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### Author

Hinkle, Caroline Mills

### Publication Date

2011

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

Creating Dad:  
The Remaking of Middle-Class Fatherhood in the United States from 1900-1930

By

Caroline Mills Hinkle

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

History

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor Paula Fass, Chair  
Professor David Henkin  
Professor Mary Ann Mason

Fall 2011



Abstract

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Between 1900 and 1930, a wide variety of authors, journalists, parenting experts, boyworkers, and social scientists expressed interest in fostering closer father-child relationships in the United States. As the interest in fatherhood grew through the late-1910s and 1920s, authors promoting greater paternal involvement also reinterpreted what it meant to be a good father, focusing more on play and camaraderie and less on discipline and education. This dissertation argues that the changing ideal of fatherhood was the result of conscious efforts to convince men to take a more active role in parenting, to revitalize fatherhood by distinguishing the fun, youthful, modern father from the stodgy, Victorian patriarchs of the previous generation. The modern father even had a new name: “Dad.”

Interest in fostering greater paternal participation in child-rearing grew in part out of a fear of the “feminization” of boys and particularly emphasized the benefits of fathers’ involvement with sons, but efforts to engage fathers more fully with their children were even more focused on the imagined benefits for men. Authors fretted over the skyrocketing divorce rate and the erosion of the shared economic function of the family and sought to tie the father more tightly to the middle-class home. The changing ideals of fatherhood reflect a more child-centered, democratic middle-class family and a new valuation of youthfulness.

This dissertation explores a variety of efforts to connect fathers more fully with their children and to make fatherhood seem modern and fun. Such concerns can be seen in efforts to design homes to appeal more to masculine sensibilities, in efforts to increase father participation in child-focused organizations, in more inclusive advice literature, and in the growth of popular humor about fatherhood. In addition to these developments, fathers began seeking parenting groups and books of their own, and the 1910s and 1920s saw the growth of fathers’ clubs, fathering classes, father-child organizations and events, and books on childrearing written specifically for and by fathers. Rather than joining

their wives in parenting groups, these men reached out to other fathers in an acknowledgement of what some called a “fraternity of fatherhood.”

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## Acknowledgments

I would like first to thank my advisor, Paula Fass, not only for the encouragement she gave me as a student, but for the extraordinarily positive and supportive attitude she had toward my sometimes clumsy efforts to find a balance between being a scholar and a parent. Paula assured me that there is room in academics for people who make a whole variety of choices about how to pursue their careers and balance them with parenthood. For this, I have more gratitude than I can describe. In addition to this, Paula is a model of scholarship and an enormously helpful advisor. She offered insightful advice and matched my enthusiasm for my topic at every turn. I am exceedingly fortunate to have her as a mentor.

I would also like to thank the other members of my dissertation committee, David Henkin and Mary Ann Mason, for their support and assistance. Their astute critiques have made my project stronger and their advice will continue to help me as I move forward.

I had the good fortune to meet Gary Cross when he spent a year at the Center for Working Families in Berkeley while I was a fellow there. Over the following years, he offered me guidance and advice as I researched and wrote. His support of this project has been a great help to me as has his scholarship on masculinity and childhood.

I would also like to thank the staffs of the following libraries and archives: The Knights of Columbus Archives; The Kautz Family YMCA Archives at the University of Minnesota; the Iowa State Historical Society; The Hudson Library and Historical Society of Ohio; the University of California, Berkeley Library and its Bancroft Library; the Rush Rhees Library at the University of Rochester; the Brian Sutton-Smith Library and Archives of Play at Strong, the National Museum of Play; the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Archives; the Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections at Cornell University; and the Archives and Special Collections Library at Vassar College. I met with universally helpful and knowledgeable people in my dealings with these libraries and collections and I am very grateful for their assistance.

I am appreciative of the financial support of the Department of History at U. C. Berkeley, which awarded me fellowships through the years, as well as the Sloan Foundation's Center for Working Families at U.C. Berkeley, which awarded me a Pre-Doctoral Fellowship and a summer research stipend.

I was fortunate to be able to present work at various conferences and I am grateful to my fellow panelists and conference attendees for their insightful comments and questions. The U.C. Berkeley history department's graduate adviser, Mabel Lee, offered her friendly assistance in navigating the university. My colleagues in the Berkeley history department provided a fun and exciting intellectual environment in which to work. Ellen Berg, especially, provided her support through every stage of this project, sharing sources, reading drafts, and talking with me for hours about my work. The friendship of

Ellen and her family is one of the best things to come out of my happy time in graduate school.

I could not possibly have finished this dissertation without the love, patience and support of my family. I am grateful for the support of my parents, David and Patty Hinkle, which has come in many forms. My daughters, Elise, Lydia, and Nora have provided me with inspiration, encouragement, purpose, and joy. My husband, David McCamant, has been unfailingly enthusiastic, supportive, and kind. He always sees the best in everything—especially in me—and that is a gift I draw from every day.

When I was working on my last chapter on humor and condescension toward fathers, I overheard my daughter Elise skeptically tell her friend, “My mother says she is writing a dissertation, but all she seems to do is read comics all day long.” This made me smile and reflect that I have been either very clever or very lucky in choosing a topic for which the sources have held such interest and fun for me. I have enjoyed researching this material immensely, even enjoyed reading old comic strips for hours every day, and for this I am very grateful. It is encouraging and even uplifting to look back and read the words of men and women struggling to improve the lives of families, to read the words of men reaching out to fellow fathers to offer encouragement and support. I did not always agree with the authors I read, but I admired the project of trying to create closer, happier families.



## Introduction

In 1925, Frederic F. Van de Water, a self-described “Dub Father,” wrote an article for the *Ladies’ Home Journal* in which he discussed the problems facing modern fathers. Van de Water characterized himself as bewildered and blustering, following blindly in the footsteps of his own father. The images that accompany the article show a confused and wondering father, scratching his head, while the mother seems decidedly more sure of herself. Van de Water wrote,

Mothers are better equipped for parenthood than fathers are. In addition, in support of maternal instinct, there is a continually growing mass of literature on motherhood. ...Nothing of which I am aware has ever been done to enlighten a father concerning his part in the delicate task of child rearing. He has neither instinct nor education to help him.

I spent four years in two long-suffering universities. I can stumble through an account of the industrial revolution, and I still recall a half dozen chemical symbols. But I don’t know what to do when one’s son is afraid of the dark.<sup>1</sup>

He continued in this vein, describing his confusion in dealing with various parenting dilemmas. The author depicted fathers as ill-equipped and puzzled, but his descriptions of his own confusion suggest that he was an involved, conscientious, gentle father. He wanted to find a “modern” way of fathering and felt guilty for relying on the outdated methods of his own father. The author was convinced that an expert (probably a psychologist) could tell him what to do in each child-rearing instance, that there was a right and wrong way to raise a child, if only he could access it. He wrote, “There is, of course, the psychologically correct method to pursue when a nervous child is afraid of the water. But I don’t know what it is.”<sup>2</sup> He called for education for fatherhood, for courses and books to support him and others in their quest to be better fathers. Although he implied that his wife was more skilled than he at child rearing, he did not consider her a viable source of assistance with his dilemmas; he saw father’s role as distinct from mother’s.

Van de Water feared being rejected by his son when the boy grew older. He described feeling left out of the intense emotional connectedness between the other members of the family, explaining that “the exquisite bond of love and sympathy between mother and child grows stronger with the years. Probably, it is only just that it should; but since this is the case, the dub father comes to feel that he is hovering about

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<sup>1</sup> Frederic F. Van de Water, “Confessions of a Dub Father,” *The Ladies’ Home Journal* 42 (May, 1925): 25. There were actually several books and numerous articles attempting to help fathers negotiate their parental role by 1925, but Van de Water appears not to have been aware of them.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

the outskirts of an esoteric association whose membership is limited straitly to two.”<sup>3</sup> Van de Water longed to become “pals” with his son and feared more generally that while sons grow closer to their mothers, “father becomes, next to mother-in-law, the Greatest National Joke.... Yes, fathers are undoubtedly comic characters to their own and other people’s progeny. They were funny to me, too, until I became a dub father. Now it is harder for me to appreciate the joke. Or perhaps, after all, there isn’t any.”<sup>4</sup> The tone of his article was humorous, but Van de Water’s concerns were genuine. He laughed at the foibles of fatherhood, even as he sought help for modern fathers.

Van de Water’s self-examination of his parenting reflects important changes in ideas about fatherhood and highlights several trends this dissertation examines. Between 1900 and 1930, growing numbers advanced the cause of education for fatherhood. As mothers relied more heavily on the advice of a cadre of child-rearing experts, the movement for educated parenthood expanded to include fathers, too. Fathers were encouraged to forge closer, more affectionate bonds with their children and to make these relationships more central in their own lives. A growing number of male authors in the early part of the century attempted to deal with the feeling of exclusion from their family circles that is expressed by Van de Water, a feeling that, I argue, is historically specific as are the changing efforts to counteract it.

In the mid-1910s as the rate of interest in fostering greater paternal involvement grew, the notion of what it meant to be a good father changed as well. Authors focused more intently on father-son relations, although daughters were not excluded entirely, and encouraged fathers to stay young, to connect with the boy on his level. Authors concerned with encouraging fathers to bond with their children reinterpreted what it meant to be a good father, placing more emphasis on play and less on discipline. They presented fatherhood as modern, masculine and fun.

Many of the changes in the family that were realized in the 1920s had their roots in the early years of the century. The family itself became smaller and more child-centered in the early 1900s. From an average of almost five children per wife in the first half of the nineteenth century, the birthrate fell such that between 1870 and 1900, there were 2.77 children per wife, and only 1.92 children per wife by 1915.<sup>5</sup> The years between 1900 and 1930 were ones of transition from Victorian to more modern sensibilities and a time of flux for familial relationships and gender roles. Advice authors who discussed fathers were attempting to work through some of these profound changes and to preserve and strengthen the institution of the family. Other historical studies demonstrate convincingly that as family sizes shrank, companionate marriage and closer relationships between husbands and wives were rising in the 1920s, along with marital expectations for happiness.<sup>6</sup> The push for friendlier relationships between fathers and

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.. 97.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.. 98.

<sup>5</sup> Michael S. Kimmel, *Manhood in America: A Cultural History* (New York: The Free Press, 1996), 159.

<sup>6</sup> See for example Paula S. Fass, “The Family Redivivus: 1880-1930” in *The Damned and the Beautiful: American Youth in the 1920's* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977). 53-118.; Steven Mintz and Susan Kellogg, “The Rise of the Companionate Family, 1900-1939,” in *Domestic Revolutions: A Social History of American Family Life* (1988). Marilyn Dell Brady, “The New Model Middle-Class Family (1815-1930),” in *American Families: A Research Guide and Historical Handbook*, ed. Joseph M. and Elizabeth I. Nybakken Hawes (New York: Greenwood Press, 1991).

sons paralleled a move toward friendlier spousal relationships, but mothers were not encouraged to be pals with their children to anywhere near the same extent.

Historians who study the turn of the century, influenced by John Higham's important 1970 essay "The Reorientation of American Culture in the 1890s," tend to emphasize the growth of a new "cult of masculinity," which celebrated vigorous, aggressive manhood.<sup>7</sup> The turn of the century's new emphasis on virility coupled with concerns about race suicide led many reformers to focus on the so-called "boy problem," the fear that white middle-class boys were becoming weak and effeminate. While boy-workers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were deeply concerned with the feminization of middle-class boys, this concern is strangely absent in discussions of fathering from the same period. Boy-workers did not commonly recommend more paternal involvement as a solution to the "petticoat tyranny" over boys, but tended to focus on promoting change institutionally, through organizations such as the Boy Scouts of America (BSA). Even within these groups, boy workers did not particularly trouble themselves about father involvement. For example, BSA leaders in the early years were drawn mainly from young men who did not yet have children and families to support.<sup>8</sup> The growing literature in support of a more conscientious and considered fatherhood did not commonly site the effeminization of boys as a reason for more fatherly involvement. The growth of articles and books advocating a new fatherhood was not directly rooted in anxieties about children's welfare, though benefits for children were often cited. Rather the energy of this literature is focused on fathers, on convincing men that they had an important and fulfilling role to fill in their families.

This pattern suggests that the promotion of more affectionate and involved fathering and the concern about the emotional ties of fathers to their families was not rooted in the so-called boy problem, but rather in concerns about the strength of the modern American family, concerns which were more likely tied to changing expectations for happiness and emotional fulfillment in family life and skyrocketing middle-class divorce rates. Between 1922 and 1926, there was one divorce for every seven marriages nationally and in 1927 there was a divorce issued for every six marriages, which was roughly sixteen times the rate for 1870.<sup>9</sup> Fears of family dissolution percolated through popular magazine discussions of fathers in the early twentieth century and rose to quite a clamor in the 1920s. Psychiatrist John B. Watson predicted, "In fifty years there will be

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<sup>7</sup> John Higham, "The Reorientation of American Culture in the 1890s" in Higham, ed., *Writing American History* (Bloomington, Ind., 1970). See also Peter G. Filene, *Him/Her/Self: Sex Roles in Modern America*, 1986 ed. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974).; Peter N. Stearns, *Be a man! Males in Modern Society* (New York: Holmes and Meier Publishers, Inc., 1979).; E. Anthony Rotundo, *American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1993).; Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995). In *Manhood in America*, Michael Kimmel sees the movement of greater involvement of fathers with sons at the turn of the century as evidence of the desire of men "to rescue their sons from the feminizing clutches of mothers and teachers...." Kimmel, *Manhood in America*, 157, fn 4: 431.

<sup>8</sup> David I. Macleod, *Building Character in the American Boy: The Boy Scouts, Ymca, and Their Forerunners, 1870-1920* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1983), 208.

<sup>9</sup> Kimmel, *Manhood in America*, 205.

no such thing as marriage.”<sup>10</sup> In fact, Frederic Van de Water wrote about divorce in a hyperbolic way in 1927, using some questionable math to predict that if trends continued unchecked, by 1938 there would be as many divorce decrees as marriage licenses issued.<sup>11</sup>

In the 1920s, social scientists and popular writers shared a fear of family disintegration and sought to reaffirm the purpose of the family as an institution as its economic function seemed less certain. Even in the early 1900s these fears are evident in the advice given in women’s magazines, which tended to promote an insular vision of the middle-class family, even to the point of being distrustful of outsiders such as adult friends and extended family. Authors in popular magazines pushed men to find emotional fulfillment in the home rather than outside it. They sought to tie father more tightly to the home by emphasizing the importance of his child-rearing role and by creating a space for him within the home that was emotionally fulfilling and fun. In the mid-1910s, men were encouraged to join child-centered organizations that began to promote themselves as designed for “parents” rather than “mothers.” In various places across the country, men in the mid-1910s and 1920s formed fathering organizations and clubs and wrote books of advice and support for other fathers.

In 1986, John Demos wrote, “Fatherhood has a very long history, but virtually no historians.”<sup>12</sup> After his seminal work in the 1980s, there have been more historians interested in the question of how men’s role in their families has changed over time. There are only a few studies of fatherhood that discuss American white middle-class fathers between 1900 and 1930, and all but one are significantly broader works which, by necessity, only touch briefly on the trends examined in this dissertation.<sup>13</sup> The most complete examination of American fatherhood is Robert Griswold’s *Fatherhood in America: A History* (1993).<sup>14</sup> Griswold’s broader focus means that his discussion of middle-class fathering between 1900 and 1930 is very brief, but in it he notes the trend toward more involved and friendly fathering that this dissertation examines more fully.

The scholar who has most closely examined fatherhood in the United States in the period this dissertation explores is not a historian, but a sociologist—Ralph LaRossa. This dissertation builds on his work and is indebted to his careful analyses. Working alone and with colleagues, LaRossa has produced important work examining the history of both changing attitudes toward fatherhood and changing paternal behaviors after World War I. LaRossa has brought the rigorous approach of sociology to work on data such as parenting articles as catalogued in the *Reader’s Guide to Periodic Literature*,

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<sup>10</sup> Quoted in Steven Mintz and Susan Kellogg, “The Rise of the Companionate Family, 1900-1939,” in *Domestic Revolutions: A Social History of American Family Life* (1988), 108. Also quoted in Kimmel, *Manhood in America*, 159.

<sup>11</sup> Frederic F. Van de Water, “A Divorce for Every Marriage,” *The Ladies’ Home Journal*, February 1927.

<sup>12</sup> John Demos, “The Changing Faces of Fatherhood,” in *Past, Present, and Personal: The Family and the Life Course in American History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 42.

<sup>13</sup> John Demos very briefly refers to some of the trends examined here, but Joseph Pleck groups together the period from the mid-nineteenth-century through the mid-twentieth century as characterized by distant fathers whose job was more or less restricted to breadwinning. Joseph H. Pleck, “American Fathering in Historical Perspective,” in *Changing Men: New Directions in Research on Men and Masculinity*, ed. Michael S. Kimmel (Newbury Park, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1987), 320.

<sup>14</sup> Robert L. Griswold, *Fatherhood in America: A History* (New York: Basic Books, 1993).

family comics in the *Saturday Evening Post*, and the content of letters written to Angelo Patri, a noted educator who offered parenting advice on the radio and in newspapers in the late 1920s and 1930s.<sup>15</sup> His analysis and careful consideration of potential variables and biases provides a wonderful base of information on which to further consider changing attitudes toward fatherhood in the 1920s and 1930s, especially, and his work is discussed in detail in several chapters of this dissertation.

LaRossa's *Modernization of Fatherhood: A Social and Political History* (1997) identifies important shifts in the roles of fathers in the 1920s and 1930s. LaRossa identifies two ideals of fatherhood which, he argues, competed for dominance in the twentieth century. The first is domestic masculinity (which he also calls "father as pal") and the other is masculine domesticity (or, "father as role model"). Periods in which domestic masculinity was dominant were characterized by a belittling of father's contribution, more humor about fathers, more use of the term "dad," and fewer significant paternal contributions to family life and parenting. Periods in which masculine domesticity was dominant were characterized by greater father involvement in important decision-making in child rearing, more gender-equal consideration of fathering (with both daughters and sons discussed in fathering literature), and more respectful treatment of fathers. He argues that domestic masculinity rose between 1916 and 1929 and was sandwiched by periods of masculine domesticity. He calls 1916-1929 the period of the emergence of "the culture of daddyhood."<sup>16</sup>

What did this mean for fathers? According to LaRossa,

It meant having the 'prerogative' to be the candy man and the bestower of toys; it meant holidays at the park. It also meant 'irresponsible enjoyment,' fun without any strings attached.... The culture of daddyhood created a space for fathers that posed little threat to the position of mothers. It carved a niche for fathers that left the parental stratification system basically intact. Men may have been asked to 'come home' (become domesticated), but they were not invited to become full partners in the child-rearing process. Playmates, yes. Helpers, if needed. But definitely not mothers, and certainly not equals. *Dad* and *mother*, in short, were more than just words in the early-twentieth-century child-rearing lexicon; they were political symbols.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Ralph LaRossa, Betty Ann Gordon, Ronald Jay Wilson, Annette Bairan, and Charles Jaret, "The Fluctuating Image of the Twentieth-Century American Father," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 53 (1991). Ralph LaRossa, *The Modernization of Fatherhood: A Social and Political History* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1997). ———, "Fatherhood and Social Change," *Family Relations* 37, no. 4 (1988). Ralph and Donald C. Reitzes LaRossa, "Continuity and Change in Middle Class Fatherhood, 1925-1939: The Culture-Conduct Connection," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 55, no. 2 (1993).

<sup>16</sup> Ralph LaRossa, *The Modernization of Fatherhood: A Social and Political History* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1997). 139.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 140-141.

La Rossa contends that being relegated to a “playmate” role meant that fathers were “dispensable” and could be easily replaced.<sup>18</sup> I agree with LaRossa’s depiction of 1916-1929 as the period for the creation of the “culture of daddyhood,” but I offer a different interpretation of the changing ideal of fatherhood and argue that the movement toward making fathers friendlier and closer companions with their sons was about tying men more fully to their families, not about making them dispensable. While I agree that fathers were sometimes treated with condescension in the 1920s, I also see strong evidence for more earnest consideration of fathers’ roles in their families and efforts to try to make a space for men in the home. The anxiety about men being condescended to and left out of families does suggest that men were being given less authority in the home, but it also reflects greater attention to and consideration of men’s familial roles. I argue that the goal throughout the period I examine remained constant—to tie men more firmly to the family by helping them to create closer and more emotionally fulfilling relationships with their children—but the means of achieving that goal changed significantly in a way that reflected important changes in the value placed on youth and popularity, as well as the changing power structure of middle-class families.

This dissertation contributes to these ongoing discussions about the meaning of changes in fatherhood in the United States. In addition to histories of fatherhood, this dissertation draws from the fields of family history, the history of children and childhood (such as works dealing with child-rearing advice literature), and studies of gender and masculinity.<sup>19</sup>

The first chapter of this dissertation examines the changing ideals for middle-class fatherhood between 1900 and 1930. In the first fifteen years of the twentieth century, fathers were encouraged to forge companionable relationships with their children, but father’s imagined role was a dignified, fairly distant one. The companionship recommended by authors in popular magazines and advice manuals consisted of taking walks together, offering help with school work, and teaching children about the world.

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 142.

<sup>19</sup> Other works that have examined prescriptive child-rearing literature include David Rothman’s *Child Rearing Literature of Twentieth Century America* (1972), Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre English’s *For Her Own Good: 150 Years of the Experts’ Advice to Women* (1978), Katherine Arnup’s *Education for Motherhood: Advice for Mothers in Twentieth-Century Canada* (1994), Julia Grant’s *Raising Baby By the Book: The Education of American Mothers* (1998), and Ann Hulbert’s *Raising America: Experts, Parents, and a Century of Advice about Children* (2003). This dissertation also draws from the work of historians of the family, such as Richard Sennett, *Families against the City: Middle Class Homes of Industrial Chicago, 1872-1890* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1970).; Fass, *The Damned and the Beautiful: American Youth in the 1920’s.*; Christopher Lasch, *Haven in a Heartless World: The Family Besieged* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1977).; Carl N. Degler, *At Odds: Women and the Family in America from the Revolution to the Present* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980).; Kellogg, "The Rise of the Companionate Family, 1900-1939," in *Domestic Revolutions.*; Elaine Tyler May, *Great Expectations: Marriage and Divorce in Post-Victorian America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980). Robert L. Griswold, "Divorce and the Legal Redefinition of Victorian Manhood," in *Meanings for Manhood: Constructions of Masculinity in Victorian America*, ed. Mark C. and Clyde Griffen Carnes (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990). Studies of masculinity and changing ideas about gender also inform this dissertation. For example, Julia Grant, "A 'Real Boy' and Not a Sissy: Gender, Childhood, and Masculinity, 1890-1940," *Journal of Social History* 37, no. 4 (2004). Gary Cross, *Men to Boys: The Making of Modern Immaturity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008). Kimmel, *Manhood in America*.

Numerous authors explained that, in addition to breadwinning, the father's role was to connect his family to the outside world, to cooperate with mothers, and to be benevolent and understanding.<sup>20</sup> In the early years of the 1900s, advice authors tended to link fathers' child-rearing success with stern discipline.

From 1915 to 1930, there was a major transition in the tone and content of the discussions of fathering. Advice authors after 1915 grew troubled by the negative aspects of father's role as disciplinarian and increasingly emphasized friendship and youthfulness over authority. Fathers were encouraged to befriend their children-- their sons especially-- and to embrace their own boyishness.<sup>21</sup> Fathers such as Frederic Van de Water were frequently depicted as aligning themselves with their children, only supporting their wives' more "grown-up" mandates, such as to go to church or school, or administering castor oil or punishments, with reluctance.<sup>22</sup> Rather than focusing on father's role as the family's disciplinarians or teacher, modern fathers in the 1920s were encouraged to discharge their paternal responsibilities by joining in various boy-hobbies, like assembling model trains, playing pool, building in woodshops, and camping. Fatherhood should be fun, suggested authors promoting closer father-son bonds in the latter 1910s and 1920s. Fathers writing about parenthood in the 1920s often boasted of their modern, democratic families or joked good-naturedly about the lack of authority afforded the head of the household. In addition to the benefits to the son of having a youthful father, many authors suggested that keeping young was one of the benefits of involved fathering. The changing ideal of fatherhood was accompanied with a new, more modern title for father – "Dad" – which itself became the subject of some controversy.

The second chapter of this dissertation examines efforts to describe fatherhood as distinctly masculine and to change home design to make middle-class homes more

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<sup>20</sup> See for example, Rev. Charles H. Parkhurst, "The Father's Domestic Headship," *Ladies' Home Journal* (November, 1895): 15. Frances Evans, "About Men," *Ladies' Home Journal* (May, 1899): 30. Harry Thurston Peck, "What a Father Can Do for His Son," *Cosmopolitan*, October 1902, 704-708. Harry Thurston Peck, "What A Father Can Do for His Daughter," *Cosmopolitan* 34 (February 1903, 1903): 460-64. George Hodges, "The Business of Being a Father," *The Ladies' Home Journal*, March 1906, 22. William J. Shearer, *The Management and Training of Children* (New York,: Richardson Smith & Co., 1904).

<sup>21</sup> Historian Gary Cross documented the connection between this early positive valuation of youthfulness in men and contemporary trends toward men's rejection of maturity in his 2008 book, *Men to Boys*. Gary Cross, *Men to Boys: The Making of Modern Immaturity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008).

<sup>22</sup> In 1928, Van de Water wrote an article for *Harper's Monthly Magazine* on his conflicted feelings regarding doling out punishment at the request of his wife. Van de Water pondered father's role as the "enforcer," reflecting the ways in which the father as disciplinarian had become problematic as friendliness and playful youthfulness among fathers was increasingly valued. Frederic F. Van de Water, "My Son Gets Spanked," *Harper's Monthly Magazine* 1928. In 1930, Van de Water again emphasized this problem when he described his difficulty in giving his son castor oil and the empathy that he had for his son imagining drinking the horrible stuff. He wrote about parenting a nine-year-old boy and the pressure on the father to serve as role model. He described himself as having many of the "uncivilized" habits his wife was attempting to drive out of his son. This connection and identification of father with son in the face of the more "adult" and well-mannered mother was also a growing trend in the late 1910s and 1920s. Van de Water repeatedly described his son's vices as his own—procrastination, absent-mindedness, failure to follow exacting rules of etiquette—the father identified with the boy and struggled to become the role model his wife wanted him to be. ———, "Bringing up Father," *Woman's Home Companion*, May 1930, 25.

comfortable for men, to provide them with both psychological and physical space. Increasingly in the 1920s, men wrote about feeling excluded from family bonds. Writers such as Frederic Van de Water spoke about feeling left out of the close connection between mothers and children and particularly about the feeling of being excluded or shunted aside after the birth of their first baby. This concern suggests shifting expectations from middle-class fathers who felt peripheral to family life and wanted to be closer to their children. The elevation and celebration of the mother-child bond in the nineteenth century may have left fathers floundering for their own place in the family relationship. The rise of the companionate ideal of marriage and friendlier, more democratic family bonds meant that fathers were no longer comfortable viewing themselves as ruling patriarchs and sought instead a more companionable relationship with their children. Authors concerned with fatherhood sought to emphasize the special, masculine qualities of fatherhood, to emphasize the uniquely masculine and playful ways in which fathers interacted with infants, for instance, as opposed to focusing on more “feminine” nurturing qualities. Efforts to attract men to engaged parenting also saw the “feminization” of the middle-class home as an obstacle to fathers’ and sons’ retaining close family bonds.

Likewise, authors addressing men frequently suggested that fathers create a home attractive to boys, including features such as gymnasiums, workshops, gardens, and laboratories, to lure the boy and his friends to “hang out” at home, thereby allowing the father to forge a closer relationship with his son and be welcomed into the boy’s inner circle. Many authors suggested the manner in which the home could be made more family-centered, and particularly, more hospitable to boys and their fathers. The growth of the suburbs and the dissolution of the parlor and (to some extent) the nursery, for instance, can be linked to an ideal of family life that emphasized togetherness at the same time as advice authors urged readers, both female and male, to create masculine and boyish places within the home so that men and boys would spend their leisure time with the family.<sup>23</sup>

Child-rearing experts rose to prominence in the early 1900s, offering advice to mothers on infant care and child-rearing techniques. In the early years of the century, such advice was directed explicitly to *mothers*. Organizations focused on children were likewise often explicitly intended for women. In the 1910s and 1920s, most of these organizations began to make overtures toward the inclusion of men, and this change is the topic of the third chapter of this dissertation. Organizations such as the Children’s Bureau, and Congress of Mothers, kindergartens, child study groups, and home economics departments and life-education programs in colleges all made efforts to reach

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<sup>23</sup> *American Home Life, 1880-1930: A Social History of Spaces and Services*, ed. Jessica H. Foy and Thomas J. Schlereth (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1992) gathers a collection of essays by historians, including Karin Calvert and Katherine Grier, with the overarching theme that the period between 1880 and 1930 is one of major transition in American Homes. See also Katherine Grier, *Culture & Comfort: Parlor Making and Middle-Class Identity, 1850-1930*, (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1997). Historian Margaret Marsh has argued that at the beginning of the century, middle-class men were taking more interest in the details of their domestic space. Margaret S. Marsh, *Suburban Lives* (New Brunswick N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1990).; Margaret S. Marsh, "Suburban Men and Masculine Domesticity, 1870-1915," in *Meanings for Manhood: Constructions of Masculinity in Victorian America*, ed. Mark C. and Clyde Griffen Carnes (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1990).



out to men and consider fatherhood in the 1910s and 1920s. While these traditionally female organizations remained predominantly composed of women, the successful efforts to expand male participation reflect an increased interest in fathers' role, as did a change in language in advice literature and child-centered organizations from the use of the word "mother" toward the use of the gender-neutral "parent." Child-rearing advice columns in newspapers, in which experts answered reader letters, also reflected this change. By comparing two of the most popular syndicated advice givers, one from the early 1900s and one from the 1920s, I highlight some of these important changes. Fathers appeared much more commonly in the 1920s columns.

In addition to new efforts to include men in existing child-focused groups, there was also a growth of books, clubs and classes specifically for fathers, which is the topic of the fourth chapter. The founding of the Father's Club in Council Bluffs, Iowa in 1913 attracted attention nationally and even internationally, and within a year, it had expanded to ten local chapters with a total enrollment of about five hundred fathers. The telling slogan of these clubs was "Make the Indifferent Different."<sup>24</sup> Similar organizations popped up around the country in the 1910s and 1920s. In the 1920s, the Young Men's Christian Association offered courses for men on marriage and fatherhood that were quite popular; the Knights of Columbus offered courses in "boyology" for fathers and boyworkers across the country. The YMCA also began the Indian Guides, a predominantly middle-class club for fathers and sons. The Indian Guides had as its explicit goal the formation of closer bonds between fathers and sons, and no boy was allowed even to attend a meeting without his father. Books of advice published exclusively for fathers were virtually nonexistent in 1900, but by 1929 there were more than twenty. Men such as Van de Water sought out advice specifically for fathers and helped to create a "fraternity of fatherhood." These efforts of men to reach out to other fathers to consider and study their parenting and work to benefit their children is the topic of the fourth chapter of this dissertation.

Coinciding with this movement toward more involved and careful fatherhood came a new tendency to poke fun at fathers. The images from "Confessions of a Dub Father," both verbal and pictorial, are of a blustering and confused, though conscientious, kind, and well-intentioned, father; Van de Water remarked with chagrin that fathers had become the "Greatest National Joke." In the 1920s, such comic depictions of fathers became quite common, as did commentary lamenting the trend. The last chapter of this dissertation addresses the interestingly comingled condescension and humor threaded through many references to fatherhood in the 1920s. Historians have tended to see this transition in a mainly negative light—as evidence of a loss of status for men in the family-- but the growing tendency to laugh at father did not simply mean that fathers had lost status. Fathers were, in fact, the ones making many of the jokes. The rise in humor suggests a complicated mingling of factors including father's desire to be laughed at, to be a "good sport" and to distinguish himself from humorless patriarchs of yore. Men seem to have had conflicting feelings about the rise in father humor. On the one hand, many men seem to have enjoyed the idea of the modern Dad as friendly and

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<sup>24</sup> "Fathers' Clubs Help Train Children of Council Bluffs," *The Christian Science Monitor*, November 21 1914. Kansas State Board of Health, "Bulletin No. 7, "Father's Clubs.," *Biennial Report* (1915).

approachable, more willing to be laughed at than the previous generation of stern patriarchs and laughingly suggesting that his desires were the family's last consideration. On the other hand, when men caught a whiff of real condescension, such as in the sentimentality in the rise of Father's Day, the response was more negative.

In the mid- 1910s, a new of ideal fatherhood came to the fore. Authors including social scientists, humorists, teachers, editors, journalists, ministers, and others promoting this new ideal sought to strengthen the middle-class family by tying men more tightly to the home through the promotion of fatherhood as masculine, modern and fun. A rising companionate ideal of marriage coupled with a more democratic family structure made the previous ideal of father as stern disciplinarian and family-head seem stuffy and old-fashioned. This new ideal of fatherhood was accompanied by the rise in the use of the title "Dad." As this new, more playful and less authoritative ideal of fatherhood ascended, fathers were increasingly teased as lacking authority, which was in part a reflection of real changing power dynamics in the family, but was also about men wanting to be seen as good sports. Fathers increasingly prized being able to laugh at themselves, being relaxed and full of good cheer, in an effort to separate themselves from the previous generation of fathers. In addition, by rejecting sentimentality as ridiculous when applied to fathers, men separated themselves from mothers, who were often described in sentimental terms. Fathers sought to create a separate role for themselves, identifying fatherhood as essentially different from motherhood. Even as parenting groups and child study associations had modest success in attracting men, many fathers emphasized the ways in which parenthood could be different for men than for women in fathering clubs and with books exclusively for and written by fathers. The fundamental changes described in this dissertation reflect new ideas about how men should relate to their children and how men should connect to their families, major shifts in the history of the American family.

## Chapter 1

### **From Mother's Enforcer to Boy's Pal: The Changing Ideals of Fatherhood in the American Middle Class, 1900-1930**

In the first decade of the twentieth century, an ideal middle-class father as depicted in popular magazines and parenting advice manuals was kind and interested in his children's schoolwork. He took his family to church Sunday mornings and spent part of that afternoon with his children. He was the family disciplinarian, called in for the most important cases, and a guiding force in his family's major decisions. He was expected to help connect his family to the world outside the domestic sphere. Most of the details of child-rearing he left to his wife. The ideal father was respected and admired by his children. Starting around 1916, there was a major transition in the tone and content of the discussions of fathering. Articles and books addressing fatherhood focused more intently on the relationship between fathers and sons, less frequently commenting on fathers' relationships with their daughters.<sup>1</sup> To a significant extent, wives dropped out of these discussions, as well, and the problematic relationship—the one that drew the most discussion—was that of fathers and sons between the ages of about eight and twenty. No longer seen as the sole connection to the world of politics and business, father's role became a more playful, friendly one that seemed less concerned with respect and obedience, and more with acceptance and affection. The image of the ideal father changed from a kind, but somewhat distant, authority to a pal, a member of the gang, a good sport. This image of the ideal father rarely focused on disciplinary duties and, when it did, emphasized the gentle guidance of a big brother or friend rather than corporal punishment or stern lectures. The tendency of fathers to avoid church became the subject of commentary, some serious, but much winkingly unconcerned. The new ideal of fatherhood de-emphasized power and authority while highlighting “fun.” The ideal father of the 1920s would still serve as a role model for his sons, would be involved and thoughtful, but he would do so without ever playing the “heavy.” He would have fun and be fun. This was the creation of the “dad.”

By examining the depiction of ideal fatherhood in popular magazines, books of advice, and newspaper articles, this chapter will attempt to show that what it meant to be a good father changed dramatically in the popular imagination between 1900 and 1929. Authors writing specifically about fatherhood in the early twentieth century were not professionalized experts. Those promoting or commenting on the changing role for men in the home were drawn from a diverse set of thinkers. Teachers, editors, scholars, scientists, freelance writers, religious leaders, novelists, poets, doctors, illustrators, advertisers, boy workers, psychologists, and sociologists all took part in creating and encouraging, and railing against, the changing ideal of middle-class fatherhood. Many of the men who were active in advocating for this changing role for fathers were socially

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<sup>1</sup> Ralph LaRossa, *The Modernization of Fatherhood: A Social and Political History* (Chicago, 1997). 134-136.

and even politically important figures. Several editors of major publications, widely-known novelists, a popular poet, influential scholars and social scientists, and men who would go on to be key figures in the Republican party were among those who wrote on the topic of fatherhood between 1900 and 1930.

These authors were not primarily concerned with the so-called ‘boy problem’—the feared effeminization of middle-class boys, but were focused instead on tying fathers more tightly to the home. New expectations for happiness and intimacy in family life and a growing sense that men had been unfairly excluded from parental joys led many reform-minded authors to urge fathers to seek closer, more fulfilling relationships with their children. To strengthen the middle-class family, an institution many authors believed was threatened by the steeply rising divorce rate, fathers had to be convinced that parenting could be fulfilling, fun, masculine, and modern. World War I and its aftermath seems to have reinforced this felt need for forging a new kind of fatherhood. Rejecting the vision of the stodgy Victorian patriarch, advice authors in books and magazines worked to promote the new, very modern “dad.”

### **Father’s New Name: The Origins and Significance of “Dad”**

The changing ideal of fatherhood in the latter-1910s and 1920s is marked by a change in language, as well. The new ideal father earned a new name—Dad. Sociologist Ralph La Rossa analyzed magazine articles about fatherhood between 1901 and 1942 and determined that the use of the terms “dad” and “daddy” rose between 1900 and 1929. Mothers, on the other hand, were hardly ever referred to informally, according to LaRossa’s study.<sup>2</sup> The lack of the use of the word “mom” or other informal words for mothers in parenting articles demonstrates that it was fatherhood specifically that was undergoing this shift to informality and playfulness in the late 1910s and 1920s.

