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The Magazine Women Believed in? “Marriage Advice” 1950-1955

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Abstract

In the United States society, the 1950s is seen as a time of great conservatism where both men and women were placed into specific gender roles that dictated much of how they lived their lives. One institution that verified these gender roles and stereotypes to be true was women's magazines. These magazines contained sections such as fashion segments, helpful cooking guidelines, advertisements, and advice columns that seemed to target middle class, white, suburban married housewives. One advice column that seemed to particularly focus on the idea of a happy housewife and married life was the column *Making Marriage Work*, which appeared in the magazine *Ladies Home Journal* during this 1950s time period. The author of this column, Clifford R. Adams, idealized the 1950s perfect housewife existence and through his advice he encouraged women to strive for this lifestyle, while there were other sources demonstrating that this perceived notion of the perfect housewife did not exist during the 1950s time period.

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Introduction

As the children's schoolyard song goes "First comes love, then comes marriage, and then comes a baby in the baby carriage." While children are still singing this song on playgrounds today, there was no time in history when this chant was perceived to be truer than during the 1950s in the United States. The 1950s are described as a time where the ideal nuclear, suburban, middle class family was dominant.¹ Men and women were placed into specific gender categories where men were expected to be the ones out working in the public sphere and women were left at home to become housewives in the private sphere. One institution that emphasized the importance of gender roles in everyday life was the media, and more specifically the magazine industry.

During the 1950s millions of women around the United States were subscribers to their favorite magazines which featured fashion segments, advertisements, and advice columns that demonstrated ways in which women should live and remain living in the feminine homemaker gender role that society had placed upon them. One magazine that emphasized the idealized role of women within the household was the magazine *Ladies' Home Journal*. With having numerous subscribers across the country, this magazine was highly influential to the millions of women that were reading it on a monthly basis.² One advice column within *Ladies' Home Journal* that clearly tried to pin point the ideal marriage and domestic life of a woman was called *Making Marriage Work*. This advice column appeared monthly and was written by the same

¹ Nancy Walker, *Shaping Our Mother World: American Women's Magazines* (Jackson, Mississippi: University Press of Mississippi, 2000), 33.

² Nancy Walker, *Women's Magazines 1940-1960: Gender Roles and the Popular Press* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 1998), 1.

psychologist, Clifford R. Adams, throughout the years of its existence.³ A reader of this magazine would be bombarded with material about how women were expected to behave and live happily in their predetermined societal role. “The 1950s are far more often characterized as a time of omnipresent, and incredibly stringent, gender norms...and evoke the 1950s as a time of great stability, when men and women enjoyed the comfort of clearly marked gender roles.”⁴ Maybe not all people were pleased with these societal gender roles they were placed into from a young age. Maybe some people wanted to live a different life than the one society said they should be. One woman, Barbara Edgerton, who was entering her early twenties during the 1950s, had the courage to break free from the stereotypical female gender norm once she realized that there was great unhappiness that came with living that housewife lifestyle the society idealized and deemed appropriate for women.

It was the summer of 1952; Edgerton had just graduated high school and was engaged to be married to her high school sweetheart. Women were not expected to achieve much after they graduated high school; unless her family was wealthy enough where they could afford to send their daughters off to college. The one lesson a girl could hardly avoid learning if she went to college between 1945 and 1960 was not to get interested, seriously interested in anything besides getting married and having children.⁵ Most women were strongly encouraged to get married and start a family right away and once Edgerton was married in early 1953, nine months later her first child was born. There was a short waiting period between the time of marriage and the time of having children. This was not uncommon and on average a woman would get pregnant within

³ Nancy Walker, *Shaping Our Mother World: American Women's Magazines* (Jackson, Mississippi: University Press of Mississippi, 2000), 54.

⁴ Jassamyn Neuhaus, "The Way to a Man's Heart: Gender Roles, Domestic Ideology, and Cookbooks in the 1950s," *Oxford Journals* 32 (1999): 529-555.

⁵ Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1963), 137.

seven months of her marriage.⁶ This was due to the lack of birth control that females had control over and also because it was ideal for couples to start a family right away.⁷ The perfect family during this time period was considered to be a legally married heterosexual husband and wife, with approximately two or three children. Although a wife may have worked, her primary responsibility remained taking care of the home, along with her husband and children; while the husband's main task was breadwinning.⁸ This was stressed in the column *Making Marriage Work*, where the primary focus was on the family and how the mother or wife could help her family better themselves as a whole through her actions. Edgerton was an avid reader of women's magazines and *Ladies' Home Journal*, and performed her role as a homemaker to fit in with the rest of the white, suburban, middle class American women. Although her family may have looked like the normal 1950s family on the outside, they were far from perfect in many aspects. Edgerton realized that she did not want her daughter growing up in this type of environment where she and her husband were constantly arguing about money and responsibility, but her husband would not allow her to work because he believed it should be men who supported the family, but then he would then go and spend all of his work money at the bars instead of spending it on needs for the family.

Edgerton felt this unhappiness within her homemaker routine and the marriage she was in, as did many other women during the 1950s. This would later be referred to as the "problem with no name" which author, Betty Friedan would coin in her 1963 book *The Feminine Mystique*. Women across the United States were feeling constrained and bored by their

⁶ Elizabeth Siegel Watkins, *On the Pill: A Social History of Oral Contraceptives 1950-1970* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1998), 9.

⁷ Elizabeth Siegel Watkins, *On the Pill: A Social History of Oral Contraceptives 1950-1970* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1998), 9.

⁸ Steven Seidman, Nancy Fischer, and Chet Meeks, *Introducing the New Sexuality Studies*. 2nd ed (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2011), 424.

marriages and often asked themselves the question, is this all?⁹ Edgerton felt that same way and decided to do something about it, so after spending two years in an unhappy and loveless marriage she filed for divorce in 1955. The process proved to be much harder than it is today, and it took her several tries before she was even considered to be a candidate for divorce. During the 1950s the grounds of filing for a divorce based on an unhappy relationship were not enough; there needed to be proof that there was something else wrong in the relationship aside from a lack of love or happiness. Edgerton finally proved this only by bringing in her father and sisters to testify about how terrible her marriage and husband were. She was disowned by some members of her family and received a huge amount of scrutiny and discrimination from her community because they did not see any reason why a woman should be getting a divorce, and asked why would a happily married wife want to separate if her husband was providing enough to put food on the table? The column *Making Marriage Work* in *Ladies' Home Journal* tried to address problems similar to this that women across the country were facing. What these people should have been asking about, and what magazines should have been addressing was whether or not Edgerton along with the needs of other women were being met and if they were happy within their relationships? This was the problem that numerous women had during this time. They were caught up in the perceived notion that was socially constructed by the general public where women were supposed to be happy being wives and homemakers, while they husbands worked outside the home. In reality many women felt this unhappiness because they wanted more for their lives than what society had deemed to be ideal for them.¹⁰

⁹ Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1963), 15.

