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INSIGHTS FROM THE CASE OF THE BABY BOOM

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**RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN GENDER AND FERTILITY:
INSIGHTS FROM THE CASE OF THE BABY BOOM**

By

Virginia Powell

A DISSERTATION

**Submitted to
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ABSTRACT

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN GENDER AND FERTILITY: INSIGHTS FROM THE CASE OF THE BABY BOOM

By

Virginia Powell

Sociologists and other scholars of fertility have explained the post-World War II baby boom as a consequence of other demographic factors, such as a decline in the age at marriage or rates of childlessness; as a response to economic prosperity; or as a reflection of changed norms and values about the importance of home, family, and motherhood.

These explanations do not adequately conceptualize the importance of gender to understanding fertility. Feminist theory provides a rich framework for understanding the centrality of gender in social life, and recent substantive research on reproduction and on motherhood and childbirth, for example, provides insight into relationships between the social organization of gender and changing birth rates. Demographic accounts have not incorporated the insights from this feminist scholarship. They have either ignored gender, reduced it to a variable, theorized it in narrow ways, or distorted its meanings by casting it in functionalist terms.

I reinterpret the baby boom from a feminist perspective, asking whether attention to ideologies of gender and sexual divisions of labor alters understandings of that phenomenon. Using bibliographic and documentary materials on the postwar period, I describe the postwar historical context, emphasizing gender ideologies and sexual divisions of labor.

The baby boom was a consequence of four confluent and mutually reinforcing trends: widespread economic prosperity which inspired hope and confidence about the future, causing the birth rates to rise; a conservative political environment that caused people to retreat to the nuclear family; gender ideologies that defined marriage and parenthood, particularly motherhood, as necessary to adult status; and, patterns of family formation and contraceptive usage which raised the birth rate. Changes in sexual divisions of labor were more contradictory and perplexing, and would not necessarily lead to an increased fertility rate. All of these patterns varied by race and by class, producing more complex pictures of gender relations and the baby boom.

My analysis challenges demography to produce more complex, multi-causal explanations for fertility, to explore the impact of men's lives and masculinities on fertility, and to examine relationships between the social organization of gender, gender inequalities, and fertility.

For my parents, Anne Marie Felix Powell and Joseph Michael Powell,
whose lives led me to these questions.

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CHAPTER 1 A FOOT IN EACH WORLD

Origins of this Project

This dissertation explores relationships between the social organization and ideologies of gender and the phenomenon of fertility. The research questions that I pose reflect my attempt to resolve confusions and inconsistencies that emerged within my studies as a graduate student. In my coursework, I concentrated in the area of "conflict and change," with an emphasis on feminist theory and social stratification, and in demography, particularly the sociology of fertility. The confusion came when I tried to integrate these two areas.

The study of gender inequality and the study of fertility both concern women's and men's experiences; I thought my knowledge in one area would enrich my knowledge in the other. This turned out to be a false assumption. The fields of demography and the sociology of sex and gender, particularly conflict and change approaches, are based on two very different epistemologies: they ask different questions, bring different assumptions to their work, and rely on different methodologies to answer those questions. And while there are potential points of complementarity between these two broad areas, they remain fairly separate within the discipline of sociology. They were also separate within my graduate training. As a consequence, I inhabited two very different sociological worlds.

In demography, I learned to be concerned with the more quantitative dimensions of reproduction, or fertility. When defining the term "fertility," demographers separate it from the concept of

"fecundity." Fecundity refers to women's potential or capacity to reproduce, while fertility refers to their accomplished fertility (Shryock and Siegel, 1973: 462; Smith and Zopf, 1976: 289; Wrong, 1977: 48). Of these two facets of reproduction, the discipline of demography is most concerned with fertility: how to measure rates of fertility in a society, as well as the ways in which those rates vary across time and across social categories such as age, class, religion, race, or ethnicity. Within demography, the concept of fertility gets operationalized as some particular rate that can be quantified or measured, such as a crude birth rate, a total fertility rate, or a cohort fertility rate (Shryock and Siegel, 1973).

As a consequence of this emphasis on the measurement of fertility, the studies I read in professional journals were set up to do some form of hypothesis testing. The data were divided into variables for measurement, and the research design tested the effects of one or more independent variables on a dependent one, usually a fertility rate. For demographers, the richest sources of data are large-scale surveys such as the National Fertility Survey, the Bureau of the Census surveys of the population, and Vital Registration counts of births (Shryock and Siegel, 1973). These surveys allow demographers to document fluctuations in the fertility rate in relationship to other sociological and demographic variables. The major contribution of fertility studies seems to be in the large numbers of the population that they survey. Because of this extensive coverage, demographers are able to do fairly sophisticated

statistical manipulations of data and to provide detailed information about rates of reproductive behaviors.

Sociologists working in the area of fertility theory have proposed schemas for explaining why birth rates change over time, as well as models for predicting future patterns of fertility. Much energy has been devoted, for example, to the development of a set of social and cultural variables that operate at the structural level to influence fertility rates, and can therefore help demographers predict levels of fertility within a given country (Davis and Blake, 1956; Tien, 1968; Yaukey, 1969).

Within studies of fertility, the larger social, political, economic, and historical contexts of fertility rates are not usually discussed. Discussions of historical context, where they occur, are relegated to a sub-area called historical demography. Missing, too, is an analysis of fertility within the framework of social conflict and power relations, whether it be between groups of people, or between individual men and women. Finally, sociologists of fertility do not study the profound significance that gender -- the fact that the world is divided into men and women who have different and unequal positions and experiences in the world -- could have on fertility rates. Demographers' understandings and uses of gender are shallow and narrow, and steeped in the logic of functionalist thought. Yet, I was encouraged to pay attention to social and historical context, to power relations, and to gender as part of my training in the conflict and change program.

In contrast to demographic work, analyses within conflict and change taught me that, to appreciate social structure, social life, and social change, I had to understand the social conflict, social inequality, and power asymmetry that characterize social relationships. I learned to appreciate that life occurred within specific cultural, political, economic, and historical contexts that needed to be understood sociologically. It also taught me that social class, race, and gender shape social experience; to comprehend those experiences meant understanding each group in terms of its unique social and historical development, and not as a simple measurable variable. This historically reflexive approach to sociology was laid out by C. Wright Mills in The Sociological Imagination:

We have come to know that every individual lives, from one generation to the next, in some society; that he (sic) lives out a biography, and that he lives it out within some historical sequence. By the fact of his living he contributes, however minutely, to the shaping of this society and to the course of its history, even as he is made by society and by its historical push and shove (Mills, 1959, p. 6).

It is the task of the sociologist to uncover connections between individual biography and social structure, what Mills called "the sociological imagination."

I found the perspective offered in conflict and change compelling, and used it to draw several conclusions about the sociology of fertility. Fertility choices, or birth rates, take place within specific social, historical, and cultural contexts, contexts which are in constant motion, shaping human choice and agency with regard to fertility. Further, fertility behaviors--

birth rates, rates of childlessness, maternal age at first birth, or rates of contraceptive use, for example -- are related to changing gender arrangements. In order to understand why fertility behaviors such as these vary and fluctuate, it is important to understand changes that occur in the positions and experiences of women and men. I am convinced that what demographers look at in fertility rates can and should be interpreted within a more gender-sensitive, structural, and historical framework.

I designed a research project in which I could explore the link between fertility and the social organization of gender. Specifically, this research asks: how would attention to the social organization of gender and the lives of women and men as women and men change our understanding of fertility and birth rates?

To take an in-depth look at one socio-historical period that was also demographically distinct, I chose to do a case study of the post-World War II baby boom in the United States, a demographic event that was unexpected and that has baffled demographers and other population experts since it occurred. Examining this one case will help to bring gender and fertility together to try out the larger theoretical issue concerning relationships between the two. Hopefully, the conclusions reached about these relationships can then be generalized to other cases.

To explore potential relationships between gender and fertility, my research project includes five sub-projects: 1) a review and critical analysis of the assumptions made about gender in accounts of the baby boom used by demographers; 2) a general overview of life in

the United States after World War II up until 1960, particularly its political economy; 3) a description of dominant gender ideologies in the postwar United States; 4) an examination of the social organization of gender and the lives of women and men in the United States after World War II; and 5) speculations on connections between gender and fertility during the baby boom. At its most ambitious, the project will point to a new way of "doing demography," at both a theoretical and methodological level. If the inclusion of gender as a central feature of research changes what we know about the baby boom, it will mean that sociologists who study fertility should make an understanding of gender critical to their research projects. Gender would no longer be neglected or reduced to variables, but theorized and studied in much deeper ways.

Organizational Plan of the Study

In Chapter 2, I review the literature on the baby boom, highlighting dominant explanations of that event. Chapter 3 discusses problems of omission within that literature, focussing especially on the omission of gender as an important analytical category. I also spend some time describing why gender is significant to understanding social life and the phenomenon of fertility. Chapter 4 describes the research questions and methodology for the rest of the study.

The next three chapters discuss the findings of the study. Chapter 5 lays out general features of U.S. society from 1945 to 1960, focussing especially on its political economy. Chapter 6 describes dominant ideologies about gender and the sexual division of

labor in the postwar United States. Finally, Chapter 7 examines structural aspects of men's and women's behavior in the postwar period: patterns of family formation, contraceptive use and the construction of sexuality, as well as the organization of education, politics, and the labor force by gender. Taken together, Chapters 6 and 7 provide broad social indicators about the social organization of gender from 1945 to 1960.

Finally, Chapter 8 summarizes and draws conclusions from the study. I will use information about postwar U.S. society and the social organization of gender at that time to re-interpret the baby boom, and return to the larger question of relationships between gender and fertility.

CHAPTER 2
EXPLANATIONS OF THE BABY BOOM:
A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The Baby Boom and Demographic Transition Theory

Starting in the mid-1940s and continuing into the early 1960s, the U.S. fertility rate increased dramatically. Although the rate fluctuated within this 15 to 20 year period, it nonetheless remained at a high and unexpected level. Table 2.1 shows the general fertility rate, the number of births per 1000 women aged 15 to 44, from 1910 to 1980. Providing a snapshot view of the postwar fertility increase, the table shows that the fertility rate declined from 1910 to 1940, but went up again after 1940. The birth rate increased from 1945 to 1947, declined until 1950, then increased steadily until 1957, when it began to decline again. The 1980 general fertility rate, 68.4, was the lowest recorded for this century, reflecting in part the legalization of abortion within the United States in 1973. The sharp increase in fertility from the 1940s to the 1960s has come to be known as the baby boom.¹

Sociologists of fertility were as surprised by the baby boom as the rest of the world. Based on their own predictions, the increase should not have occurred. When trying to predict and understand fertility patterns, demographers, either implicitly or explicitly, had relied on the assumptions of demographic transition theory. This theoretical framework, as it was used within demography, could not anticipate the baby boom (Bouvier, 1980; Wrong, 1952).

Demographic transition theory had barely been articulated in 1945 when the fertility rate began to rise. The theoretical model

Table 2.1

General Fertility Rate, 1910-1980, Selected Years

Year	General Fertility Rate
1910	126.8
1920	117.9
1930	89.2
1940	79.9
1945	85.9
1946	101.9
1947	113.3
1948	107.3
1949	107.1
1950	106.2
1951	111.4
1952	113.8
1953	115.0
1954	117.9
1955	118.3
1956	121.0
1957	122.7
1958	120.0
1959	119.9
1960	118.0
1961	117.1
1962	112.0
1963	108.3
1964	104.7
1965	96.3
1966	90.8
1967	87.2
1968	85.2
1969	86.1
1970	87.9
1971	81.6
1972	73.9
1973	68.8
1974	67.8
1975	66.0
1976	65.0
1977	66.8
1978	65.5
1979	67.2
1980	68.4

Source: United States Department of Health and Human Services, Vital Statistics of the United States 1981, Volume I - Natality.

for transition theory was laid out by Warren Thompson in Plenty of People (1944) and in Frank Notestein's article "Population - The Long View," published in 1945. Both authors attempted to chart and project the course of world population growth; in so doing, each identified three stages of population growth through which societies pass in the course of their demographic development.

"First stage societies" are characterized by high death rates and high birth rates, neither of which are stable or under human control. Medicine and health care are not developed and distributed in such a way that they decrease the mortality rate; birth control is not widely available and therefore not practiced. Population growth rates are therefore highly erratic; birth and death rates can be drastically altered by famines or the spread of disease, or other natural disasters which affect the supply of food and water. Societies in this stage of population growth typically have high growth rates. Social norms, religious values, culture, and family structure support large families, and therefore high fertility rates. These countries are usually agrarian and preindustrial (Notestein, 1945; Thompson, 1944). According to Notestein (1945), the countries of central Africa and much of South America are examples of countries in this stage of population growth.

Societies in "stage two" of population growth and development are often called "transitional societies" because both birth rates and death rates, which had been high, have begun to decline. These societies have high growth rates because their mortality rates decline at a faster pace than their fertility rates, causing a high

rate of natural increase. Decreases in mortality are usually due to changes in medicine and health care, or the introduction of vaccines against contagious diseases. Cultural norms and values still favor large families, however, keeping the fertility rate high (Notestein, 1945; Thompson, 1944). Stage two societies have usually begun to industrialize their economies, and their populations are more urbanized than stage one countries. Examples of countries in stage two of population growth include Spain, Poland, and French North Africa (Notestein, 1945).

Countries that have gotten to "stage three" in population development have low birth rates and low death rates that are relatively stable and under human control. As a consequence, population growth rates are slow or declining. Only changes in immigration or the fertility rate can alter the pace of growth; norms and values favor smaller families. Stage three societies are highly industrialized and urbanized (Notestein, 1945; Thompson, 1944). The countries of northern and western Europe, the United States, and Australia are examples of stage three societies (Notestein, 1945).

Demographic transition theory assumed that all societies would eventually move through these three stages of population growth: from a stable but precarious rate of growth in preindustrial societies where birth and death rates are high, to a transitional society where death rates decline but birth rates remain high, to industrial societies where birth and death rates are low and the rate of population growth is stable or declining.² Using this theoretical model as a predictive tool, demographers thought that the United

States had reached the stage in their demographic development where both birth and death rates would remain low, viewing the pattern of fertility of the early twentieth century as a relatively fixed one. Commenting on the likelihood of a substantial increase in U.S. fertility, for example, Notestein (1945: 42) wrote:

... such reversals will not be easily obtained, short of drastic governmental policies of an essentially totalitarian kind.

When the number of births began to increase in the mid-1940s, population experts thought that it would be short-lived and that the country would soon return to its previous pattern of low births. The increase was temporary and, they reasoned, due more to deferred marriage and childbearing during World War II than to a change in norms about family size (Bogue, 1969; Bouvier, 1980; Ryder, 1958). When the birth rate continued to rise in the 1950s, fertility theorists had to re-think the logic of transition theory. While the theory allowed for some fluctuation in birth and death rates in the final stage of the demographic transition, it could not explain the unusually high birth rates that the United States was experiencing (Bouvier, 1980; Wrong, 1952).

When the period of high birth rates ended in the 1960s, demographers and other social scientists took up the task of explaining why the increase had occurred in the first place. A review of that literature reveals three complementary types of explanations: demographic, economic, and sociological. Sociologists and demographers who try to explain the baby boom often use more than one of these interpretations at a time.

Demographic Explanations

According to a common interpretation of the baby boom, the overall increase in fertility is due to changes in other demographic factors, such as age at marriage, age at first birth, and completed fertility. Louise Russell (1982: 11) summarizes this tendency:

Four demographic factors caused the baby boom. More women married than ever before. More women who married had children. They had their children earlier. And some had more children.

Arthur Campbell (1978) attributes the baby boom to three convergent factors: a rise in completed fertility; late ages of childbearing for the cohorts of 1910 to 1925; and, the shift to early ages of childbearing among the cohorts of 1925 to 1940. Leon Bouvier (1980: 8) explains the demography of the baby boom in this way:

... the primary causes of the baby boom were more people marrying and having at least two children at earlier ages, and also what may have been some "makeup" births among older women who were previously childless.

More recently, Frank Bean (1983: 357) laid out the different components of the postwar fertility increase:

... the baby boom may be described as consisting of the following phenomena: (1) women marrying and having their first births earlier, thus quickening the pace of cohort fertility, (2) a larger proportion of women having families (where we define having a family as having at least two children), (3) a larger proportion of women having families of the same size (two to four children), and (4) a slight increase in average family size, owing to increases in unintended fertility.

These patterned descriptions are echoed over and over in the demographic literature (Goldscheider, 1971; Grabill and Parke, 1961; Kiser, Grabill and Campbell, 1968; Ryder, 1958; Westoff and Westoff, 1968; Whelpton, Campbell, and Patterson, 1966; Wrong, 1977). There seems to be a clear understanding and wide agreement among

sociologists as to what happened, demographically speaking, when the birth rate increased after World War II.

This attention to the specific details of the postwar fertility increase has yielded important information about the exact nature and source of the baby boom, providing correctives to mythology about the baby boom. The popular image, for example, is that the postwar bulge in birth rates was caused by an increase in large families. Demographic studies show that this was not really the case. The baby boom is best understood as resulting from an historically specific confluence of demographic events that altered the tempo of fertility within the United States -- e.g., higher rates of marriage, earlier ages at marriage and childbearing, a decrease in spacing between births, an increase in birth to older women, and a decrease in childlessness. While some women did have a large number of children, this was not a dominant pattern, nor does it explain the magnitude of the postwar increase in the birth rate.

Sociologist Norman Ryder (1973) offers a demographic explanation of a different sort. Interpreting that part of the baby boom that was due to an increase in higher order births, specifically the third and fourth child, Ryder claims that these births represent an increase in the rate of unwanted and unplanned births. This rate increased for two related reasons: 1) people married at younger ages, which exposed women to the risks of pregnancy for a longer span of their reproductive lives; and 2) the lack of highly effective contraception like the pill and the IUD made it difficult for couples to prevent conceptions. For Ryder, the higher proportions of third

and fourth births that characterized the baby boom do not reflect a change in desired family size, but rather the inability of couples to attain their desired family size due to these two factors. The fact that couples may have reported an ideal family size preference that matched their true family size merely represents retrospective rationalizations for births that were truly unwanted.

Another trend within the demographic literature on the baby boom is to look at the differences in fertility among subgroups of the population. Ronald Rindfuss and James Sweet's book Postwar Fertility Trends and Differentials in the United States (1977) is typical of this type of work. Their book reveals two important sets of information about the baby boom. First, they found that the fertility increase in the United States during the 1940s and 1950s was a fairly pervasive trend. To quote Rindfuss and Sweet (1977: 38):

... for virtually every education, racial, and age group examined, fertility rates increased during the 1950s and decreased during the 1960s. There are differences in the slopes, and the timing of the peaks; but the dominant picture is that of a rise followed by a decline. The only major exception found is among older, less-educated, rural women. For these women, there was an actual decrease in fertility during the 1950s ...

After demonstrating that the baby boom was a widespread phenomenon, Rindfuss and Sweet document fertility differences between groups. Their analysis of Census data reveals, for example, that the increase in fertility during the baby boom was greater among younger women and among women with higher amounts of education than for older women and women with less education (other examples of this research

orientation can be found in Grabill, Kiser, and Whelpton, 1958; and Kiser, Grabill and Campbell, 1968).

Demographic explanations of the baby boom, then, are mainly concerned with describing it as an empirical and statistical event, and with breaking down the larger trend to show distinct patterns within and across social groupings. Other explanations of the post-World War II baby boom move beyond these descriptive demographic factors, and try to explain why patterns of marriage and childbearing changed to begin with.

Economic Explanations

This interpretation of the baby boom stresses a link between economic factors and the fertility rate. The work of Richard Easterlin (1962; 1973; 1978; 1980) has been the most influential in understanding the baby boom as a consequence of economic processes. Easterlin first discussed the relationship between the economy and the baby boom in 1962 when he proposed that the postwar fertility increase was due to three unique historical circumstances that converged within the United States after World War II: 1) a Kuznets cycle of growth in the economy; 2) restricted immigration into the United States, which eliminated a previously important source of labor power; and 3) a labor force entry rate that was low due to the low immigration rate and the relatively small numbers of younger aged males (from the small birth cohorts of the 1920s and 1930s) in the population. According to Easterlin (1962: 30), these three factors:

... created an exceptional job market for those in family-building ages and as a result drastically accelerated the founding of families.

In a later paper, Easterlin (1973) extends his analysis, explaining how and why he thinks the postwar economic prosperity is related to the increase in the birth rate. Here, Easterlin attributes the baby boom to a favorable "relative economic status" for young married couples in the postwar period. Relative economic status is shaped by two other factors: the income earning potential of young men as they enter the family formation part of their lives; and, the level of material comfort to which these young people are accustomed based on their own socialization and family backgrounds. As a general hypothesis that explains the connection between these two factors, Easterlin (1973: 181) offers the following:

... if young men -- the potential breadwinners of households-- find it easy to make enough money to establish homes in the style desired by them and their actual or prospective brides, then marriage and childbearing will be encouraged. On the other hand, if it is hard to earn enough to support the desired style of life, then the resulting economic stress will lead to deferment of marriage and, for those already married, to the use of contraceptive techniques to avoid childbearing, and perhaps also the entry of wives into the labor market.

This framework provides two explanations for the baby boom: 1) the labor market was open to young men in the postwar period and offered a high income potential; and 2) the level of material comfort available to young women and men after World War II was higher than that of their family of origin in the era of the Depression. Relative economic status was high for young men and women in the late 1940s and 1950s; this promoted marriage and childbearing, and thus the baby boom.

For Easterlin, then, fluctuations in the fertility rate are influenced by the economic opportunities which are available to young

women and men who are in the family building stages of their lives. These economic opportunities are, in turn, affected by the size of the generation or cohort into which they are born, as well as the level of material comforts to which they are accustomed from early experiences in their family of origin. Easterlin has continued to develop this line of argument to explain the decrease in fertility that followed the baby boom (Easterlin, 1978; Easterlin, 1980).

An alternative economic explanation has been offered by William Butz and Michael Ward (1979). In contrast with Easterlin, however, they explore the microeconomic factors that affect fertility, and attempt to explain the choices that couples make about having children at the household level. For Ward and Butz, decisions about fertility are determined by male and female labor force participation, as well as their wages and income levels. Within the household, an increase in the husband's income can lead to an increased demand for children, although this factor is mitigated by the status of the wife in the labor force. If the wife is not employed and the husband's income is high, the demand for children will be high. If a wife is employed, however, and her wages increase, this will act to depress the demand for children. For Butz and Ward (1979: 319), childbearing among employed wives:

... increases the price of children since the opportunity cost of childbearing and rearing rises at the same time.

Put another way, the costs of having children -- in terms of time, money, and physical exertion -- will be higher in families where women work, and will consequently lower the fertility rate.

According to this framework, the baby boom was a consequence of rising male incomes, which increased the demand for children. Young wives were not likely to be employed after World War II; this made it possible for the fertility rate to rise, as it did not raise the opportunity costs of having children. The decrease in the birth rate after 1960, however, was a response to increases in women's wages and income (Butz and Ward, 1979).

Butz and Ward's research complements that of Easterlin, although each set of ideas deals with the effect of economic factors on fertility at a different level of analysis. Both confirm the positive impact that an economic boom can have on fertility rates, whether it is at the household or national level. Of these two economic explanations, however, Easterlin's is by far the most popular among sociologists; it is cited often in the literature (Bean, 1983; Bouvier, 1980; Campbell, 1978; Cherlin, 1981; Russell, 1982; Westoff and Westoff, 1968). But even before Easterlin published his paper, sociologists considered the link between the economy and birth rates to be important. In 1958, for example, Norman Ryder concluded that the postwar fertility increase was best understood as a response to an improved economy. For Ryder, the reason for the baby boom was clear: people could afford to have babies so they did. To quote Ryder (1958: 24):

... given a high enough income level, the modern family will prove to be an adequate procreative institution within an urban-industrial environment.

Demographers, then, see the postwar economic situation and the fertility rate as closely related.

Sociological Explanations

Where demographers have looked to sociology for help in explaining the postwar fertility increase, they have relied on sociological themes like normative structure and changes in values or U.S. culture after World War II. Within this literature, there are very different explanations for the baby boom.

One line of thinking attributes the baby boom to a change in norms about marriage and family life. Referring back to the demographic patterns of the 1940s and 1950s -- younger ages at marriage, and a decrease in childlessness and one-child families in favor of two, three, and four child families -- demographers point out that being married and having a family became the norm for family formation after the war. These patterns represent a break with the 1930s Depression and early 1940s war periods, when marriage rates were lower, the age at marriage was higher, and family size was smaller (Goldscheider, 1971; Westoff and Westoff, 1968).

A variant to this argument is offered by Norman Ryder (1973). Ryder (1973: 61) begins by describing a general reproductive norm within the United States:

Our own view is that the course of American fertility in the twentieth century can be explained by a fixed set of reproductive norms operating within a changing context. These norms specify that all people are expected to marry and have two children as soon as, and providing that, their circumstances permit.

In other words, different social and historical contexts permit or hinder the ability to meet these norms. The post-World War II labor market and economic picture permitted couples to have these two children because it was characterized by prosperity. But

reproductive norms did not change during the baby boom, only the ability to meet them. Unfortunately, Ryder provides no evidence to show that reproductive norms are stable over time.

Using Gallup poll data on ideal family size, Blake and Das Gupta (1975) have shown that Ryder's assumptions and conclusions are incorrect. They document changes in ideal family size from the Depression through 1975, and conclude that there is no fixed reproductive norm of two children within the United States. Describing the historical trends in preferences for family size, Blake and Das Gupta (1975: 233) write:

... the two-child family was never a norm for young people during [the Depression and World War II], but ... family size preferences rose during the time of the baby boom to over three children on the average and declined quite drastically since then.

Blake and Das Gupta's research shows that reproductive norms are not fixed at all, but change over time.

Another sociological explanation of the baby boom looks at changes in values and attitudes. In 1952, for example, Dennis Wrong (1952: 380) speculated on reasons for the upturn in the fertility rate:

There have been signs of a revival of positive attitudes toward the family in the urban middle class; perhaps the growing popularity of psychiatry, and the derogation of the values of work and success in favor of those associated with leisure and security ... has created a new preference for larger families. Possibly the pervasive anxiety of the age has produced a compulsive retreat to the 'fundamentals' of parenthood and domesticity.

Leon Bouvier (1980) also wrote about attitudinal and value shifts as important for understanding the rise in fertility. He

cites the re-emergence of a pro-marriage, pro-housewife, and pro-natalist ethic as important sociological factors that help to explain the baby boom, and therefore points to some of the same value and attitudinal changes that Wrong had described earlier.

One of the more provocative explanations of the baby boom in this tradition is that posed by Glen Elder (1974) in his work Children of the Great Depression. Using life course and cohort analysis, Elder attributes the postwar fertility rate to the unique values adopted by baby boom parents in response to their childhood experiences as they grew up during the Depression. For both women and men, early assumption of adult roles in their families of orientation led to the values of responsibility and maturity, and aspirations for adult status at relatively young ages.

The economic crisis of the 1930s drew adolescents and other children into the deprived family's division of labor earlier than would have otherwise occurred. Children had to assume adult responsibilities in order to maintain the family, responsibilities which were differentially assigned by sex. Girls were drawn into household tasks, while boys sought employment outside the home. As a consequence of these early experiences, Elder (1974: 282) found that, as adults:

The one common value across men and women is the centrality of family and the importance of children in marriage.

The experience of the Depression prepared the way for the early age at marriage, the low rates of childlessness, the decline in one-child families, and the increase in second and third births that occurred after World War II. To quote Elder (1974: 279):

Girls were drawn into a household operation which was controlled by mother ... and were oriented toward a domestic future by this experience and constraints on advanced education. ... Family centered values and a view of life which entails responsibility emerged as dominant perspectives in the lives of women who grew up in deprived households.

The picture was somewhat different for boys:

Economic hardships emancipated boys through the autonomy and obligations of work roles ... Work roles involved boys from deprived homes in adultlike experiences beyond family boundaries, enlarged their sphere of know how, and brought greater awareness to matters of economic independence and vocation. These experiences, and the realities of family hardship, accelerated movement toward the adult world (1974: 279).

The Depression affected young people's choices and value orientations, and led to the baby boom with its attendant emphasis on marriage and family life.

A final sociological explanation of the postwar baby boom is that the increase in fertility was due to changes in the culture within the United States after World War II. This interpretation has been given by Frank Bean (1983) in a review essay on the baby boom. Bean is concerned with explaining two specific components of the baby boom: 1) why both the rate of unintended births and the rate of desired fertility increased at the same time, when they are in apparent contradiction with each other, and (2) why the average family size became so uniform at that time. He attributes these changes to the unique culture of the time which emphasized family, motherhood, and home. For Bean (1983: 361), the increase in desired fertility could be seen as:

... reflections of the cultural milieu of the times, as expressions of the number of children women thought they ought to desire, given the sociocultural emphases of the moment.

The contradictory evidence on desired family size and unintended fertility is best reconciled by looking at the kinds of questions designed to elicit these answers, at the timing of these questions in women's reproductive lives, and at the social structural background of the postwar period. Bean (1983: 362-363) resolves these competing explanations this way:

Confronted with a contradictory society that was rededicating itself to the family and traditional roles between the sexes, while at the same time beckoning women to take up the jobs made increasingly available by prosperity, women in the 1950s responded to questions in ways that showed a preference for large families. Ten years later they acknowledged that a substantial amount of their fertility had been unwanted. This reflects not only the different referents of the questions, but also women's own efforts to reconcile the roles of both mother and worker; it indicates their attempts to adhere to the ideals of a society that exalted motherhood and to cope with the day-to-day realities of a job at the same time.

Bean goes on to explain the uniformity of family size in the postwar era in terms of another contradiction between aggregate economic prosperity and the increased labor force participation among married women. Bean (1983: 364) writes:

... social and cultural conditions during the era supported having families, while at the same time increasing the costs of having large families. If economic prosperity made marriage and family formation easier, rising labor force participation among married women of childbearing ages in the absence of changes in traditional sex role attitudes made having larger families harder.

This explains the preponderance of two and three child families in a pro-family culture.

Bean's explanations tell us little about why the baby boom occurred. Because his main concern was to explain why unintended fertility and desired fertility rose simultaneously, as well as the uniformity in family size after World War II, Bean never gets to the

larger question of why fertility rates increased at all. At other points in his article, Bean discusses the cultural milieu of the time and its pro-family tendencies, attributing the baby boom to that milieu.

Combined Interpretations

Recent attempts to evaluate the reasons for the baby boom have produced more complex answers by combining different interpretations for the fertility increase. Bean's (1983) review article is one example of this effort. Bean believes that Easterlin's model of fertility swings, economic growth, and cohort size is useful for understanding some components of the change in the birth rate. As I have discussed, he supplements Easterlin by looking at changes in U.S. culture after World War II, specifically with regard to women's labor force participation and the strong emphasis on motherhood and family. His use of more than one explanation provides a broader understanding of the baby boom.