The association of the term “Dad” with a playful, relaxed style of fatherhood existed from the earliest uses of the term in the 1900s. A 1905 poem published in *Lippincott’s Monthly Magazine* written from the perspective of a child read:

Some boys they call their Dad-- Papá.  
Oh, Gee! That makes me mad.  
It sounds so stiff and like a book--  
You bet I call mine Dad.

And he's a ripper too, you bet.  
The boys all wish they had  
A father that would laugh and joke,  
And love them like my Dad.

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<sup>2</sup> LaRossa, *The Modernization of Fatherhood*. 138-139, 255 f. 56. In the first decade of the century, the term was only used in seven percent of the articles examined. Between 1916 and 1921 the term had grown more popular and was used in about half of all fatherhood articles; from 1922 to 1929 it appeared in 63 percent of the articles. La Rossa further argues that the term “dad” fell out of favor in the 1930s and rose again in the early 1940s. La Rossa’s analysis is based on a theoretical sample of articles taken from all fatherhood articles categorized by the *Reader’s Guide to Periodical Literature*. LaRossa, *The Modernization of Fatherhood*. 252.f. 44.

Significantly, the term “dad” was also coupled even in this early example with condescension toward father. The author laughs good-naturedly at father’s ineffective efforts to control family spending, a theme that would pick up along with the increased use of the term “dad”:

Of course, sometimes, when all the bills  
Come in he's mighty mad.  
And then we sit as still as mice  
And hear him jaw, poor Dad.

It's always over soon, and then  
You bet we all feel glad.  
And then we all climb on his lap  
And hug and kiss our Dad.<sup>3</sup>

The term “dad” was explicitly debated in the early 1900s along these exact lines. Some argued the positive aspects of “dad”—his close and friendly connection with his children—while others focused on the negative aspects of the changing ideal—the lack of respect afforded to dads. A 1912 article by Minna Thomas Antrim responded to a “Carper” who disliked the term “Dad” which he considered “the apotheosis of modern flippancy.” The “Carper” believed the term “Dad” “lack[ed] reverence” to which Antrim responded:

Granted, but do fathers of to-day crave reverence? Are they not prouder to be their children's 'pals' and chums? .... Is he not more 'Dad' than 'Father' as, laughing and joyous, [he and his child] saunter along life's pleasure-ground, or go hand in hand to meet grief? God pity the lad whose father frowns away his Dadship.<sup>4</sup>

The author associated “dads” with modern, democratic, American life, pointing out that “In the Orient ‘Dads’ are unknown, but wherever English is daily spoken the word increasingly obtains.”<sup>5</sup> In this article Antrim and the author she debates together depict the difference between the values of “Dad” and “Father.” Proponents of “dads” felt the modern ideal of fatherhood created closer, happier, friendlier relationships between fathers and their children. Opponents of this change pointed to the lack of authority and deference accorded fathers under this new ideal.

A 1913 book of tributes to fathers included several entries discussing the meaning behind different terminology. For instance, it quoted novelist H. C. Chatfield-Taylor:

IF he's wealthy and prominent and you stand in awe of him, call him 'Father.' If he sits in his shirt-sleeves and suspenders at ball games and picnics, call him 'Pop.' If he tills the land or teaches

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<sup>3</sup> May Kelly, "'Dad'," *Lippincott's Monthly Magazine* 76 (July, 1905).

<sup>4</sup> Minna Thomas Antrim, "His Dadship," *Lippincott's Magazine*, May 1912, 743. Portions also quoted in LaRossa, *The Modernization of Fatherhood*. 137.

<sup>5</sup> Antrim, "His Dadship," 743.

Sunday School, call him 'Pa.' If he wheels the baby carriage and carries bundles meekly, call him 'Papa,' with the accent on the first syllable. If he belongs to a literary circle and writes cultured papers, or if he is a reformer in politics and forgets to vote, call him 'Papa,' with the accent on the last syllable. IF, however, he makes a pal of you when you're good, and is too wise to let you pull the wool over his loving eyes when you're not; if, moreover, you're sure no other fellow you know has quite so fine a father, you may call him 'Dad,' but not otherwise.<sup>6</sup>

“Dad,” Chatfield-Taylor suggested, is a title earned by ideal, modern fathers. “Father” is a term for the upright and the wealthy. As a prominent member of the elite himself, it is unlikely that Chatfield-Taylor would attribute fine fathering exclusively to the middle class; it is more likely that what he meant here was that stiff formality and distance made a “father.” He further distinguished the masculine and involved “dad” from the meek “Papa” who does his wife’s bidding. Chatfield-Taylor’s categories suggest that the creation of the new ideal “dad” was, in part, an effort to create a form of involved fathering that was acceptably masculine. Papa’s weak willingness to push the baby carriage refers obliquely to the demands of feminist reformers that fathers be more fully involved in the details of childrearing and the trend noted by historians such as Margaret Marsh of fathers being more involved in the day-to-day lives of their children in the early years of the 1900s.<sup>7</sup> The creation of the new ideal of fatherhood represented by the title “Dad” was an answer to these changing expectations for paternal involvement and fears of effeminization. The new ideal combined more involved and emotionally fulfilling fatherhood with a distinctly masculine, even anti-feminine, ethos.

Authors defending the title “dad,” and with it, this new more playful ideal of fatherhood, emphasized the term as modern. Some, such as Minna Thomas Antrim, suggested that the term was evident only in the most advanced civilizations. Antrim located the term “dad” in the English-speaking world, as opposed to “the Orient,” but a 1919 article celebrating “Daddy” as “America’s Greatest Invention” claimed the daddy was a distinctly modern *American* character: “He is found in every class in this country, but he is not found at all in any other country or in any other period.”<sup>8</sup> The author acknowledged that there was some “daddyhood” in the past, offering examples of playful, joyous fathers, but suggests that the real phenomenon of daddies began only a generation earlier.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> John Jarvis Holden: “HAPPY is the man who was 'Sonny' to his father and is 'Daddy' to his sons.” Wallace Rice and Frances Rice, ed., *To My Dad* (New York, 1913 (c.)).

<sup>7</sup> Marsh, Margaret S. “Suburban Men and Masculine Domesticity, 1870-1915.” In *Meanings for Manhood: Constructions of Masculinity in Victorian America*, edited by Mark C. and Clyde Griffen Carnes. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1990.

<sup>8</sup> “The Greatest American Invention,” *Outlook* 122 (July 23, 1919): 464.

<sup>9</sup> “The Greatest American Invention,” 463-464. Several books on fatherhood written by British authors were published in the United States and depict a changing ideal of fatherhood very similar to that described by American authors. It is possible, however, that these particular books were chosen for publication in the United States because they fit the changing American ideal of fatherhood so well. On fatherhood in Victorian and Edwardian Great Britain, see K.M and E.M. Walker, *On Being a Father* (New York, 1929). John Tosh, *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England* (New Haven, 1999).

Authors defining “dad” and distinguishing dad from other types of fathers frequently pointed out the closer connection dads had with their children. In 1914, the President of the American Prison Association related the story of his role in bringing a father and son closer together, asserting that he knew he no longer needed to worry about the boy when “he had reached the stage where he called his father 'my dad.'”<sup>10</sup> In 1926, a book of advice for fathers urged readers to strive to become “Dad” to their sons, asking fathers: “*Are you the 'old man' or are you 'Dad?' A great tragic gulf separates the two.*”<sup>11</sup> A 1929 book of fathering advice also made the distinction between friendly, involved, playful “Daddies” and their uptight predecessors. The book ended with “Father’s A B C,” a poem quipping about fatherhood with words starting with each letter of the alphabet. Next to an illustration of a father kneeling on the floor, playing with blocks with a child, stands the verse: “P for 'Papa'-- pompous parent of yore./ Now 'Daddy' spends days playing trains on the floor.”<sup>12</sup> These authors shared the belief that “Dad” and “Daddy” were terms that heralded the arrival of a new ideal of fatherhood.

## Father as Mother’s Enforcer

One of the most consistent themes in discussions of fathering in the first decade of the twentieth century was the responsibility of fathers to support their wives in child-rearing. A 1904 book of child-rearing advice explained, “At every point it is the father's duty to stand ready to co-operate with the mother in her attempts to train the children.”<sup>13</sup> Essayist and poet Edward Sanford Martin wrote in 1908, “It is convenient often for the mother to have authority behind her to fall back upon.”<sup>14</sup> One kindergarten teacher addressing the first annual session of the National Congress of Mothers urged women to secure their husbands’ cooperation: “I do not believe that a mother can do all that a mother should do, or that should be done for the child, without the co-operation of her husband.”<sup>15</sup> Fathers’ involvement, according to this point of view, was primarily beneficial because it strengthened the mother’s ability to enact her expert-taught child-rearing techniques.

Fathers in the early 1900s were also expected to support their wives by dispensing punishment when called upon to do so. Authors from the early years of the century

<sup>10</sup> "Importance of Father," *Journal of Prison Discipline and Philanthropy* 53 (March, 1914).

<sup>11</sup> Frank H. Cheley, *Dad, Whose Boy is Yours: Forty-Eight Little Talks with Fathers Who Want To Be Real Dads to their Real Boys* (Boston, 1926). 52. Cheley imbued the word “Dad” with great meaning in his writings, urging his male readers to seek closer, friendlier, playful, casual relationships with their sons, to forge a new style of father-son relationship, to become “Dad.”

<sup>12</sup> Walker, *On Being a Father*. 191.

<sup>13</sup> William J. Shearer, *The Management and Training of Children* (New York., 1904). 119-120. For another example, see Charles W. Eliot, "The Part of the Man in the Family," *The Ladies' Home Journal* 25 (March, 1908).

<sup>14</sup> Edward Sandford Martin, "The Use of Fathers," *Harper's Monthly Magazine*, October 1908, 764. Edward Sandford Martin, the father of three, was the founder of the Harvard *Lampoon* and one of the founding editors of *Time*. He made frequent contributions as a regular columnist, editor, and freelance writer to magazines such as *Time*, *Scribner's Magazine*, *Harper's Weekly*, and *Harper's Monthly*.

<sup>15</sup> "The Works and Words of the National Congress of Mothers (First Annual Session). Held in the City of Washington, D.C. February 17,18, and 19, 1897," in *National Congress of Mothers: The First Conventions*, ed. David J. Rothman and Sheila M. Rothman (New York, 1897 (1987)), 149-150.

placed the responsibility for serious discipline—particularly corporal punishment of children past the toddler years—in the hands of the father. Father’s stern discipline was seen by many authors as linked with child-rearing success.<sup>16</sup> For instance, a 1902 book of child-rearing advice reporting the “practical experiences of many mothers” included a chapter entitled “A Firm Father and a Tender-Hearted Mother,” in which the tender-hearted mother praised the calm but firm discipline of her husband, explaining that he was a “much better disciplinarian” than she and that “most of the discipline [fell] to his lot.”<sup>17</sup> The severe discipline of the father was defended by the mother and by the son:

Once when this father was chastising the naughty boy I ran up and begged that he might not be punished any more. To the surprise of both of us, the brave little three-year-old checked his sobs, and, looking up with the big tears in his eyes, he cried out: 'You go away, mamma, and let us alone. *Papa* will look after me!' I confess that I meekly stole away, resolving that I would never again be guilty of interfering with the edict of justice, however severe.<sup>18</sup>

Men were presumed by many authors to be better suited to enforcing discipline than women. An author writing in *The Delineator* in 1915 explained that a father could be useful in the control of “vigorous children, and particularly of boys”: “It is often due to his masculine qualities of strength, thoroughness, and firmness; although no one of these qualities be exhibited in excess.”<sup>19</sup> The assumption that masculine strength was an asset to setting limits and disciplining children was not only made by those favoring the use of corporal punishment. Authors who urged gentler discipline methods also praised calm firmness in fathers. Authors in this philosophical camp praised fathers for laying down a firm hand without spanking or yelling.<sup>20</sup>

Although one of father’s main parenting duties in the early twentieth century was enforcing discipline, child-rearing experts of the period were already beginning to warn of the hazards of leaving discipline to fathers. One author in 1911 suggested that keeping fathers in charge of corporal punishment, or using him as a threat, was detrimental to the child-father relationship:

Most of us live to regret the threats we make. 'Your father will thrash you when he comes home tonight,' or 'You'd better not let your father see you doing that,' or 'You wouldn't behave that way if

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<sup>16</sup> Authors suggesting that a lack of corporal discipline was at the root of “vain, aggressive and ill-mannered” youth blamed a lack of masculine discipline. An American Mother, “The Modern Son and Daughter,” *The Ladies' Home Journal* 17 (March, 1900): 232.. Others attributed a father’s use of corporal punishment with child-rearing success. “Organized Fatherhood,” *New York Times*, July 19 1902. Agnes Repplier, “In Behalf of Parents,” *The North American Review* 157 (August, 1893).

<sup>17</sup> Gustav Pollak, ed., *Our success in child-training; practical experiences of many mothers* (New York,, 1902). 40.

<sup>18</sup> Pollak, ed., *Our success in child-training; practical experiences of many mothers*. 40.

<sup>19</sup> Charles W. Eliot, “Husbands and Fathers,” *The Delineator* 86 (January, 1915).

<sup>20</sup> One such author, Jane Dearborn Mills, described her husband firmly telling their son he could not have more sugar on his oatmeal, demonstrating to his wife the greater efficacy of remaining firm without trying to reason endlessly with the child. Jane Dearborn Mills, *The Mother-Artist* (Boston, 1904). 69.



your father was here,' etc., are common threats which we hear directed at headstrong and willful boys. What is the result? Do such threats cause the love of the child for his father to increase? They make the child actually afraid of his father.<sup>21</sup>

Another author explained that the father, wearied by the cares of his work day, was "often not fitted to consider carefully and patiently the cases of management which the mother would gladly place in his hands." This author encouraged mothers to ask husbands for assistance with discipline "[o]nly when absolutely necessary."<sup>22</sup> Jane Dearborn Mills, the author of a book of advice for mothers, regarded too much discipline as a barrier to a close father-child relationship.<sup>23</sup> One 1902 book of advice encouraged mothers to "do away entirely with the custom, common in some households, of 'telling your father,' thus relegating the responsibility and authority to him and diminishing her own power to govern."<sup>24</sup> These authors discouraged mothers from leaving discipline in male hands, worrying both about the burden it placed on fathers and the authority it took from mothers. Underlying all this discussion is the unspoken implication that punishment was not only primarily father's responsibility but was also father's primary responsibility. If father's chief duty was to punish his children, the children would grow to fear him, warned these experts. One solution to this problem was to turn over discipline duties to the mother. Another was to reconstruct father's role.

The late 1910s and 1920s saw large changes in ideas about paternal responsibilities for discipline and the importance of maintaining authority, but these changes were far from absolute. The older ideas about father's importance as disciplinarian and the usefulness, even religious importance, of maintaining a strict division between adult and child remained a current of the literature. This school of thought lost its dominance in advice literature, but remained an important part of the debate about father's proper role. The presence of articles and opinion pieces complaining about the changes in father's role in the family represent the growing significance of these changes in the everyday lives of middle-class Americans. For example, an author argued in *American Magazine* in 1926 "'If modern boys and girls prance a bit too much, I think it is because the reins that check them are in feminine hands."<sup>25</sup> Even authors who saw benefits to fathers' taking a more youthful attitude were sometimes concerned about the challenge this could pose to paternal authority. Doctor of Divinity Shailer Mathews wrote in 1914:

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<sup>21</sup> William S. Sadler, M.D. and Lena K. Sadler, M.D., "'Making a Child What We Want Him to Be," *The Ladies' Home Journal*, November, 1911. Also, William S. Sadler and Laura K. Sadler, "How to Use Suggestion in Forming Right Habits," in *Parents and Their Problems; Child Welfare in Home, Church and State*, ed. Mary Harmon Weeks (Washington, D.C., 1914).

<sup>22</sup> Shearer, *The Management and Training of Children*. 124.

<sup>23</sup> Mills, *The Mother-Artist*. 80.

<sup>24</sup> Pollak, ed., *Our Success in Child-Training*. 39. This piece of advice appeared in the same book (edited by Gustav Pollak) as the example of the mother realizing she should not interfere in her husband's disciplining of her son which shows that these conflicting ideas coexisted even within the same book of advice.

<sup>25</sup> Robert Quillen, "If You Ask Me: There is less chance of mutiny if Dad is captain of the family ship," *American Magazine* 102 (August, 1926).

The immediate effect of this change from authority to comradeship between parents and children has never, to my knowledge, been particularly studied, but it raises the question how far the new spirit of comradeship can preserve the legitimate elements of older parental authority. If your son can outbox you, outrun you, and outgolf you, what becomes of that fear of the father that was once the beginning of filial obedience?<sup>26</sup>

Articles supporting the authority of the father and his wisdom as a disciplinarian also remained a significant part of the description of ideal fatherhood. Even as it waned in importance, the father's role as disciplinarian and authority remained as one image of a good father. The Knights of Columbus sponsored a series of lecture courses for fathers on "boyology" in 1927 across the nation. An article in the *Los Angeles Times* describing the graduation speech from one such class suggested that part of the course had included the "fundamentals" of the use of corporal punishment.<sup>27</sup> The boyology course, which was offered to fathers in cities across the nation, attempted to combine traditional belief in father's authority and the salutary effects of stern discipline with the propagation of newer ideas about the importance of remembering one's boyhood and relating to one's son as a pal. Other authors similarly combined an enthusiasm for friendly, youthful fathering with a commitment to father's role as disciplinarian.<sup>28</sup>

Nonetheless, increasingly in the late 1910s and 1920s advice authors argued that attempting to maintain the strict authority of the father could be a major mistake. The 1920s saw the spread of the theory put forward by the prominent psychiatrist D. A. Thom that the overly stern father, a supposedly common type, was psychologically harmful to his offspring.<sup>29</sup> Thom explained: "The stern and rigid father is not

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<sup>26</sup> Shailer Mathews, "The Call to American Parents," in *Parents and Their Problems; Child Welfare in Home, Church and State*, ed. Mary Harmon Weeks (Washington, D.C., 1914), 98.

<sup>27</sup> "Men Graduate in 'Boyology'," *The Los Angeles Times*, November 24 1927.

<sup>28</sup> Frank Cheley, a strong proponent of friendly relations between fathers and sons quoted an anonymous tribute to fathers that asserted that good fathers must have "sympathy and sternness, kindness and a strong right arm, patience and a hickory switch." Quoted in Frank H. Cheley, *Talks to Boys* (New York, 1920). 98. Several articles portrayed fathers as wise in their firmer treatment of youth. Major John H. Earle, "Discipline in the Home," *Good Housekeeping* 73 (July 1921, 1921). Alice Dyar Russell, "'Don't Tell Dad'," *The Delineator* 95 (September, 1919). Cheley, *Talks to Boys*. 98. Leonie Rose, "A Mother's Sentimentality and a Father's Common Sense in a Dramatic Struggle for the Soul of Their Youngest Son," *McClure's Magazine* 55 (October, 1923). Mary Stewart Cutting, "Educating Father," *Harper's Bazaar*, May 1913, 214.

<sup>29</sup> "Hygienist Decries Indulgent Mother. But Dr. D. A. Thom Tells Association a Stern Father Also Has Bad Effect on Child. Discipline is Discussed. Dr. W. H. Kilpatrick Says It Is a Bad Doctrine That All Wrong-doing Be Punished," in *The Family*, ed. Shiela M. Rothman David J. Rothman, and Gene Brown (New York, 1925 (1979)). Evans Clark, "Rearing of Children Becoming a Science. Renewed Interest in Study of Care of Child Results From Changing Status of Women and New Emphasis Upon Infants' Needs," in *The Family*, ed. Shiela M. Rothman David J. Rothman, and Gene Brown (New York, 1925 (1979)), 101. Thom's theories were widely disseminated in his often-recommended child-rearing advice manuals and in speeches and lectures he made to groups such as the Child Study Association of America. Other authors adopted the idea that the stern father was harmful to offspring without directly addressing Thom's theories. For example, Thomas Walton Galloway, *The Father and His Boy: The Place of Sex in Manhood Making* (New York, 1921). 55.

infrequently the creator of the child who feels inferior and inadequate.”<sup>30</sup> Increasingly, authors worried about the negative effects of an overly stern father. Progressive child-rearing advice authors, mainly educators, opposed corporal punishment in part on the grounds that it would distance the child from his father. The spread of Thom’s concern about the psychological damage inflicted by too-stern fathers further enforced a reluctance to limit father’s role to enforcing family discipline.

## The Benefits of Distance

In the early years of the twentieth century, one of the most important responsibilities of a father was to connect his family to the outside world. The father, with his political and business involvements, was seen as the vehicle through which his wife and children could learn about the world and widen their horizons beyond the confines of the home. Numerous articles and books of advice explicitly referred to this responsibility. Authors writing in the first fifteen years of the twentieth century suggested that respect and distance could be a useful complement to the sentimental attachment children felt for their mother. One author explained that fathers could help their wives in this way: “at times they can expound what's what to the children to good purpose, making it seem more like important news to them than when it comes from the mother.”<sup>31</sup> A 1904 child-rearing advice book explained, “While the home is the mother's world, the father is the connecting link between the world and the home.”<sup>32</sup> A 1908 *Delineator* article declared that a man who spent his day away from home should be able to bring home information improving to his family’s dinner conversation. Women and children, the author explained, are often “very much isolated” and “are greatly in need of the husband's and father's help in enlarging their sympathies and range of vision.”<sup>33</sup> Authors also encouraged fathers to read the daily paper aloud to their families.<sup>34</sup>

Child-rearing advice authors supported the role of the father as the head of the family, even as they urged him to cooperate with his wife and be considerate of the

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<sup>30</sup> Douglas A. Thom, *Everyday Problems of the Everyday Child* (New York, 1927). 37.

<sup>31</sup> Martin, "The Use of Fathers," 764.

<sup>32</sup> Shearer, *The Management and Training of Children*. 120. Edward Sanford Martin similarly wrote in 1908 “[I]t is profitable often for the children to have what may be called the indoor point of view tempered by one that has been acquired outside of the home and beyond the front gate.” Martin, "The Use of Fathers," 764.

<sup>33</sup> Eliot, "The Part of the Man in the Family."

<sup>34</sup> Eliot, "The Part of the Man in the Family." Charles Francis Read, "We Who Are Fathers," *The Delineator*, August 1908, 120. Much of this discussion included a distinctly anti-feminine tone, suggesting that a man’s nature was broader and more rational than a woman’s. An 1899 Frances Evans in one of a series of articles she wrote for *Ladies' Home Journal* urged men to bring home the “News of the day” each night and to discuss with his wife and daughters public matters not typically discussed in front of women, cautioning that the women should not embarrass themselves by discussing municipal matters outside the home. (Frances Evans, "About Men," *Ladies' Home Journal* (May, 1899).) Another author encouraged fathers to forge a close relationship with their daughters to widen the girls’ world-view and intellectual interests: “From close association with a father, the young girl quite unconsciously acquires something of the largeness of the man's nature and loses something of the pettiness and narrowness of the woman's.” Harry Thurston Peck, "What A Father Can Do for His Daughter," *Cosmopolitan* 34 (February, 1903): 463.

children.<sup>35</sup> Fathers were sometimes referred to as “Captains of the family ship.”<sup>36</sup> Although fathers were warned to use their authority with a gentle hand, to avoid being tyrannical, father’s role was family head and disciplinarian. As one minister put it, “I would not have the children afraid of him, except when conscience makes cowards of them for their own good.”<sup>37</sup> In general, the authority traditionally afforded men as household head was regarded as a beneficial part of family life, as long as the father used this authority responsibly.

It was seen as appropriate that fathers be more distant than mothers. A typical *Ladies’ Home Journal* article argued,

The very fact that the father is something of a stranger to his son gives him an added influence, a more commanding authority, a greater claim for recognition; and if there can be added to this a sense of comradeship and confidence we have a combination of conditions that might make the father a most potent influence in the life of his son.<sup>38</sup>

A 1908 *Delineator* article similarly suggested that the father’s lack of intimacy with his children, his very “novelty and strangeness” could serve as his “trump-card.”<sup>39</sup> Advice authors noted that children, particularly sons, had more faith in their fathers’ abilities and knowledge than their mother’s, although they might love their mother more.<sup>40</sup> As one author explained, “Children generally understand that the father has over the mother the advantage of larger acquaintance with men and things, and tend to attribute to him, on that account, superior wisdom.”<sup>41</sup> One story about a lad of ten entering “the Land of Companionship” with his father emphasized the boy’s awe and admiration of his father after the boy saw his father make an impressive speech and learned of his service in the war.<sup>42</sup> Child-rearing advice givers in the first years of the twentieth century argued that the ideal father was more able to lead and influence his children because he was a somewhat distant authority figure.

In fact, chummy, close father-son relationships were depicted negatively in some short stories in the first decade of the twentieth century. In a 1906 story published in *Harper’s Monthly Magazine* a close, friendly father-son relationship was portrayed as

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<sup>35</sup> Some authors directly and indirectly drew on the Bible in support of the hierarchical arrangement of the family. See for example Rev. Charles H. Parkhurst, “The Father’s Domestic Headship,” *Ladies’ Home Journal* (November, 1895). An American Mother, “The Modern Son and Daughter.” Shearer, *The Management and Training of Children*. 119. Articles and books published in the United States comparing American household-heads to their European counterparts commented on the lack of authority given to fathers by their families. Muirhead, James F. *Land of Contrasts* (Boston, 1898) quoted in Arthur W. Calhoun, *A Social History of the American Family from Colonial Times to the Present*, vol. III (Cleveland, 1919). “The American Husband,” *Current Literature* 24 (July, 1898). Fritz Koch, “The Conservation of Childhood,” *The Elementary School Teacher* 9 (November, 1908).

<sup>36</sup> Evans, “About Men.” Martin, “The Use of Fathers,” 764.

<sup>37</sup> George Hodges, “The Business of Being a Father,” *The Ladies’ Home Journal*, March 1906.

<sup>38</sup> Mary Wood-Allen, “Between Father and Son,” *Ladies’ Home Journal*, November 1907.

<sup>39</sup> Read, “We Who Are Fathers,” 120.

<sup>40</sup> Parkhurst, “The Father’s Domestic Headship.”

<sup>41</sup> Eliot, “The Part of the Man in the Family.”

<sup>42</sup> Ellsworth Kelley, “The Little Boy and His Pa,” *McClure’s Magazine* 15 (June, 1900).

potentially harmful and psychologically unhealthy. In the story, a widowed father found himself unable to give up his son when the boy fell in love and wanted to marry. The father explained to his future daughter-in-law "He has grown up with me and I've kept young with him.... We've been great pals....I can't spare him, even to you." The son, forced to choose between girlfriend and father, reluctantly left his father, whom he called "The poor old Dad."<sup>43</sup> Similarly, a short story published in *Lippincott's Monthly Magazine* in 1908 began: "MY dad and I have always been chums. Somehow, he has never made me feel that I could treat him in any other way than as a real true equal. Dad is the right sort. He takes an interest in the same things that I do. Mother says he is a bigger boy than I."<sup>44</sup> In the story, this father enjoys a close relationship with his son—his son confides in him, seeks his advice, and enjoys spending time with him. The story is about the boy's jealousy at a neighbor's new car. When he tells his father about it, the father confesses that he feels the same way and sets out to manipulate his wife, the boy's mother, into spending her money on the automobile. In the end, the father is revealed as immature, manipulative and unable to support his family. In each of these stories the father, significantly called "Dad" by his son, has made a "pal" of his son and retained his youth through that relationship, and he is portrayed as pathetic and a failure. Twenty years later, these characteristics would be essential ingredients in most descriptions of the ideal father.<sup>45</sup>

## The Friendly, Democratic Family Ideal

Starting in the the mid-1910s, the belief in the benefits of a rigid hierarchical family structure was eroding. Advice givers and popular authors began to place less value on being respected and admired and more value on earning acceptance and gaining the child's confidence. In one short story published in 1915, a daughter argued with her mother about her father's lack of involvement in her life. Responding to her mother's arguments on the father's behalf the adolescent girl declared:

'Owe him respect? Of course we do-- and we give him respect! Don't you suppose we're as proud as can be that we belong to a man of his brains and position? But he oughtn't to be satisfied with respect. He ought to want us to *love* him, and we don't-- not the way we love you!<sup>46</sup>

The father, hearing these comments, awakens to his responsibilities to his children and takes a new interest in their lives. The daughter's comments in the story reflect a new uneasiness with the traditional role of fathers. Increasingly authors suggested that men "oughtn't be satisfied with respect" and should instead seek a more fulfilling emotional

<sup>43</sup> Emery Pottle, "A Father and His Son," *Harper's Monthly Magazine* 113 (September, 1906): 622-23. The second ellipses are in original.

<sup>44</sup> Thomas L. Masson, "A Man's Game," *Lippincott's Monthly Magazine*, May 1908, 644.

<sup>45</sup> The presence of these stories demonstrates that this new, competing ideal of friendly, involved, boyish fathering was already attracting some notice before 1910.

<sup>46</sup> A. E. P. Searing, "Finding a Family," *The Delineator*, April 1915.

bond with their children. The ideal father shifted from one whose son admired him as a hero to one whose child talked to him as a confidant and listened carefully to his counsel. Authors increasingly emphasized the importance of friendly, democratic relations in the family as opposed to respectful hierarchy and touted the advantages of less formal relations between fathers and children. Advice authors also called for friendlier relations in the family generally, between spouses and between mothers and children as well, but the changes in the ideal relationship between father and children is probably the most dramatic.

Psychiatrists such as D. A. Thom emphasized the psychological harm done to children by a tyrannical father while prominent sociologists discussed the old-fashioned father's "monarch complex."<sup>47</sup> Popular advice authors shared these concerns. In an early example of this concern with the overly powerful father, M.V. O'Shea, a professor of education, wrote in 1914 that "Companionship is impossible between two people when one individual feels himself above or beneath the other, so that he must be either austere and autocratic, or humble and subservient in his attitudes. When the child is overawed by an adult, he cannot find pleasure in his presence."<sup>48</sup> This concern with the negative effects of father's authority was a change from the earlier belief that distance would make the father a more important influence in the life of his child.

Fathers were urged by authors such as Frederick Arnold Kummer to put their children "on a plane of equality, to become their interested friend -- a friend who has something real in the way of sympathy and help to offer." Kummer promised that "when this confidence has been established, it will be found that the children will come to you at once with their problems and will listen eagerly, gratefully, to your advice."<sup>49</sup> Kummer, a prolific author of books, short stories and plays as well as a civil engineer, explained in this article that the appropriate path to respect, the way to get children to seek and heed advice, was to give up claims to filial duty and instead seek companionship and even equality. Thomas Walton Galloway, a biology professor who then served as a director of the American Social Hygiene Association, explained in his *Father and His Boy: The Place of Sex in Manhood Making* (1921) that "The old 'patriarchal' stuff, left over from the time when women and children were the chattels of men, must go, in any real democracy."<sup>50</sup> He warned, "An autocratic, overbearing father will make of his children either autocrats, slaves, rebels, or hypocrites."<sup>51</sup> In 1926, Frank Cheley, a prolific author of fathering advice, urged fathers to create a family democracy, to hold regular "pow-wows" to "consider together the family's finances, the family's social life, the family's problems." He asked fathers: "*Are you an old-fashioned autocrat who rules with an iron hand and DEMANDS respect, or are you a comrade with seniority privileges?*"<sup>52</sup> Another advice author compared fathers who clung to paternal rights over children to slaveholders who fought abolition.<sup>53</sup> One 1927 *Ladies' Home Journal* article attributed the change in the father-son relationship to the World War, in which young soldiers fixed

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<sup>47</sup> Quoted in Grace Nies Fletcher, "Bringing Up Fathers," *Ladies' Home Journal* 44 (September, 1927): 35.

<sup>48</sup> M. V. O'Shea, "Favorites Among Children," in *Parents and Their Problems; Child Welfare in Home, Church and State*, ed. Mary Harmon Weeks (Washington, D.C., 1914), 185.

<sup>49</sup> Frederick Arnold Kummer, "The Father in Child Training," *Good Housekeeping* 75 (July, 1922): 151.

<sup>50</sup> Galloway, *The Father and His Boy*. 96.

<sup>51</sup> Galloway, *The Father and His Boy*. 97.

<sup>52</sup> Cheley, *Dad, Whose Boy is Yours*. 85.

<sup>53</sup> Clarence Budington Kelland, "It's Fun Being A Father," *American Magazine* 103 (January, 1927): 54.

the mess made by the older generation. The revolt of young people after the war "brought father crashing down from his insecure perch of absolute authority."<sup>54</sup> After this, the father realized "he would have to be more than an animated pocketbook or a dispenser of Jovian justice. The moment when, for perhaps the first time in history, he began to want to win his child's respect and obedience instead of requiring it as his right, marked one of the most significant turning points in the development of the modern home."<sup>55</sup>

Despite the enthusiasm of the previous quotation, authors were a bit defensive around this issue of authority, a fact that suggests the significance of this change. Noted educator and Episcopal priest Samuel S. Drury assured readers that "A father and his boy can be happy together, can admire each other, 'josh' each other, and yet maintain the right adjustment, seldom or never mistaking the bounds of authority."<sup>56</sup> A promoter of the social hygiene movement, Thomas Galloway promised readers that home democracy would not mean anarchy, but only that all members of the family would be respected.<sup>57</sup> Advice authors in books and popular magazines suggested that fathers who relied on the authority of their position without striving to *earn* their children's respect and love were failing as fathers and were even depriving themselves of the emotional rewards of true fatherhood.

## Companionability Redefined

Not only did authors increasingly look positively on more democratic family relations, but authors promoting increased paternal involvement in the lives of children increasingly encouraged fathers to make "friends" with their sons, or more exactly, to create a relationship in which their sons regarded them as friends. Authors in the first fifteen years of the twentieth century who described ideal father-child relationships almost always used a form of the word companionship or comradeship, often suggesting this ideal was equally applicable to mother-child relationships. Authors typically suggested that a close, sympathetic relationship between father and son would protect the son from all forms of ruin. A father's influence was bolstered by a close relationship. Harry Thurston Peck, a classical scholar and charismatic professor at Columbia who was also an accomplished literary editor, author, and frequent magazine contributor wrote in an article for *Cosmopolitan* in 1902, "The essence of a father's power with his son lies in an unerring understanding which begets implicit confidence and renders the relation one of perfect comradeship."<sup>58</sup> Advice authors frequently reminded fathers that by establishing a bond early on in their child's life, the father could be assured that he would have a close influence over the child later on. One author wrote about the tradition of Sunday walks with fathers and children: "At first the children hold the father's hand. After a while they get too big for that, but they never forget it. There has been established a relationship of sympathy and understanding which is a benediction,

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<sup>54</sup> Fletcher, "Bringing Up Fathers," 35.

<sup>55</sup> Fletcher, "Bringing Up Fathers," 35.

<sup>56</sup> Samuel S. Drury, *Fathers and Sons* (New York, 1927), 68.

<sup>57</sup> Crawford Richmond Green, in *Fathering the Boy*, ed. Frank H. Cheley (1921), 98.

<sup>58</sup> Harry Thurston Peck, "What a Father Can Do for His Son," *Cosmopolitan*, October 1902, 706.

sometimes a salvation, to both the father and the child."<sup>59</sup> Advice authors suggested that fathers permit children to join them in their leisure activities.<sup>60</sup> In the 1910s, there was evidence of a slow transition in the meaning of "companionship" as it came to include a more equal relationship between father and child, with less emphasis on authority and distance and more power accorded to the child to dictate which activities would be undertaken.

In the early years of the 1900s parents were often encouraged by authors concerned with improving children's lives to play with their children and to look at life through the eyes of the child. In the opening of the "century of the child," child-rearing advice authors often suggested that parents (usually mothers) try to imagine life from the child's perspective. As the male author of a 1913 book of parenting advice explained, "I live close to my boy, and by so doing I find his level and see his narrowed horizon as he sees it."<sup>61</sup> Fathers who remembered their own childhoods could better understand their sons. One author in *The Delineator* explained that remembering childhood allowed parents to have more sympathy with the child: "The father who has a vivid recollection of his boyhood days... can sympathize with his boy as no one else can."<sup>62</sup> In suggestions such as these, fathers, like mothers, were encouraged to consider the perspective of the child in order to guide children more sympathetically.

As the 1910s wore on, it became increasingly common for authors to suggest that *fathers* in particular should be cultivating friendly, playful relationships with their children. Fathers were no longer simply encouraged to welcome children to partake of their leisure activities, such as walks and camping trips; increasingly, they were asked to find or feign interest in the activities of youth, to act like a child in order to gain the friendship of their children, particularly their sons. This advice was no longer equally applicable to mothers. The ideal of playful parenting that arose in the 1910s and 1920s was explicitly limited to *fathers*.

In the 1920s, advice authors encouraged men to spend their leisure time with their children, particularly with their sons, in friendly communication and mutual enjoyment. Frank H. Cheley was probably the most important figure in the movement to encourage greater paternal involvement in the lives of boys in this period. He was the author of four books of advice directed to fathers between 1916 and 1926 and several other books addressed to boys that similarly encouraged close father-son bonds. His importance was enhanced by his role as the president of the Father and Son League which made him chief editor of its twenty-volume collection of books for fathers published in 1921. Cheley encouraged fathers to spend time with boys hiking, camping, hunting, bicycling, taking photographs, playing with radios and telegraphs, collecting plant and insect specimens,

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<sup>59</sup> Hodges, "The Business of Being a Father." For other examples, see: Wood-Allen, "Between Father and Son." F. A. Crosby, "The Home A Club for Boys," *The Delineator*, January 1910.

<sup>60</sup> One author recommended that: "When the children grow up to a companionable age the father takes them out for his own pleasure." Hodges, "The Business of Being a Father." In a similar statement, a *Ladies Home Journal* article suggested to fathers: "Take [your son] into your pleasures." Wood-Allen, "Between Father and Son."