¹⁰ Barbara Edgerton, Interviewed by Alexa Klos, October 17, 2012 *This interview was done with my grandma, Barbara Edgerton, who was entering her early 20's during the 1950s and was an avid reader of women's magazines. Even though her story cannot speak for the experience that all women had during this time period, she does represent the unhappy lifestyle that many women were facing during the 1950s.

Even though the story of Barbara Edgerton cannot speak for the experience or voice of all women during the 1950s, it does represent a dissatisfaction, unhappiness, and restlessness that women all across the country were feeling based on their lifestyle. This paper will argue that although the advice given in the *Making Marriage Work* column was targeted towards helping women improve their home lives and marriages, Clifford R. Adams was really striving for these readers to attain that perceived perfect housewife status, even though there were outside sources proving that the ideal 1950s lifestyle was based largely on gender norms, stereotypes, and socially constructed standards that society had placed upon women during this time period.

Historiography

As shown in popular magazines and throughout different institutions in the country, the 1950s was a post World War II era, dominated by a respect for an established authority as a result of national and international government affairs. Traditional ways of life and authority defined the suburbs and women were told over and over that the family was the core of a free society.¹¹ Gender roles were demonstrated and were evident with the role of women as the housewife as a result of this conservative period.¹² There is much literature written about the 1950s culture because it happened over sixty years ago and because it was a decade that was drenched in conservatism and traditionalism, and paved the way for the 1960s which is considered to be the drastic decade, compared to the 1950s, especially for women.

The trends in the literature that focus around the 1950s mainly state how there were specific gender roles that men and women were expected to live within and that it was very hard

¹¹ Eugenia Kaledin, *American Women in the 1950s* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1984), i.

¹² Francesca M. Cancian and Steven L. Gordon, "Changing Emotion Norms in Marriage: Love and Anger in U.S. Women's Magazines since 1900," *Gender and Society* 2, 3 (1988): 331.

to break out of those roles, and those that did were considered to be radical and deviant. The material written about this time period always seems to be focused more on women as the ones who were affected more by the stringent gender norms because they were confined to the household without much freedom. In reality it was both men and women that were expected to uphold certain expectations for their gender and men could be also scrutinized if they were not out working, supporting their family, or providing enough for their family.

In accordance with the trends, one author, Winifred Breines, focused her writing around the struggles that women had to go through, from being female during the 1950s. Her work, the scholarly article *Alone in the 1950s: Anne Parsons and the Feminine Mystique*, focused mainly on the life of one woman, but also looked at how the intersection of United States culture and society and how the two affected family relationships. Even though the life of one woman cannot describe the situations that all women went through, her story can demonstrate how challenging life was for women during the 1950s. Breines used the example of how difficult it was for women to be respected while on a college campus. She wrote about the college experience for women, “The prevailing view of the Radcliffe (a college) administration in our day was clearly to seek a successful husband to piggy back for the rest of our lives, while remaining well read and interesting to husband and children.”¹³ This, in the 1950s was referred to as the Mrs. Degree, where women would attend college simple to find a husband, and once married could fall into their homemaker role. Women who decided against this had to choose between being a family woman and a career woman. There was no in-between, and those who

¹³ Winifred Breines, “Alone in the 1950s: Anne Parsons and the Feminine Mystique,” *Theory and Society* (1986): 805-843.

chose a career over a family were outside of the norm.¹⁴ Readers are shown that a woman living during the 1950's was not given many lifestyle choices to base their lives upon.

There is more material written about this time period that also focuses around the idea that women were the victims of the conservative society. One book written by Nancy Walker gives some insight into the lives of women on a daily basis. In her book, *Women's Magazines 1940-1960: Gender Roles and the Popular Press*, Walker looked at how the media was highly influential to the image that society was trying to portray woman as. She argues that women's magazines during this time period were extremely prominent because of their large circulation, and articles and advertisements in magazines were essential in influencing the way women went about their daily lives. She wrote, "Yet the magazine's essential functions as guidebooks and how-to manuals (how to dress, set a table, raise healthy children, stay on a budget, improve marriage) meant that they inevitably presented a level of ideality to which women might aspire."¹⁵ Walker explained that as represented in women's magazines, wives were expected to keep track of and manage certain things around the household such as how to set a table, raise healthy kids, and so on. These were societal norms that contained women to the domestic sphere during this time period, while their male counterparts were in the public sphere and were out being the "breadwinners" for their families.

Throughout the book Walker used excerpts from different women's magazines to enhance her idea about women during the 1940s to the 1960s. She covered six main topics such as the World War II era, women in the workplace, marriage and motherhood, homemaking,

¹⁴ Winifred Breines, "Alone in the 1950s: Anne Parsons and the Feminine Mystique," *Theory and Society* (1986): 805-843.

¹⁵ Nancy Walker, *Women's Magazines 1940-1960: Gender Roles and the Popular Press* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martins, 1998), 15.

fashion and beauty, and the critiques of women's magazines. The magazine *Ladies Home Journal* had some interesting articles headlines. Some such as "You Can't Have a Career and be a Good Wife" and "Housekeeping Not to be Dull," suggested that women should not be out in the workforce but should be working in the house doing more "feminine" things.¹⁶ Walker used these different articles to enhance her idea that women's magazines did influence the way women in the United States lived during the 1940s to the 1960s.

In her second book, Walker's *Shaping Our Mother World: American Women's Magazines*, her main idea was that American women's magazines during the 1940s through the 1960s were participants in the shift of cultural values that redefined American domestic life during the after World War II.¹⁷ Walker tied in other factors such as American culture, politics, economy, technology, demographics, psychology, and social science to determine why it was that the United States society functioned the way it did. She wrote about how each of these factors was important in determining how the society played out during and after World War II and how it affected and helped to shape the way women were treated. Even though the media, and more specifically magazines, cannot represent the sole reason behind the traditionalism and gender categorization of the 1950s, they did have a large influence on the women that were subscribers. Walker also mentioned how it was usually white, middle class women that are talked about as being the suburban housewives of the 1950s. These were the women that would be the main consumers and subscribers of the magazines.

¹⁶ Nancy Walker, *Women's Magazines 1940-1960: Gender Roles and the Popular Press* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martins, 1998), 71.