Andrew Cherlin (1981) has also relied on a synthesis of explanations to understand the postwar fertility rise. For him, the ideas of Easterlin and Elder are most compelling; each reinforces the other to make the baby boom more comprehensible. To quote Cherlin (1981: 44):

The childhood and adolescent experiences of many of the men and women born in the 1920s predisposed them to place a greater value on home and family and, possibly, a lower value on material comforts. When the general shift in values about family life occurred in the 1950s, they may have been in the vanguard. Moreover, the small size of the cohorts of the 1920s and 1930s worked to their advantage during the postwar economic boom. Their relatively favorable economic situation, in turn, may have made it easier for them to achieve the kind of family life they desired.

Demographers, then, explain the postwar rise in fertility as a consequence of other demographic events, as a reaction to changes in the economy, or as a reflection of changes in norms, values, attitudes, or the culture in U.S. society. I turn now to a look at the problems and omissions within that literature. I want to cast a critical eye on these interpretations as a way of framing a research proposal that will address some of those problems and omissions, as well as point a new direction for theory and research on fertility.

FOOTNOTES FOR CHAPTER 2

1. Considered in an international context, however, the baby boom was not so large an increase. Many countries of the Third World had and continue to have much higher birth rates when compared with countries in the West. Within the United States, the reversal in historical trends in the birth rate after World War II, and the fact that it remained high for over a decade, fostered the idea of a great "boom" in the fertility rate. In the 1960s, demographers and other population experts wrote about the dangers of overpopulation (Day and Day, 1964), and debated over the consequences of high birth rates for the future quality of life within the United States (Callahan, 1971). Although the birth rate has declined steadily since the 1960s, calming these fears about overpopulation, demographers are still writing about the long term effects that this population bulge will have on U.S. society as the baby boom generation moves through the life cycle (Jones, 1980; Moore, 1977; Russell, 1982; Whaley, 1983). For demographers within the United States, then, the increase in fertility after World War II seemed quite large.

2. Transition theory has, of course, changed a great deal since Notestein's original formulation. Current research which uses transition theory includes a number of historical and cross-cultural studies on demographic transitions within specific countries. Taken together, this body of research has produced rich detail about the nature of transitions and the varieties of ways in which they begin and develop, and provided necessary correctives and revisions to transition theory (See, for example, Coale and Watkins, 1986; Lockridge, 1984; Mosk, 1983; Teitelbaum, 1984). There are also critiques and revisions of the theoretical model itself (See, for example, Caldwell, 1976; Folbre, 1983; Handwerker, 1986). Demographic transition theory, as a consequence, is not nearly as monolithic or unilinear a model as it once was; scholars recognize that there is more than one path to the demographic transition.

CHAPTER 3 GENDER, REPRODUCTION, AND FERTILITY: MAKING CONNECTIONS

Introduction

In the last chapter, I reviewed widely cited explanations for the post-World War II increase in birth rates, known more commonly as the baby boom. The explanations cluster into demographic, economic, and sociological types. I turn now to a discussion of the problems within these interpretations; I will use this critique to formulate the research question that this project attempts to answer.

I argue here that, although each of the explanations reviewed in Chapter 2 is an important piece of the puzzle about the baby boom, all are flawed in their conceptualizations of gender. Some interpretations ignore the significance of gender altogether. While many authors take account of gender in their interpretations, or include it at some level in their analysis, these understandings are narrow and superficial, and distorted by their use of functionalist social thought. These accounts of the baby boom fail to adequately and fully conceptualize the sociological importance of gender to understanding fertility.

Before discussing the problems specific to explanations for the baby boom, I will sketch out a conceptual framework for understanding the importance of gender in social life, and propose an appropriate context for understanding fertility rates, one which evolves from a gender-sensitive theoretical scheme. Using insights from these discussions, I will explore the problems within dominant interpretations of the baby boom. Finally, I will lay out a set of

research questions that will begin to resolve some of these problems, questions which I will attempt to answer in this study.

The Social Construction of Gender

In order to understand the concept of gender and its importance in sociological work, the distinction between the terms "sex" and "gender" must be made. Although they are often used synonymously, they have very different meanings. "Sex" refers to the biological categories of male and female, and is assigned at birth on the basis of physiological differences in genitalia. "Gender" refers to the cultural, social, and psychological meanings given to these sex categories, as well as to the ways in which they are organized within social structures. These meanings are dichotomized into masculinities and femininities. Margaret Andersen (1983: 25) explains the difference in this way:

The concept of gender refers specifically to socially learned behavior and expectations that are associated with members of a biological sex category. Gender is an acquired identity; biological sex usually is not. Biological sex refers to the genetic and physical sexual identity of the person.¹

Gender is therefore a social product that is intertwined with, yet analytically separable from, the realm of biology. Sherry Ortner and Harriet Whitehead (1981: 1) explain this in the introduction to their book Sexual Meanings:

What gender is, what men and women are, what sorts of relations do or should obtain between them -- all of these notions do not simply reflect or elaborate upon biological "givens," but are largely products of social and cultural processes.

Sandra Harding's (1986) delineation of three dimensions of gender is helpful for comprehending its profound sociological importance. She differentiates between gender symbolism, gender

structure, and individual gender. Gender symbolism is the tendency to attribute gender to all facets of social life so that the world appears as sets of gendered dualisms. Examples of this tendency include the construction of opposites like rational and irrational, passive and active, terms which are differentially projected onto men and women, who are said to be members of "the opposite sex;" or, assigning gender to objects which have no gender (e.g. boats, cars, hurricanes, countries) based on perceived associations with stereotyped masculine or feminine attributes. Gender structure refers to the dividing of societal activities into a man's and a woman's part, or the sexual division of labor. Finally, individual gender is the socially constructed and internalized sense of gender that each person absorbs as part of his/her personality. For Harding, analyses that neglect any of these aspects of gender fail to appreciate fully the way in which all of life is saturated with gendered meanings. By extension, they cannot fully capture the complexity of social life.

The division of the world into women and men, into femininities and masculinities, is not therefore normally or naturally derived from biology. Gender is a socially constructed division that, like race and class, organizes individual experience and social activity. It shapes and is shaped by institutional arrangements and social structure. Gender, not sex, is the crucial analytical category.

The differentiation between sex and gender, and the "discovery" of the latter as a significant theoretical category that is rooted in social, and not biological processes, has yielded another important

theoretical construct -- the sex/gender system. Originally developed by the anthropologist Gayle Rubin (1975), a sex/gender system refers to the social and cultural processes whereby biological sex takes on specific meanings and gets elaborated into gender. According to Rubin (1975: 165), a sex/gender system is

... a set of arrangements by which the biological material of human sex and procreation is shaped by human, social intervention and satisfied in a conventional manner.

Every society has a sex/gender system, although the exact nature varies historically and cross-culturally, as well as by age, class, ethnicity, and race within societies. And although each society has a sex/gender system that is unique, all sex/gender systems share the following three characteristics: 1) each creates and sustains at least two gender categories -- men and women; 2) each specifies a sexual division of labor, which divides and assigns work by gender; and 3) each prescribes rules regarding sexuality. While some societies tolerate different forms of sexual expression in varying degrees, every society is dominated by a system of compulsory heterosexuality.

The philosopher Sandra Harding (1983: 312) makes the following assessment of the sex/gender system:

The sex/gender system appears to be a fundamental variable organizing social life throughout most recorded history and in every culture today. Like racism and classism, it is an organic social variable -- it is not merely an "effect" of other, more primary causes. Of course, the sex/gender system is expressed in differing intensities and forms in different cultures and classes. Men's and women's "natures" and relative abilities to determine their own social, economic, and political lives appear very different if one looks from matrilineal to patrilineal societies, from pre-capitalist to capitalist formations, from aristocratic to democratic cultures, and, of course, from wealthy to poverty-level and white to black lives in America today.

However, beneath this considerable variation in the intensities and forms the sex/gender system takes, its underlying dynamic is detectable. Like racism and classism, the sex/gender system appears to limit and create opportunities within which are constructed the social practices of daily life, the characteristics of social institutions, and all of our patterns of thought (emphasis in the original).

Both Rubin and Harding emphasize the centrality of gender in the organization of social structure and experience.

In spite of the wide cultural and historical variation in sex/gender systems, male domination and the subordination of women is common to most, if not all. Commenting on this fact, Michelle Rosaldo (1974: 17) identified:

... a universal asymmetry in cultural valuations of the sexes. Women may be important, powerful, and influential, but it seems that, relative to men of their age and social status, women everywhere lack generally recognized and culturally valued authority.

Sex/gender systems are, therefore, characterized by power relations between men and women, and by unequal access to societal resources (e.g., economic autonomy, political influence, power and authority within families) based in gender (Richardson, 1981).

In short, gender is a fundamental dimension of social organization, and should be an essential theoretical category in analyses of the social world. It must be understood as a cultural and social product that interacts with, but is distinguishable from, biological sex. A flourishing body of empirical research, interdisciplinary in nature, has emerged from this insight about the social constructedness of gender. For specific historical reasons, however, this research focusses much more on women's lives than on men's.

The concern with gender as a missing but critical piece of knowledge about social life is an outgrowth of the women's movement of the 1960s. The women's movement called attention to the inequality and discrimination that women face in employment, education, and other social institutions, as well as the ways in which men dominate women in interpersonal relationships through economic power, violence, and other more subtle forms of intimidation. Within the United States, an allegedly democratic society that valued equality for all, women were treated as second class citizens. This critique prompted the call and struggle for remedies to the problem of gender inequality at all levels of U.S. society.

In the 1970s, this critique spread to the academy. Feminist scholars in the humanities, arts, and sciences examined their respective disciplines and found them to be androcentric, skewed to male experience, and sexist in their assumptions about women's lives. They called for a re-thinking of knowledge to correct the biases (Fowlkes and McClure, 1984; Langland and Gove, 1981; Millman and Kanter, 1975; Spender, 1981). Much of the actual research produced out of this critique is about women's lives, and reflects attempts to correct distortions and right imbalances in what we know about the world.

Gender in Sociological Analysis

Within sociology, the feminist critique of knowledge runs a gamut. Most feminist sociologists agree on the problems -- the discipline of sociology has failed to include women because it has

studied only men, has distorted women's experiences by judging them in terms of men's values or experiences, and has ghettoized their experiences within certain areas of the discipline while ignoring their importance in others. There is wide disagreement, however, on the solutions to these problems. For sociologists at one extreme, the solution is to bring women into sociology, using an essentially unaltered set of conceptual, theoretical, and methodological tools to understand their world (Epstein, 1974; Epstein, 1981; Millman and Kanter, 1975; Roberts, 1981a).

Feminist sociologists at the other extreme suggest that sociology as it is now constituted cannot fully account for women's experiences. Sociological concepts, methods, and theories are so infused with male values and masculinist thinking that they are incapable of adequately describing the lives of women. Men and women inhabit different social worlds; knowledge of women's worlds requires either new concepts, methods, and paradigms of analysis, or a profound reworking of existing frameworks (Bernard, 1973; Borovik, 1984; Gould, 1980; Smith, 1974; Smith, 1977; Stacey and Thorne, 1985; Stanley and Wise, 1983).

In developing this critique, feminist sociologists discovered the significant implications of using gender as a theoretical category. The understanding of gender which many had inherited came from structural functionalism, and conceptualized gender with terms like "sex roles," "the male role," and "the female role." Within this framework, sex roles are seen as socially necessary divisions based in biological differences between women and men. Sex roles are

divided into instrumental (male) and expressive (female) functions, which support the maintenance of the family and social cohesion in general (Parsons, 1954; Parsons and Bales, 1955).

Reacting to this formulation, feminist sociologists claimed that the functionalist conception of "sex roles" was too narrow and confining an explanation of social reality, that the division of the world into men and women has wider, deeper meanings than role theory suggests. Being a man or a woman in U.S. society is not simply a role, something which can be assumed, abandoned, or changed like an occupational role; it is a core dimension of social experience, one which cannot be taken on and off at will. And assuming that sex roles are an elaboration of biological differences between males and females glosses over the variations that exist in those elaborations across history and within and across societies. Moreover, role theory implies that men and women are different but equal, which ignores or masks the power differences that exist as a consequence of their differing social positions. The term gender was invoked to separate biological from social processes, to allow for the social constructedness of gender, and to allow more distinctions in understandings of gender -- e.g., "gender identity," "social organization of gender," "gendered personality" -- all thrown confusingly together in the notion of "sex role" (Connell, 1983; Gould, 1980; Lopata and Thorne, 1978; Thorne, 1980).

Substantive research that has evolved from these critiques emphasizes the centrality of gender to all social processes. Rosabeth Moss Kanter's (1977) research, reported in Men and Women of

the Corporation, has altered perspectives on work and organizations. Analyzing men's and women's positions and behaviors within organizations, Kanter found that the differences she observed between women and men were responses to their allocation to different positions, and not the consequence of intrinsic sex differences. Men's and women's behaviors were shaped by the structures of opportunity available to each gender, by their access to power within the corporation, and by the relative numbers of men and women within the organization itself. Barrie Thorne with Marilyn Yalom's (1982) collection on the feminist re-thinking of families successfully challenges misconceptions about family which have been taken for granted in much of sociology. Contributors to their book show that the family is not a fixed, unchanging, harmonious, monolithic entity that is separate from the rest of the world, but a complex, historically changing institution that shapes and is shaped by other socio-historical processes. Further, families harbor gender and generational conflicts, violence against women and children, and power relations between men and women, parents and children. It is a core structure in the subordination of women. Finally, research in the area of work and occupations has shown the extensive segregation of the labor force by gender, a segregation that favors men over women and supports gender inequality in the division of labor (Blaxall and Reagan, 1976; Reskin and Hartmann, 1986).

Attention to gender has also opened new lines of sociological inquiry. The shift away from thinking about womanhood as a role, for example, has allowed sociologists to view housework as a job and an

occupation, as well as a feature of women's identity (Oakley, 1974), and has enriched our understanding of motherhood (Chodorow, 1978). The focus on women's lives has led to the study of emotions in social life (Hochschild, 1975; Hochschild, 1983) and violence within gender relations (Breines and Gordon, 1983; Dobash and Dobash, 1979; Russell, 1982). Gender sensitive research has shown that the use of a term like "the poor" glosses over the significance of gender to understanding the phenomenon of poverty (Sidel, 1987; Signs, 1984). Deepened understanding has also resulted from close attention to gender in discussions of divorce (Arendell, 1986; Weitzman, 1985).

This relatively new research tradition has challenged and transformed much of what we know in sociology. The inclusion of gender has led to new questions, and has changed the answers to those questions, offering a more complex picture of social reality.

Gender and Fertility

The scholarly emphasis on gender has also created a body of substantive empirical research that provides clues about the relationship between the social organization of gender and changing birth rates, or fertility. This is not demographic research per se; few of the authors I cite here are trained demographers. By and large, their research is not used by demographers who study fertility. Nonetheless, their work provides much needed information about the social milieu within which births occur. In my opinion, fertility is best understood within this framework.

Gendered scholarship locates fertility and fertility rates within a larger phenomenon called reproduction. I define the term

reproduction as: the set of biological, cultural, and social processes that influence and shape the bearing and rearing of children. As with the term gender, it is crucial to comprehend the social nature of human reproduction, and to understand that social and biological processes interact to shape its meaning within social structures. The political theorist Rosalind Petchesky (1984: 9) clarifies this necessity:

[Reproduction] involves not only "natural," or biological, relations but social, cooperative relations among men and women through sexual and procreative practices. That activity is social insofar as it is cooperative, purposive, and above all conscious.

The biology and physiology of reproduction are mediated by culture and social structure, which help shape social meanings and experiences. The meanings and practices associated with childbirth, for example, vary immensely across social and cultural contexts (Jordan, 1978).

Like the social organization of gender, reproduction varies over time, across cultures, and within cultures, and takes shape within specific age, class, race, and gender relations. New high-tech methods of reproduction like in vitro fertilization and artificial insemination, for example, have increased the range of possibilities for single women, lesbians, and the infertile. Coupled with surrogate motherhood, these methods offer more options for men and women who want children but cannot have them. They also raise complex legal, political, and ethical issues with regard to their use, and challenge previous assumptions about motherhood and families (Arditti, Klein, and Minden, 1984; Corea, 1985). Likewise, prenatal

genetic screening, now widely available via amniocentesis, is creating a new, more complex, often painful, set of choices for pregnant women and their partners (Rothman, 1986). These choices were not widely available ten years ago. Choices have been removed, on the other hand, where racism and classism have combined to produce a system of involuntary or coercive sterilization. More often than not, poor and minority women are the targets of such programs (Corea, 1977; Dreifus, 1977b, Petchesky, 1984). The availability of contraception -- what forms it takes, who has access to it, its costs and mode of distribution -- have also changed over time (Gordon, 1977; Petchesky, 1984). Reproductive choices and possibilities must be understood within these historically specific relations and contexts.

For the purposes of this research project, the most important insight which comes from this theoretical framework is that the organization of reproduction is intimately related to gender arrangements, or sex/gender systems. More specifically, reproductive choices and possibilities are linked to ideologies about women, men, motherhood, and fatherhood, and to the experiences and situations of men and women. Using this insight, empirical research has generated three other broad conclusions about relationships between gender and reproduction.

First, gendered scholarship on reproduction has shown how, at the institutional level, reproduction is controlled more by men than by women. By virtue of their positions as politicians, lawmakers, religious leaders, doctors, scientists, and owners of drug companies,

men control the technology, morality, availability, and accessibility of reproductive possibilities. This ability to control reproduction is an extension of men's greater power in social life in general; that is, their monopoly over valued societal resources like political power and high paying, prestigious jobs (Corea, 1977; Dreifus, 1977a, Oakley, 1984; Rich, 1976; Roberts, 1981b; Rothman, 1982).

Closely related to the above is that fact that women lack the full control over their own bodies because they do not control these reproductive possibilities (Corea, 1977; Dreifus, 1977a; Roberts, 1981b). While this sounds like the simple converse of the first generalization, it is also more than that. There is a certain perversity to this arrangement vis-a-vis reproduction. Because only they can bear children, women are more closely tied to the institution of reproduction than are men. But beyond biological capability, women have been made responsible for the care and nurturance of children (Bloch, 1978; Rich, 1976). The fact that women lack basic self-determination and autonomy in the area of reproduction is a particularly ironic arrangement given the asymmetrical childcare responsibilities of men and women (Petchesky, 1984; Rich, 1976).

Finally, recent gender-sensitive research reveals that male control over reproduction is neither hegemonic nor monolithic. Reproduction is a contested terrain, where men and women struggle with a variety of social agents -- the state, medical establishments, drug companies, and religious institutions -- for reproductive choices, reproductive freedoms, and the right to individual self-

determination. Historical studies document how the struggle over birth control and abortion have a longer history than the 1970s and 1980s. Women (and men) have struggled to make birth control and abortion available and accessible throughout history (Gordon, 1977; Petchesky, 1984). Each of these studies -- Gordon's of birth control and Petchesky's of abortion -- starts in the middle of the nineteenth century and carries the analysis forward to contemporary debates. Other studies document current struggles over the issue of abortion (e.g., Luker, 1984). Modes and ideologies of childbirth have also varied historically, and reflect struggles between midwives, who were overwhelmingly women and who used techniques developed through practical experience, and a medical institution dominated by men, purportedly based in objectivity and science. The social forms that childbirth takes reflect differing conceptions of womanhood, motherhood, health, and pathology (Ehrenreich and English, 1973; Oakley, 1984; Rich, 1976; Wertz and Wertz, 1979).

Taken together, this body of writing on gender and reproduction offers a perspective on fertility which I adapt here. Put simply, this perspective says that levels of fertility, or birth rates, are but one dimension of a larger social process called reproduction, and that these births occur within specific social relations at particular points in time. In other words, there is a background, a landscape, which influences fertility rates and helps to explain their fluctuations. Of particular importance on that landscape is the sex/gender system, and the way it is organized at that historical moment. Women's and men's fertility behaviors and rates should be

understood in the context of sex/gender systems. Rosalind Petchesky

(1984: 9) gives the essence of this perspective when she writes:

A woman does not simply "get pregnant" and "give birth" like the flowing of tides and seasons. She does so under the constraint of material conditions that set limits on "natural" reproductive processes -- for example, existing birth control methods and technology and access to them; class divisions and the distribution/financing of health care; nutrition; employment, particularly of women; and the state of the economy generally. And she does so within a specific network of social relations and social arrangements involving herself, her sexual partner(s), her children and kin, neighbors, doctors, family planners, birth control providers and manufacturers, employers, the church, and the state (emphasis in the original).

Demographic frameworks have not incorporated many of the basic insights of this perspective. They either fail to include gender as a central category of analysis, or include it in overly simplistic ways. I turn now to a discussion of problems with demographic explanations of the baby boom.

Demographic Accounts of the Baby Boom: A Critical Look

Explanations of the baby boom do not treat gender as the significant theoretical category which feminist research has shown it to be. By and large, they do not explore relationships between sex/gender systems in postwar United States and rates of fertility at that time. Interpretations vary, however, in whether they include gender and, if they do, the assumptions they make.

The first level of inclusion is really exclusion: some interpretations of the baby boom do not include gender in their explanatory framework. Most of the demographic explanations fall under this heading. Campbell (1978), for example, uses the term "cohort" to describe the demography of the baby boom. Russell (1982) and Ryder (1973), in contrast, use the term "women" in their

descriptions of the baby boom. Although the latter two authors use a gender term while Campbell does not, none treat gender as central or important in their respective explanations. The focus instead is on the way in which the fertility rate can be broken down into its component parts. The use of "women" reflects the acknowledgement that women, not men, get pregnant, carry, and bear children. Fertility, or births, happens to women and not to men. "Women" are significant for this reason only, and so they are mentioned. There is, however, no substantive concern with gender as a category of analysis or as a feature of social organization and human experience which is theoretically significant to the explanation being offered. Not surprisingly, these explanations often beg other questions important to the sociologist of sex and gender: why did more women marry than ever before? why did they marry at younger ages? why did the tempo of their fertility change? etc. Attention to changes in the lives of women and men after World War II would help answer these kinds of questions.

The second level of inclusion of gender evident in accounts of the baby boom is much more complex than the first. Although each explanation offers different slants on the baby boom picture, all are infused with a functionalist conception of gender and family relations. This vision narrows and limits the power of those accounts for explaining relationships between gender and fertility.

Interpretations of the baby boom treat the sexual division of labor as a normal and natural feature of social structure which is not sociologically problematic. Implicit and sometimes explicit in

their analysis is an acceptance of a sexual division of labor where women are primarily wives and mothers, and men work outside the home for pay. While this assumption is not entirely unfounded, it does lead to a fairly static picture of the world, one which ignores the variations in sexual divisions of labor over time and across different groups. This is seen most especially in the works of Bean (1983), Butz and Ward (1979), Easterlin (1978; 1980), and Elder (1974). To a lesser degree, it is present in the reviews by Bouvier (1980) and Wrong (1952).

Assuming the breadwinner/homemaker form of the sexual division of labor also leads to a distorted understanding of fertility because it assumes that births occur only within heterosexual nuclear families to married couples. This very conservative view of the family is seen clearly in both Easterlin (1978; 1980) and Butz and Ward (1979), who use the language of marital roles -- "husbands" and "wives" -- in their explanations of the baby boom. Births occur under a wide array of conditions and in a variety of family forms, to unmarried and divorced women, for example, who may, by the way, be both breadwinners and mothers within their families. These births should not be ignored in thinking about why fertility rates fluctuate over time.

Scholars of the baby boom also treat gender as a fixed part of social life and human identity that does not vary. Most studies of the demography of the baby boom do not look at gender constructions or gender relations after World War II, or at how they might be different from, or the same as, other periods in U.S. history. They

communicate that gender arrangements were the same in the 1940s and 1950s as in the 1920s and 1930s. They neglect analyses of class, ethnic, or race differences in these gender constructions. Men as breadwinners and women as wives and mothers are viewed as socially universal; this division of labor is projected backward and forward in time. This is a particularly strange problem, for many of the authors point to changes in the social organization of gender while implying that it hasn't changed at all. Elder (1974), for example, describes how adolescents in Depression stricken families were drawn into an adult sexual division of labor to keep the family afloat. This arrangement led to the early assumption of adult roles, roles which were organized and divided by gender. Elder is describing a profound change in gender, particularly as it was organized by age; yet he ignores those changes and emphasizes instead the continuity of the sexual division of labor over time. This same problem appears in the work of Butz and Ward (1979) and Easterlin (1962; 1973; 1980), when they talk about changes in women's or men's labor force participation after World War II, but fail to talk about how these changes signalled transformations in the social structural organization of gender and sexual divisions of labor. All of these studies would be strengthened by an exploration of how the organization of gender, gender ideologies, and sexual divisions of labor changed, as well as patterns of continuity.

Frank Bean's (1983) interpretation of the baby boom begins to resolve some of these problems. He hints at changes in the meaning of womanhood and the sexual division of labor when he attributes the

postwar increase in desired family size to cultural emphases on home, family, and motherhood. Bean acknowledges that ideas about women's proper place change in reaction to other societal events. Bean does not explore these connections, however, leaving the reader to ask why the culture changed to emphasize home and motherhood at that particular point in history. Another question raised by Bean's work concerns changes in the meaning of manhood after World War II. If the culture changed to emphasize home, family, and motherhood, what particular impact and meanings did this have for men? Analyses of the sex/gender system after World War II may give answers to these questions.

While Bean treats gender as a dynamic entity, his work suffers from a reliance on role theory, a weakness he shares with most scholars of the baby boom. Bean describes the changes in definitions of womanhood and women's labor force participation after World War II as changes in sex roles. Using such a framework implies that women and men are different but equal, occupying different roles within a structurally differentiated society. Such conceptualizations gloss the inequality that characterizes those "sex roles" within the United States, as well as the differential access to power and valued societal resources which accrue to men from gender arrangements. By extension, Bean misses opportunities to understand how these forms of gender inequality are related to changing fertility rates.

Another problem in accounts of the baby boom is the assumption that fertility is the result or consequence of decision-making by individuals or couples, and that fertility rates simply represent the

aggregate of these individual decisions. This is most notable in the work of Butz and Ward (1979), who attribute changing fertility rates to a kind of cost-benefit analyses that couples engage in within households. This line of thinking ignores the wider social context - of reproduction, of gender, class, race, and age relations, of social life in general -- in which decisions about fertility are made. Individuals and couples do make decisions about fertility, but they make them at certain social and historical moments. These wider contexts influence the choices that are available, and therefore the decisions which can be made about fertility.

The work of Bean (1983), Easterlin (1962; 1973; 1978; 1980), Elder (1974) Ryder, (1958), Wrong (1952) all explain the postwar increase in fertility in the context of other postwar events. With the exception of Bean, however, none focus specifically on the social organization of gender at that time. Changes in the social organization of gender are either not examined, or reduced to a change in norms or the emergence of pro-motherhood and pro-housewife tendencies within the culture. These references or hints at the significance of gender need to be explored in much more detail to appreciate their potential impact on the fertility rate. Moving out of a functionalist framework, which assumes a certain relatively fixed set of gender arrangements, and stepping into a more gender sensitive theoretical stance, invites different questions about the social construction of gender and its significance to fertility behaviors.

The Problem of Method

A final problem with accounts of the baby boom used by demographers is their over-reliance on quantitative empiricism, which reduces gender to a variable and misses some of its theoretical possibilities. In its use of quantitative methodology, demography neglects other ways of gathering data on fertility. Demographers rely almost exclusively on survey data -- from the Vital Registration system, the Census Bureau, or other nationally conducted sample surveys -- to understand trends in demographic processes. And because these data sets have large sample sizes, high powered statistical tests can be used to analyze the data. Within this methodological system, gender is a numerical value, a binary variable -- male/female -- to be manipulated and correlated with other variables in a data set. Male and female experiences get reduced to something that can be measured or indexed. The use of labor force participation rates and income in accounts of the baby boom are good examples of this tendency.

A related problem in demographic understandings of gender has to do with its position within methodological and theoretical designs. Most often, sex is a background variable in demographic studies. And since it is not germane to the questions being asked or viewed as problematic, it is not seen as important to the answers. Gender does not become theoretically significant in these types of studies. Few studies of the baby boom reviewed here start with a theoretical framework or a research question that led to inquiry about the lives

of women and men in the postwar period as it may have affected the dramatic rise in fertility.

Treating gender as a variable or a quantity oversimplifies its meaning in social life, and diminishes historically specific contextual understandings about its significance. Quantification feeds the problem discussed earlier, where gender is seen as a static category. Historical patterns in gendered behavior are reduced to statistical trends, that tend to gloss the specific historical context in which the behaviors occurred. The reliance on quantitative methods of analysis inhibits a richer, more complex understanding of demographic processes. Qualitative research in demography, such as in-depth interviews with men and women about their fertility decisions and behaviors, would provide a much needed complement to these quantitative studies, while also permitting a more holistic and context-specific understanding of demographic processes.

I have argued so far that demographic accounts of the baby boom do not incorporate understandings of gender that are as complete as they should or could be. Most treat gender as fixed and static in time and across social groupings, as a quantity or variable devoid of social context, or as a social role. Demographic interpretations often fail to make the social organization of gender theoretically central in their work. Yet, gender is a central organizing feature of the social world. As such, it is an important dimension of demographic processes, including fertility.

An Old Question: A New Answer?

In this research project, I begin to explore relationships between gender and changing birth rates. The overarching purpose of this undertaking is to see how attention to gender -- how it was defined, organized, and experienced by women and men in the post-World War II United States -- might change the understandings and interpretations of the baby boom. I am therefore asking a very simple question, one which sociologists have also asked: what caused the post-World War II baby boom? By exploring the social organization of gender at that time, I have changed the "angle of vision" in looking for the answers (Epstein, 1974). Before describing the social organization of gender and social life in the postwar United States, I will describe the more specific research questions I asked in this study, the methodology I used for gathering data, and the problems I encountered in the process of research.

FOOTNOTES FOR CHAPTER 3

1. Andersen says that sex is usually not acquired because there are some cases where the sex of a child is unclear and gets constructed. "Hermaphroditism" refers to the situation where the reproductive system is not fully developed as either male or female, resulting in ambiguous or incomplete genital development at birth. In these cases, sex is acquired via surgical procedures that create a sex-specific genital structure (Andersen, 1983: 25-26).

