mary and Stewart Coey	Delray Beach Florida	"We knew what we wanted"	Accountant	Homemaker	2 children	College	n/a
Aug., 1950	Lucille and Austin Sheehan	Camden, South Carolina	"It's All in the Family"	Oil and Gas Business	Homemaker	3 children	n/a	n/a
Sept., 1950	Katherine and Todd Karns	Hollywood, California	"The Most Talented Kid in Town"	Actor	Homemaker	1 child	n/a	n/a
Oct., 1950	Edith and Roland Powers	Magic Valley Idaho	"Homesteaders 1950"	Farmer	Homemaker	3 children	College	College
Nov. 1950	Charlie and Lola Sheppard	Hutchison, Minnesota	"Country Doctor"	Doctor	Homemaker	2	College	College
Dec. 1950	Anne Thorpe	Cleveland, Ohio	Life in an Orphan Home		Proprietor of home with many children	N/A	N/A	N/A

1951	Name	Location	Title	Male Role	Female Role	Children	Male Education	Female Education
Jan.	Ed and Elaine Healey	Santa Rosa Ca	“Second Marriage	Rancher	Home- maker	2	College	High school
Feb.	John and Laura Patrello	Mt. Vernon New York	“A Home of their own”	Plasterer	Home- maker	3	High school	High school
March	Phyllis and James Krasilosky	Jueau Alaska	“Newcomers to Alaska	Lawyer	Home- Maker	1	College	college
April	Eledith and James Peters	Baltimore Maryland	“Our Children are going to college	Train Pullman	Substitute Teacher	4	n/a	college
May	Bryant and Mary Reed	Newton Highlands Massachusetts	“Second Call”	Engineer Lt. Naval Resereve	Homemaker	2children 2 & infant	College	High School
June	Verna and Jack Tracy	Fort Dodge Iowa	“Wanted: Nine Children	Sells office equipment	Home- maker	9	n/a	n/a

July	Annie and Andre Peterson	Akron Ohio	“Help wanted”	Researcher Goodyear	Homemaker	3	College	College
August	Rose and Mario Occhialinos	Poughkeepsie New York	“Unharried Housewife”	Service Mechanic Veteran	Homemaker	2	High school	High school
September	Harry and Joyce Hulce	Springville Utah	“New Start in life”	Steel worker/	Homemaker	3	High school	High school
October	Juanita and James McCoy	Topeka Kansas	“Fighting the Budget”	Accountant	Homemaker	3	College	College
November	Jane and Raymond Hill	Westminster Maryland	“We Live by the Journal”	Engineer	Homemaker	4	College	College
December	George and Rhea McDonald	Teaneck New Jersey	“Lesson in Love”	Theater production	Former performer	2 1 with (cerebral palsy	High school	High school

1952	Name	Location	Title	Male Role	Female Role	Children	Male Education	Female Education
January	Betty & John Quimby	Freemont, New Hampshire	“Open House in New Hampshire”	Dairy farmer	Homemaker	3 children	High school	2 years college
February	Pat & Carl Schmidt	Cincinnati, Ohio	“The Schmidts of Cincinnati”	Musician, now plate maker	Homemaker	2 children	High school	High school
March	Arvella & Dick Weir	Seattle, Washington	“Three at a Time”	Fireman	Homemaker	Triplets	High School	High school
April	Otakar & Duda Kutvirtis	Rochester, New York	“Escape to Freedom”	University Professor	Translator	2 children	College	College, MA
May	Dave & Rosebud Stallings	Henderson, North Carolina	“A Right Happy Place”	Cotton Mill	Homemaker (works in mill)	3 children	High school drop-out	High school drop-out
June	Louis & Lorene Scala	Ramsey, New Jersey	“Always a little bit behind”	Banker	Teacher	5 children	College	College