¹⁷ Nancy Walker, *Shaping Our Mother World: American Women's Magazines* (Jackson, Mississippi: University Press of Mississippi, 2000), vii.

Understanding Magazines in the 1950's

The American people have always had some system to relay news from person to person. What started simply as a way to carry important information and news to one another, soon turned into an entertainment industry. During the mid twentieth century the main source of information was the television which was invented in 1928, and by the early 1950s it was widely popular and became the main source of entertainment and news for over three million Americans who owned a television set.¹⁸ For American housewives the television was an industry that reshaped the image of the ideal woman.¹⁹ This was done through more than half of the television programs covering an array of homemaking issues such as textiles and clothing, home furnishings, time management and work simplification, gardening, kitchen planning, child care, grooming, and family relations.²⁰ Even with the televisions intense popularity, women continued to entertain themselves with the use of their favorite magazines. During this time period women's magazines influenced popular culture by telling consumers how to dress, how to cook, and how to make a happy lifestyle for their families, along with displaying the values, gender norms, and expectations for women in everyday life. No exception to this was the magazine *Ladies' Home Journal* which still today is a popular magazine among American women and has been that way since its first issue which appeared in February of 1883.²¹ By the year 1907 it was the first magazine to reach one million subscribers, becoming one of the leading

¹⁸ Marsha Cassidy, *What Women Watched: Daytime Television in the 1950s* (Austin, Texas: Texas Press, 2005), 2.

¹⁹ Marsha Cassidy, *What Women Watched: Daytime Television in the 1950s* (Austin, Texas: Texas Press, 2005), 1.

²⁰ Marsha Cassidy, *What Women Watched: Daytime Television in the 1950s* (Austin, Texas: Texas Press, 2005), 29.

²¹ "Ladies' Home Journal 125th Anniversary: Marriage." Ladies' Home Journal - beauty and fashion advice, easy recipes, and sound marriage advice from LHM. <http://www.lhj.com/style/covers/ladies-home-journal-125th-anniversary-marriage/> (accessed October 14, 2012).

women's magazines of the twentieth century and up until the 1950s it had the largest circulation of any women's magazine.²²

Along with *Ladies' Home Journal*, there were six other magazines that were a part of the "Seven Sisters Magazine." During the 1950s these seven magazines, among others targeted mainly white, heterosexual, middle class women who were married homemakers with children rather than single working women. The magazines that were a part of the "Seven Sisters" were *Better Homes and Gardens*, *Good Housekeeping*, *Family Circle*, *Ladies' Home Journal*, *Redbook*, *Women's Day*, and *McCall's*.²³ During the mid 1950s the circulation of these magazines began to decline, but the decade saw these seven magazines having amongst the highest circulation in the United States. Even though they were a part of the sisterhood, each magazine was known for its own style. *McCall's* and *Redbook* were known for its quality fiction, *Good Housekeeping* was aimed at affluent housewives, and *Better Homes and Gardens* began as a blending of a women's magazine and a home design journal.²⁴ Even though each magazine had its own niche, they were all focused on the central idea the perfect idealized American housewife and how she could better the lives of her husband and children.

With the tremendous popularity of the television, the number of magazine subscribers started to decline during the 1950s, but it was still a crucial time for the magazine industry and the heterosexual, middle class women being targeted through how to's, fashion segments, and advice columns. Even though married couples, during this time period, were molding into their

²² Nancy Walker, *Shaping Our Mother World: American Women's Magazines* (Jackson, Mississippi: University Press of Mississippi, 2000), 32.

²³ *The New York Times* (New York) 6 August 1990.

²⁴ Brian Black, "Better Homes and Gardens" (January 29, 2002): St. James Encyclopedia of Pop Culture. (Retrieved October 8, 2012).

traditional and conservative gender roles, after World War II there was an immense fear of an unsuccessful married life, family life, and of divorce. This fear sent many couples out to seek expert advice to try and save their marriages because they did not want the scrutiny and humiliation of getting a divorce as many women, such as Edgerton, experienced. One way women sought advice was through magazine advice columns. One advice column titled *Making Marriage Work* stood out among the others for its focus on women's primary role as a wife, mother, and a homemaker as a way to save a marriage because if men and women were performing their roles correctly, how could any marriage fail? This advice column appeared monthly in every *Ladies Home Journal* magazine from 1945 to 1962.²⁵ Men and women would write in with all sorts of problems concerning their marriages, and the resident psychologist Dr. Clifford R. Adams would answer their questions and throw in some marriage advice of his own.

During the years of this column Adams was a professor of psychology and the Director of Marriage Counseling Services at Pennsylvania State College.²⁶ During this time of writing for the *Journal*, he was also conducting experiments and analyzing his data from Pennsylvania State College. In one experiment he administered a questionnaire to both single individuals and engaged couples to try and find a way to prove success or failure within a marriage based on personal characteristics of an individual such as things like personality, sexual attitudes, family background, education, ability to earn a living, and alcoholism.²⁷ He himself said that the

²⁵ Catherine Gourley, *Gidgets and Amazons: Perceptions of Women in the 1950s and 1960s* (Minneapolis: Lerner Publishing Group Inc., 2008), 31.

²⁶ Bryant, C. "We Told Them- But They Didn't Believe Us." Baptist Press.
<http://media.sbhla.org.s3.amazonaws.com/217,03-Mar-1949.pdf> (accessed September 4, 2012).

²⁷ Clifford R. Adams, "Evaluating Marriage Prediction Tests," in *Marriage and Family Living*, (Pennsylvania State College: 1950), 55-58.

“Prediction of marital happiness is a very complex problem.”²⁸ Yet, with this expertise knowledge on psychology, relationships and the family Adams responded to these women in *Ladies’ Home Journal* that regardless of the marital issue, the problem within the marriage seemed to always be the fault of the woman because after all, it was her duty to make her marriage work.²⁹

Becoming a Bride

During the early 1950s the ultimate goal placed on young people within United States society was marriage and family life. The youth culture was geared towards the potential of having a nuclear family, and marriage and children became a part of the national agenda. In the 1950s, women felt tremendous societal pressure to focus their aspirations on a wedding ring. The marriage rate was at an all time high and the average age in which people got married dropped to an all time low.³⁰ During the 1950s decade almost half of all brides walked down the aisle before their nineteenth birthday and getting married right out of high school or while in college was considered the norm.³¹ Although women had other aspirations in life, the dominant theme promoted in the media and culture was that a husband, with the potential to make a family was far more important for a young woman than receiving higher education or finding a career. Magazines were even targeting a younger audience and planted the idealized bride and

²⁸ Clifford R. Adams, “Evaluating Marriage Prediction Tests,” in *Marriage and Family Living* (Pennsylvania State College: 1950), 55-58.

