

BETTER LEFT UNSAID:
POWER, DISCOURSE, AND MASCULINE DOMESTICITY
IN POSTWAR HALIFAX, 1945-1960

by

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Abstract

In the 1950s, the gender ideals expressed by journalists, advertisers, marriage experts, and other purveyors of cultural norms imagined men in a more domestic setting than at any other time in the industrial period in North America. At the same time, this increase in men's domesticity was coexistent with strict gender roles which prescribed distinct roles to men and women based on the breadwinner-homemaker family. The conservative context of cold war Canada gave legitimacy to this family ideal by preserving a don't-rock-the-boat mentality to social and political change. Normative gender discourses worked to minimize the fallout from particular examples of men's domesticity. Although the new father was engaged in more domestic matters, fundamental gender divisions of labour were not challenged. A host of cultural symbols of masculinity were appealed to in the process whereby barbecuing was made masculine. In families where the mother was temporarily absent due to illness, the Red Cross Homemaker Service redescribed fathers' roles to make them fit with prescriptions for normal behaviour. Similarly, the domesticity of bachelors' daily lives was understood to fit within normative ideals despite the potential for a radically different experience of domesticity than that described in the breadwinner-homemaker ideal. The particular ways gender discourses worked to make men's domesticity fit into normative expectations can help to inform an historical analysis of the conservatism of the 1950s. While social change may have occurred, as the study of men's domesticity shows, the interpretation of this experience was shaped and limited by normative discourses.

List of Abbreviations

DUA	Dalhousie University Archives
HMS	Homemaker Service
NAC	National Archives of Canada
NFB	National Film Board
PANS	Public Archives of Nova Scotia

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Introduction

Every society is known by the fictions that it keeps...The issue is not whether a society tells fictions to itself and others, but which fictions it calls true, which false, which art, which entertainment.¹

Catharine Stimpson is alluding, in this simple yet profound statement, to the power of cultural discourses to shape perceptions of reality. She recognizes that what societies claim to be true or false is a product of social processes. This is a useful insight for historians of the family and fatherhood in post-WWII Canada. A number of different groups, from conservative social commentators to "second-wave" feminists have made sweeping statements about what family life in the 1940s and 1950s was "really" like.² The interpretations vary from the profound to the absurd (depending on one's perspective). However, the repeated attempts to fix a definitive interpretation on the period demonstrate, if nothing else, that discourse is an ongoing political process of some importance.

Historians have charged into the maelstrom, dispensing their own interpretations and further muddying the waters.

¹Catharine R. Stimpson in "Foreword" to Gail Bederman, Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), xi.

²I am referring here to those such as the Christian Coalition in the United States, or Betty Friedan, The Feminine Mystique (New York, 1963).

There is considerable debate in the historical literature on the conservatism of the period as a whole, and on family life in particular. Elaine Tyler May's Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War is the work most often cited when stressing the interconnectedness of political conservatism and stringent family ideals. She argues that, in the United States, cold war politics sustained the normative breadwinner-homemaker family discourse. This ideal family was supposed to consist of fathers who worked to earn "bread" and mothers who refrained from wage-labour to "care" for their families in the home. May argues that magazines, movies, and other popular media buttressed the perceived normalcy of these ideal gender roles. In the Canadian context, Doug Owsram's history of the baby boom generation, Born at the Right Time, follows this interpretation. Owsram first establishes the strength of the breadwinner-homemaker family as the norm at mid-century. He then moves on to the main focus of his work which is to show the social changes brought about by the baby boom. He claims that, as that generation grew up, one of the social institutions which they challenged was the breadwinner-homemaker family and the gender ideals it prescribed. It was the experience of growing up under such restrictive family ideals, Owsram argues, which inspired later protests. Both Owsram and May, then, stress the power of conservative normative ideals in family and gender discourses in the 15

years after World War II.³

The universality of these norms has come under scrutiny, however, by historians pointing to the diversity of experiences in the period. Much of this scholarship has focused on attitudes toward working women.⁴ Those who see the period as a conservative retrenchment focus on the appeals to women to leave work after WWII and return to the home.⁵ However, although many women did leave the workforce, the actual number of women working after the war was only slightly lower than in 1939. And the number of women in the workforce continued to rise steadily throughout the 1950s. In fact, Veronica Strong-Boag has noted that the money earned from

³Elaine Tyler May, Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War (New York: Basic Books, 1988); Doug Owsam, Born at the Right Time: A History of the Baby Boom Generation (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996).

⁴See, for example, Veronica Strong-Boag, "Canada's Wage-Earning Wives and the Construction of the Middle Class, 1945-1960," Journal of Canadian Studies, 29:3 (1994): 5-25; Alvin Finkel, "Even the Little Children Cooperated: Family Strategies, Childcare Discourse, and Social Welfare Debates, 1945-1975," Labour/Le Travail, 36 (Fall 1995): 91-118; Joan Sangster, "Doing Two Jobs: The Wage-Earning Mother, 1945-1970," in Joy Parr ed., A Diversity of Women: Ontario, 1945-1980 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), 98-134; Joanne Meyerowitz, "Beyond the Feminine Mystique: A Reassessment of Postwar Mass Culture, 1946-1958," in Meyerowitz, ed., Not June Cleaver: Women and Gender in Postwar America, 1945-1960 (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994): 229-262; Susan M. Hartman, "Women's Employment and the Domestic Ideal in the Early Cold War Years," in Meyerowitz, Not June Cleaver, 84-100.

⁵See May, Homeward Bound. Ruth Roach Pierson also alludes to this in her, "They're Still Women After All": The Second World War and Canadian Womanhood (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1986), conclusion.

women's wages in the post-war period was a significant factor in the rising standard of living. The income of wage-earning women helped create the affluence usually attributed to the work of unions and near-full employment. Moreover, according to Strong-Boag (in Canada) and Joanne Meyerowitz (in the US), attitudes toward working women were not universally negative. Both examined representations of working women in popular women's magazines, and both found a variety of perspectives from the left and the right.⁶ While women with young children were generally expected to stay at home, the work of other women, without children or with older children, was more readily accepted. In fact, predating the "Super Mom" of the 1970s, women who managed both work and family were seen as particularly successful. If the breadwinner-homemaker family depended on women refraining from waged labour, then something other than this ideal was also involved in shaping attitudes toward working women.

Strong-Boag and Meyerowitz are not alone in stressing the existence of multiple, and sometimes contradictory, gender discourses. Barbara Ehrenrich has noted the existence of various critiques of men's normative role as breadwinner in the 1950s.⁷ First published in 1954, Playboy found fault with what it claimed were the undue hardships of the married man.

⁶See, Strong-Boag, "Wage-Earning Wives," and Meyerowitz, "Beyond the Feminine Mystique."

⁷Barbara Ehrenrich, The Hearts of Men: American Dreams and the Flight From Commitment (New York: Doubleday, 1983).

Wives were seen, by publisher Hugh Hefner and his playboys, as a financial burden. For Playboy, it was not necessary to marry in order to reap the benefits of the two things (Playboy alleged) women brought to marriage : sex and housekeeping. "Lady friends" could provide both without placing the burdens of breadwinning on a man. Other challenges were directed at the breadwinner role itself. Ehrenrich argues that the scare over coronary heart disease and male stress was an attack (albeit sympathetic) on the breadwinner role. Men were seen to suffer higher rates of heart disease because of stress. The responsibility for career success combined with other family responsibilities was feared to have damaged men's health. Thus, despite the perceived normalcy of the breadwinner-homemaker family, other perspectives - some contradicting this ideal - were present in cultural discourses.

To understand any aspect of family life in the 1950s, then, we must make sense of a perceived over-arching conservatism's coexistence with apparently contradictory discourses and experiences. In doing this, we may be guided by Joan Scott's claim that historians must look to process. "We must ask more often how things happened in order to find out why they happened...we must pursue not universal, general causality, but meaningful explanation."⁸ How were gender

⁸Joan Scott, Gender and the Politics of History (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 42.

identities made to appear coherent? How were alternative meanings *massaged* so that narrow definitions of masculinity and femininity could appear all-encompassing? In essence, how did gender work as a process?

To follow this line of analysis, this thesis will look to a characteristic figure of gender contradictions in the 1950s, the domestic man. Men who engaged in some forms of domestic work challenged a neat labelling of domesticity as feminine. Nonetheless recent works on the history of North American fatherhood have suggested that a more domestic, involved, and friendlier "new father" appeared sometime in the early years of the "short twentieth century."⁹ By the 1950s, the new fatherhood dominated representations of ideal masculinity. In opposition to their stern patriarchal predecessors, new fathers were their children's pals. New leisure activities such as family barbecues occupied their time. Together with his homemaker counterpart, the new father was part of a parenting team whose emphasis was on caring, stability and the home. However, even with this domestic emphasis, breadwinning was still seen as the prominent source of male identity. Although the new fatherhood did represent a change in

⁹See, Robert Griswold, Fatherhood in America: A History (New York: Basic Books, 1993); Robert Rutherford, "Fatherhood and the Social Construction of Memory: Breadwinning and Male Parenting on a Job Frontier, 1945-1966," in Joy Parr and Mark Rosenfeld eds., Gender and History in Canada (Toronto: Copp Clark, 1996): 357-375; O'ram, Born at the Right Time. Phrase borrowed from, Eric Hobsbawm, Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century, 1914-1991 (London: Michael Joseph, 1994).

expectations of fatherly behaviour, Robert Griswold has argued that "no political movement before modern feminism challenged the gender-based division of labour, questioned the assumption that women were innately more capable of rearing children than men, or lambasted men for their limited commitment to families."¹⁰ Studies of the new fatherhood, then, have examined the increased domesticity in representations of fatherhood up until the early 1960s while continually noting the lack of fundamental change in the gender division of labour.

While Griswold and others consistently note this double-standard of domestic responsibility, no studies have yet deconstructed the gender discourses by which it was legitimated in the 1940s and 1950s. The gender division of labour is noted as a problem, but then the narrative continues on to a different subject. This thesis will look at the process by which gender inequities were maintained throughout the fifteen years after WWII despite the rhetoric of democracy and the new - more domestic - fatherhood. Gender discourse uses differentiation to legitimate experience. Ambiguities and exceptions in daily life are funnelled through binary oppositions. Proper masculine experience is recognizable as the opposite of femininity or as the opposite of some

¹⁰Griswold, Fatherhood in America, 5.

illegitimate masculinity.¹¹ In the 1950s journalists, social workers, advertisers, and purveyors of advice all used gender dichotomies to make the disturbing phenomenon of men's domestic work conform to expectations of normalcy. The strict gender division of labour which they appealed to is a key element in representations of the 1950s as a "conservative wasteland" which preceded the radical and turbulent 1960s. This thesis, then, will explore the theoretical implications of the process whereby gender was constructed. Moreover, an understanding of this process of gendering domesticity will be used to historically situate the mythically conservative 1950s in relation to the legendary radicalism of the 1960s.

To begin with, gender discourses are placed within the context of post-WWII Canadian society. Issues such as democracy, conformity, sex-role theory and the importance of the family, are discussed alongside gender discourses to

¹¹For works on masculinity, see, for example, collected essays (and especially the critical introduction) in Michael Roper and John Tosh eds., Manful Assertions: Masculinities in Britain Since 1800 (London: Routledge, 1991); Lynne Segal, Slow Motion: Changing Masculinities, Changing Men (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1990); R.W. Connell, Masculinities (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); John Tosh, "What Should Historians do With Masculinity? Reflections on Nineteenth-century Britain," History Workshop Journal, 38 (1994): 179-202. For Canadian works, see Steven Penfold, "'Have You No Manhood in You?': Gender and Class in the Cape Breton Coal Towns, 1920-1926," Acadiensis, 23:2 (Spring 1994): 21-44; Steven Maynard, "Rough Work and Rugged Men: The Social Construction of Masculinity in Working-Class History," Labour/Le Travail, 23 (Spring 1989): 159-169. See also Joy Parr, "Gender History and Historical Practice," in Parr and Rosenfeld eds., Gender and History in Canada, 8-27.

demonstrate how gender was woven into this wider cultural fabric. Chapter Two builds upon this context to analyze representations of fatherhood in the period. Representations of the new fatherhood are analyzed to show what was old and what was new and to emphasize the continuities within images of fatherhood: namely, the continued supremacy of breadwinning as the source of masculine identity and the shaping of all other aspects of fatherhood around this basic premise.

The last three chapters are case studies of how gender discourses dealt with men who performed domestic labour, whether as fathers or as single men. The different situations examined are bachelorhood, specific times when the mother was absent from a family because of illness, and the family barbecue. Each linked men to domestic labour in a particular way which did not fit into prescriptive gender ideals in the breadwinner-homemaker family. For bachelors, the deviation from the norm was obvious; bachelors did not have wives to take care of household tasks. These men found alternative arrangements to meet their domestic needs. Analysis of interviews with five men in their seventies helps to explain how they and others interpreted the potential domesticity of bachelorhood. For some men whose wives were ill, the Red Cross Homemaker Service stepped in to provide a part-time Homemaker. An exploration of how the Red Cross represented fathers and domestic labour in such situations provides more insight into the uneasy process by which those articulating

normative ideals struggled with exceptions. Some exceptions to men performing domestic labour, such as barbecuing, were a trendy part of masculinity in the 1950s. In light of the period's distaste for gender deviations, representations of men barbecuing relied upon a broad range of discourses to legitimate this occasional sex-role reversal. Together, these case studies should provide insight into the process by which domestic masculinities were subsumed within normative gender ideals.

As with any study, there are a variety of cautionary notes; the first one is related to sources. Primarily, the sources used in this thesis are magazine and newspaper articles and advertisements, documentary films, and radio programs. These sources do not pretend to tell of individual experiences. Oral history and Red Cross documents are also limited in this way. The Red Cross materials are written to represent the Service to the public and especially to potential sources of funding. As well, it is a middle-class institution speaking for people from a variety of classes who are not able to speak themselves. Even oral history interviews are treated in this thesis as representations. They are representations of the past filtered through the present. As such, the sources used should be seen as purveyors of cultural discourses and not accounts of how it "really" was. Although this may limit the study, an exploration of discourse is, itself, a valuable and worthwhile

enterprise.

Another warning should be recorded regarding the geographical setting of this study. Ostensibly, this is a history of fatherhood in Halifax from 1945 to 1960. However, those looking for a Haligonian version of fatherhood will not find it here. While there may have been a local variant on broader cultural discourses, the more striking theme in this period is Halifax's integration into Canadian and North American mass culture. My findings in this regard fit in with other works which have stressed the influence of North American culture in the Maritimes in the immediate postwar period. According to Margaret Conrad, while North American influences had been present in the Maritimes in earlier decades, the pace of change in the 1950s was accelerated. Economic and social integration were linked to widespread ownership of such commodities as automobiles, refrigerators, and televisions.¹² Barbecues were an example of a commodity which represented both a consumer purchase and a choice of lifestyle congruent with North American mass culture. The Red Cross, as a national and international organization, further helped promote integration within a larger context. Certainly, in an urban area such as Halifax, finding a

¹²See, Margaret Conrad, "The 1950s: The Decade of Development," in E.R. Forbes and D.A. Muise, eds., The Atlantic Provinces in Confederation (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), 382-420. See also, on the subject of Americanization and television, Paul Rutherford, When Television was Young: Primetime Canada, 1952-1967 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990).

Maritime version of fatherhood would have been difficult.

Despite these cautions, the work here is still of value in understanding fatherhood and gender in post-WWII Halifax. I argue in this thesis that it is not enough to merely note the existence of the gender-based division of labour in the breadwinner-homemaker family. The existence of multiple, and sometimes contradictory, discourses militates against an interpretation which sees the normative discourse as the way families were. It is by exploring the process by which normative gender ideals maintained their hegemony that one can see a fuller representation of gender in the period. This wider view accounts for the varieties in representations of gender, while showing the power of normative gender ideals to manage or accommodate such variants in ways that appeared to confirm men's and women's "natural" differences. Such an understanding of the influence of normative discourses in shaping individual experience also informs an historical reinterpretation of the conservatism of the 1950s which accounts for both social change and conservative resistance to this change.

Chapter 1 : Contextualizing Gender

The facts concerning the nature, physical make-up, and functioning of men and of women point neither to equality nor to inequality. The more accurate concept is that major dissimilarities do exist, but the words "equal" and "unequal" are inapplicable when we compare the capacities and abilities of the sexes."

Mary and Judson Landis, Building a Successful Marriage, 1958.

Boys are like gods, who being used to the powers and privileges of immortality suddenly find themselves handicapped in a narrow little world they never made. But those secrets they are going to discover, anyway, so they'll be able to push the right buttons themselves. It's their business to build bridges and take heaven by storm and play around with atoms. And it's our business, I suppose, to tend the baby and keep dinner on the back of the stove until they get home.

Dolly Reitz, "Occupation: Housewife" Chronicle-Herald, [Halifax] 1955.

In the dawn of the nuclear age, Dolly Reitz's association of masculinity with "push[ing] the right buttons" and "play[ing] around with atoms" conferred power and privilege. For sociologists like Mary and Judson Landis to overlook the inequality which lay behind this and other alleged gender differences is a significant oversight which deserves further exploration. Recent history of the 1940s and 1950s has shown that the white-washing of the period as a time in which conservative suburban families ruled supreme has been

overdone.¹ Playboy, the magazine for the single man, quickly sold millions of copies promoting an anti-family ideal. Although the breadwinner-homemaker family² was the norm, attitudes to women in work and public service were mixed as opposed to uniformly negative.³ Given the diversity of the period, why was a feminist (or other) critique of gender hierarchy not more common?⁴

In part, the lack of a viable feminist analysis of gender inequality resulted from the way in which gender was understood. Gender discourses in the fifteen years after WWII were part of a wider discursive system in which the

¹In particular, see a number of the essays in, Joanne Meyerowitz, ed. Not June Cleaver: Women and Gender in Postwar America, 1945-1960 (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994).

²I use the term "breadwinner-homemaker family" in place of what is often referred to, erroneously, as the "traditional family." By this I mean families which were prescribed to consist of both mother and father with gender specific roles in which the father earned "bread" and the mother did not engage in waged labour, but instead stayed home to "care" for the family.

³See Veronica Strong-Boag, "Canada's Wage-Earning Wives and the Construction of the Middle Class, 1945-1960," Journal of Canadian Studies, 29:3 (1994): 5-25; Alvin Finkel, "Even the Little Children Cooperated: Family Strategies, Childcare Discourse, and Social Welfare Debates, 1945-1975," Labour/Le Travail, 36 (Fall 1995): 91-118; Joan Sangster, "Doing Two Jobs: The Wage-Earning Mother, 1945-1970," in Joy Parr ed., A Diversity of Women: Ontario, 1945-1980 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), 98-134.

⁴I say here "not more common" because, in fact, there was a feminist critique. For an American example in which a scholar explores critiques of the "domestic ideal", see, Susan M. Hartman, "Women's Employment and the Domestic Ideal in the Early Cold War Years," in Meyerowitz, Not June Cleaver, 84-100.

breadwinner-homemaker family was linked to democracy and social order. To speak of gender meant speaking of not just men and women, but also of husbands and wives, and of mothers and fathers. Further complicating gender identities was the idea that men and women were citizens in a western democracy in the context of the cold war. Individuality and self-direction were seen as valuable traits which, nonetheless, had to be balanced against the possibility of subversive behaviour. This political contradiction - between self-direction and conformity to "normal" standards of behaviour - was incorporated into how gender was understood. Difference and individuality were nominally praised at the same time that those who sought to create their own gender identities were sometimes attacked and harassed.⁵

This chapter will demonstrate how postwar gender discourses both shaped, and were shaped by, contemporary ideas on the family, democracy, conformity and appropriate sex-roles. It is argued that family experts - psychologists, physicians, and sociologists - played an integral role in shaping this discursive system. Gender was not understood on its own. Contemporaries framed their understanding of gender

⁵For such behaviour toward homosexuals, see Gary Kinsmen, "'Character Weaknesses' and 'Fruit Machines': Towards an Analysis of the Anti-Homosexual Security Campaign in the Canadian Civil Service," Labour/Le Travail, 35 (Spring 1995): 133-161; Daniel J Robinson and David Kimmel, "The Queer Career of Homosexual Security Vetting in Cold War Canada," in Joy Parr and Mark Rosenfeld eds., Gender and History in Canada (Toronto: Copp Clark, 1996), 317-338.

in terms of their culture as a whole. Before we move on to an examination of a particular gender ideal, then, it is useful to uncover this wider context.

It has become a cliché to speak of the importance of marriage and the family in the years following World War Two. These years were the cradle of what is now known as the Baby Boom. Marriage and fertility rates soared. The average age of marriage declined. But this was not merely a numerical phenomena. As Doug Owsram has documented, there was a culture of babies and family which expanded to affect most areas of society.⁶ When John Bedford complained to readers in Maclean's magazine in 1949 that society was not kind enough toward his children, he was riding the crest of a wave which would soon overtake him and North America. His comments spoke volumes for the future :

...if you don't like my children that's just too bad. I've browbeaten them all I'm going to. From now on they're going to yell when they feel like it, run when they feel like it and if they happen to tramp on a geranium or two you'll just have to get another geranium. And I'm not going to get rid of them. I'm going to keep them. I guess I'm just an old-fashioned turnip, but I like them.⁷

⁶See, Doug Owsram, Born at the Right Time: A History of the Baby Boom Generation (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), esp. chapt. 1. See also, in the American context, Elaine Tyler May, Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era (New York: Basic Books, 1988); Steven Mintz and Susan Kellogg, Domestic Revolutions: A Social History of American Family Life (New York: Free Press, 1988), chapt. 9.

⁷John Bedford, "Doesn't Anybody Like Kids?" Maclean's, July 15, 1949.

Bedford did not have to worry. The rest of society liked children too.

In fact, happiness and personal fulfilment were linked in popular discourses in the 1940s and 1950s to marriage and family life. Happy individuals were invariably those who were either married or romantically seeking marriage. In an award-winning National Film Board documentary, The Feelings of Hostility, the main character remained single into her twenties. Despite career success, the commentator remarked that "outside her work is a void in her life." As she walked home one evening, she wistfully eyed happy couples waiting in line at movie theatres. Returning home to a stark and empty apartment, her facial expressions indicated that she felt something was not right. Unlike many other young women of her generation, she did not marry, and hence, did not enjoy the fulfilment which this institution was often represented as bringing.⁸

Although positive rewards from family life were possible, the nuclear family did not exist in a blissful vacuum. While some may have seen the family as a safe haven, the family was nonetheless linked with the dangers of the cold war world. As Reg Whitaker and Gary Marcuse have noted in an examination of

⁸This film and another directed by Anderson won awards at the Canadian Film Awards, 1948. National Archives of Canada (NAC), 1976-0222, ISN 42342, The Feelings of Hostility, dir. Robert Anderson, Department of National Health and Welfare, Mental Health Division and the National Film Board (NFB), 1948.

the cold war in Canada, wartime anti-fascism was quickly transformed into anti-communism.⁹ In contrast to both fascism and communism, the saving graces of western society were said to be democracy and the family. Parenting expert Eduard Lindeman was not alone when he argued :

So firmly am I convinced of the importance of family life to the future of democracy that I am prepared to state that no nation which neglects the training of its citizens for family experience will be capable of sustaining a democratic way of life.¹⁰

It was not new to claim that the family was the basis of democratic society. However, in the 1940s and 1950s, experts claimed that democracy was also the basis of the family, thereby bringing the cold war threat to democracy into the home.