<sup>61</sup> Carl Avery Werner, *Bringing Up Boy; A Message to Fathers and Mothers from a Boy of Yesterday Concerning the Men of To-morrow* (New York, 1913). 43. For a similar example, see Peck, "What A Father Can Do for His Daughter," 462.

<sup>62</sup> Crosby, "The Home A Club for Boys."



birding, studying rocks, Scouting, and playing tennis and golf.<sup>63</sup> Cheley's efforts to encourage men to help direct their sons' play by joining activities their sons enjoyed represents an idea common to many fathering advice authors. John Crawley, a British widower who wrote a book published in the United States about his experiences of fatherhood, explained: "Willingly I would let no chance go of being a companion to my children. If I am wanted to bat or bowl at cricket, to play at lawn-tennis, to swim, or what not, I am ready."<sup>64</sup> Fathers ought to join children in their interests, ought to take advantage of any opportunity to make friends with their children, according to advice authors. Articles in popular magazines and books of advice placed increased emphasis on fitting the interests of the father to those of the child. Fathers were told more frequently that they ought to take on the interests of their children in order to befriend them. For example, in his 1921 book on fathering boys, Galloway wrote "Mere 'chumming' with your boy may not be of any value. It may be a great bore to both of you.... you must chum with him in such ways as to *give him pleasure* in it."<sup>65</sup> Cheley asked his father readers: "*Do you keep yourself well enough informed concerning the great field of sports so that you can talk them intelligently with the boy? If you do, he adores you; if you don't, he is afraid you are an old woman.*"<sup>66</sup> These authors encouraged fathers to adopt the interests of their sons in order to secure their boys' esteem.

## Becoming the Boy's Pal

Increasingly books and articles depicting ideal fathers showed men who were in many ways more like brothers or pals than authority figures. H.E. Luccock, in his "Five Minute Shop Talks," suggested that every child had the right "to have [his 'Dad'] for a 'pal.'"<sup>67</sup> Brother Barnabas McDonald, executive secretary of the Boy Life Bureau of the Knights of Columbus, devoted himself to correcting what he believed was a lack of connection between fathers and sons. He explained to men that boys did not want advice from "holier-than-thou individuals." What boys wanted, according to Barnabas, was "to romp with the old man in a real invitation of 'come let's go.'"<sup>68</sup> Anecdotes from magazines, newspapers, and advice books depicted fathers and sons joking together, laughingly competing, and speaking comfortably and casually about shared interests such as fishing.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Frank Hobart Cheley, *The Job of Being a Dad* (Boston, Chicago, 1923). 187-89. Cheley, *Dad, Whose Boy is Yours*.

<sup>64</sup> John Crawley, *Reveries of a Father* (New York, 1924). 35.

<sup>65</sup> Galloway, *The Father and His Boy*. 8. Italics in original.

<sup>66</sup> Cheley, *Dad, Whose Boy is Yours*. 58.

<sup>67</sup> H. E. Luccock, "Five Minute Shop Talks" in Cheley, *Talks to Boys*. 96. Similarly, a writer in an outdoorsman's magazine resolved to make a "pal" of his son by hunting, fishing and camping with him. W. Livingston Larned, "Adventures in Comradeship: The First of a Series in which Will Be Found Something of Interest to All Fathers of Growing Boys," *A Journal of Outdoor Life, Travel, Nature Study, Shooting, Fishing, Yachting*, March 1923, 102.

<sup>68</sup> "Catholics Discuss Boys," *Los Angeles Times*, September 7 1927.

<sup>69</sup> See for example, William J. Cromie, ed., *Physical Fitness*, vol. 4, Father and Son Library: A Practical Plan of All Round Development for the Boy (New York, 1921). "Boy Scouts," *New York Times*, December

Becoming a “pal” did not necessarily mean that fathers gave up their position as admired role model. Many authors emphasized that fathers would impress their children by their very youthfulness, would earn their child’s admiration by fitting in with youth culture in some way. In a 1918 book about a boy finding self-confidence and physical strength at a summer camp, camp enthusiast Frank Cheley described the father-son relationship as friendly and even teasing.<sup>70</sup> The father offers his son advice speaking informally and using slang.<sup>71</sup> The boy’s mother and aunt are overly protective; father, on the other hand, treats the boy as a comrade and offers advice in the mode of an older brother. He shields the boy from the mother’s undue worry. In this relationship, represented as an ideal one, the father is not stripped of authority. The son wants his father’s approval and follows his advice, but the two have a friendly, informal way of speaking to each other and the boy has no fear of his father. Similarly, in a series written for *A Journal of Outdoor Life*, W. Livingston Larned, an advertising man, writer, and illustrator, described his experiences bonding with his son in a series of shared outdoor adventures. Larned purported to quote from a letter he received from his wife about her communications with their son:

To him, Father is 'lots better company' than any of his boy friends. Father is 'bully good, and a real sport.' Father knows everything about fishing and camping and hunting. He never knew 'just what fun Father was BEFORE.' Father, Father, always his Father. He idolizes you.<sup>72</sup>

This letter closes with the happy declaration that “MY TWO BOYS are chums together!”<sup>73</sup> The father here is explicitly declared a “boy,” he has proven himself to his son to be “bully good” and “a real sport,” and this has led his son to “idolize” him. Sons were still depicted as admiring, even idolizing their fathers, but the characters that earned this admiration had significantly changed. This change reflects the new valuation of youthfulness in American society in the 1920s and the growing importance of youth

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<sup>3</sup> 1922. Charles Tenney Jackson, "Dad: The Story of a Humble Hero and His Secret Victory," *Ladies' Home Journal*, May 1914, 16.

<sup>70</sup> Frank H. Cheley, *Camping With Henry: Stories for the Camp Fire* (New York, 1918). 10.

<sup>71</sup> Cheley, *Camping With Henry: Stories for the Camp Fire*. 14

<sup>72</sup> W. Livingston Larned, "Adventures in Comradeship, Part IV.: Does YOUR Boy Share the Lure, the Thrill, the Unforgettable Happiness of Your Outdoor Hours? Do You Make a Chum of Him and Give Him Lessons in True Sportsmanship, That He May Grow Up Conscious of His Responsibilities in This Great Field? Is His Affection for You Based on the Wonderful Influence of Fine Comradeship?... Once Again We Fare Forth With Two Who Found It a Spiritual Investment.," *A Journal of Outdoor Life, Travel, Nature Study, Shooting, Fishing, Yachting*, June 1923, 296.

<sup>73</sup> Larned, "Adventures in Comradeship, Part IV.," 297. In later installments of this story the mother again makes this point, celebrating that "HER boys were chums at last!" W. Livingston Larned, "Adventures in Comradeship, Part VII: Without Attempting to Cast Too Far Out Into the Deeper Psychological Waters of Trout Fishing, Sonnyboy Has the Time of His Young Life, and Makes His First Catch. We Learn More of the Human Side of Trees and Thrill Under the Livid Spell of a Dramatic Forest Fire. Chip As an Angler.," *A Journal of Outdoor Life, Travel, Nature Study, Shooting, Fishing, Yachting* 93 (September, 1923).

culture in American society. Rather than regarding a youthful demeanor as evidence of immaturity, these authors celebrated prolonged youthfulness.<sup>74</sup>

## Remaining Youthful

Authors in the late 1910s and 1920s focused on the importance of fathers remaining youthful. Walter Fiske, a dean at Oberlin College, argued in an essay published numerous times in the early 1920s that one of the greatest difficulties confronting fathers was "that the father, in growing older, has lost his youth, or rather his youthfulness. He has forgotten how it seemed to be a boy..... What business has any boy's father a-growing old?--except in years and baldness--which don't count!"<sup>75</sup> No longer was the distance of superiority seen as an asset to fatherhood—authors worried about the generation gap and urged fathers to cross it. As one author explained to fathers: "YOU must dig back in your memory so that you can reproduce your sensations at thirteen, and then talk from that viewpoint. Your boy can't leap forward to forty-odd."<sup>76</sup> Boyishness was a key attribute to being a good father. The advice to "Be chummy with your boy"<sup>77</sup> and to "Keep young with him"<sup>78</sup> was indeed so prevalent that one author acknowledged in 1921 that the average father would have heard it "a thousand times."<sup>77</sup>

An author writing of the benefits of fathers and sons woodcrafting together spoke in strong terms about the use of playing with sons as a preventative to growing old: "one of the surest sins of old age is the lack of a playful spirit. The less a man plays, the older he gets."<sup>78</sup> Here it is assumed that the reader will accept the author's contention that becoming less playful, or "old," is in itself a bad thing. This negative attitude toward what might have been called "maturing" in an earlier age is strikingly prevalent in writings on fatherhood from the 1920s. In one of a series of articles written in *Journal of Outdoor Life* outdoorsman and journalist W. Livingston Larned exhorted fathers to become "chums" with their sons. He promised that one of the benefits of such efforts was retaining youthfulness: "In the process, you are very apt to discover, with an utterly overwhelming glow of satisfaction, that the companionship gives YOU back some of YOUR youth!"<sup>79</sup> In another article he again appealed to his readers with the promise of extended or rediscovered youth, explaining what happened to him when he started camping with his son:

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<sup>74</sup> A new, more positive and idealistic view of boyhood came into the fore in the 1890s, according to historian E. Anthony Rotundo, but in discussions of fathering, the longing for one's own boyhood and celebrations of boyhood did not really become common until the second decade of the twentieth century. E. Anthony Rotundo, *American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era* (New York, 1993).

<sup>75</sup> Walter Fiske, "Developing Normal Home Relationships for the Boy," in *Fathering the Boy*, ed. Frank H. Cheley (1921), 17.

<sup>76</sup> Kelland, "It's Fun Being A Father," 55. Capitals in original.

<sup>77</sup> Galloway, *The Father and His Boy*. 7.

<sup>78</sup> Philip Fagans, "The Home and the Woodcraft Idea," in *Fathering the Boy*, ed. Frank H. Cheley (1921), 110.

<sup>79</sup> Larned, "Adventures in Comradeship, Part IV.," 297.

I found all Sonnyboy's youthful enthusiasms reawakening within me. I was his age again, in thoughts, at least. And that is one of the greatest possible arguments in favor of this story. Oh, you fathers... you middle-aged men, who have lost illusions... what a wonderful thing it is to brush in close contact with Youth!<sup>80</sup>

In a later article from this series, the author's son reassured him that, gray hair or not, he would "never grow old."<sup>81</sup> Maintaining youthfulness was a promise authors held out as a reward to fathers who followed their advice on how to parent. Involved parenting, they assured readers, would help men avoid growing old.

Because this youthful ideal of fatherhood was new, authors worked hard to convince fathers of its benefits. Authors advocating for this new chummy fatherhood had to overcome the reluctance of fathers to dedicate more time to parenting.<sup>82</sup> Fathers also feared making a fools of themselves and giving up their dignity by playing with their boys. Frank H. Cheley continually reminded fathers of the importance of staying youthful and remembering their own boyhoods: "It is no easy task for a father to be a boy with his boy," he admitted, but a father should start by "by throwing his autocracy to the four winds" and trying some camping. He assured fathers that activities in the great outdoors could create opportunities for closer father-son relationships by helping fathers to reconnect to their youthful enthusiasms. He offered the discouraged father this assurance: "I've ... seen two 'kids'--a young, lithe, limber, adolescent one, and an old, fat, rheumatic, baldheaded one-- have the finest rough-and-tumble tussle in the warm lake water that you could well imagine."<sup>83</sup> One author writing of his own success in raising his children remarked on the importance of staying young and playing with one's children. Anticipating reluctance on the part of his reader, the author writes:

Some of my friends may think that I ought to be more dignified, but I frankly confess that I do not look with shame upon a snapshot of my biggest boy and his father doing a hand-stand side by side on a country road with their heels up against a barn.... It seems to me that a father ought most surely to carry the genuineness, the enthusiasm, the aliveness, the wholesome beginnings of an all-

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<sup>80</sup> W. Livingston Larned, "Adventures in Comradeship [ , Part VI]: A Brief Essay on Man's Finer Appreciation of the Real Wildwood, With Occasional Reference to Boyhood's Reactions to It. Sonnyboy Learns More Concerning Forest Fires, Human Nature and the Lure of the Mountain Trout. We Come to Know That an Abandoned Farm Can Bring Greater Happiness Than a Mansion.," *A Journal of Outdoor Life, Travel, Nature Study, Shooting, Fishing, Yachting*, August 1923, 424.

<sup>81</sup> W. Livingston Larned, "Adventures in Comradeship, Part X[I].: Bark of Alligator and Hiss of Moccasin: Yowl of Wildcat and Hoot of Owl. Hammock Thrill of the Florida Everglades, with an Incidental Hint That the Seminole Indian Still Believes in His Divine Right to the Mystic Land of His Ancient Forefathers.," *A Journal of Outdoor Life, Travel, Nature Study, Shooting, Fishing, Yachting* 94 (February, 1924): 71. John Crawley likewise asserted, "For the best way--perhaps, indeed, the only way--to prevent the coming of age is to keep close and active contact with the mind of the young." Crawley, *Reveries of a Father*. 35.

<sup>82</sup> Philip E. Howard, *Father and Son: An Intimate Study* (Philadelphia, 1922). 24-25. Angelo Patri, "Fathers and Sons," *The Delineator* 105 (September, 1924).

<sup>83</sup> Frank H. Cheley, ed., *Fathering the Boy, A Handbook for the Fathers and Leaders of Boys*, vol. 1, Father and Son Library: A Practical Home Plan of All Round Development for the Boy (New York, 1921). 64.

round, well-developed boyhood clean over into his life with his own boys.<sup>84</sup>

Samuel S. Drury similarly felt that fathers were too concerned with their own dignity, wondering, "Who ever started the notion that fatherhood must wrap itself in grand, gloomy and peculiar folds?"<sup>85</sup> Drury encouraged fathers to forge friendly relationships with their sons, explaining that the son should regard his father "as truly a big brother." Attempting to persuade the reluctant readers to share "the wholesomer type of indelicacies" with their sons, Drury wrote, "Let Mr. and Mrs. Mid-Victorian Grundy protest as they please; it is better to let your boy free his lower mirth in his father's presence than wallow in the mud of the street-corner companions."<sup>86</sup> Drury attempted to overcome his readers' reluctance to give up their accustomed distance and dignity by depicting it as un-modern and by reminding fathers that the boys' unseemly peer group would take over if they refused.

Authors attempted to overcome fathers' reluctance to adopt the new ideals of fathering by emphasizing the benefits to the father of the new model of parenting. Keeping young, these authors suggested, was one of the key benefits of fathering in this model. As one author put it, for the "present-day" father, who was "his son's boon companion[,]... old age has become obsolete."<sup>87</sup> The well-known host of a New York City radio program on parenting issues and advice author, Angelo Patri, wrote: "Fathers who share their children's growing time cannot grow old, cannot grow paunchy and stodgy and stiff even if they wished to, and who wishes to?... [A boy's father] wears the aura of young life."<sup>88</sup> Staying young helped fathers connect to their children, according to advice authors, and it also helped them retain their idealism, their enthusiasm, their energy and their youthful vigor.

Men who felt disillusioned and unhappy were told that playing with their sons would help them recapture the happiness and promise of their youth. Frank Cheley acknowledged that "Crowded and driven as are our lives, disillusioned as are most of us, even to the point of being old and sour and weighed down with the problems of life, it is extremely difficult for us to get down joyfully and be kids with the kids."<sup>89</sup> He wrote, "There are many thoughtful fathers of growing sons that are secretly worried over the fact that they are rapidly losing their youth."<sup>90</sup> The answer to these concerns, according to Cheley, was to follow a plan of spending time with his sons outdoors. He promised: "you will be amazed at the new enthusiasm and spirit of play and youthfulness of which you are capable.... Try it, Mr. Father. It is most certainly good for 'what's the matter with you.'"<sup>91</sup> Cheley acknowledged that some contemporary ideas about mature masculine behavior ran contrary to the playful, one-of-the-gang image he was promoting.

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<sup>84</sup> Howard, *Father and Son: An Intimate Study*. 16-17.

<sup>85</sup> Drury, *Fathers and Sons*. 55.

<sup>86</sup> Drury, *Fathers and Sons*. 119.

<sup>87</sup> "The Greatest American Invention," 464.

<sup>88</sup> Angelo Patri in Crawley, *Reveries of a Father*. ix-x. Note the slippage from "children" to "boy." This was not at all atypical of this period in which authors addressing fatherhood increasingly focused on boyhood.

<sup>89</sup> Cheley, *The Job of Being a Dad*. 183. Also, Cheley, *Dad, Whose Boy is Yours*. 22.

<sup>90</sup> Cheley, *The Job of Being a Dad*. 183. Also, Cheley, *Dad, Whose Boy is Yours*. 24-25.

<sup>91</sup> Cheley, *The Job of Being a Dad*. 191.

Cheley urged fathers to take on this new “dad” persona as a way of countering feelings of disappointment, disillusionment, or lack of passion. Cheley’s discussion of men’s ennui may reflect a post-war mood among American middle-class men of disillusionment and dissatisfaction. Cheley and others like him believed the answer lay in more fulfilling father-child relationships.

## One of the Gang

An article in 1913 published in *Harper’s Bazaar* depicted a father struggling to find a way to connect with his daughter. He ultimately managed to do so by playing charades and games with his daughter and her friends and learning, also, when to leave the youths alone. The article explained that father “has to be educated strictly to his duties as an entertainer to the young.”<sup>92</sup> The father in this instructive story forged a successful relationship with his daughter and finally found a place for himself as a father by becoming playmate to adolescents. The lesson of this story is strikingly different from the common advice of the first decade of the twentieth century that fathers *and* mothers play with children and look at the world through the child’s eyes. First, it is specifically father who is to have this genial relationship with youths. Mother does not have a similarly playful role in this story. The one-of-the-gang attitude the father happily adopts is specific to father and is met with some degree of condescension by his daughter who, like mother, has learned to manage her father and to cajole him out of bad moods. Images such as these, of fathers working to entrench themselves as a member of the children’s gang of friends became increasingly popular as the 1910s and 1920s went on.

In the mid-1910s and 1920s, articles suggested ways for fathers to make themselves more popular with their sons and to fit in with an adolescent or boyish culture and short stories in popular magazines began to praise fathers who did. For example, a 1914 short story depicted a father’s loving relationship with his adolescent son. On his way to a picture show with his friends, the son says to his father “I wish you would [come along]. You know how the bunch likes you-- always just like one of us. Isn't another one of 'em got a Dad like that!”<sup>93</sup> Frank Cheley suggested fathers work with their sons to entertain “the gang” at home, emphasizing the importance of being accepted by the son’s friends. He posed this question to fathers: “*Has the gang voted you in, or are they quite skeptical of your intentions? Have you captured the gang, or does the crowd consider you a killjoy and a necessary nuisance?*”<sup>94</sup> This tendency to place such importance on earning acceptance and being a part of the gang reflects the growth of a child-centered family, a new celebration of youthfulness, and, accompanying the rise of corporatism, an increased value placed on being well-liked. As peer culture became increasingly important in the lives of American youths through the 1920s, fathers were encouraged to find entry into that world in an effort to compete for influence.

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<sup>92</sup> Cutting, “Educating Father,” 214.

<sup>93</sup> Jackson, “Dad: The Story of a Humble Hero and His Secret Victory,” 16.

<sup>94</sup> Cheley, *Dad, Whose Boy is Yours*. 22. Italics his.

Father's acceptance into his son's group of friends came to be regarded by fatherhood advice authors as essential in normal, healthy father-son relationships.<sup>95</sup> Fathers were encouraged to try to impress their sons through their sports and outdoorsman prowess. In an early book by Cheley, *The Adventure of a Prodigal Father*, camping together allows the son to see his father in a new light, to appreciate his skills and competence. The boy comes to admire and respect his father, taking heed of the father's subtle suggestions and upright example.<sup>96</sup> Philip E. Howard, in his 1922 book *Father and Son: An Intimate Study*, described a father who joined his son's football practice whenever he could: "Among other efforts to 'belong,' he would do his share by punting the ball clear over the high housetop from the front lawn to the rear."<sup>97</sup> Fathers were told to adopt the language and interests of youths to earn membership into the gang. Cheley wrote of a man who approached a group of boys and in youthful parlance told them about his old gang: "The gang gravitated to this newcomer like steel filings to a magnet. Here was a man who knew the language. Here was a man that had not forgotten the days of his youth."<sup>98</sup> Numerous short stories and examples from fathering advice texts depicted good fathers talking with their children using the slang and casual manner of speaking associated with adolescents.

## Adolescents' Expectations

In the mid-1920s, one teacher asked fifteen adolescent boys to write "confidential compositions" addressing the question "What is an ideal father?" The one trait about which all respondents agreed was that he should be a companion. One boy wrote:

I think a good father should primarily be a companion to his son. He should take an interest in him from his youth up, play games with him, and not spend too much of his time with his older friends. In this way the two can get to know each other really well, and both will profit: the boy by his father's wisdom and experience, and the father by the fresh and unprejudiced opinions of youth.<sup>99</sup>

Another explained that "By friendly informal chats a man can teach his children more than by stilted parental lectures."<sup>100</sup> These schoolboys were repeating the new ideals of the late 1910s and 1920s and had absorbed the expectation that fathers should be friendly,

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<sup>95</sup> In 1921, an essay addressed to boys asked: "Dad often takes you to places you want to go--with him. Do you ever ask Dad to go along with the bunch? If you haven't, there's something the matter with the bunch or with Dad or with you or with the whole arrangement." Rather than regarding a certain separation between the child's social world and the father's as healthy and respectful, authors now considered it evidence of dysfunction. Bentley Bates, "Home, Dad, and a Boy's Room," in *The Boy's Own Book*, ed. Editorial Board of the Father and Son League (1921), 28. Also published in Frank H. Cheley, *Climbing Manward* (New York, 1925), 97., where it is unattributed.

<sup>96</sup> Frank H. Cheley, *The Adventure of a Prodigal Father* (New York, 1916).

<sup>97</sup> Howard, *Father and Son: An Intimate Study*, 45.

<sup>98</sup> Cheley, *The Job of Being a Dad*, 266.

<sup>99</sup> Quoted in Drury, *Fathers and Sons*, 144.

<sup>100</sup> Quoted in Drury, *Fathers and Sons*, 144-45.

should use “informal chats” over traditional forms of discipline, and should value their sons’ company over that of their adult friends. Furthermore, the first boy essayist repeats the notion that this association will benefit son and father alike. The image of the ideal father as a friend was a part of children’s world-view and expectations, these essays suggest.

Children’s conceptions of the ideal father were shaped in part by children’s periodicals, such as *St. Nicholas Magazine*, which propagated this new image of the playful, one-of-the-bunch father. In one such story, the main character’s parents interrupt her while she is talking with her friends about making New Year’s resolutions. The father makes recommendations about how the youths might best do this, being jocular and enthusiastic while the mother, although present, is practically silent throughout the story. The father locks the resolutions in a safe and makes the bunch all promise to return in exactly in a year for an unveiling of the promises and an accounting of each person’s success or failure in following through with the resolutions. The father of this story, who is portrayed very positively, is enthusiastic about the gang’s activities and eager to take part. The narrator calls her parents “distressingly old-fashioned” but also emphasizes that her friends never mind having them around.<sup>101</sup> Her father is friendly with the other youths and uses casual language. For instance, when he opens the safe for the year-end’s accounting, he says ““I suppose you want us old folks to clear out?”” and his daughter “knew by his voice that he was simply dying to hang around.”<sup>102</sup> The narrator’s friends are very comfortable around her father. One girl slumps on a cushion at his feet, for instance.<sup>103</sup> The youths are positive about the father’s contributions, regarding as “brilliant” his suggestion for prolonging the mystery by withholding names when reading the resolutions.<sup>104</sup>

After most of the resolutions are read, the narrator’s father complains good-naturedly that most of the resolutions seem to work to benefit mothers. He asks ““Did n’t any of you remember your dads?”” which leads to the prolonged comic conclusion. One of the girls, Dot, had resolved to ““Develop Father’s Pep!”” This creates something of an uproar, as her father is “a terrific highbrow” known to shun social gatherings.<sup>105</sup> The narrator’s Dad, in fact, lets out a “sort of smothered war-whoop” upon learning of this resolution. He puts Dot at ease by making a joke about his own failure to accomplish this with her father when they roomed together in college. Dot explains that she bargained with her father, agreeing to type his arcane manuscripts if he would do ““something he did n’t want to”” for every three hours she worked. She got him to go to church and social events, and to buy new evening clothes. She even made a radio fan of him. Her success was proven by her father’s decision to go to the movies with her mother on his first night of freedom from this agreement. They all “roared” at the thought of her father at the movies. To celebrate all this success, the narrator’s father calls for an immediate party:

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<sup>101</sup> Christine Whiting Parmenter, "Those New-Year's Resolutions," *St. Nicholas Magazine* LII (January, 1925): 238.

<sup>102</sup> Parmenter, "Those New-Year's Resolutions," 239.

<sup>103</sup> Parmenter, "Those New-Year's Resolutions," 239.

<sup>104</sup> Parmenter, "Those New-Year's Resolutions," 239.

<sup>105</sup> Note the use of “father” for Dot’s serious, distant father and the use of the title “Dad” for the narrator’s one-of-the-gang father. Parmenter, "Those New-Year's Resolutions."



He jumped up, with a glance at his watch. Father is forty-nine, but he looked as excited as a boy when he added: 'It 's only half past eight. Let 's telephone the crowd and celebrate *to-night*, by seeing the New Year in! Bill, you get the car out of the garage and go down town for some ice-cream. You kids certainly deserve a treat after this strenuous year. Mother and I 'll roll up the rugs and get out the dance records; and look here, Dot-- you 'd better call up the theater and leave a message for those frivolous parents of yours to stop in on the way home. I'm going to tell your dad that you deserve the Carnegie medal!'<sup>106</sup>

The youths then enjoy the “jolliest party of the year” and the author explains, “maybe you can see now why it is that the crowd never seems to mind when Mother and Dad butt in!”<sup>107</sup>

We learn in this tale that although the father might choose to go to bed at 10:00 normally and be “frightfully old-fashioned” about bobbed hair and the like, he is able to garner a good deal of enthusiasm for the activities of youth and he is eager to belong. The story emphasizes that the father has been accepted by the gang, showing his daughter’s pride about this. Although the mother is mentioned at the same time, she has almost no role in this story and only speaks a couple of lines. Dot, whose father is devoted to his academic pursuits, commits herself to helping her father better fit the new ideals of fatherhood. The author emphasizes that Dot’s father is a good provider, but also shows that this is not enough. It seems quite likely that the youth reading this story in *St. Nicholas Magazine* in 1925 would have envied the narrator her fun, involved father and might even have drawn inspiration from Dot’s efforts to “Develop Father’s Pep.” Stories such as these helped to shape the expectations of American middle-class youths for their relationship with their fathers.

## **The Serious Business of Being a Fun Father**

Fathers were urged to make themselves popular with their sons’ friends, to become pals, as a means to an end. The importance of a boy’s gang was accepted by advice authors, but the peer group was still seen as fraught with danger. Samuel S. Drury wrote in 1927: "The vigilant parent will separate the sheep friends and the goat friends, and tactfully keep his boy away from the goats.... Pretty exteriors must not deceive us. Beware your children's friends!"<sup>108</sup> The ideal fatherhood described by advice authors was nearly always one of self-conscious and careful guidance. Many authors suggested that fathers make serious and deliberate efforts to come across as young and friendly. One book of advice to men contemplating fatherhood explained that fathers-to-be,

*must prepare to keep young.* That means deliberate planning, too....  
Some day if you are not on your guard, you will get too busy, or too

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<sup>106</sup> Parmenter, "Those New-Year's Resolutions," 242.

<sup>107</sup> Parmenter, "Those New-Year's Resolutions," 242.

<sup>108</sup> Drury, *Fathers and Sons*. 111-12.

tired, or too lazy to do any more than talk like a 'has-been,' and show the boys your medals...For the boy's sake, keep your boyhood alive, so that you can be a boy *with* your boy, not in any artificial way, not as a concession, but because you and he belong together.<sup>109</sup>

This book is quite serious and religious in tone, and yet it accepts and promotes the idea that a father should be boy-like in his parenting. Another author who wrote a book of fathering advice based on his own parenting experiences gave step-by-step instructions on how to become accepted by one's son's friends. First, he recommended the father "drop in" to his son's room while the boy was visiting with friends to cheerfully "tell them a story—a *short* one!—that fits in with something of interest to them, and let them see that he hasn't forgotten when he was a boy."<sup>110</sup> Next, the father might host an overnight adventure outdoors with the boys as an excellent way to "get what the boys might call 'inside dope.'"<sup>111</sup> The father in this example is carefully crafting friendships with his son's friends in order to have more influence over his son. The goal in becoming a member of the boy's "bunch" was, as Frank Cheley put it, to become "of all the boy's associates, the closest, most chummy and wisest."<sup>112</sup> The prolific and well-known poet and essayist Edgar A. Guest wrote of his son: "I must not only know him thoroughly but I must know his playmates, too. This means that I cannot walk by the vacant lot where they are playing. If it's a baseball game I must take part in it."<sup>113</sup> Guest's uses the word "must"—he depicts playing baseball as a serious duty. Guest makes a conscious distinction here—when he plays he is not a man seeking youthfulness and fun, but rather a careful father fulfilling his responsibilities. Guest wrote numerous sentimental poems that similarly depicted the importance and joys of friendly father-son relations.<sup>114</sup> Father's guidance in this parenting model is achieved through manipulation both of the son and of the father's personality; the father is urged to hide his adult discomfort with the pleasures of childhood—to wear the mask of a child as a means of earning the trust and admiration of his son. The goal was a closer and more fulfilling relationship between fathers and their offspring.

## The Fun of Being a Not-Too-Serious Father

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<sup>109</sup> Howard, *Father and Son: An Intimate Study*. 15-17. Italics in original.

<sup>110</sup> Howard, *Father and Son: An Intimate Study*. 42. Italics in original.

<sup>111</sup> Howard, *Father and Son: An Intimate Study*. 42. Similarly, the explicit purpose of the popular "boyology" lecture course offered to fathers by the Knights of Columbus in 1927 was "to make fathers, and future fathers, understand the ideals of boyhood, by 'becoming boys again' and later helping to direct the 'gang spirit' into healthful, upright American channels." "Preparing for Get-together 'Feed'," *Los Angeles Times*, November 22 1927.

<sup>112</sup> Cheley, *The Job of Being a Dad*. 94.

<sup>113</sup> Edgar A. Guest, *My Job as a Father and What My Father Did for Me* (Chicago, 1923). 25.

<sup>114</sup> See, for example: Edgar A. Guest, "Father and Son," in Cheley, *Talks to Boys*. 94-95. and "The Stick-Together Families," "Grandpa," "Pa Did It," "The First Steps," "Questions," "The Man to Be," and "Bud" in Edgar A. Guest, *Just Folks* (Chicago, c. 1917).

Serious advice authors emphasized the ideal father's careful and conscious creation of friendlier father-child relationships, but other authors writing essays about fatherhood in the late 1910s and the 1920s focused more exclusively on the contention that fatherhood should be *fun*. In one such article published in *American Magazine* in 1927, Clarence Budington Kelland, who made a fortune writing light fiction and went on to become a conservative member of the Republican National Committee, encouraged fathers by emphasizing the fun of parenting:

I LIKE the job of being a father. I get more pleasure out of it than out of anything else in the world. I don't work hard at it. I play at it. My sons do not address me as 'Sir,' or show a spurious respect for me. They call me 'Dad,' and we treat each other as equals. We are a gang. And I don't insist on being the leader of the gang any more than my share of the time.... We have our quarrels, and I can quarrel as heartily as any twelve-year-old. But we don't have any heavy father and subservient son stuff. No, sirree, not in *our* family.<sup>115</sup>

Fathers writing about parenthood in the 1920s often boasted of their modern, democratic families in this way, or joked good-naturedly about the lack of authority afforded the head of the household. A chief characteristic of “dad” was that he did not make much of his authority. Male authors were proud of the comfortable familiarity between themselves and their children. Authoritative patriarchs were portrayed in articles and books about fathering as old-fashioned. The modern father enjoyed describing himself as enlightened as compared to his own father and boasted of his own renunciation of despotism in the family.

As seen in the previous example, fathers took pride in behaving like boys with their boys, even in arguing like a twelve-year-old. This vision of an ideal father rejected the pressures of being a stern family disciplinarian and encouraged men to take on more pleasurable responsibilities. An article in *Outlook* extolling America's “Greatest Invention”—the daddy—explained:

The dentist and the doctor, the teacher and the oculist, are mother's affair; tonsils and adenoids are under maternal management; candy and toys and holidays are the paternal prerogatives. It is not fair, of course, but it will grow fairer as the woman recognizes her equal rights with the man in utter, irresponsible enjoyment of children.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> Kelland, "It's Fun Being A Father," 146. Kelland published sixty novels and two hundred short stories. Early in his career, Kelland worked as an editor and writer at *The American Boy*. In 1915 he began as a full-time freelancer, publishing many short stories for *The American* and the *Saturday Evening Post*. Several of his stories were made into motion pictures, including *Mr. Deeds Goes to Town*. Kelland became very involved with politics in the late 1930s, adamantly opposing the New Deal. He was a member the conservative wing of the Republican national committee from 1940-1956 and was an admirer of Barry Goldwater's. He had two sons, one the financial editor of *The Republic* and the other an “investment man.” “Clarence Budington Kelland, Prolific Author, Is Dead at 82,” *New York Times*, February 19 1964.

<sup>116</sup> "The Greatest American Invention," 464.

Father's "irresponsible enjoyment" was the recipe for greater family happiness. Who should be left to deal with tonsils and teachers and the like, should mother be won over to the viewpoint of the Daddy, is not clearly spelled out. Authors discussing modern fatherhood directly contrasted this modern, friendly, light-hearted dad with a priggish, Victorian patriarch and, less frequently, with a fretting, smothering mother. Keeping the tone of the family light and happy and projecting unworried confidence were becoming the father's emotional responsibility.

Fathers were no longer chiefly expected to connect their children to the greater world; rather children, particularly sons, were to connect father to the separate world of childhood and youth. This shift reflects new ideas regarding youth and memory—rather than leaving childhood behind, men were encouraged to relive their own childhoods through their sons. A poem published c. 1913 celebrated the silliness of fathers who revisited their youths by playing with their sons, even as it teases men for doing so:

THIS is the time of the year, my boys  
When we kids get out and make a noise  
To see our daddies fall in line  
And act like us (!) in a baseball nine.  
...  
And when at last the game is done,  
It puts an end to us kids' fun.  
We help our daddies, one and all,  
Who thought they still could play baseball.<sup>117</sup>

Likewise, *Saturday Evening Post* covers after 1916 portrayed fathers as joyful and playful. Cover illustrations in 1916 and 1929 showed fathers playing baseball with a group of boys. Others included fathers driving fast, shopping while dressed as Santa Claus, watching boys playing marbles, and smilingly watching a son tease his toddler brother. Two covers depicted a father fishing with greater enthusiasm than the boys accompanying him.<sup>118</sup> Fathers who relived their youth could be somewhat pathetic, a danger of which authors urging fathers to adopt the new mannerisms of the ideal "dad" were acutely aware. The author of an advice manual for fathers explained that the pathetic image of a man ever looking backwards, pining for his lost youth, should be offset with a picture of a father dreaming about his boys, ever looking forward.<sup>119</sup> Another article celebrated the modern trend of "Daddies" keeping young and befriending their children, explaining that this trend made young and old enjoy spending time together and decreased the father's impulse "to live in his son's life."<sup>120</sup> In a culture that valued youth more than it ever had before, playing with sons and taking an interest in their activities became a route to capturing a youthful feeling without being considered pathetic or overly sentimental.

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<sup>117</sup> Wallace and Frances Rice Rice, ed., *To My Dad* (New York, undated). c. 1913, unpaginated.

<sup>118</sup> *Saturday Evening Post*, covers from the following dates: August 5, 1916; December 9, 1916; July 31, 1920; September 6, 1924; March 28, 1925; June 20, 1925; June 1, 1929; August 3, 1929.

<sup>119</sup> Drury, *Fathers and Sons*. 34.

<sup>120</sup> "The Greatest American Invention," 464.

With the shifting ideals of fatherhood toward a more playful, friendly fathering style came a new condescension toward fathers which was much more prevalent in popular magazines than in advice books.<sup>121</sup> Short stories portrayed mothers and adolescent children speaking condescendingly of father— of “poor Dad.” But father-authors themselves frequently made use of this trope, filling their own articles and books with half-jesting, half-boasting self-pity, remarking on their marginalization in the family and their lowly place in the family order—but all in winking good humor. The light-hearted quality of the vast majority of these articles suggests that fathers were, in some way, in on the joke. The condescension about fathers was not something simply done *to* fathers, but a part of a revised image of father in which father-authors themselves invested. Male authors explicitly celebrated their rejection of traditional authority structures. Even authors who complained about the lack of respect afforded them usually did so in a half-jesting, light-hearted manner that suggests that they did not truly feel alienated or disrespected in their families.

In the 1910s and 1920s a new ideal of fatherhood came to the fore. This ideal emphasized youthfulness and playfulness, placing a high value on emotional closeness and the comfortable exchange of personal information between father and child, particularly father and son. The new ideal de-emphasized authority and respect, and focused instead on friendship, love, and admiration. The authors who promoted this change were motivated by a desire to tie men more tightly to their families. A skyrocketing middle-class divorce rate and widely discussed fear of the disintegrating middle-class home was the backdrop to this effort to update father’s role in the family. These authors wanted to make fatherhood modern and appealing, to cast off the old ideal of fatherhood which had grown to seem dull, overly serious, and largely negative. The rising importance of mothers through the late nineteenth century and efforts to professionalize motherhood in the early twentieth century may have contributed to fathers’ feeling excluded from the family circle—or perhaps, a new value placed on domestic happiness simply made men less satisfied with traditional roles. The transition in fathering ideals happened alongside World War I and became even more pronounced after the war’s end. The timing suggests that men were seeking more emotionally fulfilling bonds and worrying about the strength of family connections while facing a time of insecurity in the world. The common discussions of disillusionment and ennui in the 1920s fathering literature, which urged men to play with their sons as a cure to such unhappiness, reflect the climate of the post-war United States. As youth culture and the importance of peers became increasingly important in the 1920s, youthfulness became more appealing to adult men as well. Advice authors encouraged men to adopt the interests and mannerisms of youth to compete for influence with their children’s peer group. The rise of a new fathering ideal further signifies a change in the emotional climate of the American middle class. In the late 1910s and the 1920s, American men were increasingly expected by popular and scholarly authors to value youthfulness, unworried confidence, and a wry sense of humor.