²⁹ Clifford R. Adams, Making Marriage Work, *Ladies’ Home Journal*, January 1950, quoted in Catherine Gourley, *Gidgets and Women Warriors: Perceptions of Women in the 1950s and 1960s* (Minneapolis, Lerner Publishing Group, Inc., 2008), 31.

³⁰ Winifred Breines, “Alone in the 1950s: Anne Parsons and the Feminine Mystique,” *Theory and Society* (1986): 805-843.

³¹ Elizabeth Siegel Watkins, *On the Pill: A Social History of Oral Contraceptives 1950-1970* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1998), 9.

homemaker, as opposed to a career into the minds of young female readers. Seventeen magazine said, “There is no office, lab, or stage that offers so many creative avenues or executive opportunities as that everyday place, the home.”³²

Column writer, Clifford R. Adams believed that marriage and a family life were also quite important to the women of America, and he wrote about this monthly in his advice column. Many of his responses to women’s questions would involve his one sided answer about what a woman could do to improve and better her qualities in order to meet that marriage standard that men were looking for. Adams suggested that marriage was the ultimate purpose for any couple’s relationship and that if they had been dating for a while it was time for them to settle down and start a family. In January of 1951 one woman wrote into *Ladies’ Home Journal* and Adams responded through the *Making Marriage Work* column. This woman’s concern was about the state of her current relationship. She asked that if she and her boyfriend had been dating for six years and he still had not proposed, what should she do? Adams suggested, without any prior knowledge of this couple’s relationship, that the woman’s boyfriend was “Too emotionally immature and not ready for marriage.”³³ If he was not ready to purchase a ring, propose with the intention of marriage that instant, Adams then advised the woman to move on and find someone that was ready to commit to a lifetime of marriage.³⁴ This type of advice demonstrated the importance that was placed on marriage for both men and women within the 1950s, where the goal was to marry at a young age so couples could start making that ideal family and home life complete. This concept would be a topic of Adams column again in March

³² Elizabeth Siegel Watkins, *On the Pill: A Social History of Oral Contraceptives 1950-1970* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1998), 10.

³³ *Ladies’ Home Journal*, February 1951. (microfilm)

³⁴ *Ladies’ Home Journal*, February 1951. (microfilm)

of 1952. Adams responded to one woman with, “Marriage is a dream for any women...Planning a wedding is what every woman looks forward to once she is engaged.”³⁵ She had asked whether or not she should hope to marry her current boyfriend.

With the huge importance that society placed on marriage, there were certain qualities that women were expected to have in order to make themselves suitable for the ideal marriage. Society told people to pity the neurotic, unfeminine, unhappy women who wanted to be poets or physicists or presidents. They learned that truly feminine women did not want careers, higher education, political rights, or independence and opportunities.³⁶ Women were not expected to strive for higher education or a successful career, but instead they were expected to want to be mothers and housewives. If a woman was living a different lifestyle and refused to marry and instead decided to live by herself without a man she was then considered to be radical and deviant. Clifford R. Adams along with writer Vance Packard came up with another name used to describe this type of woman. This word was “old maid” and was used to depict unmarried women over the age of thirty-five. The two men concurred that it was at the age of thirty-five when unmarried women could no longer consider themselves young maid’s and it was seen as disgraceful and embarrassing if a woman was not married, settled down, and with children by that age.³⁷ Women who decided to live alone were judged by the rest of society because of their alternative lifestyle, which was one that did not fit in with the women reading magazines such as *Ladies’ Home Journal*. Adams and Packard would later go on to explain that except in very

³⁵ *Ladies’ Home Journal*, March 1952. (microfilm)

³⁶ Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1963), 16.

³⁷ Lynn Peril, *Pink Think: Becoming a Woman in Many Uneasy Lessons* (New York, London: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2002), 105.

unusual cases women who lived alone would become neurotic and frustrated.³⁸ To these men and others in the general public the idea of women wanting to become anything besides being that perfect bride and eventually a housewife was completely backwards and outside of the gender and societal norms.

Later in his writing career Clifford R. Adams changed his mind and decided that thirty was the new thirty five, suggesting that women would start to turn into “old maids” at the age of thirty. He claimed, that “Once a woman hits that age her chances of finding men within her age group are very slim unless she made some fundamental changes to herself. For after this age, men suitable for her become steadily fewer, while the traits that interfered with her marrying become more fixed and more obvious.”³⁹ Within his column he suggested that after thirty most of the good men were already married off because no decent and respectable man would delay marriage so long. Adams was clearly telling women reading this column that if they were thirty and single there was something wrong with them and that needed to be fixed immediately because the average woman was getting married ten years younger than these women.⁴⁰ If a man was not willing to date, propose to, and eventually marry this woman before her thirtieth birthday then there was something wrong with the way the woman was presenting herself and there were drastic measures that needed to be taken in order for the woman to improve her lacking qualities. Adams offered a few suggestions on how a woman could undergo some fundamental changes to herself in hope that one day she would find a husband of her own. One

³⁸ Lynn Peril, *Pink Think: Becoming a Woman in Many Uneasy Lessons* (New York, London: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2002), 105.

³⁹ *Ladies' Home Journal*, September 1951. (microfilm)

⁴⁰ Elizabeth Siegel Watkins, *On the Pill: A Social History of Oral Contraceptives 1950-1970* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1998), 9.

suggestion he made was about the physical masculine appearance that some women had about themselves. He wrote, “Mannish styles like severely tailored suits and harsh hats do not enhance a woman’s physical appearance.”⁴¹ These, among other items were on Adam’s list of what not to wear. He recommended that instead of wearing clothing that was considered unattractive in his mind, women should try to be more feminine because femininity was always an appealing quality in a woman.⁴²

Along with offering suggestions on how women should look and present themselves, Adams wrote about ways in which he believed women should behave. In his advice column, *Making Marriage Work*, from January, 1955, Adams said that another qualification for a woman to be marriage material was that women needed to be adaptable. He wrote about how marriage can be stressful, and the good wife should be one that “adapts her mood to her husbands,” and “conceals her disappointments.”⁴³ Here he was saying that women should really have no emotions of their own, because if they did that could interfere and create problems within their marriage. Adams suggested that women should just keep all of their problems to themselves or decide not to display them in front of their husband, and they should instead try to fit their mood to match with his apparently always upbeat attitude.

