
Review (Feb. 1993). Over the past two centuries, since the Industrial Revolution began, there has been a shift away from the family as the basic unit of social organization. "As . . . many of its functions have moved outside the household [e.g., to the workplace], child rearing has moved increasingly out of the household as well. Constructed social organization, in the form of the school, the nursery school, and the daycare center, [has] taken over many components of child rearing." These are now the "primary child rearing institutions." They have not yet been "well designed" to fulfill their expanded responsibilities, however.

For millennia, children have received the support and guidance that they need from "available, cohesive families in relatively small, stable communities that characterize most of human history," David A. Hamburg of the Carnegie Corporation of New York writes in *Teachers College Record* (Spring 1993). He believes that children can now get these vital things from other sources—"from responsible, caring adults in schools, in community and youth organizations, in religious organizations, and many more." Harvard's Lisbeth B. Schorr, writing in the *Aspen Institute Quarterly*, shares Hamburg's confidence. The effective programs go against the grain of large bureaucracies, she

says, and are relatively rare. What is needed, she says, is "a new culture" in "human-service systems" and government bureaucracies.

To conservatives, that smacks of utopianism, and they are no longer so alone. Government may or may not have some modest role to play, but more and more Americans seem to be re-emphasizing family. "Over the last 25 years, we have seen the future, and it is not a wholesome one," says Amitai Etzioni, of George Washington University, in *Utne Reader* (May-June 1993). "If we fervently wish for our children to grow up in a civilized society, and if we seek to live in one, let's face facts: It will not happen unless we dedicate more of ourselves to our children." Whitehead, in the same publication, says she thinks that a new shift in the culture may be starting to take place, "a shift away from an ethos of expressive individualism and toward an ethos of family obligation and commitment. . . . Today, a critical mass of baby boomers has reached a new stage in the life cycle. They've married. They are becoming parents. And they're discovering that the values that served them in singlehood no longer serve them in parenthood."

A return to Ozzie and Harriet? Not exactly. But, after a detour of several decades, a fresh appreciation of the two-parent family and a new commitment to marriage and children may be in the offing.

PRESS & MEDIA

The Mystique That Wasn't

"Beyond the Feminine Mystique: A Reassessment of Postwar Mass Culture, 1946-1958" by Joanne Meyerowitz, in *The Journal of American History* (March 1993), 1125 East Atwater Ave., Bloomington, Ind. 47401-3701.

In her influential 1963 book, *The Feminine Mystique*, feminist Betty Friedan argued that the nation's popular magazines, particularly

women's magazines, persuaded the women of postwar America that they could "find fulfillment only in sexual passivity, male domination, and [providing] maternal love." This "feminine mystique," she claimed, confined women to the role of mere housewives and denied them "careers or any commitment outside the home." University of Cincinnati historian Meyerowitz, however, contends that the magazines were not the antifeminist Frankensteins that Friedan—and historians who have taken their cues from her—portrayed them as.

Friedan focused mainly on short fiction in *Ladies' Home Journal* and three other women's magazines, Meyerowitz points out. Meyerowitz surveyed 489 *nonfiction* articles about women that appeared between 1946 and '58 in eight monthly magazines, ranging from *Reader's Digest* to *Woman's Home Companion*. She found that the magazines "did not simply glorify domesticity or demand that women return to or stay at home." They "advocated both the domestic and the nondomestic, sometimes in the same sentence."

More than 60 percent of the articles dealt with individual women and their achievements. (Other articles concerned more predictable subjects, such as women's paid work, marriage, and domesticity.) The individual women profiled included prominent entertainers and others in the public eye, such as "star reporter" Dorothy Kilgallen and athlete Babe Didrikson Zaharias. "In general, [these] articles suggested that the noteworthy woman rose above and beyond ordinary domesticity." Many such articles saw women "both as feminine and domestic and as public achievers." In an article by journalist (and future senator) Richard L. Neuberger, for example, Dorothy McCullough Lee was portrayed as both an "ethereally pale housewife" with a "frail, willowy" appearance and the hard-nosed mayor of Portland, Oregon, who had successfully fought organized crime and was "headed for national distinction."

The magazines that set the tone of postwar America did not pretend that women were creatures only of hearth and home. In reality, Friedan, herself a veteran magazine writer when *The Feminine Mystique* was published, elaborated on a conflict in women's lives that magazines had been exploring for years.

Bad Business

"Hollywood's Dirty Little Secrets" by Michael Medved, in *Crisis* (March 1993), 1511 K St. N.W., Ste. 525, Washington, D.C. 20005.

A majority of Hollywood movies these days (61 percent in 1991) are rated R, barred to children

under 17 unless accompanied by a parent. Is that because the American public craves flicks full of profanity, sex, and violence? Not at all, says film critic Medved. Hollywood is insistently giving the public what it *doesn't* want.

Some R-rated films, such as *Basic Instinct* (1992), do well at the box office. But most do not. Only one (*Beverly Hills Cop*) of the 10 top money-making movies of the 1980s was R-rated. In 1991, movies aimed at families—those rated PG (parental guidance advised) and G (general audience)—reaped, as a whole, three times the median box-office gross of R-rated films. These family movies ranged from *Beauty and the Beast* to *City Slickers*. A recent analysis by Paul Kagan Associates found that of 1,187 films released between 1984 and '91 (and shown, at their peak, on at least 100 screens), those in the PG category were most successful. Since 1983, Medved says, there has not been a single year in which R-rated movies did as well as those rated PG—and yet the proportion of "adult" films on Hollywood's menu has increased every year.

The film industry violates its own business interests, Medved argues, because of Tinsel Town's peculiar culture. "There is a sense in Hollywood that in order to be . . . serious . . . one must be an alienated artist convinced that life is bleak and meaningless and dishonest and hypocritical," he says. Even though a moviemaker may have a Rolls Royce in the garage and a per-picture paycheck in the millions, he still needs "to attack conventional institutions" to show that he has kept faith with his artistic roots. Hence, the filmmakers have produced a raft of movies, such as *The Handmaid's Tale*, *Agnes of God*, and *The Pope Must Die*, casting organized religion in an unfavorable light—even though all such films have bombed at the box office.

With a desperation born of insecurity, moviemakers want the respect of their peers. "Their pretentiousness, their preening, their desperate desire to be taken seriously runs very deep," Medved says, "and even leads to financial risk-taking on a grand scale, as the industry shows its 'integrity' by ignoring—and even assaulting—the sensibilities of much of the public." Among the politically correct film projects bubbling away today are *five* about the radical Black Panthers of the 1960s.