Fathers in the 1910s and 1920s were told that they needed to break down the wall of generation by making themselves more youthful. But there is evidence that numerous

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<sup>121</sup> Sociologist Ralph LaRossa attributes the rise in humor directed at fathers to the reduction of men’s fathering role to “playmates—and *only* their playmates.” LaRossa, *The Modernization of Fatherhood*. 134-136.

fathers rejected this call. Many fathers refused to sacrifice their dignity by romping on the floor with tots or speaking slang with adolescents. Indeed, keeping up with the young could be exhausting, even when trying to keep memories of one's boyhood in mind—as one father complained, “MANAGING a three-ringed circus is a mere incidental compared to managing my three boys.... It's just one unfortunate situation after another until I get desperate. I think I was a real boy myself, but I don't believe I was possessed!”<sup>122</sup> But the ideal of a close father-child friendship, of less formal relations between the household head and his offspring, and the association of playfulness with fatherhood was incorporated into middle-class culture in the 1920s. The culture of the young was accepted and even adopted by men somewhat, for this new vision of an ideal father embraced boyishness more fully than had ever been seen in American culture before. Popular and scholarly authors created and advocated a new, friendlier, more boyish ideal of fatherhood in an effort to create a more enjoyable, meaningful and unique role for American middle-class fathers and to thereby create closer, happier families.

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<sup>122</sup> Quoted in Cheley, ed., *Fathering the Boy, A Handbook for the Fathers and Leaders of Boys*. 51.

## Chapter 2

### **Fitting In: Finding Room for Men and Boys in the Middle-Class Home**

Challenges to traditional white, middle-class gender roles between 1900 and 1930 had significant ramifications on family life and on father's role in the home. Many social scientists, religious leaders, and popular authors feared the effect these changes were having on home life and spoke passionately about the dissolution of the home and the traditional family. The challenges of feminism alongside changing expectations for happiness in family life and marriage indeed created a new set of ideals and expectations for men in their homes. Men were expected to find fulfillment in their home lives, to forge friendlier relationships with their children and more intimate and congenial relationships with their wives. Traditional concepts of masculinity did not always sit easily with these new expectations. Authors anxious to help father find his place in the modern American family, to enhance his role as parent, wrestled with the presumed contradictions between contemporary ideas about masculinity and domesticity. There were important shifts in the manner in which authors attempted to resolve these conflicts between 1900 and 1930. In the early part of the period, authors longing for greater paternal involvement tended to focus on the importance of cooperation and partnership between husband and wife, on the dignity of being a masculine role model to children. Starting in the mid-1910s, authors increasingly aligned the father with the child, depicting the modern dad as allied with his children in a quest for fun. These authors emphasized the difference between men and women as parents, celebrating the ability of men to remain calm and unworried and touting the fun of male parenting.

In the late 1910s and in the 1920s, there was a striking change in the tone and style of articles on fathering. New types of emotions and ideas became acceptable to voice while other ideas were quieted. Men increasingly wrote about their feelings of exclusion, especially in discussions of the birth and homecoming of a new infant. Feelings of exclusion and resentment, hardly mentioned at all before the late 1910s, became fairly common in the 1920s, but such discussion was almost always tempered by distancing humor and self-mockery. Increasingly fathers complained about their lesser role in the home, explicitly discussing their commitment to forging relationships with their children that were closer than those of the previous generations and openly commenting on their resentment of their wives' closer bonds. This change is evidence both of a new tendency in professional and popular writing to criticize mothers as smothering and of young fathers' growing expectation that they would find emotional fulfillment in close, friendly, life-long relationships with their children.

The growing concern about how to fit the twentieth-century father into the household and into the lives of children was further manifested in the changing way middle-class Americans designed and organized their homes. The notion that the home had become overly feminized was widely asserted in the early twentieth century. Authors concerned with reforming fatherhood, boy workers, and decorators alike sought to make the home a more inviting place for men and their sons. The home was to serve as a means to create a new kind of fathering according to numerous authors in the 1910s and 1920s. The cozy hearth, the workshop, the garden—all were explicitly discussed as places where fathers could bond with

their sons. Dens and recreational spaces for men in the home, popular throughout the period, likewise consciously drew fathers into the home. In the later 1910s, however, designers who discussed dens increasingly rejected the concept of a retreat for father as unmodern, for companionable togetherness was a hallmark of the modern family. Perhaps the most important trend in home design in the early decades of the twentieth century was toward designing a central space for the relaxation of the family together, a comfortable and private space designed with all members of the family in mind—the living room. Changes in the interior design of homes and in the use of household space suggest concrete efforts to make domesticity and masculinity fit together more comfortably.

All these changes to some extent reveal a movement against the “feminine” in the home; in the late 1910s and 1920s, mothers were increasingly blamed for keeping men out of the life of the household. Mothers were told they were smothering their children, failing to make space for fathers, that they created homes that were uncomfortable for men and boys because of the effeminacy and ridiculousness of the design. Fathering was increasingly depicted as cheerfully opposed to mothering, rather than as its complement. But it was a Victorian feminine ideal that was so assaulted—“modern” mothers faced different criticisms, such as being too interested in pursuing their own happiness. Modern, involved, friendly, fun fathering—dadhood—was contrasted with a Victorian, fretting, fussy motherhood. But complicating this trend and running alongside it, was a growing commitment to family togetherness, to creating family roles and domestic spaces that encouraged men to spend their time and emotional energy with the family. Modern mothers and fathers should be partners and friends, and friends with the children, too. Increasingly authors suggested that father’s most important parenting job was to have fun. Efforts to make the home less feminine and to make fathering seem more appealing and acceptably masculine and modern must be understood in this context.

## **Parenting the Manly Way**

Authors who discussed the proper role of fathers faced a certain amount of uneasiness when discussing caregiving. Breadwinning as a role was comfortably masculine and many authors attempted to imbue wage-earning with special emotional power, emphasizing the love and sacrifice of the father as provider.<sup>1</sup> Authors also used two kinds of strategies when discussing other sorts of care giving. One group of writers, especially of fiction in women’s magazines, focused on the manliness of tender feelings toward children, emphasizing the quiet strength of fathers who loved their children deeply. A strategy that became more common in the 1910s and 1920s was to differentiate the father from the mother by portraying him as boyish in his enthusiasm for parenting. Such articles emphasized the difference between fathers and mothers by highlighting their very different, even contradictory approaches to child rearing. Earlier literature tended to emphasize strongly the importance of fathers supporting mothers in childrearing, urging men to support the modern, expert-driven child-rearing techniques used by their wives. While the theme of support did continue in women’s magazines into the 1920s, a new undercurrent emphasized the idea of a masculine mischievousness, of men who knew better how to raise boys because they were less

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<sup>1</sup> The theme of sacrifice was in itself often seen as a feminine attribute, so the common use of it to discuss fathers in the 1920s is in itself interesting.



smothering, less restricted by unhealthy worry and better able to understand the high jinx of boyhood.

Authors who advocated greater paternal involvement in the lives of children between 1900 and 1930 sometimes sought to reassure their readers that parenting was not an effeminate pursuit.<sup>2</sup> Before 1920, in women's magazines particularly, authors emphasized the manliness of men who were tender and loving toward their children. In a 1912 story published in *The Ladies' Home Journal*, taking over domestic concern actually corrected gender "confusion" in the family. A mother who had been officious, overly focused on the details of her baby's care and dismissive of her husband found after returning from an extended absence to care for her father that her husband had quite competently taken over the care of the baby from the nurse. He had bought the baby new shirts and changed her formula and worked from Holt's baby care manual, which he purchased for himself after his wife's departure.<sup>3</sup> Before her trip, the mother had belittled the father and failed to appreciate his tender overtures to her. After her return, upon facing the husband's skill at caring for the infant, the wife underwent a transformation: The man put his arms around his wife and "A strange sense of weakness came over her-- of weakness and yet of content." The narrator approvingly notes that the wife was uncharacteristically passive, allowing her husband to lead her. The merry husband "picked her up in his arms and pranced about the room, then sank down in a big chair and held her like a baby, while he chuckled over her. 'The funny little girl! To think she could have her baby all by herself! And she wouldn't let the clumsy

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<sup>2</sup> Few, if any, articles discussed male efforts to be more helpful with domestic tasks other than childcare. But, there was considerably more discussion about the appropriateness of having boys help around the house and discussion of raising a generation of males capable in domestic work than there was conversation about the suitability of grown men taking on such tasks. It is not, perhaps, surprising that anxieties about masculinity's compatibility with domesticity were worked out, in part, through a discussion of boys. Authors arguing for boys' taking on more household chores often qualified their suggestions and defended the male dignity of such work. Mrs. Theodore W. Birney (Alice McLellan Birney), a reformer and advocate of education for motherhood who helped found and presided over the National Congress of Mothers, devoted a chapter of her 1904 text *Childhood* to "The Education of Boys as Future Fathers and Citizens," suggesting that mothers should train their boys to help with the housework in order to make them considerate husbands in the future. (Mrs. Theodore W. Birney, *Childhood*, 1905 ed. (New York, 1904). 101.) One Wisconsin reader wrote to *Harper's Bazaar* in 1910 with the tip that mothers urge their sons to help with housework by emphasizing the manliness of working in the home. She jested about the discomfort boys felt about the supposed effeminacy of housework: "It makes for courageous manhood for boys to help mother when necessary. To help father is man's work and grand, but nothing less than a desire to play fair with mother will give a boy courage to wash dishes." (C.E.C., Jefferson, Wisconsin, "The Training of Our Boys, By Their Mothers," *Harper's Bazaar*, March 1910.) Bentley Bates published an essay in at least two places in the early 1920s that urged boys to help their mothers with gardening and cooking. As he did this, Bates was on the defensive: "Why, a boy can have more fun puttering about home than in almost any other way-- and do it without the loss of a single iota of his dignity either. There's nothing to be ashamed of about a dish towel, a mop, or a vacuum cleaner." (Bentley Bates, "Home, Dad, and a Boy's Room." In Editorial Board of the Father and Son League, ed., *The Boy's Own Book*, vol. 2, Father and Son Library, A Practical Home Plan of All Round Development for the Boy (New York, 1921). 29. Also, Frank H. Cheley, *Climbing Manward* (New York, 1925). 99. The authorship of this essay is in some question as it was first attributed to Bentley Bates and later to Frank Cheley).

<sup>3</sup> This story is also suggestive of the ways in which the rising authority given to experts and the notion of educated, scientific parenting could encourage and legitimate paternal involvement by de-naturalizing motherhood. Rather than relying on the natural maternal instincts as essential in good care, scientific child-rearing allowed for the possibility of learning how to provide such care. The notion of a mother's instinct did not disappear with the rise of expert authority, however, and the vast majority of child-rearing advice was directed explicitly or implicitly to mothers.

man touch it, or love it, or anything but tiptoe around the edges of it? Funny, foolish, darling little girl!"<sup>4</sup> Then the wife wept with joy. In this story, the man is able to put the family into "proper" gender order, returning the wife to a position of childishness and admiration of him, by taking over child-care concerns. The story also presents an image of a jocular family head whose emotional duties in the family included promoting happiness and chasing away worry through his buoyancy and confidence. This image arose in the early 1900s and ascended to prominence by the 1920s.

An article in 1915 likewise suggested that tender, involved fathering was not unmanly. Mary Ware Dennett, a pioneer in the fight for birth control and sex education, arguing in *The Century* for greater equality between the sexes and increased paternal involvement in child care, described a father looking at a "really charming" photograph of himself and his young son, a photo she dubbed "The *Padonna* and Child." The author comments, "He was obviously proud over being the paternal ancestor of so fine a son, but he was also embarrassed at being caught with an expression so tender and protecting as to seem almost feminine."<sup>5</sup> This discomfort with the feminine aspects of loving children was in the way of the next step in human "evolution," according to Dennett, and she tried in the rest of the article to overcome this reluctance. In her effort to convince men to undertake greater responsibility for childcare and work toward greater equality between the sexes, Dennett attempted to appeal to masculine values of courage, strength, and persistence and even to challenge male readers' pride a bit, suggesting that men were surely up to the task if women were: "Motherhood, quite aside from the initial physical strain, has always been something of an endurance test, demanding heroism. Surely fatherhood should be equal to meeting the same demand."<sup>6</sup> Feminist authors in the 1900s and 1910s often referred to increased domestic involvement by fathers as a necessary concomitant to greater opportunities in the wider world for women. They also used allusions to fatherhood in various strategic ways to rebut anti-feminist sentiments.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Elisabeth Woodbridge, "Baby-broke: The Hidden Possibilities of Mere Fatherhood," *The Ladies' Home Journal* 29 (June, 1912): 63.

<sup>5</sup> Mary Ware Dennett, "The Right of a Child to Two Parents," *The Century* 90 (May, 1915): 104.

<sup>6</sup> Dennett, "The Right of a Child to Two Parents," 108.

<sup>7</sup> Feminists arguing for a woman's right to higher education and greater employment opportunities pointed out that men were not willing to sacrifice their time or space for a large family. In a 1906 letter to the editor of the *New York Times* responding to a letter disparaging women in business, one feminist wrote that men who wanted large families needed then to enlarge their role in the home. She accused men of shirking their responsibilities, relegating children to the status of "half orphans." (EVE, "Women in Business," *New York Times*, July 2 1906.) Another author pointed out the undiscussed tendency of college-educated men, like college-educated women, to have smaller families, pointing out the hypocrisy of the attention given to educated women's choice. (A.B. A Spinster, "'Tis Not Learning Cools a Woman," *New York Times*, September 2 1915.) Pro-women's-suffrage editorials likewise pointed out that the responsibilities of fatherhood had not been incompatible with the right to vote, so neither should the responsibilities of motherhood be. (Frederic Almy, "Some Women Are Stupid," *New York Times*, February 21 1915.) Similarly, Rev. Anna Howard Shaw, President of the National Woman's Suffrage Association reminded readers of the *New York Times* in 1905 that fatherhood and husbandhood are quite as important and noble as wifehood and motherhood. ("Mrs. Shaw on Race Suicide," *New York Times*, April 14 1905.) Charlotte Perkins Gilman, in a New York lecture in 1914 argued that men were the superior parents for their ability to recognize the need of a true "social" parenthood, devoted to creating a better civilization in which the child grows. ("Mrs. Gilman Seeks Wider Motherhood," *New York Times*, March 19 1914.) President of the Feminist Alliance, Miss Herietta Rodman, argued that sharing economic responsibility for the family would allow the father to become "a real father, one who has sufficient leisure to take a creative

Articles by less politically radical authors emphasizing the gentleness of loving fathers tended to qualify these descriptions in ways that emphasized the difference between feminine gentleness and the manly version of tender emotion. A 1919 *Delineator* article defending the manly sacrifice of war fathers described the tenderness of men toward their children, while emphasizing the manly reluctance of these men to verbalize their emotions or ask for help. The author challenged readers who doubted the strength of fathers' love for their children as compared to mothers' to watch a new father holding his infant when "he thought he was alone." The "tenderness, the wistfulness, the yearning, the hopes that stream from his whole face" would be enough to make one "walk a little more softly in the presence of fathers," she assured her readers.<sup>8</sup> The fathers described in this article are manly, but tender. Again and again the author describes the men as hiding their weakness, their fears, in order to be strong for their families. She describes their sacrifices as unheralded and unspoken, celebrating the "feminine" value of self-sacrifice in men while emphasizing their strength and stoicism. By the late 1910s, articles that emphasized manly tenderness were mainly restricted to articles about the fathers of soldiers in World War I. Articles in the early part of the century tended to emphasize the manly qualities of worldliness and strength to urge fathers to support their wives in domestic discipline and child training.

Another method of reassuring readers of the manliness of parenting was to compare fathering to other masculine pursuits. This strategy became more common in the 1920s. Masculine metaphors were not entirely new in parenting literature discussing fathers—for instance, an 1899 article called father "Captain of the family ship"—but such metaphors became more drawn-out and popular as the twentieth century wore on and more authors focused their attention on fathering.<sup>9</sup> In one example, Major John H. Earle, writing for *Good Housekeeping* in 1921, described his role in his family as the "Commanding Officer" explaining how he was able to turn his family of five boys around when, upon returning from France, he found discipline lax and his wife harried. His method? To teach the boys the same system of military discipline used so effectively by the U.S. Navy.<sup>10</sup> The 1921 article used a similar concept to the 1899 one, but the metaphor was greatly expanded.

Such comparisons went hand-in-hand with a striking change in the tone of popular articles between 1900 and 1930. As articles became more breezy and incorporated slang, authors encouraged fathers to see themselves in a more youthful light with metaphors and comparisons that drew from a playful, boyish interest in excitement and sport. In a long series of articles on connecting to his son through outdoor sports, outdoorsman and journalist W. Livingston Larned wrote in *A Journal of Outdoor Life* in 1923, "To take the growing boy and to teach him the rudiments of true sportsmanship is a more exhilarating experience than many men ever know. It has all the fascination of big-game hunting. It jazzes drowsy

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interest in his children." (quoted in, George MacAdam, "Feminist Apartment House to Solve Baby Problem," *New York Times*, January 24 1915.)

<sup>8</sup> Maude Sperry Turner, "Fathers," *The Delineator* 94 (June, 1919): 7.

<sup>9</sup> Frances Evans, "About Men," *Ladies' Home Journal* (May, 1899). One later author looking for a greater role for fathers criticized this description of father's role, saying "surely, the father's relation ought to be more vital, more sympathetic than that." Franklin K. Mathiews, "The Profession of Fatherhood," in *Parents and Their Problems; Child Welfare in Home, Church and State*, ed. Mary Harmon Weeks (Washington, D.C., 1914), 221.

<sup>10</sup> Major John H. Earle, "Discipline in the Home," *Good Housekeeping* 73 (July 1921, 1921).

sensibilities. It gingers up the chap who had forgotten how to be thrilled."<sup>11</sup> Parenting, claimed a 1929 book for fathers, "is one of the most arduous tasks that a man can undertake."<sup>12</sup> Another author used an extended sports metaphor, comparing finding one's role in caring for an infant to playing various positions on the baseball diamond.<sup>13</sup>

Fatherhood articles emphasized that men could perform domestic rituals in special, masculine ways, decidedly different from the female way of doing things. One article explained that a father given the task of weighing his young daughter was able to make it into a ritual by singing and baby-talking with the infant. He "translates" these conversations as casual exchanges between friends and emphasizes that women could not understand these discussions. The father describes playing with the baby during the weighing sessions, pretending the scale was a car, making engine noises. "You ought to hear me hit on all six," he brags about his imitation of "a 1917 Buick full of carbon."<sup>14</sup> Baby and father eat raw oranges, not the strained and boiled food she gets from mother and nurse, and he describes the other games they play, suggesting again and again that the women would not approve of his special, masculine brand of play.<sup>15</sup> Authors in the 1920s were more likely than their predecessors to describe their relationships with their children, especially their sons, as being set apart from the child's relationship with the mother. Half in jest, numerous authors explained that their style was more youthful, more daring, than mother's and that if mother knew all, she would not completely approve. Such rhetorical tendencies reflect an effort to set fathering apart from mothering, to emphasize the uniquely masculine characteristics of male parenting.

In 1900, fathers were encouraged to support their wives, to be more tender and involved. Authors attempting to convince men of the importance of their roles emphasized activities such as instructive walks, mealtime discussions, and assistance with schoolwork. In the latter 1910s and the 1920s, greater number of authors became interested in the issue of fatherhood and attacked the problem of underinvolved fathers in a new way. These authors increasingly emphasized the masculine ability to have fun, to play, to be free from feminine worry. Throughout the period between 1900 and 1930, popular authors and some social scientists in effect held family togetherness as an alternative, or response, to feminism.<sup>16</sup> Friendly family relationships and more family togetherness were held up as the cure to the

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<sup>11</sup> W. Livingston Larned, "Adventures in Comradship: The First of a Series in which Will Be Found Something of Interest to All Fathers of Growing Boys," *A Journal of Outdoor Life, Travel, Nature Study, Shooting, Fishing, Yachting*, March 1923, 102.

<sup>12</sup> K.M and E.M. Walker, *On Being a Father*, First ed. (New York, 1929). 141.

<sup>13</sup> Harry Irving Shumway, "Every Baby Needs a Father: Advice to a young father on how, in spite of Mother and nurse, to get acquainted with his own child," *Parents' Magazine* 4 (December, 1929): 29.

<sup>14</sup> Shumway, "Every Baby Needs a Father," 91.

<sup>15</sup> Shumway, "Every Baby Needs a Father," 92. Ralph LaRossa examines this same phenomenon of fathers describing performing the tasks of infant care in manly ways for the period between 1932 and 1937 in the "For Fathers Only" column of *Parents' Magazine*. LaRossa uses categories of analysis for these articles—a division of articles into those reflecting "masculine domesticity" and those reflecting "domestic masculinity"—that I did not find salient for my period of analysis. Ralph LaRossa, *The Modernization of Fatherhood: A Social and Political History* (Chicago, 1997). 127-134. There are some early examples of fathers' fearlessness and playfulness being contrasted with the protectiveness of women as well. See for example Eugene Field in Wallace and Frances Rice Rice, ed., *To My Dad* (New York, c. 1913).

<sup>16</sup> Historian Margaret Marsh argues for masculine domesticity as an alternative to feminism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in Margaret S. Marsh, "Suburban Men and Masculine Domesticity, 1870-1915," in *Meanings for Manhood: Constructions of Masculinity in Victorian America*, ed. Mark C. and Clyde Griffen Carnes (Chicago, 1990), 127.

family's ails, and efforts to reassure men that being a family man did not run counter to ideas about masculinity shared this commitment to family togetherness, an idea that only grew stronger as the period progressed.

## Mother's Responsibility for Father's Fathering

Some authors concerned with family relationships sought to assure fathers and, perhaps, convince mothers that men were essential to home-life, that their role in the home was crucial and their devotion to it admirable. Authors suggested, usually implicitly, that women's domination of the home, both literal and figurative, kept men from forging strong relationships with their children. Before 1920, this implication was almost always subtle. For example, many authors addressed mothers, the primary readers of parenting articles and women's magazines, directly, urging them to help establish a connection between their husbands and their children. Often they suggested that the best thing for a mother to do was to absent herself for some period to allow space for the father and child to forge a deeper connection. The mother, they implied, took up so much space in the home and in the life of the children that the father was unable to find his own place while she was there. Nonetheless, while physically absent, the mother was often represented as a great help in urging father and child toward a closer bond. A typical short story from 1904 depicted the mother as being the source of salvation to a father-son relationship, which was saved when she left home for a week. The twelve-year-old boy then entered into a battle of wills with his stern father and they were only able to find their way to each other by reflecting on a portrait of the angelic woman of the house. It was by looking into his son's eyes and seeing his wife there that the father was able to find and express his love for his son. Similar stories appeared throughout the first three decades of the twentieth century.<sup>17</sup> The need for the

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<sup>17</sup> Herbert D. Ward, "A Story in the Life of a Man and a Woman," *The Ladies' Home Journal* 21 (August, 1904). In a 1912 story, a mother reluctantly leaves for an extended trip to care for her ailing father, which, contrary to her expectations, allows her husband to learn all the details and joys of caring for his infant daughter, and furthermore, to fix all that was wrong in their marriage. (Woodbridge, "Baby-broke.") A 1913 *Harper's Bazaar* article about a reformed father suggests that the mother played the role of wise intermediary, in part because she knew to leave her adolescent daughter and father alone to work things out on their own. (Mary Stewart Cutting, "Educating Father," *Harper's Bazaar*, May 1913.) In W. Livingston Larned's 1923-1924 series of articles about developing a strong relationship with his son, he consistently notes his wife's clever scheming to get him to spend time alone with his son and to orchestrate their bonding from afar, while "her two boys" were camping together. (For example, W. Livingston Larned, "Adventures in Comradeship, Part IV.: Does YOUR Boy Share the Lure, the Thrill, the Unforgettable Happiness of Your Outdoor Hours? Do You Make a Chum of Him and Give Him Lessons in True Sportsmanship, That He May Grow Up Conscious of His Responsibilities in This Great Field? Is His Affection for You Based on the Wonderful Influence of Fine Comradeship?... Once Again We Fare Forth With Two Who Found It a Spiritual Investment.," *A Journal of Outdoor Life, Travel, Nature Study, Shooting, Fishing, Yachting*, June 1923, 297. W. Livingston Larned, "Adventures in Comradeship [Part VI]: A Brief Essay on Man's Finer Appreciation of the Real Wildwood, With Occasional Reference to Boyhood's Reactions to It. Sonnyboy Learns More Concerning Forest Fires, Human Nature and the Lure of the Mountain Trout. We Come to Know That an Abandoned Farm Can Bring Greater Happiness Than a Mansion.," *A Journal of Outdoor Life, Travel, Nature Study, Shooting, Fishing, Yachting*, August 1923, 446, 449. W. Livingston Larned, "Adventures in Comradeship, Part XII. (Conclusion): Comes the Day When the Two Cronies Reach a Perfect Understanding, While a Great Conflagration on the Everglades Hammock-Land Puts Them Both to the Test. A Contact Is Made With Tommy Tiger, Seminole Which Produces Some Interesting Results.," *A Journal of Outdoor Life, Travel, Nature Study, Shooting, Fishing, Yachting* 94 (March, 1924): 172.)

mother to absent herself in order to heal the father-child relationship was a consistent theme in popular magazine literature between 1900 and 1930.

In the 1920s, however, the criticism of mothers as standing in the way of a close father-child relationship became more blatant. As professional psychiatrists became interested in the idea of a smothering, over-involved mother, they began to suggest that mothers often stood in the way of a healthy father-child bond. This is not to suggest that mothers had only been positively portrayed before the 1920s. Mothers were sometimes portrayed as more frivolous or impatient than their husbands and a few authors also saw mothers as failing to make room for men to bond with their children.<sup>18</sup> The explicit discussion of the negative effects on the father-child relationship of the smothering over-involvement of the mother took on a new energy in the 1920s, given the stamp of scientific fact. Before behaviorism became the fashionable psychological theory, parenting experts would sometimes urge mothers to encourage men to be involved with their children, and would even suggest that women had the power to orchestrate such relationships and should be sure to give father time alone with his children. A few articles and books in the 1900s and 1910s suggested that the mother's involvement prevented the formation of a close relationship between father and child. But in the 1920s, mothers increasingly faced blame for standing in the way of the relationship between father and child and this belief became part of standard discussions of family relationships by psychologists and the popular authors who read them. For instance, in 1927, the famous psychiatrist and director of habit clinics, D.A. Thom wrote in a book of advice introduced by Grace Abbott, director of the Children's Bureau,

Mothers are sometimes responsible, in part at least, for the gulf that exists between fathers and children. The difficulties and complexities of caring for the child are stressed so much that the father is led to believe that any contribution he might make would raise havoc with all the careful thought and premeditated ideas that the mother has been daily putting into the task of child training. Whatever he says is apt to be the wrong thing. If Johnny asks for a story, it's time for bed. If Dad brings home candy, it's a foregone conclusion that it will make him sick. If plans are made for a football game, it's too cold or rainy or something else unsuitable. Dad seems to have the faculty of always suggesting the wrong thing.

Mothers often fail to impress fathers with the pleasure that is associated with the care of the children. As a result, a valuable

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<sup>18</sup> In a 1904 book of child-rearing advice introduced by National Congress of Mothers president Hannah Kent Schoff and directed toward mothers, Jane Dearborn Mills wrote, "Our modern views hold too much to the notion that mothers are alone in giving children's training due consideration. The fact is, that women in their absorbing zeal, and with the same tendency, being human, that men have to assume superiority when the occasion offers, fail many times to recognize the man's true wisdom. The wife, consequently, occupies all the ground, not only hers, but his, so that if he would he cannot come into the nearness to the children necessary to do for them what he might, and worse than that even, she prevents and discourages in him the conscious growing of his fatherhood; for a man can be discouraged as easily as a woman, and the one who can most perfectly accomplish his discouragement is his wife." Jane Dearborn Mills, *The Mother-Artist* (Boston, 1904). vi-vii.

incentive for inducing the father to take on some of the responsibility in the care of the child is lost.<sup>19</sup>

Thom's other works paired an image of the too-involved, smothering mother and the distant, too-stern father; this duo was cited again and again in the popular press as a plague on the mental health of the coming generation.<sup>20</sup>

Sometimes authors attacked the supposed sanctification of motherhood as undermining respect for fatherhood. In a 1921 essay addressed to boys entitled "'Dad, Here's to You'" the author described visiting a home that had the words "What is a Home Without a Mother?" over the parlor door and, in another room, a sign that read "God Bless Our Home." The affronted author asked, "Now, what's the matter with 'God Bless Our Dad'?" He gets up early, lights the fire, boils an egg, and wipes off the dew of the dawn with his boots, while many a mother is sleeping." Father pays the butcher, the grocer, and the milkman, he continued; and "If there is a noise during the night, Dad is kicked in the back and made to go down stairs to find the burglar and kill him. Mother darns the socks, but Dad bought the socks in the first place, and the needles and the yarn afterward. Mother does up the fruit; well, Dad bought it all, and jars and sugar cost like the mischief." Dad buys and carves the chicken for Sunday dinner and ends up with the neck after everyone else is served.<sup>21</sup> Here the affirmation of the importance of the father is done with some hostility toward the celebration of the mother. The money-earning and protection of the father is elevated to an act of love for his family equal or superior to the mother's labors. The 1920s saw a new defensiveness about the importance and respect accorded to fathers along with a tendency to assert that father's comfort was the family's last consideration and a new hostility toward old sentimental ideas of motherhood.

Authors varied in the extent to which they held women responsible for the health of the father's connection to the home. Women were urged to make homes more comfortable, to make parenting look pleasant, to find special times when fathers and children could be together. Many articles aimed their efforts directly at women, not surprising since women comprised the bulk of the readership of many of the magazines which published fatherhood articles. In the 1920s, authors arguing for greater paternal involvement increasingly laid the blame for the weakness of that relationship at the mother's door. Joining the steady clamor claiming that fathers were abdicating their paternal responsibilities came this new argument that fathers were being left out. Well-meaning dads were unable to find their place, according to many books and articles in the late 1910s and 1920s. A growing number of authors between 1900 and 1930 came to believe that finding space for father was a challenge that must be met in order to fix the ailing institution of the American family.

## **No Space for Father—Life with a New Baby**

One occasion which frequently prompted authors to discuss the lack of space for father in the home and in the lives of the wife and children was the birth of a new baby.

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<sup>19</sup> Douglas A. Thom, *Everyday Problems of the Everyday Child* (New York, 1927). 47-9.

<sup>20</sup> See for example, Evans Clark, "Rearing of Children Becoming a Science. renewed Interest in Study of Care of Child Results From Changing Status of Women and New Emphasis Upon Infants' Needs," in *The Family*, ed. Shiela M. Rothman David J. Rothman, and Gene Brown (New York, 1925 (1979)), 101.

<sup>21</sup> Editorial Board of the Father and Son League, ed., *The Boy's Own Book*. 33.

First-time fathers lamented the infants' intrusion into their lives, the baby's "imperialism," as one father put it, that took over so much of the man's physical space in the home, as well as the intensity of the relationship between mother and infant that left the father feeling excluded.<sup>22</sup> There was nothing new about the exclusion of fathers from birthing rituals and infant care in 1900, yet the interpretation of this exclusion changed dramatically between 1900 and 1930.<sup>23</sup> When popular authors before 1915 wrote about the male experience of the birth of a child, they did not typically emphasize feelings of resentment of the mother-infant bond, even when discussing how maternal feelings differed from theirs.

The image of the father excluded from the birthing room, often waiting at the door or on the stairs, with no physical space of his own was frequently employed by authors commenting on the need for a greater role for fathers.<sup>24</sup> One author in 1905 recalled the birth of his first child, a baby who would die a few months later, "There is a stir at my heart now, as I think of that night, when I sat below stairs, waiting, listening, trembling..."<sup>25</sup> This author explained that the birth was transformative for his wife in a way that it was not for him, much as he loved the baby, but he did not suggest that this was a wrong done to him in any way or that he had been unjustly excluded. Likewise a 1913 story titled "Making a Father," relating the pains endured by a couple unable to conceive for ten years only to lose a baby in childbirth, described the exclusion of the father from the hospital without resentment.<sup>26</sup>

Later authors were more explicit about the exclusive qualities of the customary birthing rituals. An author calling for greater consideration of the sacrifice of war fathers in 1919 recalled a maternity nurse saying,

'there's another husband sitting on the stairs looking stern!'... And suddenly I saw millions of husbands all down the ages sitting on stairs looking stern-- agonized, inarticulate, helpless, waiting husbands. Nurses toss their heads at them, doctors push them on to the stairs,

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<sup>22</sup> Franklin P. Adams, "There's No Place at Home," *The Ladies' Home Journal*, October 1927, 36.

<sup>23</sup> On the history of birthing practices in North America, see Judith Walzer Leavitt, *Brought to Bed: Childbearing in America, 1750 to 1950*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), Catharine M. Scholten, *Childbearing in American Society: 1650-1850* (New York: New York University Press, 1985), and Richard W. Wertz and Dorothy C. Wertz, *Lying In: A History of Childbirth in America* (New York: Free Press, 1977).

<sup>24</sup> In fact a 1929 book on fatherhood advice suggested that much of the anxiety felt by fathers during the birth of their children could be blamed on novelists who had eagerly seized the drama of the image of a wife and newborn in peril as a father is stuck outside, unable to do anything to help. Walker, *On Being a Father*. 99-100.

<sup>25</sup> William R. Lighton, "The Heart of a Man: The Story of the Inner Life of a Husband and Wife," *The Ladies' Home Journal* 22 (January, 1905): 15.

<sup>26</sup> It is no coincidence that both of these examples involve the loss of a new infant. Child mortality rates were high in the early twentieth century. It is relatively uncommon to read accounts by fathers in popular magazines of the birth of a child before the late 1910s and those accounts and stories that were published often involved a death. In 1911, a father's poem describing a birth with a happy outcome described the author's feelings of being something of an outsider to the birth, but the poem describes no resentment, only his fear for his wife's safety and relief after the birth, suggesting that fear for wife and child overrode any feelings of resentment even in a happy case. Edwin Carlile Litsey, "Fatherhood," *Current Literature* 51 (October, 1911): 446-7. Men discussing the death of a child might well have been less likely to discuss resentment of their wives than those who did not suffer such a loss, but this positive and accepting attitude toward the unique bond between mother and child is generally apparent in childrearing literature and popular magazines of the late nineteenth century and the early years of the twentieth century.



janitors don't even trouble to flick the corner of an eye at them,  
Helpless, agonized, inarticulate husbands waiting on the stairs.<sup>27</sup>

The accompanying illustration of a father sitting on the stairs while his wife is attended during her childbirth by a nurse demonstrates visually the exclusion of fathers from the earliest moments of their children's lives.<sup>28</sup> The father in the image has no comfortable space in the ritual—his role is to pace, to fret, to worry silently. He is not even given a chair.

Franklin P. Adams, a father who was also a famous columnist, wrote in 1927 of his despair at being ousted from the hospital after the birth of his first son. He described the feeling of exclusion in dramatic terms:

Have you ever lain awake, sobbing at your solitariness, and thinking--  
jealously, if the Freudian truth be told-- of those two in the nice,  
beautiful, friendly, warm hospital; those two who are becoming hourly  
better acquainted, even as you lie there alone with your self-pity,  
knowing that you are becoming more of an outsider every minute?<sup>29</sup>

This father described his restless night and his fear that by the time he returned to the hospital there would be “a free-masonry established” between his wife and son that he “never could hope to share utterly.” His night ended at 4:45 when he phoned the hospital to check on his wife and child. They were both sleeping—thoughtless of them, he jests.<sup>30</sup> The expectant father in such stories had no space in the birth of his child, he was literally stuck outside, uncomfortable, unsure, eager to help, but excluded, and he resented it. Adams's article implied, even if his comments were half in jest, that the father was suffering alone, sleepless and worrying while the mother and babe were resting peacefully. The image of the father without a clear or comfortable space in the birthing ritual or early hours of his child's life was used to symbolize his lack of a role in the life of the infant. The author's use of humor and gentle self-mockery serve to make his feelings more palatable and to lessen the force of them.

In the introduction of a 1929 book of advice for fathers written by British authors but published in New York for American readers, the authors described the inception of the idea for the book. Two strangers, far different men in most ways, found themselves nervously waiting at a “late night coffee stall” for word about the birth of their children. The men, joined by the keeper of the stall, “himself a family man” began to wonder, “Why were men kept in the dark at such crises? Why should they not be told exactly where they stood? There were books written by the hundred for mothers and those about to become mothers. Why had nobody spared a thought for the father, who, useless as he might be at such times, at least had the right to know?”<sup>31</sup> In an introduction to this volume, Cecil Delisle Burns declared this exclusion of fathers to be a modern phenomenon: “Fathers... although

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<sup>27</sup> Turner, "Fathers," 7. There were several articles and short stories about fathers returning from war struggling to find their space in the family. For example, Alice Dyar Russell, "'Don't Tell Dad,'" *The Delineator* 95 (September, 1919). , Earle, "Discipline in the Home."

<sup>28</sup> Turner, "Fathers," 7.

<sup>29</sup> Franklin P. Adams, "Yes, Sir. That's My Baby," *The Ladies' Home Journal* 44 (May, 1927): 24. This author went on to write another article about raising his son and then, later, a book dedicated to his son on parenting.