July	Wilma & Elmo Webb		“I’m the housewife with the beautiful inferiority complex”	Accountant	Homemaker	2 children	College	High school
August			“Child of Nature”					
September	Bob & Nancy Parschall	New York, New York	“Stage set for love”	Actor	Actor	Pregnant	College	Drama School
October	Richard & Eugenia Simmons	Los Angeles, California	“They learned to love Again”	Salesman	Homemaker	2 children	Some college	High school
November	Catherine & Banks Upshaw	Dallas, Texas	“We’re polls apart in politics only”	Text book Publisher, Delegate	Homemaker	4 children	College	High school
December	Charles & Betty Libby	Middleburg, Conn.	“Christmas in the Parsonage”	Minister	Homemaker	4 children	College	College



1953	Name	Location	Title	Male Role	Female Role	Children	Male Education	Female Education
January	Bob & Gina Short	Concord, California	“How Young America Lives”	Steel Worker	Home-maker	1 child	High school	High school
February	Dot & Ray Rowland	Vannatta, Tennessee	“Pioneers-1953”	Cotton Fields	Home-maker	n/a	High school	High school
March	Fran & Bill Calkins	Levittown, New Jersey	“A Home is Born”					
April	Harold & Ruth Young	Kansas City, Missouri	“Lucky in Love”	Carpenter	Homemaker	2 children	High school	High school
May	Arlene & Marshall Irving	Long Island, New York	“Our First Year”	Navy	Homemaker	None	High school	High school
June	Jacque & Gene Biegunwald	Monroe, Louisiana	“With Love & Lumber”	Railroad Engineer	Homemaker	2 children	High school	High school
July								
August	Bill & Fran Calkins	Levittown, Pennsylvania	“The Big Move”	Works in bank	Homemaker	1 child	College & military	Attended college

September	Nita & Jack McCloskey	Haddonfield, New Jersey	“Meet Mrs. \$10,000 Exe. In home”	Teacher & pro basketball player	Homemaker	2 children	College & navy	Junior college
October	Caroline & Chuck Bauer	Chicago, Illinois	“I Can’t Afford to Work”	Manufacturers representative	Homemaker	1 child	Navy	High school
November	John & Lucille Bradford	Sharon, Pennsylvania	“A Living Room that Works”	Engineer	Homemaker	5 children	College & military	Colby college & boarding school
December	Nick & Elaine Cardell	Point Lookout, New York	“Faith for this day”	Minister	Substitute teacher/homemaker	1 child	Columbia University	Brigham Young

1954	Name	Location	Title	Male Role	Female Role	Children	Male Education	Female Education
January	Grant & Laura Ford	Denver, Colorado	“Love on Four Skis”	Insurance	Secretary  Homemaker	No  children	College	High school
February	Dell & Ray Smith	Minneapolis, Minnesota	“The Five Hardest Years”	Real Estate	Homemaker	3 children	College & Military	High school
March	Gene & Lilian Hise	Bristol, Virginia	“The marriage that couldn’t last”	Service engineer	Homemaker	2 children	High school	High school after marriage
April	Betty & Lavern Munsell	Lansing, Michigan	“Race with the Stork”	Swing shift labor	Homemaker	3 children	High school	High school
May	Don Schmitt & Mary Jo Allhoff	St. Louis, Missouri	“The Big Wedding”	College student	College student	n/a	College	College
June	Elaine & Sam Wolf	Riverside, Connecticut	“Year of Crisis”	Advertising Agent	Macy’s & housewife	1 child	College	High School
July	Dick &		“The Time	Fireman	Homemaker	2 children	High	High

	Gergee Williams		of our Lives”				school	school
August	Dorothy & William Camer	Beechhurst, Long Island, New York	“The Scrambled Housewife”	Insurance Investigator	Homemaker	4 children	High school & military	High school
September	Scud & Bets Parker		“We Started Live Over”	Farmer	Farmer	4 adult children	High school	High school
October	Ed & Lilli Hough	Trenton, New Jersey	“I quit teaching college”	Runs gas station	Homemaker	3 boys	College	High school
November	Dottie & Barnham Robb	Atlanta, Georgia	“Year of Crisis”	Air conditioners	Homemaker	2 children	Returned to college after military	High school (quit)
December	Ray & Marcel Crookston		“Houseful of Angels”			10 children	n/a	n/a