Bringing democratic parenting into the home was the purpose of a series of CBC radio broadcasts in 1954 sponsored by the Canadian Home and School and Parent Teacher Federation. The January 17 broadcast entitled The Father Who Wouldn't Listen was especially strident in emphasising how democratic

⁹See, Reg Whitaker and Gary Marcuse, Cold War Canada: The Making of a National Insecurity State, 1945-1957 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), 3-4; Whitaker, "From World War to Cold War," in Greg Donaghy ed., Uncertain Horizons: Canadians and Their World in 1945 (Canada: Canadian Committee for the History of the Second World War, 1997), 305-323.

¹⁰Eduard C. Lindeman, "Are Parents to Blame?" in Hilda Holland and Fritz Kahn eds., Why Are You Single? (New York, 1949), 119-134.

values were to have influenced family life.¹¹ In this program the father's comments represented a dangerous kind of parenting :

There's no point in talking about freedom. If you want a child to grow up properly you have to take command....When a child is taught to be obedient, to obey all the time under all circumstances, why...she will do the right thing automatically....She will do what's right without having to think.

Of course, the listener knew that there was something wrong with this kind of logic. The link to cold war representations of fascism and communism was easily apparent : "to obey all the time," "without having to think." Lest the listener miss these associations, the narrator later explained that the father's approach was wrong because it represented "authoritarian" discipline. Democracy, then, was expected to change the way family members interacted.

These new democratic, non-authoritarian families were allegedly a change from both a patriarchal past and a fascist/communist alternative. Authoritarianism was to be avoided through cooperation, discussion and partnership of all members of the family. The postwar period provided a number of examples of how these families could work. With the assistance of government funding, record numbers of men were

¹¹This program was one in a series of thirteen on parenting in 1954 produced by the CBC and the Canadian Home and School and Parent Teacher Federation entitled The Way of a Parent. NAC, 1989-0415, ISN 137468, The Way of A Parent: The Father Who Wouldn't Listen, written by George Salverson, Jan 17, 1954.

able to attend university.¹² But many were family men, whose university careers required family adjustment. Putting "Pop" through college was a trend which, although far from universal, represented many of the elements of family cooperation. Larger families were also a trend in postwar society, and managing with these families was allegedly made easier by a cooperative, democratic style of life. One of the tools available for cooperative families touted in this period was the family meeting. While some made joking reference to it, such meetings were a visible sign of discussion fostering democracy in the family.¹³ The cooperative spirit could also take on religious significance as an article by Muriel Nissen in the Halifax Chronicle-Herald for Father's Day, 1953, suggested. She urged readers to "Make a Father's Day resolution in the home, that all three units of the family - father, mother, and children - will unite in a family trinity, guided by God and a parent at each side mutually sharing the responsibilities and rewards of raising children."¹⁴ Even without the religious connotations, democratic families meant that everyone had a say in meeting and overcoming the

¹²See, Owrap, Born at the Right Time; May, Homeward Bound.

¹³John Clare, "How the Greigs Put Pop Through College," Maclean's, Jan. 15, 1952; June Callwood, "How to Raise Ten Kids in Six Rooms," Maclean's, Oct. 15, 1951. For a reference to family meetings, see Sidney Margolius, "Who Should Handle the Family's Money?" Maclean's, Oct. 1, 1950.

¹⁴Muriel Nissen, "Dad's Day Not Mere Time of Gift Giving," Halifax Chronicle-Herald, June 20, 1953.

challenges faced by the home in the cold war.

While Nissen's comments suggest that each member of the family was integral to the democratic family, democracy did not imply sameness. When a housewife wrote in to Mary Hawworth's advice column in the Halifax Chronicle to complain that her husband was not sharing in household responsibilities, Hawworth's response was less than sympathetic. She argued that "Partnership implies mutual dependence of the parts, but not necessarily tit-for-tat division of prime responsibilities." Then, adeptly linking family life with cold war rhetoric, she told the woman that for the "collective security" of the family it would be to a husband and wife's "mutual benefit" if she met "his expectations with cordial efficiency."¹⁵ Women and men clearly had different roles; and democracy, instead of fighting against this, gave legitimacy to differentiation for the allegedly greater good.

The discursive linkages between gender, family, and democracy were shaped by the growth of psychology and the social sciences in the postwar period. As economists are to the 1990s, psychiatrists, sociologists, and psychologists were to the 1940s and 1950s; occasionally maligned, but nevertheless, the holders of a sacred science. The surge in their popularity coincided, not accidentally, with a shift in

¹⁵Mary Hawworth, "Mary Hawworth's Mail", Halifax Chronicle, June 16, 1945.

emphasis in psychiatry from clinical treatment to examining the "socioenvironmental" causes of mental illness.¹⁶ Crossover between academic and popular writing was common. Fritz Kahn was one such doctor who walked the line between academic and popular writing. Kahn's essay, "Are You an Oedipus?", appeared both in an edited collection of essays by doctors and social science professionals entitled, Why Are You Single? and in Maclean's magazine.¹⁷ Kahn was not alone, as a number of sociologists, physicians, and psychologists dispensed advice in popular forums.¹⁸

The response to this expert advice was one of grudging respect. Perhaps the most well known advice book of the period was Benjamin Spock's, The Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care, which advised parents to follow their own common

¹⁶See, Gerald Grob, From Asylum to Community: Mental Health Policy in Modern America (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1991), esp. chapter 5.

¹⁷The Maclean's version of the essay was much shorter. See Fritz Kahn, "Are You an Oedipus?" in Holland and Kahn, Why Are You Single?, 135-157, and Fritz Kahn, "Let Your Child Grow Up," Maclean's, July 1, 1949.

¹⁸Other parenting experts who followed the trend of academic and popular writing include, William Blatz (who also wrote during the 1920s and 1930s as well as in the postwar period), Samuel Laycock, and Sidney Katz. See Mona Gleason, "Disciplining Children, Disciplining Parents: The Nature and Meaning of Advice to Canadian Parents, 1945-1955," Histoire Sociale/Social History, 29:57 (May 1996): 187-209; Katherine Arnupp, Education for Motherhood: Advice for Mothers in Twentieth-Century Canada (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994).

sense.¹⁹ The fact that millions bought the book in order to be told to follow their own common sense speaks volumes about contemporary attitudes toward child psychology. Robert Allen, a Maclean's staff writer who often wrote about family issues, reflected the popular blend of uneasiness and respect toward expert advice : "...child psychology is an important science and I have a lot of respect for the men and women who gave it to us. But child psychology still deals largely with theory....The ability to apply the findings of child psychology is almost a separate science." Allen was not alone in his views. An article on "The Ten Worst Mistakes Parents Make" started off by waxing nostalgic about a time when "parents didn't worry too much about rearing a family." However, with the advent of child psychology, the more parents learned, "the more they worried." In part this was due to a rising awareness of the impact of parenting on a child's development, but according to the author, Dorothy Sangster, it was also due to the misinformation provided by child psychology. However, Sangster's response was not to mistrust expert advice altogether. Rather, readers were urged not to worry about the problems with previous advice in favour of following these "reassuring signposts" from "the most modern

¹⁹For a discussion of Spock, see, Arnupp, Education For Motherhood, 87-89; Owram, Born at the Right Time, 48-49.

authorities."²⁰

The work of these "modern authorities" often represented the family as being threatened in the same manner that democratic society was threatened. Such threats were often hidden, and supposedly, worked in insidious ways to undermine both family and society.²¹ When introducing a story on different kinds of discipline on the CBC radio program The Father Who Wouldn't Listen, the narrator's voice creeps and crawls with lurking danger :

At the Linden place in the suburbs of the city, the lawn was smooth, the hedge was trim, the rooms were bright and charming. Mrs. Linden would never tolerate a speck of dust...but a kind of dust was collecting in the corners; a dust of bad feeling...Robert Linden's daughter was sixteen and unhappy. It wasn't an obvious unhappiness...It was a submerged unhappiness, for in a model household, Amy was a model daughter.²²

Such situations were not uncommon, nor were they easy to spot. Any household could have been gathering the kind of dust the Linden's household had been gathering. As the Gouzenko affair had been a signpost for the threats allegedly present in society at large, psychological problems were a warning sign that the home also needed careful guarding lest it to fall

²⁰Robert Thomas Allen, "You Too Can be a Perfect Parent," Maclean's, Mar 15, 1951; Dorothy Sangster, "The Ten Worst Mistakes Parents Make," Maclean's, Dec 15, 1952. See, Arnupp, Education for Motherhood.

²¹See, Mariana Valverde, "Building Anti-Delinquent Communities: Morality, Gender, and Generation in the City," in Parr ed., A Diversity of Women, 19-45; Gleason, "Disciplining Children, Disciplining Parents."

²²NAC, The Father Who Wouldn't Listen.

prey to subversive influences.

Families that allegedly exhibited such psychological abnormalities were often portrayed as the cause of societal problems. Admonishing parents in Maclean's to treat their children better, a twenty-one year old who worked with teenagers warned that

...crime doesn't just happen. There has to be a cause. You may be content to say that jail is the only cure, but can you expect the police to cure your broken homes and unhappy marriages which have provided the real seed and soil for the weeds of delinquency?²³

In other words, bad parenting was not just a personal problem. The twin social evils of the 1950s, juvenile delinquency and male homosexuality, were consistently linked in popular discourses to family abnormalities.²⁴ Too much feminine influence and authoritarian discipline were most often given as the particular parental faults.²⁵ But regardless of the particular fault, the fact that the blame rested with parents and non-conforming families was assumed.

Prescriptive discourses urged parents to avoid these

²³Mary Lou Dilworth, "Why Don't Adults Grow Up?" Maclean's, Jun 1, 1950.

²⁴On juvenile delinquency, see Mariana Valverde, "Building Anti-Delinquent Communities: Morality, Gender, and Generation in the City," in Parr ed., A Diversity of Women, 19-45.

²⁵See, among others, J.D. Ketchcum, "The Prude is Father to the Pervert," Maclean's Jan 15, 1948; John Nash, "It's Time Father Got Back in the Family," Maclean's, May 15, 1956. See also, Barbara Ehrenrich, Hearts of Men: American Dreams and the Flight From Commitment (New York: Doubleday, 1983), chap. 2; Robert L. Griswold, Fatherhood in America: A History (New York: Basic Books, 1993), chap. 9.

problems by practical, cooperative parenting which fostered self-direction and individuality. According to Dorothy Sangster, one mistake parents sometimes made was to "forget what discipline is for." Parents were told that "the long range aim of discipline in a loving home and a democratic society is to teach a child self-direction and self-control....we are not trying to teach them to snap to attention at an authoritative word as if they were storm troopers." However, excessive individualism was also wrong. Rather, Sangster argued that, "We are trying to teach our sons and daughters how to live, how to direct their own actions wisely and well, how to conform to the requirements of our society...." Apparently lost on Sangster was the very limited amount of "self-direction" she was advocating. The difference seemed to be one of tone and timing only. It would not have been proper for children to "snap to attention." However, the end result was expected to be the same; conformity to the "requirements of...society." As Barbara Ehrenrich has pointed out, while conformity was seen to be a problem in the 1950s, the solution was merely a kind of "higher, more reflective conformity," not outright individuality.²⁶

This subtle, but significant, contradiction was especially apparent in the CBC radio program The Father Who

²⁶Sangster, "The Ten Worst Mistakes Parents Make," and Ehrenrich, The Hearts of Men, 31.

Wouldn't Listen. The father's use of authoritative discipline - not listening, making rules without reason or explanation - is made known to the listener by his actions and by the narrator's knowing commentary. A meek daughter lacking in judgement and self-direction, the listener is told, would be the end result of such discipline. However, the evidence that the father's discipline had gone awry had ironic implications for the daughter's lesson in self-direction. Without thinking of his daughter's feelings, he told her that she had to be back home on Friday evenings by 10:00 PM. The daughter had been invited to join a girls' club which met on Friday evenings until 11:00. In order to be home by 10:00, she would have had to leave the meeting even earlier to catch the bus. At this point in her life, the narrator warned, "fitting in" with her friends was exceptionally important for the daughter. By insisting on this curfew, the father had not allowed his daughter to find her own place socially. Apparently this kind of obedience had been experienced before because the daughter wondered aloud whether the invitation had come because of pity. She confessed this to her mother, saying, "I just wonder because I am sort of different."²⁷ In this scenario, self-direction meant the ability for the daughter to conform to the standards of her own social group as opposed to her parents' demands. Such a sterile definition of individuality lacked the potential to question why "fitting in," itself, was

²⁷NAC, The Father Who Wouldn't Listen.

necessary.

The negative social implications of not conforming were also stressed in marriage advice. Significant variations from the breadwinner-homemaker pattern were sometimes linked to deviancy and social ills. In The Feelings of Hostility the step-father came home to find his wife had not made dinner. "No dinner for the breadwinner" piped in the narrator. The same scenario occurred at breakfast. The awkward and unkempt "breadwinner" fixed his own breakfast: cereal. Instead of righting the obvious wrong and confronting his wife, the step-father said nothing. And the whole family suffered. The wife wondered why her husband no longer showed interest in her sexually. At work, the husband took out his repressed hostility on a subordinate. As for the main character, the daughter, this is merely another incident in a life-course which led to loneliness and spinsterhood.²⁸ To break from expected patterns of behaviour, then, was shown to have severe repercussions.

On the basis of these threatened dangers, discourses on conformity, gender and democracy interacted to endorse a conservative, don't-rock-the-boat mentality. While political and social disruption did occur in the 1950s,²⁹ the period is justifiably noted for its non-confrontational style of

²⁸NAC, The Feelings of Hostility.

²⁹See essays by Harriet Hyman Alonso and Dee Garrison in Meyerowitz, ed., Not June Cleaver. cite something else here.

politics.³⁰ Sociologists Judson and Mary Landis drew parallels between conservative democratic politics and fulfilment in the home. They claimed that conservative husbands and wives were often happier than their radical counterparts.³¹ Marriage expert Henry Bowman further linked conservatism, fulfilment and normal gender roles. In his book, Marriage for Moderns, Bowman dismissed the possibility of altering or fighting against current sex-roles. According to Bowman, "the most intelligent attitude is one of mutual adjustment... We live with people as they are, not as we should like them to be or as they may be years hence when society has become different from what it is at present."³² Resignation to and acceptance of gender roles were directly linked with fulfilment, happiness and conservative democracy.

Within this context, the breadwinner-homemaker family was represented as normal. Language describing the mother-child relationship referred to it as "beautiful" and "natural." What was interpreted as the biological fact of motherhood legitimated the normative reality of the breadwinner-homemaker family. Marriage experts Judson and Mary Landis wrote that,

The child's physical connection with the mother before birth and his dependence upon her in the

³⁰See, Whitaker and Marcuse, Cold War Canada; May, Homeward Bound.

³¹Landis and Landis, Building a Successful Marriage (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1958).

³²Henry A. Bowman, Marriage for Moderns (Toronto: McGraw-Hill, 1954), 15-19.

early months of his life are arrangements made by nature, and they do limit the mother's freedom more than the father's. It seems logical that with the greater freedom of the father should go a greater responsibility for the support and protection of his wife and children.³³

This did not mean that the breadwinner-homemaker family was not malleable in some ways. Recent work by historians Veronica Strong Boag in Canada and Joanne Meyerowitz in the United States has pointed out that attitudes toward working women were not universally conservative. Life stage was an important factor in the acceptability of working mothers; older mothers received less negative attention than mothers with younger children. Many magazines also portrayed women in public as living successful, balanced lives.³⁴ Nevertheless, these were exceptions. Biology, as represented in the alleged connection between mother and child and greater male strength, was said to explain and justify the normative ideal.

Often, the normalcy of the breadwinner-homemaker family was not so much expressly stated as it was assumed. Dorothy Sangster's writing on rules for parenting presupposed certain sex-roles. Sangster warned parents of the consequences of expecting too little of their children : "The husband who marries a girl who can't cook is in for a rude shock. The wife who marries a boy whose mother still babies him has not

³³Landis and Landis, Building a Successful Marriage, 32.

³⁴Strong-Boag, "Canada's Wage-Earning Wives,"; Joanne Meyerowitz, "Beyond the Feminine Mystique: A Reassessment of Postwar Mass Culture, 1946-1958," in Meyerowitz, ed., Not June Cleaver, 229-262.

taken on a man, but a boy." She both relied upon and reinforced links between women and cooking as well as men and responsibility. Similarly, the NFB documentary Know Your Baby, meant to prepare families for a newborn, focused almost exclusively on the mother.³⁵ Another series of documentaries on raising children also operated within these limits. When the young boy called for his "mommy" at 6:20 in the morning in The Terrible Twos and Trusting Threes, the father, pretending to sleep, winked at the camera after the mother left to deal with her son. The narrator commented slyly, "Of course, Jim always manages to sleep through."³⁶ Such humour recognized the inequality in the breadwinner-homemaker family, but by designating the situation as humorous, the inequality was dismissed as not being worthy of any further attention.³⁷ Regardless of the potential ramifications in terms of equality of the sexes, the breadwinner-homemaker family was seen to have been based in the "normal" and "natural" roles of men and women.

³⁵Sangster, "The Ten Worst Mistakes..."; NAC, 1984-0383, ISN 42358, Know Your Baby, Department of National Health and Welfare, Child and Maternal Health Div. and Mental Health Div, prod. Crawley Films, NFB, 1947.

³⁶NAC, 8612-0040, ISN 38570, Ages and Stages : The Terrible Twos and Trusting Threes, Department of National Health and Welfare, Mental Health Div, prod. Crawley Films, 1951. Interestingly, the same type of comment is made in an article on dealing with women in Playboy, see, Shepherd Mead, "The Sorry Plight of the Human Male," Playboy, 2:11 (1955).

³⁷On the social implications of humour, see James Snell, "Marriage Humour and its Social Functions, 1900-1939," Atlantis, 11:2 (1986): 70-85.

The belief in gender difference as fact seemed at times to be an article of faith. In an essay entitled, "The Marriage-Shyness of the Male," Theodore Reik argued emphatically that "It *must* be significant that women and men have a different attitude toward marriage, and this difference *must* be based not only on sociological but also on psychological factors."³⁸ The Masculine-Feminine (MF) test which was used to measure masculinity and femininity did accommodate men and women who demonstrated characteristics of the opposite sex.³⁹ However, the assumption that there were knowable "feminine" and "masculine" characteristics remained. Moreover, gender norms were determined in MF tests by labelling "masculine" those traits which men generally shared and "feminine" those traits which women generally shared. In doing this, MF tests provided fixed definitions to gender identities based upon averages and assumptions. The conformity stressed in experts' advice on marriage and parenting was thereby incorporated into what were seen as "normal" gender ideals. That gender could be a changeable social process was not accommodated. According to Henry Bowman, to always state that some men exhibited feminine characteristics in particular situations and that some women

³⁸Theodore Reik, "The Marriage-Shyness of the Male," Why Are You Single?, 23-37 (emphasis mine).

³⁹See, Joseph H. Pleck, "The Theory of Male Sex-Role Identity: Its Rise and Fall, 1936 to the Present," in Harry Brod, ed., The Making of Masculinities: The New Men's Studies (New York: Routledge, 1992): 21-38.

exhibited masculine characteristics in particular situations would have been "tedious."⁴⁰ While overlap in sex-roles was possible, difference was the more significant issue.

Issues of power did not easily enter this gender discourse. To speak of equality between the sexes was to compare apples to oranges. "Are the roles of husband and wife equally important?" Bowman asked readers in 1954. "They are," he answered, "but this does not make them interchangeable...." In order to make a comparison, a standard would have had to be established. However, because so much of human behaviour was coded by gender, the standard would have been either masculine or feminine. In each case, the sex whose standard was not being used to measure equality would have fared worse.⁴¹ Thus, despite a recognition of their social implications, gender differences were not understood as gender hierarchies.

Conclusions

Recognition of different sex-roles did not eliminate inequality. Although the fact was not mentioned as often as in previous decades, the father was still "head" of the family.⁴² Access to well-paid, high status employment was still a dream for the majority of women. Positions of political and economic power were still held by men. The

⁴⁰Bowman, Marriage for Moderns, 19.

⁴¹Bowman, Marriage for Moderns, 19.

⁴²See, Griswold, Fatherhood in America; Mintz and Kellogg, Domestic Revolutions.

gender division of labour still burdened women with the vast majority of daily activities whose unpaid status structured them into economic dependency. Why then was an aspiration to equality not a more significant factor in gender discourses?

In part, as this chapter has shown, the answer lies in how gender was understood. Gender discourses did not exist in a vacuum. They were part of a larger cultural context. The dominant gender discourse was informed by particular discourses surrounding democracy, the breadwinner-homemaker family, and other social norms. In the cold war, activism of any kind could easily be labelled as radical and subversive. While challenging norms was, in theory, appreciated by western democracy in the period, gender norms were understood in the particular context of the breadwinner-homemaker family: this institution enshrined the difference between husbands and wives. This family, though not universal, was represented as normal and natural. To challenge gender norms, then, meant challenging the social and political framework upon which this institution was based. In a period when social disruption of any kind was open to question, challenging an institution - the breadwinner-homemaker family - which was seen to be irrevocably connected with social order was not likely. Although real social change and diversity was possible in daily experience, such change was not greeted with radical chants or calls for further upheaval.

A comprehensive examination of specific gender roles in

the breadwinner-homemaker family can offer more insights into the particular workings of this gendered discursive system. In particular, an analysis of representations of masculine domesticity can help explain the nitty-gritty workings of these prescriptive discourses. How, in this period when ideal manhood was figuratively and literally constructed in the home - a place associated with femininity - were gender differences, and the power hierarchies they maintained, legitimated? It is to this purpose that we now turn.

Chapter 2 : Representations of the New Fatherhood

Picture a father from the 1940s and 1950s. There are a variety of images available: the strong breadwinner, working hard to support his family; the compassionate television father, giving solid advice to his young son; or, the emasculated father, controlled by his domineering wife. What do these seemingly disparate stereotypes have in common? They all assume the importance of fatherhood for society and the family. Whether celebrating a father's caring capacity or warning against women who allegedly "henpecked" their husbands, these stereotypes assume that fatherhood was central to normative masculinity, a key element in social order. Fatherhood, in this context, was the endgame of masculine respectability.