<sup>30</sup> Adams, "Yes, Sir. That's My Baby," 24.

<sup>31</sup> Walker, *On Being a Father*. 11-12.

traditionally honoured, are now, as the authors of this book show, reduced to waiting outside."<sup>32</sup> In their chapter on childbirth, the authors discussed the terrible feeling of impotence suffered by the father during the birth and described rituals all over the globe which permitted fathers a greater role in the birth of their children.<sup>33</sup> Although these authors did not implicate women in this exclusion, they spoke at length and with some passion about the wrong done to fathers who were not allowed to feel themselves useful or important in the birth of their offspring and used examples of other kinds of traditions to show that such exclusion was neither natural nor necessary.

Authors in the 1910s and 1920s also described fathers feeling excluded upon a baby's arrival home, a notion sometimes explained in the language of psychology by social scientists. Historian Arthur W. Calhoun, in his well-known *Social History of the American Family* (1919), wrote that "The undue exaltation of infancy operates to disturb the normal equilibrium of home and the true balance of interests. The love-madness of the mother often sacrifices husband and father to the cult of the child. He is violently hushed at the door, his rights are ignored, he is neglected hour after hour."<sup>34</sup> Calhoun blamed the father's feelings of exclusion on the mother's "love-madness" invoking the psychological critique of motherly smothering advanced by D.A. Thom and John Watson. Discussions of the father's response to his child's homecoming in the 1910s and 1920s emphasized more strongly the mother's role in the father's feelings of exclusion.

Fathers also felt displaced literally and complained, often in a light-hearted manner, about the baby's tendency to take over space in the home previously reserved for the head of household. One 1912 story had a new father, hurt by his wife's tendency to ignore him and keep him from caring for the baby, telling his wife, "You know, Alice, you must give a fellow time. Here I've been slamming doors all my life, and kicking up all sorts of a row; and now along comes a little wad of warm flannel, and I have to make myself over."<sup>35</sup> Columnist Franklin P. Adams in another 1927 article on being a father, complained of the mother's ousting of him from his study, bedroom and bathroom, forcing him to live in the mere one-tenth of the house not taken over by baby and nurse. His wife even led the family to purchase a country home that would make the father's commute very difficult, all so their son could "have a few acres to play in."<sup>36</sup> A 1925 book about fatherhood contained verse detailing the father-author's trials of finding neither soap nor towel in the bathroom now owned by the baby.<sup>37</sup> Another complains that men must rove about the house in order to avoid being "run down" by the women caring for the infant.<sup>38</sup> These authors played to a theme made popular in the 1920s of the father as the family's last consideration. Such pitiful descriptions of men ousted from their roosts by officious women and young heirs must not be taken too literally. The comical discussion by fathers of their own oppression suggests that they were in fact quite comfortable with the state of the family's hierarchy or lack thereof. These authors complain in good humor—they seem mostly to enjoy the upheaval of the new

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<sup>32</sup> Walker, *On Being a Father*. 15-16.

<sup>33</sup> Walker, *On Being a Father*. 100-105.

<sup>34</sup> Arthur W. Calhoun, *A Social History of the American Family from Colonial Times to the Present*, vol. III (Cleveland, 1919). 153.

<sup>35</sup> Woodbridge, "Baby-broke."

<sup>36</sup> Adams, "There's No Place at Home."

<sup>37</sup> Quoted in "Bittersweets of the Male Parent," *New York Times*, August 23 1925.

<sup>38</sup> Shumway, "Every Baby Needs a Father," 29.

infant and to have pride in their modern, friendly home. These men do not *want* to see themselves as patriarchs.

Adjusting to life with a new baby was often difficult for fathers, and many authors writing on the topic of fatherhood expressed exasperation with the lack of a clear and important role for fathers in the lives of their babies. An author in *The Delineator* in 1919 lamented that fathers were often treated merely as “props,” their deep emotions and responsibilities overlooked.<sup>39</sup> An entire book of humor in 1925 focused on the insignificant and unappreciated role allotted to fathers of children under age two.<sup>40</sup> Harry Irving Shumway, an author of varied interests, wrote in the newly created *Parents' Magazine* in 1929 about his experience of being a new father. He complained that woman's place in relation to baby was "a rather hovering, roving position, encompassing all territory from the catcher's box to the far outfield and all way stations. But man! Nobody, no book has ever shown him where his place is when the baby enters." He explained, father “yearns” for a role in his baby's life, but is unwelcome, his only remaining use to serve as “something to lay all the baby's bad traits and features on-- something to be 'taken after.'”<sup>41</sup> Shumway pushed the responsibility for father's unsatisfying role even further, holding “mothers and nurses” entirely responsible for excluding desperately well-meaning fathers from the lives of their infants. The mother trusted experts, but not father, and the head of the house was left relying on such experts in his bid for greater involvement in his infant's life. Shumway writes in his petulant, half-jesting way,

It seems that some one of the Licensed Hoverers read a piece that said a father ought to have an hour in the day with his own baby. It must have been an awful blow to them, but there it was in print. I suppose the idea was in the nature of a preventative; so baby wouldn't get him mixed up with the tradespeople and letter carrier; would know her Dad when she saw him.

So from five to six has been given to me (I now know just how Lazarus felt on receiving the dogs' offering of crumbs) as my hour.<sup>42</sup>

Even the title of this article –“Every Baby Needs a Father: Advice to a young father on how, in spite of Mother and nurse, to get acquainted with his own child”—suggests the mother's role in keeping father from developing a bond with his child. These authors argued that father was not given enough space in the domestic circle once baby was born, that his home was taken over by women and children and fathers were left with a diminished role and diminished physical space. In fact, the home itself was unwelcoming to fathers, argued authors concerned with men's role in the family. The house needed to be redesigned with father in mind.

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<sup>39</sup> Turner, "Fathers."

<sup>40</sup> Fairfax Davis Downey, *Father's First Two Years* (New York, 1925). The humor in this book, according to a *New York Times* reviewer, disguised the truth of the follies the author hit upon. "Bittersweets of the Male Parent."

<sup>41</sup> Shumway, "Every Baby Needs a Father," 29. Shumway went on to become a frequent contributor to *American Home* in the 1930s and '40s.

<sup>42</sup> Shumway, "Every Baby Needs a Father," 91.

## The Feminized Home

Numerous authors in the early twentieth century suspected that the home had been dangerously feminized during the Victorian era. Many writers simply advised men and boys to spend time away from home, camping or being in the wilderness, to revitalize themselves.<sup>43</sup> The bulk of authors addressing fatherhood seemed to feel that their desire to keep boys at home, the better to forge a close connection to their fathers, was dependent on making the home a more masculine space. At the turn of the century, social commentators from the United States and abroad remarked upon the exclusion of American middle-class men from the home. The trend at the turn of the century was toward decreased club participation among married men.<sup>44</sup> Although fraternal orders had blossomed after the Civil War, by the early years of the 1900s, more men were taking their entertainment *en famille*. The actual decrease in club attendance by middle-class men was accompanied by criticisms of the club-going culture of the male middle class.<sup>45</sup>

Some writers regarded the tendency of middle-class American men to spend so much time at work or the club as a condemnation of the American home. Such writers often blamed women for failing to make the home sufficiently welcoming to men. In 1898, a disgusted bachelor described being invited by a married friend on the spur of the moment to dine with him at home, only to arrive at the house to find the wife had retired without ordering any dinner. He wrote, "The American husband is not expected to remain at home. That's not his place! If he is not down town making money, fashion dictates that he must be at some clubhouse playing a game. A man who remains at home and reads or chats with the ladies of his family, is considered a bore and unmanly. There seems to be no need in an American house for the head of it."<sup>46</sup> A few years later, an anonymous author whose work was highlighted in *Current Literature* warned American women that it was up to them to keep their husbands at home, advising the well-meaning wife to make for her husband "a lovely, comfortable, appropriate abiding place, in which he has room for the development of his own tastes and opportunity to bring about him his friends in hospitable fashion."<sup>47</sup> Authors at the dawn of the twentieth century worried that men were no longer tied sufficiently tightly to the home. Charlotte Perkins Gilman, for example, wrote that "'The best proof of man's dissatisfaction with the home is found in his universal absence from it... Men work outside, play outside, and cannot rest more than so long at a time."<sup>48</sup> These authors suggested that the middle-class American father was not at ease at home. Architectural and interior decoration trends, as well as explicit discussion of men's comfort in the house, suggest that concerns regarding father's domestic involvement and comfort seeped into the way Americans organized their space. The ideal middle-class home itself

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<sup>43</sup> This antagonism toward the feminized home was certainly not accepted by all authors. *Harper's Bazaar* in 1910 published an exasperated editorial lamenting the tendency to send boys away to summer camp which asked: "Have we not advanced far enough beyond the conditions of pioneer life to accept the fact that manliness is not opposed to keeping one's coat on and wearing a starched shirt?" "The Boy and His Vacation," *Harper's Bazaar*, April 1910.

<sup>44</sup> Marsh, "Suburban Men and Masculine Domesticity, 1870-1915." In *Meanings for Manhood*, 116.

<sup>45</sup> See for example, Calhoun, *A Social History of the American Family*. 194.

<sup>46</sup> "The American Husband," *Current Literature* 24 (July, 1898): 52.

<sup>47</sup> "C." "Thoughts on Life in the Home," *Current Literature* 32 (January, 1902): 16. See also, Charles W. Eliot, "The Part of the Man in the Family," *The Ladies' Home Journal* 25 (March, 1908).

<sup>48</sup> Quoted in Calhoun, *A Social History of the American Family*. 194.

changed dramatically between 1900 and 1930 to incorporate new ideas about family togetherness. Resolving conflicts between domesticity and masculinity became an important challenge in home decoration and attracted the attention of authors primarily concerned with fostering better father-son relationships.

## **The Den, 1900-1930: The Decline of a Retreat**

The den, a room reserved for the relaxation of the man of the house, existed in middle-class homes in 1900 and in 1930. Some authors in the early 1900s lamented the lack of space turned over to male amusement, or declared the space given to father to be shrinking.<sup>49</sup> Although the design and meaning of the den did not radically change in this period, the concept of the den as a retreat became less accepted in the mid-1910s and 1920s. Change in household design and usage does not happen suddenly or completely or evenly. The ideal of a den as a place for men to entertain male guests remained throughout this period, but increasingly designers focused on making living rooms and central family spaces more hospitable to the entire family. Attempts to modify designs deemed overly feminine or too stuffy in order to create central living spaces that would entice the entire family to relax and play together became an important theme in home decorating. Articles recommending the creation of masculine spaces for father were often defensive, openly refuting the idea that such spaces were “retreats.” The focus on creating comfortable spaces to promote family togetherness and the discomfort with the idea of the den as a masculine retreat were both tied to a new ideal of family togetherness.

Dens were decidedly male spaces. The den was “essentially a man's room” and as such was to be decorated in a distinctly masculine manner, unlike the rest of the home.<sup>50</sup> The library was also often furnished in a masculine style, and depictions of libraries frequently included fathers alone or with family members (unlike depictions of kitchens or bedrooms, for instance, which did not tend to include men), but libraries were defined as reading places and places for quiet scholarly reflection. Although that definition has strong masculine overtones, the room was usually meant to be used by the entire family.<sup>51</sup> The den, on the

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<sup>49</sup> In *The Decoration of Houses*, which was Edith Wharton's first book, written in collaboration with architect Ogden Codman, Jr. in 1897 and republished in 1902 and 1917, the authors complained that the small room that usually was all that was “given over to the master” was often eliminated altogether in modern homes in order to make the front hall appear larger. (Edith and Ogden Codman Wharton, Jr., *The Decoration of Houses* (New York, 1917 (c. 1897)). 153.) Similarly, a 1911 author saw the den as fading in popularity. (Ann Wentworth, “The Passing of the Den,” *House Beautiful* 29 (March, 1911).)

Newly built apartments and houses in the 1910s and 1920s tended to be smaller than those of the 1890s in part because of the expense of new systems for heat, plumbing, electricity, cooking gas, and heated water. Katherine C. Grier, *Culture and Comfort: People, Parlors, and Upholstery 1850-1930* (1988). 288. At the same time, average family size had also decreased, meaning fathers might be expected to gain space as household size shrunk.

<sup>50</sup> W. L. Simons, “A Consistent Den,” *Country Life in America* 27 (December, 1914): 50. Michael S. Kimmel writes that the den was presented as an “antidote to feminized Victorian parlors.” Kimmel, Michael S. *Manhood in America: A Cultural History*. New York: The Free Press, 1996, 111.

<sup>51</sup> The home library of the early twentieth century could also serve as a masculine retreat. Libraries of this era tended to have a “simple, masculine design” with paneling, built-in bookcases, and subdued decorating. Libraries of the early twentieth century tended to feature the man of the house's personal photographs, trophies, awards, and items related to sports and leisure pursuits. Candace M. Voltz, “The Modern Look of the Early-Twentieth-Century House: A Mirror of Changing Lifestyles,” in *American Home Life, 1880-1930. A Social History of Spaces and Services*, ed. Jessica H. and Thomas J. Schlereth Foy (Knoxville, 1992), 36. Voltz

other hand, was defined explicitly as a masculine space to be used by father alone, with his friends, or, more rarely, by father and sons. Furthermore, the den was a place for manly leisure and for entertaining male friends.

The decoration of the den reflected its masculine nature. In Edith Wharton and Ogden Codman, Jr.'s well-read guide to home decoration, *The Decoration of Houses* (1897), they wrote, "Whatever extravagances the upholsterer may have committed in other parts of the house, it is usually conceded that common sense should regulate the furnishing of the den" where "the master's sense of comfort often expresses itself.... Thus freed from the superfluous, the den is likely to be the most comfortable room in the house."<sup>52</sup> This, they reassured the reader, did not necessarily mean it needed to be ugly. The acceptance of a special male space in the home was such that it was a part of the world expositions of the early twentieth century. One author found inspiration in the 1904 German and Austrian sections of the world exposition in which "Nearly every suite had a man's room.... Sometimes the man's room was a library but it was usually designed to be a counterpart of the American den. But what a difference!" She continued that contemporary American shops carried many excellent examples of furniture along simple lines, "and today it is an easy matter to furnish a 'man's room' in a manner pleasing to the owner."<sup>53</sup> A 1914 article in *Country Life in America* suggested that the den be given "a strong, massive effect" by the use of posts and beams, with muted colors, sporting and hunting pictures, and a humidor and poker table.<sup>54</sup> Decorators frequently commented on the masculine color schemes and masculine furniture appropriate to the den.<sup>55</sup>

The den was often further described as a retreat from the feminized home—a space where men went to feel comfortable and relaxed. Such descriptions demonstrate that the early-twentieth-century home was not regarded as a space entirely compatible with contemporary ideas about masculinity. A 1906 cartoon in *Puck* titled "Daniel in the lions' den" played on the dual meaning of the term "den," showing Daniel and a group of male lions relaxing in a den, smoking, drinking, and lounging around a hearth. In that same year, Daniel Beard suggested the den as a masculine space necessary for both boys and men: "OF late years our people have come to realize the fact that a man's room or a boy's room is as necessary to the properly conducted household as the lady's boudoir. These rooms, by common consent, are known as 'dens.'"<sup>56</sup> Beard's comments on the den were a preface to his detailed plans for the creation of a "surprise den"—a "primitive pioneer cabin" built onto or within a home. Beard suggested that the den was a necessary retreat from the feminized home:

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describes this as a change from the nineteenth-century library in that the modern library focused on the personality and interests of the man who used it rather than the nineteenth-century library which focused on building character.

<sup>52</sup> Wharton, *The Decoration of Houses*.

<sup>53</sup> Wentworth, "The Passing of the Den."

<sup>54</sup> Simons, "A Consistent Den," 50-51.

<sup>55</sup> For example, Paul Chalfin, "Where a Man Can Be Himself: Showing the Decorative Possibilities of Interiors Devoted Solely to the Male Members of the Family," *House and Garden* 51 (April, 1927): 140. Frank Alvah Parsons, *Interior Decoration: Its Principles and Practice* (Garden City, NY, 1916 (c. 1915)). Simons, "A Consistent Den," 54.

<sup>56</sup> Dan Beard, "How to Build and Furnish a Surprise Den in a Modern House," *Outing Magazine* 48 (April, 1906): 112. Caps in original.

A den usually consists of a small space, sometimes nothing more than an alcove where the men or boys of the house may retreat to, and the den is usually decorated with an abundant display of yachting flags, college colors, trophies of the hunt and athletic field, fishing-rods, guns, etc., with probably a desk and an easy chair. But, as the wealth of the country increases and luxuries multiply, the den gradually assumes a more and more primitive condition. This is the natural result of the reaction against the surrounding effete luxury of the household.<sup>57</sup>

Daniel Beard, emphasized the masculinity of the space by including boys in its usage—boys and men alike needed retreat from the “effete luxury” of the rest of the home. Beard even suggested that father and son might cut puncheons together to create this style of den.<sup>58</sup>

Such pioneer imagery was not uncommon in discussion of dens and suggests the ways in which ideas about vigorous manliness were sometimes aligned with anti-modern sentiments. The den in the early twentieth century was a retreat both from the feminine home and from the overly complex modern world. Images of dens often included stuffed heads and antlers and outdoorsman’s gear. More sophisticated rooms still harkened to pioneer images—a 1923 article in *House and Garden* titled “Dignity in a Man’s Room” included photographs of several sophisticated, masculine New York apartments, but the author said that the most distinctive space he could remember was a simple log cabin.<sup>59</sup> This concept of the den as a retreat from the modern world and from the feminine home was increasingly problematized in the late 1910s and 1920s, indicating a growing rejection of the anti-modernism inherent in the pioneer-style den and a turn away from the acceptance of the need for a private, separate space for father as father was increasingly expected to spend his leisure time with his family.

Dens were often represented as the proud center of masculine entertaining, where sportsmen could display their trophies, sit in comfortable furniture and smoke.<sup>60</sup> In the early twentieth century, as the value given to leisure continued to grow, the home became, in the words of one historian, an “important focus for the pursuit of leisure activities.”<sup>61</sup> Some authors called for male spaces for leisure in addition to or in lieu of a den. In a 1911 book on home decoration, the prominent architect J. H. Elder-Duncan recommended the billiard room as a nice addition to any home. For men of “ordinary means” for whom “the possession of a full-sized table is not practicable” he recommended the purchase of a miniature table or a recent innovation—a dining-room table that converted into a full-sized

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<sup>57</sup> Beard, "How to Build and Furnish a Surprise Den in a Modern House," 112.

<sup>58</sup> Beard, "How to Build and Furnish a Surprise Den in a Modern House," 114.

<sup>59</sup> John G. Hamilton, "Dignity In A Man's Room," *House and Garden* 43 (May, 1923): 102.

<sup>60</sup> See for example, W. Livingston Larned, "Dreamin' in th' Den," *A Journal of Outdoor Life, Travel, Nature Study, Shooting, Fishing, Yachting* LXXXVI (August, 1916): 1110. Samuel J. and Associate Contributors Fort, "The Den," *A Journal of Outdoor Life, Travel, Nature Study, Shooting, Fishing, Yachting* LXXXVI (February, 1916): 797. Hamilton, "Dignity In A Man's Room," 102. Kem Weber, "House and Garden's Modern House: A Room Planned for a Man," *House and Garden* (December, 1928): 76. A modernist designer explained that the den intended for “an American business man in his home” should be a “pleasant and appropriate background for an after-dinner gathering of men.” Hamilton, "Dignity In A Man's Room," 76.

<sup>61</sup> Donna R. Braden, "'The Family That Plays Together Stays Together': Family Pastimes and Indoor Amusements, 1890-1930," in *American Home Life, 1880-1930. A Social History of Spaces and Services*, ed. Jessica H. Foy and Thomas J. Schlereth (Knoxville, 1992), 145.

billiards table.<sup>62</sup> As spaces came to be understood as reflecting the individual personalities of owners in the 1910s and 1920s, decorators suggested that masculine spaces likewise reflect the leisure pursuits of the users. A 1927 article in *Home and Garden* described how spaces devoted “Solely to the Male Members of the Family” could reflect individual interests:

A man with a private golf-course expands the wash-up room of his house to a little smoker and trophy-room, with tables for numerous drinkers, a billiard-table on the large adjacent sun porch, and a corridor off it for bags. He has localized the country club in what was his study. It is beautifully his.<sup>63</sup>

Similarly, the author explains, he knows a man who loves gardening who added a fireplace, drafting table, and lounging chairs, along with a shower and wardrobe room, to a garden-house.<sup>64</sup> Men, the author implies, can create special leisure spaces at the periphery of family life. These spaces seem simultaneously to pull father away from the family and keep him at home, in his “localized” country club. Into this schema in the 1920s was sometimes added an element of the playful. One *House and Garden* article recommended including in the den’s design: “Space for screw-drivers, extra wire and such playful accessories is supplied by appropriate cabinets built in at either side of the radio case.”<sup>65</sup> Another author, in a story about bonding with his infant, described playing in his “own work room,” with its “trick lights, books, typewriters, tire gauges, miscellaneous hardware, bottles of ink,” a room that shocked the feminine sensibilities of the maid sent to clean it.<sup>66</sup> This description has much in common with the typical description of a lad’s bedroom, filled with specimens and curios, precious to him, but a puzzle to his mother.

The image of the den as a separate space and masculine retreat remained into the 1920s, but later authors were less likely to embrace the concept of the den as a retreat from the feminized home unproblematically. In an early example of this trend, *House Beautiful* author Ann Wentworth wrote in 1911 that “The first ‘dens’ were merely a means of escape from the over-feminine parlors and reception rooms.”<sup>67</sup> In her description of the ideal den she ultimately upends the notion of a retreat by suggesting that its success is marked by its appeal for the other members of the household: “If the children choose it above all other places for study and play, the daughters of the family to receive their friends, and the mistress of the house as a pleasant escape from the drawing room, it can be truly said to have all the hall-marks of an ideal ‘man’s room.’”<sup>68</sup> In 1927, a *House and Garden* author, Paul Chalfin, suggested the concept of retreat and simultaneously denied it, writing “What I should like, then, to single out as an ideal setting for the masculine member of the family is neither a cabinet nor a retreat but a comfortable, dignified interior where a man may retire for a fugitive hour and feel at ease, the motive behind the decoration being peace to the male heart

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<sup>62</sup> J. H. Elder-Duncan, *The House Beautiful and Useful, Being Practical Suggestions on Furnishing and Decoration* (New York, 1911). 175.

<sup>63</sup> Chalfin, “Where a Man Can Be Himself,” 105.

<sup>64</sup> Chalfin, “Where a Man Can Be Himself,” 105.

<sup>65</sup> Weber, “House and Garden’s Modern House: A Room Planned for a Man,” 77.

<sup>66</sup> Shumway, “Every Baby Needs a Father,” 92.

<sup>67</sup> Wentworth, “The Passing of the Den,” 127. The author is referring to dens designed before the 1880s.

<sup>68</sup> Wentworth, “The Passing of the Den,” 128.



and comfort to the male frame."<sup>69</sup> Chalfin here suggested that the man of the home (and possibly a son) needed a separately designed, masculine space to “feel at ease” for a stolen hour, a phrase which certainly suggests retreat, but he also explicitly refused to regard the space as such. In fact, he suggested that the concept of a masculine retreat was old-fashioned, a throw-back to the old battle of the sexes when there was “war” between “tea and port.” In those days, he explains, “a man’s room was a retreat. . . . But who has anything like that to regain in private today? We do all in the living-room and he who would retreat for any of these, steps not into another room but into a remote past.”<sup>70</sup> These authors share a discomfort acknowledging a need for male separateness, a discomfort that arises out of a new ideal of family togetherness. In fact, they regarded the desire for a retreat as a relic of the past, as distinctly unmodern. As authors embraced modernity, they tended to reject the den with its frontier imagery and ideal of male separateness as a throwback to the past. Families were urged to find fulfillment in each other’s company and as this idea became more commonly accepted the idea of father needing a space apart to be by himself or to entertain friends became a less comfortable one.

Even when authors discussed the den as a retreat from the family in the 1920s, there was likely to be a humor belying the call for privacy. In a humorous story published by *House Beautiful* in 1929, an anonymous author recounted his experience in building a new home, in which he had planned the fulfillment of his “life’s ambition”—a den. The first drawings contained a large den, favorably situated with plenty of room for the author’s old books and college decorations relegated by his wife to the attic. In later plans, his den shrinks and is moved to less desirable parts of the house. Once the home is constructed, the author finds his small “Father’s Den” commandeered by the other members of the house, one after another, until he finally accepts that the room will never actually serve as a masculine retreat.<sup>71</sup> When he fantasized about this den that was not to be, the author imagined it as a space where he could be alone; a room he could decorate according to his own taste; a room of his own. His ideal den included easy access to the back garden—“means of quick and easy escape.”<sup>72</sup> When his anticipated masculine retreat is taken over by the rest of the family, the father complains of its use by son, daughter, and wife alike, but his complaining is good-natured and lacks real sting. As was typical of such stories in the 1920s, the author remarks upon his inability to get his way in the family, but does so with comfortable humor. His home, as he describes it, is a bustling place where father’s needs come last, but he seems amused by this.<sup>73</sup> This way of speaking about family relationships was new in the 1910s and 1920s. The father here is not truly bothered by losing his den, even as he complains about it. He is proud of his modern family, of his children’s casual attitude with him. He seems to enjoy seeing himself as his family’s last consideration, which suggests that he is secure in his position in the family and sees his family’s willingness to take away his “life’s ambition” as a sign of its very modernity. If this father truly wanted a retreat, a place to escape his family, he would not regard it as so humorous that he was unable to have one.

Similarly, in 1927 a father complained of losing his room upon the birth of his son, warning expectant fathers: "Father should know that nurse has to use the room once

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<sup>69</sup> Chalfin, "Where a Man Can Be Himself," 105.

<sup>70</sup> Chalfin, "Where a Man Can Be Himself," 105.

<sup>71</sup> "Rusticus", "Father's Den," *House Beautiful* 65 (June, 1929).

<sup>72</sup> "Rusticus", "Father's Den."

<sup>73</sup> "Rusticus", "Father's Den."

ridiculously called the Study." If father complains, he will be called a "whiner," the author explains.<sup>74</sup> The jesting tone of the article undermines the force of his complaints. As in the previous example, this author seems to enjoy seeing himself as overlooked by his family, enjoys complaining about the sacrifices he has made for the comfort of his son, jokes about his wife's unspoken authority over him, and sees his situation as comical. While it is important to recognize the way in which fathers' ability to laugh about their lowly role in the family suggests that they were not too deeply threatened by social change, the articles also indicate an effort on the part of men to acknowledge and come to terms with changing power structures and expectations in the American middle-class family. Articles adopting this theme of light-hearted complaint that families put fathers' needs last should not be taken too literally, but do suggest that new kinds of emotions and ideas had become acceptable to voice. Men felt free to claim that they were not respected without feeling shame for this, and felt more free to discuss their desire to be brought closer to the heart of the family.

### **Living-Rooms and Family Togetherness**

Dens represented the ideal of a masculine space within the home. Decorators imagined dens as rooms designed particularly for male comfort and for male entertaining. Although occasionally it was suggested that boys or other family members might use the den as well, it was seen as the household head's private room. Offering men a special, masculine space within the home suggests one way of drawing men into the home and making them comfortable there. But the creation of a separate space for men in the home also reveals their discomfort in the rest of the house. Men were kept apart from the family not only for their own comfort, but to protect the family from their masculine pursuits. For instance, the ability to smoke in peace, without being criticized for damaging delicate fabrics, the right to display objects regarded as too ugly for display in other parts of the home, and the ability to visit with friends without disturbing the rest of the family were mentioned as advantages to having a den.<sup>75</sup> Although masculine retreats remained a part of many homes as houses and families shrunk in size in the 1920s, an even more important trend was the effort to make the home overall more inviting to men and boys. Decorating trends followed "masculine" styles in the simple lines of the Arts and Crafts movement, sometimes openly describing modern design as in opposition to effete styles of the Victorian era.<sup>76</sup> The living spaces of the family also increasingly were designed with the comfort of all family members in mind, and living rooms, in particular, were meant to foster family togetherness by appealing to men and children as well as to women.

Architects in home magazines explicitly discussed designing homes to promote family togetherness in the early twentieth century. More open floor plans, in bungalows particularly, replaced numerous rooms easily separated. Larger living rooms often replaced formal front halls, parlors, studies and sitting rooms.<sup>77</sup> One of the most important changes in

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<sup>74</sup> Adams, "Yes, Sir. That's My Baby," 36.

<sup>75</sup> See for example, Fort, "The Den," 797. "Rusticus", "Father's Den.". Wentworth, "The Passing of the Den," 127.

<sup>76</sup> For more on the Arts and Crafts movement as a critique of "the feminization of American culture" and as a style intended specifically to appeal to men, see Kimmel, *Manhood in America*, 110-111.

<sup>77</sup> Marsh, "Suburban Men and Masculine Domesticity, 1870-1915," 126. Marsh argues that advocates of suburban living in the early twentieth century "preached that removal from the city would both encourage family unity and discourage excessive attention to one's individual wants. The suburb served as the spatial

home usage and design between 1900 and 1930 was the replacement of the Victorian parlor with the twentieth-century living room. Middle-class living rooms were spaces meant for the whole family, for private family use and for entertaining.<sup>78</sup> Parlors, decorating magazines and books agreed, were old-fashioned, suffering from an “atmosphere of foolish Victorian artificiality and priggishness.”<sup>79</sup> Living rooms were to be decorated with comfort in mind, to be inviting to all members of the family. Most comments about the living room compared it to the old-fashioned parlor, but a *House Beautiful* article in 1911 saw it as replacing the “once-popular” den. The author explained that dens were commonly thought to be unnecessary because living rooms had become such comfortable and informal places.<sup>80</sup>

Creating comfort for the whole family was indeed the central design challenge discussed by many interior designers in discussions of the living room. In his 1908 book, *The Furnishing of a Modest Home*, which grew from a series of lectures on home design, Fred Hamilton Daniels emphasized the need for comfort in the living room and emphasized the importance of using furniture sturdy enough to take children’s abuse.<sup>81</sup> In *Planning and Furnishing the Home : Practical and Economical Suggestions for the Homemaker* (1914), designer Mary J. Quinn saw the “Family-Living Room” as a “very modern part of the house,” a room for entertaining guests and spending leisure together. She wrote, “It must be attractive to youth and comfortable for grown-ups.”<sup>82</sup> In *Interior Decoration for the Small Home* (1917), Amy Rolfe recommended using “Only big restful pictures which every member of the family enjoys.”<sup>83</sup>

Advertisements for furniture and flooring to be used in the living room emphasized this ideal of family togetherness. For example, a 1918 design pamphlet written by the well-known interior designer Frank Alvah Parsons for a linoleum company depicted an ideal living room with father sitting by the hearth with his feet up on a pillow with a woman standing from her chair to greet a son or brother who is in military garb; father is turned to smile at him as well. The caption suggests that a living room should be “comfortable, practical, restful and companionable. It should also express the culture and taste which are the family’s ideals.”<sup>84</sup> The emotional image of a family greeting a returning soldier—the more potent because of the war abroad-- was used here to convey the loving, companionable

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context for what its advocates hoped would be a new form of marriage.” Marsh, “Suburban Men and Masculine Domesticity, 1870-1915,” 127.

<sup>78</sup> Grier, *Culture and Comfort: People, Parlors, and Upholstery 1850-1930*. 288. Change in terminology and usage from the formal parlor to the every-day-use living room was gradual and uneven between 1910 and 1930. Parlors focused on presentation, on impressing visitors and displaying the family’s cultural knowledge, whereas living rooms focused inward on making the family comfortable and fostering togetherness. Grier, *Culture and Comfort: People, Parlors, and Upholstery 1850-1930*. 298.

<sup>79</sup> Abbot and Harold Donaldson Eberlein McClure, *House Furnishing and Decoration* (New York, 1914). 90.

<sup>80</sup> Wentworth, “The Passing of the Den,” 128.

<sup>81</sup> Fred Hamilton Daniels, *The Furnishing of a Modest Home* (New York, 1908). 80.

<sup>82</sup> Mary J. Quinn, *Planning and Furnishing the Home : Practical and Economical Suggestions for the Homemaker* (New York, 1914). 133. Quinn was an instructor in the design school of household science and arts at Pratt Institute.

<sup>83</sup> Amy L. Rolfe, *Interior Decoration for the Small Home* (New York, 1917). 92.

<sup>84</sup> Frank Alvah Parsons, *The Art of Home Furnishing and Decoration* (Lancaster, PA, 1918). Parsons was the president of the New York School of Fine and Applied Art, and he was described in the foreword of this publication as the “foremost American authority on interior decoration” (III) In mentioning expressing a family’s “ideals” in addition to creating “companionable” comfort, this work bridges older parlor purpose of representing the family to visitors with more modern living-room intent of creating family togetherness and relaxation.

togetherness of an ideal family which could be promoted through the properly designed living room, and suggests the way in which World War I may have reinforced and propelled the emphasis on the importance of family togetherness and father inclusion.<sup>85</sup> A 1921 furniture advertisement depicted a man reading to a young child on a couch while an older daughter sat nearby at a desk. The mother peeks at the scene happily from the door. The caption reads: "*Is yours a Living-room which invites the whole family to linger there in delightful companionship?*"<sup>86</sup> The suggestion here is that it is mother's responsibility to decorate a living room that encourages family togetherness, and more particularly, encourages father to be with his children. The idea of a family living room became increasingly popular through the 1910s and 1920s, and in 1932 *Parents Magazine* published an article summing up the trend: "It's a serious matter, this play business; it deserves, whenever possible, a room dedicated to the sole purpose of family fun."<sup>87</sup>

The popular style of interior decoration became vastly more simplified in the early twentieth century, influenced in large part by the Arts and Crafts movement. This change was identified by numerous contemporary authors as a turn away from an overly-feminine style. In the first years of the 1900s, some authors still regarded the home as appropriately feminine. For instance, although this decorator acknowledged the man's discomfort with female design choices in 1903, she is of the opinion that that is simply his bad luck: "It is always a wonder to the masculine, that the feminine mind has such an ineradicable love of draperies. The man despises them, but to the woman they are the perfecting touch of the home.... As long as the woman rules, house-curtains will be a joy and delight to her."<sup>88</sup> Supporting this feminine sensibility, the author insists that curtains are "important adjuncts of house furnishing and decoration."<sup>89</sup> But as the Arts and Crafts style became more popular though the decade, made popular in part by the success of its sale through mail-order catalogs in the Midwest, the old, lavish style of decoration came under attack. The criticisms faced by Victorian décor were often gendered and its supposed failings were often particularly feminine liabilities. For instance, one 1908 home decorating text compared the "Homes of sense" of the modern day to those of a previous generation which were filled with "starched draperies of imitation lace."<sup>90</sup> Such a comparison suggests that the feminine lace and draperies lacked "sense"—a complaint that has gendered connotations. Similarly, the influential designer, Frank Alvah Parsons in 1918 warned that in interior design, "Oversentimentality is as bad as overdecoration."<sup>91</sup> Women were indeed blamed for many of the failings of good taste: "In regard to ornaments the ladies are, I regret to say, great offenders.... How many times, I wonder, have the efforts and schemes of the most competent architects and decorative artists been brought to naught by the mistaken energies of their clients' wives and daughters?" wondered one prominent architect in 1911.<sup>92</sup> This author further remarked that the average wealthy American made his home too ostentatious to be

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<sup>85</sup> This publication was probably produced before the November 11<sup>th</sup> cessation of fighting.

<sup>86</sup> "Living-room Furniture Week" -- at Barker Bros.--on Broadway."Advertisement, Barker Bros. Living-Room Furniture Week," *Good Furniture Magazine* 17 (July, 1921). Italics in original.

<sup>87</sup> Helen Sprackling, "A Family Playroom," *Parents; Magazine* 7 (Oct. 1932):22. in Braden, "'The Family That Plays Together Stays Together': Family Pastimes and Indoor Amusements, 1890-1930," 159.

<sup>88</sup> Candace Wheeler, *Principles of Home Decoration With Practical Examples* (New York, 1903). 158.

<sup>89</sup> Wheeler, *Principles of Home Decoration*. 159.

<sup>90</sup> Daniels, *The Furnishing of a Modest Home*. 15.

<sup>91</sup> Parsons, *The Art of Home Furnishing and Decoration*. 8.

<sup>92</sup> Elder-Duncan, *The House Beautiful and Useful*. 21-22.

appealing, subtly suggesting that it was a woman's taste that was so unpleasant: "One marvels that an average man can preserve his sanity in such surroundings."<sup>93</sup> The rational, modern home, with clean lines and simpler furnishings, was distinctly masculine when compared to a Victorian sensibility.

Between 1900 and 1930, design trends and changes in interior design worked to make the home more comfortable for men and boys. The desire in the early decades of the twentieth century to promote family togetherness factored into the new idea of a family living room, which was decorated in a style more likely to please men and more suitable for the inhabitation of children. The rest of the home, during the 1910s and 1920s, slowly came to be styled in a fashion of furniture and draperies which had previously been reserved for dens, though the hunting trophies and gun racks never were incorporated into living-room designs. Girl's and women's "boudoirs," on the other hand, remained ornately decorated with flowered motifs, skirted furniture, chintzes, and elaborate draperies.<sup>94</sup> Such decorating choices show that it was not merely that the aesthetic of home design had changed—American women and girls continued to choose rooms for themselves that were ornately styled. But shared living spaces became less "feminine" as part of an effort to promote family togetherness and make men and boys more comfortable spending their leisure at home. As these changes took place, the idea of the den as a masculine retreat became less popular and more problematic. This notion of the den as a place of male escape did not disappear, but authors in popular magazines and decorating manuals became less comfortable talking about a den as a "retreat" and encouraged men and women alike to decorate their homes with an eye toward creating spaces where the whole family could be together.