August	Chuck & Sally Harball	Polnon, Montana	“Ranch Wife”	Rancher & cowboy	Rancher & homemaker	3 children	Veteran & high school	High school
September	Pat & Eddie Gorrie	Ridley Park, Pennsylvania	“The Best Things in life are Free”	Atlantic foundry	Homemaker	1 child	High school & military	High school
October	Curt & Winifred Roach	Mineoka, Illinois	“Year of Disaster”	Bluebird Bus Company	Homemaker	4 children	High school	Quit high school
November	The Kerrs	Larchmont, New York	“Our Gingerbread Dream House	Playwright	Playwright	n/a	College	College
December	Mario & Estelle Carota	Berkeley, California	“No Place like home at Christmas”	n/a	n/a	10 children	n/a	n/a

1956	Name	Location	Title	Male Role	Female Role	Children	Male Education	Female Education
January	Harry & Allison Neal	Paris, Tennessee	“Wave as you pass”	Traveling Musician	Traveling musician	1 child	n/a	n/a
February	Billy Jean & Zane Williams	St. Louis, Missouri	“Where’s Mama?”	Construction	Stenographer	3 children	High school	High school
March	Bill & Edith Brady	Wilmington, Delaware	“Bulging at the Seams”	Insurance agent	Homemaker	4 children	High school	High school
April	Bob & Ray Darner	Fargo, North Dakota	“My 15-hour Day”	Engineer	Homemaker	5 children	College	High school
May	Ruth & J. D. Beal	Birmingham, Alabama	“Mama gets too tired”	Engineer	Homemaker	3 children	High school & military	College
June	Barbara & Jimmie Burnes	New York, New York	“First Baby”	Ph.D. student	Homemaker	None	College	College
July	Jay & Jean O’Connor	Sylmar, California	“Heaven Sent but not always	Salesman	Homemaker	6 children	College & military	High school

## Angels”

August	Mary Lou & Jim Field	Farmington, New Mexico	“Strangers in Town”	Accountant	Homemaker	4 children	High school & military	High school
September	Ronald & Marilyn Kiddy	Detroit, Michigan	“Her 3 Men”	Machine operator	Homemaker	2 children	High school	High school
October	Bud & Olga Williams	Long Island, New York	“Year of Conquest over Polio”	Marine director chemical company	Homemaker	4 children	College	College
November	Ben & Betty Webster	Des Moines, Iowa	“A Mansion was all we could afford”	Lawyer	Homemaker	3 children	College	College
December	Horace & Mrion Rascom	Charleston, New Hampshire	“Be Happy- here”	n/a	n/a	6 children	n/a	n/a

1957	Name	Location	Title	Male Role	Female Role	Children	Male Education	Female Education
January	Violet & Lawrence Allen	Lynchburg, Virginia	“Open House to 100 Teenagers”	Antique dealer	Antique dealer		High school	High school
February	Lt. Col. Daniel & Dorothy James	Otis Air Force Base Cape Cod, Massachusetts	“Demonstrated Ability”	Squadron Commander	Homemaker	3 children	College	High school
March	Grace & Forrest Lee	Brownlee, Nebraska	“The Ranch is where my heart is”	Rancher	Rancher	Empty nest	High school	High school
April	Rosellen & Gerald Dennerlein	Long Beach, California	“There’s more fun than Money in Teaching”	High school teacher & former pro football player	Secretary at elementary school	3 grown children	College	College
May	Jim & Gloria Wortman	St. Louis, Missouri	“California here we come”	Art director ad agency	Homemaker	1 child	High school & military	College
June	Ted & Betty Kendall & 5 other	Tuscon, Arizona	“Will you have enough money when you retire?”	Draftsman	Homemaker	2	High school	High school

families

July	Steve & Judy Ambrose	University of Wisconsin	“Campus Romance”	Student	Student	n/a	College	College
August	Mel & Lea Travioli	Beverly Hills, California	“The Happy Man”	Cripple & sells newspapers	Homemaker	3 children	n/a	n/a
September	Ann & Bob Palmer	Albany, Oregon	“Second Marriage”	Salesman	Homemaker	5 children	High school	High school
October	Fern Morling	Fallon, Nevada	“Suddenly a Widow with 5 Children to support”	n/a	Morel chambermaid	5 children	n/a	Highs school
November	Ted & Clara Nadler							