CHAPTER 4 RESEARCH STRATEGY AND METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION

Research Questions

This research project attempts to overcome a major problem and omission in the literature on the baby boom -- the near absence of understandings of the social organization of gender in analyses of the post-World War II rise in birth rates. I ask the same question that sociologists have asked since the 1940s -- why did the baby boom occur -- but try to answer the question from a gendered perspective. At its most general and inclusive level, the research question is: how might a sociological understanding of the sex/gender system and the position of men and women within the United States during the 1940s and 1950s help explain the increase in fertility at that time?

In order to research this general question, I broke it into several parts:

1. First, I wanted to describe the major features of the era, specifically its political economy. I sought a general sociological understanding of U.S. society in the postwar period. The goal of this part of the study was to create a socio-historical context, to set the stage, for the rest of the study.
2. Second, I wanted to examine how "womanhood" and "manhood" were constructed and how the sexual division of labor was defined in the postwar period. The purpose of this piece of the research was to understand gender prescriptions and ideologies of the late 1940s and 1950s.
3. Third, I wanted to investigate the actual position of men and women within the United States after World War II. I chose three particular dimensions of social life: employment, education, and the world of politics. For example, this part of the study would document men and women's position within the economy by looking at patterns of employment, with attention to shifts in sectors of employment by sex after World War II. My goal was to understand how sexual divisions of labor were

organized at the social structural level, and how this was consistent or in contradiction with ideologies of gender.

4. I wanted to find out whether or not the postwar period was different from other periods in terms of patterns of family formation, and if these patterns differed for men and for women. Here, I collected information on marriage and divorce rates. I also wanted to look at the availability and use of contraception during that time period. Post-World War II United States is often noted for its conservatism and emphasis on the family. I wanted to see if this was somehow reflected in patterns of family formation. These patterns might reveal important information about the social organization of gender in the post-World War II period.

After all the steps of the research process were done, I planned to reinterpret the baby boom from a gender centered approach. The question to be answered was: how did this attention to the social organization of gender and the lives of men and women change interpretations of the baby boom, and perhaps fertility in general? From the study, I hoped to be able to speculate on factors that are important to studying fertility as a gendered phenomenon. This, in turn, might open new directions for demographic theory and research on fertility.

Limitation Decisions: The Case of the Baby Boom

As I discussed in Chapter 1, I chose a case study approach because the literature on fertility in general seemed so vast that I would be unable to adequately capture all of it. A case study seemed more logical because it made the topic of fertility more concrete and manageable, allowing me to explore the relationships between gender and fertility. I use the baby boom as an illustrative case about those relationships.

But like all methodological strategies, the case study has both strengths and weaknesses. Choosing a case study meant that I could

take an in-depth look at a single social phenomena, providing rich description and detail about the period from 1945 to 1960 within the United States as well as its gender relations. The data would be fairly extensive, and my conclusions about that case would be grounded in data. On the other hand, choosing one case also meant that I had to be careful in making generalizations and conclusions about relationships between gender and fertility. I had to separate what was unique to the case from the theoretical insights that seem to transcend the case. In choosing a case study, then, the strength of the method -- an in-depth look at one historical and demographic period -- was also its weakness -- tentativeness in drawing general conclusions about the larger theoretical questions.

There were three reasons for my choice of the baby boom as my case study. The first was both theoretical and practical. The period from 1945 to 1960 has been recognized as a unique time period in the United States. After World War II, U.S. society changed from what it had been during the Depression of the late 1930s and the war; it changed again in the 1960s. The 1950s, in particular, are seen as very different from the 1960s. This time period was therefore recognized as historically and socially unique. In addition, the baby boom of the postwar period was a distinct demographic event. The baby boom poses a puzzle for demographers and other population experts since it did not fit their predictions. Since the demographic period and the socio-historical period coincided, I chose this as my case.

Secondly, I chose the baby boom because I thought I would be able to get a substantial amount of information about that demographic and socio-historical period. The baby boom started 42 years ago. Given the amount of time that has passed, I thought I would be able to find more complete data and more thorough explanations of the period and of gender arrangements than if I had chosen a more recent time period. Time has also passed for demographers, enough so that they can reflect on long term trends in, and explanations for, the postwar baby boom.

The third reason is a more personal one. I am a child of the baby boom. My parents married at the age of 17 and, by the age of 30, had nine children, all born between 1945 and 1956. I wanted to understand why they had made those choices -- what historical forces and gender arrangements had shaped their decisions? Because their pattern of family formation fit the baby boom so well, I was especially interested in that period.

Methods of Data Collection

The data for this research came from documents and bibliographic sources. Since the goal of this project was to reinterpret the baby boom within a gendered perspective, the generation of new data was not necessary. Instead, I collected data from primary and secondary sources that already existed and reviewed them to illuminate my research question. The process of data collection required that I pull together the work that had already been done and recast it in terms of my research topic. Each set of questions to which I wanted to find answers required a different type

of search. I had different challenges and problems with each set of questions -- sometimes too much data, sometimes too little; problems of definitional disparity or changing definitions over time, etc. I will discuss these problems, and what I learned in the process of doing this research.

The Social History of the Post-World War II Period. I started my exploration of the postwar period by pursuing a regular search of historical abstracts e.g., America: History and Life and Combined Retrospective Index to Journals in History. I quickly abandoned them. These were not fruitful sources of data for me because I was looking for historical overviews of the period. Most of the citations here were journal articles or book reviews that focussed on a specific feature of the society, and did not offer the kind of overall view that I wanted. Many articles, for example, dealt with U.S. foreign relations with specific countries during the postwar period. My purpose was not to study the 1945-1960 period in such depth; this was, after all, a background research question which was less important to my overall project than was the research on the social organization or gender.

One benefit that came from looking at these tools was the realization that historians and historical bibliographers periodize the historical literature as I have done, labelling the postwar period 1945/1946-1960. My periodization is in step with the work of many historians.

I next went to the card catalog with the resolve that I would somehow select 10 general histories of the postwar period, read them,

and develop an essay on common themes that emerged from my reading. I quickly gave up this method of getting a reading list. There were far too many books to choose from, and some appealed to me more than others. I ended up reading a few books that were interesting to me in terms of title, table of contents and introduction. From there, I read their bibliographic essays and found other books that they recommended. A few of the books that I read were must reads according to the authors I started with; that is, they were recommended by more than one author. Although I planned to read many more, I ended up reading seven historical books about this period and skimming others. I stopped at seven because the material was starting to get repetitive. Despite their variation in approach and emphasis, many of the books cover the same events.

I stopped when I reached saturation and when I felt comfortable enough to write about what happened in the United States during that period. Treating the books I read as I would interviews, I wrote about common themes which emerged from my reading, a methodological rule I adopted in all of my reading for this project.

Gender in the Postwar Period. I had very different problems with my research on gender. Documentary evidence about men's and women's lives in the postwar period was more than adequate for this project. And while I found an acceptable amount of bibliographic and historical material on womanhood and women's lives in the postwar period, I found far less on manhood and men's experiences.

Documentary data came from publications of the Census Bureau, the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the Department of Health, Education,

and Welfare, the National Center for Education Statistics, and from Vital Registration data. I collected statistical information about women's and men's education, employment, marriage and divorce patterns. When I gathered these data, I went for a wide sweep in time, so that long term trends could be observed. This helped to locate postwar patterns in a larger historical context.

My overall purpose in using documentary evidence was to paint a picture of gender arrangements and sexual divisions of labor at the structural level. I also wanted to know how closely men's and women's behavior conformed to gender prescriptions, another part of the social organization of gender that I wanted to understand. In order to understand how men and women felt about those gender prescriptions, I reviewed questions asked of the U.S. population by Gallup pollsters from 1945 to 1960. In analyzing the documents, I had the following kinds of questions in mind: What general historical patterns could be seen in men's and women's employment, education, and family formation behaviors? Did men and women's lives reflect any influence from, or challenges to, gender ideologies? What did men and women think about the prescriptions that had been laid out in gender ideologies? Was there anything unique about these patterns relative to other periods in history? Because of the wide and thorough coverage of the population that these data represent, I felt confident asking these kinds of questions and interpreting their meaning to my research project.

I had few problems finding data on employment, education, and family formation; these were well covered by various government

agencies. I was surprised and disappointed, however, at the lack of evidence about political life. A search of statistical abstracts and indexes revealed no sources for data on men's and women's political lives and behaviors, except their rates of voter registration. Documentary librarians confirmed that data about political behavior is sketchy and not systematic, particularly compared with data on employment and education. I therefore relied exclusively on bibliographic references to paint a picture of gender and politics in the postwar period.

Use of documents did present another problem over the course of my research. As in any ongoing research project, definitions and ways of measuring various aspects of social behavior change. There are few standard definitions that endure over time. This was not a major problem in my search. Most of the statistics that I gathered were relatively consistent over time in their meanings; e.g., median age at marriage, proportion of persons ever-married, and percent employed in various occupational categories. My biggest frustration came with the category of race. Until recently (1940 and after), the Census Bureau did not separate race categories beyond white/non-white distinctions in most of its surveys. Much of the statistical data presented in Chapter 7 are broken down in this way. Although Blacks represent over 90% of the non-white categories, there are important differences among non-white groups that are erased by this categorization. These data give only a crude picture of the behaviors and experiences of different minority groups.

I used bibliographic references to supplement the documents, works that were both interdisciplinary and historical. I used historical studies more than sociological research for a specific reason. I needed work that had described and analyzed postwar U.S. society and its gender arrangements in terms of the particular historical, cultural, and social contexts in which they occurred. I thought it essential, in other words, that the work I read be deliberately reflexive and self-conscious about the historical setting in which events took place. Sociological research is often ahistorical and non-reflexive about context; sociologists don't always locate their findings on an historical landscape (a point made by Mills, 1959; Tilly, 1981; Williamson, Karp, Dalphin, and Gray, 1982). I broadened my search across disciplines in order to get an understanding of that landscape. Studies that included an historical perspective helped me to get more detailed information about men's and women's lives, as well as gender ideologies, in the postwar period. There was much less information about men, however, than there was about women.

In my investigation of manhood, I started at the card catalog, using the keywords "males," "men," "masculinity," "gender" (which does not exist as a category in the card catalog), and "sex roles," writing down the names of books that could have information about men's lives in the postwar period. I got quite a few books by this method, and started looking through them to see if they had any materials on the postwar period, or if their bibliographies gave references to work done on men in the postwar period. Relative to

the number of books I reviewed, this was a fairly thin yield. Most books about men are about modern men, men in contemporary society, men in reaction to feminism and the new "roles" for women, etc. I did, however, find four books that discussed men's lives after World War II (Dubbert, 1979; Filene, 1974; Filene, 1986; Pleck and Pleck, 1980; Stearns, 1979). The information in these books was often sketchy and uneven, however, especially compared with historical information about women. While women's lives in the 1940s and 1950s have been the topic of entire books (Anderson, 1981; Hartmann, 1982; Kaledin, 1984), for example, men's lives at that point in history are covered in a few pages or a chapter of a larger work. There is much more detail and depth in histories about women when compared with men. I therefore found a big difference in both the quantity and quality of information about men in history versus women in history.

I next went to abstracts and indexes to find articles about men's lives and experiences after World War II. I focussed specifically on bibliographic tools in history and the social sciences. Again, I got very few sources. There simply isn't much research on men as men. There are, however, plenty of references to "men." But like the books that are being written, these articles typically deal with men in the contemporary world, and do not reflect back on men's history in a gender-sensitive way. A large proportion of the articles in the social science literature, for example, deal with the measurement of masculinity and femininity using various attitudinal scales and psychological projective tests. There are literally hundreds of these kinds of articles.

I also searched four bibliographic references that were specifically about men and male experience (August, 1985; Grady, Brannon and Pleck, 1979; Men's Studies Bibliography, 1977; Treadwell, 1986). Here, I found references to the same books I had found in the card catalog. These bibliographic tools confirmed what I had found in my other searches: there is very little research in the area of men's history; what is being written about men as gendered subjects is largely about men in contemporary society rather than men in an historical perspective. My impressions about the ahistorical nature of men's studies were further confirmed when I reviewed a syllabi collection compiled by Femiano (1984) on men's studies. Femiano collected syllabi from people who are active teachers and researchers in the field of men's studies. Most did not include an historical overview of masculinity or male experience. With few exceptions, those teaching about men are not teaching men's history either. There is a clear need for more historical research on men as men, which examines their experiences as gendered individuals.

The fact that there is very little written about the history of men and masculinity points to important problems and contradictions for women's studies and its claim that knowledge has a male bias. There is a male bias in history, but it has particular contours. First, much of history is about great men, e.g., politicians, generals, and capitalists, and not common men and their lives. Men's history shares a problem with women's history in that we know very little about the daily lives of ordinary men. Stearns (1979: 4) makes this point in his assessment of historical knowledge about men:

Feminist historians rightly point out that until recently most history dealt with men. But it did not deal with ordinary men, nor with private spheres of male existence.

Likewise, the historian Peter Filene (1987) points out that the history of men and masculinity focusses on the powerful, extraordinary, and public aspects of men's lives, neglecting the ordinary, private, and semi-public dimensions of their experiences. Further, some forms of masculinity -- for example, homosexual, Black, and Hispanic identities -- are subordinated to others -- white, heterosexual, in a structure of "hegemonic masculinity," which dominates much thinking and research about men (Carrigan, Connell, and Lee, 1985). Current knowledge and assumptions about men's lives and experiences, historical and otherwise, give a very narrow, monolithic, and distorted view of men.

Secondly, although much of knowledge takes male experience as the central focus without acknowledging doing so, there is little research on men as men, as gendered individuals with particular experiences and behaviors because of that genderedness. Both women and men are gendered, but most research has failed to explore the nature of men's experiences. It is women who are seen as having gender, not men. Men are the equivalent of "human being," while women are simply women. Harry Brod (1987b: 40) describes the impact of this distortion on knowledge:

While seemingly about men, traditional scholarship's treatment of generic man as the human norm in fact systematically excludes from consideration what is unique to men qua men. The overgeneralization from male to generic human experience not only distorts our understanding of what, if anything, is truly generic to humanity but also precludes the study of masculinity as a specific male experience, rather than a universal paradigm for human experience (emphasis in the original).

Many of the sources I read that tried to review some of men's history or to understand men as individuals who act in gendered ways point out these very problems. Over the course of my research, I found a number of scholars in the field of men's studies who shared my frustration in understanding men's lives in an historical perspective. Dubbert (1979: 5), for example, laments:

Few ... studies go very far toward explaining the formation of the male image in American history. None have sufficiently studied the essential ingredients of manly character and related them to the broader social context (emphasis in the original).

And commenting on the problem of men's history, Pleck and Pleck (1980: 1) argue:

Historians (mostly men) have considered at length the public deeds and quests of (selected) men. Many of the facts about men's lives in the past are thus already known. However, these facts are badly in need of a new, sex-conscious reinterpretation. This project requires reviewing men's historical experience, not as human history but as the history of only one of the two sexes and, specifically, that of the more privileged sex.

Likewise, Carrigan, Connell and Lee (1985: 551) write about the lack of a gender sensitive perspective on men in social science:

Though most social science is indeed about men, good-quality research that brings masculinity into focus is rare (emphasis in the original).

Much of what I read about men and masculinity came through the filter of feminist research. That is, much of my information comes out of research on women, research which is explicitly feminist in perspective, that compares women with men along some specific dimension. This is a different gestalt than research done directly on men and masculinity, one which poses a particular dilemma for understanding men's lives. Feminist research may over-emphasize male privileges vis-a-vis women, neglecting differences between men by

class and race. Within this literature, men are often seen as a monolithic group of oppressors, and the differences among them are ignored or distorted (Carrigan, Connell, and Lee, 1985). The best kind of research would focus on the historical development of men and masculinity on its own terms, and not necessarily or always in comparison to women and femininity.

In contrast to resources on men, I found an abundance of material on women in the postwar period, especially women's experiences in the labor force. Comparatively speaking, there is a great deal of information on women in the labor force after World War II, and much less on their educational and political experiences. I started with three general histories of the period: Hartmann (1982) on the 1940s, Kaledin (1984) on the 1950s, and Jones (1985) on the history of Black women. From there, I read books that seemed to emerge as important over and over in my readings. As I had done with general histories of the postwar period, I stopped reading when I felt saturated and had stopped learning new things, again looking for themes that emerged across the readings.

Overall, I relied on historical studies like Hartmann's and Kaledin's to understand women's lives in the postwar period. I did not, therefore, use primary sources. However, on a few occasions when I was gathering information about gender ideology in the postwar period, I went back to an original document. For example, Ferdinand Lundberg's and Marynia Farnham's book Modern Woman: The Lost Sex (Lundberg and Farnham, 1947), and Benjamin Spock's books on child care (Spock, 1946; Spock, 1957) were both mentioned more than once as

important to the creation and maintenance of gender ideology in the postwar period. I went back and read them because I felt it was necessary if they were so critical to understanding the time period. While these authors were actually talking only about women's appropriate place in society, they also said much about men's proper place. Again, I learned about men by reading about women.

Analysis of the Data

I used all of this data to create the following analytical descriptions of U.S. society after World War II: a general overview of the period, in terms of major social changes and their effect on social life; a description of dominant gender ideologies as they were promoted within U.S. popular culture; a characterization of sexual divisions of labor as seen in men's and women's opportunities and experiences in employment, education, and politics; and a look at patterns of family formation and personal life.

In the next three chapters, I lay out these descriptions. Chapter 5 draws a picture of life in the United States after World War II; Chapter 6 discusses dominant gender ideologies in the postwar period, and Chapter 7 talks about women's and men's actual patterns of family formation, as well as gender differences in the areas of education, employment, and politics.

CHAPTER 5
THE UNITED STATES, 1945-1960:
AN HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Introduction

Two interrelated and contradictory trends in post-World War II U.S. society provide insights into why the baby boom occurred. Each has its roots in the developing political economy of the time. They are contradictory because one trend created a sense of anxiety about the future, while the other offered hope. On the one hand, the political climate of the postwar period, the Cold War, created anxiety and insecurity about the safety and future of the United States as a democratic society. A major consequence of the Cold War was a change in the collective mood or psyche of the population. The Cold War silenced the population, and led to an emphasis on personal relationships, on home and family, as the centers of individual identity. People turned inward and sought meaning in their private lives. On the other hand, the postwar period was characterized by an economic prosperity that was unprecedented in U.S. history. The economy was growing, jobs were plentiful, and wages were high. This created a climate of optimism and hope about the future and about planning. Given the experience of the Depression of the 1930s, however, there was a certain amount of fear associated with the new affluence. People were afraid that it wouldn't last, that all they had could be taken away at any moment. The particular confluence of these contradictory trends of hope and hopelessness at that moment in U.S. history, the postwar political economy, is important to understanding the baby boom. The attachment to home and family, of

which the baby boom is but one manifestation, is a consequence of both of these tendencies.

In the remainder of this chapter, I use general histories of the postwar period to describe the details behind these trends, and to discuss several sub-trends that are a consequence of them. I want to paint a picture of life within the United States, particularly the political economy, after World War II, to show how particular features of postwar U.S. society may have contributed to the baby boom, and to set a stage for understanding gender ideologies and sexual divisions of labor at that time.

Roots of the Cold War: The International Context

The United States emerged from World War II as the most powerful nation in the world. Wittner (1974: 6) describes the U.S. position this way:

America was emerging from the war virtually unscathed, with a booming economy and a gross national product that had more than doubled. The United States, with 6 per cent of the world's population, held three-fourths of the world's invested capital and two-thirds of its industrial capacity.

Having replaced Britain as the leading world power, the United States was concerned with maintaining and enlarging its position of dominance. Essential to U.S. postwar reconstruction was the expansion of capitalism throughout the world. The United States' own economy depended on this expansion for continued national prosperity.

In order to achieve its goals of maintaining power and continuing economic growth, the United States sought to create a network of trade and investment opportunities throughout the world. This would allow the economy to continue to boom -- by exporting

surplus goods for sale in other countries, and by importing natural resources and raw materials necessary for domestic production from those countries. Overseas investments would permit the United States to have a say in the economies of these countries, as well as some political influence. The United States sought trade and investment agreements with other nations that would accept these terms (Jezer, 1982; Wittner, 1974).

The government and much of the population thought the United States had a right to such ties, and that they had a distinct mission for prosperity and leadership in the world. This belief was an extension of the ideology of Manifest Destiny, which had been so popular in the early twentieth century, that characterized U.S. overseas expansion as benevolent, humanitarian, and necessary for the preservation of a free world. The fact that the United States had won World War II strengthened these ideas (Miller and Nowack, 1977; Zinn, 1973).

One country that did not want to become economically entangled with the United States was the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union, with its state owned and controlled economy, was inhospitable to capitalist penetration. While the United States and the Soviet Union could develop a trading relationship, it was not possible for U.S. businesses to invest and set up corporations within the Soviet Union (Jezer, 1982). The Soviets were devastated by the war and in need of economic aid, but were unwilling to accept the strings that would come with aid from the United States. The Soviets accused the United States of being guided by imperialist impulses, and of trying to

control vast portions of the world. They opposed the open door policy of the United States and developed their own plans for building and reconstruction. The USSR signed trade agreements with the countries of Eastern Europe, while the United States did so with Western Europe, Japan, Canada, and other countries in Central and South America. This tension locked the United States and the Soviet Union in a struggle for control over the political, economic, and military resources of other countries, and became known as the Cold War (Wittner, 1974).

Two events helped to establish and shape the Cold War. The first was the proclamation of the Truman Doctrine, which was prompted by events in Greece and Turkey soon after World War II. Britain announced that it could no longer provide economic aid to these countries because it had been weakened by the war. If aid were not provided by the United States, Greece and Turkey could possibly swing to Soviet influence. In order to convince a Republican Congress to support such aid, President Truman used the idea of an ominous Soviet threat. In pushing through his aid package, he said:

I believe that it must be the policy of the United States to support free people who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities and outside pressures (Truman, as quoted in Solberg, 1973: 40).

This declaration had two ideological effects. It moved the United States away from its previous isolationist position, and involved it in any part of the world where it perceived a threat to U.S. interests. It also helped to divide the world into good and evil. Repeatedly throughout the postwar period, the U.S. government likened communism and the Soviet Union to German nazism and totalitarianism,

while equating the United States and capitalism with democracy and freedom. This ideology was invoked many times to justify U.S. military, economic, and political intervention all over the world (Jezer, 1982; Solberg, 1973; Wittner, 1974).

The Marshall Plan also helped to solidify the Cold War. The countries of Western Europe were severely weakened by the war and had few internal resources with which to rebuild their economies. The Marshall Plan gave \$13 billion worth of economic aid to 16 nations. This not only helped Western Europe to recover, but also bolstered the U.S. economy by assuring overseas markets for U.S. goods and investment opportunities for U.S. corporations. Again, President Truman relied on the notion of a Soviet threat to make his aid package acceptable to Congress and the U.S. citizenry (Miller and Nowack, 1977; Solberg, 1973; Wittner, 1974).

These events helped to create and escalate the Cold War. The Soviet Union reacted negatively to the Truman Doctrine and saw the Marshall Plan as an instrument of U.S. imperialism in the world. The U.S. government responded that it was defending world freedom. The battle lines were drawn. Increasingly throughout the late 1940s and the 1950s, a Cold War frenzy developed that polarized the world into communist/non-communist, east/west, good/evil, free/totalitarian. U.S. involvement in other countries -- in the form of economic aid, military activity or arms sales -- was justified in the name of anti-communism and keeping the world safe for democracy. The Cold War intensified in 1949 when China became a communist country and the Soviet Union exploded its first atomic bomb. These two events made

the threat of communism real and brought the Cold War home. Solberg (1973: 150) describes their significance:

All of the hates and fears that had been building up in America since the Second World War flashed in the thunderheads that rose over the land with the Russian bomb and the Communist capture of China. Out of these charged clouds of frustrated emotions poured a politics of hysteria that flowed over America and merged into the 'Grand Inquisition of the '50s'.

The Cold War at Home

During the 1950s, Cold War politics were as much a part of the national scene as they were the international. The Cold War sent a chill over U.S. society and affected domestic life profoundly. President Truman instituted a Federal Employee Loyalty Program that screened employees and prospective employees for communist sympathies or inclinations. Approximately one in four families came under scrutiny in the 1950s, and 11,500 government and private employees lost or were denied clearance for jobs as a consequence of these probes (Solberg, 1973: 130). The House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC), which had been established in 1938 but lay dormant during the war, was resurrected in the postwar period. It pursued communists with a vengeance, determining guilt not on the basis of overt action, but rather through suspicion and doubt. Anyone with liberal or left leaning ideas was associated with communism and viewed as a danger to the nation and its security (Solberg, 1973; Zinn, 1973).

Despite the fact that few people were ever found guilty of the crimes of which they were suspected, these investigations served two purposes. First, they put it in people's minds that the United States was in as much danger of coming under Soviet influence as

other countries. This point was driven home and sensationalized when 11 members of the Communist Party within the United States were indicted for holding Marxist-Leninist principles in 1948, in the Alger Hiss trials in 1950, and in the conviction and execution of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg in 1951. Second, the investigations and accusations made people afraid to speak out or be critical of what was going on in the society. Any criticism may have been construed as being soft on or sympathetic to communism. The silencing was effective; during the postwar period, radical elements of labor, intellectuals, the press, and the left in general were virtually wiped out. Solberg (1973: 83) describes the consequence of this silencing:

... the normal balance of political forces was upset, making possible an inordinate preponderance of conservative and reactionary elements that was to be felt at every level of the nation's life.

This atmosphere of suspicion and mistrust explains the ascendance of Joseph McCarthy to power and influence. In 1950, McCarthy accused 205 members of the state department of being communists. This kicked off a five year anti-communist crusade and gave earlier attempts at rooting out communism "a new flamboyance, skillful public-relations management, and daring" (Wittner, 1974: 94). Until his downfall in 1954, McCarthy was given free reign to accuse a wide range of people of having communist sympathies. Even though few people were ever found guilty of the crimes of which they were accused, McCarthy was allowed to continue making ruthless allegations.

Early on in his campaign, McCarthy was supported by conservatives and liberals, Democrats and Republicans, and most of the public. All had caught anti-communist fever, and thought the violations of personal freedom and civil rights that McCarthyism represented were necessary to preserve the nation. McCarthy was not opposed for his ideas or strategies, but only for taking them too far. He lost his vast political influence when he pointed an accusing finger at U.S. power centers --the Army, the Senate, and the White House. In the televised U.S. Army hearings that resulted, McCarthy appeared as an arrogant maniac who had lost control; his supporters and the public turned away from him. McCarthy's career ended in September 1954 when the U.S. Senate voted to censure him. Cold War anti-radicalism and the purges continued throughout the 1950s; McCarthy had been stopped, but McCarthyism lived on (Miller and Nowack, 1977; Solberg, 1973; Wittner, 1974).

Another feature of the Cold War was the development of the atom bomb, which became part of U.S. culture in the 1950s, and, as I will show in the next section, necessary to economic prosperity. To paraphrase Miller and Nowack (1977), the population of the United States "learned to love the bomb" during the 1950s. They were encouraged by the U.S. government and by the scientific community to view the bomb as necessary to world peace and national defense, to trust the scientific progress embodied in the bomb, to believe in the survivability of a bomb attack, and to develop simple strategies, like fallout shelters, for protection in the event of an attack. It was rare for the real effects of nuclear war to be discussed; those

who tried to talk about them or to protest the development of nuclear technology were labelled communists and threats to national security. In the context of the Cold War, pacifists seemed very dangerous indeed. Anyone calling for disarmament at such a tense moment in international relations would have to be a communist. Most women and men accepted the bomb as an inevitable fixture in their world (Miller and Nowack, 1977).

Although the vast majority of people accepted the necessity of nuclear weaponry, they also feared its effects. Especially after the United States dropped bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the specter of those dangers became real. People reacted to the bomb with a complex and contradictory set of emotions -- fear of its effects on human life; trust in science and government's ability to control it; hope that an outside attack would not happen and, if it did, that it was survivable; a sense of empowerment because the U.S. had such a mighty weapon; and, a nervousness and anxiety that the United States could be the target of such bombs at any time (Jezer, 1982; Miller and Nowack, 1977).

Public opinion data gathered in the late 1940s about the atom bomb shows some of these mixed reactions. The Gallup Poll asked a sample of the U.S. population the following question in 1945 and 1947: "Do you think it was a good thing or a bad thing that the atomic bomb was developed?" In 1945, 69% taking the poll said "good," 17% said "bad," and 14% had "no opinion" (Gallup, 1972: 527). Two years later, the proportion responding "good" to that question had dropped to 55%; the percentage of the population who

thought the development of the atomic bomb was "bad" more than doubled to 38, while seven percent had "no opinion" (Gallup, 1972: 680). Yet, in the same year, 1947, Gallup also asked this question: "Should the United States continue to manufacture the atomic bomb?" Seventy percent (70%) of the respondents thought the U.S. "should" continue to make the bomb, while 26% thought they "should not," and 4% had "no opinion" (Gallup, 1972: 680). While many people did not like the idea of an atomic bomb and wished it had not been developed, they nonetheless saw it as a necessary evil in their world. The majority of people, however, favored both the development and manufacture of atom bombs.

The constant tension between the United States and the Soviet Union made another war seem likely. This fear of war decreased over the course of the 1950s, however. In 1947, Gallup pollsters asked a sample of U.S. citizens: "Do you think the United States will find itself in another war within, say, the next 25 years?" Nearly three-fourths of those polled, 73%, answered "yes" to this question; 18% said "no," and nine percent had "no opinion" (Gallup, 1972: 641). A similar question was asked in 1951, although the question asked about the likelihood of war within the next five years. Fifty-eight percent (58%) thought a war was likely within the next five years; 20% did not, and 22% had no opinion (Gallup, 1972: 1000). In 1955, when asked about the likelihood of war within the next five years, 48% said "yes," 30% said "no," and 22% expressed "no opinion" (Gallup, 1972: 1304). By the end of the decade, in 1959, the percentages were nearly reversed from 1947; 23% thought a war was possible within

the next five years, while 77% did not (Gallup, 1972: 1617). Throughout most of the postwar period, therefore, the U.S. population thought another war was plausible.

The Cold War at home -- the loyalty hearings, the Hiss trials, the trial and execution of the Rosenbergs, McCarthyism, and the bomb -- left its scars. People feared communism at home and abroad, worried about the possibility of war, about their own futures, and the future of the nation. They did not speak out against the violations that had become part of Cold War politics, but largely supported the Cold War mongers in what they said and did. The Cold War produced a psychic malaise and a sense of fearfulness about human existence.

An Unprecedented Prosperity

Juxtaposed against this tense and frightening political scene was an extraordinary economic prosperity that characterized the United States in the period from 1945 to 1960. The economic boom was particularly impressive when compared with the period of the Depression and the war years, and, in contrast to the political scene, gave much cause for hope about the future. This prosperity was related to the Cold War and its emerging political economy.