## **Boys' Discomfort in the Home: Conflicts between Masculinity and Domesticity**

Attracting more direct discussion than the idea of making the home more comfortable to *men* in the early twentieth century were efforts to counter the presumed fact that the home was an unappealing place for *boys*. Discussing boys' uneasiness in domestic spaces was a way for authors and illustrators to address anxieties over changes in gender roles indirectly. The new interest in discussing boys' uneasiness in the home and the focus on the difficulties with keeping boys happy within the domestic circle reflects concerns about men's domestic contentment and the appropriate role for men in the home. *The Saturday Evening Post* was a conservative magazine with a wide middle-class and largely male audience. In the early years of the *Post*'s publication, children were rarely featured on covers. Beginning in about 1905, children became more frequent subjects of *Post* cover art, and between the mid-1910s and the mid-1920s, humorous depictions of boys' discomfort in the female sphere became a mainstay of *Post* covers. *The Saturday Evening Post* published ten covers portraying boys

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<sup>93</sup> Elder-Duncan, *The House Beautiful and Useful*. 26.

<sup>94</sup> See for example Lurette Guild, "The Room That Was Built for a Boy / The Room that Was Built for a Girl," *St. Nicholas* 51 (May, 1924): 1054-1055. "The Girls' Page for March; Making and Applying Design II. A Stencil Design for Window Curtains," *The Youth's Companion*, March 8 1917. Mrs. H J K, "The Girl's Room," *Indiana Farmer's Guide*, August 19 1922. "The G.Y.C.; Making a Room to Live in. An Interview with Nancy McClelland," *The Youth's Companion*, March 1929.

uncomfortably doing domestic work between 1913 and 1926, half of which were images of an older brother looking after an infant.<sup>95</sup> One example of this theme is the August 25, 1923 cover which shows an unhappy boy, with a discarded fishing pole beside him, trying to feed a bottle to a screaming infant. The implication that the boy was on his way to more enjoyable pursuits when saddled with the infant's care is unmistakable, as is the boy's difficulty with the chore. Other covers included boys' begrudgingly helping in the kitchen or with sewing. Boys were depicted as uncomfortable in other "feminized" spaces such as the school, as well. In the twenty years from 1909 to 1929, there were nineteen different covers on this theme and several others showing boys forced by female relations to go to church, take their medicine, and bathe.<sup>96</sup>

These covers were not the only ones that indicated a deep uneasiness with male involvement in feminized spaces. There were five different covers in the 1910s that addressed boys' impatience for entry into the world of adult masculinity and hints that mothers were holding them back. For instance, the August 10<sup>th</sup> issue of 1918 depicts a barber cutting off a boy's long curls, to the boy's apparent glee, while his mother stands by looking quite upset at the loss. Other covers included a boy trying to shave and two related to the first acquisition of long pants. In addition to these, there were numerous war-related covers illustrating a boy's desire to protect and serve his country.<sup>97</sup> A few covers also depicted grown men participating in work around the house, but such covers were far less common and most involved men outside the physical space of the home, caring for the yard or the building exterior.<sup>98</sup> By and large, according to *Post* covers, boys were happy skinny-dipping, playing in the snow, playing sports (baseball particularly), and fishing-- all activities that took place outside the home and away from female supervision.<sup>99</sup>

Boys were used to depict the uncomfortable alliance between the home and the male. According to *Post* cover art, the boy resented being stuck with domestic work and regarded female labor as beneath him, or, at least, as tedious. He longed to be a man, trying on his father's clothes, practicing shaving, looking forward to graduating to long pants. The covers of the *Saturday Evening Post* suggested that the adult masculinity to which all "normal" boys aspired was not easily compatible with domestic chores and childcare. If fathers could feed bottles to babies or help peel potatoes without loss to their dignity, there would be no reason for boys to be so humorously affronted at having to do so.<sup>100</sup> But men had turned up

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<sup>95</sup> *Saturday Evening Post*. Cover. Editions: August 2, 1913; October 18, 1913; January 23, 1915; May 20, 1916; October 28, 1916; January 29, 1921; July 9, 1921; March 4, 1922; August 25, 1923; November 27, 1926.

<sup>96</sup> *Saturday Evening Post*. Cover. Covers related to schooling: June 5 1909; September 18, 1909; March 19, 1910; September 10, 1910; December 17, 1910; September 7, 1912; September 20, 1913; September 19, 1914; October 27, 1917; February 28, 1920; October 16, 1920; September 3, 1921; June 10, 1922; June 23, 1923; June 26, 1926; January 8, 1927; June 25, 1927; September 10, 1927; September 14, 1929.

Others: August 17, 1912; October 16, 1915; December 25, 1915; March 18, 1916; April 17, 1920

<sup>97</sup> *Saturday Evening Post*. Cover. February 28, 1914; April 15, 1916; August 10, 1918; March 28, 1914; September 30, 1916; June 16, 1917; September 15, 1917; March 2, 1918; April 29, 1922; June 9, 1923; June 30, 1923; April 18, 1925.

<sup>98</sup> *Saturday Evening Post*. Cover. August 6, 1910; May 6, 1916; April 8, 1922; May 2, 1925.

<sup>99</sup> Such images of boys rejecting feminizing influences have a rich history in the nineteenth century in novels by authors such as Booth Tarkington and Mark Twain.

<sup>100</sup> One father good-naturedly complained that on the nurse's day's off he might expect his work to be "pleasantly interrupted by giving Anthony his bottle. Woman's work? Not at all. For if Mother can't read or

their noses at domestic labor and infant-care for a long time by 1900, so why did this topic become so popular in the 1910s and 1920s in the *Post*? The prevalence of these images might in part be attributed to the interests and talents of a few favored illustrators, such as J. C. Leyendecker and Norman Rockwell, but the popularity of Leyendecker and Rockwell in part depended on their ability to pinpoint such areas of interest and popular humor. These illustrations suggest a discomfort with gender roles brought about by the feminist movement and the changing roles for men that accompanied feminist advances.

The frequent use of the theme of boys stuck at home or with domestic or school work emphasized the naturalness of the male desire to play, to be outdoors, to fight, to play sports, and to run around with a gang of friends. Practically the only representations of boys older than toddlers in the home in which the boy was not noticeably uncomfortable were a couple of covers that showed boys watching the preparation of feasts. Illustrative covers with boys who were inside the home otherwise suggested discomfort with female rules of behavior, or impatience to get out, such as the depiction on January 29, 1927 of a boy anxiously waiting for his mother to mend his pants so that he could return to playing with the group of boys outside waiting for him.<sup>101</sup> The home was not a comfortable space for boys, according to these illustrations, and much of the writing addressing fatherhood in this era shared this assumption and sought to make the home a more welcoming place for boys and their fathers.

### Keeping Boys at Home

Many authors writing about children and fathers focused on the need to keep boys closer to home in order to forge stronger family bonds, particularly between fathers and sons. Starting in about 1910 authors specifically concerned with the relationship between sons and fathers began to seek solutions in the physical layout and use of the home. The home was an uncomfortable space for boys, they suggested, because it had been feminized. The boys were not allowed to “be boys” in the home; they were forbidden to make messes or play freely. If men wanted to forge stronger friendships with their sons, or if mothers wanted their husbands and sons to be closer, these authors argued, parents must first convince boys that home is a fun place to be and a good place to relax with boy friends.

Some authors, mirroring the anti-modernism found in discussions of men’s dens, attributed the boy’s discomfort in the home to modern living conditions. F. A. Crosby, an author who contributed to various works for reforming fatherhood, wrote a *Delineator* article on the subject of home life and the boy in which he explained that modern conditions necessitated turning the “home into a boys' club.”<sup>102</sup> He explained, “There is no home work, there are no chores to perform, in our modern city life, for the splitting of kindling, the carrying of water, the caring for horse and dog are abolished. These tasks meant much in the home life of the restless boy and gave him a share in domestic affairs. But these are gone, and something must be put in their place.”<sup>103</sup> This theme was echoed a decade later by prolific author and president of the Father and Son League, Frank Cheley, who felt the old-

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take a nap on [the nurse’s] day out, when can she?” Adams, “Yes, Sir. That’s My Baby,” 187. The father here is still somewhat uncomfortable with the idea of giving the baby his bottle, seeing it as typically women’s work.

<sup>101</sup> Those which did not show the boy impatient to get out, or unhappy, usually demonstrated his discomfort with female rules some other way, such as showing him doing some mischief, such as reading when he should be sleeping (November 7, 1925), feeding a dog under the table (December 15, 1923), or standing on chair at mother’s vanity practicing his pitching stance (April 24, 1915).

<sup>102</sup> F. A. Crosby, “The Home A Club for Boys,” *The Delineator*, January 1910, 42.

<sup>103</sup> Crosby, “The Home A Club for Boys,” 42.

fashioned home had fostered father-son closeness by encouraging men and boys to work and play together.<sup>104</sup> Boy workers saw the lack of clear common economic purpose in modern middle-class families as a challenge, but reassured fathers that modern homes designed with the boy in mind could help create closer, happier families. Cheley wrote, "Home, Dad, and a Boy's Room is the combination that starts a boy right, gives him direction, and helps him realize his best dreams."<sup>105</sup> The author hoped to make explicit the notion that the existence of a separate space for the boy, along with the creation of space designed to foster closer communication between father and son, could help boys grow up to be successful adults, inspired by and close to their fathers. Walter Fiske, a Junior Dean at Oberlin College who published on the topics of boy life and fatherhood for the Y's Association Press and others, wrote an essay published in at least three places by 1921 that claimed, "Many wise parents introduce dark-rooms for photography, gas-rooms for chemistry, workrooms for carpentry, bug-rooms for natural history, even mushroom farms in the cellar, and so on through the whole fad chapter, and it all works splendidly. The boy likes his home, stays at home, and brings his friends home."<sup>106</sup> As to the inconvenience of devoting so much space to the boy and the various accidents and mishaps that might drive the father to "affectionate near-profanity! Never mind. Nobody cared. It saved the boys."<sup>107</sup> Proper home design could keep boys from ruin, could preserve or re-create the family solidarity that had existed in an earlier, rural era in which families worked closely together from economic necessity.

The first and most important step in fostering closer relationships between fathers and sons, according to these authors, was to get the boy to spend more time in the home. The first recommendation stated by many authors was that the boy have his own room, but that was merely a minimum requirement. Eben Rexford, author of numerous books and articles on gardening, in an article in *Outing Magazine* recommended to fathers in 1907 that they help their sons convert an attic or barn into a gymnasium and find space for a workshop for the boy.<sup>108</sup> In 1921, Frank Cheley quoted Rexford as insisting that "Every home in which there are boys growing up is surely incomplete without a place which these boys can call their own."<sup>109</sup> The variety of spaces Fiske suggested be turned over to the boy, including space for the creation of dark rooms, laboratories, workshops, mushroom farms and bug rooms, was not unusual in books on fathering the boy in the 1920s. Cheley wrote again and

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<sup>104</sup> Frank H. Cheley, *The Job of Being a Dad* (Boston, Chicago, 1923). 183.

<sup>105</sup> Italics in original. Bentley Bates, "Home, Dad, and a Boy's Room," in *The Boy's Own Book*, ed. Editorial Board of the Father and Son League (1921), 31. Also published in Cheley, *Climbing Manward*. 100. The authorship of this passage is somewhat in question. Frank Cheley frequently used unattributed quotation marks, probably to quote his own large body of work, and his edited books contain the works of numerous others quoted both briefly and at length. This passage seems to be attributed to "Bentley Bates" in 1921's *The Boy's Own Book* and to Cheley himself in 1925's *Climbing Manward*. It is also possible that Bentley Bates is a name Cheley wrote under, though it is puzzling that he would quote himself so openly in much of the book and then use a pseudonym in only a few chapters.

<sup>106</sup> Walter Fiske, "Developing Normal Home Relationships for the Boy" in Frank H. Cheley, ed., *Fathering the Boy, A Handbook for the Fathers and Leaders of Boys*, vol. 1, Father and Son Library: A Practical Home Plan of All Round Development for the Boy (New York, 1921). 24-25. Also G. Walter Fiske, "The Boy's Normal Home Relationships," in *Parents and Their Problems; Child Welfare in Home, School, Church and State*, ed. Mary Harmon Weeks (Washington, D.C., 1914), 290.

<sup>107</sup> Walter Fiske, "Developing Normal Home Relationships for the Boy" in Cheley, ed., *Fathering the Boy*. 25. Also Fiske, "The Boy's Normal Home Relationships," 290-291.

<sup>108</sup> Eben E. Rexford, "Putting the Country Home in Order," *Outing Magazine* 50 (June, 1907): 365.

<sup>109</sup> Quoted in Cheley, ed., *Fathering the Boy*. 41.



again about the importance of making space for the boy in the home.<sup>110</sup> In *Dad, Whose Boy Is Yours?* (1926), a book of short essays directed at fathers of boys, Cheley wrote repeatedly about the importance of creating space for boys in the home. He encouraged fathers to "Invoice your home to-day to see if you have arranged it inside of its natural limitations so that it serves the needs of the growing boy to best advantage."<sup>111</sup> In this volume Cheley suggested several projects for fathers that involved creating physical space for the boy.<sup>112</sup> In *Fathering the Boy*, the first volume of the 1921 series titled *The Father and Son Library*, Cheley told fathers to encourage their sons' hobbies and collections and to provide special spaces for them. For instance, he suggested providing necessary equipment for the boy who likes wireless communication or electricity.<sup>113</sup>

Many of these authors imagined interior design as a means of creating father-son interactions. For instance, Bentley Bates describing the ideal boys' room in 1921, wrote "there should be a fireplace if at all possible, and a couple of easy chairs that will attract Father in for an occasional visit to see about a number of things."<sup>114</sup> Fathers were encouraged to work with sons in the creation of special masculine spaces of the home. Pictures showed fathers and sons together in workshops and gardens and in comfortable fireside chairs.<sup>115</sup> Not only should fathers provide boys with spaces and the correct materials

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<sup>110</sup> Cheley's preference was for the boys to have a special room in addition to their bedrooms. Cheley, ed., *Fathering the Boy*. 44. In fact, his very definition of the word "home" focused on the needs of the boy: "*A home is a garden that fully meets the physical, mental, moral, spiritual and social needs of a growing boy, as such needs develop, rearing and adequately training its children to become independent, self-propelled, social beings.*" Frank H. Cheley, *Dad, Whose Boy is Yours: Forty-Eight Little Talks with Fathers Who Want To Be Real Dads to their Real Boys* (Boston, 1926). 66.

<sup>111</sup> Cheley, *Dad, Whose Boy is Yours*. 67.

<sup>112</sup> Including "No 33 Give the Boy a Room of His Own." in Cheley, *Dad, Whose Boy is Yours*. 103-104. In a project suggestion of a different entry, he wrote: "When a boy's own room has been arranged, then there will be a place for a punching bag, a set of boxing gloves, perhaps even a place to wrestle a bit. It is one thing to talk about exercise and health; it is quite another to provide the attractive opportunity for their achievement." Frank H. Cheley, *Dad, Whose Boy Is Yours*, 112.

<sup>113</sup> Cheley, ed., *Fathering the Boy*. 68-69. Cheley also encouraged parents to allow boys to have pets, especially dogs and said that all boys should be encouraged to build their own library. Authors who were more focused on home decorating than boy-work nonetheless saw a need to give boys substantial amounts of space in the home. One author in *House Beautiful* in 1916 wrote: "Of course, the ideal arrangement is to have two rooms" so that in addition to a bedroom a boy might have use of his own "workshop, gymnasium, or playroom." She further suggested adding a sleeping porch for the boy. (Hanna Tachau, "The Boy's Room," *The House Beautiful* 37 (May, 1915): 190-191.) Hazel H. Adler's *The New Interior: Modern Decorations for the Modern Home* (1916) approvingly described the suite of rooms a Boston architect designed for his high-school-aged son. The suite "consisted of bed-room, guest room, study and bath" all for the exclusive use of the boy and his guests. (Hazel H. Adler, *The New Interior: Modern Decorations for the Modern Home* (New York, 1916). 131.)

<sup>114</sup> Bates, "Home, Dad, and a Boy's Room," 31. The authorship of this quotation is in some question since other parts of this essay were later published in *Climbing Manward* (1925) under the name of Frank Cheley. This particular quotation appears only in the earlier essay.

<sup>115</sup> Gardening as career and hobby expanded greatly between 1890 and 1920. (Patricia M. Tice, "Gardens of Change," ed. Jessica H. and Thomas J. Schlereth Foy (1992), 190.) Many authors suggested that children should have a garden, and an entire book of the Father Son Library was devoted to teaching boys and fathers to garden. See for example, "Making the Home Garden." by Albert E. Wilkinson, in Hamilton Wright Mabie, Edward Everett Hale, and William Byron Forbush, ed., *Ideal Home Life*, vol. 10, *The Young Folks Treasury* (New York, 1919). 372.; E. L. D. Seymour, ed., *The Garden Book*, vol. 14, *Father and Son Library: A Practical Home Plan of All Round Development for the Boy* (New York, 1921). Illustrations also depicted the

to cultivate their interests in the home, Cheley wrote, they should entice the boy and his friends to spend time in the house by providing special foods, such as “red lemonade,” taffy, and iced fruit drinks “served by an interested parent when the gang is around.”<sup>116</sup> The tasty food and attractive home was only to lure the boy in—it was not enough to create a happy home-life. To do that, fathers must create a certain home spirit, must show themselves to be members of the boys’ gang.

The project of keeping the boy at home through the creation of space conducive to his comfort did not come cheaply, although most authors made some effort to suggest that the solutions they offered could work for committed families of any class. Cheley explained to fathers that “[p]ersonality and program” were more important than expensive equipment in “Making Home Gang Headquarters.”<sup>117</sup> In another of his books, Cheley recommended that fathers simply allow the gang meet in “the den, the barn, the attic or the garage.”<sup>118</sup> Walter Fiske related the story of a family “not wealthy, either” who turned their attic into a gymnasium using money originally earmarked for new parlor furniture.<sup>119</sup> Nonetheless, specific instructions and warnings about how to create appropriate spaces for boys in the home suggest a strong tendency to assume that families had a considerable amount of income to spend on pleasing their sons. The presumed audience of fathering literature was clearly middle-class or well-to-do. In his five rules for a boy’s room, Cheley included two separate rules emphasizing the importance of “[t]horoughly first-class and artistic furnishings and equipment.”<sup>120</sup> Cheley urgently warned fathers: “Under no circumstances let the boy feel that the old, worn-out, repaired stuff from the living room is good enough. This is a fatal error.”<sup>121</sup> Other authors shared Cheley’s disgust for the practice of giving shabby furniture deemed no longer suitable for use in the rest of the house to sons (and according to other authors, to fathers for dens on occasion).<sup>122</sup>

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camaraderie achieved by fathers and sons who gardened together. See for example, Sidonie Matzner Gruenberg, *Your Child Today and Tomorrow* (Philadelphia, 1912 (1913)). inset between p. 130 and p.131.

<sup>116</sup> Cheley, ed., *Fathering the Boy*. 69.

<sup>117</sup> Cheley, *Dad, Whose Boy Is Yours?* 129-30.

<sup>118</sup> Cheley wrote that the boy could be given an attractive room, or even well-lighted and dry basement, finished attic, or a heated upstairs of a new garage. Cheley, *Dad, Whose Boy Is Yours?* 130. And Cheley, ed., *Fathering the Boy*. 42.

<sup>119</sup> Walter Fiske, “Developing Normal Home Relationships for the Boy” in Cheley, ed., *Fathering the Boy*. 14-27. It is interesting to note the use of the term parlor here which both demonstrates the continued use of parlors by American families and again contrasts a modern, family-centered, unpretentious value set which placed family happiness and togetherness above public appearances with a Victorian sensibility, symbolized by the parlor, which put public appearances and fashionable furnishings above the comfort of the males of the family.

<sup>120</sup> Cheley, ed., *Fathering the Boy*. 43.

<sup>121</sup> Cheley, ed., *Fathering the Boy*. 43.

<sup>122</sup> One poem published in *Puck* and the *Houston Post* jokingly suggested that a den was when all the broken down furniture was “gathered into a heap by ma/ And put into a room for pa.” (“A Den,” *Puck*, June 4 1913.) Another complained that because homes were usually decorated by women “men’s rooms have been either the dumping ground for all the unwanted furniture of the house or else have been done in a manner to suggest a feminine boudoir.” (Hamilton, “Dignity In A Man’s Room,” 74.)

One author warned against using shabby furniture to decorate a boy’s room in a 1907 women’s magazine. (Jean Whittmore Dwight, “How to Make a Boy’s Room Inviting,” *The Ladies’ Home Journal* 24 (May, 1907).) Two different authors in *House Beautiful* articles written five years apart, the first in 1915 and the second in 1920, identified giving boys worn furniture as a trend that was thankfully passing away. (Marian Clarke, “The Boy’s Retreat,” *House Beautiful* 47 (January, 1920).. Tachau, “The Boy’s Room,” 190.) The decorator Hazel H. Adler also complained that the son “often falls heir to the heavy discarded furniture from other portions of the house.” (Adler, *The New Interior : Modern Decorations for the Modern Home*. 130.)

Ideal boys' rooms were decorated in a style very similar to that of the father's den. Designers interested in such rooms used similar descriptions of appropriate colors, styles of furniture, types of wood, and even similar meaningful objects. The nursery or playroom imagined in the first years of the century was a magical place designed to celebrate childhood and foster development.<sup>123</sup> The boy's room, or boy's play area, was foremost a masculine space and had more in common with his father's den than with his sister's bedroom. Interest in child development may have contributed to the variety of experiences encouraged in shops, darkrooms, gardens, gymnasiums, etc., but, primarily, boys' rooms were spaces designed to keep boys close to home and to help the home be more masculine, and therefore more comfortable, to the "real boy." Boys' rooms were usually decorated in a plain, even militaristically spartan, style after 1910.<sup>124</sup> Textiles were kept to a minimum. Both dens and boys' rooms favored mission-style furniture, or furniture with plain, unadorned lines and dark or bold color schemes. One decorator writing for *House Beautiful* in 1915 suggested that a boys' room should be filled with surroundings that reflect the "masculine love of comfort and solidity," a solid couch, an armchair, a desk, a table, book shelves, good lighting, cabinets for his collections, and, ideally, a fireplace. Except for the instruction to make sure the couch was strong and big enough to hold a "frolic" the description of an ideal boy's room could as easily been written for a den.<sup>125</sup> Indian and camping themes were frequently suggested for boy's rooms and were also recommended for men's dens.<sup>126</sup> One *House Beautiful* author described the gun-rack which hung over the mantel of her son's room as "the idol of its owner's heart," perhaps because of its resemblance to his father's, or, at

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Some authors recommending generous accommodations for boys claimed that boys in general were given lesser accommodations than their sisters. (Rexford, "Putting the Country Home in Order," 365. Adler, *The New Interior : Modern Decorations for the Modern Home*. 130.)

<sup>123</sup> The notion that the home ought to contain spaces for children's play was not a new one, but the focus on boys sharpened after 1910 or so. Mothers of young children and tots were encouraged to allow their children room to play in many articles and the question of whether the young child ought to be removed to the nursery (and the care of a nurse) or allowed free range among the home and family was debated in women's magazines. See, for example, Mary Louise Howden, "Nursery-Bred Children," *Good Housekeeping* 1909.; Nora Archibald Smith, "Letters to Madame Crusoe; III. Play Room and Play Things," *Good Housekeeping*, January 1909. Mothers were warned to carefully design play spaces and encouraged to devote large areas to children's play. For examples of this, see: Wharton, *The Decoration of Houses*. 178. "A Modern Playroom," LHM 16 (July 1899) described in Karin Calvert, "Children in the House, 1890 to 1930," in *American Home Life, 1880-1930: A Social History of Spaces and Services*, ed. Jessica H. Foy and Thomas J. Schlereth (Knoxville, 1992). Adler, *The New Interior : Modern Decorations for the Modern Home*.

<sup>124</sup> Typical boys' rooms are described in Calvert, "Children in the House, 1890 to 1930," 87. Calvert writes that militaristic themes in boys' rooms became very popular in the 1920s.

Articles on interior decoration sometimes paired examples of a boy's room and a girl's room, highlighting the differences between them, as though to teach mothers the codes for gender. See, for example, Guild, "The Room That Was Built for a Boy / The Room that Was Built for a Girl," 1054-1055. Hope Harvey, "The Girl's Room-- The Boy's Room," *Woman's Home Companion* 55 (November, 1928). In part, this change was caused by new concerns with child sexuality. Parents in the early twentieth century were less comfortable with sons and daughters rooming together than were those of a generation earlier. Children after babyhood were moved to gender-separated rooms, which by 1910 were sharply differentiated using codes of color and design. (Calvert, "Children in the House, 1890 to 1930," 87.)

<sup>125</sup> Tachau, "The Boy's Room," 190-191.

<sup>126</sup> Elizabeth Collins Cromley, "A History of American Beds and Bedrooms, 1890-1930," in *American Home Life, 1880-1930. A Social History of Spaces and Services*, ed. Jessica H. and Thomas J. Schlereth Foy (Knoxville, 1992), 128-9. Adler, *The New Interior : Modern Decorations for the Modern Home*. 132. Beard, "How to Build and Furnish a Surprise Den in a Modern House."

least, to a masculine idea of home decoration.<sup>127</sup> Sports pennants and trophies were suggested decoration for both boys' rooms and men's dens.<sup>128</sup> Fathers and sons were presumed to share taste to some extent, for one mother counted her son's room design a success because boys loved to "collect there" and "the men enthuse over it."<sup>129</sup>

Authors who argued for the creation of special spaces for boys emphasized the masculinity of the spaces by pointedly excluding reference to the sisters. The emphasis of this home design discussion was on the creation of spaces for boys—mother and sisters' involvement was rarely mentioned and was extremely limited in the fatherhood literature.<sup>130</sup> Even articles on home decoration in women's magazines and decorating magazines, which did not tend to focus on the father-son relationship, emphasized the importance of allowing boys to create their own space and build their own furniture and the importance of creating distinctly masculine spaces in the home.<sup>131</sup> The creation of separate, masculine spaces within the home reveals discomfort with male involvement in the domestic sphere at the same time as the creation of family-friendly living rooms and more open floor plans in the early twentieth century worked to create a home environment that was comfortable and

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<sup>127</sup> Clarke, "The Boy's Retreat."

<sup>128</sup> Candace Wheeler, *Principles of Home Decoration* (NY: Doubleday, Page and Co., 1903), 61-2, quoted in Cromley, "A History of American Beds and Bedrooms, 1890-1930," 129.

<sup>129</sup> Clarke, "The Boy's Retreat." Furthermore, as with dens, boys' rooms were frequently described as places for entertaining male guests. The notion that a person should be able to entertain with pride and in comfort was central to discussions of both dens and boy's rooms. (Rexford, "Putting the Country Home in Order," 365.) In 1905, one boy who had decorated his room with furniture he built himself, explained that "every fellow" wanted a room to entertain his friends. He wrote of decorating his bedroom, "I wanted my den to be substantial, convenient and comfortable." In addition to using the word "den" to describe his bedroom, he connected his room to a man's den by comparing his current room to an imagined den "with mahogany and rare furnishings" of his adult future. (Clifford B. Walker, "Railroad-Tie Furniture to Furnish a Boy's Den," *Woman's Home Companion* 32 (October, 1905).) A 1907 article recommended decorating the boy's space such that "with his books about him he has a den of his own to which he can invite his boy friends." (Dwight, "How to Make a Boy's Room Inviting.") Though the author does not explicitly say so, the implication is that the boy will have a masculine, grown-up space, just like his dad, for entertaining. A 1911 article said that a boy "should have a den of his own" and that he ought to furnish it with furniture made by himself, including a table, bench, bookshelf, gun-rack and desk. "Furniture for a Boy's Room, Made by the Boy Himself," *Woman's Home Companion*, October 1911. Essentially the exact pieces recommended for a father's den.

<sup>130</sup> For instance, one author suggested that mother might make a rug and sister curtains for the boys' room. Bentley Bates, "Home, Dad, and a Boy's Room" in Editorial Board of the Father and Son League, ed., *The Boy's Own Book*. 30-31.

<sup>131</sup> Determined boy-worker, prolific author, and president of the Father and Son League Frank Cheley often urged boys to create and maintain their own domestic spaces, emphasizing work such as building bookshelves more than the work of sweeping and dusting. Cheley often suggested that fathers and sons work together on these projects. Women's magazines also suggested that boys should be encouraged to be actively involved in the creation and maintenance of their rooms in the home. A 1905 article in *Woman's Home Companion* encouraged such handicraft by publishing an article written by a boy who had designed and built furniture for his own room out of railroad ties and two other articles describing how boys could follow the example of youngsters who had designed their own room in all its particulars. (Walker, "Railroad-Tie Furniture to Furnish a Boy's Den." Joseph H. Adams, "Fitting Up a Boy's Room," *Woman's Home Companion* 32 (February, 1905). Joseph Adams, "Fitting Up a Boy's Room," *Woman's Home Companion*, March 1905.) In 1911, the *Companion* encouraged boys to send in the plans and descriptions of things they had successfully built for their own rooms, offering a set of five books on boys' "handy occupations" as a prize to the best original idea. ("Furniture for a Boy's Room, Made by the Boy Himself.") Such work was, to some extent, domestic, but building furniture is a distinctly masculine way to contribute to the interior decoration of the home and carpentry was emphasized more often than the other aspects of room design.

inviting the men and boys of the family. Boys' rooms and play areas that were for older boys were sharply gendered spaces. These areas were designed to cultivate father-son togetherness apart from mothers, sisters, and tots. The idea of this play-centered relationship, in which father joined his son in boy activities, rather than son joining father for walks or study, represents a changing idea of fatherhood in which fathers were to relate to their sons as "former boys." These masculine spaces in some ways runs counter to the ideal of family togetherness represented by the living room in that boys' spaces were consciously designed to encourage the exclusion of the females, but this attention to boys' spaces relates more to this new ideal of youthful parenting than it does to the old idea of masculine retreat, represented by the den.

## **Conclusion**

New attention to fathering in the early twentieth century was concerned with creating closer relationships between fathers and their children and was focused on keeping men at home emotionally and physically. In the 1910s and 1920s authors increasingly assured men that their domestic contribution was manly by emphasizing the difference between masculine nurture and feminine nurture. Men in the home were bold, fearless, full of humor and playfulness. They loved their children, but their love was distinctly masculine in this new image of what it meant to be a modern father. Such efforts to reconcile the contradictions between masculinity and paternal tenderness were accompanied by concrete efforts to reconcile the home itself with contemporary ideas about masculine style and comfort. In these conversations about male nurture and male domesticity, boys came to stand for many of the dilemmas in this effort to maintain gender norms while encouraging greater domesticity among males. Keeping boys at home went hand-in-hand with creating physical spaces designed to appeal to fathers and to encourage father-son interaction.

The manner of appealing to fathers was new in the 1910s and 1920s and represents a large change in what it meant to be a father and to be a man. The new emphasis on playfulness, boyishness (indeed, on father-son interaction rather than father-child interactions), and good cheer evident in the creation of special spaces for boys to interact with their fathers, was a part of a greater change in parenting and gender roles. Likewise, the emphasis on a new, modern ideal of family life in which togetherness and casualness was emphasized over public display, an ideal which rejected the style of the Victorian era as effeminate and priggish and encouraged the creation of family spaces comfortable for both boys and fathers contributed to the new ideal of fatherhood. What it meant to be a good father changed to incorporate both a new emphasis on family togetherness and informal, friendly interaction among family members and a new emphasis on men as cheerful and worry-free, as compared to mothers.

Authors writing about fatherhood and those seeking to make homes more comfortable to men and boys between 1900 and 1930 shared a commitment to convincing men to spend more time with their families, a commitment rooted in their fears about the dissolution of the American family as well as the so-called effeminization of middle-class boys. With the growth of a democratic ideal of the middle-class family, decorators, architects, and authors writing about fatherhood shared an interest in creating homes comfortable to men and boys. Fathers addressed their feelings of exclusion around the birth of an infant and their desire to carve out a special, masculine, playful relationship with their children. In the 1920s, the elevation of divine motherhood gave way to an idealized vision of the middle-class family as

companionable and cooperative. The household was increasingly organized with father in mind, in order to draw father in and hold him close to the family's center.

## Chapter 3

### From Mothering to Parenting: Child-Rearing Experts and the Inclusion of Fathers

The early 1900s saw the rise of the childrearing expert. Mothers, and later, parents, were instructed on both the day-to-day mechanics of infant care and on the “correct” methods for dealing with childrearing choices, such as discipline and schedule. Whereas in 1900, few parenting organizations or books or articles of childrearing advice thought to reach out to fathers, by 1930 it was typical for organizations and publications to include a consideration of fathers. The bulk of childrearing advice, particularly about very young children, remained explicitly or implicitly directed at mothers and the majority of readers of parenting advice literature and members of parenting organizations remained female in 1930. Yet, the idea of fatherhood as a profession, as a central interest in men’s lives and a subject worthy of consideration, grew. The language of parenting advice articles and books changed from a nearly exclusive use of the word “mother” to the more inclusive “parent.” Major reform-minded organizations and groups interested in children’s welfare, such as the Children’s Bureau and Better Baby Campaigns, kindergarten workers, the Congress of Mothers, and child study organizations, all grappled with how to get more men to become involved in reform efforts. The child-study movement grew into the movement for education for marriage and parenthood, developed in home economics departments and life-education programs in colleges. These programs and departments also made efforts in the 1910s and 1920s to include men and a consideration of fatherhood. Newspaper advice columnists reflected this change in tone and greater inclusivity in the 1920s, addressing fathers more frequently and in a more positive way.

#### Rise of the Childrearing Expert

In the late nineteenth century, reformers concerned with children and women tended to elevate motherhood to the status of a divinely inherited quality specific to women and this notion of divine motherhood remained powerful well into the twentieth century. However, as the twentieth century progressed, the importance of scientific expertise was promoted over maternal instinct and women’s folk wisdom in writings about child rearing and professionals such as doctors and, eventually, psychologists, weighed in on childrearing choices and methods. At the third convention of the National Congress of Mothers, the highly influential pediatrician and author L. Emmet Holt warned his audience that it was time to dispense with the advice of “female relatives and friends whose knowledge is very limited, but whose prejudices regarding these matters are very strong....”<sup>1</sup> The field of child-rearing advice giving grew expansively in the

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Ann Hulbert, *Raising America: Experts, Parents, and a Century of Advice About Children* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003), 41-42. Holt was the author of the very successful *Care and Feeding of Infants* (1896)

early 1900s and advice givers who were experienced mothers without professional credentials were increasingly replaced by doctors and academics. By the mid-1920s, the notion of divine motherhood had gone out of fashion and mothers were even suspect in the eyes of child-rearing experts as potentially over-protective problems rather than divinely appointed sources of love and wisdom.<sup>2</sup> Behaviorism, a theory developed by John Watson, held that mothers' over-indulgences, such as cradling and comforting infants, created weakness and dependency. Organizations such as the Children's Bureau and popular magazines adopted the behaviorists' idea that all behavior was learned.<sup>3</sup>

The movement for the professionalization of motherhood moved from a celebration of divine motherhood toward a more scientific approach to mothering, which focused on education and scientific inquiry. Mothers turned to childrearing experts for help in their efforts to raise their children in the best possible way. In 1978, Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre English documented the rise of the expert in *For Her Own Good: 150 Years of the Experts Advice to Women*. Ehrenreich and English explored the ways in which such expertise stripped women of their authority as mothers, writing:

The relationship between women and the experts was not unlike conventional relationships between women and men. The experts wooed their female constituency, promising the 'right' and scientific way to live, and women responded-- most eagerly in the upper and middle classes, more slowly among the poor-- with dependency and trust.<sup>4</sup>

Ehrenreich and English acknowledged the role women, even feminists, played in promoting the influence of these experts, but described the relationship between women and scientific experts as a "romance."<sup>5</sup> Historian Julia Grant in 1998 further explored the way in which, far from having expertise imposed upon them, middle- and upper-class mothers in fact sought out such information and used it selectively, rather than following it blindly.

In fact, women as a consumer group organized to demand child development expertise even before the profession was established, as they sought assistance in the increasingly complex and privatized enterprise of raising children.<sup>6</sup>

Middle- and upper- class women eagerly read the advice of child-rearing experts seeking the best ways to raise children. With the growth of scientific child-rearing expertise

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<sup>2</sup> The rise of the child-rearing expert is discussed at length in the following: Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre English, *For Her Own Good : 150 Years of the Experts' Advice to Women*, 1st ed. (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Press, 1978). (Particularly Chapter 6, "The Century of the Child"). Molly Ladd-Taylor, *Mother-Work : Women, Child Welfare, and the State, 1890-1930*, Women in American History (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994). Julia Grant, *Raising Baby by the Book : The Education of American Mothers* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998). Ann Hulbert, *Raising America*.

<sup>3</sup> Grant, *Raising Baby by the Book*, 41.

<sup>4</sup> Ehrenreich and English, *For Her Own Good*, 4.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>6</sup> Grant, *Raising Baby by the Book*, 6.



came a turn away from a focus on “mothering” to a discussion of “parenting.” Increasingly in the 1920s, the word “mothers” was replaced by “parents” in advice literature.<sup>7</sup> By the 1920s, Child-Study campaigns had transformed into a campaign for parent education.<sup>8</sup>

## Education for Fathers, 1900-1910

As soon as the movement for the education of motherhood gained steam, certain reformers began to suggest that men also should be educated for their familial roles, but these ideas did not find a universally receptive audience. An author in *The North American Review* in 1893 mocked the idea that a father needed to read books of instruction on parenting, condemning them as instruments “designed for the instruction and humiliation of parents.”<sup>9</sup> A British author, published in *Littell’s Living Age* in the United States, derided an article from the *Parents’ Review* that called for parents to educate themselves and found insulting the condescending tone of the article’s comparison of a father to a bird, ““ever on his way homewards with a worm in his beak.”” The *Little’s Living Age* article argued aggressively against the notion that the breadwinner should seek to educate himself about parenting.<sup>10</sup> Breadwinning, this author suggested, was responsibility enough and, he continued, fathers were unlikely to be receptive to such added responsibilities. He condemned the newly founded “Parents’ Educational Union” (of twelve members) as meddlers and suggested that the father who joined this organization would cut a “poor figure” heading off on a train, much like his schoolboy sons, to be examined in his “Continuation School.”<sup>11</sup> This author considered parents’ education insulting and even child-like. Formal education, he seems to suggest, should be left to children and, perhaps, mothers.