In January of 1955, Adams brought up the idea that cooking was a determinant of how well a woman would fill the role of a wife. Adams gave women subscribing to *Ladies’ Home Journal* a few points to read over to establish if they were qualified for marriage. One of the qualifications was that a woman had to put her home and what she could do for her family above

⁴¹ *Ladies’ Home Journal*, September 1951. (microfilm)

⁴² *Ladies’ Home Journal*, September 1951. (microfilm)

⁴³ *Ladies’ Home Journal*, January 1955. (microfilm)

everything else. Adams wrote, “With common sense and a good cookbook a bride soon learns to prepare adequate meals.”⁴⁴ Here he was assuming that all women enjoy cooking and were interested in spending a large part of their day in the kitchen preparing meals for their family on a daily basis. Nowhere in the article does it say that men should also be grabbing their cookbooks and learning to prepare adequate meals right next to their wives. Throughout much of his column, Adams rarely wrote about men as being the focal point in bettering a relationship, instead the blame and advice was always directed at women. In many of his articles there was constant emphasis on attaining that perfect bride status, and this goal of perfection continued on into married life, for those readers who had already found husbands.

Family Life

Once a man and a woman had been through dating, engagement, and a wedding, they were now to the stage of starting a life together. During married life the notions of femininity and masculinity were empathetically differentiated, women were expected to become domestic and dependent on men, and men to be breadwinners.⁴⁵ Women as housewives were supposed to remain in the domestic sphere and many had little say in what happened in the public sphere. In many cases during the 1950s women were considered to be only useful for their skills within the household. In the April 1955, *Making Marriage Work* columnist Clifford R. Adams wrote, “The man is primarily responsible for earning a living, the woman for running a home...she is concerned with recipes, and menus, techniques of child care and perhaps style in decorating or

⁴⁴ *Ladies' Home Journal*, January 1955. (microfilm)

⁴⁵ Wini Breines, *Young, White, and Miserable: Growing up Female in the Fifties* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992), 33.

landscaping.”⁴⁶ Here, Adams was putting men and women into gender specific categories, where the norms given to each sex seemed to define their positions within that marriage. He was insulting women’s ability to do anything but be able to take care of their children and house.

Aside from that, the only credit Adams gave women was that they were perhaps good at decorating or landscaping, but only perhaps because their sole talents were working with their children and in their houses. Nowhere in his column did Adams ever look at the fact that women could have careers outside of the home. Once in a while he mentioned it, but the thought would be pushed aside. If there were women who decided to work they were considered less feminine and would be ridiculed by those who believed that women were neglecting their duty as females and mothers if they had a career.⁴⁷ In this period, the careers were reserved for men, and if they worked most women had lower paid jobs like a secretary, teacher, or nurse. Adams said that a females true place was in the home and not out in the working world, because that was the sphere where men work and it would be going against societal norms for a woman to be breaking into male territory because these two areas did not mix.

The conservative messages regarding women in the postwar period were a part of an effort to ensure that women went home and stayed home after the war, and to make certain that men were given priority over women in jobs and education.⁴⁸ Adams agreed with that statement and in his advice he believed that a woman’s true place was within the home and that being able to cook, bake, and prepare food was a prerequisite and determinate for how good of a wife and a

⁴⁶ *Ladies’ Home Journal*, April 1955. (microfilm)

⁴⁷ Steven Seidman, Nancy Fischer, and Chet Meeks, *Introducing the new sexuality studies*. 2nd ed. (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2011), 69.

⁴⁸ Wini Breines, *Young, White, and Miserable: Growing up Female in the Fifties* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992), 33.

mother a woman would be. Females would be judged if they were not able to perform in the kitchen as men would be judged if they were not able to perform in the workplace, because these were norms that were expected of each gender. “The success and value of a woman were to be measured only by the domestic aspects of feminine existence that society had created.”⁴⁹

There were other magazine articles published aside from *Making Marriage Work* that also depicted what women were expected to do for their husbands on a daily basis. One article that was published in *Housekeeping Monthly* summed up the lifestyle that women were expected to lead during the 1950s. The article was titled *The Good Wife's Guide*, published in 1955, and featured eighteen bullet point suggestions about how women could be good wives and please their husbands through their actions within marriage. This article emphasized the messages that Adams was sending women throughout his years of writing the *Making Marriage Work* column. In this article one bullet point suggested that women should prepare themselves before their husbands arrived home. The article encouraged women to take a quick fifteen minute cat nap, touch up their makeup, put a ribbon in their hair, and be as fresh looking as possible. After freshening up their appearances women were instructed to behave a certain way once their husbands arrived home. One bullet point said, “Listen to him. You may have a dozen important things to tell him, the moment of his arrival is not the time. Let him talk first- remember his topics of conversation are more important than yours.” The final bullet point of *The Good Wife's Guide* really summed up the overall experience of many married women during the 1950s. The final point was, “A good wife always knows her place.”⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1963), 43.

⁵⁰ "The Good Wife's Guide," *Housekeeping Monthly*, May 13, 1955.

Unhappiness within Marriage

If marriage and family life were expected to be so perfect during this time period, then why was it that advice columns in magazines such as *Making Marriage Work* were even necessary? Women should not have needed to write in with their problems because in the 1950s marriages were idealized as being flawless and without any problems. But there were problems and people were not always happy with this stereotypical nuclear, middle class, suburban 1950s family, where men and women were carrying out their specific gender roles with smiles on their faces.⁵¹ As in the case with Barbara Edgerton, there were both men and women that were unhappy with this type of lifestyle that society was expecting of them. Some decided to make it known to others that the idealized United States lifestyle was not as perfect as some thought and many people felt trapped by the constraints placed upon them. This was done though women writing in to *Ladies' Home Journal* with their critical views on the advice given by the Clifford R. Adams in the *Making Marriage Work* column, along with other outside sources being presented such as the groundbreaking *Feminine Mystique* by Betty Friedan, the scandalous *Sexuality of the Human Male and Female* by Alfred Kinsey, and the engineering of the birth control pill which demonstrated that not everyone in the United States was as pleased with the current culture and lifestyle, and they were going to do something about it.

During the 1950s *Ladies' Home Journal* had two mottos that were constantly being written throughout the magazine. They were, "The Magazine Women Believe In," and "Never Underestimate the Power of a Woman."⁵² Most women during this time probably did enjoy

⁵¹ Jessamyn Neuhaus, "The Way to a Man's Heart: Gender Roles, Domestic Ideology, and Cookbooks in the 1950s" *Oxford Journals* 32 (1999): 529-555.