The opening up of overseas markets, particularly those of Western Europe under the Marshall Plan, made it possible for U.S. corporations to sell their products in foreign markets. Most of the Marshall Plan money, for example, was spent inside the United States buying goods necessary for the European Recovery Program (Solberg, 1973). Overseas investments allowed U.S. businesses to establish

multinational corporations all over the world, increased profit rates for those companies, and provided an essential impetus to the growth of capitalism throughout the world. Because the health of the U.S. economy depended on this involvement in other countries, the United States could not afford to be isolationist in its foreign policy. Capitalism and corporate growth depended on U.S. involvement and expansion in the world. Much of postwar foreign policy and the Cold War mentality was designed to protect these investments and markets (Jezer, 1982; Miller and Nowack, 1977; Solberg, 1973).

A related development was the increasing dependence for prosperity on the arms race and military spending that characterized the entire postwar period and especially the 1950s. When the United States learned that the Soviets had exploded the atom bomb in 1949, a tremendous military expansion took place. This pattern accelerated even more in 1950, as a result of the Korean War. Most of the money spent on defense was for two purposes: to expand the national economy in anticipation of war against communists, and to build a network of military bases overseas to stop Soviet expansion (Solberg, 1973). The development of the atomic bomb and nuclear weaponry, both of which could destroy entire cities, were central parts of this build-up (Miller and Nowack, 1977). The military-industrial complex grew steadily in the postwar years; the business it generated for U.S. corporations was crucial for postwar prosperity. Justified in terms of fighting communism, the military build-up protected U.S. investments and profits overseas, helped to stabilize political and economic relationships with other countries, and provided employment

to a substantial portion of U.S. workers (Jezer, 1982; Wittner, 1974).

Each of these postwar developments --U.S. overseas expansion and the build-up of a military establishment --points to another critical feature of U.S. political economy after World War II. The state became more and more involved in the economy in order to stimulate economic growth and avoid another depression. Whereas state intervention had once been seen as a threat to corporate interests, it now became a force for corporate growth. This signalled a fundamental shift away from the ideas of Adam Smith and laissez-faire capitalism toward Keynesian economics, which emphasized the need for government intervention in the economy (Brooks, 1966; Jezer, 1982).

State involvement in the economy can be seen in how dependent the prosperity was on the size of the defense budget and the number of defense contracts put out (Jezer, 1982). Also, with the Serviceman's Readjustment Act of 1944, known more commonly as the GI Bill of Rights, the state provided aid to returning veterans for schooling, to purchase a home, or to set up a business of their own. No fewer than 7.8 million of the 15 million returning GIs took advantage of financial aid to get an education (Solberg, 1973: 58). This government program helped the economy in at least two ways: it kept men (and some women) out of the labor force for a longer period of time, and it provided a well trained labor force at a later date. The GI Bill of Rights also allowed many veterans to purchase a home by guaranteeing long term, low interest loans through the Veterans Administration. This, in turn, provided financial stability for

those men and women in their childbearing ages, contributing to the increase in marriage and birth rates at that time.

State involvement in the economy can also be seen in the number of businessmen who went to work for the government after World War II. Washington opened its arms to corporate leaders. Corporate leaders represented less than one percent of the population, but dominated key policy making decisions within the federal government (Wittner, 1974). A telling event in this regard was a statement made by Charles E. Wilson, head of General Motors corporation, at his confirmation hearings for Secretary of Defense. When asked if his corporate holdings (\$7 million in personal stock, \$2.5 million in GM holdings) did not represent a conflict of interest for him as a public official, Wilson replied: "What is good for our country is good for General Motors and vice versa" (Wilson, as quoted in Jezer, 1982: 60). Wilson's sentiment was widely shared by businessmen and politicians alike.

All of these developments within the United States fed a domestic economy that was expanding as quickly as the international one. The boom was characterized by an expanding job market and low rates of unemployment. Jobs were plentiful in all sectors of the economy, particularly in construction, manufacturing, and the growing multinational corporations. Compared to the 1930s, the employment picture looked good; people who wanted jobs could get them (Goldman, 1965; Jezer, 1982; Miller and Nowack, 1977; Solberg, 1973).

Buy. Buy Buy!

As both cause and effect of these expanding job opportunities, consumers went on a shopping spree after the war, buying mass produced household and luxury items that were not widely available during the Depression or the war. Three of the most important postwar purchases, which kept production, consumption, and employment levels high, were suburban homes, the automobile, and the television. Each of these were related to the development of a particular type of family life -- that is, the nuclear family. All had a profound impact on the culture as well.

Throughout the late 1940s and 1950s, white middle income groups from both the middle and working classes moved out of cities and into newly built suburbs, taking advantage of government loans to do so. Home ownership became a possibility for large numbers of people so that, by the middle of the 1950s, two-thirds of the population owned their own homes (Solberg, 1973: 263).

People who moved to the suburbs claimed that suburban life was superior to that in the city, that cities were becoming too crowded and crime ridden, and that the suburbs offered wide open, clean and safe space. The move to suburbia had its costs, however. Old forms of community life and kin networks were destroyed in the move, and were never replaced in the transition. In addition, the process of suburbanization created patterns of racial segregation that persist today (Jezer, 1982; Miller and Nowack, 1977; Solberg, 1973).

Black people, displaced from agriculture and sharecropping in the South, and drawn by the promise of jobs in the expanding labor

force, moved into cities, replacing the migrants to suburbia. Due to class and race discrimination, the work patterns of these new urbanites were characterized by high unemployment and underemployment or low wages, sporadic employment, and poverty. And whereas the government provided loans for the development of suburbs, public housing for the urban poor lagged far behind. The primary forms of urban redevelopment were middle and upper-income housing and the construction of office buildings in the downtown areas. Government policies toward housing were critical in the development of urban slums in the postwar period. The cities deteriorated without the residential tax base they once had. Thus, this dual migration--whites to the suburbs, Blacks to the cities -- set in motion patterns of urban decay and racial segregation that still exist (Jezer, 1982; Miller and Nowack, 1977).

Coupled with the move to suburbia was the proliferation of the automobile. By the mid-1950s, three out of five families owned cars, one in five owned two, and about two-and-one-half percent owned three cars (Solberg, 1973: 253). Jezer (1982: 139) describes the importance of the automobile:

During the postwar years, as never before, the automobile became the dominant factor in American life. ...The private automobile became the personal metaphor from which American drew their self-image of potency and strength and by which they showed off their status and influence.

People needed cars to get from the suburbs to the cities and back again in order to work. Mass transit was undeveloped or left to decay under pressure from U.S. car companies, particularly the General Motors Corporation. In order to facilitate the movement of

people from the suburbs to the cities and to accommodate the automobile, a system of highways and interstates was built with Federal monies (Miller and Nowack, 1977).

Finally, the television became a common piece of furniture in homes after World War II. By 1960, for example, 50 million televisions were owned in the United States; in 1946, that number was 7000 (Miller and Nowack, 1977: 344). Television came to replace all other forms of media -- radio, newspapers, magazines -- as the primary source of news, information, and entertainment. As a visual medium, television was very powerful and was wholly exploited by corporations. Advertising and marketing took on new importance. Television was a "lush jungle of messages, lessons, cues, and instructions on living in the material world" (Miller and Nowack, 1977: 345). It taught people to want and need things they did not have or need. It also played on the sense of insecurity and fear that characterized the postwar years, convincing people that some measure of security and happiness could be had with the purchase of luxury items. In this way, television helped to create and sustain the consumer binge of the period (Jezer, 1982; Miller and Nowack, 1977).

Television had another profound effect on personal life. It changed family and household entertainment patterns. People stopped talking to each other or reading to each other, and started watching television with each other. Thus, people switched from an interactive, communal, shared experience to a non-interactive, private experience that was not shared (Miller and Nowack, 1977).

The high rate of consumer spending represented by these luxury items depended on the development and availability of credit to much of the population. Although credit had been available early in the century, it was democratized in the postwar period. Buy now, pay later arrangements became common:

In 1955, a peak year in new car sales, 30 percent of the purchasers had yet to pay off the debt on their previous car. Overall, from 1954 to 1960, installment credit rose from \$4 billion to \$43 billion. Total outstanding consumer credit rose from an identical \$8.3 billion figure in 1940 and 1946 to \$21.5 billion in 1950 and \$56.1 billion in 1960 (Jezer, 1982: 126).

The first credit card, Diner's Club, was born in 1950. Sears and Roebuck, Carte Blanche, American Express, and BankAmericard were all introduced in the 1950s, and made it possible for people to make purchases without having cash. The extension of credit to the mass of the population created large profits for banks and other lending institutions because they charged interest on unpaid bills (Brooks, 1966; Jezer, 1982; Miller and Nowack, 1977).

Getting the population to use credit was problematic for lenders. Having gone through the Depression, people were savers and not spenders; they had to be taught to value consumption and spending, and advertising and public relations campaigns became the teachers. The function of advertising was to teach people to need and want what they did not have, and to always want more:

Advertising was big business and grew during the fifties at a faster rate than the GNP. In 1955 some \$8 billion was spent stimulating consumers to buy. By the end of the decade this rose to nearly \$12 billion. Admen toyed with all kinds of motivational research. Subliminal ads, flashed so briefly on the screen they could only be perceived subconsciously, were also first explored at this time. The package often became more important than the product packaged (Miller and Nowack, 1977: 118).

Advertising was so successful that "consumerism became the true American religion" (Wittner, 1974: 119). The availability of credit was an important part of this consumerism.

From the perspective of the domestic economy, people were hopeful and saw promise in their futures. Especially for the middle class, economic security and a high standard of living now seemed possible. Against a backdrop of the Cold War with its doomsday predictions, then, there were reasons to be optimistic.

Data from public opinion surveys taken over the course of the postwar period show a cautious optimism about the economy and personal welfare. In 1948, 25% of the people polled by Gallup mentioned "Inflation, danger of depression" as the item about which they would question the President of the United States if they could attend a press conference with him. This was the most frequently cited concern (Gallup, 1972: 709). In the 1950s, however, many people thought they were better off than their families had been when they were growing up. In 1951, for example, Gallup pollsters asked the following question: "Comparing your present family circumstances with those when you were a child, would you say you are better off, or worse off, than your parents were then?" Fifty-nine percent (59%) answered "better off," 24% said "worse off," 15% said "same," and two percent said "don't know" to this question (Gallup, 1972: 971). Some people feared another Depression. In 1953, for example, 28% of the population responded "yes," 54% responded "no," and 18% had "no opinion" on this question: "Do you think there will be a serious business depression in the United States within the next four years?"

(Gallup, 1972: 1159). In 1956, Gallup asked this question: "Do you think the present 'good times' that the country is having will continue through the present year?" Seventy-nine percent (79%) of those polled answered "yes, will continue," to this question. Eight percent said "no, will not," three percent said "not having good times," and 10% expressed "no opinion" (Gallup, 1972: 1398-1399). Responses to these questions reveals an acknowledgement of, and optimism about, the future of those "good times;" at the same time, however, they show a concern about whether or not those "good times" will last.

Changes in Social Stratification

Postwar economic prosperity altered patterns of social stratification within the United States. I want to discuss those changes in terms of class and race inequality. In each case, there were reasons to be hopeful about the direction of social change.

The class structure of the United States changed dramatically after World War II. Popular ideology however, exaggerated those changes. It said that the United States was becoming a middle class society, that the very rich and the very poor had been eliminated, and that societal wealth was more widely and evenly shared. This was true only in a relative way. Looked at from the vantage point of the Depression, poverty was severely reduced, but it did not, disappear. Miller and Nowack (1977: 122) cite a study by Robert Lampmann of poverty within the United States after World War II. Lampmann found that, in 1957, 32.2 million people, nearly one-fourth of the population, had incomes below the government defined poverty level.

Although this was a high rate, it was not until the early 1960s that poverty was rediscovered. Michael Harrington's The Other America, published in 1962, played an important part in this rediscovery. Harrington points out that the poor had not gone away in the 1950s, but had become invisible against the backdrop of a prosperous society. Put another way, the poor had gotten lost in the ideological shuffle.

It was not at all true that the rich had disappeared or dwindled in numbers. On the contrary, effective ownership of U.S. wealth became more concentrated and consolidated after World War II. In 1953, 76% of corporate stock was held by one percent of the population. That figure had been 62% in 1945. In addition, 1.6 percent of the population owned 82.2% of corporate stock, 88.5% of corporate bonds, and virtually all state and local bonds. In the same year, the Internal Revenue Service reported that 398 taxpayers had reported incomes of at least one million dollars, compared to 62 taxpayers in 1944 (Wittner, 1974: 113). Clearly, the rich got richer in the postwar period.

The improvements on which the ideology focussed were the increases in the proportion of people with middle incomes. This, in turn, was due to the addition of white male blue collar workers to the high wage earning middle class. Organized labor won a middle income for their predominantly white male membership in postwar labor agreements (Jezer, 1982). Between 1947 and 1961, for example, members of the United Auto Workers (UAW) union doubled their pay. This pattern was duplicated in other industries. In the following

quote, Solberg (1973: 248-249) describes the size of this new middle income stratum:

By 1953 -- and largely as the result of gains registered in the years after the Cold War began -- millions upon millions of working class Americans had climbed higher on the economic ladder and joined members of the old middle class in the middle-income brackets. In consequence no fewer than 18,000,000 families-- more than a third of all Americans -- could now be counted in the group of citizens receiving between \$4000 and \$7500 a year in 1950 dollars. To this hugely expanded middle-income group now went something like 42% of all the money earned by Americans. When to this "great mass" were added the next higher income group -- those receiving between \$7500 and \$10000 per year who had in the same period increased from two to three million families, the big bulge at the middle of American society grew to overpowering proportions. In all, well over half of all American families (58%) now had a real income measured in constant dollars of from \$4000 to \$10000 -- as compared to a mere 31% of the nation in 1931. This ... caused many to say that America was becoming one vast middle class.

The postwar class structure looked very different from that of the 1930s, and people were eager to believe that the United States was one big middle class society. To sustain this belief they had to ignore the rich and the poor. They were encouraged in this thinking by the increase in wages, in employment rates, and by postwar consumer spending.

Race relations within the United States did not improve after World War II. Throughout the 1940s and 1950s, the potential for race conflict increased, particularly in Black/white relations. Yet, it was from these conflicts that hopes for better times came.

The government of the United States claimed that it had entered the World War II to fight the spread of Nazi racism, yet their troops were segregated by race, blood donations to the Red Cross were separated by race, and the best military facilities were reserved for white soldiers. Within the United States, Blacks faced legal,

political, and economic barriers to equality. Segregation in public facilities, at the workplace in low paying jobs under bad working conditions, and in social relations that were characterized by race hatred, all kept Blacks subordinate to whites. In the 1950s, the contradictions between the proclaimed values for fighting in World War II and actual race relations within the United States were becoming too large to ignore (Miller and Nowack, 1977; Solberg, 1973; Wittner, 1974; Zinn, 1973).

The contradictions steadily worsened, and Blacks came to see the U.S. commitment to freedom and democracy --proclaimed over and over in its foreign policy of intervention and containment --as a sham and a lie (Zinn, 1973). Freedom and democracy was denied Black people every day. While President Truman supported civil rights in theory and occasionally pushed for them, little change was made during his two terms in office. Truman made bold proposals where he had little impact, and acted timidly where he had more control (Wittner, 1974). Eisenhower ignored or evaded the issue of civil rights for Blacks as much as he could (Solberg, 1973; Wittner, 1974). Because they were unable to make progress in other ways, Blacks, via the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), turned to the courts for justice.

The most notable victory among these court challenges was the Supreme Court ruling in Brown versus Board of Education in 1954. The Brown decision defined as unconstitutional and banned racial segregation in public educational facilities, striking down the "separate but equal" doctrine that had dominated since the 1896

Plessy versus Ferguson decision. De facto segregation remained fully intact despite this ruling. The first serious challenge to the Brown decision occurred in 1957 in Little Rock, Arkansas when the Governor refused to obey a court order to desegregate the high school and called in the National Guard to prevent nine Black youths from entering the school. The courts forced him to remove the troops and allow the children to enter. A group of hostile white citizens gathered to take their place. Eventually, President Eisenhower sent troops to Little Rock to assure that the ruling was obeyed. The conflicts and violent confrontations between blacks and whites that developed over enforcement of this decision helped to mobilize more challenges to segregation and white supremacy. In 1955, Rosa Parks was arrested when she refused to move to the back of the bus in Montgomery, Alabama, touching off the Montgomery bus boycott. Blacks refused to ride the busses until they were desegregated. After more than a year of walking and/or car pooling, they were successful (Miller and Nowack, 1977; Solberg, 1973; Zinn, 1973).

Throughout the postwar period, Blacks made great strides like the Brown decision and the bus boycott victory. But always the enforcement of these decisions brought into sharp relief the de facto racial inequality and racism that pervaded U.S. society. Zinn (1973: 123) summarizes the political and legal responses to pressure from Blacks:

The pattern for federal action in the postwar years was now set. The Supreme Court would make unprecedented decisions for racial equality. Congress would pass civil-rights laws in formidable numbers. The total effect was to give the impression abroad, and to whites at home unaware of the day-to-day lives of black

people, that tumultuous changes were taking place in America's race relations.

Throughout the 1950s and into the 1960s, Blacks continued to challenge white supremacy through the civil rights movement. These challenges yielded many small and few major victories. But the fact that Black women and Black men struggled at all signalled a hopefulness and optimism about race equality among Blacks. For their part, many whites were threatened and reacted with hostility to these challenges to their privileged positions.

Postwar Mood

All of the above changes in U.S. society after World War II created a unique mood or psyche among the people of the United States. Most writers summarize the mood with one word -- fear. Over the course of the postwar period, people feared a lot of things -- another Depression, another war, the bomb, nuclear holocaust and annihilation, communists abroad, communists at home, speaking out, and the speed of social change. The resulting personality was a conservative one that emphasized conformity, security, stability, and a return to normalcy (Goldman, 1965; Miller and Nowack, 1977; Solberg, 1973; Zinn, 1973). College students were called "the silent generation," while David Riesman (1950) described U.S. character as other-directed and shaped by the expectations of others, and William Whyte (1956) identified the new "organization man," who took his values from the corporate world and looked for security and a sense of belonging in his work. Describing this shift in human character, Miller and Nowack (1977: 130-131) write:

For most middle-class youth coming to maturity in the 1950s, the values of the social ethic were already accepted. Homes, churches and schools taught them that adjustment to the group was essential. The attitude of their peers meant everything. ...Such indoctrination produced a generation of smooth, dull, cautious, savorless young men. These youths looked forward to a long, pleasant, rewarding relationship with a big company. They avoided the scary extremes of politics, morals, religion, emotion -- feeling that to express such things was to risk future success. The company would provide security -- a good salary, modest advancement, fringe benefits, responsibility but not too much -- while they enjoyed the 'good life' with wife and kiddies in suburbia. It was a modulated age; everyone seemed smothered in a blanket of inertia, apathy, and conformity.

For a substantial segment of the population, the ideas of Riesman and Whyte rang true.

There were signs that people searched for stability in their troubled world. The postwar emphasis on marriage and the nuclear family was part of the search. People married at younger ages and in higher proportions than they had ever done within the United States:

... popular culture was saturated at all levels with the belief in the supreme wonderfulness of being married. It seemed so sane, healthy, natural for people to do that it became an absolute unbending tenet of life (emphasis in the original) (Miller and Nowack, 1977: 147-148).

Marriage and family gave people a sense of belonging and security, and was part of the overall tendency toward privatization. People turned inward and found meaning in home and family (Solberg, 1973; Miller and Nowack, 1977; Jezer, 1982).

Another example of people's search for stability can be seen in their turn to religion. From 1940 to 1962, formal membership in churches rose from 49 percent to an unprecedented 63 percent (Solberg, 1973: 379). Bible sales skyrocketed, and a religious building boom took place. Whereas previous religious revivals had occurred among narrower segments of the population, the postwar

return to religion included virtually all categories of people. In 1954, the phrase "under God" was added to the U.S. pledge of allegiance. People turned to religion to find hope and meaning in an anxious world (Miller and Nowack, 1977).

Religion was important for another political reason. Religious ideology became a weapon in the Cold War against communism. Because communism was equated with godlessness, religion and religiosity were seen as essential to the fight against it. Democracy took on religious overtones as good and patriotic citizens were, by definition, religious citizens. Atheists and agnostics were not easily tolerated, and were suspected of having communist inclinations (Miller and Nowack, 1977).

A symptom of the fearfulness or anxiety of the age can be seen in the increased use of drugs in the 1950s. The drug industry grew enormously in the postwar period. Aspirin sales, for example, shot up 240% between 1945 and 1960 (Solberg, 1973: 467). Tranquilizer sales went from virtually nothing in 1954 to \$4.75 million in 1959 (Miller and Nowack, 1977: 138). Consumption of alcohol increased, as did the use of sleeping pills and psychiatric help (Miller and Nowack, 1977). All of this pointed to an underlying restlessness and insecurity about life.

The search for meaning in the 1950s, triggered by an overwhelming fear of all the changes that were taking place in the world, led people to "domesticity, religiosity, respectability, (and) security through compliance with the system" (Miller and Nowack, 1977: 7).

Conclusions

The political economy of the United States after World War II set up a cultural and social schizophrenia marked by powerfulness, hope and optimism, as well as a loss of confidence and feelings of powerlessness and hopelessness. The emphasis on domesticity, on home, family, and private life that characterized the postwar period suggests a link between these social processes and the patterns of birth and marriage rates at the time.

The idea of a prosperous economy influencing marriage and birth rates after World War II is, of course, not unique in this study. Both Easterlin (1962) and Butz and Ward (1979) describe the impact of economic factors on fertility rates. What is unique in my discussion of the economy is the emphasis on the way people experienced that prosperity. Whereas Easterlin and Butz and Ward describe the prosperity in terms of structural economic characteristics or rates of economic behavior, such as the rate of immigration or the degree of openness of the labor force, the data reviewed here emphasize the ways in which economic factors influenced many segments of the population so that they felt hopeful and optimistic about their futures. Despite the difference in emphasis, however, both lines of thinking lead to a similar conclusion: the postwar economic situation supported a baby boom because young men and women could afford to marry and have children when compared with the Depression and war years. In somewhat altered form, this argument is similar to the "relative economic status" explanation offered by Easterlin (1973), where the postwar increase in birth rates is attributed to a

favorable job market for young men, and a higher level of material comfort after World War II among young men and women relative that experienced in their families of origin during the Depression and war years. Although none of the histories discussed here use Easterlin's terms, most authors describe the postwar optimism and hopefulness, which was rooted in economic prosperity, in comparison with the deprivations and hopelessness of the Depression and war years.

What is new in my overview of the postwar period is the inclusion of the political environment as it may have influenced fertility rates. I found that, while every history of the postwar period treats the Cold War as a dominant motif, this theme is not mentioned in any explanations for the baby boom. The Cold War and McCarthyism had a profound effect on life within the United States, contributing to the postwar emphases on the nuclear family, on home, on motherhood -- all tendencies which were identified but left unexplained in accounts of the baby boom (Bouvier, 1980; Wrong, 1952). Looking at the history of the postwar United States from the vantage point of the Cold War may help to answer questions that are begged by such vague explanations: why was there a pro-housewife, pro-family, pro-motherhood ethic within the United States after World War II? My analysis offers a partial answer to this question, suggesting that the Cold War created a cultural environment of fear that inhibited the development of relationships outside of nuclear families. When coupled with patterns of migration and economic consumption, the political atmosphere of the postwar period nurtured

attachments to private life, to home and to family; attachments which contributed to high marriage and fertility rates.

Another unique feature of this analysis when compared with other accounts of the baby boom is the concern with political economy, or relationships between the political and the economic, and their mutual impact on the culture, in postwar U.S. society. Attention to the impact of the Cold War and economic prosperity on birth rates permits a more complex understanding than is offered in either Easterlin's or Butz and Ward's work. Economic explanations such as theirs, for example, tell much about the how of the baby boom; that is, the economic forces which enabled men and women to marry and have children. A focus on the political economy of the postwar period contributes understandings of how and why they did so; that is, why a vast majority of young men and women within the United States chose to marry and have children at that time.

While my review is suggestive of connections between the baby boom and the postwar political economy, my focus on trends at the structural level leaves many questions about the baby boom unanswered. Particularly unclear are the linkages between macro level social processes, such as economic prosperity, the Cold War and McCarthyism, shifting class structures, and race conflict, and the social psychology or micro level of fertility decisions. How did these social structural processes get received, experienced, understood, internalized, or possibly resisted, and by what processes did they affect fertility decisions and behaviors? Why, for example, did postwar economic prosperity result in higher birth rates? Why

did people choose marriage and children over more televisions or cars, or larger saving accounts? Why did the hopelessness and anxiety created by the political atmosphere support higher birth rates? Why didn't it suppress birth rates instead, since this could be an equally plausible reaction to the same set of historical events? What was similar or different in the way these contradictory tendencies were experienced by men and by women, and how do these differential experiences help to explain the rise in birth rates?

Other questions about why the baby boom occurred emerge from a consideration of postwar class and race relations. Although a large proportion of men and women shared in the economic good times after World War II, class and race inequalities kept poor and minority groups from sharing fully in that prosperity. Yet, all income, education, race, and ethnic groups had a baby boom. The obvious question is why this was so? Why did men and women who did not benefit from postwar economic prosperity participate in the baby boom? In terms of the political atmosphere, one possible explanation could be that all members of the society lived in the same political world, and were all therefore subject to the fears and hopes and the emphasis on home and family that this engendered. But the ways in which economic factors influenced their lives is unclear. It may be that, relative to their own experiences during the Depression, poor and minority groups were better off in the postwar period. They therefore experienced economic prosperity, but on a much different level than working and middle class groups. Explanations for the baby boom must account for these kinds of race, class, and ethnic

variations in experience, and suggest possible relationships between broad social structural changes, fertility behaviors, and processes of social stratification.

While my review of some aspects of postwar political, economic, and cultural life within the United States suggests a connection between the political economy and the baby boom, further study is needed to comprehend the interplay between the structural and the social psychological levels of fertility decisions and behaviors, as well as the ways in which variations by class, race, and gender influence these decisions. My analysis has raised questions about these linkages, identified gaps in knowledge about the baby boom, and provided possible leads to understanding those connections. But the baby boom was the consequence of a much more varied, complex, and contradictory set of social processes than either I or others have yet identified.

CHAPTER 6 GENDER IDEOLOGIES IN THE POST-WORLD WAR II PERIOD

Introduction

In the last chapter, I described some of the unique features of U.S. society in the immediate post-World War II period. I focussed on two contradictory tendencies -- fear of the future and optimism about the future -- that were part of the social fabric of the times, and that are clues to understanding why the fertility rate increased so dramatically. Each of these tendencies was rooted in specific socio-historical processes and the postwar political economy. The fear had its roots in the politics of the Cold War and McCarthyism, the fear of war with the Soviet Union, and the fear of another economic crisis like the Depression. The hopefulness came from the economic recovery and from a national sense that since the United States had won the war, it was now the global power to be reckoned with. Out of this tension between fear and hope came a postwar mood that I described as the privatized self. People turned inward, and looked for normalcy and stability in their personal lives. As a consequence, family ties -- nuclear family ties, in particular -- took on new importance and meaning in people's lives.

In this chapter, I take a closer look at one aspect of family relations and the postwar sex/gender system -- gender ideologies. I describe the dominant ideological constructions of masculinity and femininity in the late 1940s and 1950s; in the next chapter, I will examine the material conditions of women's and men's lives after World War II. Before discussing the actual content of gender

ideologies, I take a brief detour to define what I mean by "ideology," and to explain the importance of that concept to this study.

Ideology and Human Behavior

I use "ideology" as the authors reviewed here use that term. "Ideology" refers to a set of beliefs and prescriptions that define and set limits on social reality, on human behavior, and on social relations (Berger and Luckmann, 1967). Ideology defines social reality, what is good, what is desirable, and what is possible within social structures. It also defines the converse of these -- what is not good, not possible or desirable, and not in the realm of social reality (Therborn, 1980). Ideology shapes social reality at the structural level of societal institutions, as well as within individuals. It acts as an external mechanism of social control (Berger and Luckmann, 1967), and is simultaneously internalized to become part of human personality (Therborn, 1980).

I study gender ideologies in the post-World War II period for reasons that are related to the above definitions. I want to know what was thought to be good, desirable, attractive, plausible, and real for women and for men at that time. I also want to know what was not possible and real. I want to know what limits or constraints were placed on men's and women's behaviors by these definitions. Finally, I want to look at gender ideologies to see what clues they give about reasons for the baby boom.

The authors reviewed here study the dominant ideologies of the postwar period in two different ways. The first looks at artifacts

of the culture -- the popular press, women's magazines, men's magazines, television, literature, and movies -- and describes the images of women and men that they project. These images reflect ideologies about gender (Friedan, 1974). Gender ideologies may also be explored by analyzing the beliefs and prescriptions -- the particular conceptions of manhood and womanhood -- of "experts" like physicians, psychologists, psychiatrists, sociologists (Ehrenreich and English, 1979; Friedan, 1974; Margolis, 1984). These ideologies differ from the first in that they are supported by the authority of science, and therefore seem more like truths than mere beliefs. As I will show below, however, each method of studying ideologies yields the same basic conclusions about conceptions of gender in the postwar period.

There is a danger of reading too much meaning into dominant gender ideologies, and a few warnings about their interpretations are therefore in order. First, there is no perfect correspondence between these idealized prescriptions about behavior and behavior itself. Men and women do not simply absorb ideologies about gender in toto: they ignore, resist, absorb, and fight them, thereby experiencing them in complex ways. Yet, we know very little about men's and women's reactions to these prescriptions.¹ To combat an overly determined model of gender ideologies, I will draw on attitudinal data from Gallup Polls, taken over the course of the postwar period, to illustrate the ways in which attitudes and ideologies converged and diverged at that time. Examining these

attitudes gives some information about how women and men felt about gender prescriptions after World War II.

A second caution has to do with diversity across social groups. Gender ideologies differ across categories of experience like ethnicity, religion, race, class and region. Also, the structure of class and race relations within the United States allows more powerful groups, such as white and middle and upper class men and women, to more closely fit the model prescribed by dominant gender ideologies when compared with men and women of color and poor and working class men and women (Kennedy, 1979; Margolis, 1984). All men and women are no doubt influenced by dominant ideologies, but they also develop ideologies of their own, ideologies which more closely match their lives and experiences based on group identities. Although there is a dominant or "hegemonic" conception of masculinity and femininity, it is important to remember that, in reality, there are multiple ideologies of manhood and womanhood -- masculinities and femininities -- which co-exist at any point in time (Carrigan, Connell, and Lee, 1985). Unfortunately, little research has been done that captures these variations. Interpretations of the baby boom that are truly comprehensive would need to account for these group variations in ideologies.