The particular meanings attributed to fatherhood in the 1940s and 1950s had their origins in the previous century. In the nineteenth century, home was most often linked to the private sphere and to women. But, by the turn of the century, some middle-class men had turned to the home for a sense of identity and purpose. Having achieved relative economic success and stability, family leisure was viewed as a reward and an escape; home was a 'haven in a heartless world.'¹ The

¹Linda K. Kerber, "Separate Spheres, Female Worlds, Woman's Place: The Rhetoric of Women's History," Journal of American History, 75:1 (1988): 12; Robert Griswold, Fatherhood in America: A History (New York: Basic Books, 1993), 88-89.

1920s saw the spread of some aspects of middle-class familial and social values to the working-class. Representations of a middle-class domestic ideal were disseminated through avenues such as mass circulation magazines, radio, the legal system and social welfare legislation.² However, working-class families, with their economic limitations and own particular cultures, adopted these ideals only sporadically or adapted them to meet their own conditions of life.³ With post-WWII prosperity, the process continued at a rapid pace. While familial values were still a method of distinguishing between

²For the influence on working-class culture of magazines and radio, see, Suzanne Morton, Ideal Surroundings: Domestic Life in a Working-Class Suburb in the 1920s (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995). For the legal system, see James Snell, In the Shadow of the Law: Divorce in Canada, 1900-1939 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991); Dorothy E. Chunn, From Punishment to Doing Good: Family Courts and Socialized Justice in Ontario, 1880-1940 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992). For social welfare legislation, see work on the establishment of Mother's Allowance in Canada, Veronica Strong-Boag, "'Wages for Housework': Mother's Allowances and the Beginnings of Social Security in Canada," Journal of Canadian Studies, 14:1 (Spring 1979): 24-34; James Struthers, The Limits of Affluence: Welfare in Ontario, 1920-1970 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), chap. 1.

³For a discussion of the particular way families in a working-class suburb of Halifax articulated, adapted, and sometimes adopted these values, see Suzanne Morton, Ideal Surroundings. Morton points out that the homogenization of middle-class ideals in mass culture brought together gender and class divisions in working-class homes. While men were keen to understand their position in families as breadwinners, the alignment of the home with middle-class mass culture created tensions between men and women, young and old.

social classes,⁴ middle-class ideals - and with them, the new fatherhood - overwhelmingly dominated popular and therapeutic representations of fathers.

These representations of a more domestic fatherhood created a paradox in gender discourses. Breadwinning had been seen as the basis of masculine identity throughout the industrial period in North America. While this was still an essential element of normative masculinity in the postwar period, the new fatherhood also prescribed other, more domestic, behaviour. Much of men's leisure was spent at home; watching television, at backyard barbecues, or spending time with children. These 'domestic pursuits seemed to have contradicted a masculine ideal which was based solely on breadwinning. Popular anxiety about this apparent paradox took a variety of forms: with the concept of "momism", Philip Wylie attacked women and their emasculating influence while critics of the "organization man" lamented the imagined loss of the rugged and individualistic breadwinner.⁵ At the heart of these social critiques was uneasiness over a redefinition of fatherhood which incorporated allegedly "feminine" domestic characteristics. However, the domesticity of the new

⁴Griswold argues that the more companionate new fatherhood was one means by which the middle-class sought to set itself apart in the 1950s. See, Griswold, Fatherhood in America, chap. 9.

⁵See, Philip Wylie, Generation of Vipers (New York, 1942). For a discussion of these social critiques, see, Barbara Ehrenrich, The Hearts of Men: American Dreams and the Flight From Commitment (New York: Doubleday, 1983).

fatherhood was narrowly interpreted. While representations of men focused on their role as fathers in a domestic setting, fundamental traditional divisions of labour were not challenged.

To explain the reasoning behind the new fatherhood's limitations, this chapter argues that the new fatherhood merely created a new - masculine - space in the private sphere of the home. Just as women's suffrage had enlarged a female public space in the midst of a perceived masculine public sphere, so too, the new fatherhood created a masculine space in what was perceived as the feminine private sphere. In the case of women's suffrage, maternal feminists in Canada based their challenges to exclusionary voting laws in assumptions about femininity which were acceptable to the existing social and political order. Women's right to vote, then, was based not on changing beliefs about their citizenship but on an extension of their "maternal" role. The limitations of this role were carried into the political realm. In the same vein, fathers' increased domesticity was premised on their role as breadwinners and men. Far from challenging definitions of normative masculinity, the new fatherhood embraced what was considered to be traditionally masculine. Throughout, the basic gender division of labour in the breadwinner-homemaker family remained unchanged.

Breadwinning and Paternal Authority

In the post-WWII period, breadwinning was almost universal in representations of fatherhood. Other ideals may have been more forcefully prescribed (representing particular anxieties of the period), but breadwinning was omnipresent. In an eloquent and convincing passage in his Fatherhood in America, Robert Griswold argues that,

Supported by law, affirmed by history, sanctioned by every element in society, male breadwinning has been synonymous with maturity, respectability, and masculinity.⁶

Post-WWII Halifax was no exception. Appeals to fathers as breadwinners were common in the Halifax Chronicle and Chronicle-Herald from 1945-1960. Life insurance companies were the most explicit in linking fatherhood and breadwinning in their advertisements. Life insurance, they argued, was a family's main protection against the death of a father and hence a breadwinner.⁷ The strength of the breadwinner ideal can be seen in the way it was more often assumed than overtly explained. Advertisements suggesting wallets and bill folds as suitable Father's Day gifts were a not-so-subtle reminder

⁶Griswold, Fatherhood in America, 7.

⁷One advertisement worked in reverse but still maintained the breadwinner-homemaker family as the ideal. It argued that a wife should have insurance because in case of her death, only the wealthiest of men could afford a homemaker. Only life insurance could prevent the break-up of the family because breaking down the gender division of labour was not given as an option. See advertisements for life insurance in, [Halifax] Chronicle-Herald, 14 June, 1952; [Halifax] Chronicle, 13 June 1945; 19 June, 1948.

of fathers' position as money-earner.⁸ Any account of the new fatherhood, therefore, must incorporate breadwinning as a recurring theme in the ongoing workings of fatherhood, the bass in the melody which was fatherhood.

The sentimentality associated with breadwinning was both an example of the importance of this ideal, and a means by which the ideal was buttressed. Breadwinning was often portrayed as a difficult and arduous task for which others should have been grateful. A 1950 article in the Halifax Chronicle-Herald urged readers not to forget Father's Day, for it was on this day that "we pause to pay due honour to the one whose daily toil, often by the sweat of his brow, keeps a roof over our heads, feeds, clothes, and loves us...." In the same article, Margaret E. Bruner expressed her feelings toward her father in verse: "And as I grew in years you worked and planned/ That I might have that which had been denied -/ To you in youth...."⁹ Such sentimental pleas were part of breadwinning's mythical status. Representations of fathers working "by the sweat of their brow," suffering in their youth, and sacrificing present enjoyment, were heroic manipulations of daily occurrences and life choices. Such representations appealed to contemporary symbols of masculinity: responsibility, duty, and obligation. Making

⁸See, [Halifax] Chronicle-Herald, 19 June, 1954.

⁹Farmer Smith, "Don't Forget Father's Day Members Warned," [Halifax] Chronicle-Herald, 17 June 1950.

such activity epic reinforced the importance of breadwinning as an integral part not only of fatherhood but of society.

Conversely, fathers who were less than adequate breadwinners received little sympathy. In her regular advice column in the Halifax Chronicle-Herald, Muriel Nissen was direct in her condemnation of a man who had been out of work for three years. The man wrote to Nissen that he feared his wife was considering a divorce. Nissen's hostile response was, "After three years, your wife got sick and tired being breadwinner, housekeeper, cook and companion." By not fulfilling his role as breadwinner, the man had fallen short. Nissen condemned the man saying, "What you need more than anything else is to grow up a bit." In this period, maturity was linked to breadwinning and achievement of masculine respectability. By failing to be a breadwinner, he had failed to be a man and was thus a boy.¹⁰ A similar fate befell the unambitious step-father in the National Film Board documentary, The Feelings of Hostility. In this film, the family is shown to have numerous problems which hurt all individuals within the family, the society around them, and especially the daughter. Early in the film, the father (an engineer) was made into a mythic figure when he died in an explosion. Mother and daughter were shown staring

¹⁰"Muriel Nissen says..." [Halifax] Chronicle-Herald, 15 June 1956. For an examination of the significance of age in constructing masculinity, see, Steven Penfold, "'Have You No Manhood In You?': Gender and Class in the Cape Breton Coal Towns, 1920-1926," Acadiensis 23:2 (Spring 1994): 21-44.

disconsolately into his picture. When the mother remarried, the new man was unlike this mythic figure. The step-father was a dumpy looking man who occupied a middle level position in an office. His lack of career ambition was a disappointment to his wife :

Without being aware of it, his wife resents his failure to realize her ambitions. She married him because he was safe and would never go away. For the same reasons that he was safe and needed security, he has never been able to equal her desire for what might have been.¹¹

There are two critiques here: the wife's ambition is seen as inappropriate, but the step-father is also rebuked for not completely living up to his breadwinning capabilities. In this way, the breadwinner ideal could be stultifying: celebratory and sentimental but also limiting and confining in its prescriptions.

In the 1940s, and especially the 1950s, one celebrated aspect of breadwinning was its connection to consumerism. Although this began to be seen in representations of fatherhood in the 1920s, the depression and war years had stalled consumerism's momentum. However, in the years after 1945, when fears of a postwar recession were not realized, consumerism exploded. So, too, did its link with fatherhood. From hula hoops to Davy Crockett hats, children's desire for products (fuelled by advertising) propelled fathers into a

¹¹National Archives of Canada (NAC), 1976-0222, ISN 42342, The Feelings of Hostility, dir. Robert Anderson, Department of National Health and Welfare, Mental Health Division and the National Film Board (NFB), 1948.

mediating role between children and the consumer economy. And, at least in representations of fatherhood, Dad did his best to fulfil his children's wants. According to Danny Boutilier's poem, a father "... had a battle on his hands to try and meet [his children's] demands the many times that they expressed a wish for things their friends possessed."¹² Even on Father's Day, when fathers were supposed to be on the receiving end of gift exchanges, the connection between fatherhood and providing was still made. An advertisement for Clayton's Drug Store told readers that "Clayton's prices on Father's Day gift suggestions will show you how to get further with father." Getting "further" with father's money is one possible interpretation of this advertisement.¹³ With its focus on purchasing goods for children and the home, consumerism gave a domestic slant to fathers' breadwinning. Consumer goods, such as electric stoves, televisions and automatic washing machines, were tangible benefits of the new fatherhood. Consumerism, then, was a new means of measuring and succeeding at breadwinning.

Similarly, discipline was another aspect of fatherhood which continued through this period, though with new methods

¹²Danny Boutilier, "Father's Day," [Halifax] Chronicle-Herald, 15 June 1956.

¹³Clayton's clothing super-mart advertisement, [Halifax] Chronicle-Herald, 14 June 1957. For a discussion of fatherhood and consumerism, see, Robert Griswold, Fatherhood in America; Doug O'wram, Born at the Right Time: A History of the Baby Boom Generation (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), chap. 4.

and rules. In the heady days of democracy's "victory" over fascism and ongoing battle with communism, any discipline that seemed authoritarian was out of step.¹⁴ "Modern" discipline was democratic and purposeful, and it was usually carried out by fathers. The NFB parenting series, Ages and Stages, clearly identified fathers as the family disciplinarian.¹⁵ In these films, before a child was 5 years old, the mother was the main purveyor of rules and obligations. However, because children of such a young age were not able to reason, real and meaningful discipline was to be avoided. The most useful technique of dealing with a wayward child was distraction. By about the age of five, firmer discipline was recommended. It was at this time that the father, so often on the periphery in the child's younger years, entered the film and the child's life in a more concrete fashion. The first real punishment meted out to the young five year old came from his father. When the young boy in The Frustrating Fours and Fascinating Fives made a mess of his father's tools, he was firmly rebuked for the first, but not the last, time. As the child grew, the father would take up this role more often. By the time the

¹⁴See, Elaine Tyler May, Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War (New York: Basic Books, 1988); Griswold, Fatherhood in America.

¹⁵See, in this series, NAC, 1984-0383, ISN 42358, Know Your Baby, Department of National Health and Welfare, Mental Health Div., prod. by Crawley Films, NFB, 1947; NAC, 8612-0040, ISN 38570, The Terrible Twos and Trusting Threes, 1951; NAC, 8612-0040, The Frustrating Fours and Fascinating Fives, 1953; NAC, ISN 139509 The Teens, 1957.

series focused on teenagers in The Teens, the father's role as disciplinarian was set.

As with delinquent breadwinners, fathers who failed in their role as family disciplinarian were represented as the cause of social problems. The CBC radio program, A Question of Responsibility was a telling reminder of the consequences of inadequate discipline.¹⁶ The teenage boy in this program had never been properly punished as a child. When the boy had stolen a bike, gotten into fights, or received bad grades, the father had always taken his son's side: making excuses, blaming the other boys or the teacher. Only too late did the father realize his mistakes. After his own car broke down, the son stole a neighbour's car, and crashed it into a tree, killing his friend in the accident. Even at this point, the father was unwilling to see his son's guilt, believing the youth's half-witted story about "borrowing" the car. Throughout the program, the father's periodic conversations with a mother who had a son of about the same age as his own, had provided a comparison between good and bad parenting. When this other adolescent's car had broken down, he had taken up a job to pay for the repairs. Another conversation with this youth's mother led the father to the realization of where

¹⁶This was from the Way of a Parent series which was written by George Alverson and produced by the Canadian Home and School and Parent Teacher Federation in conjunction with CBC radio. There were 13 episodes in the series each dealing with different parenting problems. NAC, 1989-0415, ISN 137506, A Question of Responsibility, 7 March 1954.

he had gone wrong. Punctuated by the narrator's own interpretation, the father realized that it had been his lack of constructive discipline which had led his son into delinquent behaviour. Authoritarian discipline may have been out, but discipline was nonetheless an integral part of successful and socially responsible fatherhood.

The New Fatherhood

From the early decades of the twentieth-century, and especially since the 1920s, parenting experts had called for fathers to be more involved in the home.¹⁷ The "new fatherhood," as it was called by its exponents, arose in the context of allegedly more companionate family relationships and a general increase in the importance of home and family for the middle-class. It was a loosely connected set of prescriptions for ideal fatherly behaviour. Breadwinning and discipline were no longer enough. Fathers were expected to be "pals" with their children. The new fatherhood was touted as a modern, democratic alternative to a patriarchal and authoritarian past. The economic stability and increased leisure time of the postwar period made this type of fatherhood more acceptable and more possible for a larger segment of the population. Although not universal, the new

¹⁷The context provided in this paragraph relies upon work by Doug O'wram, Born at the Right Time; Griswold, Fatherhood in America.

fatherhood dominated representations of paternity in the postwar years.

The new father was invariably a wise man, dispensing sage advice to his less experienced children. In an article in the Halifax Chronicle-Herald for Father's Day 1950, children were given this advice :

ask him [your father] to advise you...he is so much older and more experienced than you that later, if not now, you will be grateful for that advice and wise to follow it.¹⁸

According to this logic, age and experience, time-honoured signifiers of paternal respectability, gave fathers a clearer, more worldly view. The father-child relationship could have been compared to the relationship between coach and player in sports. This analogy was clearly expressed when the 1949 award for "Father of the Year" was conferred by the Canadian Father's Day Council on famous athlete and coach Syl Apps.¹⁹ As opposed to giving "orders" as his imagined patriarchal predecessors had given, the new father "advised" and counselled his children. Still in charge of the team, the wise new father/coach used new tactics to get his players to play the same old game.

One of the reasons fathers were able to coach their children was a result of the breadwinner's position as a link

¹⁸Smith, "Don't Forget Father's Day...", Chronicle-Herald, 17 June 1950.

¹⁹"Athlete Wins Father's Day Title," [Halifax] Chronicle-Herald, 18 June 1949.

to the outside - public - world. The father who disciplined his child in The Frustrating Fours and Fascinating Fives was also involved with his child as a mediator between private and public life. His role was to introduce and explain the magnificent events which happened beyond the safety and security of home. Chronicle-Herald advice columnist, Muriel Nissen, made this link directly, telling readers that father

should be... the leader of activities in the great outside world. Father, whose daily routine includes meeting new people, getting along with business associates - often under trying conditions - is the one to teach self-reliance and poise, to help overcome shyness.²⁰

The new fatherhood, therefore, had built within it the accepted gender division of labour from the breadwinner-homemaker family. A father's involvement with his children was, in part, predicated on activities requiring his absence from child care for a large part of most days.

When the father was at home, the time spent with his son was represented as special. In an article for Maclean's in 1951, journalist Robert Allen's address to new fathers assumed the importance of this relationship: "So you've just become a father? Congratulations! A boy? Nice going!" A cursory reading of these comments might suggest the author's choice of

²⁰NAC, Frustrating Fours and Fascinating Fives, NFB, 1953; Muriel Nissen, "Dad's Day Not Mere Time of Gift Giving," [Halifax] Chronicle-Herald, 20 June 1953.

the child's sex as coincidence.²¹ However, the importance of the father-son bond in popular discourses militates against this interpretation. Fathers' preference for boys apparently caused some anxiety among expectant mothers, and an advice column in the Halifax Chronicle-Herald attempted to soothe this uneasiness. In answer to the question "Do most men want their first-born to be a boy?" the experts responded that, "Men frequently express themselves that way but the wish is usually not deeply rooted. When that is the case the father is probably not emotionally prepared for parenthood."²² Nevertheless, the presence of the advice points to the existence of the problem. In fact, Robert Rutherford has found that men's role as progenitor was consistently reported as a foundation of men's identity as fathers in this period.²³ And it was the son who was seen to make this possible for fathers.

Expert advice which emphasized the importance of the father-son bond was more common than advice which downplayed this relationship. Dominant gender and parenting discourses prescribed that fathers were to be healthy masculine sex-role

²¹Ironically, Maclean's editors often made mention of the fact that Allen was the father of two *girls* to give his advice a sense of parental legitimacy. Robert Allen, "You Too Can be a Perfect Parent," Maclean's, 15 March 1951.

²²"Mirror of Your Mind," [Halifax] Chronicle-Herald, 19 June 1954.

²³See, Rutherford, "Fatherhood and the Social Construction of Memory," 368-369.

models for their sons. Robert Allen voiced the typical expert opinion when he argued that, as a boy reached the age of six or seven, "the boy's strongest ties should no longer be with the mother, but with the father." Along with other experts, he held that father-son interaction was necessary for proper sex-role development, but he also stated that the importance of fatherly involvement was not limited to "merely the psychosexual development" of the child.²⁴ A father was important to the development of "the total personality of his son." In essence, experts held that the reproduction of appropriate masculinity required the presence of such masculinity in the daily life of the child.

Popular anxiety over a lack of male parenting was specifically fixated upon its implications for the young boy. The consternation over domineering mothers - momism - was both a misogynistic attack on women as well as a call for more male parenting. These anxieties found mythical representation in the Oedipus story. According to parenting expert Fritz Kahn,

Freud plucked the Oedipus myth out of ancient Greek literature and made it serve as a symbol, a catchword to express the relation between mother, father and child. For it contains three elements that are typical of this relation: fixation on the mother; antagonism to the father; and withdrawal from life as a self-inflicted punishment.²⁵

Although daughters also suffered in this phenomenon of family

²⁴Allen, "You Too Can be a Perfect Parent," Maclean's, 15 March 1951.

²⁵Fritz Kahn, "Let Your Child Grow Up," Maclean's, 1 July 1949.

relationships, the typical illustrations involved a male child. For boys, modern suburban life was said to be particularly hazardous. With their breadwinning obligations, fathers, according to this thinking, were not seen to be at home enough to provide adequate masculine influence. Even when fathers were home, there was still the emasculating influence of domineering wives to be dealt with. The CBC radio program, The Mother Who Saw Herself, sought to ameliorate the situation by advising women on how to avoid smothering a child with help or protection.²⁶ Whether by her opening doors, tying shoelaces, or stopping him from helping his father, it was made clear to the listener that the mother did not allow the child to learn or to become masculine. The father was the voice of reason who saw the potential consequences of over-mothering. In one sequence, he confronted the mother, saying, "That 'sissy', that's what they will call him...What are you trying to do, Joyce? Keep him a baby so you can hug and kiss him all the time?" Only when the mother was confronted with her own son's stunted future in the form of other children who had, in the past, suffered the same care as she was giving her own son, did she realize her mistake. The reproduction of masculinity, then, was threatened not only by absent fathers, but also by

²⁶NAC, 1989-0415, ISN 137469, The Mother Who Wouldn't Listen, (Way of a Parent Series), Jan 24, 1954. See also, John Nash, "It's time father got back in the family," Maclean's, 15 May 1956.

domineering, emasculating mothers. The father's role, then, was to protect their sons by controlling the mother.

But the new father was not gruffly masculine. Besides being a masculine role-model, new fathers were also supposed to be caring parents. This was seen as a change from the stern patriarchal authority figure of previous generations. Shot during the 1940s, the home movies of the Lynches, a middle-class Nova Scotian family, show this representation of fatherhood.²⁷ Scenes which show the father walking with a child on his shoulders, kissing a child good-bye, and playing with his children in the water are indicative of the companionate new father. The celebration of Father's Day took up this theme of companionship. Fathers were supposed to enjoy Father's Day because they enjoyed their children. One writer in the Halifax Chronicle-Herald told readers to get something for father because, "without a doubt he'll get a lift from any card or any gift received from someone he holds dear."²⁸ As opposed to the removed patriarchal father, representations of the new father showed him to be a companion and close friend.

²⁷The collection is actually from the Merkel family, but Charles Lynch married into the Merkel family and it is of his family that many of the movies are shot during the 1940s. Public Archives of Nova Scotia (PANS), Picture and Moving Image Collection, Mary Elizabeth Lynch Collection, FSG30 Vb254, 1948 and 1950.

²⁸Danny Boutilier, "Father's Day," [Halifax] Chronicle-Herald 15 June 1956. See also, Griswold, Fatherhood in America.