⁵² Catherine Gourley, *Gidgets and Women Warriors: Perceptions of Women in the 1950s and 1960s* (Minneapolis, Lerner Publishing Group, Inc., 2008), 31.

reading the magazine and all that it had to offer; therefore these slogans may have been true for some women during the 1950s. Through advertisements, fashion segments, advice columns, marriage articles, and more, magazines such as *Ladies' Home Journal* set up standards and practices that let women fall neatly into their role determined during this conservative time period.⁵⁴ There were many, including those in magazines, who thought that there were three main concerns when it came to being a woman. Those who read, wrote into, and lived in the 1950s idealized society believed that as a woman, you bring to marriage first your image of yourself as a female-feminine person. Secondly, there is your conception of what a wife should be and, thirdly, of your role as a mother.⁵⁵ Though this may have been true for many women, there were those that did not believe every article in every issue produced by magazines that kept regurgitating this concept. Some of these women that had concerns vocalized them by writing into the *Making Marriage Work* column to have Clifford R. Adams justify advice that he had been giving for years.

One situation where women realized that the advice Adams had been giving may have been a little off was during the April 1950 issue of *Ladies' Home Journal*. One woman wrote in to the *Making Marriage Work* column with a question concerning her husband. She wrote, "Like most counselors, you stress what a wife should do to make a marriage happy, but seldom suggest that a husband is responsible for some adjustments too."⁵⁶ Even in this most popular of magazines, that women had been avidly reading for years, female readers started to notice that

⁵³ Eugenia Kaledin, *American Women in the 1950s* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1984), 17.

⁵⁴ Arlene Skolnick, Jerome Skolnick, *Family in Transition: Rethinking Marriage, Sexuality, Child Rearing, and Family Organization* (Glenview, Illinois: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1989), 267.

⁵⁵ Lynn Peril, *Pink Think: Becoming a Woman in Many Uneasy Lessons* (New York, London: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2002), 115.

⁵⁶ *Ladies' Home Journal*, April 1950. (microfilm)

the advice that they were getting seemed to blame women for failing marriages and family life. In her comment to Adams, this woman was concerned because typically it was women that got blamed for a marriage going downhill, and later in her letter she wrote, “For ten years I’ve been trying to cooperate with my husband. I cultivate his friends, share his hobbies, run his errands, and gear my whole life to his. But if I so much as mention a movie, or church, or a call to friends of mine, he either refuses, or complains so much that I again retreat into my shell.”⁵⁷ She feared that her needs were not being met by her husband; even though she did everything she could to please him, he never returned the favor. Clifford R. Adams responded with a suggestion that this woman and other female readers should try different techniques to please their husbands. He mentioned options such as, “Change around your schedule so that you will always be there when your husband needs you, accept his emotional distortion, and to build up his self-esteem.”⁵⁸ By doing this, Adams suggested that through his advice her husband will become happier, and in turn she will also become happier herself. Adams failed to mention that perhaps husbands could change their lifestyles around to meet the needs of their wives. Even though Adams was a marriage counselor, his advice seemed to be very one sided and by no means did he ever suggest what husbands could alter about their lifestyles and only recommended what these wives should change about themselves to make their husbands happier.

This problem that women faced during the 1950s concerning their unhappiness within their married life was what author Betty Friedan would later refer to as “the problem with no name.” Friedan was an American feminist, writer, and activist. Her motivational outlook on

⁵⁷ *Ladies' Home Journal*, April 1950. (microfilm)

⁵⁸ *Ladies' Home Journal*, April 1950. (microfilm)

gender roles allowed women to be inspired to take on a new role. She encouraged women to break out of the gender roles they were assigned by making speeches and writing books. Her most famous book is *The Feminine Mystique*, which was published in 1963.⁵⁹ One concept that the book was largely based on was the “problem with no name,” which was where women felt trapped within their marriages by either their husbands or the pressure that society placed upon married housewives. This problem in other words, was the sense of loneliness and boredom that women experienced, in part due to the isolation enforced by suburban life. Friedan said this about the “problem that has no name,” in her book *The Feminine Mystique*. She wrote,

The problem lay buried, unspoken, for many years in the minds of American women. It was a strange stirring, a sense of dissatisfaction, a yearning that women suffered in the middle of the 20th century in the United States. Each suburban wife struggled with it alone. As she made the beds, shopped for groceries, matched slipcover material, ate peanut butter sandwiches with her children, chauffeured Cub Scouts and Brownies, lay beside her husband at night- she was afraid to ask even of herself the silent question- 'Is this all?'⁶⁰

Friedan referred to this problem throughout her entire book and addressed this issue that women all over the United States were facing during the 1950s. She said that, “For years there was nothing written in women’s books, magazines, and articles about this problem and the only thing that was addressed was that fact that the female role should be one of seeking fulfillment through being a wife and mother.”⁶¹

Many women, such as Barbara Edgerton, during the early 1950s seemed to display this problem that Betty Friedan referred to the “problem with no name.” In September of 1951 one

⁵⁹ Stephanie Coontz, *A Strange Stirring: The Feminine Mystique and Women at the Dawn of the 1960s* (New York: Basic Books, 2011), xv.

⁶⁰ Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1963), 15.

⁶¹ Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1963), 41.

woman wrote in to Clifford R. Adams with a question about her marriage. She wrote, “My husband is wonderful and we get along beautifully, but I am missing happiness since I don’t love him. Should I divorce him?”⁶² Here, this woman was clearly troubled over what to do because she was living the ideal married life that society said she should be, but at the same time she was unhappy because of it. Adams responded with the answer that no, she should not get divorced because there was a social stigma attached to it. During this time period it was extremely rare of a woman to get the courts approval for a divorce, as seen in Edgerton’s case. Couples were expected to get married, and stay married, regardless of how miserable or unhappy they were.⁶³ Adams said that, “The trouble within the marriage lies within the woman,” and had nothing to do with her husband.⁶⁴ His suggestion was that she should seek council and grow up and through that she may learn to love which was an ability, according to Adams, that she never had before.⁶⁵ It never crossed Adams mind that husbands and wives could together try and strengthen their bond and eventually their marriage. Instead, he jumped right to the conclusion that it was entirely the woman’s fault and she needed to tap into her inner ability to love to make the marriage work.

In December of 1951 Clifford R. Adams addressed this topic again of happiness within a marriage. He said “There is little real married happiness for a wife unless her husband is happy too. By insisting on personal freedom and pleasure, you may be risking your happiness as well

⁶² *Ladies’ Home Journal*, September 1951. (microfilm)

⁶³ Arlene Skolnick, Jerome Skolnick, *Family in Transition: Rethinking Marriage, Sexuality, Child Rearing, and Family Organization* (Glenview, Illinois: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1989), 268.