A Renewed Domestic Code

Gender ideologies in the postwar period were conservative, and reflected the larger social wish to return to normalcy and stability after the two crises of Depression and World War II. The content of those ideologies focussed on domestic life, emphasizing the

importance of marriage and family life for both men and women. These definitions assigned women and men two different places within domestic life and the division of labor. As I will show here, the definition of what was normal and stable labelled men as heads of families and breadwinners, and women as wives, mothers, and homemakers. Postwar gender ideologies treated men and women as two different types of human beings, each with distinct sets of wants and needs at the same time that it held that those wants and needs could only be satisfied within a heterosexual, nuclear family environment (Chafe, 1972).

The above portraits of postwar gender ideologies were the dominant ones within U.S. society. Research about Black women and Black men, however, point to somewhat different definitions of masculinity and femininity. While not describing the postwar period per se, for example, Robert Staples (1982) makes a crucial point about masculinity among Black men. Many Black men cannot attain the cultural ideal of masculinity because the structure of racism--characterized by unemployment, poverty, and economic discrimination--prevents them from doing so. Pleck and Pleck (1980) suggest that a large proportion of Black men in the United States have always lived in a permanent state of Depression, a situation that was only partially alleviated in the postwar economic boom, when Black men made economic gains but still had high rates of unemployment and low wages when compared with white men. These problems made it difficult for Black men to attain the breadwinner or head of family status. This chronic economic crisis helps to explain the high proportion of

Black households that are headed by women, as well as their high rates of labor force participation. This was true in the postwar period (Current Population Reports, P-23, Number 80), and suggests that race interacts with class to produce different gender ideologies among Blacks and whites.

Gender ideologies that focussed on Black women did take on a different cast than the dominant image of femininity. Jacqueline Jones (1985) found that the image of Black women projected in Ebony magazine throughout the postwar period included work outside of the home as an essential, important, and respected ingredient of their identity, one which was perfectly compatible with motherhood. Although Ebony distorted Black women's lives by describing only middle-class, professional, and successful women, thereby ignoring the poverty and deprivations that pervaded most Black women's lives, it presented Black women as intelligent and capable human beings, a conception that was contrary to the more dominant ideologies about women at the time. Jones (1985: 269) summarizes this image:

Though Ebony engaged in its own brand of image-making and its portrayal of women hardly reflected their actual socioeconomic status, this monthly publication consistently presented working wives and mothers in a positive, and frequently positively heroic light. Black working woman had to contend with a myriad of problems, but the gnawing fear that they were neurotic was probably not one of them.

In Ebony magazine, then, Black men and Black women constructed their own alternative visions of gender. Although distorted by a middle class bias, these ideals were based in some of the material conditions of their lives, particularly the recognition that women can and should work outside of the home.

In their proclamation that women were mothers, wives, and homemakers, and men were the family breadwinners, dominant gender prescriptions spoke more to white and middle class men's and women's lives than to the experiences of Black and working class men and women, ignoring the real need to work among many women, a situation which has always been true in the United States. According to Kennedy (1979: 201), for example: "None of the popular literature (after World War II) discussed the working-class woman or the woman who had no choices about working." Yet many women simply had to work because they were the family head and breadwinner, or because their incomes were needed to keep the family afloat. Working-class men and women had no less an attachment to home, family, or motherhood when compared with middle and upper-class men and women; working-class women did, however, have to juggle work and home responsibilities simultaneously in order to sustain that family.

In her study of marriage among blue collar couples, Mirra Komarovsky (1964) found that both men and women supported the sexual division of labor and gender prescriptions as they were defined by dominant ideologies. Komarovsky interviewed 58 blue collar couples (defined as skilled, semi-skilled, and unskilled workers) in the late 1950s, and found that both men and women defined women's place as in the home, saw housework and childcare as women's work and not men's, and thought that mothers of young children should not work outside the home. Men's place was at work; success for men was judged in terms of making a good living, which in turn was equated with a good job.

Attitudinal data from the Gallup Poll also show some support for these dominant ideologies, particularly for the breadwinner/homemaker division of labor. In 1948, Gallup asked a sample of the population: "What would you say in the most important quality in a good husband (wife)?" Among married men, 47% said "good homemaker, good housekeeper, etc.," the most frequently cited response. It is interesting to note that only five percent said "good mother." Among married women, 42% listed "good provider" as the most important quality in a husband, which was the most frequent response. Only one percent mentioned "good father" as an important quality (Gallup, 1972: 716).² Unfortunately, Gallup did not ask his interviewees about the exclusiveness of this arrangement.

This brief review of class and race variations in postwar ideologies and attitudes about gender shows that men and women often conformed or agreed with the dominant ideologies of the time and, when they did not or could not, which was often true among working class men and women and men and women of color, created alternative ideologies for the parts that didn't fit their own experiences. At the same time, Gallup Poll data and Komarovsky's findings point to a certain tenacity with respect to the sexual division of labor as it was prescribed within dominant ideologies.

The actual content of postwar ideologies of gender and sexual divisions of labor was not new. Men had been defined as heads of families, breadwinners, and workers, and women as wives, mothers, and homemakers since at least the nineteenth century. The advent of industrial capitalism over the course of the nineteenth century led

to a separation of home and workplace and with it, an ideology of separate spheres for women and men. Men were defined by their attachments to the newly emerging public sphere of production, women by their connections to the private, consumption-oriented, reproductive-centered home. Motherhood came to be exclusive to women, and a core dimension of womanhood (Bloch, 1978). In a study of prescriptive literature of the nineteenth century, for example, Maxine Margolis (1984) notes that fathers all but disappeared from child-rearing manuals by mid-century. While advice on childrearing before this time was offered to "parents," it was directed at "mothers" during the nineteenth century.

Since the nineteenth century, then, and continuing to this day, sexual divisions of labor defined women by their connection to homes as mothers, wives, and housewives, and men by their ties to the workplace as breadwinners, husbands and fathers. Within the broad outlines of these sexual divisions, there are historical variations in the importance and intensity attached to parenthood, motherhood, and fatherhood relative to other aspects of men's and women's lives. These variations are related to larger social, political and economic realities, and are reflected in gender ideologies. The importance of motherhood and fatherhood receded during the Depression and World War II, for example, because of the national emergencies that each represented.

During the Depression, ideologies of gender focussed on men's and women's rights and obligations within the labor force. Men's abilities to be breadwinners were undermined or threatened by high

rates of unemployment and underemployment which, in turn, undermined their sense of self and masculinity (Milkman, 1979; Filene, 1986; Stearns, 1979). Much of the discourse about women suggested that women should not work outside the home, should not steal "men's jobs", or take a job from a breadwinner (Daniel, 1987; Jones, 1985; Kessler-Harris, 1982; Milkman, 1979). The debate over men's and women's proper place was centered on women and men in the workplace, on ways of re-establishing men's positions as heads of families and breadwinners, and not women as mothers. And given the depth of the national crisis, the declining birth rate during the Depression was of little concern (Margolis, 1984).

During World War II, ideologies of gender returned to a concern with women in the workplace, but shifted to the battlefield for men. Women were now encouraged to enter the labor force to help the war effort in defense industries, to bring the boys home (Anderson, 1981; Hartmann, 1982; Honey, 1984). Men were the nation's war heroes--fighting Nazism and defending world freedom (Dubbert, 1979; Filene, 1986). Again, gender ideologies focussed less on women as mothers and men as breadwinners and more on their new wartime assignments.³ The basic definition of women as mothers and men as breadwinners did not change, however; women were reminded of this over and over again when their wartime work was characterized by employers, by unions, and by the government as taking over "men's jobs" only "for the duration" (Anderson, 1981; Hartmann, 1982).

After World War II, gender ideologies focussed centrally and intensely on motherhood and wifehood for women, and breadwinning and

fatherhood for men. These ideologies were bolstered by a booming economy, an emphasis on nuclear families, as well as the threat that women workers now posed to men's advantaged positions within the labor force. Women had replaced men "for the duration," but it was time to go home. There are two features of these ideologies that made them particularly powerful in the post-World War II context. Both of these are crucial to understanding why the baby boom occurred. First, there was a system of compulsory parenthood for both women and men, so that parenthood was seen as an especially necessary and important part of normal, adult status for both women and men. Freudian psychology was important to the maintenance of these definitions of normalcy. Second, relative to both the Depression and World War II period, an ideology of motherhood grew in importance in the postwar period: full-time mothering was defined as critical to the needs of children and women alike. I will discuss each of these separately.

Compulsory Parenthood

For both women and men, marriage and family life signalled the achievement of normal adult status and became equated with maturity in the postwar period. This maturity, however, followed the contours of the sexual division of labor. Men were responsible adults when they married, had steady employment, and provided for their wives and children by supporting them (Brenton, 1966; Dubbert, 1979; Filene, 1986; Pleck and Pleck, 1980). Barbara Ehrenreich (1983: 11-12) describes the power of this prescription for men:

In the 1950s, ... there was a firm expectation that required men to grow up, marry, and support their wives. To do anything else

was less than grown-up, and the man who willfully deviated was judged to be somehow "less than a man".

Men took this message to heart, and defined themselves as working for their families (Stearns, 1979).

In contrast with men, women were seen as healthy, mature, and normal when they married and became mothers and homemakers. Betty Friedan (1974: 31) describes the ideal woman of the postwar period:

... woman's world was confined to her own body and beauty, the charming of man, the bearing of babies, and the physical care and serving of husband, children, and home.

While fatherhood was important because it showed that a man was being a responsible adult, motherhood was important because it was the central characteristic of a woman's identity. Parenthood was therefore an essential determinant of adulthood for both men and women. To deviate from these ideals was defined as pathological-- not normal, not mature, not adult, not masculine and/or not feminine (Ehrenreich and English, 1983; Margolis, 1984).

Implicit in these assumptions about the normalcy of marriage and family and the division of labor, of course, was another assumption about sexuality -- that everyone was naturally heterosexual, and that being otherwise was not normal. Gender ideologies defined marital heterosexuality to be the one correct way to express sexuality. Bachelors, spinsters, and homosexuals were therefore deviant and pathological, and in need of some social reform (Ehrenreich, 1983; Filene, 1986; Pleck and Pleck, 1980).

Within these narrow definitions of compulsory heterosexuality and human pathology, men and women were granted new sexual freedoms over the course of the postwar period. A double standard about

virginity prior to marriage still existed for men and women however; while virginity was expected of women, this was not necessary for men, who could be expected to be sexually active when single (Eisler, 1986).⁴ But within marriage, both men and women now had the right to sexual pleasures and gratifications. This new recognition of women as sexual beings was the consequence of two other processes at work in postwar U.S. society. First, the overall emphasis on consumption and indulgence that characterized the United States affected ideas about sexuality. Like any other commodity, sex was something to be pursued, enjoyed, and consumed (Filene, 1986; Friedan, 1974). Secondly, ideas about women's sexuality were nurtured by new conceptions of marriage in the postwar period, which claimed that the "modern" marriage of the 1950s was a marriage of two equals living together in democracy and harmony, sharing decisions in a fair partnership. Part of this reciprocity was found in sexual companionship that was mutually fulfilling for men and women (Filene, 1986; Miller and Nowack, 1977).

While sex was pleasure for both men and women, meanings attributed to sex were harnessed to motherhood and procreation for women. Under the influence of Freudian thought, which I discuss more fully below, marriage, family, and sex experts said that while a woman should enjoy making love, for it to be truly satisfactory she must:

... in the depths of her mind desire deeply and utterly to be a mother (Miller and Nowack, 1977: 158).

Consistent with this definition of sex for the purpose of motherhood was the notion that vaginal orgasms represented the only expression

of normal sexual development, while clitoral or digital orgasms were seen as a woman's rejection of femininity (Miller and Nowack, 1977). Thus, ideas about sexual expression recognized women and men as sexual beings, but tied women's sexuality to marriage, family and motherhood while permitting men more freedom outside of marriage.

These definitions of normalcy -- of marriage, family life, motherhood, fatherhood, and sexuality -- were buttressed by Freudian ideas in the postwar period. While it did not create gender ideologies, Freudianism nonetheless helped to legitimate and maintain dominant conceptions of men and women by describing them as natural and necessary because of biological differences between women and men.

Freudianism and the Sexual Division of Labor

Freudianism was integrated with the ideas about gender at this time, emphasizing the biological base to motherhood. Put simply and briefly, Freudianism said that all women have a maternal instinct that originates from their lack of a penis. Women develop penis envy from the recognition that they will never have a penis. The only way to have a penis is symbolically through the birth of a son. Therein lies the mandate to motherhood: women mother to compensate for not being men.

In the postwar United States, Freud's ideas were popularized by the sociologist Ferdinand Lundberg and the psychiatrist Marynia Farnham in their book Modern Woman: The Lost Sex (1947). Virtually all sources used in this chapter describe how influential this book

was in the late 1940s and 1950s. For example, Friedan (1974: 111) says the book was:

... paraphrased ad nauseam in the magazines and in marriage courses, until most of its statements became a part of the conventional, accepted truth of our time.

In addition, Modern Woman spent time on the best-seller list (Ehrenreich and English, 1979).

For Lundberg and Farnham, modern woman is lost because of feminism, a set of doctrines which they trace to the publication of Mary Wollstonecraft's A Vindication of the Rights of Women, in 1792, but "which have undergone no change to our day" (Lundberg and Farnham, 1947: 144). Feminism has denied basic differences that exist between men and women by supporting political, economic, and social equality for women. As a consequence, Western societies are characterized by massive unhappiness and neurosis that afflicts feminists and non-feminists alike. Discussing the neurosis of the feminists' ideology of equality, a term that they characterize as "a fetish of the feminist movement" (Lundberg and Farnham, 1947: 147), Lundberg and Farnham (1947: 147) say the following:

... society was being asked (by Wollstonecraft and other feminists to 1947) to accept as identical two similar but decidedly different and complementary organisms, one endowed with ovaries, uterus, Fallopian tubes, cervix, vagina, vulva, clitoris, and mammary glands and the other with testicles, seminal vesicle, prostate gland and penis but none of these other organs. It meant, also, that society was to accept as identical the functions of these different sets of organs along with their functional effects and emotional accompaniments, and was to act as though the social consequences of their functioning or nonfunctioning were identical.

Feminism, according to their interpretation, represented penis envy

gone wild. It rejected natural biological differences between women and men, and encouraged women to want to be men instead of women:

The entire object of feminism, however rationalized, was simply to enable women, as much as possible, to avoid being women. By avoiding all taints of femaleness, they imagined, they would be able to enjoy all the real and imagined pleasures of men ... (Lundberg and Farnham, 1947: 192).

Among the many examples that they use to substantiate this point that modern women really want to be men, Lundberg and Farnham discuss women in higher education studying "men's subjects" like mathematics, astronomy, and other physical sciences, and women serving in the military during World War II, which they bluntly term "the utmost formal expression of free-flowing penis-envy" (Lundberg and Farnham, 1947: 214). This basic aversion to womanhood is most dangerous because it leads to unhappy or failed motherhood. For Lundberg and Farnham, women are, by definition, mothers. The following quotes from an appendix to their book, titled "Masculinity and Femininity Defined," captures this idea of biology as destiny:

... basic masculinity and femininity are determined by the emotional attitude of any man or woman to his or her reproductive function. Basic masculinity or femininity is impaired in proportion as acceptance and assertion of the reproductive function is in any way qualified or denied; all other attitudes are colored by this fundamental one toward the reproductive function -- the most basic drive after self-preservation (Lundberg and Farnham, 1947: 381-382).

The authors go on to explain some of the conditions in modern society that interfere with basic masculinity and basic femininity. The examples they give include bachelorhood or spinsterhood, homosexuality, and sexual activity that is not procreative in intent.

While the above quote and their examples of failed masculinity and femininity suggest that both women and men must parent and

reproduce, the problem as the authors saw it was modern woman's refusal to mother. This was evidenced by the low birth rates of the 1930s, by the increased promotion and use of contraception that separated sexuality from procreation, and by women's poor quality mothering in the contemporary period. Because feminism has held out other options and choices for women, women as mothers often reject or neglect their children:

We come now to the fact that the mother, under conditions of modern social change, is very often deeply disturbed. Although not a feminist or a courtesan type, necessarily, she is herself afflicted very often at a deep level with penis-envy, which plays itself out in various ways with respect to her children. She is disturbed, discontented, complaining, unreasonably demanding, aggressive, and shows it directly or indirectly. The damage she does, to boys as well as girls, is great (Lundberg and Farnham, 1947: 229).

The solution to this problem of bad mothering was, they believed, to give motherhood and child-rearing a more valued and respected place in society. This would raise women's self-esteem and make them want to be women again; this, in turn, would also raise happier, less neurotic children who would feel loved and wanted by their mothers.

For Lundberg and Farnham, then, biology is destiny; women are mothers and men are fathers. For women to deny this signals mental illness and intense desires to be men. For their part, men were defined by the public world of higher education, the military, careers, jobs, and politics. While not explicitly laying out their conception of the division of labor by sex, Lundberg and Farnham give blatant clues as to what it should be. For them, women's place is defined by the imperative to mother, men's by their involvement in

the public world, presumably as breadwinners and providers for women and children.

Assessing the impact of Freudian theory on the social construction of masculinity, Ehrenreich (1983) says that the unmarried man or the man who was not a breadwinner was defined as immature, not masculine, or infantile. The cause of his problem was either an unnatural closeness or dependency on his mother, in which case he was a sissy, or a homosexual:

Fear of homosexuality kept heterosexual men in line as husbands and breadwinners; and, at the same time, the association with failure and immaturity made it almost impossible for homosexual men to assert a positive image of themselves (Ehrenreich, 1983: 26).

Lundberg and Farnham's rendition of Freud's ideas described sexual divisions of labor that made parenthood a necessary part of normal adult status for women and men. Freudians mandated parenthood, and made motherhood the core dimension of femininity. These ideas fed and were fed by a conservative society where people looked for normalcy and stability in their lives. Much of the legitimacy and influence of Freudian thought came from the language of science in which it was presented. And since Freud's ideas rest on a theory of the unconscious, it was inaccessible to the layperson and therefore difficult to challenge. For example, a woman who says she does not have penis-envy or desires to be like men suffers from denial; this shows the penis envy all the more. And so on. The point is that the scientific arguments for these sexual divisions of labor were difficult to criticize or dismiss. In defining parenthood, and especially motherhood, as critical to gender

development, Freudian ideas may have helped to establish a social psychological base for the baby boom.

Gallup poll data on ideal family size, gathered throughout the postwar period, shows some support for the idea of compulsory parenthood. While I found no data that asked men and women about the necessity of marriage and children to men's and women's identity or fulfillment, Gallup did ask people's attitudes about the ideal number of children per family.⁵ Demographers Judith Blake and Prithwis Das Gupta (1975) have analyzed these and other data in terms of the baby boom; I reviewed their explanations in Chapter 2. The important finding here is that no one polled said that zero children was an ideal number for a family. In addition, the number of children considered ideal rose during the postwar period and declined in the 1960s (Gallup, 1972: 524, 649, 1474-1475, 1654). Since having no children wasn't viewed as an option, these data lend some support to the notion of compulsory parenthood, although the links between attitudes on family size and this ideology are not clear.

Exclusive Motherhood

There was more to compulsory parenthood than the necessity of having children. A second dimension of gender ideologies was the idea of exclusive mothering. Throughout the postwar period, motherhood was defined as an all-encompassing, full-time, round-the-clock job for women. The pediatrician Benjamin Spock was the most popular and influential promulgator of this ideology of full-time motherhood. His book Baby and Child Care was first published in

1946; to this day, it is an important resource for parents on child care.⁶

Spock's book (1946) was meant as a general reference manual on child care from infancy through early puberty. One running assumption throughout the book is that women do the mothering and child care and that men, as fathers, are fairly marginal figures in the lives of their children. While Spock often uses the terms "parents" in giving instructions for child care, in most cases he is talking to mothers.

For the bulk of the book, Spock never directly says that children need full-time mothers. He assumes and implies it instead by promoting patience, permissiveness and near constant availability on the part of mothers. He suggests, for example, that mothers let children make their own eating and sleeping schedule instead of being scheduled; that mothers move children who are playing with a dangerous object to another part of the room and play with them for a few minutes to get their minds on something else; that they let the child decide what to eat; and, that they allow the child to take his/her time when eating or playing or exploring something new. All of these suggestions assume that mothers are available to the child virtually all the time and that their lives should adjust to the rhythm of the child's.

Where Spock does talk specifically about children's need for mothers is toward the end of the book in a section called "Special Problems." Here Spock (1946: 475-476) tackles the "problem" of the working mother, of which he says the following:

Some mothers have to work to make a living. Usually their children turn out all right, because some reasonably good arrangement is made for their care. But others grow up neglected and maladjusted. ... You can think of it this way: useful, well-adjusted citizens are the most valuable possessions a country has, and good mother care during early childhood is the surest way to produce them. It doesn't make sense to let mothers go to work making dresses in factories or tapping typewriters in offices, and have them pay other people to do a poorer job of bringing up their children (emphasis in the original).

Further along in this section, Spock (1946: 476) discusses the desire to work among professional women, and reminds us of the centrality of mothers to their children's lives:

The important thing for a mother to realize is that the younger the child the more necessary it is for him to have a steady, loving person taking care of him. In most cases, the mother is the best one to give him this feeling of "belonging," safely and surely. ... If a mother realizes clearly how vital this kind of care is to a small child, it may make it easier for her to decide that the extra money she might earn, or the satisfaction she might receive from an outside job, is not so important after all.

These two quotes promote the idea that women are the best people to mother children, that there is some risk for children involved when women do not mother, and that motherhood is a task that demands all of women's time. Women who work because they have to are putting their children in danger; women who want to work are selfishly thinking about themselves rather than their children. Spock's message had not changed 11 years later when a revised edition of his book was published in 1957.⁷

Spock's was not a lone voice for exclusive motherhood. In the 1950s, many psychologists, psychiatrists, and physicians thought that children needed the full-time love and attention of their mothers in order to develop into healthy human beings (Anderson, 1981; Ehrenreich and English, 1979; Friedan, 1974; Margolis, 1984).

It was not simply that children needed their mothers; women needed children in order to develop into healthy human beings too. In order for women to be women, they needed to be intimately involved with children and childcare. Margolis (1984: 70) summarizes the sentiment when she says:

The ideal mother of the postwar decades was completely fulfilled by carrying out all the minute and often tedious tasks of childcare, fulfillment that came naturally from her maternal instinct.

Just as marriage and breadwinning were essential ingredients to men's identity, marriage and motherhood were critical to women's (Ehrenreich and English, 1979).

Women walked a fine line, however, between giving their children enough attention and giving them too much. The specter of "momism" clouded and complicated the mother-child relationship, and experts cautioned against the devouring mom. "Momism" referred to a problem of women over-mothering their children so that they could not function as adult members of the society. The other side of the coin was the permissive mother whose child was weak because s/he had been over-indulged. While women needed to immerse themselves in childcare in order to be fulfilled and mature human beings, they also needed to curb their maternal reflexes so that they would neither smother nor be smothered by their children (Ehrenreich and English, 1979; Hartmann, 1982; Margolis, 1984).

The idea of exclusive motherhood also provides clues about men's place in the lives of their children. Although it was important for men to have a family, it was less important that they be active members of their families and more critical that they concentrate on

breadwinning. Fathers were viewed as fairly marginal in the lives of their children (Brenton, 1966; Margolis, 1984). Occasionally, fathers' lack of time and contact with their children was lamented, particularly because father involvement could act as a control on momism and mothers' tendencies to overprotect children. In addition, fathers' concerns with work meant that they had little time to be positive male role models for their children, particularly their sons (Brenton, 1966; Dubbert, 1979; Ehrenreich and English, 1979). Unlike women, however, men did not need to spend time with children for their own development and mental health.

Women and Men Outside of the Home

Because mothering was so important to both women and children, and at the same time so tenuous an enterprise, activities for women outside of the home and aside from mothering were largely proscribed by prevailing ideologies. Women who had work or educational aspirations, as I have shown in the work of Lundberg and Farnham and of Spock, were criticized for trying to be like men or for being selfish.

While it was fine and perfectly appropriate for men to work outside the home and to pursue a job or a career, the idea of married women working outside the home was not considered either appropriate or desirable. A woman should work only until the time she married, and then stay home to care for home, husband, and children. Attitudinal data from the postwar period shows that a large proportion of people did not take this mandate very seriously. In 1949, Gallup pollsters asked men and women this question: "Do you

think it's all right for young women to work for the first few years of married life to help earn enough so they can be married?" Both men and women thought this was an agreeable arrangement, although women favored it a little more than men did. Eighty-one percent (81%) of women responded "yes" to this question, compared with 77% of the men. Only 14% of women and 19% of men said "no;" an additional four percent of men and five percent of women gave "no opinion." A breakdown of responses by age revealed that younger men and women, whose lives would be most affected by this practice, favored this arrangement more than older women and men (Gallup, 1972: 835). Overall, few people agreed with this limitation on young married women's lives.

While married women were advised not to work, the idea of women with children working was absolutely deplored. Working mothers were accused of undermining the family and family values, neglecting their children, avoiding their true calling in life as wife, mother, and homemaker, and were therefore blamed for many problems that emerged in the postwar period. The most notable of these is juvenile delinquency. Juvenile delinquency was "discovered" after World War II, and experts claimed that one of its major causes was maternal neglect by working mothers. Women were needed as mothers and wives, not as workers (Ehrenreich and English, 1979; Friedan, 1974; Hartmann, 1982; Kaledin, 1984; Kessler-Harris, 1982; Margolis, 1984).

As intense as this ideology was, it was nonetheless flexible with respect to women who took jobs, and recognized that they

sometimes had to work. Margolis (1984: 80) summarizes the attitude toward women working in this way:

Women could work part-time or after their children were grown, but their wage-earning activities were to fit in with and never take precedence over their primary responsibilities as mother.

Women's work outside of the home should meet three requirements: it should involve jobs that do not interfere with family and home obligations; it should be in those jobs that were traditional female jobs; and, it should be in jobs where women would not be competing with men. Women in careers or professions, however, who wanted to work, were condemned (Anderson, 1981; Friedan, 1974; Hartmann, 1982; Kaledin, 1984; Margolis, 1984).

Data from Gallup polls found a more diverse set of attitudes toward women in the professions. In answer to the question: "What is your feeling about having more women serve as governors, senators, doctors, lawyers, and in other professions?", asked in 1947, 46% of respondents approved of more women in these positions. An additional 41% disapproved, seven percent gave a "qualified" answer, and six percent gave "no opinion." Women favored women in the professions more than men. Middle and upper middle class men and women favored women in the professions more than working class men and women. This is evident in the way levels of education affected the answers to this question: 61% of college graduates versus 38% of those with a grammar school education approved of more women in the professions. Respondents who gave qualified answers thought the professions could benefit from women's talents, but that women should stay out of politics (Gallup, 1972: 659). Although this question did not tap

men's and women's attitudes toward married women or mothers in professions, it nonetheless shows that popular attitudes did not condemn careers for women to the extent suggested in dominant ideologies.

Ideas about the role of education in women's and men's lives were consistent with gender ideologies about divisions of labor by sex. Since women's lives and identities revolved around home and family, there was little need for them to be educated beyond high school; the opposite was true for men. Since men were family breadwinners, their education was both approved and applauded. While marriage and family life seemed inconsistent with education for women, they were perfectly consistent for men.

As I will show in the next chapter, many men and women did go to college in the postwar period. When men and women pursued education at the college level, the fundamental goal of such an education was to train women to be mothers and homemakers, and only secondarily for a career, and to prepare men to take jobs and careers in the labor market (Hartmann, 1982; Kaledin, 1984). Describing the character of women's college education in the postwar period, Friedan (1974: 148) says the following:

The one lesson a girl could hardly avoid learning, if she went to college between 1945 and 1960, was not to get interested, seriously interested, in anything besides getting married and having children, if she wanted to be normal, happy, adjusted, feminine, have a successful husband, successful children, and a normal feminine adjusted, successful sex life (emphasis in the original).

While college could provide some additional training for married life and childcare, it was most certainly not viewed as necessary for

women. In this way, ideas of education for women and men fed and were fed by the ideology of exclusive mothering.

Likewise, the definition of women's and men's place in the political world also connected it to the sexual division of labor and to women's and men's positions in the family. Kaledin describes it this way:

Over and over, it was made clear: women should send out good influences from the family; they were urged to communicate the domestic experience of living in the free society that men were defending ideologically. But they were to play this political role without actually leaving their homes (Kaledin, 1984: 86).

Despite this limiting prescription, many men and women thought that women should be more involved in politics. In 1945, Gallup pollsters asked men and women: "A woman leader says not enough of the capable women are holding important jobs in the United States government. Do you agree or disagree with this?" The majority of men, 53%, disagreed with this statement; 26% agreed, and 21% gave "no opinion." Women were more likely to agree with this statement at 38%, although the largest proportion of them joined men in disagreement at 43%. An additional 19% of women expressed "no opinion" on this statement (Gallup, 1972: 548). Note, however, that both women and men supported work for married women and women in the professions more than they supported women in political positions. This suggests that men and women recognized women's needs or rights to work, but not their rights to political power and influence.

Over the course of the postwar period, however, men and women came to accept a greater role for women in politics. Gallup asked this question in 1945, 1949, and 1955: "If the party whose candidate

you most often support nominated a woman for President of the United States, would you vote for her if she seemed best qualified for the job?" In general, men supported the idea of a woman president much less than women did; among both men and women, support for this statement increased between 1945 and 1955. For men, the proportion saying they would vote for a woman for President went from 29 in 1945, to 45 in 1949, to 47 in 1955. Among women, these percentages were 37 in 1945, 51 in 1949, and 57 in 1955 (Gallup, 1972: 548, 861, 1315).⁸ Admittedly, one question about a woman President is a weak base for making assertions about general attitudes toward women in politics. It does indicate, however vaguely, that dominant ideologies about women's place exaggerated the notion of exclusive motherhood.

Conclusions

Dominant ideologies of gender were centered intensely on the breadwinner-father/mother-wife-homemaker division of labor in the late 1940s and 1950s, especially compared with the Depression and World War II periods. An ideology of compulsory parenthood claimed that heterosexuality, marriage, and parenthood were critical for both men and women because they signalled the achievement of adult normalcy and maturity. Exclusive motherhood declared that children needed to be with their mothers and that mothers needed to be with their children in order for both to be healthy and well adjusted human beings. As a corollary to exclusive mothering, activities for women in the public sphere -- in education, the labor force, and politics -- were largely prohibited within these gender

prescriptions. Data on attitudes toward women in politics and the labor force, however, suggest that men and women did not totally agree with exclusive mothering, and saw places for women in the public world.