Along with ideas of caring fathers came representations of father as his children's "pal."²⁹ For fathers to be a pal meant spending time playing with children; at sports, reading books, on outings, or just "romping" around the house. An advertisement for Eno's Fruit Salts described the home-coming of a father who was his daughter's pal:

Young Susan runs to meet her daddy at the front door. With a happy hug and smile they greet each other. In spite of a long and busy day, daddy still has the pep and energy for a playful romp with his daughter.³⁰

The father's position as breadwinner was maintained, but the new fatherhood called upon him to spend his leisure time with his children. Fatherhood, then, was a leisure activity which contrasted with the full-time work of motherhood. The activities of fathers were not to be seen as work. Instead, new fathers were playing with their children and, in fact, playing with child-care.

Limitations of the New Fatherhood

Robert Griswold noted that the new fatherhood failed to

²⁹An advertisement on Father's Day 1949 in the Chronicle-Herald urged readers, "for better citizenship make dad your pal."

³⁰Advertisement for Eno's Fruit Salts, [Halifax] Chronicle, 14 June 1945.

"politicize" fatherhood.³¹ By this he meant that it did not challenge the traditional gender division of labour in the breadwinner-homemaker family. Being a guide, advisor, and pal could be done on a part-time basis, coexistent with breadwinning. In fact, being a breadwinner gave a father outside experience which he could then pass on to his children. The discipline exacted by fathers was supposed to be more democratic, but the position of disciplinarian, and the power that went along with that position, remained. The new fatherhood, therefore, was just as remarkable for what was old, as for what was new.

The limitations of the new fatherhood can be seen, in part, in representations of fatherly involvement in the family as an "event." It was often shown to be an occasion when fathers looked after children or did the evening dishes. The NFB parenting series consistently portrayed fathers' involvement as an event, and in The Terrible Twos and Trusting Threes, the narrator explicitly made this connection. It was noted that "Jim [the father] spends as much time with Julia [the daughter] as he can. Routines become events when Dad takes over."³² The specialness attributed to these "events" robbed them of their potential to alter gender discourses which made daily child care the obligation of the homemaker.

³¹See his discussion of this limitations of the new fatherhood, Griswold, Fatherhood in America, (generally) 6-7, (in the 1950s) chap 9.

³²NAC, The Terrible Twos and Trusting Threes, 1951.

Part of the reason fatherly involvement was an event was because of its relative infrequency. Even when one woman called for increased time with dad, the amount of time asked for would not have radically altered the structure of the family. In the Halifax Chronicle-Herald, advice columnist Muriel Nissen argued that "Outings with dad should not be annual or semi-annual occasions. They should be enjoyed as frequently as possible. Surely, once a week most fathers could take the children out." But even once a week was not going to change things. Fatherly care would remain special, motherly care, routine. The outings which Nissen had in mind for a father to "enjoy" with his children were events like "fishing trips, a boat ride, a ball game."³³ Unlike the necessity of mothers' daily care, fathers' involvement involved choice - what to do, where to go, and how often.

In the less eventful moments, when fathers were not involved, dads were sometimes represented as an "audience" watching the play which was their family. In the NFB film, The Frustrating Fours and Fascinating Fives, the father is only an occasional participant. In some scenes, his body hovers in the background, his face invisible off camera, as the main drama between the mother and child takes centre-stage. In another film of the same series, The Teens, the father is also seen as less involved. The narrator comments

³³Muriel Nissen, "Dad's Day Not Mere Time of Gift Giving," [Halifax] Chronicle-Herald, 20 June 1953.

that the father "is fond of his family but not so inclined to worry about them as their mother is."³⁴ Distance, metaphorically portrayed, distinguished the father's role from the mother's.

In the CBC radio program The Straight Jacket Bank Account, the father is represented as being removed from his family. The narrator remarks that,

George Brown, Alfred's father, was annoyed and bewildered by vague tensions blowing like ill winds through the old brick house, until recently so comfortable, so well-run by Mrs. Brown that he seldom had to concern himself with the trivial to take a man's mind from his business. At least, this was how Mr. Brown felt about a household in which he was vaguely out of things.³⁵

In this scenario, the home is separate from a man's "business." It is only because of "tensions", which are "vague" because of his distance, that the father concerns himself with his family. The problem in the home was that the mother had not let her eighteen year old son have access to his own bank account (a mistake for parents in the fifties when self-direction was key for children and adolescents). However, despite the remark that this was a "household in which [the father] was vaguely out of things," he was quickly able to see through to the core of the problem. Any criticism which might have arisen from the father's distance

³⁴NAC, The Frustrating Fours and Fascinating Fives, 1953; NAC, The Teens, 1957.

³⁵The Way of a Parent series, NAC, The Straight Jacket Bank Account, 11 April 1954.

was erased when he convinced his wife to treat the son as an individual, near-adult. The father in the audience could still participate, but at his own discretion and in an "objective" fashion.

When fathers did participate in the daily functioning of the home, specifically in domestic chores, their involvement was represented in gender-specific language. Men's household chores most often included yardwork, house repairs, heavy work, car maintenance, snow shovelling, changing light bulbs, and fixing things. Women were still consistently represented as providers of primary child care and daily housework like cleaning, cooking and laundry. Prescriptive material in newspapers and magazines was remarkably consistent on the gender-specificity of household chores.³⁶

The gendering of chores was assisted by the fact that the new fatherhood did not challenge fathers' relative monopoly of

³⁶This paragraph relies upon research in Halifax newspapers, national magazine articles, and select radio and film footage from 1945-1960. Although a statistical sample was not done, the examples of gendering housework were so universal that it was the exceptions which were noticeable. One exceptional comment was made by marriage expert Henry Bowman: "The truly modern husband, whose ideas have kept pace with social change, thinks of homemaking as a joint responsibility." Of course, even Bowman still assumed that there was "woman's work" and "men's work", but he was liberal in his claim that men should work to overcome this barrier: "Since there is such a common tendency to consider "woman's work" as somewhat inferior to "man's work" the modern husband, though he does not share this point of view, recognizes its existence. Therefore, in participating in homemaking he sees an opportunity to pay his wife a subtle compliment and to express his high esteem as an equal and copartner in a mutual enterprise." Henry Bowman, Marriage for Moderns (Toronto: McGraw-Hill, 1954), 92.

breadwinning. Breadwinning gave men an arguable reason not to perform household tasks equally and to label specific labour-intensive tasks as feminine. Roles in the breadwinner-homemaker family were represented as complementary, not "tit-for-tat" divisions of tasks. The breadwinner-homemaking family was predicated upon the idea that breadwinning was a father's main responsibility, and that, therefore, other family obligations were, to him, secondary.

This kind of thinking was legitimated by the mythic image of the burdened father. In these representations, altruistic fathers spent long days at overwhelming jobs only to come home and labour away at the tasks of fathering, all for the sake of their families. For three years - 1949, 1950, 1951 - the Halifax Chronicle-Herald ran similar editorial page cartoons on the Saturday before Father's Day.³⁷ All three cartoons operated upon the same principle; for the poor dad, Father's Day was only a brief respite, soon to be replaced by the drudgery which was his daily life. In the 1949 rendition, the father is shown running inside a hamster-wheel which is propelling a ferris wheel. While the father sweats on the hamster contraption, the mother and children laugh and enjoy themselves on the ferris wheel. In another, as dad labours away in a similar manner, his family tosses him a bouquet of flowers for Father's Day which falls on the ground beside him

³⁷See, editorial cartoons, [Halifax] Chronicle-Herald, 18 June 1949; 17 June 1950; 16 June 1951.

as he sweats. Poor dad suffered, and poems for Father's Day cherished this : "The sacrifices made he never once regrets/And we should remember that, but at times we do forget/ The trouble that we made brought grey locks to his hair."³⁸ In a Christian society, such representations of a father's suffering suggested limits to the possible benefits associated with breadwinning. Fathers' may have had access to political and economic power but they had to suffer to earn it. Images of mythic burdened fathers built upon these associations between sacrifice, atonement, and power in the western tradition to justify and legitimate a source of men's social power: breadwinning.

The corollary to the burdensome position of breadwinner was special time away. Robert Rutherford has noted, in his study of fathers in Prince George in the postwar years, that, while men often regretted not spending enough time with family, they nevertheless felt they deserved time to themselves.³⁹ Fishing trips could be spent with the family but they could also be spent with male friends. At home, weekend afternoons were represented as time for men to rest from their work week. A comic in the Halifax Chronicle depicted a poor father being constantly interrupted by his young son who was unable to complete simple tasks and

³⁸Smith, "Don't Forget Father's Day Members Warned," [Halifax] Chronicle-Herald, 17 June 1950.

³⁹Rutherford, "Fatherhood and the Social Construction of Memory."

constantly interrupted his father's afternoon nap to ask for help. The message was clear; the poor father just could not get the rest he deserved. Other fathers were more successful. In the NFB film, The Teens, after dinner the father went into the living room, sat down in his chair and smoked his cigar while the mother and son did the dishes. The after-dinner smoke, the afternoon nap, the weekend fishing trip: all of these were represented as legitimate time away from the domestic work of child care for the allegedly domestic new father.

Conclusions

The new fatherhood did not radically alter gender hierarchies; men were not represented as cooking roasts or hanging out laundry on a regular basis. Although there were a variety of images of fatherhood with a number of possible interpretations (some contradictory), normative gender discourses interpreted and shaped these particular images in a stultifying fashion. Fatherhood may have been imagined in a domestic setting, but breadwinning was the essential backdrop. If the new fatherhood was the new show on television, it was still seen in the black and white of breadwinning.

While historians often focus on change and the meaning of this change in historical context, there is also an argument

to be made for stressing continuity. Ostensibly, the new fatherhood was a different model of parenting. It was touted by magazines, advertisers and parenting experts, each of whom relied upon putting out the most "modern" information in order to secure their reputation and income. However, they understood "new" in a linguistic context which relied upon what was already known to convey meaning. Representations of the new fatherhood relied upon recognized contrasts, allusions and analogies to be understood. As such, what was already fundamentally accepted would have been difficult to change. That the new fatherhood was just as remarkable for what was old as for what was new should not be surprising. The continued supremacy of breadwinning as the core of masculine respectability is significant, as are the ways in which other, new ideas about fatherhood, were shaped around this basic premise. Historians, then, should look to these continuities in representations of the new fatherhood to explore what were the basic assumptions and meanings of fatherhood in the period.

To merely note these continuities is not, in itself, enough. How and why, in the context of increased recognition and acceptance of masculine domesticity, were the conservative constructions of family life preserved? The following chapters will be an examination of how particular instances of masculine domesticity were massaged and moulded to contain the impact such domesticity might have had on the ideal gender

roles represented in the breadwinner-homemaker family.

Chapter 3 : "'What's (or Who's) Cooking?': Making the Barbecue Masculine"

"[The barbecue] has presented the world with the weird sight of the domestic white-collar male exchanging recipes for barbecue sauce with the boys at work, as if discussing how to mix a Martini"

Thomas Walsh, "How to Cook Without a Stove," Maclean's 1955

Thomas Walsh's commentary on the barbecue phenomenon reveals a particular anxiety about men and domestic labour in the 1940s and 1950s. He presented the situation of barbecuing, in which men were responsible for cooking part of a meal, as a "weird sight." In doing so, Walsh reaffirmed normative gender ideals in which cooking and other domestic chores were generally considered to be in women's domain. He was quick to point out that these men who cooked outdoors were not effeminate. When they exchanged recipes, it was with "the boys". And these recipes were not for jellied salads or rhubarb pie. Barbecue sauce was instead linked to a symbol of 1950s middle-class masculinity, the Martini. Walsh was not alone in his linguistic posturing over men and barbecuing. Other representations of the family barbecue also treated it as a form of masculine domesticity that needed the "masculine" emphasized.

A further examination of discourses surrounding barbecues and masculine domestic labour in the 1940s and 1950s reveals

the politics of gender at work.¹ This paper will show how representations of barbecuing were organized to turn the ordinary task of preparing a meal into a ritual of normative masculinity. To achieve this, barbecue discourses included a host of cultural symbols of masculinity: the new fatherhood, the outdoors, old-fashionedness, modernity, strength, danger, fire, drinking, skilled work, domestic incompetence and manly pride. Each symbol was deployed in advertisements, magazine and newspaper articles, films, and cookbooks by writer's promoting their version of the "good life" of the 1950s. The affluence of the postwar period had bolstered the position of breadwinners as family providers. Along with barbecues, a variety of consumer products for the home were taken as tokens of successful breadwinning. While women and children were targeted by advertisers for many of these products, the barbecue was marked as masculine. However, the strong association of cooking with femininity required the discursive masculinization of barbecuing in order that men's cooking be considered normal. The barbecue had to be constantly remade as masculine to quell the anxiety that this sex-role reversal caused.

The Barbecue Fad

¹The phrase "politics of gender" is paraphrased from Joan Scott's Gender and the Politics of History. I use politics, as does Scott, to refer to power relations broadly defined. See, Joan Scott, Gender and the Politics of History (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), introduction.

Like the Hula Hoop and television, the barbecue was a trend of the 1950s. However, unlike the Hula Hoop, whose fate was inglorious, the television and the barbecue survived to greet later decades. As with other 1950s fads, the barbecue's success was linked to an increased emphasis on family and leisure.² Although the similar tradition of the family cook-out preceded the postwar period, it was the years after WWII, and especially the mid to late-1950s, that saw the popularity of the backyard barbecue in Canada increase substantially. Catalogues distributed by Eaton's, Sears, and Canadian Tire began to advertise portable barbecues in this period.³ More substantial promotion of the fad was offered in Canadian Home and Gardens, which ran a number of articles instructing readers how to build their own backyard barbecue.⁴ One manufacturer reported that one hundred barbecues were built in

²See, Doug Owsram, Born at the Right Time: A History of the Baby Boom Generation (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996).

³The collection of Sears, Eaton's, and Canadian Tire catalogues in the Dalhousie University Archives is not quite complete so the exact year barbecues first appeared in each of the catalogues is not always clear. However, their appearance in this period, within one to two years, was determined. Portable barbecues first appeared in the Sears Summer catalogue of 1953, the Eaton's Spring/Summer catalogue of 1954 (although the 1953 edition is missing), and in the Canadian Tire Spring and Summer catalogue of 1954. Subsequent years did not necessarily contain advertisements for barbecues and barbecue appliances until the late 1950s when such advertisements were in all catalogues regularly.

⁴See, "How to Build Your Own Barbecue," Canadian Homes and Gardens Jun 1948; "The Barbecue Anyone Can Build," Canadian Homes and Gardens May 1949. See also, "Barbecues for Outdoor Living," Home Building Jun-Jul 1952.

1955 for every one barbecue built ten years earlier.⁵ By the late 1950s, the backyard barbecue had become a symbol of the family oriented leisure of the period.

The barbecue represented less formal leisure. When the Canadian Cook Book was revised in 1961, a new section on "Outdoor Meals" was added.⁶ The editor linked informal leisure and barbecuing, noting that "With longer hours of leisure and a more informal attitude to living, outdoor cooking has suddenly become everyone's delight." Not everyone approved of this casual style of cooking. Canadian Home and Gardens food columnist, Frederick Manning, was critical of the effect of barbecue culture on social mores. "If it's all the same to you," he appealed to readers in August 1948, "I'll eat [my meal] in the kitchen and carry it out, wind and weather permitting, but only if the dining room is knee deep in [a] paper and painting job. After all, what is wrong with a dining table in summer anyway?"⁷ In the backyard, dress could consist of bathing suits, shorts, and blue jeans; not the type of dinner attire Manning approved of. However, despite Manning's complaints, the barbecue was representative of

⁵Quoted in, Walsh, "How to Cook Without a Stove."

⁶The section on "Outdoor Meals" was one of two new sections, the other being "Treats for Teens." Both were linked to the importance of family and leisure in the period. Nellie Lyle Pattinson, Canadian Cook Book, revised by Helen Wattie and Elinor Donaldson (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1961).

⁷Frederick Manning, "A Man Talks Food: Summer Eating and Some...", Canadian Homes and Gardens Aug 1948.

changing values and a new type of family leisure.

This changed leisure coexisted with changes in male parenting brought about by the new fatherhood.⁸ The backyard barbecue was an ideal means for the new father to become involved in his family's lives. Families were urged to make frequent use of the barbecue to come together as a unit. An article in Canadian Homes and Gardens advised readers that Sunday morning was a good time to "gather the home circle around [the barbecue] and have brunch...." Images often represented barbecued meals as "family time." A cartoon which accompanied an article on building your own barbecue depicted a father (in chef's hat) standing beside his recent creation while wife and child stood by smiling admiringly.⁹ If the new fatherhood was representative of an ideal masculinity, then the barbecue was representative of an ideal paternal leisure pursuit.

Just as fathers were seen to be central to family life in the 1950s, so, too, were they seen to be central to the family barbecue. Virtually all representations of barbecues in advertisements and magazines portrayed men as doing the actual

⁸See, Robert Griswold, Fatherhood in America: A History (New York: Basic Books, 1993). While Griswold has traced changes in male parenting brought on by ideas of the new fatherhood to the 1920s, the postwar period, with its growing affluence and emphasis on family life saw the spread of these ideas more fully. See, chapter 2.

⁹"Every Meal's a Picnic...With a barbecue!" Canadian Homes and Gardens May 1949; "The Barbecue Anyone Can Build," Canadian Homes and Gardens May 1949.

barbecuing. Women and children were usually present in the barbecue ritual, but they were more often represented as accessories to the main event, which was the grilling of meat. An advertisement for a barbecue in Eaton's Spring-Summer catalogue explicitly made the connection between masculinity and barbecuing, boasting that one particular barbecue did "a man-sized job of outdoor cooking."¹⁰ Contrary to the ideals expressed in the breadwinner-homemaker family, men took the lead role in at least one form of cookery.

The reversal of normative gender roles brought on by barbecuing did not go unnoticed. Words like "weird" and "odd" were used to describe men's role in this form of domestic labour. The breadwinner-homemaker family prescribed very specific sex-roles. While men could "help out" with some household chores, their position was typically represented as secondary.¹¹ However, this was not the case with barbecuing. At a barbecue, men took a central role in preparing the main dish for the family's or guests' dinner. Men barbecuing were not just "helping out" as they were in doing the dishes or in picking something up on their way home from work. In a period

¹⁰"Aids to Outdoor Fun" Eaton's Spring/Summer Catalogue, 1954, 548.

¹¹On labelling men's domestic labour as "help", see Joy Parr, The Gender of Breadwinners: Women, Men, and Change in Two Industrial Towns, 1880-1950 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 191. See also, Miriam A. Glucksmann, "Some Do, Some Don't (But in Fact They All Do Really); Some Will, Some Won't; Some Have, Some Haven't: Women, Men, Work, and Washing Machines in Inter-War Britain," Gender and History 7:2 (1995): 275-294.

in which deviant gender behaviour was sometimes harshly treated, the backyard barbecue seemed to fly dangerously in the face of normative ideals.

Making the Barbecue Masculine

With its potentially effeminate status, the barbecue had much in common with the new fatherhood. Representations which made the barbecue masculine, then, were similar to those which buttressed the masculinity of the new fatherhood. One form this took was an emphasis on the barbecue as a special event. An advertisement in a Canadian Tire catalogue announced that it was "Bar-B-Q Time!" This particular "time" was not normal time. Part of the reason for the distinctiveness of "Bar-B-Q time" was its irregularity. A Simpson's advertisement in the Halifax Chronicle-Herald remarked that the barbecue and barbecue appliances advertised were "for his outdoor cooking sprees." Such a comment implied that barbecues were not daily events. In fact, the weekly planner of a cookbook from the period scheduled only two barbecued meals in the whole summer. The barbecue was also represented as perfect for entertaining: again, not an everyday occurrence.¹² As an event, the

¹² [Barbecue ads] Canadian Tire Spring and Summer Catalogue, 1960, 104; [Simpson's advertisement] Chronicle-Herald [Halifax] 14 Jun 1958; Beverly Pepper, Glamour Magazine's New After Five Cookbook (New York: Doubleday, 1963 [first published 1952]).

barbecue was associated with difference and specialness in a way which made the potentially dangerous sex-role reversal at its centre seem less out of the ordinary.

This cause was furthered by the assumption that at events, and at barbecues in particular, normal rules did not apply. A barbecue was seen as an informal occasion. Even guests were sometimes asked to cook their own meals, to the chagrin of Canadian Home and Gardens' food columnist Frederick Manning. If your host did not cook at a barbecue party, Manning complained, "your hostess is apt to be one of those persons who gaily announces...that everyone will now cook his or her own meal!" A barbecue meant a change in more than just the sex of the cook. To eat a meal "picnic style" was to include "all the elements of informality plus a change of atmosphere and even a different type of menu."¹³ Change, then, was identified as a legitimate part of the backyard barbecue.

Another aspect of barbecue culture which set it apart was its association with "fun." The new fathers who were their children's "pals" could demonstrate this relationship by having a "fun" barbecue. Advertisements of barbecues and accessories told readers to "Enjoy Outdoor Fun" and that it was "fun to cook and eat on the patio!" Of course, one would not expect advertisers (who wished to sell products) to focus

¹³Frederick Manning, "Summer Eating and Some..."; "Let's Have a Picnic... and make it a success," Chronicle-Herald [Halifax] 18 Jun 1954.

on negativity. But, the link between barbecuing and fun was also explicit in other kinds of representations. Cookbooks described outdoor cooking as a "delight" and focused on the "enjoyment" of the whole experience.¹⁴ Barbecuing posed a significant contrast with the burdensome responsibilities of breadwinning. Unlike women of the period, for whom cooking was work, and supposedly fulfilling, men barbecuing were at play and having "fun."¹⁵

The barbecue was supposedly fun for men, in part because it was constructed as something which was easy. Not only was it not a regular occurrence, but many of the secondary tasks usually associated with cooking a meal, such as washing dishes, were not seen as part of barbecuing. Food could be cooked right on the grill and, as one advertisement boasted, "no pans [were] needed." The Canadian Cook Book suggested using aluminum foil for cooking : "often foods can be served right in the foil after cooking; it can be disposed of after use and thus eliminate dishwashing." Even if there were dishes, the attitude toward doing them was lackadaisical. A cartoon used humour to distance men from these tasks, showing a man in chef's hat and apron spraying water from a hose onto

¹⁴ [Barbecue advertisement] Canadian Tire Spring and Summer Catalogue, 1960, 104; Canadian Cook Book, "Outdoor Meals."

¹⁵For a discussion on expectations of women gaining fulfilment from homemaking, see, Susan M. Bland, "Henrietta the Homemaker and 'Rosie the Riveter': Images of Women in Advertising in Maclean's Magazine, 1939-1950."

dishes piled up in a children's plastic pool.¹⁶ Without these other tasks, barbecuing was "convenient" and "easy" and altogether different from the work of homemaking or breadwinning.