⁶⁴ *Ladies’ Home Journal*, September 1951. (microfilm)

⁶⁵ *Ladies’ Home Journal*, September 1951. (microfilm)

as your husband's.”⁶⁶ This shows that Adams is aware that women are trying to gain their independence and break out of their role by insisting on personal freedom and pleasure, but Adams believed that a wife could only attain happiness by also pleasing her husband. The tables were never reversed and so women reading *Ladies' Home Journal* during the 1950s may have believed that they were the ones always at fault for failing marriages, when in fact there were probably other factors involved from the start aside from what Adams was suggesting. Friedan said, “The feeling didn't have a name. It didn't have a reason. So you turned it inward and assumed you were the problem. And so did everyone around you.”⁶⁷

With the societal stigma placed on divorces, many couples were stuck living in unhappy marriages. Due to this, both men and women would resort to being unfaithful to their partner because they believed that, if they did not get caught, cheating was a better than getting a divorce. Adams addressed this issue in his column during October of 1951. He asked female readers about their unfaithful husbands and whether their husband's behavior had changed at all since they got married? If so, Adams said that then the wife must assume some of the responsibility for her cheating husband. He declared that, “In some way, whether it is sexually, as a companion, or as a wife, the woman in the marriage had failed at her duties and was lacking the qualities to fulfill her husband's needs.”⁶⁸ Adams suggested that once the woman realized that she was lacking in certain categories she would discover and then fix her shortcomings and from there the marriage could grow into an understanding relationship and somehow her husband would stop cheating on her. Again, Adams was placing no blame on males for going

⁶⁶ *Ladies' Home Journal*, December 1951. (microfilm)

⁶⁷ Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1963), 20.

⁶⁸ *Ladies' Home Journal*, October 1951. (microfilm)

out and cheating on their wives, even though they were the ones that were physically doing something wrong. Anytime there was a problem with the marriage, that failure was always blamed on women because it was considered their responsibility to keep their husbands happy and it seemed that Adams was suggesting that it was not 100% wrong for men to cheat in relationships if their wives were not keeping them happy.

The times were changing in terms of the understanding of adultery in the United States, even though it was thought that men are usually the cheaters, women were also committing acts of adultery during this time. This was found in a study done during the late 1940s and early 1950s by Alfred Kinsey and his team of researchers that looked at the number of both men and women that had committed adultery against their partner, amongst other things. Over a span of five years Kinsey and his team published both the *Sexual Behavior of the Human Male* and the *Sexual Behavior of the Human Female*. In his first work, *Sexual Behavior of the Human Male*, Kinsey interviewed men all across the country about their sexual behaviors. He found that fifty percent of men had at one time engaged in extramarital sex.⁶⁹ Because divorce had such a stigma attached to it, many men would find it to be a better idea to cheat on their wives, as long as they did not get caught, because there was such scrutiny and humiliation that came along with getting a divorce. However, men were not the only ones that were adulterous and women did their share of cheating too.

Kinsey would prove this five years later when he and his team came out with another research finding, but this time it was *Sexual Behavior of the Human Female*. The book, authored by Alfred Kinsey and his research staff at the Kinsey Institute at Indiana University, first

⁶⁹ Steven Seidman, Nancy Fischer, and Chet Meeks, "Polishing the Pearl." In *Introducing the new sexuality studies*, 97. 2nd ed. (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2011), 97.

appeared in print on Sept. 14, 1953.⁷⁰ To attain this information the team interviewed 5,940 white, urban, middle-class women from around the country about their sexual activity. The findings included some of the first reports on women's sexual activity, including such taboo subjects as premarital and extramarital sex.⁷¹ They found that twenty six percent of women had engaged in extramarital sex.⁷² These statistics about extramarital sex could be looked at in a few different ways. Either both men and women within their relationships were unhappy within the constraints of the married lifestyle and the only way to get around that, while avoiding the social stigma of divorce, was to cheat on their spouse. Second, this statistic of women also committing acts of pre-marital sex and adultery could show that the beginning of the sexual revolution had arrived and women were realizing that they did not have to live a life that they were unhappy with and they expressed this by trying to free themselves of the constraints that society had been holding them down with for years. For some of the female the extra-marital relationships had provided a new source of emotional satisfaction.⁷³ As Kinsey and his team had expected, public reaction ranged from admiration and gratitude to horror and disgust. Citizens were shocked to read about the high rates of extra and pre marital sex, and a variety of other stigmatized sexual practices and identities.⁷⁴ People could not believe that this type of behavior was happening within their so called "perfect" society.

⁷⁰ "Kinsey's "Sexual Behavior in the Human Female" published 50 years ago this month: IU News Room: Indiana University ." IU News Room IU News Room: Indiana University .
<http://newsinfo.iu.edu/news/page/normal/1119.html> (accessed October 19, 2012).

⁷¹ Steven Seidman, Nancy Fischer, and Chet Meeks, "Polishing the Pearl." In *Introducing the new sexuality studies*, 97. 2nd ed. (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2011), 97.

⁷² Alfred Kinsey, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female* (Philadelphia: W.B. Saunders Company, 1953), 416.

⁷³ Alfred Kinsey, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female* (Philadelphia: W.B. Saunders Company, 1953), 432.

⁷⁴ Steven Seidman, Nancy Fischer, and Chet Meeks, *Introducing the new sexuality studies*, 97. 2nd ed. (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2011), 323.

Along with Kinsey's new found information, another way the idealized society was changing was through the engineering of the birth control pill throughout the 1950s. Even though the female controlled birth control pill was not available to the public until 1963, the process of getting it approved by the FDA and available to women was well under way during the 1950s. One woman who had always been an advocate for birth control for women since the 1920s was Margaret Sanger. In the 1950s Sanger lobbied for an oral contraceptive because a pill that could be taken at a time and place independent of the sex act would place the control of contraception solely in the hands of women.⁷⁵ This would be a way that women could control their sexuality because they could take the pill on their own time without the knowledge or needed cooperation of a male partner. Sanger believed that the answer to many of the problems of families and society lay in the development and distribution of a better contraceptive.⁷⁶

During the 1950s the contraceptive options were limited for women. The most effective method of birth control was a diaphragm used in combination with a spermicidal jelly. The next most effective method, the condom, could be purchased at a local drugstore. The diaphragm and jelly were messy and took a great deal of time to put in and remove and in order to obtain one a woman had to get it fitted from a physician. Also, their male partners did not always want to wear a condom, so the chance of an unplanned pregnancy was always a fear for women.⁷⁷ In the *Making Marriage Work* column, Adams did not touch on the topic of sex too often because it was something that was not openly talked about during this time period. Once or twice he would mention the idea of a couple having sex once they were married, but there was never a discussion

⁷⁵ Elizabeth Siegel Watkins, *On the Pill: A Social History of Oral Contraceptives 1950-1970* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1998), 11.