The realities of race and class inequality caused some women and men to alter these definitions, particularly because so many working-class and Black women worked outside the home for economic survival, and because Black men and working-class men were not the sole breadwinners in their families. For their part, some professional and middle-class women chose to work in careers, which violated ideas about women's proper place in the public world. Ideologies of gender are therefore not monolithic; they change and are changed by the material conditions of men's and women's lives, and by their conscious human efforts. Actual research on class and race variation, however, shows that, while many Black and working-class women regarded exclusive motherhood as an unattainable (and sometimes undesirable) arrangement, motherhood was an important and core dimension of their identities.

There was, then, an ideological base in the postwar sex/gender system for an increase in the fertility rate that helps to explain the baby boom. Coupled with postwar economic prosperity and the emphasis on the nuclear family, gender ideologies, and particularly compulsory parenthood, encouraged most men and women to want to marry and have children.

Without necessarily labelling them "ideologies," sociological explanations for the baby boom (Bean, 1983; Bouvier, 1980; Elder,

1974; Westoff and Westoff, 1968) have pointed to the re-emergence of family-centered norms and values in the postwar period. A few authors refer specifically to a shift in attitudes about women, such as a pro-housewife ethic (Bouvier, 1980) or a renewed cultural emphasis on motherhood (Bean, 1983). Some demographers therefore acknowledge the role of gender ideology in influencing the rise in fertility rates. My analysis moves beyond these vague references to norms and values, fleshing out and deepening understandings of gender ideologies, and their origins and contents. Ideologies embed historically specific complexities and nuances that get lost when reduced to a "pro-housewife ethic" or to a renewed emphasis on motherhood, complexities and nuances that should be examined for their potential relationship to changing fertility rates.

A major contribution of this review is my attention to ideologies of masculinity as they influenced the baby boom. No explanation reviewed here deals with attitudes toward men as fathers or breadwinners or heads of families after World War II. There is an implicit assumption, I think, that men and masculinity remain unchanged over time, that history and social change do not alter ideas about men and their behaviors, and that ideas about men and men's behavior have no bearing on birth rates. In this chapter, I have shown that these assumptions aren't true. The pro-family attitudes of the postwar period made marriage and parenthood important for men as well as for women, although in very different ways. This suggests that fertility rates are affected by changing ideas about womanhood and manhood.

While this review suggests a connection between gender ideology and the baby boom, the links between compulsory parenthood, exclusive motherhood, and the postwar increases in fertility are not totally clear. In order to understand these relationships more fully, the following kinds of information would be needed: 1. women's and men's opinions about the necessity of marriage and parenthood to human identity, and particularly the importance of motherhood for women; 2. men's and women's ideas about the relationship between mothers and fathers and their children, as well as their beliefs about the needs of children; 3. how ideas about men's and women's proper place affected decisions about having children; 4. how men and women felt about motherhood as an exclusive arrangement for women; and 5. how these attitudes and decisions varied by race and class experience among men and women. In short, we need to know just how important and influential these ideologies were -- how they were interpreted, internalized, resisted, or used -- in decisions about marriage and childbearing within the United States after World War II.

FOOTNOTES FOR CHAPTER 6

1. A recent review of resistance theory by Dubois, et.al. (1985) lays out some of the theoretical complexities of these reactions to ideologies. Radway's (1984) book analyzes relationships between romance novels and the development of identity among their women readers, describing different ways in which romance novels are read, internalized, and used by readers. Both of these works paint a more complicated picture of the role of ideology in social life.

2. Other qualities mentioned by both men and women are given below. Note that none of these refer specifically to the sexual division of labor. Additional qualities of a good wife, and the frequency with which they were mentioned, include the following for married men-- Agreeable, good company, pleasant disposition (18%); Faithfulness, loyalty (15%); Cooperative, a partner (13%); Patience, understanding (11%); Loving, devoted (3%); Intelligence, common sense (2%); Neither smoke, nor drink (1%); Miscellaneous (3%); and Don't Know (2%). Among married women, these were the other qualities of a good husband mentioned: Faithfulness, steadiness (22%); Kindness, consideration (20%); Agreeable, good company (14%); Cooperative, a partner (5%); Neither smoke, nor drink (5%); Loving, devoted (3%); Intelligence, common sense (1%); Miscellaneous (3%); and Don't Know (2%).

3. Mothers did not totally disappear from the scene during World War II. Maureen Honey (1984) found that wartime propaganda designed to get women into non-traditional, previously male-dominated jobs, drew upon images of women as mothers when targeting working-class women, and women as wives among middle-class women. In this way, motherhood was harnessed to the war effort.

4. The magazine Playboy, first published in 1953, celebrated sex outside of marriage for men, and encouraged men to pursue sexual pleasures while trying to avoid the restrictions of marriage. For further discussion of this male rebellion against marriage in the 1950s, see Ehrenreich (1983).

5. The fact that Gallup never asked about the importance of marriage and/or children is itself telling of the times. A plausible interpretation, I think, is that marriage and children were assumed for both men and women. Individuals exercised choice about when they would marry or how many children they would have, but not about whether they would marry or have children.

6. Komarovsky (1964: 34) found that, among the blue collar couples she interviewed, women relied on their mothers, not Spock, for advice about childrearing: "a married woman's guide is still her mother and certainly not Dr. Spock." Despite this lack of reliance on Spock, most of these women subscribed to exclusive motherhood, especially when children are young.

7. Spock's opinions about child care and motherhood have changed radically since 1957, however. Although the 1985 edition of his book (which is now co-authored by Dr. Michael B. Rothenberg) is rife with middle and upper-middle class assumptions about family life and gender, Spock now supports the right of both mothers and fathers to work at a career, and calls for both men and women to be active parents to their children.

8. All of these questions that ask men and women about women in the workplace, in professions, and in politics give other unintended clues about gender ideologies in the postwar period. Note that there are no parallel questions which ask about the appropriateness of married men working or men in politics. Men are assumed to work when married, and to be in professions and politics. Only women's entrance into these public worlds are problematized in Gallup's questions. This suggests that the questioners consider women to be out of their realm when they enter these public arenas.

CHAPTER 7 FAMILY FORMATION AND SEXUAL DIVISIONS IN THE POSTWAR UNITED STATES

Introduction

In the last chapter, I described the content of dominant gender ideologies in the United States after World War II. Briefly, ideas about gender cast women and men into narrowly defined scripts. Men were defined by their attachment to the occupational world and as breadwinners within families. Women were defined as homemakers, wives, and mothers, whose main source of identity came from their connections to men and to children. Marriage and family ties were seen as important for both men and women, albeit in different ways. Race and class inequalities produced some variations on these themes, although the importance of motherhood was common to all groups.

In this chapter, I look at structural dimensions of men's and women's behaviors in the time period from 1945 to 1960. I have chosen to explore two areas of postwar experience: 1) family formation, contraception, and sexuality; and 2) sexual divisions of labor as they were reflected in men's and women's experiences in the labor force, in education, and in politics. All of these give more information about the social organization of gender and sex/gender systems at that time. Examining patterns in family formation and in sexuality will show whether or not the postwar emphasis on home, marriage, and family are reflected in changing marriage and divorce rates, in patterns of contraceptive use, or in shifting definitions of sexuality. Sexual divisions of labor are important for other reasons. Sexual divisions of labor organize and distribute valued

societal resources on the basis of gender. As gender ideologies define what is possible and desirable at the level of beliefs and attitudes, sexual divisions of labor set up and limit access to the material resources in a society, such as high paying jobs, education, and political power. Sexual divisions, in short, help define who does what and who gets what within a society, co-existing and overlapping with other divisions of labor based on class, race, and age. These definitions change over time, creating different possibilities and setting constraints on men's and women's behaviors. I am interested in how sexual divisions of labor and patterns of family formation in the post-World War II period can help to explain the increase in fertility during that time.

The data reveal three important pieces of information about women's and men's lives in the postwar period. First, the behavior of the majority of women and men was different from earlier time periods as seen in long term statistical trends in marriage and divorce, labor force participation, and education, suggesting that there was something distinctive about gender relations during this period. Second, the behaviors of most men and women fit patterns prescribed by dominant ideologies about gender and sexual divisions of labor, although there were some major variations in degree of conformity based on class and race membership. Men and women married in higher proportions and at younger ages than ever before. Sexual divisions of labor were organized such that men's opportunities in the area of education and the labor force were enhanced, while opportunities for women were mixed. While they lost crucial wartime

gains in the labor force, for example, women's labor force participation rates increased over the course of the postwar period. Formal politics were a white male bastion; white women were politically active in less formal ways, and Black women and Black men took political action through the Civil Rights Movement. Where opportunities were available in education, politics, or the labor force, however, they were typically consistent with definitions of women's and men's proper place within sexual and racial divisions of labor. Finally, the behaviors of white women and white men were more likely to be consistent with gender ideologies than those of Black women and Black men. Race and class inequities made it more difficult for non-white men and women to conform to gender arrangements as they were prescribed by either dominant or their own alternative ideologies.

Patterns of Family Formation

Fluctuations in both marriage and divorce rates over time can provide clues to patterns of family formation. Table 7-1 shows the percentage of men and women ever-married for selected years from 1890 to 1980. The table reveals that both women and men married in higher proportions than would otherwise be expected in the period from 1947 to 1960. While the proportion of people ever-married increased by roughly one percentage point between each decade from 1920 to 1940, those proportions increased 6.5 percentage points among men and 5.6 percentage points among women between 1940 and 1947. Such a leap suggests marriage patterns that were out of step with historical trends. While the proportions of persons ever-married was steadily

Table 7.1

Proportion of Persons Ever-Married, 1890-1980, Selected Years,
By Sex

Year	Men (%)	Women (%)
1890#	56.4	65.9
1900	58.0	66.7
1910	59.6	68.2
1920	63.1	70.6
1930	64.2	71.6
1940	65.2	72.4
1947	71.8	78.0
1948	72.3	79.0
1949	73.9	80.0
1950	73.8	80.4
1951	75.7	80.9
1952	76.0	80.9
1953	76.3	81.7
1954	76.5	81.5
1955	75.9	81.8
1956	76.2	81.8
1957	76.1	81.4
1958	75.5	81.2
1959	75.1	81.3
1960	74.7	81.0
1970	71.9	77.9
1980	70.7	77.6

Sources: United States Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, Series P-20, Numbers 10, 23, 26, 33, 35, 38, 44, 50, 56, 62, 72, 81, 87, 96, 105, 365.

Percentages for 1890 to 1970 include persons 14 years of age and over; figures for 1980 include persons aged 15 and over.

increasing from 1890 to 1940, the pace or tempo of the increase quickened after World War II. The tempo slowed in 1955 for men and in 1956 for women, when the proportion of persons ever-married began to decline. The proportion of persons ever-married was still higher in 1980 than it was in 1940, however. The same basic pattern of marriage rates is observed when the data are divided by race. For both women and men, blacks and whites, the highest increase in proportion of persons married was in the 1940 to 1960 period (Current Population Reports, P-20, Number 35; Current Population Reports, P-23, Number 80).

The demographer Andrew Chernin (1981) reports that women and men who entered adulthood after World War II had the highest proportion of married persons when compared with previous generations. Ninety-six percent (96%) of women and 94% of men who were at their most marriageable ages in the 1950s did get married (Chernin, 1981: 10).

The postwar period also signalled a change in the timing of marriage in women's and men's lives; both men and women married at younger ages. Table 7-2 shows the median age at marriage by sex for selected years between 1890 and 1980. Between 1940 and 1960, men decreased their median age at marriage by 1.5 years, women by 1.2 years. And as with the percent ever-married, the trend towards lower age at marriage accelerated over the course of the postwar period. Since 1960, it has gone up.

When men and women married, they tended to stay married; that is, they didn't get divorced in as great proportions as they should have based on population projections from the rate of marriage.

Table 7.2

Median Age at First Marriage, 1890-1980, Selected Years,
By Sex

Year	Men	Women
1890	26.1	22.0
1900	25.9	21.9
1910	25.1	21.6
1920	24.6	21.2
1930	24.3	21.3
1940	24.3	21.5
1947	23.7	20.5
1948	23.3	20.4
1949	22.7	20.3
1950	22.8	20.3
1951	22.9	20.4
1952	23.0	20.2
1953	22.8	20.2
1954	23.0	20.3
1955	22.6	20.2
1956	22.5	20.1
1957	22.6	20.3
1958	22.6	20.2
1959	22.5	20.2
1960	22.8	20.3
1970	23.2	20.8
1980	24.6	22.1

Source: United State Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, Series P-20, Number 365.

Table 7-3 gives the divorce rate for the United States for selected years between 1890 and 1980. The divorce rate increased after World War I (1920) and World War II (1945-1947), not an unusual pattern since divorce rates usually increase dramatically in immediate postwar years. But after World War II, the trend towards a higher divorce rate that had begun in 1890 slowed, and did not accelerate again until the 1960s. In other words, the rate was lower than would have been expected given the long term trends. Commenting on these trends in marriage and divorce, Chernin (1981) says that the postwar period represented an historical anomaly rather than continuity in well-established patterns.

Although men and women married in higher proportions and were less likely to get divorced, the proportion of married couples, male-headed families, and female-headed families -- family structure--stayed remarkably stable over the course of the postwar years. Table 7.4 shows the distribution of family types from 1930 to 1970. Since the proportion of men and women who had ever-married steadily increased over the course of the postwar period, I expected that the percentage of married couple family types would also increase. It did not. The percentage of all families that were composed of married couples fluctuated around 87% for the 14 year period. Likewise, the proportions of male-headed families with no wife present and female-headed households with no husband present also stayed the same between 1947 and 1960.

Overall, these data indicate a shift at the structural level in women's and men's behavior with respect to marriage and divorce after

Table 7.3

Divorce Rate for the United States, 1890-1980, Selected Years

Year	Rate per 1000:	
	Total Population	Married Women 15 Years and Older
1890	.05	3.0
1900	.07	4.1
1910	.09	4.7
1920	1.60	8.0
1930	1.60	7.5
1940	2.00	8.8
1945	3.50	14.4
1946	4.30	17.9
1947	3.40	13.6
1948	2.80	11.2
1949	2.70	10.6
1950	2.60	10.3
1951	2.50	9.9
1952	2.50	10.1
1953	2.50	9.9
1954	2.40	9.5
1955	2.30	9.3
1956	2.30	9.4
1957	2.20	9.2
1958	2.10	8.9
1959	2.20	9.3
1960	2.20	9.2
1970	3.50	14.9
1980	5.20	22.6

Sources: For 1890-1965, United States Department of Health, Education and Welfare, 100 Years of Marriage and Divorce Statistics: United States, 1867-1967, Series P-21, Number 24; for 1970-1980, United States Department of Health and Human Services, Vital Statistics of the United States, 1981, Volume III - Marriage and Divorce.

Table 7.4

Family Type, 1930-1970, Selected Years

Year	Married Couples (%)	Male Head, No Wife Present (%)	Female Head, No Husband Present (%)
1930	-----	87.3 ----#	12.7
1940	83.8	5.0	11.2
1947	87.2	3.3	9.5
1948	86.9	2.9	10.3
1949	87.1	3.2	9.7
1950	87.6	3.0	9.4
1951	86.9	2.9	10.2
1952	87.2	2.8	10.0
1953	87.6	3.0	9.4
1954	87.5	3.2	9.3
1955	86.7	3.2	10.1
1956	86.7	3.4	9.9
1957	87.0	2.9	10.0
1958	87.1	3.0	9.9
1959	87.2	2.9	9.8
1960	87.2	2.8	10.0
1965	87.1	2.5	10.5
1970	86.8	2.4	10.8

Sources: For 1930 figures, United States Bureau of the Census Fifteenth Census of the United States: 1930. Volume IV: Families; for 1940 to 1970 percentages, United States Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, Series P-20, Number 345.

Figures for 1930 are divided between male headed and female headed families only.

World War II. They point to a turn to marriage and family in higher rates than would otherwise be expected, given long-term trends in those patterns. Women and men got married in high proportions and at younger ages, were not likely to get divorced.

Abortion, Sterilization, and Contraception

These patterns of marriage and family formation could easily contribute to the baby boom because they accelerated the formation of nuclear families. Information about birth control use among white married couples reveals that they were not concerned about preventing births early in their marriages, a pattern which would also contribute to an increase in the birth rate. As is true today, there were three ways for heterosexually active couples to control births in the postwar period -- through abortion, sterilization, or contraception. Of these three, men and women used contraception most often.

Throughout the entire postwar period, abortions were illegal except when they were judged by a physician to be necessary to save a woman's life. Illegal abortions were available, but often dangerous and life threatening because of the conditions under which they were performed (Hartmann, 1982). Although figures about its prevalence are sketchy and unreliable, one study estimated that, in 1958, between 200,000 and 1,200,000 induced abortions (legal and illegal) were performed in the United States (Freedman, Whelpton, and Campbell, 1959: 32). Hartmann (1982) claims that the rate of induced abortion declined in the late 1940s because of the new domestic code and the ideological climate of the times that

emphasized motherhood. Women were refused abortions because doctors said that they would regret that decision later in life. This suggests that the rate of illegal abortions may have gone up, as women who were truly desperate had to find other ways to end their pregnancies. For the most part, however, abortion was not accessible or common as a means of birth control, especially compared with the availability of abortion today.

Some women and men used sterilization to control the number of children they had, although sterilization was not as common in the postwar period as it is today. Freedman, et. al. (1959: 29-30) found that, among a sample of white, married women aged 18-39, nine percent reported that either they or their husbands had been sterilized. Sterilization was more common among older women and women with children, among women who had less than a high school education, and among Protestant women compared with Catholic and Jewish women. Most of these sterilizations were for the explicit purpose of preventing conceptions, but some were the consequence of other medical problems that resulted in sterility.

Most men and women who wanted to control the number of children they would have used some form of contraception. But studies of contraceptive use in the postwar period paint a picture of that use as a fairly laissez-faire effort, at least until couples reached their desired family size. Women in their childbearing years reported that they wanted, on average, two to four children, and that they wanted to have those children within the first ten years of marriage (Westoff, Potter, and Sagi, 1963). This birth spacing

preference represented a break from earlier generations of women, who spread their births out over a longer period of their reproductive lives. As a consequence of this desire to have children early in the marriage, men and women were not very diligent about their use of contraception at that phase in their lives. Westoff, Potter and Sagi (1963) found that, among the 905 urban, white, native-born married women whom they interviewed in the late 1950s, most did not use contraception early in their marriages, but were more careful in their efforts as the number of children born increased. As women approached desired family size, in other words, they took more care to prevent further conceptions. These women were not worried about accidental pregnancies, but defined them as acceptable because they wanted another child in the future anyway. Many baby boom births were due to this increase in desired family size, coupled with women's attitudes about birth spacing and unplanned pregnancies. These attitudes and behaviors may also explain why rates of abortion declined in the late 1940s.

The increase in births after World War II was not due to a lack of contraception. Compared with earlier periods, more reliable methods of birth control were available to women who wanted them. While douching or rhythm were the most common forms of birth control used in 1938-1939, Freedman, Whelpton, and Campbell (1959) found that white married women used the condom or the diaphragm more often than either rhythm or douching, although this varied by religion. Among the women in their sample who reported using any contraception, Jewish and Protestant women were more likely to use either the condom

or the diaphragm, while Catholic women used rhythm. Rhythm, a highly unreliable method of birth control, was the only form of birth control sanctioned by the Catholic church. Not surprisingly, Catholic men and women had the highest birth rates of all religious groups over the course of the baby boom. Freedman, et. al., also found that, as the number of years of marriage increased, use of rhythm declined among all groups, including Catholics. Finally, Freedman, et. al. urban women, women with higher levels of education, and working women were more likely to use the condom or diaphragm when compared with rural women, women with lower educational attainment, and non-working women. The baby boom was not a consequence of the lack of reliable methods, then, but more of the patterns in their use and adaptation. If widespread, these trends in birth control use, coupled with high rates of marriage at younger ages, would nourish a large increase in birth rates.

Unfortunately, researchers who studied contraception use during the baby boom did not interview Black women. I do not know how often or what types of contraception Black women and Black men used, what their attitudes were about desired family size, or how they felt about birth spacing and accidental pregnancies. Hartmann (1982) says that Black women, for a variety of reasons including personal preferences, affordability, and mistrust of dispensing birth control clinics, were less likely than white women to use contraception in the 1940s. If true, this would help to explain why Black women and Black men had their own baby boom. Because they married in higher proportions and at younger ages than they had previously, and were

less likely to use contraception than whites, their fertility rates increased after World War II.

Sexual Behavior, Sexual Meanings

These facts about marriage, divorce, and contraception provide clues about how and why the birth rate could increase after World War II, but they also obscure a more complex social reality with respect to postwar intimacy, sexuality, and sexual behavior. Up to this point, the picture drawn portrays men and women as decidedly heterosexual, monogamous, and living in nuclear family arrangements. While this was true for the majority of people most of the time, there is research to suggest that many men and women did not regard this as an exclusive arrangement.

Alfred C. Kinsey and his associates conducted in-depth interviews with men and women about their sexual behavior. After more than a decade of research and analysis, they published Sexual Behavior in the Human Male in 1948 and Sexual Behavior in the Human Female in 1953. The Kinsey reports were important because they documented a wide variety of sexual behaviors and expressions among the U.S. population -- masturbation, pre-marital and extra-marital sex, and heterosexual and homosexual orientations -- that public opinion had decried as immoral and/or inappropriate, and that data on marriage and divorce do not reveal. Kinsey found, for example, that roughly half of all married men and a quarter of all married women had had intercourse with someone other than their spouses while they were married. In addition, 19% of the women and 37% of the men in their samples had had sexual experiences with persons of the same sex

(Kinsey, Pomeroy, and Martin, 1948; Kinsey, Pomeroy, Martin, and Gebhard, 1953).

The Kinsey reports disclosed that sexuality in the United States was much more dynamic and varied than the patterns of marriage and divorce suggested, and that homoerotic behavior was much more common than believed. However, John D'Emilio (1983), in his study of the development of a homosexual minority in the United States, characterized the postwar period as a time of extreme public intolerance of homosexuality. Mobilization for World War II had created opportunities for men and women who felt same-sex attractions to meet others like themselves, and to explore varied sexual styles and identities. For men, this was most likely to happen in the military. For women, the call to work in the defense industries in urban areas drew them away from kin and created these possibilities. Under these circumstances, many lesbians and gay men "came out" during World War II, making homosexuality more public and visible, and therefore more dangerous, than it had ever been. In the postwar period, the return to normalcy and the renewed emphasis on family made it difficult to claim a homosexual identity:

In the baby boom years of the late 1940s and 1950s, the man or woman choosing to pursue same sex intimacy was more than ever going against the grain. The reaffirmation of normative gender roles and stable heterosexual relationships made those who lived outside them appear more clearly deviant (D'Emilio, 1983: 38).

The dominant ideology of the heterosexual nuclear family was not the only factor that made it difficult to claim a lesbian or gay identity. The Cold War targeted lesbians and gay men, and made homosexuality a visible, public issue. Homosexuals were defined as

moral degenerates and as national security risks, and were therefore part of the Cold War inquiries and purges. Like the people who were charged with being communists, men and women who were accused of homosexual ties found it impossible to fight the charges or to construct a positive self-image. In addition, the medical profession joined the anti-homosexual positions of legal and religious institutions by defining homosexuality as a disease. Between 1945 and 1960, half of all state legislatures passed sexual psychopath laws. These laws defined homosexuality as a socially dangerous disease (D'Emilio, 1983). Given this negative association of lesbian and gay male identity with the safety of the nation and with medical pathology, a healthy definition of self was impossible for most who chose that identity:

The condemnations that did occur burdened homosexuals and lesbians with a corrosive self-image. The dominant view of them -- as perverts, psychopaths, deviates, and the like -- seeped into their consciousness. Shunted to the margins of American society, harassed because of their sexuality, many gay men and women internalized the negative descriptions and came to embody the stereotypes (D'Emilio, 1983: 53).

The existence of a homosexual minority in the postwar United States, both real and imagined in the Cold War mentality, bolstered gender ideologies and the emphasis on the nuclear family.² Lesbians were labelled masculine; gay men, feminine. To cross the boundary from heterosexual to same sex relationships made lesbians "not women" and gay men "not men." This was true despite the findings of the Kinsey reports. According to D'Emilio (1983: 37), in the postwar period, the Kinsey reports "served to magnify suddenly the proportions of the danger (which homosexuals) allegedly posed."

Patterns of family formation, as seen in marriage and divorce statistics, reflected the postwar emphasis on home and the nuclear family and caused the birth rate to soar. Women and men were more likely to marry and married at younger ages than ever before. While reliable methods of contraception were available, most men and women did not use them until after they started their families. The very publicity of homosexuality in the postwar period made it seem more dangerous, and caused a backlash against it by Cold War mongers and the medical establishment. It is quite plausible, I think, that many gay men and lesbians suppressed their sexual orientations, married, and had children to fit in with the conservative times.

Sexual Divisions of Labor

Before discussing sexual divisions of labor as they were organized after World War II, I want to describe their general contours during the war. These two time periods offered vastly different opportunities to men and women. Postwar sexual divisions of labor, as well as gender ideologies, have their roots in wartime experience.

Sexual Divisions During World War II

When World War II started, a large proportion of young men went overseas to fight. Divisions of labor that had been set up within the United States before the war changed as a consequence of their absence. The war years represented a period of expansion for women in the economy and in education; they crossed boundaries into jobs men traditionally held, and women were more likely to earn degrees in subjects that had been reserved for men in the natural sciences,

engineering, law, and medicine (Daniel, 1987; Hartmann, 1982; Solomon, 1985). Women's involvement in politics also increased during the war (Hartmann, 1982; Werner, 1966; Werner, 1968). A closer look at women in the labor force during the war reveals just how profound a change this was.

As World War II wore on and labor shortages intensified, employers hired women workers to fill the jobs left vacant by men. While both women and employers were reluctant to accept this arrangement, both gave way as labor shortages continued. The War Manpower Commission and the Office of War Information launched several media appeals to get women into the labor force, calling on women's sense of patriotism and civic duty to the nation and to men. Advertisements laid the responsibility for the outcome of the war at women's feet, claiming that women's work outside the home would mean the difference between victory and defeat for the United States (Anderson, 1981; Daniel, 1987; Hartmann, 1982; Honey, 1984; Kennedy, 1979). Media appeals and other propaganda ploys were careful to point out, however, that work outside of the home would not interfere with or harm the family. They also asserted that women were especially suited to war work because of their patience with tedious tasks, their reliability, and their manual dexterity. Doing men's work during the war suddenly became inherently "feminine" (Anderson, 1981; Hartmann, 1982; Honey, 1984).

A distinct feature of women's wartime work was the number of married women who entered the labor force at this time. Married women were the highest proportion of new workers -- approximately 75%

of all new women employees during the war (Weiner, 1985: 95). This represented a break with past trends, where women who worked were predominantly single, and with popular beliefs about a married woman's place being at home.

One of the most important and unprecedented features of women's entrance into the labor force during World War II was the fact that women filled many of the positions in manufacturing, as welders, shipbuilders, and riveters, that had previously been reserved for men. Women represented 20% of all factory workers in 1940; by 1944, that percentage was up to 30% (Hartmann, 1982: 86). In April 1941, seven aircraft factories had 143 women employees. That figure jumped to 65,000 women in these factories by October of 1943 (Weiner, 1985: 95). Women's labor power was critical to the maintenance of the economy during the war. Many of these women were from the working class, for whom these jobs meant high wages and a better life for their families, and the chance of upward mobility. Many thought they would keep these jobs long after the war was over (Kennedy, 1979).

Women got added benefits when they worked in men's jobs. Wages were higher than they were in those jobs dominated by women, for example, although women still earned less than men in the same jobs. Many women received training in a skilled trade like welding or shipbuilding. Between July 1940 and April 1944, approximately 2.5 million women received job training (Kennedy, 1979: 188). In addition, labor unions courted women workers and tried to address some of their unique problems. Between 1940 and 1944, women's membership in the AFL-CIO went from 9.4% to 21.8% (Hartmann, 1982:

64). By 1944, women made up 40% of the membership of the United Electrical Workers (UEW) union (Kenneally, 1978: 176). At the same time that they tried to accommodate and recruit women members, however, labor unions also discriminated against their newest members. Separate pay scales and seniority lists for men and women were usually maintained by the union leadership. These separate lists were used to dismiss women after the war was over (Hartmann, 1982; Kenneally, 1978; Milkman, 1982).

A parallel process occurred in divisions of labor by race. Just as women passed over the line to typically male jobs, Black women and Black men took jobs that had been reserved for whites only. Most remarkable about this change in wartime employment patterns was Black men's and Black women's exodus from agriculture into industry, and Black women's flight from domestic work into the industrial labor force (Giddings, 1984; Harris, 1982; Jones, 1985). According to Harris (1982: 122), "'Rosie the Riveter' was as likely to be black as white". Blacks and whites worked in different jobs, however, so that divisions by race emerged within the factory. Wartime opportunities nevertheless yielded higher wages, better working conditions, and higher rates of union membership than the Black population had ever known (Foner, 1981; Harris, 1982).

In summary, World War II labor shortages created opportunities for Black and white women and Black men that had never been available. These new possibilities also created expectations and hopes about the future that were not fulfilled after the war was over.

Gender and the Labor Force

The forces that had pulled women into the labor force during the war were similar to the ones that pushed them out when it was over. The government and employers used the idea of a national emergency to call women to work. Had they not entered the labor force, national security would have been endangered and the U.S. position in the world would have been weakened. After the war, the fear of economic crisis or depression created another national emergency. If women stayed in the economy in the same jobs that they filled during the war, they would be taking jobs from returning GIs. A partial solution to the problem would be women's voluntary withdrawal from the labor force. Once again, the idea of patriotic duty was used to coax women to surrender their jobs. Men, they were told, deserved the jobs that would be available -- as homecoming presents and symbols of the nation's gratitude for winning the war, and as a means for bolstering their sense of self as men. Gender ideologies now called women home to family and motherhood.

While many women did voluntarily leave their wartime jobs, many more were laid off or fired (Anderson, 1981; Hartmann, 1982; Kennedy, 1979). Most women who worked during the war wanted to work after it was over. In 1943, Gallup asked women workers in war plants: "After the war do you plan to go on working?" Thirty-four percent (34%) of married women and 73% of single women reported that they planned to work after the war (Gallup, 1972: 383-384). Two years later, another poll revealed that most women planned to work after the war. Sixty-one percent (61%) reported that they planned to work in any

job. Unfortunately, this is not broken down by marital status, race or class (Gallup, 1972: 487). Since many wanted to keep their jobs, they had to be forced out at war's end.

As Black men and particularly Black women had been the last hired during the war, they were the first fired or terminated when the war was over. Black women and Black men bore a disproportionate share of postwar unemployment. In Northern urban areas, for example, Black men's unemployment was two to three times higher, while Black women's unemployment was three to four times higher, than among whites (Jones, 1985).