Apart from its link to the new fatherhood, the barbecue was also associated with what were considered "traditional" forms of masculinity.¹⁷ The fact that the barbecue was located outside the home in the outdoors (even if it was just in the backyard) was one link to a perceived rustic masculinity. Remarking on the proclivity of men to cook at barbecues, Thomas Walsh speculated in Maclean's that,

"One theory for the increasing number of male cooks is simply that barbecuing is done outdoors, which is man's natural domain. It's the same inherited impulse that makes him take over at a corn roast or wiener roast."¹⁸

The barbecue occupied a different space from the stove and kitchen table. Whether it took place on the patio, in the country, or on the lawn in the backyard, a barbecue was outdoors and removed from the home.¹⁹ Representations of barbecuing were explicit that this was "outdoor cooking"

¹⁶[Barbecue Advertisement] Canadian Tire Spring and Summer, 1956, 104; Canadian Cook Book, "Outdoor Meals"; Walsh, "How to Cook Without a Stove."

¹⁷One significant exception was an advertisement for a small portable barbecue called "Bar-B-Cutie".

¹⁸Walsh, "How to Cook Without a Stove."

¹⁹For a discussion of the importance of physical space in representing gender difference, see, Linda Kerber, "Separate Spheres, Female Worlds, Woman's Place: The Rhetoric of Women's History," Journal of American History 75:1 (1988).

despite its relatively domestic setting. This rustic designation set the barbecue apart from the allegedly feminine cooking inside the home.

Also setting barbecuing apart from other forms of cookery were its imaginary ancient roots. Reflections on the origins of the barbecue relied upon historical clichés. For example, the Canadian Cook Book claimed that "For this very popular form of cookery [barbecuing], we must give credit to the cave man." Then the culinary expert turned historian went on to find other examples of barbecuing in history: "Some of the most efficient barbecues can still be seen in the remains of medieval castles where great spits held suckling pigs, fowl, and all forms of succulent meats over coals of enormous hearths." Others left the western tradition to trace the origins of select types of barbecue food. The shishkebab was said to be "...a Turkish term for roasting food over a fire on the point of a sword..."²⁰ While these may not have been serious attempts to historicize the barbecue, the repeated attempts to give it an ancient lineage, in terms redolent of muscular and military work, helped to legitimate the sex-role reversal in who did the cooking.

Although not all would have traced the barbecue back to the caveman, representations did associate it with an old-

²⁰Canadian Cook Book, 193; Walsh, "How to Cook Without a Stove." See also, Playboy food critic Thomas Mario's thoughts on the origins of the shishkebab, "Food on a Sword," Playboy 3:8 (1956).

fashioned masculinity. However, it was a 1950s version of "old-fashioned." After all, modernism reshaped fashion and home-decorating in the fifteen years after WWII. More functional designs, which made use of synthetic materials and flashy, non-traditional colours were stylish.²¹ The barbecue image, with its rustic connotations, was remade in the period as a blend of the modern and the traditional. While most barbecues came in black with brown wooden trimmings, the more adventurous could opt for multi-coloured barbecues of blue, red, or coral.²² The writing of Playboy food critic Thomas Mario was a blend of the admiration and disgust with the barbecues rustic image. In his article on barbecue cooking, "How to Play with Fire," he began by debunking part of the traditionalism associated with cooking over fire:

A man-about-town going on an out-door picnic is not the old-fashioned type whose idea of fun is to build a primitive trench fire in the Andes or to construct a mud reflector for a rough stone barbecue on a mountainside.

However, his next comments emphasized simplicity and traditionalism. According to Mario, this same "man-about town,"

wants his beef steaks cut from the best blue ribbon beef, unmasked with pretentious sauces or phony garnishes. Fun should be fun and should be easy.²³

²¹Owram, Born at the Right Time, 77-79.

²²[Barbecue Advertisement] Sears Catalogue Summer 1953, 35-36.

²³Thomas Mario, "How to Play With Fire," Playboy 1:8 (1954).

The rusticity of the barbecue was, like representations of the new fatherhood, imbued with modern elements while still maintaining an emphasis on what was seen as traditionally masculine.

However, despite its truncated ruggedness, the distinction between the relatively old-fashioned barbecue and the modern, electric stove was clear.²⁴ It was only in the postwar period that ownership of electric stoves began to rise significantly. By 1951, the number of households in Halifax owning electric stoves was almost the same as those using wood or coal burning stoves.²⁵ So at the same time that the electric stove was remodelling kitchens, cooking over fire was being moved to the backyard.²⁶ The different advertising for barbecues and stoves was a process in gendering the household tasks associated with each. The electric stove was

²⁴For a study of the gendered aspects of manufacturing, selling, and buying stoves, see Joy Parr, "Shopping for a Good Stove: A Parable About Gender, Design, and the Market," in Joy Parr ed, A Diversity of Women: Ontario, 1945-1980 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), 75-97.

²⁵Unfortunately the 1941 and 1961 censuses do not provide information on home cooking appliances so the 1951 information is all that there is to go by. In 1951, 7,330 households in Halifax had electric range stoves compared to 7,030 households with wood or coal stoves. 2,890 used gas ranges while 12,215 had oil stoves. Statistics from Table 39-1 "Occupied dwellings by tenure showing lighting, cooking, and refrigeration facilities, for census metropolitan areas, 1951," Government of Canada, Census, 1951 (Dominion Bureau of Statistics, 1951).

²⁶The coexistence of the barbecue fad and coal and wood burning stoves is interesting given that much was made of the rusticity of barbecue cooking over fire.

represented as a modern appliance. It was meant to fit into a stylish home. One stove was said to have a "smart straight-line design for up-to-date appearance in the home." Colours were also important and stoves were made to complement "any kitchen colour scheme."²⁷ While the option of different colours was sometimes present in advertisements for barbecues, the main focus was on the back-to-nature aspect of outdoor cooking. The meaning associated with the barbecue's actual physical cooking surface, then, contrasted with that of the homemakers assigned equipment in the kitchen.

Appeals to a masculine old-fashioned roughness did not stop at the barbecue, but were also incorporated within descriptions of barbecuing utensils. Typically, they were not referred to as utensils, but instead were called "tools."²⁸ The man who barbecued, then, had the same language applied to his craft as did the man who fixed up his home.²⁹ A Canadian Home and Gardens article on building your own barbecue came

²⁷[Advertisement for stoves from Halifax Furnishing Co.] Chronicle-Herald [Halifax] 19 Jun 1959; [Advertisement for Enterprise Electronic Range] Chronicle-Herald [Halifax] 13 Jun 1958.

²⁸See, for example, Sears Summer Catalogue 1953, 36; Sears Spring and Summer Catalogue, 1959, 448. An advertisement in the Sears Spring and Summer Catalogue, 1958, which referred to kitchen utensils as "tools", suggests that this was not an entirely foreign term for food preparation utensils. But this seems to have been an exception for kitchen utensils whereas it was quite common for advertisements to refer to barbecue utensils in this manner.

²⁹Home repairs was a form of domestic labour which was often designated as masculine in popular representations. See, chapter 2.

with an advertisement for :

five members of a gadget set, namely large fork, soup ladle, flapjack-flipper, vegetable spoon for odd jobs...The last item is a real old-fashioned butcher knife for carving steaks, etc.³⁰

This one advertisement carried with it a number of gendered assumptions. First, it was labelled a "gadget set" despite the fact that all of its components were seemingly normal kitchen items. But calling these items "gadgets" in the context of barbecuing distanced them from their normal household uses. As well, the butcher knife was "old-fashioned" to fit in with the image of rusticity. The inclusion of this language with a gendering orientation in such short advertisements points to the strength of the discursive link between the barbecue and normative masculinity.

Images of strength and toughness were also included in representations of barbecues. Many advertisements used the same or similar descriptive language: portable barbecues were said to be made of "heavy steel," "sturdy steel," or "heavy-gauge steel."³¹ An advertisement from the Eaton's 1954 Spring/Summer catalogue provided the flavour of the typical ad :

Top...is made of heavy-gauge aluminum to be completely rust proof. Firebox is a durable

³⁰"The Barbecue Anyone can Build," Canadian Homes and Gardens May 1949.

³¹See, for example, Eaton's Summer Catalogue 1959, 187; Sears Summer Catalogue 1953, 35-36.

stainless steel. Grill, spit and supporting uprights are steel finished in gleaming nickel plate. Legs and wheels are of braced steel in baked-on enamel finish with cross braces."³²

This was a sturdy contraption which would hold up under extreme conditions. The reiteration of this theme of strength in advertisement after advertisement was another step in making the barbecue fit with normative masculine discourses.

These same advertisements also focused on another aspect of 1950s masculinity, mechanical ability. The family car, and the responsibility for its minor repairs and upkeep, had been relegated in popular discourse to fathers.³³ Barbecues were also shown to be mechanical contraptions in need of a knowledgeable user. Advertisements used deliberately mechanical terms. The "extra heavy grid" on one barbecue was said to "adjust for heat control by raising and lowering [a] crank mechanism." Another advertisement stated that "crank at front raises, lowers revolving grill."³⁴ The electric rotisserie was another feature which could be added to the barbecue which gave it a mechanical tinge. These were not household terms. Such features were more likely to be associated with an industrial setting. Unlike the easy,

³²[Barbecue Advertisements] Eaton's Spring/Summer Catalogue, 1954, 548.

³³Two of the ways this link was made were : many advertisements for Father's Day suggested car maintenance equipment as a suitable gift, and; images of family outings virtually always showed the man driving the car.

³⁴[Barbecue Advertisements] Eaton's Summer Catalogue, 1959, 187; Eaton's Summer Catalogue, 1960, 10-11.

modern dials on the electric stove, the mechanical nature of the barbecue set it that much further apart from potentially subversive notions of domesticity.

Also unlike other appliances in the domestic setting, the barbecue could be dangerous. The Canadian Cook Book included a number of precautions about barbecue use in its section on "Outdoor Meals." The barbecue was to be kept away from the house and a bucket of sand was to be kept nearby to deal with flare-ups. Signifying that this was a job not just for males but for grown men, children were to be kept away from the barbecue.³⁵ Proper attire was also called for. Barbecuers were advised to "Dress for the job. Wear a large, heavy, non-frilly apron and thick oven mitts."³⁶ All of these terms; "large," "heavy," "thick," and "non-frilly" drew upon contemporary assumptions about masculinity. While barbecuing could be dangerous, other forms of cookery were also dangerous, such as deep fat frying and pressure cooking.³⁷ And domestic woodstoves were known as a threat to children. However, it was the barbecue which was said to require a

³⁵Others have pointed out the importance of age as a signifier of power in constructions of masculinity. See, Steven Penfold, "'Have You No Manhood in You?': Gender and Class in the Cape Breton Coal Towns, 1920-1926," Acadiensis XXIII (Spring 1994), 24; R.W. Connell, Masculinities (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995).

³⁶Canadian Cook Book, "Outdoor Meals."

³⁷A section on pressure cooking did list precautionary measures to avoid having the lid blow off, but the section was much smaller than that for barbecuing and did not call for proper dress.

special dress which protected the cook from this dangerous (read masculine) form of cookery.

Much of the barbecue's danger came from its association with fire. This was another aspect of barbecuing which was linked to a supposed rugged, old-fashioned masculinity. Since the early decades of the twentieth century, groups like the Boy Scouts had emphasized in their training for normative masculinity such outdoors skills as building a proper fire.³⁸ Representations of barbecuing appropriated the perceived link between masculinity and fire. Instead of saying Dad was responsible for the barbecue, an article in the Halifax Chronicle-Herald noted that "Dad [was] responsible for the fire."³⁹ The barbecue fad was also contemporaneous with such groups as the Nova Scotia Guides. Its annual meeting at Lake William was filmed in 1957 by the CBC.⁴⁰ Advertisements from earlier years billed the meet as "the most outstanding sports event in Nova Scotia."⁴¹ Coverage of the event showed men

³⁸See Ross Bragg, "The Boy Scout Movement in Canada: Defining Constructs of Masculinity for the Twentieth-Century," (MA Thesis, History Department, Dalhousie University, 1994).

³⁹"Let's Have a Picnic...and Make it a Success," Chronicle-Herald [Halifax] 18 Jun 1954.

⁴⁰Public Archives of Nova Scotia [PANS], Fb 1141-1144, Nova Scotia Guides Meet, Sound and Moving Image Division, CBC Collection, 1957.

⁴¹Established in 1909, the group held its annual meeting at a variety of lakes around Nova Scotia. According to promotional pamphlets, it was best known in the years it was held at Lake William. PANS, V/F vol. 375 #4, Come to the Guides Meet at Lake William, [pamphlet] 1938.

taking part in a number of outdoors competitions including log rolling, canoe-tipping, shooting and log sawing races.⁴² Linking these competitions to ideal masculinity, an advertisement claimed that "those competing are real men of the trail...and have proved themselves almost super-men."⁴³ Included as a test of manhood was kettle-boiling, judged by how quickly a group of men could boil a pot of water given a few logs and a hatchet. Representations of the barbecue used the visible symbol of fire and its association with a rugged masculinity to further imbue the barbecue with masculine meaning.

The need to prepare a good fire was often stressed for the proper preparation of meat. Whether it was steaks or hamburgers, most representations of barbecuing showed meat to be the primary food served. While vegetables were served at barbecues, they were secondary. According to the Canadian Cook Book,

Usually when a complete meal is being served outdoors, it is the meat course that is barbecued, perhaps with one or more vegetables. When serving a crowd, unless the barbecue is equipped with a spit, it is often impossible to accommodate more

⁴²In the film coverage, women were only shown to take part in the log rolling competition. This coverage and the promotional material from 1938 suggests that it was mainly men who competed. However, a 1989 pamphlet advertising the 60th anniversary of the event does note a "Laura Whymot, champion pistol shot." See PANS, V/F vol 491 #53, 60th Anniversary of the Lake Williams Guides Meet, 1989.

⁴³PANS, Come to the Guides Meet at Lake William, 1938.

than the meat over the fire box...⁴⁴

Vegetables were "perhaps" served, but only if there was room. The link between barbecues and meat was made more explicit in an advertisement from Canada Packers in the June 7 1955, Halifax Chronicle-Herald. Those who purchased a certain amount of canned meat products were to have received a free portable barbecue.⁴⁵ Such representations drew upon a perception of meat as a "manly" food to add masculine legitimacy to the barbecue.

Along with meat, drinking was another masculine cultural symbol linked to the barbecue. The drink of the middle-class man in the 1950s was the Martini, and cocktail hour (in representations if not in practice) was a masculine tradition.⁴⁶ When Thomas Walsh, in his Maclean's article on outdoor cooking, compared barbecue sauce to Martinis, he was making the barbecue masculine. He went on to say that

the simile is particularly apt in the case of one dedicated barbecue fan living in Oshawa, Ont - he's invented a barbecue sauce made from Martinis. 'You not only marinate the meat in it,' he says, 'you also marinate yourself in it.'

Such representations made barbecues more like a men's party than a family dinner. This link between drinking and barbecuing was also made by James Bannerman in an article in

⁴⁴Canadian Cook Book, section on "Outdoor Meals."

⁴⁵[Canada Packers Advertisement] Chronicle-Herald [Halifax] 7 June 1955.

⁴⁶See Ehrenrich, The Hearts of Men.

Canadian Home and Gardens.⁴⁷ Bannerman's first experience with barbecuing had been in Britain when he had been so drunk that he woke up one evening in Stratford after having gone out drinking the night before in London. He recounted that, being hungry, he had decided to try some of the oxen roasted by the locals but had abhorred it. Only years later, according to his personal legend, did he decide to do his own barbecuing. But his, and others', link between masculine social drinking and the barbecue placed this form of cookery in an acceptable masculine discourse.

The gendering purpose behind barbecue discourses can be seen in the directly contradictory associations made between barbecuing and skill. Barbecuing was portrayed as the task of both simpletons and chefs. Historians have shown that gender is an important element in social constructions of skill.⁴⁸ The barbecue was no exception. In virtually all visual representations of barbecuing, men were depicted wearing a chef's hat, suggesting that the man who barbecued shared more in common with chefs of *haute cuisine* than with their homemaker spouses. Advertisements often used language such as "chef," "expert," or "genius" to describe those men who

⁴⁷James Bannerman, "Me and My Barbecue!: Adventures in barbecuing, past and present - a harrowing tale with a happy ending," Canadian Homes and Gardens May 1949.

⁴⁸See Shirley Tillotson, "'We May All Soon Be First Class Men': Gender and Skill in Canada's Early Twentieth-Century Urban Telegraph Industry," in Parr and Rosenfeld, eds. Gender and History in Canada, 227-253.

barbecued.⁴⁹ When Maclean's ran an article on outdoor eating, the article went to great lengths to discuss the different theories of barbecuing, pointing out debate between two schools, "those who believe that a steak should be cooked in a leisurely manner over a coolish fire, and those who think it should be cooked fast, rare and low over the coals or even in the coals."⁵⁰ As with other labour performed by men, the barbecue was associated with high levels of skill which was more a result of gender identifications than the actual level of skill required.

But the sex-role reversal at the heart of barbecuing made this designation of skill problematic. Despite the heavy discursive masculinization of the barbecue, the comparison to cooking in the kitchen was never far from the surface. As with the new fatherhood, barbecue discourses included contradictory claims about men's abilities. Just as the new fathers were sometimes portrayed as "dopey dads" in their role as parents, buffoonery was also associated with men and barbecuing. Labels of skill were often made jokingly. The barbecue costume of chef's hat and apron was just as likely to be ironic as it was a signifier of skill. Some claimed that it was the surroundings - the outdoors - which made the food

⁴⁹See, for example, [barbecue advertisement] Canadian Tire Spring and Summer Catalogue 1959, 104; [Simpson's advertisement] Chronicle-Herald [Halifax] 15 Jun 1956; [barbecue advertisement] Chronicle-Herald [Halifax] 19 Jun 1959.

⁵⁰Walsh, "How to Cook Without a Stove."

taste so good. An article in Canadian Homes and Gardens noted that "even the plainest dish spiced by fresh air and summer fragrance rates more ohs and ahs than *poulet á la campagne?* eaten indoors."⁵¹ Given these contradictory skill designations, was the male barbecuer, then, a chef or a short-order cook?

At least in popular representations of the barbecue, he was both. The exploits of James Bannerman retold in an article in Canadian Home and Gardens demonstrate how the two skill designations could coexist. Resorting to self-deprecating humour, Bannerman admitted to readers that building a barbecue and cooking a meal on it,

sounds easy and I don't doubt it would be to a person of normal intelligence. It so happens, however, that I am not a person of normal intelligence and for a while it looked as if I was never going to get anything more out of my barbecue than the odd puff of pallid smoke.⁵²

Such a blatant admission of incompetence contradicted other images of barbecuing as skilled labour. Yet, the effect of the two representations was the same. Bannerman did not feel so stupid when his barbecuing succeeded. Instead, the barbecue became a source of male pride; a means to show off to his wife and children. After a difficult time building his barbecue and then an initial failure at barbecue cooking, his

⁵¹"Every Meal's a Picnic..." Canadian Homes and Gardens May 1949.

⁵²See, Bannerman, "Me and My Barbecue..." Canadian Homes and Gardens May 1949.

second effort was much more to his liking. His wife's response to his barbecuing efforts boosted his ego immensely :

When she got her teeth into the first mouthful, my wife looked across at me with an expression I've seldom seen in her eyes since the day before we were married. I smirked. I had a right to smirk. It was sheer triumph.

Bannerman's initial failure had been a result of his ignorance of barbecuing and cooking. This was something which was not only acceptable but expected. After all, cooking was not his job, but just an amusement. In the latter case, Bannerman's success was, like the achievement of breadwinning, linked to manly pride and success. Barbecuing was not work, but when the situation was right (and wife and children were depending on supper) fathers were shown to accomplish their goals. The talent needed for barbecuing, then, was defined to fit normative gender ideals.

The extent of the discursive process by which the barbecue was made masculine attests to the anxiety caused by such exceptions to gender norms. One of the ways societal anxiety expressed itself was through humour. Humour theorists and historians have noted the tendency of humour to act as a means of social control.⁵³ Writing on marriage humour from 1900 to 1939, historian James Snell has argued that humour deals with the incongruity between the ideal and reality. By

⁵³See James Snell, "Marriage Humour and its Social Functions, 1900-1939," Atlantis 11:2 (1986): 70-85.

poking fun at contradictions between the ideal and the reality, Snell argues, the ideal is buttressed. In this case, barbecue comedy was a means by which the sex-role reversal in who did the cooking could be acknowledged without challenging the ideal. By laughing at the contradiction, the inadequacy of what was considered "normal" gender behaviour to fully reflect all of men's and women's behaviour was glossed over.

Barbecue humour took a variety of forms. The potential effeminacy of men cooking on the barbecue was met head on. The universal depiction of men in apron and chef's hat was itself a source of joking. Funny designs and sayings patched on to these materials helped to give it this designation. One quotation from an apron which read, "Call me Cookie," openly flirted with effeminacy.⁵⁴ However, this was a type of humour which relied upon "exposure" to draw forth laughter. By exposing sensitive - but well known - subjects, such humour released the tension and so dealt with the fears about, though not with the limits of, gender norms. An advertisement in Sear's 1959 summer catalogue for barbecue aprons with designs of bulls and other western symbols came with the caption, "Apron. Humorous."⁵⁵ The only apparent sign of humour was in

⁵⁴Advertisement is described in Walsh, "How to Cook Without a Stove."

⁵⁵[barbecue accessories advertisement] Sears Summer Catalogue, 1959, 190. The apron was associated with an illegitimate, effeminate masculinity. In Rebel Without a Cause (1955), James Dean's angst toward his father's effeminacy and ineffectiveness as a parent gels in a scene in which the father walks into his son's room wearing an apron.

the masculine symbols on an allegedly feminine form of dress, the apron. Making the barbecue funny robbed it of its potential subversiveness.

Conclusion

At its simplest, to barbecue a meal was to cook a meal. Food was prepared and put upon a heat source until it was done and then it was served. The breadwinner-homemaker family ideal prescribed that women do this virtually every day. Such behaviour was said to come to women "naturally" and to be for them a source of "fulfilment." The only difference for barbecuing was that a man prepared the meal and not a woman. However, this made all the difference.

The fact that men were responsible for cooking the family's meal was a signal of the domesticity of the new fatherhood. However, the sex-role reversal at the heart of barbecuing was a source of anxiety and concern in a society which defined a strict gender segregation of labour. As such, it was explained and massaged through discourses attempting to fit this abnormality into what was considered normal. A broad range of masculine cultural symbols - some of which were contradictory - were appealed to in this process. By functioning in this manner, gender discourse did not allow the

For a discussion of this aspect of the movie, see Owram, Born at the Right Time, 256; Griswold, Fatherhood in America, 185-186.

performance of housework by men to diminish basic assumptions of gender difference. Men may have done some cooking but the connections drawn between barbecuing and collectively recognized symbols of masculinity made this act of domesticity men's work.