Some writers at the turn of the century were considerably more positive about education for fatherhood. Kindergartener Nora Archibald Smith, for example, was open to the idea of education for fatherhood. In 1894 she asked, “And what is the future father doing...? Is he preparing for his possible responsibilities? is he strengthening his shoulders for the burdens which may sometime be laid upon them? or is one parent, if she be a good one, supposed to be enough in a family? I put these questions as one thirstily desiring information. If I could answer, I should not ask them.”<sup>12</sup> Edward Howard Griggs, professor of humanities and chair of ethics at Stanford, contributed a series of

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<sup>7</sup> Maxine P. Atkinson and Stephen P. Blackwelder, “Fathering in the 20th Century,” *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 55, no. 4 (1993): 980.

<sup>8</sup> Grant, *Raising Baby by the Book*, 41.

<sup>9</sup> Agnes Repplier, “In Behalf of Parents,” *The North American Review* 157, no. 441 (1893): 232.

<sup>10</sup> The author further asked: “Who that reads of fresh tasks to be imposed, can withhold a generous sigh of sympathy, or even a tear of pity for the hated parent, already overwhelmed with the cares of providing his sons and daughters with the necessary equipment for the battle of life? Dwell for a moment-- he has to dwell for many moments-- on the butcher's and baker's bills, the tailor's and dressmaker's bills, the triennial school bills-- but we forbear. If, to all these is to be added the bill (in time and anxiety) of his own education as a parent, who, we ask, will be found to rashly undertake so arduous a position?” “The Cry of the Parents, by One of Them,” *Littell’s Living Age* 185 (1890): 766.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*: 768.

<sup>12</sup> Nora Archibald Smith, “Training for Parenthood,” *The Outlook* 49 (1894): 25.

articles on the moral training of children to *The Ladies' Home Journal* in 1903, in which he wrote:

Mothers, it is true, are awakening to the fact that motherhood is a profession demanding a high degree of special and liberal culture for its right fulfillment, but the profession of fatherhood (even the words sound strange) is almost undiscovered. Most fathers feel that they have done quite well by their children if they won for them food, clothing and shelter, failing to see that the very heart of the parent's duty to the child is the moral influence that can come only through daily companionship.<sup>13</sup>

In 1903, the idea of a “profession of fatherhood” was new and strange, but it became less so as the decade passed.

Authors committed to an expert-driven, educated motherhood began to envision the benefits of likewise educating fathers. For example, a humorous book of “vocabulary” published in 1908 for the new father suggested that men needed assistance of advice literature even more than women since “Nature seems to have provided [women] with an instructive bibliography” on how to understand their infants.<sup>14</sup> This author suggested that the lack of “maternal instinct” made men even more in need of education for parenting than women. An article in *Outlook* magazine referencing Ernest Hamlin Abbott’s *On the Training of Parents* suggested that it was little wonder that fathers, who were so ill-prepared by their education to expect the “duties and joys” of fatherhood, would make poor parents, abandoning the care of the children mainly to their wives.<sup>15</sup> In her *Century of the Child*, translated into English in 1909, Swedish feminist Ellen Key envisioned a future that included the education for fatherhood alongside education for motherhood.<sup>16</sup> Marion Talbot, University of Chicago sociologist, in the *American Journal of Sociology* in 1909 wrote of “the imperative social demand that men be fitted for their duties of husband and father,” insisting that as many American homes were “suffering from the incapacity of husbands and fathers to contribute their share to the family life as from the attempt of wives and mothers to develop their individuality.”<sup>17</sup> Boys and girls both must be trained for parenthood, she argued, to correct for changes wrought by modernization:

Under the former industrial system the father shared much more largely than at present in the life and training of the child. The part which he now plays is often so small as to give rise to a series of

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<sup>13</sup> Edward Howard Griggs, "Edward Howard Griggs's Talks: The Moral Training of a Child, Fourth Paper--the Influence of the Personal World," *The Ladies' Home Journal*, February 1903.

<sup>14</sup> O.N.E., *A Vocabulary for Young Fathers* (New York: Dodge Publishing Co., 1908), 8-9. This book was ahead of its time with its use of humor and its breezy style regarding fatherhood.

<sup>15</sup> "The Training of Parents," *The New Outlook* 89 (1908): 16.

<sup>16</sup> Ellen Karolina Sofia Key, *Century of the Child* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1909), 105.

<sup>17</sup> Marion Talbot, "Disappearance of Household Industries and Education," *American Journal of Sociology* 14 (1909): 621.

humorous tales with the child's ignorance of his father as the central theme.<sup>18</sup>

She continued, "A lessening of the so-called feminization of the schools by replacing women with men teachers is but a sorry remedy for the difficulty...." and suggested that one aspect of the solution to this problem had received less attention than it deserved—and that was educating boys for fatherhood.<sup>19</sup> Talbot argued that education for fatherhood was necessary to combat the twin problems of an increasing divorce rate and "race suicide" brought about by a declining birth rate among native-born white Americans:

Race suicide and divorce are symptoms of a social disorder, doubtless very grave and certainly very evident, whose remedy, in my opinion, lies in the direction of training both boys and girls for parenthood.<sup>20</sup>

Social scientists in the early twentieth century took very seriously the rising divorce rate and the supposed threat to the family and the white race that it represented. Education for fatherhood often came up in this context, as a means toward creating closer-knit, more secure families.

Some authors argued against specific education for parenthood, but the respect with which they considered the question of preparing boys for fatherhood reveals a growing seriousness about preparing young men for paternal responsibilities. Kate Upson Clark, the author of parenting advice books, argued that the schools needed to prepare boys for fatherhood and girls for motherhood, most importantly by helping them achieve strong and able bodies to physically prepare them for parenthood.<sup>21</sup> The president of a New York City mothers' club remarked in a letter to the *New York Times* that President Theodore Roosevelt's call for a differentiation of education to help women learn to be good mothers made her wonder what courses were offered by "the great universities...which provide for the training of boys to be good fathers."<sup>22</sup> To this an anonymous author in *Harper's Weekly* responded, giving the discussion more serious consideration than opponents a decade earlier had, arguing that such courses were not necessary since "A good man is very apt to be a pretty good father. If the colleges turn out good men they do enough towards supplying good fathers. No experience better qualifies a man to be a good father of boys than to have been himself a boy." The author explained that a "a good mother must be a judge of health, diet, and clothes, and must watch and regulate all the details of the child's life. Mothering is skilled labor; fathering isn't."<sup>23</sup> To the extent that education for motherhood efforts involved food and clothing choices, fathers remained mainly exempt throughout the 1910s and 1920s; however, when child-rearing experts addressed children's education or the new field of child

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid.: 620.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.: 621.

<sup>21</sup> Kate Upson Clark, "On Education for Motherhood," *The Times Dispatch*, July 20 1904.

<sup>22</sup> Mrs. Lillie Devreux Blake quoted in "Commenting on President Roosevelt's Recent Address...", *Harper's Weekly* (1905).

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

psychology, fathers were given a more significant role. From 1900 to 1910, sporadic consideration of education for fatherhood became hesitantly more positive, but remained a minor consideration in the education for motherhood movement.

## The Mothercraft Movement

The Mothercraft movement, which grew out of child study, promoted mothering as a profession. Mary L. Read, who founded the first American School of Mothercraft in New York City in 1911, wrote in the introduction of her *Mothercraft Manual*,

What of fathercraft? Every child has two parents, equal in responsibility for his heredity and likewise for his rearing. Fathers could hardly be expected ordinarily to be versed in the intricacies of clothing, feeding, and bathing the baby. But why should not every man understand the principles of hygiene and foods as a matter of his general knowledge quite as much as for cooperation with the mother in the children's regime? Why should he not with equal zest make a study of growth and development during childhood? Even more, why should he not be intimately acquainted with child psychology and the fundamental principles of child training and education, that he may understand his own children and cooperate sympathetically in their upbringing?<sup>24</sup>

Sociologist Ralph LaRossa, in his 1997 study of the history of fatherhood from 1900 to 1940, suggested that this quotation demonstrates the tendency among proponents of Mothercraft to resign fathers to the role of mere assistant. He wrote, "What appeared on the surface, then, to be an open invitation to fathers to become partners in the child-rearing process was, from another angle, something less."<sup>25</sup> He argued that, "One of the ironies of the mothercraft movement was that in order to professionalize mothering it also had to acknowledge fathering. The reason was simple: If child rearing depended not on biology but on socialization, then anyone could learn how to do it-- even fathers."<sup>26</sup> The mothercraft movement and those working for the education for motherhood were certainly focused on educating and increasing respect for mothers specifically, but that does not mean that they were necessarily reluctant to "acknowledge fathering."

All but radical feminists assumed that mothers would be the full-time caregivers of children in anything other than exceptional circumstances and assumed that the large majority of daily care of young children would be done either by mother or under her charge. This was a reflection of the realities of middle-class life of the time. Men worked long hours outside the home in most circumstances and women did not. Men were expected to provide financially for their families, which left them little time for daily care of young children. Of course, middle-class mothers, even those wealthy

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<sup>24</sup> Mary L. Read, *The Mothercraft Manual*. (Boston, Little, Brown, 1916), xii. Quoted in Ralph LaRossa, *The Modernization of Fatherhood: A Social and Political History* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1997), 38.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

enough to hire help with heavy housework, also had work that kept them from tending their children, but their work was at home. A study of “comfortable” families in the 1920s determined that women spent an average of fifty-six hours per week in housework and some complained that this work left them too exhausted to enjoy time with their children.<sup>27</sup> Nonetheless, authors who were working to educate parents about child-rearing and those looking to define motherhood as a profession assumed that mothers did most care-giving and most considered this to be proper and good. To the extent that education for parenthood was focused on the daily physical care of children, the focus remained on mothers, for they were almost always the primary caregivers and only a small number of people thought to question this.

Many authors, particularly in the first years of the twentieth century, emphasized a mother’s supposed natural and instinctive feminine ability to care for children and contrasted her nurturing nature with the sterner, more disinterested demeanor of fathers. What is interesting about the Mothercraft movement and about the way in which child-rearing experts and advice-givers changed over the first decades of the twentieth century is that they increasingly rejected the idea of a special inherent feminine instinct for caregiving. As LaRossa pointed out, by emphasizing the extent to which mothering was a skill that could be studied and learned, those in the Mothercraft movement removed it from something uniquely available to mothers. The increased use of the term “parent” in place of “mother” in child-rearing advice literature and popular magazines reflects the growing notion that parenting with its specific skills should or could involve both men and women and could be taught to either.

## **The Profession of Fatherhood, 1910s**

In the 1910s authors more often used the notion of a “profession of fatherhood” to indicate that fatherhood, along with motherhood, was a profession worthy of serious study and consideration. In 1914, an article *Outlook* suggested,

The idea that fatherhood is really a profession, that success in it is a notable thing, worthy of distinction, never seriously occurred to any one. For the raising of a family in these days is one of the things that every man does, but, like playing golf or being handy around the house, it lies outside the serious domain of business, and is therefore a matter of little importance.<sup>28</sup>

Jean Paul Richter, in his “Doctrine of Education” lamented that “The education of most fathers is but a system of rules to keep the child at a respectful distance from them...”<sup>29</sup>

In 1913 and 1914, Chief (Boy) Scout Librarian Franklin Mathiews published an essay on the importance of fatherhood both in the *New York Times* and in a multi-volume publication for parents published by The National Congress of Mothers and Parent-Teacher Associations. In it he called for a profession of fatherhood, explaining, “When we think of any profession, we think of a course of study, of knowledge in a particular

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<sup>27</sup> Taylor, *Mother-Work*, 32.

<sup>28</sup> Bruce Barton, “When Your Son Is a Fool,” *Outlook* 107 (1914): 38.

<sup>29</sup> Quoted in “Book Notes,” *The Kindergarten-Primary Magazine* 20 (1907): 203.

field, systematized, organized into sciences. We are coming, or better still, we have come to the time when we may well speak of the profession of fatherhood or the profession of motherhood."<sup>30</sup> Oberlin dean and writer on boy life, Walter Fiske, made profession his main theme in his article for the National Congress of Mothers and Parent-Teacher Associations' series in 1914, writing "Parenthood is a profession; perhaps the noblest profession. It is a life calling. It is a fine art; and it is based upon a genuine science. There is therefore a psychology of fatherhood, and the rudiments of it every boy's father should know."<sup>31</sup> Another author in the multivolume work mentioned above spoke in 1914 of "the profession of parenthood" in a manner suggesting that he expected his readers to be familiar with that idea.<sup>32</sup> It became increasingly common to discuss the profession of fatherhood in the 1910s, but in the mid-twenties some child-study experts still regarded it as a new idea. The introduction to the papers of the Child Study Association of America conference "Concerning Parents" held in 1925 suggested that "Fathers and mothers are beginning to realize that parenthood is a vocation and that its responsibilities can be met adequately only by these [sic] who bring to it an educational equipment sufficient for the task."<sup>33</sup>

The authors of the 1910s and even earlier who wrote about fatherhood or parenthood as a profession requiring special education sometimes explicitly suggested that women educate their husbands along these lines. Kindergartner Jenny Merrill, writing for *The Kindergarten-Primary Magazine* in 1908, urged mothers to have patience when introducing their husbands to the games designed by a kindergarten educator to enrich the father-child relationship and encouraged mothers to give a book teaching fathers games to play with very young children and infants to their husbands as a gift.<sup>34</sup> Elizabeth Harrison, president of the National Kindergarten College and author of a series of parenting articles for the *Ladies Home Journal*, wrote approvingly in 1914 of a mother who read to her husband from a study of child nature while he was dressing or eating "so that he might become imbued with its spirit."<sup>35</sup> Franklin Mathews in his essay on fatherhood as a profession, first published in 1913, wrote that fathers were "very much interested" in their children's upbringing, but turned responsibility over to the mothers because of their great confidence in the ability of mothers: "What is needed, then, is a strong urge on the part of the well-informed mother that the father should share in her knowledge of child-life and join with her in helping to direct the welfare work for boys

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<sup>30</sup> Franklin K. Mathews, "The Profession of Fatherhood," in *Parents and Their Problems*, ed. Weeks, 224. Also, ———, "The Crying Need of a 'Profession of Fatherhood'," *New York Times*, July 6 1913.

<sup>31</sup> G. Walter Fiske, "The Boy's Normal Home Relationships," in *Parents and Their Problems*, ed. Weeks, 288. Also appears in Walter Fiske, "Developing Normal Home Relationships for the Boy," in *Fathering the Boy*, ed. Frank H. Cheley (1921), 22.

<sup>32</sup> Shailer Mathews, "The Call to American Parents," in *Parents and Their Problems*, ed. Weeks, 100. Fiske, "The Boy's Normal Home Relationships," in *Parents and Their Problems*, ed. Weeks, 283-293.

<sup>33</sup> *Concerning Parents; a Symposium on Present Day Parenthood*, (New York: New Republic, Inc., 1926), v.

<sup>34</sup> Jenny B. Merrill, "Mothers' Meetings and Reading Circles," *The Kindergarten-Primary Magazine* XX, no. 6 (1908): 204.

<sup>35</sup> Elizabeth Cherrill Birney, "A Little Library for Mothers," in *Parents and Their Problems*, ed. Weeks, 231. In an interesting reversal of this common idea, one author writing about fatherhood in 1922 told of a father of two young boys, aged one and three, who read aloud to his busy wife from a child training book. Philip E. Howard, *Father and Son: An Intimate Study* (Philadelphia: The Sunday School Times Company, 1922), 10.

and girls both within and without the home. In a word, it's 'up to the woman.'"<sup>36</sup> According to this viewpoint, the mother, once properly educated, would serve as an example and teacher to the father who would come to realize the benefits of educated parenthood and want to work together with his wife to raise the children according to modern principles and methods. With the authority of experts behind them, mothers were encouraged to teach their husbands, reflecting the way in which the movement for educated motherhood could bolster women's status in the home. Such a cooperative approach to childrearing also reflected the growing emphasis on companionship between husband and wife.

## The Influence of Psychology

In 1887, G. Stanley Hall founded *The American Journal of Psychology*, the first journal of psychology in the United States, and, a few years later, became the first president of the American Psychological Association. Hall wrote the seminal two-volume work *Adolescence* in 1904, and in 1909 he introduced Americans to Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung. Thanks in no small part to Hall's efforts, in the early 1900s, the influence of psychology grew in importance and its terms became more prevalent in the popular lexicon of Americans. Some authors argued that fathers, as much as mothers, could benefit from the new science of psychology and could learn more about parenting by learning about child development. George Herbert Betts, a professor of psychology at Cornell, criticized fathers for keeping abreast of professional, political, social and industrial issues, while knowing little about the science of childrearing. He queried in *Fathers and Mothers* (1915):

[H]ow many fathers make a serious study of boy nature, not only from the point of view of sympathetic observation and companionship with their own son, but also scientific matter dealing with boyhood? How many fathers are informed on the simple truths taught by practical psychology concerning their children? How many buy and read books or magazines dealing with child nature and education? How many are able to judge the different methods proposed for teaching the child religion? How many can in a delicate and tactful way initiate the child into the mysteries of sex, and thereby lead to purity of thought and habit? How many fathers devote the time, the interest and the intelligence necessary to the full understanding of their sons?<sup>37</sup>

Betts argued that fathers needed to draw from the new font of expert knowledge, especially emphasizing fathers' relationships to their sons.

G. Stanley Hall was particularly interested in boys' nature and the so-called "boy problem" of the early 1900s. Reform-minded authors and early psychologists discussed at length the supposed feminization of middle-class culture and its deleterious effects on

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<sup>36</sup> Franklin K. Mathiews, "The Crying Need of a 'Profession of Fatherhood'," *New York Times*, July 6 1913, X10. ———, "The Profession of Fatherhood," in *Parents and Their Problems*, ed. Weeks, 227.

<sup>37</sup> George Herbert Betts, *Fathers and Mothers* (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1915), 16-17.

middle-class boys. Hall believed in a theory of “recapitulation,” whereby each individual white male needed to relive the history of the race. Boys and adolescents went through phases, he argued, of primitive tribalism, during which they needed the fellowship of a gang of male youths, vigorous physical activity and group identity. Hall and reformers influenced by him believed that men needed to embrace this necessary developmental phase of “gang life” and help to channel and direct it positively.<sup>38</sup> Although early concern with boys focused not on family roles but on institutional and organizational solutions, such as scouting, single-sex education, increasing numbers of male teachers, and organizing sports and playgrounds, the focus on the “boy problem” eventually expanded to include efforts to affect father-son bonds.<sup>39</sup> In part because of this interest in boys’ nature and the ‘boy problem’, in the 1910s and especially the 1920s, discussions of educated fathering focused on fathers’ relationships with sons more than daughters.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> G. Stanley Hall. "Adolescence Its Psychology and Its Relations to Physiology, Anthropology, Sociology Sex, Crime, Religion and Education, Vol. I." (New York: D. Appleton & Company, 1904, ————. "Adolescence Its Psychology and Its Relations to Physiology, Anthropology, Sociology Sex, Crime, Religion and Education, Vol. II." (New York: D. Appleton & Company, 1904. William Byron Forbush, *The Boy Problem; a Study in Social Pedagogy*, 2d ed. (Boston, Chicago,: The Pilgrim Press, 1901).

<sup>39</sup> For information on the efforts to address the “boy problem” through institutional changes see, David I. Macleod, *Building Character in the American Boy: The Boy Scouts, YMCA, and Their Forerunners, 1870-1920* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1983). Leslie Paris, *Children's Nature: The Rise of the American Summer Camp* (New York: NYU Press, 2008). For a discussion of the so-called “crisis of masculinity” of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, see: Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995). Mark C. Carnes and Clyde Griffen, *Meanings for Manhood : Constructions of Masculinity in Victorian America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990). E. Anthony Rotundo, *American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1993), T. J. Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace : Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880-1920*, 1st ed. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981). Richard Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation : The Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: Atheneum, 1992). “Chapter 3: Men and Manliness” in Peter G. Filene, *Him/Her/Self: Sex Roles in Modern America*, 1986 ed. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974). Michael S. Kimmel, ""Born to Run": Nineteenth-Century Fantasies of Masculine Retreat and Re-Creation (or the Historical Rust on Iron John)," in *The Politics of Manhood: Profeminist Men Respond to the Mythopoetic Men's Movement (and the Mythopoetic Leaders Answer)*, ed. Michael S. Kimmel (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995).

<sup>40</sup> LaRossa analyzed a theoretic sample of fatherhood articles (so classified by the *Readers' Guide to Periodic Literature*). Of approximately 222 total articles, LaRossa chose 149 to analyze, creating a theoretical sample. He chose these articles based on finding the best examples to represent repeating themes, eliminating repeats. LaRossa searched for the terms “son” or “daughter” in the selected articles and determined that there was a greater emphasis on sons than daughters throughout the 1901-1942 period he examined, but that the emphasis on sons at the expense of daughters was at a low between 1901-1909 (with a ratio of mentions of sons to daughters of 1.25), it remained steady from 1910-15 (with a ratio of 1.26) and dramatically peaked between 1916-1921 (with a ratio of 4.0). The ratio fell slightly in 1922-1929 (to 3.52), and then fell more dramatically in 1930-34 (to 1.97) remaining about the same from 1935-39 (at 1.94).

In order to illustrate this dramatic increase in the discussion of sons at the expense of daughters, LaRossa broke his data into unequal year divisions, which drove the sample size down to a very small number. For instance, in the dramatic high ratio of sons to daughters in 1916-1921, the sample size was only eight articles, four of which were about the war’s effect on sons and fathers (although eliminating these four articles from consideration did not alter the ratio). When his data is manipulated to create more even time periods and larger sample sizes, the basic trend holds up, although some of the dramatic swings are removed. From 1901-1909, the ratio of articles mentioning sons to daughters was 1.25; in 1910-1920 it



## Reformers and The Children's Bureau

Reformers committed to helping impoverished mothers and children also included fathers in their efforts in the second and third decade of the twentieth century. The Children's Bureau, launched in 1912, grew out of Progressive Era reforms and was the first government department devoted entirely to children. Julia Lathrop, first head of the Children's Bureau, had this to say about the Bureau's service mission:

It must be done in a way to respect and to express the spirit of parenthood, not motherhood alone nor fatherhood alone, but parenthood. There will then be no risk of undue interference, no danger of overbearing agents forcing their way into homes over parental protest, as has been feared.<sup>41</sup>

The Bureau's first efforts were to combat infant mortality, a politically astute move by Lathrop who correctly judged that such an effort would not provide ammunition for the Bureau's opponents who believed that the Bureau was either imposing too much in the private realm or overlapping with the work of other agencies.<sup>42</sup> The Bureau focused on mothers' education because it did not have the means to address in other ways the poverty which led to much higher infant mortality rates among the poor but Lathrop did make efforts to draw the nation's attention to the problems of poverty, focusing as she did so on the need to allow fathers to earn an adequate wage. Making sure fathers could earn enough to support their families was the best way to drop the infant mortality rate, according to Lathrop.<sup>43</sup>

Most of the Bureau's reflections on fathering were about breadwinning, but the Bureau also attempted to instruct men in proper child-rearing techniques to some extent. In addition to its popular pamphlets on prenatal care and infant care, the Children's Bureau printed a "Message to Fathers" to distribute locally and encouraged local groups to emphasize the importance of fathers in providing for the welfare of infants.<sup>44</sup> The Bureau took note of the success of Pittsburgh Baby Week's efforts to reach out to fathers and adapted a "Letter to Fathers" that reminded fathers of their responsibilities-- to care for the mother before and after birth and to help keep her milk supply up by keeping the mother from overworking.<sup>45</sup> A health week campaign in Iowa, for example, included a "father's day" with window demonstrations of things "'father should know' regarding proper food, sleep and regular habits" followed by infant wellness exams by appointment in the afternoon alongside speeches directed at fathers by Cora Bussey Hills, vice president of the National Congress of Mothers and Parent-Teacher Associations, and a

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was 1.8; from 1922-1929, it jumped to 3.5; and from 1930-39 it had dropped back to 1.96. LaRossa, *The Modernization of Fatherhood*, 134-35, 252-53, n. 45.

<sup>41</sup> Julia C. Lathrop, "The Children's Bureau," *The American Journal of Sociology* 18, no. 3 (1912): 33.

<sup>42</sup> Kriste Lindenmeyer, *'A Right to Childhood': The U.S. Children's Bureau and Child Welfare, 1912-46* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 35.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

<sup>44</sup> United States Children's Bureau, "Baby-Week Campaigns: Suggestions for Communities of Various Sizes," (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1915), 28.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 60.

speech by a rabbi on the moral training of children.<sup>46</sup> In the Washington, D.C. area in 1916, the Father's Day of baby week was observed by sending baby-care literature home to fathers with the pupils of public schools.<sup>47</sup>

There are indications that fathers were receptive to such efforts. According to the *Washington Post* many fathers attended the 1916 Father's day exhibits of the local baby week campaign and kept the visiting nurse busy answering questions, particularly about proper clothing and diet for toddlers.<sup>48</sup> The *Los Angeles Times* reported in 1918 that "Fathers as well as mothers are flocking to the lectures, conferences and exhibits, of Better Baby Week" in Pasadena.<sup>49</sup> A 1922 article on the San Francisco better baby campaign noted the high number of fathers in attendance "assisting the mothers with the intricacies of undressing the sons and daughters of the household" and suggested the unusual number of men in attendance was likely because of the Columbus Day holiday.<sup>50</sup> At least one report of these Father's Day activities was less enthused. In 1916, the *San Francisco Chronicle* belittled the efforts:

Father is to receive recognition at the exhibit incident to Baby Welfare week... tomorrow afternoon having been set aside as 'Father's day.' This does not mean, however, that anything will be done to lessen his troubles, to prolong his life or to facilitate his pursuit of happiness; it merely means that he will be permitted to go to the Auditorium and inspect the exhibit, or rather, that he will be expected to come.<sup>51</sup>

The article sarcastically identified the point of including father as to teach him "what he may do for his wife and child, and what to avoid doing that he may become a fit associate for them, and it is hoped that father will appreciate the privilege and avail himself of it."<sup>52</sup> The Baby Week campaigns and the Children's Bureau's literature did indeed focus on ways in which fathers could be of assistance to mothers in caring for infants, which this reporter seemed to find belittling.

Reformers noted the role that could be played by fathers in supporting mothers. Mrs. William Lowell Putnam of the American Child Hygiene Association, for instance, remarked at its 1919 conference, "I cannot help thinking that the greatest way we could help the young mother would be to help the young father. The young father isn't given half a chance to do his share... I think there are a great many [fathers] anxious to help,

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<sup>46</sup> With thanks to Mary J. Bennet, Special Collections Coordinator at the State Historical Society of Iowa, for her help in finding this record. "Fathers Show Interest in Baby Health Contest," in *The Sioux City Daily Tribune. The Cora Bussey Hillis Scrapbook (Ms 72)* (Iowa City: State Historical Society of Iowa, 1920). On the other pamphlets, see Lindenmeyer, 'A Right to Childhood', 49.

<sup>47</sup> "Program for 'Baby Week'," *The Washington Post*, March 19 1916. New York's Federation of Child Study also celebrated a father's day as part of their Baby Week campaign in 1916. "In the Current Week," *New York Times*, May 7 1916.

<sup>48</sup> "Dad in Baby Week Net," *The Washington Post*, May 13 1916.

<sup>49</sup> "Mothers, Aso Fathers There," *Los Angeles Times*, June 8 1918.

<sup>50</sup> "Baby Show Has Biggest Day of Exposition," *San Francisco Chronicle*, October 13 1922.

<sup>51</sup> "Fathers Are Expected to Inspect Babies and Learn," *San Francisco Chronicle*, March 11 1916.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

only they are crowded out.”<sup>53</sup> She described the success of a 1915 demonstration on proper infant bathing, which drew the attention of a large number of young fathers on their way home from work. The Child Hygiene Association used a leaflet entitled “Advice to Fathers” and encouraged local chapters to appeal to men’s organizations and clubs to emphasize to working-class and foreign-born fathers the proper care that should be given to the mother before and after the baby’s birth.<sup>54</sup>

And yet, the focus of the Children’s Bureau remained on mothers and children with the passage of the Sheppard-Towner Act in 1921, which provided federal funds for maternal and infant hygienic information and care in an effort to reduce the infant mortality rate. As the Children’s Bureau explained in one of its series of articles for the *Washington Post* in 1930,

Though father and mother alike play important roles in the development of the child, the discussion so far [in these articles] has been addressed chiefly to the mother, in appreciation of the fact that the greater part of her time and energy is spent in the actual care and supervision of the child. Interest and love alone on her part are not enough to assure success in handling the innumerable problems met with in the management of children.<sup>55</sup>

The father, this article implies, can make do with love and interest alone; but, the article goes on to say, the mother may find that love of her children is the chief “stumbling block” toward successful childrearing, making her overly worried and over-solicitous.<sup>56</sup> This idea of a mother’s love as her potential weakness became more prominent with the rise of behaviorism in the 1920s.

## The Kindergarten Movement

Like the Children’s Bureau, kindergartners worked a great deal in family outreach, with home visits, reading circles, classroom visits, and lending libraries for parents. Such efforts were designed primarily to inculcate mothers with the ideals of the kindergarten educational philosophy. Fathers were included somewhat in these efforts, though certainly to a far lesser degree than mothers. In the *Kindergarten-Primary Magazine* in 1908 kindergartner Jenny Merrill urged teachers to start a “Mothers’ Reading Circle” to which fathers be invited and suggested that a circulating library of literature could help to bring fathers into the childrearing philosophy of the kindergarten movement, as well.<sup>57</sup> She wanted to “entice fathers” with books such as Emily Poulsson’s *Father and Baby Play*. Poulsson was well known to kindergartners and offered a book of verses designed to attract fathers with ideas for vigorous games and play, different from the finger-plays

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<sup>53</sup> "Transactions of the Annual Meeting", (paper presented at the American Child Hygiene Association, Asheville, NC, 1920 (published) 1919).

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Children's Bureau. Department of Labor., "The Parent," *The Washington Post*, December 14 1930.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Jenny B. Merrill, "Mothers' Meetings and Reading Circles," *The Kindergarten-Primary Magazine* XX, no. 6 (1908): 203. Those who worked in or for the kindergarten were called “kindergartners.”

and gentler poems of her books for mothers, although the book also included lullabies and shadow pictures for quieter moments. Merrill described Poulsson's book as "full of the most active of all home plays, for father's love is apt to express itself in less quiet ways than 'finger plays,' and we find him tossing, romping and carrying the little ones 'pick-a-back, and even sending him without ceremony into tumble-down.' Echoes from the busy noisy world enter into father's play."<sup>58</sup> Poulsson also included ways for mothers to promote fond father-baby bonds by suggesting rhymes and ways to prepare baby for father's homecoming to make it "an event in the day as it is in so many happy homes."<sup>59</sup> Another reviewer noted also the tenderness promoted by the book, recommending the song "Baby Dear" and promoting an image of a gentle father-baby scene: "Every father should know this song and be able to croon it to the baby when playtime is over, feeling with the child its charm of exquisite tenderness."<sup>60</sup> The review recommended the book as a perfect gift for the holidays for father.<sup>61</sup> Encouraging fathers and children to play was a delicate operation. Kindergartner Jenny Merrill warned, "The book and its stories must suggest play rather than force it, for forced play is no play at all, hence let us warn over-zealous mothers not to be discouraged if father does not apply Miss Poulsson's suggestions at once."<sup>62</sup>

Kate Douglas Wiggin, the author of *Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm* and a kindergarten teacher, authored a widely circulated teaching manual that encouraged teachers to instill "the father spirit" in boys by using such teaching techniques as encouraging boys to play with dolls.<sup>63</sup> Wiggin did not seem to take education for fatherhood overly seriously when she wrote:

There is a good deal of journalistic anxiety concerning the decline of mothers. Is it possible that fathers, too are in any danger of decline? It is impossible to overestimate the sacredness and importance of the mother-spirit in the universe, but the father-spirit is not positively valueless (so far as it goes). The newspaper-pessimists talk comparatively little about developing that in the young male of the species.<sup>64</sup>

But, later in her discussion of developing the "father spirit" to lessen the "greater hardness" found in young boys, she wrote with more enthusiasm about the benefits of such a program and briefly suggested that kindergarten activity worked to correct a societal problem, encouraging boys to become more active and loving fathers. As she described it, she began her education for fatherhood program by asking boys to play "father birds," gathering worms for their young, so the activity of the "manly occupation of flying about the room seeking worms overshadows their natural repugnance to feeding the young." Later, she asked a boy to play father by caring for a baby doll: "The radical

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.: 204.

<sup>60</sup> "Book Notes," *The Kindergarten-Primary Magazine* 20 (1907): 147.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> ———, "Mothers' Meetings and Reading Circles," Ibid.XX, no. 6 (1908): 204.

<sup>63</sup> Quoted in LaRossa, *The Modernization of Fatherhood*, 31-32.

<sup>64</sup> Kate Douglas Wiggin and Nora Smith, *Children's Rights: A Book of Nursery Logic* (Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin, and Co., 1896), 63-64. Nora Smith and Kate Wiggin were sisters.

nature, the full enormity, of the proposition” went unnoticed by the boy, who “rocked the baby soberly, while [Wiggins’s] heart sang in triumph. After this the fathers as well as the mothers took part in all family games, and this mighty and much-needed reform had been worked through the magic of a fascinating plaything.”<sup>65</sup> Wiggins believed strongly in the value of play and used this example to emphasize how, through thoughtfully guided play, young children could learn valuable lessons, thereby bringing about real and important societal change. Wiggins worked with a working-class population and may not have believed these reforms necessary for a middle-class population, for it is not clear if her observations about the “greater hardness” of little boys in her kindergarten were class-specific in her mind.

Although some kindergartners took meaningful strides toward emphasizing involved and loving fatherhood to young students, in general kindergarten literature focused strongly, almost exclusively, on mothers’ involvement and ignored fathers. In 1903, one contributor to the Forty-Second Annual Meeting of the National Education Association, paused to consider the role of the father in the kindergarten after recounting some of the successful efforts to include mothers:

Then there are the mothers' and fathers' visits to the kindergartens, and occasionally there are fathers' meetings also. Perhaps hitherto the father has been regarded too much as a negligible quantity in kindergarten work.<sup>66</sup>

Most kindergarten literature of the early twentieth century focused on mothers to the near exclusion of fathers, despite the more considered efforts to educate boys for their future role as parents. There was, however, another school organization—the enormously successful Congress of Mothers—that dealt more deeply with the question of fathers’ involvement.

## **From the Congress of Mothers to the Parent-Teacher Association**

The organization known today as the Parent Teacher Association was originally called the Congress of Mothers. It was a hugely successful organization. Its first meeting in 1897 drew 2,000 women. The organization then experienced an enormous expansion in the 1910s, growing to 60,000 members in 1915, and 500,000 in 1930.<sup>67</sup> Organized by Alice McLellan Birney and Phoebe Apperson Hearst in December 1896, the Congress of Mothers is an excellent example of the extent and limits of efforts of mothers’ groups to include fathers in the early twentieth century. The Congress of Mothers began debating changing its name in order to include fathers almost from its founding. Birney, a widowed mother of three, was the key original organizer and was a firm believer in

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 64-67.

<sup>66</sup> Richard Watson Gilder, "The Kindergarten: An Uplifting Social Influence in the Home and the District" (paper presented at the Forty-Second Annual Meeting of the National Education Association, Boston, MA, 1903), 390.

<sup>67</sup> Grant, *Raising Baby by the Book*, 58-59.

divine and natural motherhood.<sup>68</sup> At her speech at the first meeting of the Congress, Birney emphasized that men were encouraged to be part of the movement, but that women were by nature the primary caregivers of children and therefore the most suited to take up their cause:

This is in no sense a sex movement, nor has the appeal to take up this child culture and kindred topics been made to mothers alone. Men have a thousand imperative outside interests and pursuits, while Nature has set her seal upon woman as the caretaker of the child; therefore, it is natural that woman should lead in awakening mankind to a sense of the responsibility resting upon the race to provide each new-born soul with an environment which will foster its highest development.<sup>69</sup>

In an article discussing the origins of the Congress of Mothers, Birney revealed that the question of fathers' inclusion was a common one from the start and that she was, perhaps, less than enthusiastic about the inclusion of fathers. Furthermore, she was committed to the notion that mothers were uniquely suited to deal with children:

I am always prepared for the question of why the congress is called a congress of mothers, since its objects appeal to fathers, guardians, educators and all those who are in any way associated with child life. It is so called because the mother has been divinely appointed to be the caretaker of the child, and because of her constant and close contact with it.<sup>70</sup>

Despite Birney's commitment to a congress of *mothers*, the question of whether to more explicitly include fathers continued to attract debate. At the third convention, Birney addressed fathers directly:

And now a word to the fathers: We need your sympathy, your aid in this movement which revolves about the home, for in that home your influence makes for weal or woe; your ignorance or your indifference is as fatal in its way as that of the mother, and without your coöperation her most earnest efforts must fall short of the results she may be striving to obtain.... No true-hearted man will shirk his duty in this crusade for the children, a warfare as glorious, I think, as any men ever waged on a field of battle, and a warfare in which the old and feeble, as well as the young, may enlist.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 57.

<sup>69</sup> Mrs. Theodore W. Birney, "The Need for Organization," in *Parents and Their Problems*, ed. Weeks, 33.

<sup>70</sup> ———, "The Congress Origin," in *Parents and Their Problems*, ed. Weeks, 27.

<sup>71</sup> Mrs. Theodore Birney, "Mrs. Birney's Address" in "Proceedings of the Third Annual Convention of the National Congress of Mothers, Held in the City of Washington, D.C. February 16-17-18, 1899," in *National Congress of Mothers: The First Conventions*, ed. David J. Rothman and Sheila M. Rothman (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1899 (1987)), 201.