Women did not stay out of the labor force. Over the course of the 1940s and 1950s, they increased both their share of the labor force and their overall proportions in the labor force relative to men. In examining trends in labor force participation rates, however, it is important to remember that the bulk of men worked outside the home, while the majority of women did not. Tables 7.5 and 7.6 document these trends. Table 7.5 shows the labor force participation rates broken down by race and sex. The table shows that men decreased their labor force participation between 1947 and 1960, while the rate of women's labor force participation increased. Particularly after 1947, the gap between white and non-white participation rates decreased, although non-white women were still more likely to work than white women. Table 7.6 reveals that, from 1890 to 1945, men decreased their share of the labor force, which increased again briefly from 1946 to 1951, and then continued to decline until 1960. Women's share of the labor force increased

Table 7.5

Labor Force Participation Rates, 1890-1960, Selected Years,
By Sex and Race

Year	White		Non-white	
	Men (%)	Women (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)
1890#%	84.0	15.8	86.6	37.7
1900	85.4	17.3	88.5	41.2
1920	84.1	20.7	87.5	40.6
1930	81.7	21.8	86.1	40.5
1940	79.7	24.5	80.0	37.3
1947	83.2	28.7	85.3	41.0
1948	83.4	30.3	83.4	39.9
1949	83.5	29.9	83.3	40.1
1950	83.3	31.1	83.5	42.1
1951	83.1	31.8	82.4	41.5
1952	82.9	31.9	83.6	39.7
1953	83.0	32.3	82.9	39.6
1954	82.9	32.4	81.0	42.5
1955	82.2	32.9	79.7	41.2
1956	82.5	34.2	81.3	42.7
1957	81.4	34.1	81.0	43.7
1958	80.7	34.6	80.2	45.4
1959	80.4	34.7	79.1	44.4
1960	80.1	35.2	77.9	45.5

Source: United States Bureau of the Census, Historical Statistics of the United States: Colonial Times to 1970.

Percentages for 1890 to 1940 represent figures for the total labor force and total population; those for 1940-1960 represent the civilian labor force.

% Percentages for 1890 to 1960 include persons who are 14 years old and over.

Table 7.6

Proportional Share of the Labor Force, 1890-1960, Selected Years,
By Sex

Year	Men (%)	Women (%)	Total (%)
1890#%	83.0	17.0	100
1900	81.9	18.1	100
1920	79.6	20.4	100
1930	78.1	21.9	100
1940	75.4	24.6	100
1945	70.8	29.2	100
1946	72.2	27.8	100
1947	72.6	27.4	100
1948	72.0	28.0	100
1949	71.7	28.3	100
1950	71.2	28.8	100
1951	70.7	29.3	100
1952	70.6	29.4	100
1953	70.8	29.2	100
1954	70.6	29.4	100
1955	69.8	30.2	100
1956	69.0	31.0	100
1957	68.8	31.2	100
1958	68.5	31.5	100
1959	68.3	31.7	100
1960	67.7	32.3	100

Source: United States Bureau of the Census, Historical Statistics of the United States: Colonial Times to 1970.

Figures for 1890 to 1940 are from the Decennial Census; figures for 1945 to 1960 are from Current Population Reports.

% Percentages from 1890 to 1947 include persons 14 years old and over; those from 1948 to 1960 include persons 16 years of age and over.

between 1890 and 1945, declined until 1950, and then increased steadily until, in 1960, they represented roughly one-third of all workers.

The bulk of the postwar increase in women workers was among married women, white women, and women from the middle class. Black women, working class women, poor women, and single women had always worked outside of the home in high proportions. In the postwar period, the gap between these categories of workers and white, middle-class, married women workers narrowed (Hartmann, 1982; Jones, 1985; Kennedy, 1979; Kessler-Harris, 1982; Weiner, 1985). Comparing white and non-white women in Table 7.5, for example, reveals that between 1930 and 1960, the difference between white and non-white women's labor force participation rates went from 18.7% to 10.3%.

While many women had always worked, the postwar period signalled a dramatic shift in the marital status of those workers. Table 7.7 displays labor force participation rates of women broken down by marital status for selected years between 1940 and 1960, showing a turnabout in the marital status of women workers over this time. While the proportion of all women workers who were widowed or divorced remained fairly stable, the majority of all other women workers went from being single in 1940 to being married in 1960.

This increase in married women working was related to problems of supply and demand in the postwar labor force. On the one hand, the postwar prosperity and economic boom created new jobs in sales, service, and clerical categories. But on the other hand, the low birth rate of the 1920s had produced a small cohort of new workers

Table 7.7

Marital Status of Women in the Civilian Labor Force,
1940-1960, Selected Years

Year	Single (%)	Married (%)	Widowed or Divorced (%)
1940#	48.5	36.4	15.1
1944	40.9	45.7	13.4
1947	37.9	46.2	15.9
1948	34.6	48.3	17.1
1949	33.1	50.9	16.0
1950	31.6	52.1	16.3
1951	29.2	54.7	16.1
1952	29.4	55.0	15.6
1953	27.1	56.5	16.4
1954	27.4	56.8	15.7
1955	25.2	58.7	16.0
1956	24.8	58.9	16.3
1957	25.0	59.0	16.0
1958	24.4	59.2	16.4
1959	23.1	60.7	16.2
1960	24.0	59.9	16.1

Source: United States Bureau of the Census, Historical Statistics of the United States: Colonial Times to 1970.

Percentages for 1940 to 1960 include women who are 14 years of age and older.

for the postwar period. This, coupled with the increase in marriage at younger ages, meant that there were not enough single women to fill these jobs. Married women took these jobs despite a widespread feeling that married women working outside the home was inappropriate (Hartmann, 1982; Kaledin, 1984; Oppenheimer, 1970). The fact that so many married women had to enter the labor force shows the limits to gender ideologies in the face of social realities.³ Larger social, economic, and demographic forces were at work, forces that gradually challenged and undermined that particular feature of ideology.

A similar change, though not nearly as dramatic, occurred in terms of working mothers. These patterns are illustrated in Table 7.8. Between 1948 and 1960, married women with children between the ages of 6 and 17 years of age, as well as those with children under the age of six, increased their labor force participation rates. The largest increase occurred among women with children between the ages of 6 and 17 years of age, which increased by 13% between 1948 and 1960. Women with young children under the age of six were least likely to work outside of the home. This doesn't seem surprising, given the powerful messages women were being sent about the dangers posed for children when their mothers worked. As Kennedy (1979) suggests, working mothers with young children did so with much guilt and anxiety.

The entry of women into the labor force violated dominant gender ideologies about men and women's proper place, although other ideologies validated women's work outside of the home (Jones, 1985; Kennedy, 1979). Dominant ideologies assumed that men worked in order

Table 7.8

Labor Force Participation Rates of Married Women by Age and Presence of Children, 1948-1960

Year	No Children Under 18 (%)	Children 6-17 Years Only (%)	Children Under 6 (%)
1948#	28.4	26.0	10.8
1949	28.7	27.3	11.0
1950	30.3	28.3	11.9
1951	31.0	30.3	14.0
1952	30.9	31.1	13.9
1953	31.2	32.2	15.5
1954	31.6	33.2	14.9
1955	32.7	34.7	16.2
1956	35.3	36.4	15.9
1957	35.6	36.6	17.0
1958	35.4	37.6	18.2
1959	35.2	39.8	18.7
1960	34.7	39.0	18.6

Source: United States Bureau of the Census, Historical Statistics of the United States: Colonial Times to 1970.

Percentages for 1948 to 1960 include women who are 14 years of age and older.

to be breadwinners, and that working was "natural" for men. Women, particularly married women and women with young children, had no place in the labor force. While it was perfectly appropriate for single women to hold jobs, they were expected to leave these jobs when and if they married. But the character of men's and women's labor force participation also conformed to beliefs about gender and sexual divisions of labor. This can be seen in the types of jobs women and men took, and in the way that work was defined.

While women had taken over many jobs that had typically been done by men during World War II, this was not the case in the postwar labor market. Men and women did different jobs, and were dominant in separate types of occupations. Table 7.9 lays out the occupational distribution of men from 1900 to 1960. Table 7.10 gives the same data for women. These two tables show the degree of occupational segregation by sex within the labor force throughout the postwar period. By 1960, roughly one-third of all men who worked were in white collar jobs, and a little over half were in manual or service jobs. Within these broad categories, one in ten men was a professional, one in ten was a manager or proprietor, one in five worked as an operative, and one in five as a craftperson. More than half of all women, in contrast, were in white collar jobs. An additional 42% worked in manual or service occupations. The specific jobs they held within these groupings were very different from those that were filled by men. Approximately 31% of all women workers held clerical jobs; an additional 23% worked in service jobs, and 17% as operatives.

Table 7.9

Percent Distribution of Men in Major Occupational Categories, 1900-1960

Occupational Category	1960	1950	1940	1930	1920	1910	1900
White-collar workers	35.4	30.5	26.6	25.2	21.4	20.2	17.6
Professional, technical and kindred workers	10.4	7.2	5.8	4.8	3.8	3.5	3.4
Managers, officials, and proprietors, except farm	10.8	10.5	8.6	8.8	7.8	7.7	6.8
Clerical and kindred workers	7.2	6.4	5.8	5.5	5.3	4.4	2.8
Sales workers	7.0	6.4	6.4	6.1	4.5	4.6	4.6
Manual and Service Workers	56.1	54.6	51.7	50.0	48.2	45.1	40.8
Manual Workers	49.6	48.4	45.6	45.2	44.5	41.3	37.6
Craftsmen, foremen, and kindred workers	20.6	19.0	15.5	16.2	16.0	14.1	12.6
Operatives and kindred workers	21.2	20.5	18.0	15.3	14.4	12.5	10.4
Laborers, except farm and mine	7.8	8.8	12.1	13.6	14.0	14.6	14.7
Service Workers	6.5	6.2	6.1	4.8	3.7	3.8	3.1
Private household workers	0.1	0.2	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2
Service workers, except private household	6.3	6.0	5.7	4.6	3.6	3.6	2.9
Farm Workers	8.5	14.9	21.7	24.8	30.4	34.7	41.7
Farmers and farm managers	5.5	10.0	13.3	15.2	18.4	19.7	23.0
Farm laborers and foremen	3.0	4.9	8.4	9.6	12.1	15.0	18.7

Sources: For percentages from 1900 to 1950, David L. Kaplan and M. Claire Casey, "Occupational Trends in the United States 1900 to 1950," Bureau of the Census Working Paper; for 1960 percentages, United States Bureau of the Census, Historical Statistics of the United States: Colonial Times to 1970.

Table 7.10

Percent Distribution of Women in Major Occupational Categories, 1900-1960

Occupational Category	1960	1950	1940	1930	1920	1910	1900
White-collar workers	56.3	52.5	44.9	44.2	38.8	26.1	17.8
Professional, technical and kindred workers	13.3	12.2	12.8	13.8	11.7	9.8	8.2
Managers, officials, and proprietors, except farm	3.8	4.3	3.3	2.7	2.2	2.0	1.4
Clerical and kindred workers	30.9	27.4	21.5	20.9	18.7	9.2	4.0
Sales workers	8.3	8.6	7.4	6.8	6.3	5.1	4.3
Manual and Service Workers	41.8	43.9	51.0	47.3	47.6	58.1	63.2
Manual Workers	19.1	22.4	21.6	19.8	23.7	25.7	27.8
Craftsmen, foremen, and kindred workers	1.3	1.5	1.1	1.0	1.2	1.4	1.4
Operatives and kindred workers	17.2	20.0	19.5	17.4	20.2	22.9	23.8
Laborers, except farm and mine	0.6	0.8	1.1	1.5	2.3	1.4	2.6
Service Workers	22.8	21.5	29.4	27.5	23.9	32.4	35.4
Private household workers	8.4	8.9	18.1	17.8	15.8	24.0	28.7
Service workers, except private household	14.4	12.6	11.3	9.7	8.1	8.5	6.8
Farm Workers	1.9	3.7	4.0	8.4	13.5	15.8	18.9
Farmers and farm managers	0.6	0.7	1.2	2.4	3.2	3.8	5.9
Farm laborers and foremen	1.3	2.9	2.8	6.0	10.3	12.0	13.1

Sources: For percentages from 1900 to 1950, David L. Kaplan and M. Claire Casey, "Occupational Trends in the United States 1900 to 1950," Bureau of the Census Working Paper; for 1960 percentages, United States Bureau of the Census, Historical Statistics of the United States: Colonial Times to 1970.

Women and men did not compete for the same jobs. Women did "women's work" in the expanding clerical, sales, and service work force. Where they worked in professions, it was usually as teachers, social workers, nurses, or librarians. In 1950, for example, 70% of all professional women were in three occupational categories -- as teachers, nurses, and librarians (Kaledin, 1984: 66). Men, in contrast, dominated in manufacturing and other skilled and unskilled occupations that were defined as "men's work." They were more likely than women to be managers and proprietors. Where they worked in professions, it was as doctors, lawyers, accountants, and engineers. These data suggest that the labor force status of women during World War II was an historical anomaly, and did not signal new sexual divisions of labor. Men and women returned to gender appropriate jobs after the war was over (Anderson, 1981; Gabin, 1982; Hartmann, 1982; Kessler-Harris, 1982; Oppenheimer, 1970).

A re-alignment of the labor force by race also took place after World War II; Black women and Black men worked in different jobs than white men and white women. Black women were forced back into domestic work, which became more race segregated at this time, or into institutional service jobs in laundries or hotels as domestics and scrubwomen. Both of these had been abandoned by white workers (Jones, 1985). Within industries, Black men and Black women were still given the lowest-paying, non-unionized, unskilled jobs, and were largely segregated from white workers within the factories (Harris, 1982; Jones, 1985). Although they did not share fully or equally in the postwar economic prosperity, Black women's and Black

men's employment patterns after World War II represent substantial improvements when compared with any other period in the United States. The move out of agriculture for men and women, and the reduction in the proportions of women in domestic service, led to an increase in wages, a reduction in the length of the work week, less physically demanding work tasks, and less oppressive work relations with bosses and supervisors. Despite postwar setbacks in Black men's and Black women's labor force status, their lives were greatly improved (Harris, 1982; Jones, 1985).

Black women and Black men were far less likely than white women and white men to assume professional jobs, but a small Black middle class did develop after World War II. The bulk of Black professionals were women -- 58% in 1950. This was, of course, the opposite among whites. Black women trained for jobs as teachers, nurses, and social workers, while Black male professionals were likely to be physicians, lawyers, dentists, ministers, and college professors. Continuing the pattern of race segregation within the labor force and U.S. society in general, Black professionals' work was largely confined to servicing the Black community (Giddings, 1984; Higginbotham, 1987).

The new postwar workers -- white, middle-class women -- were defined and defined themselves as supplementary wage-earners. They took jobs so that their families could enjoy the postwar prosperity -- a house in the suburbs, a new car, a washing machine, a college education for their children. Women's work was therefore crucial to the maintenance of the family's middle class status (Hartmann, 1982;

Kaledin, 1984; Kessler-Harris, 1982). But these women did not think of themselves as breadwinners. They defined their labor force participation as secondary to their identities as wives and mothers, and secondary to their husbands' breadwinning (Kennedy, 1979).

This was in sharp contrast with many poor, working-class, and Black families, where women's work outside of the home was critical to economic survival and human identity. Women's wages were particularly critical in Black households, which were more likely to be headed by women. In many of these households, women were not supplementary earners, but breadwinners. Black women who were trained as professionals were more likely than their white counterparts to work outside of the home; their work was an important source of self-esteem and identity as well as income (Giddings, 1984; Jones, 1985; Kennedy, 1979).

Women's entry into the labor force after World War II can be seen as both an expansion and a contraction at the same time. It was an expansion in the sense that women had more economic opportunities. Women who wanted to work could find jobs. In addition, work gave women a feeling of independence and empowerment. And although the ideological climate was hostile to the idea of married women and mothers working, ideologies had to give way as women continued to work outside of the home. But women's labor force status after World War II also represented a contraction of opportunities. This is the case when women's work outside the home is compared with their work during World War II.

Sexual and racial divisions of labor within the economy re-emerged after World War II. The majority of men, white and non-white, held jobs outside of the home; the majority of women did not. Where women did work, it was in jobs that were female-typed and dominated by women, although these were further divided by race. White men, for their part, regained their monopoly on high-paying, high status, skilled, unionized jobs that had historically been their preserve. Some men of color enjoyed male privileges within this labor force, but most were excluded.

The critical question, of course, is how these new sexual divisions within the labor force were related to the increase in birth rates at that time. Without direct interview data to answer this question, the connections are not clear. White men from the working class and the middle class were able to get stable and high-paying jobs and assume positions as heads of households, and so could support the patterns of early marriage and childrearing which characterized the baby boom. This was true for a smaller proportion of Black men. But since women in all class and race categories were expanding their numbers and their rates of participation in the labor force, I would expect fertility rates to decline, marriage to be deferred, and childspacing to increase because work and motherhood put competing claims on women's time and energy. Yet, women increased their involvement in both work and childrearing simultaneously. One explanation for this puzzle could be that it is men's labor force status, and not women's, that is critical to understanding historical fluctuations in birth rates. That is, the economic opportunities

that are available to men more directly affect fluctuations in fertility than those that are open to women. This is similar to the argument made by Easterlin (1962) in his work on the baby boom. If this is the case, it would be more fruitful to pay attention to men than to women when examining sexual divisions within the labor force as they impact on fertility.

Another interpretation, one which makes more sense to me, has been offered by Bean (1983). Bean emphasizes the contradictory nature of relationships between women's labor force participation and fertility in the immediate postwar period. He writes that women in the late 1940s and 1950s were caught in and reacted to a set of historically unique tendencies that produced higher birth rates. On the one hand, postwar cultural ideologies were pro-natal, pro-marriage, and pro-family, and stressed the importance of motherhood for all women. On the other, the postwar labor market needed women workers, and women wanted or needed to work. Despite the difficulties in juggling these demands, women did marry younger, have more children, and work. Women's and men's fertility behaviors were therefore consistent with the ideology, but contradicted the real conditions of their lives that required that many women work outside of the home. The baby boom was therefore an anomalous situation, and would not happen in exactly the same way again. The fact that since 1960 women's labor force participation has increased, birth rates have declined, and age at marriage have increased all point to work and fertility patterns that are now more in step with expectations about that relationship.

This interpretation is less satisfactory, however, when the intricacies of race and class are considered. Given that working class women and Black women had always worked in higher proportions than white women or women from the middle class, postwar sexual and racial divisions of labor were not totally new for them. These women had balanced motherhood and work responsibilities long before the baby boom. While the content of labor force opportunities expanded for them relative to the pre-World War II period, the fact that these women worked outside of the home was a continuation of well established historical trends. Yet, all class and race categories of women participated in the baby boom. Of course, all women of childbearing age, despite differences in race and class experiences, would have been caught in the bind described above. This suggests that there is more at work than a simple relationship between labor force status and fertility behaviors. The hypothesis that women's work outside of the home depresses fertility is overly simplistic, and belies a more complex social reality about social stratification.

Gender and Education

Levels of educational attainment increased within the United States after World War II, although patterns of achievement differed by gender and by race. Table 7.11 shows the percentage of persons at various levels of educational attainment for the total U.S. population for selected years from 1940 to 1959. Table 7.12 shows the same figures for non-whites. Table 7.11 reveals that, between 1940 and 1959, men were more likely than women to have finished elementary school or to have gotten some college education; women

Table 7.11

Educational Attainment of Persons 14 Years and Over,
1940-1959, Selected Years, By Sex

MEN	1940 (%)	1947 (%)	1952 (%)	1959 (%)
Elementary school, 7-8 years#	32.7	29.0	19.5	16.9
High School Graduate	13.7	18.9	20.2	22.6
College Graduate or More	4.4	4.9	7.3	8.5
WOMEN	1940 (%)	1947 (%)	1952 (%)	1959 (%)
Elementary school, 7-8 years#	31.1	27.4	18.1	15.9
High School Graduate	18.1	24.5	27.6	29.9
College Graduate or More	3.1	3.9	5.1	5.1

Sources: United States Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, Series P-20, Numbers 15, 45, 99.

Category includes completion of 7 or 8 years of school in 1940 and 1947, and 8 years in 1952 and 1959.

exceeded men in the proportions who finished high school. Overall, at both the high school and college level, both women and men increased their educational attainment. At the same time, the proportions of men and women who completed elementary school declined.

Table 7.12 reveals somewhat different patterns for the non-white population. Men had lower levels of educational attainment than women except at the college graduate or higher level in 1940 and 1959; here, men exceeded women by a small margin. Noble (1956), however, found that among Black women and men, women had higher rates of college education than men.

Despite these increases in educational attainment across all groups, race discrimination produced a gap between whites and non-whites in those levels; whites and non-whites are far from equal in degrees of educational attainment. Table 7.13 gives a sense of the difference in education by race by listing the median number of years of school completed for persons age 25 years and older by race and sex for 1940, 1950, 1960, and 1970. The basic pattern illustrated in the table is that white women have the highest median years of school completed, followed by white men, non-white women, and then non-white men. All race and gender categories increased their median years of school completed over the 30 years.

Another way of looking at sexual divisions of labor after World War II is to examine the distribution of women and men across the categories of advanced degrees. Advanced degrees beyond high school are important because they are often linked to the occupational

Table 7.12

Educational Attainment of Non-white Persons 14 Years and Over, 1940-1959, Selected Years, By Sex

MEN	1940 (%)	1947 (%)	1952 (%)	1959 (%)
Elementary school, 7-8 years#	19.2	21.6	12.5	12.7
High School Graduate	4.2	8.1	8.3	11.5
College Graduate or More	1.1	1.8	1.6	2.8
WOMEN	1940 (%)	1947 (%)	1952 (%)	1959 (%)
Elementary school, 7-8 years#	22.3	24.8	13.4	13.4
High School Graduate	5.9	10.1	11.2	15.6
College Graduate or More	1.0	2.0	2.3	2.4

Sources: United States Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, Series P-20, Numbers 15, 45, 99.

Category includes completion of 7 or 8 years of school in 1940 and 1947, and 8 years in 1952 and 1959.

Table 7.13

Median Number of School Years Completed by Persons 25 Years
of Age and Older, 1940-1970, Selected Years, By Sex and Race

	1940	1950	1960	1970
NON-WHITE				
Men	5.4	6.4	7.9	9.7
Women	6.1	7.2	8.5	10.2
WHITE				
Men	8.7	9.3	10.7	12.1
Women	8.8	10.0	11.2	12.1

Source: United States Bureau of the Census, 1970 Census of
Population: General Social and Economic
Characteristics.

world, and are geared toward the preparation for a career or a profession. Patterns in these levels of attainment can give clues about the degree to which the society and culture were open to education and careers for men and for women. Tables 7.14 lays out the number and percent of women and men who earned Bachelor's degrees for selected academic years from 1869-1870 to 1979-1980. Table 7.15 gives the same information for Master's degrees; Table 7.16 for Doctoral degrees. The same pattern holds in each of the tables: while the numbers of men and women attending colleges and universities steadily grew over the times examined, the years 1949-1950 and 1959-1960 show a reversal in the long term trend where men were decreasing their share of the degrees granted, and women were increasing theirs. Across all degree levels, women's proportion of degrees granted decreased and men's grew for these years, a pattern that is particularly dramatic for Bachelor Degrees. The 1969-1970 year shows a return to the patterns that were underway by 1940.

Although these tables do not show a breakdown by race, it is reasonable to conclude from all other evidence given here that non-whites did not share equally with whites in these advanced degrees. Both Hartmann and Noble note that, while there was a gap between Blacks and whites in terms of educational attainment, Black women and Black men were more similar in their patterns of advanced degree attainment than were white men and white women (Hartmann, 1982; Noble, 1956). My earlier discussion of Black women and Black men in professional occupations supports this claim. World War II had expanded opportunities for Black women as nurses and Black men as

Table 7.14

Number and Percent of Bachelor Degrees Awarded, 1869-1870
to 1979-1980, Selected Years, By Sex#

Year	Total (f)	Men (f)	Women (f)	Men (%)	Women (%)
1869-1870	9371	7993	1378	85	15
1879-1880	12896	10411	2485	81	19
1889-1890	15539	12857	2682	83	17
1899-1900	27410	22173	5237	81	19
1909-1910	37199	28762	8437	77	23
1919-1920	48622	31980	16642	66	34
1929-1930	122484	73615	48869	60	40
1939-1940	186500	109546	76954	59	41
1949-1950	432058	328841	103217	76	24
1959-1960	392440	254063	138377	65	35
1969-1970	827234	484174	343060	59	41
1979-1980	999548	526327	473221	53	47

Source: National Center for Education Statistics, Digest of Education Statistics, 1982.

These figures include all Bachelor's degrees and other first professional degrees.

Table 7.15

Number and Percent of Master's Degrees Awarded, 1869-1870
to 1979-1980, Selected Years, By Sex

Year	Total (f)	Men (f)	Women (f)	Men (%)	Women (%)
1869-1870	0	0	0	0	0
1879-1880	879	868	11	99	1
1889-1890	1015	821	194	81	19
1899-1900	1583	1280	303	81	19
1909-1910	2113	1555	558	74	26
1919-1920	4279	2985	1294	70	30
1929-1930	14969	8925	6044	60	40
1939-1940	26731	16508	10223	62	38
1949-1950	58183	41220	16963	71	29
1959-1960	74435	50898	23537	68	32
1969-1970	208291	125624	82667	60	40
1979-1980	298081	150749	147332	51	49

Source: National Center for Education Statistics, Digest of Education Statistics, 1982.

Table 7.16

Number and Percent of Doctoral Degrees Awarded, 1869-1870
to 1979-1980, Selected Years, By Sex

Year	Total (f)	Men (f)	Women (f)	Men (%)	Women (%)
1869-1870	0	1	0	100	0
1879-1880	54	51	3	94	6
1889-1890	149	147	2	99	1
1899-1900	382	359	23	94	6
1909-1910	443	399	44	90	10
1919-1920	615	522	93	85	15
1929-1930	2299	1946	353	85	15
1939-1940	3290	2861	429	87	13
1949-1950	6420	5804	616	90	10
1959-1960	9829	8801	1028	90	10
1969-1970	29866	25890	3976	87	13
1979-1980	32615	22943	9672	70	30

Source: National Center for Education Statistics, Digest of Education Statistics, 1982.

doctors, and postwar increases in levels of educational attainment among Blacks created the need for Black teachers. It was developments like these, during the war and after, that led to the development of a very small educated Black middle class within the United States (Giddings, 1984; Higginbotham, 1987).

The departure from past trends in getting advanced degrees is attributable to other factors in postwar U.S. society, all of which provided foundations for a baby boom. First, the GI Bill of Rights gave financial aid to veterans to pursue higher educations. Men from all class and race categories benefitted from this government program. And because stipends given in the GI Bill were large enough that men could support a family, many men married and started families at the same time that they went to school. College students who were married and had children had been relatively rare before this time. This means that men (and women) who took advantage of the GI Bill did not have to defer children until after college, but could start and build families just as they would if they had been in the labor force. This lack of deferred fertility among college students in the postwar period contributed to the baby boom. Married women, however, did not go to college, but appeared on the campuses of U.S. colleges and universities as wives of veterans (Hartmann, 1982). Gender ideologies discouraged higher education for most women. The idea that women should be full-time homemakers and mothers deterred many women from pursuing an education beyond high school (Friedan, 1974; Hartmann, 1982; Kaledin, 1984; Solomon, 1985). This ideology was bolstered by actual admission practices to colleges

and universities: under the strain of growing enrollments and to accommodate the new demand for education by male veterans, many colleges and universities turned women students away (Hartmann, 1982; Solomon, 1985). In addition, the numbers of women who dropped out of school was higher than among men throughout the postwar period (Friedan, 1974; Kaledin, 1984). These patterns could have fed the increase in birth rates. Options for women who might have pursued a college education were narrowed or eliminated, and calls to motherhood were powerful enough to discourage some women from wanting an advanced degree at all.

A final factor in patterns of advanced degree attainment is related to the demography of the baby boom period. Put simply, the decline in the age at marriage and the age at first birth stopped many women from attending college because home and family responsibilities took their time (Solomon, 1985). While male veterans could go to school and be husbands and fathers, women could not. The increase in rates of marriage and the decrease in age at marriage engaged women in family ties and responsibilities before they could even get to college, thereby precluding that option.

The figures in Tables 7.14, 7.15, and 7.16 show that some women did pursue and receive advanced degrees in the postwar period. Although this was in tension with dominant ideologies of gender, the character of that education was often consistent with ideas about women's and men's place. The purpose of men's education was to learn a skill, get a job, and pursue a career or a profession (Newcomer, 1959). It was easier for men to get an education after World War II

because the GI Bill of Rights supported and financed an education for so many men.

Women's experiences were different from men's. The ideological climate of the times, as I have shown in the last chapter, worked against women's preparation for a job or a career other than mother and homemaker. Those who did attend college were confronted by institutions and curricula that had incorporated those assumptions. Basically, women's higher education in the postwar period was designed to prepare them to be wives and mothers, a striking problem given the simultaneous increase in women's employment (Kaledin, 1984). But educators and other promulgators of this "education for motherhood" idea claimed that intellectual and occupational pursuits by women were a threat to womanhood, manhood, and children -- the family. They therefore cautioned women against aiming too high (Friedan, 1974; Hartmann, 1982; Kaledin, 1984; Newcomer, 1959; Solomon, 1985). For their part, large proportions of women who attended college in the postwar period reported that they planned to work only until marriage, at which time they would leave the labor force to become mothers and homemakers (Kaledin, 1984; Solomon, 1985). This was less true for Black women, who typically went to college because they planned to work (Hartmann, 1982; Noble, 1956). While white women with college educations may have stayed home to bear and care for children, it isn't clear why or how Black women managed to get a college education, work, and have more children at the same time.

Women and men who went to college studied in different fields: women in the humanities, education, and social sciences; men in the natural sciences, engineering, medicine, and law. For example, men earned 90% of all Bachelor's degrees awarded in business and management, 95% of all medical degrees, and 98% of all engineering Bachelor degrees in 1955-1956. Women, in contrast, earned 99% of all Bachelor's degrees in home economics, 72% of all Bachelor's degrees in education, 45% of those awarded in psychology, and 57% of those given in sociology in the same year (Digest of Educational Statistics, 1981; Digest of Educational Statistics, 1982). Women and men pursued very different curricula, which were related to their perceived characteristics and places within the division of labor.

After World War II, the structure of opportunities in higher education, and ideas about its importance, supported a sexual division of labor among whites where men would become workers and providers for families, and women would be educated for motherhood and family responsibilities. These women and men married early and started having children early in the marriage, contributing their share to the baby boom. Among Blacks, both men and women pursued educations in order to get jobs. They also had higher births rates, which means that, at least among Black women, they probably postponed marriage and childbearing until their education was finished.