Chapter 4 : "Expressing What Cannot Be Said: Red Cross Homemakers and the Crisis of Men's Domesticity"

Those regulating discourses on men's domesticity sometimes dealt with situations potentially more volatile than men's leisure barbecuing. Family failure due to the illness or death of a mother was one such situation which was considered potentially dangerous during the 1940s and 1950s. The removal of a mother from a home presented the possibility that men might perform a wide array of household tasks normally assumed to be done by housewives. Discourses regulating such situations, then, dealt with not just one "weird" incident (as with the barbecue) but with the possibility of a temporary breakdown of the breadwinner-homemaker family. Such situations were not seen to be routine but emergencies. What was the response of those in charge of regulating men's domesticity when the basic tenets of the breadwinner-homemaker family underwent such strain?

A study of the Red Cross Homemaker Service (hereafter HMS) in Halifax may seem like an odd place to analyze fathers' domestic role. After all, the Homemaker was sent into a home to take "the place of the mother" when she was ill.¹ The presence of a Homemaker during a mothers' illness was to maintain the breadwinner/homemaker dichotomy and prevent fathers from changing dirty diapers or, worse still, shopping

¹Public Archives of Nova Scotia (PANS) MG20, vol. 323, "Commissioners' Report," Annual Report -Red Cross, Nova Scotia Division, 1953, 5 (hereafter cited as AR, [year]).

for groceries. However, tracing the development of the Red Cross HMS in Halifax from 1945-1957 provides insight into the social construction of the father's role as well as the mother's. In the 1940s and 1950s, fatherhood was often imagined in a domestic setting. The mere existence of an institution meant to preserve the breadwinner-homemaker relationship was one way in which this domesticity was limited. As a social welfare service, the HMS had a power over their clients which other purveyors of gender ideals - advertisers, magazine writers, and film directors - did not share. The manner in which Red Cross officials explained (or failed to explain) fathers' domestic role shows the troubles those responsible for articulating gender "norms" had in dealing with exceptions and inconsistencies.

The Red Cross Homemaker Service

During the war the Red Cross in Nova Scotia had grown to unprecedented levels. In 1939, 9% of Nova Scotia's population was affiliated with the Red Cross either through its adult programs or through the Junior Red Cross. By 1945, participation had increased to include 28% of the population.² Red Cross officials were aware of the war's role in increasing involvement and the potential for a collapse after 1945. The

²PANS MG20, vol. 323, "The Story of the Red Cross," in AR, 1946, 106.

postwar goal then was to maintain momentum. For Nova Scotia Division President E.L. MacDonald this meant adopting a wartime mentality: "when suffering, starvation, racial discrimination and death from the ravages of disease are rampant in the world the RED CROSS IS AT WAR." New areas of involvement were needed to catch the attention of Nova Scotians. The Homemaker Service, Outpost Hospitals, and Swimming and Water Safety were the new programs established to maintain this progress.³

The establishment of the Nova Scotia HMS was part of a wider process. The impetus to develop a Nova Scotian Homemaker Service came from a National Nutritional Committee of the Red Cross. Although new to Nova Scotia, Homemaker Services were already established in other areas of Canada. When Marjorie Bell was hired to act as director of the Halifax Homemaker Service she looked to programs in Toronto and Hamilton as models upon which to build. The programs which were developed in Halifax, Amherst and Sydney were not alone in the Maritimes. Other cities, including St. John and Charlottetown, developed Homemaker Services as well.⁴ The

³PANS MG20, vol. 323, "Report of Divisional President," AR, 1945, 10.

⁴PANS MG20, vol. 323, "Home Services Report," AR, 1945, 38; "Home Services Report," AR, 1947, 41. Services were also established in Edmonton and Cornwall (Ontario), see, Mrs. Allan Lobsinger, "Partners in Planning," Canadian Welfare, 15 July 1947, 31-32; "Across Canada," Canadian Welfare, 15 Jan 1948, 36.

Year	Red Cross Homemaker (HM) Service, 1946-1957				
	Families Serviced	Children Serviced	Days of Service	FT* HM's	PT** HM's
1946	37	122	502½	-	-
1947	116	-	-	8	3
1948	181	418	1,558	-	-
1949	186	439	2,014	5	4
1950	224	580	1,721½	4	5
1951	238	876	1,848	3	5
1952	225	565	1,141½	3	(3-5)
1953	268	790	1,496	5	(3-5)
1954	(information not available)		not	available)	
1955	-	-	-	5	(3-5)
1956	168	521	1,497½	5	3
1957	157	519	1,000½	1	6

* full time ** part time

Source: PANS MG20, vol. 323, Red Cross, Nova Scotia Division Annual Report, 1946-1958.

desire for the program, then, was a response both to local initiatives and to national and international trends.⁵

At the local level, Red Cross officials saw the potential for the HMS in Halifax to be integrated with other municipal welfare programs. According to the Red Cross, the HMS filled "a long felt community need."⁶ Applicants for the HMS were

⁵Evidence of international trends can be seen in the survival of documents relating to U.S. Homemaker Services kept along with the records of the Nova Scotia HMS. One U.S. study found along with other HMS materials outlined the general policies of such services throughout North America. It claimed that there were fifty seven Homemaker Services in the U.S. and five in Canada, PANS MG 20, vol. 408, 5.20, Practices in Homemaker Service (United States Federal Security Agency, Social Security Administration - Children's Bureau, 1951).

⁶PANS MG20, vol. 1366, 2, Policy Book (Red Cross, Nova Scotia Division), 3.

expected to rely first on kin in emergencies. The Red Cross felt that Halifax, as a port city, was home to many immigrants and service families (without relatives nearby) who could potentially need assistance in times of crisis. Although the HMS was a relatively small welfare service, it was well established in the community with linkages to the local Welfare Council.⁷ The longtime chair of the Red Cross Home Services Committee was James Lovett, Executive Secretary of the Halifax Welfare Council in the mid 1950s. Mary MacLeod was also a member of the Home Services committee in addition to her position as Executive Secretary of the Family Services Bureau of the Halifax Welfare Council. The organization of the service also relied on doctors, social workers and nurses for referrals, advertisement and advice. The acceptance of the HMS in Halifax was such that, in 1951, when the Red Cross reduced the HMS' budget, the municipality provided \$2,000 for continuation of the service. This grant became an established source of funding and, along with the benefits gained from other local connections, was essential in the HMS' struggle to maintain solvency and viability as a service provider.⁸

Part of the reason for the HMS's financial difficulties

⁷Some documents regarding the HMS were found in Halifax Welfare Council materials at PANS.

⁸PANS MG20, vol.323, "Home Services Report," AR, 1951,1; MG20, vol. 408, "Memo to Committee on Homemaker Services, Canadian Welfare Council from Welfare Council of Halifax, Feb. 27, 1957"; MG20, vol 1366, 2, Policy Book, section 11, 3; "Home Services Report," AR, 1951,41.

was its charitable role. Payment for services was charged on a sliding scale depending on the recipient's income. The length of the illness, size of family, and cost of rent were other measures used to modify any charges levied. In order to achieve equity, the HMS studied wage rates and the cost of living (especially food costs). For many families, services were provided free of charge. Aware of the possible association of social stigma with reception of its services, the HMS claimed that their Homemakers went just as happily to poorer homes as they did to wealthier homes. In 1956 James Lovett happily boasted that \$2,500 in free services were given out that year. Given that the total HMS budget for 1956 was \$6,520, this represented a significant amount.⁹

The generosity of HMS officials should not be confused with open-mindedness. The HMS was motivated by a very strict sense of what family life should be. Part of the Homemaker's responsibility was to teach mothers (almost always from "poor" families) better nutritional habits. According to Red Cross officials, many families' "food habits [were] so bad nothing but ill health could result."¹⁰ Moreover, if families listened to the Homemaker, not only would better health result, but also "a much improved family relationship."

⁹PANS MG20, vol. 408, Homemaker Services (Red Cross, Nova Scotia Division, pamphlet), 5; MG20, vol. 323, "Home Services Report," AR, 1946, 46; Red Cross News, [Nova Scotia] Jan-Feb 1956, 5; "Home Services Report," AR, 1952, 1.

¹⁰PANS MG20, vol.323, "Home Services Report," AR, 1947, 42.

Fathers were not exempt from this moralizing tone. When the death of the mother left an employed father with four children, the Homemaker stepped in. According to the HMS, "the father's plan for the disposition of the children was not, in the opinion of the Homemaker, a happy one." Although the "father's plan" is never specified, the Homemaker convinced him that an alternate plan would better suit all involved and so the children were sent off to their new homes separately.¹¹ While crucial details are only hinted at, the suggestion is that, without a full-time homemaker, the family was no longer viable.¹² However, the decision about viability was not the father's but the Homemaker's. Convinced of the appropriateness of their own judgement, Homemakers not only filled in for the ill mother, but also made recommendations and decisions to shape the families they "served."

This preference for appropriate values also applied to the selection of Homemakers. The ideal Homemaker was a woman of "good character" who was middle aged (35 - 45) with experience in domestic labour and child care. However, Homemakers talent for housework was not simply natural. Each Homemaker took a course in Home Nursing and attended staff

¹¹PANS MG20, vol. 323, "Home Services Report," AR, 1953, 2; "Home Services Report," AR, 1957, 1.

¹²Life Insurance advertisements made similar warnings that the death of a mother/homemaker could mean the break-up of the family. See, for example, Mutual Life Insurance Advertisement, Chronicle [Halifax] 19 Jun 1948.

meetings 1-2 times per month. Unlike fathers who "played" at child care or had "fun" with barbecuing, homemaking was a serious business. The "modern conditions" of family life in postwar Halifax required constant thinking to develop new ideas. Primary among the Homemaker's responsibilities was giving instructions on diet, cooking and buying. In the immediate postwar years, with worries of a possible economic fallout from the war, education in these matters was presented as an inflation fighting mechanism. By the late 1940s, however, the HMS had shifted its emphasis to stress the need for education to "influence housekeeping practices" among many of its clients. According to the HMS, instruction in shopping and food preparation was needed because some mothers "did not properly feed [their] children."¹³ This role fit in well with the link between consumerism and homemaking stressed by advertisers in the 1940s and 1950s. In Maclean's magazine after the war, 70% of advertisements related to women focused on the homemaker/consumer role.¹⁴ The HMS expected their Homemakers to be excellent consumers. In short, the Red Cross Homemaker was to be the typical Canadian mother *par excellence*.

¹³PANS MG20, vol. 1366, 2, Policy Book, section 11, 4, 8; MG20, vol. 408, Homemaker Service (Red Cross, Nova Scotia Division), 7; MG20, vol. 323, "Halifax Branch Report," AR, 1951, 21; "Home Services Report," AR, 1947, 42; "Home Services Report," AR, 1953, 2; "Home Services Report," AR, 1954, 1.

¹⁴Susan M. Bland, "Henrietta the Homemaker, and 'Rosie the Riveter': Images of Women in Advertising in Maclean's Magazine, 1939-1950," 607.

Discursive Construction of Gender Roles

The dominant prescriptive discourse surrounding families in the postwar years emphasised normalcy. According to Doug Owrarn, the period was marked by consensus politics and a general striving for stability after depression and war.¹⁵ Although the war had the potential to change gender roles, as Ruth Pierson has noted, the breadwinner-homemaker discourse was instead reinforced. Women, both in the military and in paid employment, were portrayed in a safe and recognizably feminine manner. Their new positions, as seen in film, advertising, and other media, did not change the basic dichotomy man-breadwinner/woman-homemaker.¹⁶ Expert opinion on parenting held that parents were to reinforce this dichotomy through their parenting techniques. Each parent was to be a proper sex-role model for their children of the same sex to ensure the development of normal and healthy personalities and thus a normal and healthy family and

¹⁵See Doug Owrarn, Born at the Right Time: A History of the Baby Boom Generation (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), chapt. 1; Elaine Tyler May, Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War (New York: Basic Books, 1988), introduction.

¹⁶Pierson, 'They're Still Women After All'. See also Yvonne Mathews-Klein, "How They Saw Us: Images of Women in National Film Board Films of the 1940s and 1950s," Atlantis, 4:2 (1979): 20-33; Bland, "Henrietta the Homemaker,"; Alison Prentice et al "The 'Bren Gun Girl' and the Housewife Heroine," in Smith and Douglas eds. Readings in Canadian History 4th ed. (Toronto: Harcourt Brace, 1994).

society.¹⁷

Social workers in this period emphasized their role in strengthening this type of family. Not only were social workers needed to feed and clothe the unfortunate, they were also needed to help families "adjust" to more normal patterns.¹⁸ The HMS was infused with this dominant gendered discourse focusing on normalcy. Homes which the HMS dealt with were "threatened" and in "crisis." The HMS literature is replete with calls "to strengthen the family," and "to keep the home running smoothly... and to permit the father to stay at work." Homemakers were to "maintain" gender roles by allowing fathers to "insure the paycheque" when the mother was ill. A family without a mother was in "crisis" and the homemaker was necessary to "bring order out of the confusion of illness."¹⁹ Both the tone and the content of these comments signalled the importance of the breadwinner-homemaker family for the HMS.

Within the Red Cross deviation from "normal" family life

¹⁷See, Robert Griswold, Fatherhood in America: A History (New York: Basic Books, 1993), esp. 206-210; Mona Gleason, "Disciplining Children, Disciplining Parents: The Nature and Meaning of Advice to Canadian Parents, 1945-1955," Histoire Sociale/Social History 29:57 (May 1997): 187-209.

¹⁸See, "Foundations for Tomorrow," Canadian Welfare, 1 March 1947, 1-2; H. Charles Tutte, "Are Private Social Service Organizations Obsolete?" Canadian Welfare, 1 March 1946, 24-26.

¹⁹PANS MG20, vol. 323, "Home Services Report," AR, 1948, 52; AR, 1951, 40; MG20, vol. 408, Homemaker Service (Red Cross, Nova Scotia Division), 6.

also took on health-related characteristics. The HMS fell under "Promotion of Health and Safety" in Red Cross guidelines.²⁰ This mandate directed the Red Cross to "stimulate and maintain interest in public health...to disseminate useful knowledge concerning health through demonstration, education, and otherwise, and to promote through widespread membership in the society a sense of responsibility for good health habits."²¹ When the HMS was introduced in 1946, the Red Cross Nutrition Committee, which initiated and had responsibility for this program, was renamed as the Home Services Committee. At the time, members of the committee felt that the new name "seem[ed] more appropriate."²² However, with the exception of the HMS, the Home Service Committee still dealt with such recognizably nutritional programs as distributing cod-liver oil and supplying lunches to school children. While nutrition was a concern of Red Cross Homemakers (who gave advice on such items as shopping, food preparation, and proper diet), the health analogy was carried further. The HMS wanted to insure "healthy" families. For the HMS, masculinity and femininity were tied to bodily sex differences. Deviant gender roles were therefore interpreted as a psychosexual pathology which

²⁰PANS MG20, vol. 323, "Commissioner's Report," AR, 1948.

²¹PANS MG20, vol. 323, "Report of the Commissioner," AR, 1945, 15.

²²PANS MG20, vol. 323, "Report of Commissioner," AR, 1945, 17.

needed preventative medical care. Adopting the military metaphor often used by medical experts, the HMS claimed to be "a major line of defense for the preservation of family life."²³ A family which did not fit the dominant prescriptive gender discourse of breadwinner-homemaker was not only abnormal, it was unhealthy.

The health framework adopted by the HMS arose not only from its Red Cross affiliation, but also out of the growth of social psychiatry in the postwar period. Social psychiatry stressed the role of "socioenvironmental" factors in the prevention of mental illness. Overall, psychiatry shifted its emphasis from mental hospitals to society at large; from chronic treatment to preventive measures.²⁴ This was accompanied by a blurring of professional boundaries in which clinical psychology, psychiatric social work, and psychiatric nursing developed.²⁵ Social work literature on the family adopted the scientific language of psychiatry. War and

²³PANS MG20, vol. 408, 5, Homemaker Service (Red Cross, Nova Scotia Division), 1. For further discussion of military metaphors and medicine, see, Jay Cassel, "Making Canada Safe for Sex: Government and the Problem of Sexually Transmitted Disease in the Twentieth Century," in C. David Naylor ed., Canadian Health Care and the State: A Century of Evolution (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992), 144.

²⁴See, Gerald N. Grob, From Asylum to Community: Mental Health Policy in Modern America (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 93-103.

²⁵See, for example, the notice of collaborative work between psychiatrists, psychologists and sociologists in, "Across Canada," Canadian Welfare, Dec 1, 1950, 36. See also Grob, From Asylum to Community, 93.

depression had disrupted family life and created "personality defects." It was therefore necessary to reinforce the family to maintain "emotionally sound individuals."²⁶ Being related to both nursing and social work, the HMS was in an ideal position to build on the growing popularity of social psychiatry in the postwar years.²⁷ Relying on the science of social psychiatry for justification, the HMS (like other social services) medicalized gender roles.

Fathers and Domestic Labour

The new father so commonly talked about in prescriptive psychological literature, was also present in the HMS's interpretation of fatherly roles. One purpose of the HMS was to keep families intact. In part, this took the form of a pro-family outlook. The natural home was believed to be a much better place for rearing children than a foster home. In this context, the relationship between fathers and children was key.²⁸ While breadwinning was still seen as the mainstay of a father's identity, he was also represented as a caring

²⁶Dora Wilensky, "War's Impact on Family Life," Canadian Welfare, 15 Oct., 1945, 9; "Conferences: First Maritime Conference on Social Work," Canadian Welfare, 1 Dec., 1947, 26.

²⁷See, Strong-Boag, "Home Dreams," 476-478.

²⁸PANS MG20, vol. 408, Homemaker Service (Red Cross, Nova Scotia Division), 2; MG20, vol. 408, Homemaker Service (US Dept. of Health, Education and Welfare - Social Security Administration, Children's Bureau, 1958), 5.

parent. The blend of these two roles can be seen in the self-congratulatory remarks by the HMS about how they helped one family at Christmas in 1951: "As well as knowing the children were well cared for, [the father] was especially grateful because he was enabled to give them a happy Christmas even though the mother had to remain in the hospital."²⁹ Although the family was damaged and "threatened" without the presence of a mother/homemaker, the HMS nonetheless appeared to have seen a role for the father in his children's development beyond merely breadwinning.

There were, however, limits on fatherly roles, limits which the HMS and exponents of the new fatherhood appeared adamant not to violate. Fathers were important to their child's development and this led some to advocate fathers spending greater amounts of time in the home. But the type of involvement was expected to follow proper sex-role characteristics. As Robert Griswold has argued, fatherhood took on increasing significance and importance in families during the 1950s, but the gender division of labour was not challenged.³⁰ Those who advocated a greater role for fathers in child rearing conveniently overlooked the dirtier and more laborious side of child care. According to popular discourses in the 1940s and 1950s, fathers were expected to get their

²⁹PANS MG20, vol 323, "Home Services Report," AR, 1951, 40.

³⁰Griswold, Fatherhood, 194.

hands in the parenting business without getting their hands in the dishwasher.

The possibility that limits on fathers' domesticity may have been exceeded was an uncomfortable prospect for the HMS. A Homemaker went into a home in which the mother was absent and the father was potentially in a very different position than just breadwinner or "pal." Even with a Red Cross Homemaker present, the father's role was changed, making the HMS's insistence on "normal" gender roles ring hollow. Joy Parr has noted that "something vitally important is being lost by concluding that the family is one, and that one is the male breadwinner. There is clearly something more to the family man than the image of economic man can comprehend."³¹ It is this "something more" that the HMS was not willing to admit to. Popular discourse and advocates of the new fatherhood did encourage men to "help-out" in the home.³² But was this the role taken by fathers whose families needed Red Cross Homemakers? How does the labelling of fathers' roles as "help" inform our interpretation of what these roles were?

The hours worked by Homemakers imply "something more" to the father's role in the family than popular discourses allowed. Homemakers worked from 8 or 8:30 in the morning until 5 or 5:30 in the evening. It was not possible for a Homemaker to work the "double day" for the families she

³¹Joy Parr, Gender of Breadwinners, 244.

³²See Strong-Boag, "Home Dreams," 475.

assisted. The documents also clearly show that Homemakers did not normally work on Saturdays or Sundays. The only examples given of this happening were from families in which no father was present. This schedule indicates that fathers had a role to play in child care in the evening and on weekends. When husbands were not able to play this role, alternate arrangements were made. One indigent woman who was to go to the hospital for her fourth "confinement" needed extra assistance. Her husband was noted to be an alcoholic so he "could not be trusted to look after the children at night." Arrangements were made in this case for the mother to receive medical care in the home with the Homemaker's assistance.³³ Although breadwinning was the father's predominant role, it is implied, though significantly not stated, that fathers were to take on child care when the Red Cross Homemaker was not present.

The limitations upon the tasks performed by Homemakers also suggest that fathers' contributions were more than what was openly stated. The Homemaker would not scrub floors, shovel snow, empty ashes, carry fuel or do the evening dishes. The HMS did not specify who exactly was to perform these tasks; rather it was up to "the family." Presumably this meant that the children would play a role in domestic chores. However, not all families receiving the service had children

³³PANS MG20, vol. 408, Homemaker Service (Red Cross pamphlet); MG20, vol. 323, "Home Services Report," AR, 1951, 40; AR, 1952, 1-2.

of a suitable age. What was the father's role? Notably, Red Cross Homemakers would not do the washing unless there was an electric machine.³⁴ While many households owned powered washing machines, not all did. Of the 18,710 households listed in the 1951 census, 11,540 had a powered washing machine in their residence.³⁵ As both Meg Luxton and Joy Parr have found, laundry was a heavy and arduous task that men did not do in this period.³⁶ Those families who received help from the HMS also did not have relatives in the area who could have helped them. Did this mean that laundry was not done when the mother was seriously ill? In families that could afford it, were market alternatives used? Or did fathers actually do the laundry? Perhaps more important than answering these questions is to note the reluctance of the HMS even to speak about fathers' role in these aspects of the "feminine" world of homemaking.

Housework allegedly emasculated men. Psychologist

³⁴PANS MG20, vol. 408, Homemaker Service (Red Cross pamphlet) n.p.

³⁵The proportion of powered washing machine ownership was higher for those who owned homes (6,315 of 8,785) than for those who rented (5,225 of 9,925). See, Table 89, "Crowded and Uncrowded households by tenure showing special facilities and conveniences..., 1951," Census, 1951: Families and Households (Government of Canada: Dominion Bureau of Statistics, 1951).