⁷⁶ Elizabeth Siegel Watkins, *On the Pill: A Social History of Oral Contraceptives 1950-1970* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1998), 19.

⁷⁷ Elizabeth Siegel Watkins, *On the Pill: A Social History of Oral Contraceptives 1950-1970* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1998), 11.

about birth control or anything like that. During this time period other commonly used birth control methods were withdrawal, douching, and rhythm, which were relatively fallible.⁷⁸

Throughout the 1950s women knew that there would eventually be a new form of birth control that they could control on their own without a visit to the physician needed or the consent of a male. Also throughout the 1950s women knew that there was something building and right around the corner would be a new decade where women would gain more freedom and independence without the constraints placed upon them within marriage and the housewife lifestyle that had dominated the 1950s.

Epilogue: Women Find their Voice

Those who believed in the idealized housewife of the 1950s started to see the reality by the 1960s when American women would finally find their voices.⁷⁹ This had already begun in the 1950s, but the culture was stuck in its notions of what gender norms were expected to be and by the 1960s the women's movement was well on its way. Already in the 1950s popular magazines had begun to look at women's growing discontent. One of the Seven Sisters' magazines, *McCall's* published the articles, "The Mother who Ran Away" in 1956, and "Is Boredom Bad for You?" in 1957.⁸⁰ One of the biggest changes came in the year 1962 when the magazine *Ladies' Home Journal* underwent a drastic change to the layout and content of the magazine. The column *Making Marriage Work*, that had been a constant in the magazine since

⁷⁸ Elizabeth Siegel Watkins, *On the Pill: A Social History of Oral Contraceptives 1950-1970* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1998), 11.

⁷⁹ Eugenia Kaledin, *American Women in the 1950s* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1984), 220.

⁸⁰ Eugenia Kaledin, *American Women in the 1950s* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1984), 214.

1945, was taken out.⁸¹ The column and Clifford R. Adams were removed from the magazine forever.

One year after the layout change to *Ladies' Home Journal*, the magazine published an excerpt from *The Feminine Mystique* in 1963.⁸² The response to publishing part of Betty Friedan's book was incredible. Hundreds of women wrote letters to Friedan about how they had been experiencing much of what she wrote about in her book in their own lives.⁸³ Women were starting to realize that there was more to their lives and that it was time to redefine the needs of women in a country that was ready for a change. The work of Betty Friedan was used as a catalyst for the second wave of feminism and the women's movement of the 1960s.

The institution of marriage, which served the need for reproduction and often the sexual desires of men but not necessarily those of women, was changing by the 1960s.⁸⁴ By the late 1950s, both single and married American women were ready and waiting for a new and improved form of birth control so they could not only control their sexual desires but also their family planning. When the Pill was introduced, the social factors affecting women's reproductive lives contributed significantly to the warm reception women across the country gave the Pill. Similar to those women reading magazine, it was mainly white, middle-class women, who constituted the largest group of pill users in the United States during this time period.⁸⁵ Many women found swallowing a small tablet once a day for twenty days each month to be more

⁸¹ Nancy Walker. *Women's magazines, 1940-1960: Gender Roles and the Popular Press* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 1998), 56.

⁸² "Ladies' Home Journal 125th Anniversary." Ladies' Home Journal - beauty and fashion advice, easy recipes, and sound marriage advice from LHJ. <http://www.lhj.com/style/covers/125-years-of-ladies-home-journal-family/?page=7> (accessed November 1, 2012).

⁸³ Stephanie Coontz, *A Strange Stirring: The Feminine Mystique and Women at the Dawn of the 1960s* (New York: Basic Books, 2011), 25.

⁸⁴ Alix Kates Shulman, "Sex and Power: Sexual Bases of Radical Feminism," *Chicago Journals* (1980): 590-604.

⁸⁵ Elizabeth Siegel Watkins, *On the Pill: A Social History of Oral Contraceptives 1950-1970* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1998), 4.

appealing than fumbling with a diaphragm and jelly or persuading their partners to wear a condom. As Margaret Sanger had argued, women also preferred the pill because they controlled the method of birth control. A woman did not need the consent of her sexual partner to take the pill to prevent conception. In the 1960s the pill offered many women the opportunity to enjoy sex with whomever they pleased without the fear of getting pregnant.⁸⁶

This also helped many women manage their families better. They now had more power in controlling when and if they wanted to have children at all. The pill became the most popular form of birth control in the United States, prescribed by 95% of obstetricians and gynecologists. By 1965, six and a half million married women and hundreds of thousands of unmarried women had obtained prescriptions for oral contraceptives.⁸⁷

Due to the fact that women could control when and if they wanted to have children and a family, this meant that more time could be spent working towards a career if a woman wanted to do that. If there were no kids involved in the equation that meant that women did not have to stay at home with their children, but could instead be out in the working world. By 1960 thirty percent of married women and thirty nine percent of women with children held jobs. It was ironic that a large proportion of the women entering the workforce were the same middle class housewives and mothers who had supposedly found satisfaction in homemaking.⁸⁸ This is an increase from the majority of women who were stay at home moms during the 1950s.

⁸⁶ Elizabeth Siegel Watkins, *On the Pill: A Social History of Oral Contraceptives 1950-1970* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1998), 54.

⁸⁷ Elizabeth Siegel Watkins, *On the Pill: A Social History of Oral Contraceptives 1950-1970* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1998), 34.

⁸⁸ Elizabeth Siegel Watkins, *On the Pill: A Social History of Oral Contraceptives 1950-1970* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1998), 10.

After getting her divorce in 1955, Barbara Edgerton decided to get a job in the workforce. Similar to other women, she found that women were paid lower wages and were only allowed to work in jobs that did not require much skill. She became a secretary, and raised her daughter as a single mom. This was rather unheard of during this time period, because it was thought that a man was required to bring home the food and money for the family. Throughout her entire life Edgerton remained an avid reader of women's magazines, especially *Ladies' Home Journal*, and remembers being disappointed when certain columns she enjoyed reading no longer appeared in the magazines. Looking back on that time period and the content that the magazines printed, she says, "I am sorry that millions of women had to read these magazines and their demeaning content, but luckily not all women lived that way and we as women eventually made it out of that decade and we able to move onto a better."⁸⁹

⁸⁹ Barbara Edgerton. Interviewed by Alexa Klos. October 17, 2012

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