Gender and Politics

The public and visible world of politics was white male territory after World War II. It had always been this way. White men controlled the most powerful and key decision-making positions on

the national, state, and local levels. They therefore dominated the formal political arena of public offices and political parties.

Women were, by and large, less involved in this part of politics than men. Women had filled many political positions during World War II, but this ended when the war was over and men once again took over those positions. Emmy Werner (1968: 43) described the general historical pattern of women's involvement in state legislatures and Congress from 1920 to 1960 as the following:

The most rapid influx of women in the state legislatures occurred within five years after the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment, up to 1925. There was another relatively sharp increase twenty years later, during World War II, and thirty years later, during the Korean War. The number dropped during the depression years and shortly before and after World War II -- at points of economic, political, and social unrest in American history. Women in Congress were affected by the same trends.

Where women did win political positions, they were typically at the state or local, and not the national, level (Baxter and Lansing, 1980; Hartmann, 1982; Kaledin, 1984). Werner (1968: 42), for example, counted 249 women in state legislatures versus 11 Congresswomen in 1951. In terms of political appointments at the federal level, women were usually selected for positions that were presumably of more interest to them, such as in the Children's Bureau, the Women's Bureau, the Bureau of Home Economics, and the U.S. Civil Service Commission (Daniel, 1987: 208-209). For the most part, women in politics and in these federal bureaus were white.

Hartmann (1982) offers three reasons for women's relative absence from political offices after World War II. First, women's own passivity stopped them from participating. Women, as well as men, thought politics were best left to men. Second, men were not

willing to share power and decision-making with women; women were not accepted as colleagues by men, but were isolated and alienated from male politicians when they did hold office. Finally, public opinion was against women holding important or key political positions. Women in politics violated notions of women's place as mother and homemaker. Hartmann's ideas are confirmed by the work of Werner (1966; 1968), who found that women in Congress and the State Legislatures in the early 1960s confronted these very problems.

While white women were either not involved or not important in the sphere of formal politics, they were important actors on the local and community levels. Women were active in political parties as election workers and canvassers (Hartmann, 1982); they did grass roots political work in community organizations through their volunteering; (Baxter and Lansing, 1980); and, they were active as volunteers in pressure groups like the peace movement, consumer affairs, and the Civil Rights movement (Kaledin, 1984). Kaledin (1984: 83) describes women's political activity in the 1950s by saying that they "worked behind the scenes as concerned individuals". Unfortunately, the Cold War climate of the postwar period contributed to preventing the development of a feminist movement that could have challenged these arrangements in order to give women more visible and central roles in politics (Daniel, 1987; Hartmann, 1982).

Black women and Black men had different experiences with politics than their white counterparts. Most Blacks were not registered to vote. In 1952, for example, 78% of Black women had never cast a vote (Jones, 1985: 276). Those who were registered

were met with white anger, hostility, and sometimes violence at the voting booth, and were often denied this rudimentary political right. Women were less likely to vote than men. These facts were especially true in the South (Baxter and Lansing, 1980; Hartmann, 1982).

Like white women, Black men and Black women did not have access to political positions. When Blacks did hold political office, men were much more likely than women to fill them. Thus, racism stopped Blacks from formal political participation, but that participation favored men when it happened at all (Baxter and Lansing, 1980).

Despite this lack of fundamental rights, both Black men and Black women found their political voices in the postwar period. The Civil Rights Movement began in the 1950s, and challenged white political, economic, cultural, and social domination in U.S. society. The center of the conflicts and confrontations was in the South.

Fewer Black men were actively involved in the Civil Rights movement than Black women. Jones (1985) attributes this to demographic and cultural factors. Demographically, there were fewer men than women in the South since a disproportionate share of the out-migrants to the North had been men. Culturally, Black women had always held a respected place as leaders in the Black community. When the Civil Rights movement developed, they naturally assumed many of the leadership positions. Black men were among the most visible leaders of the Civil Rights movements because of their positions as ministers and preachers to the Black community. Black churches were the organizational network and backbone of the Civil Rights movement (Giddings, 1984; Jones, 1985).

A fairly complicated picture of the postwar political world emerges from the above descriptions. White men controlled in the more formal and public political sphere of elected officials, at the national, state, and local levels. White women were less active in formal politics; their political work was done in the shadows of these offices or as volunteers in organizations that worked on the social issues of the times. Their political participation was local and community oriented. While white men were the visible doers and defenders, white women worked behind the scenes as helpmates and supporters. None of these patterns are unique to the postwar period, however. Although some women held political offices during the war, these gains were subsequently lost in the postwar period. Neither white men's nor white women's political behaviors after World War II seem much different, in quantity or quality, from before or during World War II. Indeed, politics do not inform most people's daily lives like employment or education do. Among whites, the postwar sexual divisions in politics, while reflective of the times, are not terribly distinctive or telling of those times. This is the opposite among Blacks. Black men and Black women struggled with the formal political structure, trying to gain entree and alter it at the same time. While white women worked behind the scenes in politics, Black women were very much a part of a different scene. Sex and race divisions overlapped to offer men and women very different opportunities within the political arena.

The connections between these trends in political behaviors and experiences and fertility is unclear. We know very little about the

relationship between politics and fertility in general; it is difficult to know how they interacted with and influenced each other in the postwar U.S. context. It could be said, from the vantage point of white women's and white men's experiences, that nothing happened in their everyday political lives that would have interfered with a baby boom. In fact, political behaviors and their meanings continued to be divided along gender-typed lines. Women, who were predominantly from the middle or upper classes, were political in ways that would not interfere with or take precedence over their positions as mothers, and upper and middle class men were political leaders and decision makers. Moreover, women's political work was consistent with definitions of women as nurturing helpmates. Coupled with powerful ideologies about women's needs to mother, their political work was structured in such a way that it did not compete with their home and family responsibilities. But if and why this would lead to an increase in fertility is a question for further study. Relationships between political behavior and fertility are more difficult to comprehend for Black women and Black men, since both women and men were active members of the Civil Rights movement, experiences which took them away from family and home and into the public arena. Again, further study is needed to understand how Blacks' coming to political consciousness and struggle in the late 1940s and 1950s led to their participation in the marriage and family patterns which encouraged the baby boom.

Conclusions

This exploration of men's and women's lives in the post-World War II period has yielded several insights about sex/gender systems at that time. With regard to family formation, both men and women chose marriage in higher proportions and at younger ages than the country had ever known. Their relaxed attitudes toward the adoption of birth control and unwanted pregnancies meant that they had more children earlier in their marriages. Deviations from heterosexuality, though somewhat common, were not easily tolerated. Most men and women followed the domestic code that emphasized the nuclear family -- at least on the surface.

Postwar sexual divisions of labor, as revealed in labor force participation, education, and politics, fed and were fed by the domestic code and gender ideologies. Men were more likely to work outside the home, and regained their dominance in high-paying, high status, unionized, skilled jobs. The majority of women did not work outside of the home. When they did work, their jobs were low-paying, unskilled or semi-skilled, and not likely to be unionized. These patterns advantaged men over women, and whites over non-whites. Men were educated to be workers and therefore providers, while women were educated to be wives and mothers. This was much less true of Black women than white women, who were more likely to work and be breadwinners within their families. Finally, the world of politics was segregated by gender and by race. White men dominated major decision-making political offices as well as the political parties. White women worked at the grass roots level or in positions that were

supportive of men. Black women and Black men worked for basic human rights and political visibility through the Civil Rights Movement. The best of the socially valued resources within the United States thus went to class-privileged white men; white women, Black women, and Black men were either denied them or got the leftovers. Particularly in comparison with the war years, white male dominance was reasserted after World War II.

My review has provided some pieces of information about sex/gender systems that help to explain the baby boom, and others that seem inconsistent with a baby boom. On the one hand, the patterns of postwar family formation and contraception use encouraged and permitted the baby boom by simply creating more nuclear families. This was true across racial categories. Data on marriage show that whites and non-whites married in higher proportions and in younger ages than ever before after World War II. In addition, increased publicity about the dangers of homosexuality fed an emphasis on heterosexuality which may have further nourished the formation of nuclear families. The link between these trends in family formation and the increase in birth rates is clear and straightforward.

On the other hand, historical and statistical data about sexual divisions present a challenge to understanding the increase in fertility at that time. The data provide complex, contradictory, and conflicting pieces of evidence about gender relations in the postwar period, some of which are difficult to reconcile with a baby boom.

It seems clear that the meanings imposed on women's and men's public lives -- by educators, the government, unions, and employers--

- fit them within a domestic code that defined men's public lives as natural and necessary to family relations, and women's as largely unnecessary and secondary, but sometimes appropriate, to home and family responsibilities. While many women and men resisted these ideas about sexual divisions of labor, most no doubt internalized them. Given the overall conservatism and the emphasis on the nuclear family that characterized the times, most women and men believed this was the right and natural way to live. Marrying and having children were to be expected; men's return to the head of families as breadwinners, and general postwar economic prosperity, made it possible to do these things at younger ages.

This explanations breaks down and gets more complex when the data are examined by race, because sexual divisions were not nearly as strong among Blacks. Despite dominant prescriptions about women's place being in the home, as well as profound discrimination based on race and sex, Black women worked, got educated, and participated in the politics of the time equally or more often than Black men. Economic and racial discrimination prevented Black men from attaining the high wages and level of education enjoyed by their white counterparts. Under these circumstances, the domestic code -- men as breadwinners and heads of families, and women as mothers, wives, and homemakers -- made little sense in their lives. Black men and Black women developed alternative definitions of gender, ones which supported women's leadership in the community and work outside of the home, and recognized the barriers in men's lives. Despite these problems of racism and discrimination, and the centrality of work in

Black women's lives, Black women and Black men had a baby boom. This suggests that hypotheses which predict that increases in women's public activities (e.g., labor force participation and education) will reduce birth rates are simplistic and often incorrect when group variations are considered. Relationships between sexual divisions of labor and fertility are affected by race and class divisions as well; the nature of all of those relationships must be known to understand fertility fluctuations over time.

Another puzzle has to do with women in the economy and within higher education. Both married women's and mother's labor force participation increased after World War II, despite the dominant ideas about women's proper place and exclusive motherhood; so did the numbers (but not the proportions) of women getting advanced degrees. Yet, these public activities and opportunities usually suggest that fertility rates will decrease. But virtually all categories of women had a baby boom. Why?

The data suggest that the post-World War II emphases on family, on home, and on the breadwinner/homemaker domestic code were more immediate, intense, and meaningful in men's and women's lives than the material changes that were occurring within sexual divisions of labor. Men and women of the 1940s and 1950s were not aware of "the subtle revolution" that was occurring in their lives (Smith, 1979). This revolution slowly undermined the domestic code, and was borne out of the following set of contradictory patterns: women's raised hopes during World War II, when they entered men's worlds in the economy, education, and politics; women's dashed hopes and bitterness

when those gains were lost to returning veterans at war's end and they were unemployed or forced to return to women's work; and "the feminine mystique" or deep restlessness among young educated women in the 1950s, who thought there should be more to life than a house in the suburbs, a husband, and kids. The feelings of injustice and inequity that all of these patterns engendered created a mass of discontented women who were dissatisfied with the domestic code. During the 1950s, most men and women apparently internalized the pro-natal ethos of the times. They married and had children at the same time that the realities in their lives made it increasingly more difficult for them to follow the patterns of behavior prescribed in that ethos. Many historians and social commentators point to this contradictory set of postwar events, and their long term consequences, when explaining the origins of the social unrest of the 1960s and women's coming to political consciousness during that time (Chafe, 1972; Daniel, 1987; Friedan, 1974; Giddings, 1984; Kaledin, 1984; Margolis, 1984). Further study should examine these factors as they may help to explain why the baby boom came to an end, that is, why the fertility rate decreased in the 1960s, and how that fertility decline is related to the sex/gender system which was taking shape.

Comparing this above account with other explanations for the baby boom reveals a few similarities and some differences. Many previous accounts describe changes in marriage patterns after World War II (Bean, 1983; Bouvier, 1980; Chernin, 1981; Russell, 1982; Westoff and Westoff, 1968); a few discuss women's postwar labor force participation rates (Bean, 1983; Butz and Ward, 1979; Easterlin,

1973); and one author relates divorce rates to fertility rates (Chernin, 1981). None of those interpretations looked at the other aspects of the social organization of gender covered here -- women's and men's participation in education and politics, the structure and meanings attached to sexuality, race and class variations in postwar sex/gender systems, and men's involvement in the labor force.

Considering all of these parts of postwar gender arrangements generates a more complete and complex picture of men's and women's lives, suggesting that it is overly simple to reduce those experiences to women's labor force participation rates or men's and women's income levels. And while my attention to the social organization of gender does not necessarily contradict or disprove existing interpretations of the baby boom, it enriches and adds to them by showing the complexity of that organization. No existing demographic account, for example, could appreciate the intricacies of race relations in the postwar period as they may have affected the baby boom. Likewise, no explanation looks at men's lives after World War II in relation to women's experiences, e.g., sexual divisions of labor. Finally, none of the accounts compare sexual divisions of the wartime period with those of the postwar period; my exploration has shown dramatic shifts in gender arrangements between those two time periods. An emphasis on the social organization of gender changes understandings of the baby boom by looking at it from this very different angle.

FOOTNOTES FOR CHAPTER 7

1. This was more true for married women than single women because birth control clinics in the 1940s and 1950s specifically required that their clients be married (Gordon, 1977). Some single women undoubtedly got contraception from their private doctors, but this was probably not common given the general cultural importance attached to premarital virginity for women.

2. D'Emilio (1983) describes how the phenomenon of "butch-femme" roles became common in lesbian bar culture in the 1950s. This involved a simulation of divisions within male-female relationships (e.g., dominant/subordinate, strong/weak, masculine/feminine), and was expressed in dress, appearance, and mannerisms, and probably influenced home life. This mimicking of stereotypical gender roles is at least suggestive of the power of postwar ideologies of masculinity and femininity.

3. Other potential sources of labor supply -- from large scale immigration from other countries, or from among women and men of color within the United States -- were not tapped, although they could have been. Some caution should therefore be exercised in thinking that only married women, predominantly white and middle-class, could have filled these positions in the labor force.

CHAPTER 8 CONCLUSIONS

The Baby Boom: Another Look

I now come full circle, back to the question that prompted this research project: what caused the baby boom -- the unprecedented and long term rise in fertility rates after World War II? In trying to find answers to this question, I have focussed on the postwar political economy, gender ideologies, and sexual divisions of labor. Asking the question from that angle has yielded results that build on other accounts of the baby boom, and permits a more complex understanding of that period. Attention to political economy and the social organization of gender also raises a number of questions about relationships between gender and fertility that are not answered by my research design.

From the evidence I've given here, it seems that the baby boom was influenced by four confluent and mutually reinforcing trends within U.S. society after World War II: economic prosperity, political conservatism, dominant gender ideologies that made parenthood compulsory to women's and men's achievement of "normal" adult development; and patterns of family formation and contraceptive usage which raised the birth rate. However, actual changes in men's and women's lives and within sexual divisions after World War II are more contradictory, and would not necessarily indicate an increase in birth rates. According to prevalent interpretive frameworks, these changes should have acted to depress fertility rates rather than leading to their increase.

Economic prosperity was widespread after World War II and allowed much of the population to live at a higher standard of living than they had ever known. This high level of living, coupled with the seemingly endless growth potential of the economy, fostered confidence about the future. Prosperity and confidence together influenced the proportion of men and women marrying, average ages at marriage, women's age at first birth, and the mean number of children born so that the birth rate increased. This is similar to the argument that Richard Easterlin (1962; 1973; 1980) makes in his work on the baby boom when he emphasizes the very open job market of the postwar period and its influence on the fertility rate. The promise of the job market raised the marriage rate, brought the age of marriage down, and boosted the birth rate.

The political environment of the postwar period was uniquely conservative and dominated by a Cold War mentality that made the future of the United States seem tenuous and fragile. This environment produced a nation of worried, quiescent people who feared annihilation by the bomb or by communists, a depression, or another war, most of whom did not speak out against the wrongs and injustices in their world. Most men and women spent their energy seeking stability, safety, and privacy from the chaos and social disorganization. And whereas at other times in history people in this situation may have turned to the community or to wider kin networks for comfort and stability, the nuclear family came to represent a haven from the world. The processes of suburbanization and urbanization, and the introduction of television and the

automobile, fed this emphasis on privacy, on home, and on the nuclear family. Marrying and having children were central to establishing this refuge. Thus, the political economy of the postwar period produced a contradiction -- between optimism and anxiety about the future -- that manifested itself in the turn to the nuclear family.

Other accounts of the baby boom do not discuss the Cold War or the political atmosphere within the United States after World War II, a conspicuous oversight given my findings. However, many sociologists do point to the emphasis on the nuclear family that characterized the times (Bean, 1983; Bouvier, 1980; Chernin, 1981; Elder, 1974; Wrong, 1952).

Postwar conceptions of manhood and womanhood supported sexual divisions of labor where both women and men would marry and parent, and exaggerated the importance of these experiences to human identity. Within gender ideologies, marriage and parenthood were equated with adulthood, normalcy, and maturity. Conversely, not being married and not parenting were associated with social or psychological pathology. This equation of parenthood with normalcy was especially true for women, whose identity was very closely tied to their family relationships. While dominant ideologies proscribed women's work outside of the home because of the importance of motherhood, ideologies for working class women and Black women recognized their needs and rights to work.

Sociologists who seek to understand the baby boom hint at the significance of ideologies by describing the reappearance of pro-motherhood and pro-housewife attitudes in the postwar period. Other

gender ideologies -- of masculinities or of other ideologies of gender as they may have varied by race and class -- have not been studied or called into focus in those research projects. Instead, vague references are made to the pro-housewife, pro-natalist attitudes of the time (Bouvier, 1980), or to the emphasis on motherhood and family that characterized the era (Bean, 1983). Further, no studies have taken an in-depth look at ideologies to discover their origins or the particular forms they took at that time.

Much of the baby boom was related to women's and men's patterns of marriage and divorce, and to their use of contraception. Both women and men married in higher proportions and at younger ages than ever before; their rates of divorce were lower than would be expected given long term historical trends. Desired family size increased after World War II when compared with the 1930s and early 1940s, and women wanted smaller birth intervals so that all of their children were born early in their marriages. Finally, young men and women of the late 1940s and 1950s did not try to prevent births until they reached their desired number of children, and accepted unplanned pregnancies. These patterns in childbearing and childspacing led to the foundation of larger families in relatively short periods of time. Sociologists who try to understand the baby boom note the unique historical qualities of these patterns (Bouvier, 1980; Chernin, 1981).

It is the coming together of these four factors that influenced the rise in fertility rates. All supported marriage, the nuclear

family, and parenthood for men and women. All are intertwined. Ideas about women's and men's proper place would not have had the impact they did, for example, had there not been an economic boom. Likewise, men and women would not have married young or in such high proportions, they would have practiced contraception more diligently, and fewer children would have been born if the United States had experienced depression instead of prosperity. Had there not been a Cold War that emphasized the nuclear family, if the postwar period had instead been characterized by massive social unrest like the 1960s, gender relations may have been altered to such an extent that a different ideology of the family and gender would have developed.

Relationships between actual changes in men's and women's lives and the baby boom are more ambiguous and contradictory, especially when they are broken down by gender, race, and class experiences. Given the nature of the data I collected, which takes a very structural approach to these trends, I can only describe these contradictions and offer tentative suggestions for how they may be related to the baby boom.

Looking only at the changes in men's lives in the postwar period shows that they could be consistent with a baby boom. After World War II, men -- particularly from the middle and upper middle-classes -- were restored to positions of dominance within the labor force and politics, and were educated, many with help from the GI Bill, in fields that led to high-paying, high-status jobs. Middle class men worked as professionals and managers in expanding U.S. corporations. Working class men got jobs, wages, and benefits in manufacturing and

construction industries that were unprecedented in U.S. labor history. Black men also shared in this prosperity, although theirs was a relative share. While their jobs in industries and the expanding service sector represented a vast improvement over any other period in history except during World War II, for example, race and class discrimination kept Black men from sharing equally in the economic good times.

This widespread prosperity among men, coupled with the emphasis on the nuclear family and the importance of fatherhood for men's identity, could have supported the marriage and family formation rates of the postwar period. If this is true, the link between changes in men's life chances and identities and their fertility decisions and behaviors are quite direct and clear. Knowing little about men's relationship to the entire phenomenon of fertility, it is difficult to project the meanings of these changes for decisions they made. The processes by which men of very different race, ethnic, and class backgrounds came to similar fertility decisions is also not clear. These are areas for further research.

The links become more clouded and contradictory when looking at this relationship between life events and fertility behaviors among women. Despite the fact that dominant ideologies warned against it, women of all race and class categories increased their participation in the labor force after World War II. Many women worked and had children at the same time, as the rate of working mothers increased steadily throughout the late 1940s and 1950s. In addition, both Black and white women increased their numbers (but not their

proportions) in higher education. Finally, Black women became more and more politically active over the course of the 1950s. These increases in women's public activities would usually depress marriage and fertility rates while increasing childspacing, thus reducing the fertility rate. But for over a decade within the United States after World War II, increases in women's activities outside of the home did not have that depressing effect. Instead, women increased their involvements inside and outside the home at the same time. The most logical explanation for this, I think, is that the behaviors of women in the postwar period, while contradictory to what we might expect based on historical trends, was nonetheless consistent and to be expected given the specific social and cultural milieu of the late 1940s and 1950s. Women wanted to be wives, mother, and homemakers, to participate in the dream of the nuclear family, at the same time that they wanted or needed to work to maintain or help maintain those families. By their own efforts and through their affiliations with men, they shared in the economic good times and optimism, as well as in the anxieties produced by the Cold War atmosphere. Women were not immune to these influences. While public life competed with home life for their time and energy, women of all race and class groups juggled both sets of responsibilities because each was important in a different way. Further studies, which bridge the gap between these macro-structural processes of divisions of labor by sex, race, and class and micro-level processes of fertility decisions and behaviors, are necessary to understand if and why this was so.

Frank Bean (1983) is the only demographer who tackles gendered behavior in the postwar period when he looks at women's labor force participation, and writes about how the call into the labor force competed with the call to go home, producing tensions and contradictions for individual women. He does not look at men's behavior, however, nor does he place women's labor force participation within the larger context of changing sexual divisions of labor and ideologies of masculinities and femininities.

My analysis suggests that the sex/gender system may be related to fertility, but in ways that are not linear or easily comprehended. More research is needed to explore the ties between postwar gender ideologies and behaviors, for example, to see if and how ideologies affected decisions about fertility. Given the wide variations in historical experience by race, class, and ethnicity, there are different avenues to fertility decisions and behaviors. This is another area for further research that is merely suggested by my project. Black women and white women inhabited very different social worlds after World War II, yet behaved in similar ways with respect to rates of fertility. An important next step in research would be to find out why this was so. This would, in turn, provide clues about the connections between gender and fertility that are unique to group experiences versus those that are shared across different social groups.

Contributions to Understandings of Fertility

This project makes four specific contributions to the sociological study of fertility. First, my research reveals that

fertility rates are a consequence of a number of factors --economic, political, social, cultural, and historical -- and cannot be reduced to one or two causes. It is the interactions of these historically specific processes that influence birth rates. Theories that attempt to explain changes in fertility over the short run, as well as those concerned with long term fertility transitions, should include all of these factors. The failure to look at fertility rates within their specific contexts seriously distorts and ultimately hampers explanations for why they change or remain the same. An example of this in my research is the Cold War, which I found to be very important to the time period and for the baby boom. While no accounts of the baby boom that I reviewed even mentioned the Cold War, every history I read treated it as one of the most important determinants of post-World War II life within the United States. Insights into its effects provides an important clue about why birth rates increased, and is therefore a critical piece of the baby boom puzzle.

A second contribution of this project concerns the inclusion of ideologies of masculinity in explanations of fertility. I have argued that ideologies about manhood, as well as the actual conditions of men's lives, may affect fertility decisions and behaviors. Fertility happens to men and women, although in very different ways. This fact is seldom acknowledged in demographic theories of fertility. Had demographic accounts of the baby boom considered ideologies of manhood in their explanations, they would have found a "pro-breadwinner," "pro-father" ethic to match those of

motherhood and housewifery. My research shows that fatherhood took on important meanings in the postwar period, meanings which were tied to men's ability to be good providers for their families, and which varied across the categories of race.

Third, my research suggests that the social organization of gender is not the only factor in understandings of fertility rates and why they rise and fall. In the case of the baby boom, political, economic, and cultural factors were as important in understanding the increase in birth rates as gender ideologies and sexual divisions of labor. This does not mean, however, that the social organization of gender can be neglected in future research on fertility. Theoretical connections between gender and fertility remain, and should be theorized, researched, and probed in other ways to illuminate those connections.

Finally, my research contributes to discussions of the usefulness of demographic transition theory as a model for predicting changes in fertility. Demographic transitions are not linear processes; societies do not move from stage one, with high birth and death rates, to stage three, with low birth and death rates, and remain there. Social processes of modernization, industrialization, urbanization, and development, in short, do not automatically mean low birth rates. Within highly industrialized and urbanized societies, birth rates rise and fall as a response to larger political, economic, and cultural forces. Within the United States, the crises of Depression and World War II caused the birth rate to dip lower than might be expected; after World War II, economic

prosperity and the emphasis on family life caused fertility rates to be higher than expected. These rates stayed high for well over a decade. A different set of social and historical events brought an end to the baby boom in the 1960s. This fall, rise, and fall pattern occurred within a highly developed and urbanized society. Thus, demographic transition theory as it was originally formulated is of limited value as a general predictive tool. Changes in fertility rates and major transitions in societal fertility patterns should be thought about and studied within historically and culturally specific contexts. These kinds of studies will produce more complex but accurate models of demographic transitions and how they come about. In the end, it may mean that we need multiple theories of demographic transitions, ones which aid in understandings of the factors that shape and influence demographic processes, but also leave room for historical and cultural variations.

Implications for Demographic Research

The above discussion of contributions points to several implications for future demographic research. These implications can be summarized by this general statement: if sociologists and demographers want to predict, explain, and understand the phenomenon of fertility, their models of fertility have to be more complex and dynamic. Four specific directions are suggested by my research. First, demography needs to develop theoretical models that pursue more than one cause for changes in fertility rates. Unicausal explanations, such as the ones offered by Butz and Ward (1979), Easterlin (1962; 1973) or Elder (1974) fall far short of answering

all the questions raised when trying to understand birth rates. Second, demographers should be more historically reflexive about the specific social, cultural, political, and economic milieu in which fertility rates take place. Third, demographers should pay close attention to the social organization of gender as they attempt to explain particular patterns of birth rates. Those who do not study gender should; those who have begun to look at gender by examining attitudes toward motherhood and housewives or women's labor force participation rates, for example, should push ahead, making gender (not sex) more central to their questions and in their research designs. This means including men and women within those models. Most importantly, sociologists should explore connections between the social organization of gender and fertility transitions, examining how each influences the other. Finally, fertility rates and gender relations should be understood as they intersect with relations of race, class, ethnicity, and age. The different rates and pathways to fertility across social groupings are most assuredly related to these intersecting sets of social relations. Demographic transition theory will need to account for all of these intersections to fully comprehend the nature of those transitions.

Suggestions for Further Research

The next step in this specific research project is to interview and collect oral histories from baby boom parents, the men and women who married and/or had children in the late 1940s and the 1950s. While reading and thinking about the baby boom and in coming up with my own set of explanations for it, I often wondered how these people

would explain that period in their lives and what their own explanations of the baby boom would be. I also wondered how their identities as men and women would influence their explanations of their lives. I have uncovered and reviewed the explanations of historians, sociologists, anthropologists, and other "experts," producing a picture that is abstract, structural, and not very helpful in understanding specific connections between gender and fertility. It's time to ask the historical actors themselves.

In retrospect I think my ability to understand the baby boom would have benefitted immensely from the inclusion of these voices. The value for me in having done this project first, however, is that I now know the kinds of questions which need to be asked. I imagine that if I had read the literature on the baby boom and started interviewing from there, for example, I would not have interviewed men, and I would not have understood the links between the pro-family postwar and the Cold War. This study has taught me to look for these kinds of broad links between fertility and social structure. As a consequence, I am much better prepared to talk to baby boom parents - men and women, and to anchor abstract connections between gender and fertility in their lived experiences.

Collecting oral histories from these men and women with an eye on demographic questions would be a fairly radical venture compared with other demographic studies. While asking women about their fertility choices isn't unique, asking men and women to reflect back on their reproductive decisions would be. This data would be invaluable to our understandings of fertility, gender, history, and

social structure. At its best, it would move the discipline of demography past its methodological rigidity, showing that measuring is not the only way to explore fertility phenomena.

Another research project suggested by this study would compare the postwar period with another historical era to see if the same factors emerge in explanations of fertility rates. Gender would remain central to the research questions, as would a general understanding of each time period in terms of its political economy, social structure, and culture. I would, in short, keep the same research strategy and design, and look to see which explanatory factors remain, and which fall away, in the comparisons. A comparative project such as this would be particularly helpful for sorting out the complexities and inconsistencies between the social organization of gender and fertility. Since the baby boom was such an anomalous situation and happened in the midst of other tumultuous political, economic, and cultural events, making conclusions about gender and fertility based on this one case may not be as theoretically useful as other cases would be. It might be helpful to compare it with a less unusual period.

An alternative to this historical research design would be a cross-cultural study that examined relationships between fertility and the social organization of gender across two or more societies. This type of study would help distinguish what was unique to each cultural case from what was common to both, a design which would then allow theoretical generalizations about relationships between gender and fertility. This kind of study would provide promising leads

about how the social organization of gender affects and is affected by demographic transitions in fertility and mortality levels.

Still another set of questions emerge from this study. A next step could be to ask the same question I asked here about other demographic processes, specifically mortality and migration. How does attention to gender alter understandings of the dynamics of these processes? This would be a valuable project for getting demographers to think more deeply about the centrality of gender in all of social life.

Finally, I think there is an acute need for more historical studies of gender that focus on men and women of color, and men and women from varied social class backgrounds. If there are few histories which bring "masculinity into focus" (Carrigan, Connell, and Lee, 1985: 551), careful historical work on men of color -- on Blacks, Hispanics, and Native Americans, for example -- is rare or non-existent. The same is true for women of color, although Giddings' (1984) and Jones' (1985) histories of Black women are important contributions to the historical record. Since many minority men's and women's histories are hidden in the "non-white" categories of the Census Bureau, a very importance source of historical data, these gendered histories may be nearly impossible to write. But it is these kinds of studies that are needed so that sociologists can fully understand and account for variations in social behavior.

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