³⁶Meg Luxton, More Than a Labour of Love: Three Generations of Women's Work in the Home (Toronto: Women's Press, 1980): 152-158; Parr, Gender of Breadwinners, 91. My interviews of five bachelors living in Halifax between 1945 and 1960 also followed this trend. See chapter 5.

Alastair MacLeod warned that women were not to force their husbands to perform housework lest they risk causing a "biological imbalance" which would make him less than a "real man."³⁷ According to one writer, "a man whittles himself down to less of a man by consistently performing women's work."³⁸ If there was a problem with the family in the postwar years, according to experts, it was that families were too focused on the mother. This had especially grave consequences for young boys. Too much feminine influence could lead to juvenile delinquency and homosexuality.³⁹ Gary Kinsmen's study of the RCMP's attempt to purge the public service of homosexuality indicates how much homosexuality was feared. There was such a fear among RCMP officers about being labelled homosexual that the RCMP consistently had problems attracting enough volunteers to act as a control group for its "scientific" tests.⁴⁰ In the popular masculine discourse, effeminacy, discursively linked to homosexuality in the postwar years, was to be avoided.

³⁷Chatelaine, March 1959, cited from Strong-Boag, "Home Dreams," 482.

³⁸Jean Libman Block, "Husbands Should not do Housework," Star Weekly 16 Nov. 1957, cited from Strong-Boag, "Home Dreams," 481.

³⁹John Nash, "It's time *father* got back in the *family*," Maclean's, 12 May 1956.

⁴⁰Gary Kinsman, "'Character Weaknesses' and 'Fruit Machines': Towards and Analysis of the Anti-Homosexual Security Campaign in the Canadian Civil Service," Labour/Le Travail 35 (Spring 1995): 133-161.

When Red Cross officials could not avoid referring to men and homemaking, the language used reflected a certain uneasiness. The father was not "filling in" for the mother as the Red Cross Homemaker did. Instead, when the Homemaker left on Friday, "the father...[would] **take over** for the weekend." The reference to control is significant. Fathers had a role to play but the meaning ascribed to this role was different than that of the mother's or Homemaker's. "The husband [was] still expected to play his part by **taking charge** of the family after working hours."⁴¹ But was the father's role really that different? When fathers went to work during the day (as this gendered discourse prescribed that all did) did the Homemaker "**take charge** of the family"? No such description of Homemakers was found. Instead, they were mother substitutes. As one young boy phrased it, the Homemaker was his "Red Cross Mummy."⁴² The fathers role after hours is almost never mentioned. In the only two instances when this occurs, he is said to "**take charge**." In fact, although most housework was done by the Red Cross Homemaker, the father's role in the evening might have included tasks such as changing dirty diapers, washing dishes, or getting children ready for bed. Language reinscribed child care to fit a masculine discourse,

⁴¹PANS MG20, vol. 323, "Home Services Report," AR, 1948, 52; MG20, vol. 408, 5, Homemaker Service (US Dept of Health, Education and Welfare - Social Security Administration, Children's Bureau, 1958), 29-30. (*italics mine*)

⁴²PANS MG 20, vol. 323, "Home Services Report," AR, 1953, 2.

but the activity itself does not appear to have changed.

The use of language to alter the gendered meaning of tasks is not specific to postwar Halifax. Suzanne Morton in her study of a Halifax working-class neighbourhood in the 1920s, and Joy Parr in her study of Hanover in the 1930s and 1940s, found similar posturing with respect to men and gardening. According to Morton, "there was no language available to recognize the male contribution to domestic production," so this activity was described as a hobby or leisure pursuit. Parr also found that men's work around the home was referred to by women as "helping out" and not the "real work" that women did.⁴³ In these examples and in the case of the HMS, men's role in the home is only awkwardly incorporated into discourses on domestic labour. How does this discursive hiding of men's domestic labour inform an understanding of men's power in the family?

The "hapless father" was a recurring image in the 1940s and 1950s media. While fathers were portrayed respectfully as breadwinners, their domestic pursuits were often the subject of light hearted jokes and ridicule. An article in Maclean's in 1952 titled "Timetable of Father Looking after the Children," is indicative of this trend.⁴⁴ The mother leaves

⁴³Suzanne Morton, Ideal Surroundings: Domestic Life in a Working-Class Suburb in the 1920s (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995): 129; Parr, Gender of Breadwinners, 191, 200.

⁴⁴Barry Mather, "Timetable of Father Looking After the Children," Maclean's, 15 Jan. 1952.

home at 7:25 for a meeting on "child guidance" after instructing her husband to have the two children in bed by 7:45. What follows is an entire evening in which the "hapless dad" is stripped of any dignity in a blatantly incompetent, though energetic, attempt to put his children to bed. The children and even the woman next door make fun of the father's feeble efforts. At least in domestic matters, dads were just not "with it."

While some contemporaries criticized this "denigrated" fatherly image, the "hapless father" in the home did not challenge, but rather reinforced the breadwinner role and the patriarchal authority it sustained. In the "democratic" postwar family, both men and women had their equal roles. To maintain this normative equality, it was not only important for the man to be the breadwinner, it was also important that he not be a homemaker. Even those who criticized the "hapless father" image did so out of fear that it challenged the dignity conferred on him as the breadwinner. All the "hardworking breadwinners" should be upset by the portrayal of fathers as "hapless", Victor Maxwell claimed in 1947, because after all, "the old man is still the guy who pays the bills." Maxwell thought fathers deserved respect because they put the bread on the table; he did not care if fathers were inept at cleaning the oven in which that bread was baked.⁴⁵

⁴⁵Victor Maxwell, "So Daddy's a Dope," Maclean's, June 15, 1947.

Conclusions

Although the Red Cross Homemaker Service has continued into the 1990s, it has changed. In 1957, as part of larger cuts in the Red Cross budget, the HMS lost most of its funding. When funding was restored the next year the service looked quite different. Only one full-time Homemaker was kept on staff in Halifax. The rest of the work was to be carried out by part-time Homemakers. More significantly for the purposes of this paper, the HMS expanded the type of clients it assisted. Homemakers now went to assist the elderly, and over the next few years, disabled persons were also made eligible as clients.⁴⁶ Maintaining a "home" was still the priority of the HMS, but the definition of what constituted a home at risk had been expanded.

From 1945-1957, the HMS helped to keep men's and women's family roles distinct. They dealt with the effeminacy of men's domestic involvements in some of the ways that others have addressed the apparent deviance of women's paid work. Miriam Glucksmann's recent study of women workers in Britain highlights the ways in which one group of women, whose many part time jobs equalled the full time work of a man, did not label themselves as workers; instead, they were mothers. This

⁴⁶PANS MG20, vol. 323, "Home Services Report," AR, 1957; AR, 1958.

same trend has been noted by many historians of women.⁴⁷ Similarly, the (albeit limited) housework apparently done by men in the families served by the HMS does not enter into the way men were portrayed. In HMS discourse men "took charge" of a home, they did not "care" for it. This fit well with the dominant gender discourse which prescribed very specific and different sex-roles for men and women in the breadwinner-homemaker family. However, while the portrayal of women's paid employment as "pin money,"⁴⁸ served to limit their access to social power, the portrayal of men as "taking charge" of the home did the opposite, by legitimizing men's role as providers and protectors and not cooks and cleaners.

The Red Cross HMS shaped perceptions of men's potential domestic involvement. Whether the men who used the HMS's services actually performed household chores is never mentioned. The response of the HMS to this *possible* activity, however, suggests one way in which normative gender discourses work to maintain legitimacy. The exigencies of daily life often flew in the face of prescribed ideals. Mothers sometimes became ill. However, the success of the

⁴⁷Miriam A. Glucksmann, "Some Do, Some Don't (But in Fact They All Do Really); Some Will, Some Won't; Some Have, Some Haven't: Women, Men, Work, and Washing Machines in Inter-War Britain," Gender and History, 7:2 (1995): 275-294. See also Parr, Gender of Breadwinners; Bettina Bradbury, Working Families: Age, Gender, and Daily Survival in Industrializing Montreal (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1993).

⁴⁸See Barbara Latham, Not Just Pin Money: Selected essays on the History of Women's Work in British Columbia (University of British Columbia Press, 1984).

breadwinner-homemaker discourse lay in its mediation between everyday experience and the perception of that experience. If families were to maintain the guise of democracy in postwar Halifax, even the possibility that fathers were frolicking in the "feminine" realm of homemaking could not be admitted to.

Chapter 5 : "Sissies and Studs: The Domesticity of Single Men"

The "problem" of single men did not go unnoticed by marriage experts and the popular media generally. Historians of the period have generally focused on representations of single men as "sissies", fussy old bachelors, and potential homosexuals.¹ According to historian Doug Owrarn, given the stress on marriage, family, and strict gender roles in the 1940s and 1950s, "homosexuality was routinely seen as one of the major reasons people failed to marry." However, there was an alternate discourse which described single men as free and virile. Owrarn dismisses this as the stuff of "bachelor parties and old jokes." Accepting in part the association of normal human behaviour with men's role in the nuclear family, he claims that men's "human instinct" led them to search for "love and stability" in marriage.² However, while the "respectable" thing to do may have been to marry, there was a cultural discourse which celebrated the potential freedom of bachelorhood as a genuine expression of masculinity.

¹See, Doug Owrarn, Born at the Right Time: A History of the Baby Boom Generation (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996); Veronica Strong-Boag, "Home Dreams: Women and the Suburban Experiment in Canada," Canadian Historical Review, 72:4 (1991): 471-504; Elaine Tyler May, Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War (New York: Basic Books, 1988).

²In fact, Owrarn does not cite a single example for his contention that the "fussy old bachelor" was a major theme in representations of single men. See, Owrarn, Born at the Right Time, 15-16.

Bachelors, then, were seen as both effeminate and masculine.

As we have seen in the representations of men's barbecuing and fatherhood, such contradictions were common. But the emphasis on fixed gender roles in the decade and a half after WWII necessitated that contradictions to these gendered norms be constantly justified. Social science experts acted as key purveyors of a normative marriage discourse that treated bachelors to both carrot and whip. Respectability was the incentive they offered to pull men toward marriage while the threat of homosexuality vigorously urged bachelors forward. However, those men who remained single despite such cultural pressures posed a threat to normative gender roles which could not be abolished by advertising the benefits of marriage or the detriments of single life. Men outside of marriage were not just breadwinners without families, but were also saddled with domestic responsibilities normally attributed to homemakers. An alternative discourse - that of the free-wheeling masculine bachelor - helped to limit the potential subversiveness of single men's domesticity. This chapter will explore these two discourses of bachelorhood and domestic labour through representations in popular media and in five interviews with men who were bachelors between 1945 and 1960.³

³The men were contacted through a senior's residence and a senior's drop-in centre. The later marital status of the group is mixed: one married in the late 1940s; two married later in life; and, two remained bachelors at the time of interviewing. Three of the interviews were recorded while two

Methodology

Oral evidence is used for a particular purpose in this chapter. To meet the critique that such evidence is unreliable and impartial,⁴ social historians and postcolonial writers have emphasized that oral history must be judged by its own standards.⁵ So long as the forms and rules of written evidence are not imposed upon the spoken word, it can be a fruitful source in the writing of history. By examining representations of bachelors and domestic labour in cultural discourses, this chapter builds upon the strengths of oral evidence. Oral history relies upon continuity and repetition to transmit messages over time. Even when Paul Thompson admitted that oral evidence might be unreliable for specific information, he noted that it could "still be taken as

men preferred that only written notes be taken.

⁴For a discussion of the importance of writing in the creation of modern - Rankean - historical writing, see Peter Novick, That Noble Dream: The "Objectivity Question" and the Future of the Historical Profession (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

⁵See Elizabeth Tonkin, Narrating Our Pasts: The Social Construction of Oral History (Great Britain: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Gwyn Prins, "Oral History."; Paul Thompson, The Voice of the Past: Oral History (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978); and, Walter D. Mignolo, The Darker Side of the Renaissance: Literacy, Territoriality, and Colonization (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995). Although not explicitly about oral history, Mignolo's work provides evidence of the link between writing, remembering and power relations in western civilization's contact with non-literate (in a western sense) cultures.

symbolic evidence of attitudes."⁶ Oral evidence is used in this chapter for this purpose: to reveal assumptions and stereotypes in cultural discourses, not necessarily to describe how things "were." This chapter does not tally up how many men claimed to have washed dishes or shined their shoes. Oral testimony is here used to look at complexities, preoccupations, and contradictions which appear in representations of men's daily life to gain a fuller understanding of how single men and others understood the potential domesticity of bachelorhood.

Images of Bachelorhood

Representations of single men were moulded by the assumption that marriage was the normal path in life. Although Canadian universities did not have the marriage courses and departments as in the United States, academics and other experts emphasizing the naturalness of getting married abounded.⁷ In a time when men's and women's position in the breadwinner-homemaker family was the basis of their adult gender identity, those who remained single were more than just marital statistics on the wrong side of the equation. While sociologists Mary and Judson Landis recognized that not everyone married, "nevertheless," they argued, "the average

⁶Thompson, Voices of the Past, 210.

⁷See, Owram, Born at the Right Time, 21.

person considers marrying and is interested to know as much as possible about marriage since it is the way of life for the majority of people." Even if one did not marry, it was necessary to want to marry. They went on to argue that "to be marriageable implies the ability to live effectively with others."⁸ These were strong statements in the midst of 1950s cold war Canada.⁹ Conforming to the gender roles in the breadwinner-homemaker family was linked with social stability and the survival of democracy.¹⁰ Breaking with the "majority" could have been seen as defiance or subversiveness. Linking marriage with the "majority" and the "average", therefore, was not just a statement about relative numbers of people who did and did not marry. In this context, the portrayal of marriage as "normal" was akin to an accusation of deviance against the single.

Sociologists', doctors' and other marriage experts' representations of the unmarried conveyed a sense of blame for this difference. Henry Bowman provided a list of reasons why people refused to marry which included: lack of opportunity,

⁸Mary Landis and Judson Landis, Building a Successful Marriage 3rd ed. (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1958), 113-114.

⁹For the cold war in Canada, see Reg Whitaker and Gary Marcuse, Cold War Canada: The Making of a National Insecurity State, 1945-1957 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994); Reg Whitaker, "From World War to Cold War," in Greg Donaghy ed. Uncertain Horizons: Canadians and Their World in 1945 (Canada: Canadian Committee for the History of the Second World War, 1997), 305-323.

¹⁰See Chapter 1 on the link between cold war politics, democracy, conformity, and gender.

unattractiveness, aggressiveness (in women), wanting a career (in women), lack of interest, illness or physical malformation, distorted ideas, parent fixation and fear of sex. This detailed list of reasons and his explanation for each make his initial claim, that those who chose to remain single were "normal", ring hollow.¹¹ Others were less generous. After giving a similar list of reasons why people chose to remain single, another expert argued that "in most of the instances discussed here, there were no basically valid reasons for avoiding matrimony." The blame for not marrying rested solely with the single. Hilda Holland, in the introduction to a collection of essays by sociologists, psychologists, and doctors titled Why Are You Single?, recognized that those who were single often felt "ostracized." However, her solution was unequivocal: "the answer is not to change society but to change the single...[for] in the last analysis, any solution depends on inner change in the individual. For God..[can] help only those who help themselves."¹² The need for social conformity to a "normal" life in marriage was assumed. By not fitting in with the expected roles in the breadwinner-homemaker family, the single were represented as dangerously different individuals who were

¹¹Henry Bowman, Marriage for Moderns 3rd ed. (Toronto: McGraw-Hill, 1954), 55-56.

¹²Abraham Stone, "Celibate Facts and Fancies," in Hilda Holland and Fritz Kahn eds. Why Are You Single? (New York, 1949); Hilda Holland, "Introduction," to Holland and Kahn eds., Why Are You Single?.

to blame for their own difference.

The consequences of being single were many, but primary among these was loneliness. Marriage and the nuclear family were often portrayed as the source of men's and women's fulfilment and happiness. Remaining single, then, had not only broad social implications but also personal consequences. The National Film Board documentary, The Feelings of Hostility, told of the psychological and emotional problems faced by a fictional girl up until her twenties. As a result of various problems in her upbringing, the woman did not marry, and the film showed her life to be lonely and empty.¹³ A regret that they did not marry was also a theme present in the testimony of bachelors from the period. Two men claimed that when they were younger they "couldn't take no interest in" or "didn't have time for" marriage. However, both signalled regret about these choices. The distinction between his recollection of his own feelings and what he felt was expected of him socially was unclear when a lifetime bachelor said, "I look back at where I think I should have got married, you see...I should have got married when I was younger and brought up a family, you see."¹⁴ His expectations for

¹³National Archives of Canada (NAC), 1976-0222, ISN 42342, The Feelings of Hostility, dir. Robert Anderson, Department of National Health and Welfare, Mental Health Div. and the National Film Board (NFB), 1948. For a larger discussion of this film and these issues, see Chapter 1.

¹⁴Interview #2, tape #1, side A, 323; Interview #4, tape #1, side A, 244.

personal happiness were interconnected with the social expectation that he "should" have married. Although men were not supposed to have been as attached to marriage as women, loneliness was nonetheless represented as a serious repercussion of choosing the single life.

Bachelors were seen to be less respectable for not taking up the responsibilities of marriage. According to one writer on the single, "For large numbers of bachelors the great problem is the financial responsibility for wife and children which they shrink from assuming."¹⁵ To support a wife and children was the ultimate in successful breadwinning. Recounting how things had changed when he married, one former bachelor exclaimed: "You had responsibility then!" Seated in the living room of his home that he and his wife had lived in since they married, he said, "Oh yeah, look what you are looking at."¹⁶ The material possessions and the home itself were seen as the tangible evidence of successful breadwinning which he would not have achieved if had remained single. Experts presented responsibility in terms which supported breadwinning as a "natural" male endeavour. According to Theodore Reik, "Obligation, duty, responsibility - these words have for male ears an undersound which is for women as little audible as are, for male ears, the emotional undercurrents

¹⁵Beatrice M. Hinkle, "Spinsters and Bachelors," in Holland and Kahn eds., Why Are You Single?.

¹⁶Interview #1, tape #1, side A, 490.

which women feel when they think of kindness, tenderness, and affection."¹⁷ The irresponsible man, then, could have been compared to the unkind, rough and unfeeling women; neither of which were complimentary images in the 1950s.

However, although responsibility was strongly linked to normative masculinity, it was not the only cultural symbol of manhood. What for some was the major fault of being single - lack of responsibility and respectability - was, for others, interpreted as its greatest asset - freedom from such obligations. Playboy symbolized the celebration of bachelor freedom in the 1950s. Its pages were replete with articles and jokes ridiculing marriage and the life of married men. In presenting the results of a readership survey, the magazine wrote that "Half of Playboy's readers are free men [single]; the other half are free only in spirit [married]." Taking up this theme and incorporating a playful twist of American nationalistic language, one joke read: "a bachelor is a man who believes in life, liberty and the happiness of pursuit."¹⁸ Wives were often represented as the enemy. They were seen to hurt their husbands in two ways: by having sex with other men (mostly travelling salesmen); or, by limiting

¹⁷Theodore Reik, "The Marriage Shyness of the Male," in Holland and Kahn eds., Why Are You Single?.

¹⁸Examples of this attitude are apparent in almost every issue in the 1950s starting with Hugh Hefner's introductory editorial in issue #1. For the readership survey, see Playboy, 2:9 (1955). For the joke about bachelor's and "happiness of pursuit", see "Playboy's Party Jokes," Playboy, 3:5 (1956).

a man's sex life by getting in the way of possible liaisons with other women. Barbara Ehrenrich has noted that Playboy was able to avoid the charge of effeminacy often laid upon single men by emphasizing men's career ambitions and strident heterosexuality: "In every issue, every month, there was a Playmate to prove that a playboy didn't have to be a husband to be a man."¹⁹ Instead of shying away from the sexual and other freedoms of bachelorhood, Playboy revelled in it.

Playboy was not alone in its positive representation of the freedoms of bachelors' lives. Maclean's staff writer Robert Allen, who often wrote on family life, showed signs in his writing of appreciation for bachelorhood. In an article titled "How Children Remodel Their Parents," Allen recounted that he

used to play quite a bit of snooker with a guy who was one of the most composed men I've ever known, a tall, pale ladies luggage salesman with a way of handling his cue with fine long surgeon's hands as if he were presiding at a brain operation and humming softly.²⁰

According to Allen, the man "led a completely empty life of movies, good food, beer, lots of money and sleep." However, Allen goes on to say how all this changed when the man married and had children. The former bachelor developed nervous twitches and had to see a psychologist allegedly because he

¹⁹Barbara Ehrenrich, The Hearts of Men: American Dreams and the Flight from Commitment (New York: Doubleday, 1983), 51.

²⁰Robert Allen, "How Children Remodel Their Parents," Maclean's, 6 Aug 1955.

could not put up with the screaming of his two bickering children. In this context, Allen's earlier critique of the man's bachelor years reads as an ironic longing for single life. In the same article, Allen also recounted a story about an insurance salesman who never lived up to the reputation of his cattle-rancher bachelor brother in his son's eyes. Despite "Uncle Arch's" irresponsible motorcycle driving and other habits, the young boy idolized him. At the end of the article, Allen came around to note the positive benefits of responsibility in parenting as part of men's and women's natural life-cycle. However, the bachelor's life, as represented by Allen, is far from the effeminate and potentially homosexual experience recounted by sociologists and other experts.

The men interviewed also carried with them assumptions linking freedom with bachelorhood. Single life was seen as qualitatively different from married life. For one bachelor the difference was one of "lifestyle." He recounted how he had spent his leisure time with male friends playing darts, bowling, and drinking. But with his married friends, he felt that he had to be aware that this was not always possible; a married man had "to be more concerned" whereas a bachelor "would be free to come and go."²¹ Another was less judicious. In comparing his life to that of a married man, he stated unequivocally that, "they never had the life that I

²¹Interview #3, notes.

had. I had a much better life than they did." He claimed that he had left England in the late 1940s to come back to Halifax because he "was getting the girls in the family way," and the English authorities were after him to pay support which was "enough to do alot of damage to your pocket."²² The sexuality of his single life would have been inhibited by the monetary responsibilities of marriage. For these men, monetary and other responsibilities brought by marriage were burdens not suffered by the single.

Such representations of freedom and bachelorhood drew upon cultural discourses which linked freedom and masculinity. Not only was responsibility "masculine", so too was freedom from such responsibility. Theodore Reik claimed that "The thought of marriage is natural for a woman; she takes to it as a duck to water; but there is something alien in the idea of marriage to men." Instead, men were wont to roam the earth impregnating females. For Reik, this was "the biological truth, plainly spoken."²³ Therefore, contradictory assumptions about men and marriage were built into diverse cultural symbols of masculinity. While Reik believed that men should eventually turn to marriage because it was the responsible thing to do, he also accepted the association between masculinity and freedom which was integral to some

²² Interview #5, notes.