1958	Name	Location	Title	Male Role	Female Role	Children	Male Education	Female Education
January	Priscilla & Paul Ricker	Midland, Texas	"Rich one year poor another"	Buys oil leases	Homemaker	4 children	College	College
February	Ward & Johnnie Haraydos	North Brunswick, New Jersey	"More dreams than money"	Roofing	Homemaker	3 children	High school	High school
March	Stories on teen addiction		"Our teenage drug addicts"					
April	Jack & Ava Shaw	Beaumont, California	"Home for Troubled Kids"	Policeman	Homemaker	4 children	n/a	n/a
May	Hugh & Frances Olsen	Philadelphia, Pennsylvania	"Mother is a doctor now"	Watches children	Medical student	4 children	College	College & medical school
June	Kathy & Hugh Beaumont	Hollywood, California	"Between Jobs"	Actor father in "Leave it to Beaver"	Actress	3 children	College & Methodist minister	College & minister

July	Harriet & Dave Lusty	York Harbor, Maine	“The sea the sky and \$75 a week”	Runs marina	Marina & homemaker	1 child	College	College
August	Billy & Ruth Graham	Montreat, North Carolina	“Billy Graham my Son in law”	Minister	Homemaker	4 children	College	College
September	Sonny & Bess Linger	Tuscon, Arizona	“Rodeo Wife”	Rodeo	Rodeo	3 children	n/a	n/a
October	Donald & Sally Shannon	Washington, D. C.	“My Working doesn’t hurt anyone”	Washington correspondent	Secretary U. S. Information Agency	1 child	College & military	College & foreign service
November	Several stories		“Why do they marry so young?”					
December	William & Mattie Zehner	Fulton, Missouri	“The More the Merrier for Christmas	Works for dairy & college student	Works for dairy & homemaker	12 children	College	High school



1959	Name	Location	Title	Male Role	Female Role	Children	Male Education	Female Education
January	Willie & Meda Sharp	Lewiston, Utah	My Faith grew all over again”	Farmer	Homemaker	6 children	High school	High school
February	Ed & Betty Rogers	Winchester, Virginia	“Weekend wife Weekend widow”	Traveling salesman	Homemaker	3 children	High school	College
March	Several unwed mothers		“The Unwed Mother”					
April	Clyde & Beverly Beck	Decatur, Illinois	“We are just average”	Factory worker	Homemaker	3 children	High school	High school
May	Joyce Hayes	Florence, Oregon	“How to bring up 4 children on \$100 a month”	n/a	Homemaker & divorced	4 children	n/a	High school
June	Clayton & Grace Hewett	Morton, Pennsylvania	“Whither thou goest”	Episcopal priest	Homemaker	4 children	College & seminary	High school

July	Helen & Arthur Matthews	Hartford, Connecticut	“One Armed Mother”	Navy	Homemaker	4 children	High school	High school
August	Scott & Ann Pardee	Los Angeles, California	“We adopted a blind child”	Sales rep. aircraft industry	Teacher & homemaker	4 children	College	College
September								
October	Robert & Marita Olsen	Marshalltown, Iowa	“My Wife is just about Perfect”	Salesman	Homemaker	3 children	High school	High school
November	Two families		“Children in the Dark”					
December	Dr. Jim & Doris Frasers	Grand Lake, Colorado	“Country Doctor”	Doctor	Nurse & homemaker	8 children	College	Nursing school

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