²³Reik, "The Marriage Shyness of the Male," in Holland and Kahn eds., Why Are You Single?.

representations of bachelorhood.

Bachelors and Domestic Labour

As boys and young men living at home, the bachelors interviewed were probably expected to marry eventually like other men. Their recollections of how domestic labour was performed in the home when they were young fits in with representations of men and domestic labour generally. Household chores were not an important part of their childhood identity. The chores done were usually gender specific. As such, their domestic labour was occasional and consisted mostly of outside work and repairs to the home. Cooking, cleaning, and laundry were often assumed to be women's work.²⁴ Reflecting this gendered perception of domestic labour in his youth, one man claimed, "I never done no cooking or anything like that. My mother done all the cooking and everything."²⁵ Another bachelor recollections shadowed this gendered perception of household chores: "There wasn't too much I had to do...there was so many to do it. The girls would help out with the cooking. There wasn't too much I had to do - look after the dog."²⁶ Unlike his sisters, domestic

²⁴For a fuller account of men's domestic labour, see Chapter 2.

²⁵Interview #2, tape #1, side A.

²⁶Interview #4, notes.

chores were not something he remembered doing. Another bachelor recalled a similar, less than rigorous, routine of household chores for he and his brothers: "Well, I can't remember us getting too involved in it."²⁷ For these bachelors, domestic labour was not seen as part of their childhood identity. Each had to think carefully to remember chores done whereas other leisure activities sprang to their memories more readily. Their use of vague language - "there wasn't too much" and "not too involved" - reflects an uncertainty about their own recollection and the subject being recalled. The one chore which was recounted by three of the men using the same descriptive language was "running errands."²⁸ As an occasional task done outside the home, this experience legitimated discourses linking masculinity to freedom from domestic chores. Overall, the childhood of these future bachelors did not prepare them for life without a wife/homemaker.

Even as these men aged and did not marry, however, the importance of household chores in their lives did not appear to have changed. According to one man, these were subjects which he and his bachelor friends "didn't talk too much about."²⁹ However, he did feel that living on his own had changed the types of tasks he performed. "I had to do all my

²⁷Interview #1, tape #1, side A, 178.

²⁸Interviewees #1-3 all recalled "running errands."

²⁹Interview #4, tape #1, side A, 306.

own cooking and everything," was his description of how home life had changed when he had moved out of his parents' house. But the subject was not left at that. Although he had already mentioned it, he felt obliged to repeat that the reason he had moved out on his own (and thus justify cooking his own meals): "You know, my parents, they were sick."³⁰ Even when such labour was done, then, it was seen to be a result of the normal course of events being altered. While the position of single men may have potentially been radically different from breadwinners, the idea that they were different with respect to domestic labour does not seem to have entered into their recollections of the past.

In part, single men saw themselves as breadwinners without wife and family. Earning a living was still the primary goal in life which affirmed their identity as men. For one bachelor who remained at home for most of his life, becoming a man changed his relationship to domestic labour much as it would have if he had married. After reaching a certain age, he claimed "I wouldn't be running errands like when I was little. I was working."³¹ For another, the theme of earning a living was constant throughout his recollections. The fact that he had not received a disability pension due to a wartime injury until 1960, was something which he came back to repeatedly throughout the interview. Because of his

³⁰Interview #4, tape #1, side A, 225.

³¹Interview #3, notes.

injury, he reported that he had not been able to work steadily and admitted to having received welfare for one week. Demonstrating the importance of this issue for him, he would often go back to his inability to work and problems in getting a disability pension when asked questions on entirely different subjects. His inability to earn a living was a sore point which overshadowed all other remembrances.³² Although bachelors did not have a wife and children to support, this fact did not necessarily change their perception of themselves as wage-earners. Breadwinning, with or without a family, was still seen to have been the core of their identity.

In part, bachelors could still see themselves as breadwinners because they were able to make use of a variety of substitute homemakers. One such alternative was paying for services. Homemakers were seen to do domestic chores on a full-time basis. By limiting their involvement in household acts through the use of market alternatives, bachelors were able to limit the potentially effeminate aspect of being single. While some bachelors cooked their own meals, many relied upon restaurants to supplement their own labour.³³

³²Interview #5, notes.

³³Andrew Hurley's study of diners in post-WWII United States suggests that at least some of the market alternatives used by single men were transformed during this period to reflect the family orientation of most of society. Although he does not mention it, the transformation of diners from working-class male eating establishments to family restaurants would likely have had a significant impact on the single. While none of the bachelors interviewed mentioned diners, this may have been a result of the geographic particularity of the

Eating a three course meal at the Salvation Army for 75¢ was an attractive alternative to preparing one's own meal.³⁴ Boarding combined buying meals with buying lodging and other services. This was recounted as the perfect arrangement: "For thirteen dollars a week, you got free meals, you had your bed...my laundry was done...." For one bachelor who moved in with a family he knew and paid board, it was like living in a family: "it was comfortable, it was no problem."³⁵ Another recounted that he took his laundry to the "Chinaman."³⁶ By using a variety of market services, bachelors replicated the form of the relationship between wage-earning and homemaking outside the breadwinner-homemaker family. Even though bachelors may still have done many of their own household chores, purchasing some domestic services helped (at least symbolically) to reduce the anxiety that single men were somehow deviant by performing the tasks of both men and women.

A similar process was represented as taking place in the more recognizable confines of the family. Even when men aged,

business. Hurley notes that diners were common in the north-eastern United States but failed to significantly take off in the west or south. See Andrew Hurley, "From Hash House to Family Restaurant: The Transformation of the Diner and Post-World War II Consumer Culture," Journal of American History (March 1997): 1282-1308.

³⁴Interview #5, notes.

³⁵Interview #1, tape #1, side A, 275-330.

³⁶Interview #5, notes.

their families - especially female relatives - were seen as essential sources of domestic services. Bachelors who boarded at home were seen as a sort of alternate breadwinner providing money for household services. For one man, it had been a matter of common sense and pride to pay board to his parents. As a teenager, he had taken a job for \$10 per week which he gave them. "If I got a job later on with more money in it," he claimed, "I would give my mother and father more money, see...But I didn't want my father and mother to look after me for nothing you know. I always paid my way, you know... they had to buy the groceries and what have you like."³⁷ In this case "the parents" substituted for a homemaker. Although another man lived on his own, his sister did his laundry: "My sister used to do my laundry. She would be here every week, she would come and pick up the laundry. I would go to her place every Sunday for dinner, see, and she did my washing. She didn't live far from me."³⁸ Such arrangements had symbolic importance expressed in one interviewee's comment on their possible collapse. Reflecting on the consequences of a mother's death, he claimed that he "was lucky...some guys have a situation like that...and then they are stuck."³⁹ The "situation" referred to was the possibility that without a mother, a bachelor would have been "stuck" performing his own

³⁷Interview #2, tape #1, side A, 148.

³⁸Interview #4, tape #1, side A.

³⁹Interview #3, notes.

domestic labour. His use of crisis language - "situation", "stuck" - points to the importance of single men's maintaining alternatives to doing their own household chores.

When bachelors did perform housework, it was represented in a manner which was acceptably masculine. Playboy regularly ran columns on "food and drink" and men's dress. But playboys did not just cook a meal, there was an ulterior motive: sex. For example, an article describing the preparation of oysters began with a discussion of their aphrodisiac qualities.⁴⁰ Another story which appeared under the heading "Food and Drink" recounted the author's trip to Cuba and his encounters with an exotic dancer. At the end, a recipe for chicken and rice which the dancer had served him is tacked on.⁴¹ However, in this article the recipe was clearly secondary to the sultry tale of the dancer. Although the apartment dwelling playboy was not a rustic type, he was not averse to preparing a barbecue if there was a clear sexual purpose. A military metaphor is woven into the description of a playboy's potential barbecue and rendez-vous with a female guest. After eating the meal, the author claims that the man could look over to his guest and note that, "As she sips the ale you

⁴⁰Thomas Mario, "Pleasures of the Oyster," Playboy, 1:5 (1954). Playboy's version of food articles obviously appealed to some as a letter to the editor in vol. 1 no. 8 stated, "What a magazine! I never thought I would enjoy a food article as much as the one on the oyster. This is tops in its field. I'm looking forward to the next issue."

⁴¹Rob Roderick, "Matanzas Love Affair," Playboy, 1:1 (1953).

detect in her eyes a kind of yielding rapture. Are any further stratagems necessary? Your battle, of course, is won."⁴² In a similar fashion, a clean house with the appropriate furnishings was also made masculine by linking it with sexual achievement. Using the logic of sexual baiting, an advertisement noted that "Like the Spider, the smart playboy keeps his surroundings inviting...."⁴³ Playboy, then, used the associations of bachelor freedom and sexual virility to justify a way of life which might otherwise have been seen as effeminate.

Bachelors' domestic labour was also made masculine by constructing it as skilled labour. Just as men's barbecuing was coupled with skilled labour, other forms of men's cookery followed this pattern. Playboy's food and drink editor, Thomas Mario, was not just a man giving recipes, he was a gourmand. Other men recalled preparing meals as something to be proud of. One bachelor boasted that, when his two brothers lived with him for a short time, he had been the cook. This was not represented as a feminine task but as an achievement. He recalled that he had come by this talent naturally in that his father had also been skilled in the culinary arts and had taken pride in the particulars such as gravy.⁴⁴ The use of

⁴²Thomas Mario, "How to Play With Fire," Playboy, 1:8 (1954).

⁴³[advertisement in "Design Section"] Playboy, 1:6 (1954).

⁴⁴Interview #1, tape #1, side A.

such free floating symbols of masculinity was one way to overcome the effeminacy of men's cooking.

Conclusion

Without any mention of housework, the gendered image of single men was already dubious. In the family-centred 1950s, a single man was akin to the proverbial "fish out of water." Without a wife to take care of domestic needs, single men broke the neat dichotomy in gender roles presented in the breadwinner-homemaker family. However, bachelors were helped along by the flexibility in what was considered masculine. Journalists, advice columnists, and advertisements noted that respectable men matured and took on the monetary and other responsibilities of wife and children. This was part of the maturing process. But as youths, men were said to be wild and free. At some imagined "natural" level, masculinity was believed to be free of constraints. So while most men matured and married, those who were single could still be seen as masculine, if not ultimately respectable.

The breadwinner-homemaker dichotomy was still useful in the discursive process which negotiated between the domestic needs of bachelors' everyday life experience and the gender ideal which saw such domestic concerns to be feminine. The potential existed for single men to see themselves differently than married men based on their domestic routine. However,

discourses which labelled housework feminine also influenced single men. Bachelors were allegedly free from the responsibilities of married life: supporting a wife and children. However, this freedom was not seen to be balanced out by the burden of domestic responsibilities. Such tasks did not enter into single men's perception of themselves. Instead, cultural assumptions which labelled household tasks to be women's responsibility were internalized. Single men interpreted their daily experience - which may have included many "feminine" tasks - as fitting in with the standards of normative masculinity. Domestic services could be paid for or relatives could help. When such activities were done, single men were able to call upon cultural associations of skilled work and sexuality to justify their behaviour. The strength of normative expectations that men - as breadwinners - did not involve themselves in most housework was such that, single men perceived their own potentially radically different experience to fall within these normative parameters.

Conclusion

The larger story, of which this thesis is only a small part, is that of the historical context of the 1950s. The period after WWII has often been labelled as a conservative wasteland. After the tumultuous years of depression and war, North Americans allegedly yearned for stability and calm. The stringent gender roles represented in the breadwinner-homemaker family were a key element in this image of conservatism. The decade's place immediately before the sexual revolution, women's liberation, and other social protest movements of the 1960s has served to reinforce such stereotypes. Squeezed between war and social revolution, the 1950s were beguilingly tranquil.

Historians have begun to question just how different the 1950s were from the 1960s. Part of this work has focused on attitudes toward women and women's employment.¹ Although women's liberation and a high rate of women's employment are usually identified with the 1960s, some scholars have noted that changes in these areas also took place in the 1950s. Doug Owsen concluded his history of the baby boom generation,

¹See Susan M. Hartman, "Women's Employment and the Domestic Ideal in the Early Cold War Years," in Joanne Meyerowitz ed., Not June Cleaver: Women and Gender in Postwar America, 1945-1960 (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994): 84-100; Joanne Meyerowitz, "Beyond the Feminine Mystique: A Reassessment of Postwar Mass Culture, 1946-1958," in Meyerowitz ed., Not June Cleaver, 229-262.

Born at the Right Time by comparing the two decades.² He noted that the 1950s and 1960s shared a variety of social phenomena: economic affluence; demographic impact of the baby boom; general optimism; sense of specialness; and a distinction between youth and adult society. Given these interpretations, should we abandon our perception of the 1950s as a conservative epoch preceding the more radical 1960s?

There are a number of valid reasons why the 1950s should be viewed as a period of social change. In terms of gender difference, the period is striking for the similarities between the sexes. Choice of dress and leisure are the most obvious example of this similarity.³ While most women did not work, and working mothers were generally frowned upon, women were typically allowed to work by law. This was an improvement upon the 1930s when various federal and provincial laws restricted married women's paid employment.⁴ Although they were only tokens in a male dominated system, some women held positions of authority in politics. Among these, Ellen

²Doug Owrarn, Born at the Right Time: A History of the Baby Boom Generation (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), epilogue.

³Owrarn, Born at the Right Time, 255. Sociologists Mary and Judson Landis noted that men's and women's social roles had "broadened" to include a number of tasks previously considered to be only done by the opposite sex. Mary Landis and Judson Landis, Building a Successful Marriage 3rd ed. (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1958), 36-38.

⁴See Margaret Hobbs, "Rethinking AntiFeminism in the 1930s: Gender Crisis or Workplace Justice? A Response to Alice Kessler-Harris," Gender and History, 5:1 (1993): 4-19.

Fairclough was a prominent member of John Diefenbaker's government while New Brunswick's Muriel Fergusson was the Maritime region's first female senator.⁵ On the domestic front, the new fatherhood imagined men in a domestic setting taking on more involvement in parenting matters. By these measures, the 1950s were not radical, but neither were they entirely devoid of social change.

By examining one area of social change in the 1950s - domestic masculinity - this thesis can shed light on whether a recognition of such changes calls for a reinterpretation of the period as essentially conservative. An analysis of the position of single men is particularly useful in this regard. Without wives, bachelors were potentially in a position where they would have to take care of all the household tasks usually understood to be feminine. Yet bachelors consistently understood themselves, and were understood by others, not to be associated with such "feminine" tasks. Single men were said to be free from responsibilities. This image of freedom was not balanced with a recognition that the burdens normally taken on by a housewife would fall upon their shoulders. Instead, bachelors relied upon discourses which linked freedom from responsibility to a natural - though not respectable -

⁵Margaret Conrad, "Feminism and Canada's First Federal Cabinet Minister: Ellen Fairclough as One of the Boys," (paper presented to the Dalhousie University History Department, Oct 1996); "The Decade of Development," in E.R. Forbes and D.A. Muise eds., The Atlantic Provinces in Confederation (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), 388-390.

masculinity. Single men were further distanced from "feminine" domestic tasks by the association of some household chores with skilled work and other acceptably masculine stereotypes. Even though the experience of single men was potentially radically different from that expressed in the breadwinner ideal, single men's understanding of their own experience was shaped by discourses emphasizing normative gender differences.

The Red Cross Homemaker Service (HMS) worked to achieve similar ends when the breadwinner-homemaker family was threatened due to the illness of the mother. Homemakers were sent into homes to maintain the basic framework of the ideal breadwinner-homemaker family. The possibility that families could exist otherwise was not admitted to. The HMS claimed that if a Homemaker did not go into these homes, the family would collapse and the children would be split up. Having fathers take on broader household tasks was not presented as a possibility by the HMS. Although the fathers served by the HMS potentially performed a number of domestic tasks not listed among the Homemaker's responsibilities, the HMS was clearly uncomfortable admitting this breach of the ideal family arrangement. Alternative metaphors and symbols were used to redescribe the father's tasks with different - masculine - meaning. More often, the father's domestic responsibilities were not mentioned at all. For the HMS, silence was the most effective tool in maintaining the

perception of normalcy. Again, while the experience of men's domesticity may have been quite different than prescribed in the ideal, the interpretation of that experience (in this case, by those articulating gender norms) was shaped to fit perceptions of normalcy.

Masculine domesticity did allow for normal men to take part in a variety of domestic concerns in the 1950s. The new fatherhood was the most common form of masculine domesticity in the period and the barbecue was a visible sign of this new father's domestic leisure. However, this new - more domestic - fatherhood was represented in a manner which reinforced normative gender difference. That symbols of the new fatherhood - like barbecuing - were leisure pursuits was central to this reinforcement of gender difference. The new father's additional domestic responsibilities were not responsibilities at all; reading bedtime stories, playing catch or grilling steaks in the backyard were part of the new father's leisure choices which might also have included playing golf or going out with "the boys."⁶ As such, this domesticity did not challenge basic assumptions about men's role as breadwinner. New fathers also appealed to a variety of cultural symbols of masculinity to make their new domestic

⁶On men's feeling that time away with other men was a right due to their breadwinning responsibilities, see Robert Rutherford, "Fatherhood and the Social Construction of Memory: Breadwinning and Male Parenting on a Job Frontier, 1945-1966," in Joy Parr and Mark Rosenfeld eds., Gender and History in Canada (Toronto: Copp Clark, 1996): 357-375.

pursuits more masculine. Associations between normative masculinity and skilled work, domestic incompetence, old-fashionedness, modernity or mechanical ability may have contained contradictory images. However, all these masculine symbols appealed to by the domestic new father worked to legitimate and reinforce sexual difference despite some social changes in men's domesticity.

This study of domestic masculinity in the 1950s may seem to be only a theoretical analysis of how gender works as a process to maintain normative definitions of difference between men and women. However, the manner in which gender discourses limited the potential cultural meanings in domestic masculinity also provides an opportunity to historically contextualize the conservatism of the 1950s. To note the changes in representations of men's domesticity in the 1950s should not call for a reinterpretation of the period's noted conservatism. Neither should the limiting context in which the changes in men's social roles were shaped simply reinforce previous stereotypes. The study of gender discourse in the 1950s shows a period not without change, but one struggling with change. In the 1960s, feminists would radically challenge and protest the labelling of most domestic chores as "women's work." However, as the study of masculine domesticity shows, the process by which housework was gendered in the 1950s was already heavily politicized. It is not because of a lack of social change in such areas as men's

domestic activities that the period has been seen as conservative. Rather the discursive context in which cultural changes were understood was essentially conservative in the 1950s. The experience of men in new domestic roles was different. However, the understanding of this difference was recast by conservative cultural discourses to fit with normative definitions of men's and women's accepted gender roles.

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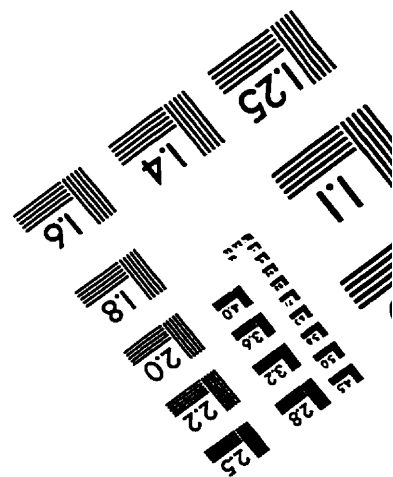
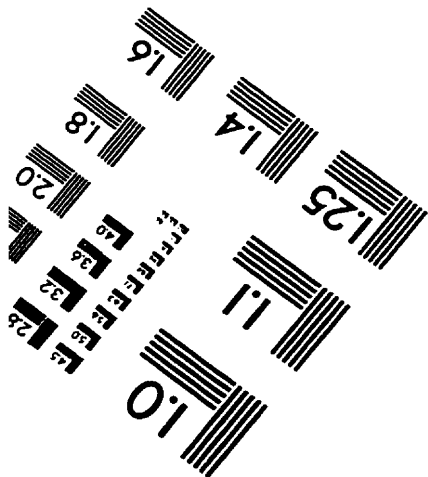
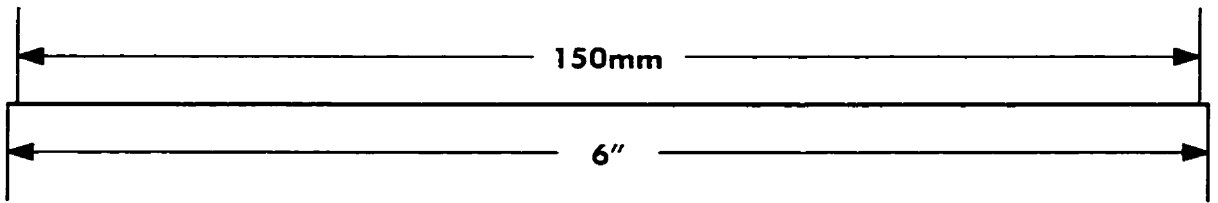
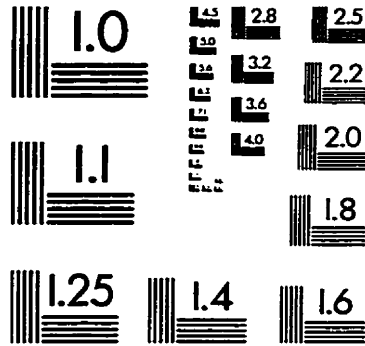
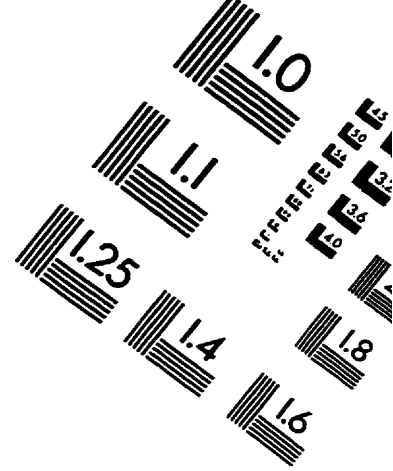
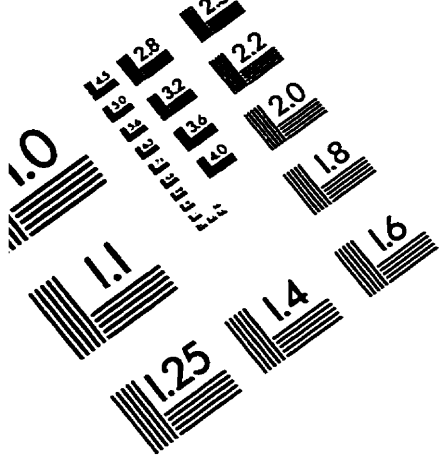
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