Birney saw fathers' role as supporting the mothers in their efforts to improve the lives of their children, but other members of the Congress of Mothers wanted to do more to bring fathers into the organization.

The role of fathers in the Congress and the question of changing the organization's name was debated by members and leaders in the first years of the organization's existence. At the Second Annual Convention in 1898, Miss Janet Richards described the organization as reaching fathers "vicariously" through the mothers, and added "... I wish we could see more of the fathers here." She continued, "It has been suggested that this movement will develop some day into a National Congress of *Parents*-- to which I say, 'God speed the day!' The mothers, I am sure, have no desire to be selfish or exclusive, but are more than ready to share the good things with the men."<sup>72</sup> The issue was widely discussed and debated in state organizations. For instance, the report from the meeting of the Mothers' Congress of Illinois in 1900 stated, "Nearly every woman who has addressed the congress has made some reference to the advisability of organizing some fathers' club or an auxiliary of some kind to the Women's congress which will include men."<sup>73</sup>

Not everyone supported the idea of including men and teachers, with some concerned that the organization should remain limited to mothers in order to acknowledge and support mothers' unique role. For example, a self-identified "father" wrote to a newspaper in 1900 to explain that while he planned to attend every session of the Des Moines meeting of the Congress to gain pointers in raising children, he was "not one of those who have suggested that the name of the Mothers' Congress should be changed to the Congress of Parents and Teachers." He argued that the original name and idea were broad enough to appeal to fathers and teachers, but that it was right for mothers to take a leadership role: "To them are committed the keys of the gates of the future. They must lead and the fathers and teachers must follow." He expected other fathers to share his interest in the Congress, writing, "I know that, in common with thousands of other fathers, I shall be helped by what I hear at the sessions."<sup>74</sup>

At the business meeting of the National Congress of Mothers in Washington in 1902, a resolution was introduced to change the name of the society 'to include fathers as well as mothers.'<sup>75</sup> In 1907, in response to this "growing sentiment," the Department of Parent-Teacher Associations was created and, at the 1908 convention, the organization's name was changed to the National Congress of Mothers and Parent-Teacher Associations. In 1924, the name was simplified to the National Congress of Parents and Teachers.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> "Report of the Proceedings of the Second Annual Convention of the National Congress of Mothers, Held in the City of Washington, D.C. May 2d-7th, 1898," in *National Congress of Mothers: The First Conventions*, ed. Rothman and Rothman, 149-50.

<sup>73</sup> "Favor a Broad Congress," *Daily Tribune*, May 30 1900.

<sup>74</sup> With thanks to Mary J. Bennet, Special Collections Coordinator at the State Historical Society of Iowa, for her help in finding this record. "A Father's Comments on the Mothers' Congress. May 22, 1900" In *The Cora Bussey Hillis Scrapbook (Ms 72)* Iowa City: State Historical Society of Iowa. A similar argument was made by an "enthusiastic leader in the mothers' club organizing" in "Notes from the Educational Field," *The Kindergarten for Teachers and Parents* 13, no. 8 (1901): 473.

<sup>75</sup> "Various Topics," *Public Opinion* 32, no. 11 (1902): 334.

<sup>76</sup> Martha Sprague Mason, ed., *Parents and Teachers: A Survey of Organized Cooperation of Home, School and Community Prepared under the Auspices of the National Congress of Parents and Teachers* (Boston: Ginn and Co., 1928), 285, 116.

This effort did not go unnoticed by those writers who were struggling to achieve greater father participation in the lives of children. In 1914, shortly after he became the chief scout librarian for the Boy Scouts of America and editor of *Boys Life Magazine*, Franklin Mathiews wrote that fathers should “give their enthusiastic support” to parent-teacher groups:

It is well that the Mothers' Congress did not inaugurate *mother-teacher* associations. The responsibility for a vital interest in the children at school rests upon father and mother alike. .... There should be not only parent-teacher associations to support the work of the public school but similar organizations should be inaugurated to make more effective the work of the Sunday school, the Y. M. C. A., the playground, the Boy Scout movement, etc.<sup>77</sup>

He marked as a sign of great encouragement that “fathers all over the country are very much interested in the parent-teacher associations of the Mothers' Congress....”<sup>78</sup>

Parent-teacher associations and school publications wrote about the importance of bringing fathers into school organizations and projects and praised new clubs and programs that encouraged paternal involvement in the schools. Authors noted the “sprinklings” of fathers in parents’ associations and the new efforts of fathers to help in the schools.<sup>79</sup> Materials advising parent-teacher organizations often suggested holding evening meetings, at least occasionally, with the express purpose of including fathers in the organization.<sup>80</sup> One author even urged schools to invest in more modern and comfortable desk chairs to make meetings more comfortable and enticing for fathers.<sup>81</sup> At the 1927 convention for the national PTA, Frank H. Cheley, prolific author and activist for the promotion of closer father-and-son bonds, gave an address.<sup>82</sup> The program of this annual convention demonstrates the popularity of fathers’ nights, with many references to such events and an article extolling the importance of fathers and describing one man’s experience attending the convention.<sup>83</sup> One mother, speaking at the District Mothers' Congress and the Teachers and Parents' Association joint meeting in 1911 blamed mothers for keeping fathers from their children: “Lawlessness and disobedience in the American child are caused in a great degree by mothers preventing fathers from sharing in the care and bringing up the little ones.” According to the *Washington Post*, she claimed, “mothers lack the sense of truth and law, and for this reason are not fit to bring up children without the sterner influence of the man.”<sup>84</sup> Birney

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<sup>77</sup> Mathiews, “The Profession of Fatherhood,” in *Parents and Their Problems*, ed. Weeks, 222-23.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 226-27.

<sup>79</sup> Elsa Denison, *Helping School Children: Suggestions for Efficient Cooperation with the Public Schools* (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1912), 121-22.

<sup>80</sup> The United States Bureau of Education, “Report of the Commissioner of Education for the Year Ended June 30, 1912,” (Washington: 1913), 370.

<sup>81</sup> Robert Perry Shepherd, *Essentials of Community Efficiency: A Statement of the Human Forces and Factors Involved in Making Effective in American Communities, Ideals and Principles and Practices of Social Responsibility and Community Welfare* (Chicago: The Abingdon Press, 1916), 238.

<sup>82</sup> “Parent-Teacher Activities,” *The Washington Post* 1927.

<sup>83</sup> National Congress of Parents and Teachers, “Program-- Thirty-Second Annual Convention, Cleveland, Ohio,” *The PTA Magazine (Child Welfare Magazine)* 22 (1927): 73, 85, 98, 108, 231, 352.

<sup>84</sup> Quoted in “Says Mothers Lack Sense,” *The Washington Post*, March 22 1911.



also spoke at this conference and it is hard to imagine she was in agreement with these sentiments.

Often, father participation in school parents' organizations was noted as an afterthought. For instance, one school's parents' association grew out of a ladies' club, and therefore first focused on meetings for mothers, with the intention of later enlisting "the interest of the fathers."<sup>85</sup> Most meetings of the Congress of Mothers and Parent-Teachers' Associations had women in charge and primarily women in attendance but meetings of more widespread interest attracted fathers, such as a meeting to debate a motion to rescind an endorsement of a bill for medical inspection of the schools that attracted 5,500 mothers and fathers in 1911.<sup>86</sup> Perhaps the political nature of this meeting attracted men, who were regarded as having greater political expertise than their wives. Many authors from the parent-teacher associations noted special efforts to hold meetings at times when fathers could attend. The U.S Bureau of Education report of 1912 recommended that Parent-Teacher Cooperative Programs occasionally hold evening meetings "to which *all* the fathers can come."<sup>87</sup> While there were efforts to hold evening meetings to attract male participation, most meetings continued to be held during the day, which was most convenient for the mothers who were the vast majority of the participants. In 1914, one mother writing in *School and Home Education* explained,

Parent-Teacher Associations are for the fathers as well as for the mothers. While generally the clubs meet in the afternoon when fathers can seldom attend, most clubs hold several evening meetings during the year so the fathers too may meet the teachers, see where their children spend so much of their time, perhaps inspect some of their school work, and in general keep their eyes and minds open to the responsibilities with which we invest the school authorities.<sup>88</sup>

There is some indication that in the 1920s it became more common to hold evening meetings for the purpose of including men. Martha Sprague Mason, the first vice-president of the National Congress of Parents and Teachers, wrote in 1928: "With a growing membership among fathers there is a decided tendency to hold all meetings in the evening and to assign offices and responsibilities to both men and women...."<sup>89</sup>

Numerous branches of the Congress of Mothers and Parent-Teacher Associations noted efforts to attract a greater male membership and celebrated increased male participation in their bulletins. In 1914, Hannah Kent Schoff, in her essay, "Outlook for the National Congress of Mothers and Parent-Teacher Associations," explicitly referred to both men and women being endowed alike by God to be mothers and fathers and repeatedly included fathers in her description of the importance of education for

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<sup>85</sup> "Parents Interested," *Boston Daily Globe*, May 26 1905.

<sup>86</sup> Rose L. Ellerbe, "Women's Work, Women's Clubs," *Los Angeles Times*, March 3 1911. A report noted that it was unusual that the morning meeting was attended by a "fair sprinkling" of fathers.

<sup>87</sup> The United States Bureau of Education, "Report of the Commissioner of Education for the Year Ended June 30, 1912," (Washington: 1913), 370.

<sup>88</sup> Florence S. Fleming, "Parent Teacher Associations from the Standpoint of a Parent," *School and Home Education* 34 (1914): 149.

<sup>89</sup> Mason, ed., *Parents and Teachers*, 155.

parenthood.<sup>90</sup> This stands in marked contrast to Birney, who saw mothers as uniquely and divinely endowed with a special connection to children and their interests, and to Schoff's own emphasis in talks a decade earlier on the special importance of mothers.<sup>91</sup> The California Teachers association frequently mentioned its desire to promote father participation.<sup>92</sup> *Child Welfare Magazine* celebrated increased male participation and due paying in the state's parent-teacher association in Texas in 1919, which was the result of special efforts for the Children's Year.<sup>93</sup> In Michigan, leaders of the parent-teacher association asserted in 1922 that fathers belonged in the organizations as well as mothers and a year later remarked on the growing number of fathers on the membership rolls: "In Michigan we have larger numbers of fathers realizing they, too, are parents."<sup>94</sup> A 1923 PTA Bulletin reported, "More and more fathers are taking an active part in Parent-Teacher Association work. That is indicated by reports from all sections of Iowa."<sup>95</sup> In New Jersey, some Associations had annual campaigns to increase father membership; in 1925, New Jersey claimed 1,829 active father members and more who demonstrated some interest.<sup>96</sup> A mother who wrote to a syndicated advice columnist in 1929 to complain about her local PTA meetings found frustration with both men and women—the women only wanted to serve food and play bridge, and the men were "so anxious to talk politics and automobiles" that they did not focus on the business at hand.<sup>97</sup>

Parent-teacher organizations made a number of different arguments for why father involvement would be beneficial for fathers, children, and the community. A release from the press committee of the Illinois Congress of Mothers and Parent-Teacher Associations in 1917 explained that fathers were not yet fully brought in to the parent-teacher associations, in part because of their work commitments; however, the committee chairman argued, fathers could benefit greatly from participation in parents' associations:

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<sup>90</sup> Schoff did talk about mother's special abilities when calling for women's suffrage: "The mother's view of children's needs comes from experience and insight beyond any other." Mrs. Frederic (Hannah Kent Schoff) Schoff, "Outlook for the National Congress of Mothers and Parent-Teacher Associations," in *Parents and Their Problems*, ed. Weeks, 53.

<sup>91</sup> When Hannah Kent Schoff, who became president of the National Congress of Mothers in 1902, visited the Mothers and Fathers' Club of Boston in 1903 to advertise for the Congress, she emphasized that "With the mothers more than with the fathers rests the responsibility of the citizenship of the country, because the child of today is the man of tomorrow." With the original leadership of the National Congress of Mothers, the emphasis was squarely on mothers as the primary child-raisers. "Mothers' Congress," *Boston Daily Globe*, March 25 1903. "Report of the Proceedings of the Second Annual Convention of the National Congress of Mothers, Held in the City of Washington, D.C. May 2d-7th, 1898," in *National Congress of Mothers: The First Conventions*, ed. Rothman and Rothman, 5. Mrs. T. W. Birney, "Address of Welcome" in "Report of the Proceedings of the Second Annual Convention of the National Congress of Mothers, Held in the City of Washington, D.C. May 2d-7th, 1898," in *National Congress of Mothers: The First Conventions*, ed. Rothman and Rothman, 15-16.

<sup>92</sup> "Item Notes," *California Teachers Association* 19 (1923): 61.

<sup>93</sup> "State News," *Child-Welfare Magazine* 14 (1919): 95. 1918 was declared by the U.S. Congress to be "Children's Year."

<sup>94</sup> Evangeline G. Tefft, "Rural Child Labor in Michigan," *Moderator-Topics* 42 (1922): 432. "Fathers Are Playing the Game," *PTA Magazine* 18 (1923): 559.

<sup>95</sup> "Fathers Are Playing the Game," *PTA Magazine* 18 (1923): 282.

<sup>96</sup> "Parent-Teacher Project," *The Christian Science Monitor* (1925).

<sup>97</sup> Arthur Dean, "Your Boy and Your Girl," *The Washington Post*, February 4 1929.

It is doubtful whether the father fully understands his child unless he regards it from the point of view of the school as well as that of the home and the church. And as a matter of fact, it may be stated that the fathers who relate themselves most intimately and sympathetically to the work of the Parents' Associations are upon the whole the most intelligent, affectionate, and altogether effective in their relations to the children in the home.<sup>98</sup>

Furthermore, she argued, fathers who were involved with the schools became better citizens in their communities and more patriotic. Another writer pointed out that it was important to bring fathers into the school community to help him feel better as a tax payer: "He is ordinarily the tax payer, and is he not a more willing one when he can see some of the actual things for which the school taxes are used?"<sup>99</sup> One teacher similarly noted the willingness of fathers to pay the school tax once they were invited into the classroom to see what the money was for. She described her successful program of hosting fathers each year on a fathers' visiting day in her primary classroom: "Incidentally, these fathers are not going to complain of the high school tax, nor assert that teachers do not earn their salary."<sup>100</sup>

The organization that began as the Congress of Mothers changed its name specifically to attract fathers to the organization. This reflected a shift in values, a shift away from a celebration of motherhood and women's special, supposedly inherent ability to parent, and toward a promotion of education for parenting that included both men and women. The Parent-Teacher Association was built around a vision of mothers, fathers and teachers working together for the benefit of the children and the schools, focusing more on the combined efforts of all these influences than on the mothers' special place. Despite this significant change, parents' organizations continued to be attended and run mainly by women. Although the language of the organization was inclusive, it remained by and large a woman's organization. In response to this difference between the ideals of the association and the reality of participation, in the 1920s, male involvement in the PTA took on a new form and PTAs saw a growth in separate fathers' events and fathers' clubs, a phenomenon that will be examined at length in the next chapter.

## **The Child Study Movement and Parent Education**

Some of those interested in parent education hoped to pull fathers into the movement. Kindergarten and children's author Nora Archibald Smith suggested that she would like to see mothers' meetings and men's clubs combined and lamented the underuse of men's clubs for the discussion of home problems: "...surely these problems are as vital as any they now discuss. These problems have suffered from over-

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<sup>98</sup> "Parent-Teacher Association Dept., Supplied by the press committee (Mrs. Lawson Gilbert, Chairman) Illinois Congress of Mothers and Parent-Teachers Associations" Nathaniel Butler, "Some Things Which the Parents' Club May Mean to Fathers," *School and Home Education* 37 (1917): 56-57.

<sup>99</sup> Florence S. Fleming, "Parent Teacher Associations from the Standpoint of a Parent," *Ibid.* 34 (1914): 149.

<sup>100</sup> Ruby Nash, "School-Room Visitors," *Primary Education* (1913): 335. This article mentioned fathers missing half a day's work "at the factory" suggesting the parents in her school community were likely working class.

feminization. We have regarded them as mothers' problems. They are fathers' problems, too; and most fathers will welcome a straight discussion of the subject."<sup>101</sup> At least one such club existed. The Fathers and Mothers' Club of Boston was founded in 1901 "partly for the purpose of giving the fathers as well as the mothers the opportunity of having their 'say,' and of co-operating more fully with the mothers in their efforts for the betterment of the home and the betterment of all the conditions of child life...."<sup>102</sup> In its first year, the club had speakers addressing such questions as "What constitutes a good father," but after this, although it remained interested in studying the "problems of parenthood" to some extent, the club was primarily devoted to improving "the condition of neglected and dependent children" rather than assisting parents in rearing their own children.<sup>103</sup>

The growth of the Child Study movement encouraged reformers to consider fatherhood more closely. In addition to the fears of the modern mother being pleasure-seeking and irresponsible, advocates for a more educated and scientific approach to parenting believed that fathers fell far below the ideal—as one author put it, common wisdom of the era suggested that the "modern father is even less of a father than he used to be."<sup>104</sup> The growing popularity of the Child Study Association of America (CSAA) suggested something different to one author—that there was "a renewed sense of parental responsibility and interest which has now reached the proportions of a full-fledged national movement."<sup>105</sup> By 1925, the Child Study Association held a national conference on parenthood and had twenty-three chapters in New York City alone, each group made up of fifteen to thirty people, and more than forty others chapters spread across the country.<sup>106</sup> An investigation into father inclusion in the CSAA by sociologist Ralph LaRossa yielded some conflicting results. LaRossa found scant evidence of a consideration of men's role in childrearing before the mid-1920s, but he reported that the language of the CSAA shifted from discussing "mothers" to "mothers and fathers" in some CSAA documents in the mid-1920s.<sup>107</sup> In the 1920s, LaRossa found evidence of meetings that were designed to include men and other materials discussing meetings for "mothers and students," which made it impossible to determine to what extent such efforts were an outreach to fathers and to what extent they were intended for male students. In 1925, the CSAA had a membership drive to recruit men, but on closer

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<sup>101</sup> Nora Archibald Smith quoted in *Parents and Their Problems*, ed. Weeks, 17.

<sup>102</sup> J. L. Harbour, "A Mothers' and Fathers' Club," *Good Housekeeping*, September 1906, 234.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 235. "Upbuilding and Upbringing," *The Outlook* 111 (1915): 888. "'1915' Boston Exposition Official Catalogue and the Boston 1915 Year Book," ("1915" Boston Exposition Company, 1915).

<sup>104</sup> "Modern Parenthood," (1925) in *The Family*, ed. Shiela M. Rothman, David J. Rothman, and Gene Brown (New York: Arno Press, 1979).

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>106</sup> *Concerning Parents; a Symposium on Present Day Parenthood*, (New York: New Republic, Inc., 1926). Evans Clark, "Rearing of Children Becoming a Science. Renewed Interest in Study of Care of Child Results from Changing Status of Women and New Emphasis Upon Infants' Needs," (1925) in *The Family*, ed. Rothman, Rothman, and Brown, 102. The Child Study Association of America grew out of Felix Adler's Ethical Culture Society. For more information on the CSAA, see LaRossa, *The Modernization of Fatherhood*, 99-103, Roberta Wollons, "Women Educating Women: The Child Study Association as Women's Culture," in *Changing Education: Women as Radicals and Conservators*, ed. Joyce and Sari Knopp Biklen Antler (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990).

<sup>107</sup> LaRossa, *The Modernization of Fatherhood*, 101.

investigation, LaRossa discovered that the drive was in search of men's financial support more than their participation.<sup>108</sup>

Surveys from the late 1920s and 1930s looking at the parent education movement show only very slight male participation.<sup>109</sup> According to the findings of a White House study published in 1936, mothers were about six times more likely to participate in a child study group than fathers. Fathers from the professional and semi-professional and managerial classes were the most likely to participate and only about six percent of fathers in those top two economic brackets were reported to attend child study groups.<sup>110</sup> In 1927, the journalist Grace Nies Fletcher reported in the *Ladies' Home Journal* that although it "may be startling for those conservatives who still cling to the contention that home-making and the rearing of children are exclusively the woman's field," nearly half of the evening audiences of many parent-teacher and child-study groups throughout the country were men.<sup>111</sup> Even some pre-school associations for child study reported an increase in fathers' interest.<sup>112</sup>

As part of her evidence that fathers were growing more involved in parents' groups, Grace Nies Fletcher wrote that in 1927 the United Parents' Association (UPA) of New York City reported that half of its 30-60,000 members were men and that its president and nearly half of its board members were also men.<sup>113</sup> It is unclear where Fletcher obtained this information, but a close examination of the UPA's records and contemporary reports reveals that this number is an exaggeration of the actual male involvement. The UPA was a federation of parents' groups interested in child welfare and education. It was involved in helping the schools, in actions similar to those of the PTA, in civic work, and in parents' education. The UPA's guidelines from its founding in 1921 explicitly included men, emphasizing the inclusivity of the organization by using the term "parents" and pointedly using "his or her" as a possessive in examples.<sup>114</sup> In 1925, the UPA offered fourteen suggestions to parents to help their children at the start of the school year, and one was: "Mothers should arouse the interest of fathers in school activities and get their cooperation."<sup>115</sup> In 1930-31, the UPA decided to investigate why such a high percentage of the parents involved in the UPA were mothers:

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<sup>108</sup> LaRossa argues that these numbers may be somewhat skewed against demonstrating male participation, both because women usually filled out the surveys and because the studies focused on preschool-aged children. However, even allowing for some potential underreporting of male involvement, these figures demonstrate the overall dearth of male participation in parental education. *Ibid.*, 102-03.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 90-91.

<sup>110</sup> Committee on the Infant and Preschool Child, "The Young Child in the Home: A Survey of Three Thousand American Families," in *Report of the Committee on the Infant and Preschool Child: Section III--Education and Training* (New York: White House Conference on Child Health and Protection, 1936), 80-82.

<sup>111</sup> Grace Nies Fletcher, "Bringing up Fathers," *Ladies' Home Journal* 44 (1927).

<sup>112</sup> Mason, ed., *Parents and Teachers*, 152.

<sup>113</sup> Quoted in LaRossa, *The Modernization of Fatherhood*, 92.

<sup>114</sup> For example, "Parents' Groups Win Approval," *New York Times*, May 9 1926, "Exposition for Parents," *New York Times*, October 30 1927.

<sup>115</sup> "Fourteen Rules by Parents' Association to Help Start Children Right in School," *New York Times*, September 6 1925. A very similar list of suggestions was printed in the *New York Times* in 1924, but it did not include this mention of fathers. "Nearly a Million Ready for School," *New York Times*, September 7 1924.

Were fathers not interested in the study of child development? Would they perhaps become interested if a somewhat different approach were made? And if more of the U.P.A. meetings were held in the evenings, would they attend? Surely they were interested in civic activities to better the child's community-- at least they had been active in some such projects in parents associations when the U.P.A. was founded. In 1931 a committee was appointed by the president of the U.P.A. to explore these questions.<sup>116</sup>

In the fall of 1932, the Fathers' Committee under the headship of LeRoy E. Bowman completed its survey investigating the involvement of men in the organization.

The report indicated that the proportion of male officers of individual groups had fallen significantly from 1925-26 to 1928-29. In 1925-26, 41 percent of the presidents of local groups were men. In the succeeding years, those percentages fell to less than half of that, ranging from six percent to nineteen percent in the following five years, a period of growth for the UPA.<sup>117</sup> The assessment of male involvement overall proved difficult. According to the report, "[t]here is no way of securing even approximate figures to show the proportion of the membership composed of men.... The range [of incomplete reports] is great, several women reporting no men whatever in their organizations but one man reporting 50 per cent."<sup>118</sup> The *New York Times* reported that estimates of male membership in the associations ranged from six to fifty percent.<sup>119</sup>

The Fathers' Committee attributed the decline in male leadership in the late 1920s to the "strong emphasis on parent education" from UPA headquarters at that time. The report surmised that UPA groups with male leaders, often those focused on civic matters and local politics, tended to drop out of the organization in response to the increasing numbers of parent-education groups, which were mainly led by women. According to the "Report of the Fathers' Committee," these male-led groups "found themselves in uncongenial company and dropped out."<sup>120</sup>

To encourage greater male participation, the Fathers' Committee report recommended several steps, the following of which were accepted to be adopted into the UPA's by-laws in 1933: no groups that restricted membership to a single sex or indicated such a limitation in their name would be permitted to join the UPA; all UPA groups must hold at least some evening meetings; and dues were to be paid on a family basis rather than per capita.<sup>121</sup> The *New York Times* reported on these changes and indicated that "...borough-wide evening meetings for fathers are planned and participation of fathers in study groups is being considered."<sup>122</sup> The UPA president mentioned the Fathers' Committee's findings in the annual report in May of 1933 and the UPA

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<sup>116</sup> Margaret and Leroy E. Bowman Lighty, *Parenthood in a Democracy* (New York: The Parents' Institute, Inc., 1939), 80.

<sup>117</sup> "Report of the Fathers' Committee," November, 1932, LeRoy E. Bowman, Chairman, pp. 2-3 in *Ibid.*, 84.

<sup>118</sup> "Report of the Fathers' Committee," November, 1932, LeRoy E. Bowman, Chairman, pp. 2-3 in *Ibid.*

<sup>119</sup> "Clubs Seek Fathers' Aid," *New York Times*, January 2 1933.

<sup>120</sup> "Report of the Fathers' Committee," November, 1932, LeRoy E. Bowman, Chairman, pp. 2-3 in ———, *Parenthood in a Democracy* (New York: The Parents' Institute, Inc., 1939), 84.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, 85.

<sup>122</sup> "Fathers' Aid Asked by Parent's Group," *New York Times*, May 2 1933.

attempted to “enlist the services of fathers on various central committees” and held an increasing number of meetings in the evening in an effort to attract men.<sup>123</sup> In the mid-1930s, 17 of 80 groups that responded to a UPA questionnaire reported leading “Special programs for men,” a similar number to those who answered that they held children’s clubs, exhibits, health projects, child guidance clinics or distributed information about children’s diets. In general, civic programs were more popular than parent education projects, and the UPA reported that, “Where men have been brought into the lead along with women, almost universally a more aggressive program, and particularly one more civic in nature, has developed.”<sup>124</sup> The *New York Times* suggested that the committee’s report demonstrated that men were looking for “practical projects to be accomplished” and chafed at the “lack of real authority in parents’ groups.”<sup>125</sup> The information gathered by the UPA suggests that fathers were less involved in parent education groups than in school and civic organizations.

There was a definite move toward using the term “parent” instead of “mother” when discussing education for parenthood and the profession of parenthood, but whether this effort encouraged a significant increase in male involvement in such educational efforts is unclear. One *Los Angeles Times* reporter mocked the move to the term “parent” as superficial:

Of course, they do call it a Conference on Modern Parenthood. But all the same, it's mamma they are after. Papas just naturally seem to understand that their presence is not expected... It was also interesting that when Dr. Williams, as an afterthought, suggested courses for fatherhood too, everybody laughed. That was funny if you like.<sup>126</sup>

The author further mocked the experts, most of whom had no children, and the audience members who, rather than being mere parents, were chiefly titled themselves. The reporter hinted that the audience was not actually composed of “young mothers” as the speaker suggested, but wondered who would be home minding the babies if there were such young mothers in the audience. She concluded: “But perhaps, of course, it is father.”<sup>127</sup>

In 1929, sociologist and parent education leader Ernest Groves reported on the status of the family in the proceeding year for *The American Journal of Sociology*. He reported with cautious optimism that men were taking greater interest in parenting: “There has been no decrease in the interest of mothers in the science of child care, and there is some indication that more fathers are becoming concerned with the problems of parenthood.”<sup>128</sup> Similarly, for the *Bulletin of the American Association of University Professors*, Clara M. Brown reported in 1930 that,

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<sup>123</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, *Parenthood in a Democracy* (New York: The Parents' Institute, Inc., 1939), 85, 98, 134.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, 153-54.

<sup>125</sup> Eunice Barnard, “Classroom and Campus: Elusive Father,” *New York Times*, December 25 1932.

<sup>126</sup> Alma Whitaker, “Educating Mamma,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 16 1926.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>128</sup> Ernest R. Groves, “The Family,” *The American Journal of Sociology* 34, no. 6 (1929): 1107.

There is another phase of education which seems to be of equal importance for men and women, and that is parent education. Classes in parental education are still filled largely with the feminine parents, but each year sees more men enrolled, as in the parental education classes in Omaha....

Before another generation passes there will probably be a rather widespread acceptance of the idea that homemaking is a man's problem as well as a woman's.<sup>129</sup>

According to one 1930 report from the meeting of the American Public Health Association, "one afternoon's session consisted largely of pleas (by men) that fathers assume their share of the responsibilities for home and child management-- not the mandated management of the past but joint management when husband and wife share equally...."<sup>130</sup> Men participated in and were courted in a modest way by child-study groups in the 1910s and 1920s. In the 1920s, child study and mothers' education efforts evolved at the college level into home economics programs and life education courses.

## **Education for Marriage and Fatherhood in Colleges and Universities**

Beginning in the 1920s, according to historian Julia Grant, there was a move toward including men in home economics. Courses were opened to men, and classes affirmed that men, as well as women, were responsible for child rearing.<sup>131</sup> Alma Binzel, a home economist at the University of Minnesota, remarked in *Child Welfare Magazine* in 1924, "The great danger at present is that parenthood shall be narrowly conceived in terms of mother-craft and motherhood, that father-craft and fatherhood will be ignored."<sup>132</sup> The efforts of home economists to include men in home economics programs and to convince men that they should be educated for parenthood were largely unsuccessful.<sup>133</sup>

In 1925, Cornell's College of Home Economics considered establishing fathers' groups.<sup>134</sup> The Cornell department did offer courses specifically for men and publicly

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<sup>129</sup> Clara M. Brown, "New Problems and a New Curriculum," *Bulletin of the American Association of University Professors* 16, no. 4 (1930): 307.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> Grant, *Raising Baby by the Book*, 129-30.

<sup>132</sup> Alma Binzel, "Education's Responsibility for Parenthood," *Child Welfare Magazine*, 18 (Feb. 1924): 247, quoted in Ibid., 130.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

<sup>134</sup> From Child Study Association of America Papers, Box 45 Folder 478 Social Welfare History Archives, University of Minnesota, in LaRossa, *The Modernization of Fatherhood*, 92. Cornell's department of Home Economics (made into a college in 1925) had a "practice apartment" where students in home economics would live for a week at a time to practice keeping house and caring for an infant. A series of infants were leased, one at a time, to the program where they were cared for by students for one year and then released for adoption. Of course, in these model homes, students did not live with "model husbands." Historian Megan Ellias argued in an article published by *The Journal of the History of Sexuality* in 2006 that the lack of male presence in the model homes subtly undermined the program's belief in domestic partnership between husbands and wives, suggesting by the absence of model fathers that men were peripheral or unnecessary to a properly run household. The scrapbook compiled for one of these infants—Joan Domecon (for Domestic Economy)—in 1922 shows the baby in one photograph held by a man with the added playful



affirmed that there was no reason men should not enroll in the department's courses. However, according to the research of historian Megan Ellias, "neither [Flora Rose and Martha Van Rensselaer, heads of Cornell's home economics program] nor any of the major figures in the movement made any real effort to get men involved as students or as professors, and there was a sense that men took home economics only out of temporary necessity-- to learn how to run their fraternity houses, for instance-- rather than in a true vocational spirit."<sup>135</sup> Furthermore, the department of home economics' course most popular with male students, institutional management, was quickly isolated in the new department of hotel management, separating profit-driven, public housekeeping skills from domestic homemaking.<sup>136</sup> Doris Mitchell, a 1925 graduate of the College of Home Economics was asked in an oral history interview in 2001 if there were "divisions between men and women on campus" while she was a student. She replied that there were not, that the "hotel management class was in the home economics building then, and the students were friendly." She remarked that she could not recall if there were any women in the hotel management class, implying that there were no men in the home economics classes.<sup>137</sup>

There was a widespread effort to provide girls with an education for motherhood by the early twentieth century, which accompanied attempts to make motherhood into a profession. This widespread movement did not often consider educating boys for fatherhood—the primary purpose of a boy's education was thought to be to prepare him for citizenship and breadwinning. However, some educators argued that training for fatherhood should be part of a boy's schooling. This was an idea that was prevalent enough to be mocked and debated in the press, but not so common as to enact wide curriculum changes.<sup>138</sup>

Freelance writer and instructor of English Grace Nies Fletcher argued at length in the *Ladies' Home Journal* in 1927 for the education of young men for marriage and fatherhood as a protection against divorce, but she understated her goals in her conclusion, suggesting that with all the "modern agitation" for the training of motherhood, "it may not be amiss to give occasional thought to 'bringing up father.'"<sup>139</sup>

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caption "Men are such a bore!" Megan Ellias, "'Model Mamas': The Domestic Partnership of Home Economics Pioneers Flora Rose and Martha Van Rensselaer," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 15, no. 1 (2006). New York State College of Home Economics records, #23-2-749. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library. #21-13-2365 Box 31, 1922 yearbook, pp. 36-7 "1922 Yearbook," in #23-2-749 *Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections* (New York State College of Home Economics records, Cornell University Library, 1922). There were no men on faculty, so one would have to presume this man was a friend, student, or staff member.

<sup>135</sup> Megan Ellias, "'Model Mamas': The Domestic Partnership of Home Economics Pioneers Flora Rose Adn Martha Van Rensselaer," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 15, no. 1 (2006): 87.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

<sup>137</sup> *Oral Histories: Interview with Doris Mitchell, Home Economics '25*, Division of Rare & Manuscript Collections, Carl A. Kroch Library, Cornell University (2001).

<sup>138</sup> One possible exception to this is in the kindergarten, which did develop curricula to include games to promote involved fatherhood.

<sup>139</sup> Fletcher, "Bringing up Fathers": 202. Fletcher also argued that elementary-school and high-school boys be educated for fatherhood. She noted that a teacher at Columbia suggested exposing older children of both sexes to younger children to give even children with small families the opportunity to familiarize themselves with babies. The teacher explained, "Even if there are younger children in the family, the boy is only too apt to regard them as pets or pests, as the case may be, to be romped with or avoided. The idea

The prominent psychologist Ernest R. Groves, head of sociology at Boston University, also argued that training boys and girls for parenthood and marriage would help eradicate divorce.<sup>140</sup> One author questioned twenty college professors in the mid 1920s to ask them what they would put in a course about parenthood for men, and “invariably” the answer was that they would put in just what they did for a course for women.<sup>141</sup>

In one notable instance, the idea of training young men for parenthood came from a direct request by youths. When (male) students at Rutgers asked for a course in “How to Live,” “[a] great stir was created among the columnists and cartoonists of the country.” The boys asked that a “discussion of fatherhood and family relations in general be included in the course.” Fletcher chastised the press for mocking such an idea, noting that the “same papers” that scoffed at the notion of education for fatherhood “not long after carried figures showing the alarming increase in divorce and unrest in the American home, and no one seemed to find this situation particularly mirth-provoking.”<sup>142</sup> To the educators who responded that the entire school system was already fashioned to create good citizens and fathers, she noted that no college course prepared a young man for dealing with the particular challenges of raising a child; in particular, “what to do when Johnny stole a quarter from the missionary box to buy those paints he was so passionately fond of,” or “how to keep sixteen-year-old Mary from going secretly with that handsome degenerate, Tom Saunders, whom she insisted upon following around.”<sup>143</sup>

At Rutgers, the student desire for courses on “fatherhood and sex relations” met with the support of the former Executive Secretary of the YMCA and was investigated by a student committee, which recommended such classes be offered. After this, the course “How to Live” which would “include personal hygiene, the fundamental principles of psychology and the duties of fatherhood” was required of all undergraduates at Rutgers.<sup>144</sup> Likewise, the University of North Carolina dated its first marriage education course to 1927 “when a group of senior men requested a ‘practical’ marriage course and Ernest Groves, a sociologist of the family with a strong interest in psychology, was hired.”<sup>145</sup> Ernest Groves is often hailed as the father of marriage education and heavily promoted it throughout his career. In 1926, he wrote the first college textbook on marriage and, in 1934, he founded a professional organization for the promotion of

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that these children are real people, worth while knowing and studying, is a new one to him.” Quoted in ———, “Bringing up Fathers,” *Ladies' Home Journal* 44 (1927): 201. Fletcher suggested nursery schools be connected to high schools and high school students be taught child psychology. She quoted a director of child study groups with twenty-years experience and a doctorate of philosophy who suggested that boys should be trained for fatherhood throughout their schooling by “imply[ing] fatherhood in the whole curriculum,” such as by having students make a household budget in math class. Quoted in ———, “Bringing up Fathers,” *Ladies' Home Journal* 44 (1927): 201. In 1904, Alice McLellan Birney, a founder of the National Congress of Mothers, devoted a chapter of *Childhood* to “The Education of Boys as Future Fathers and Citizens” in which she argued that there should be obligatory school courses devoted to teaching boys how to be citizens and fathers. Ch. 11 in Mrs. Theodore W. Birney, *Childhood*, 1905 ed. (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Co., 1904).

<sup>140</sup> Grace Nies Fletcher, “Bringing up Fathers”: 201.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*: 202.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*: 201.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>144</sup> “Course in How to Live Proposed at Rutgers,” *New York Times*, October 24 1926.

<sup>145</sup> Beth L. Bailey, “Scientific Truth... And Love: The Marriage Education Movement in the United States,” *Journal of Social History* 20, no. 4 (1987): 715.

education for marriage: the Conference on the Conservation of Marriage and the Family.<sup>146</sup> By 1937, over 200 of the 672 colleges and universities in the United States offered courses on marriage.<sup>147</sup>

An examination of some of Groves's course descriptions from between 1924 and 1930 demonstrates that they were about family relationships.<sup>148</sup> In 1930, Harvard offered a summer course on parent education taught by Groves. According to the course description, the class investigated "The motives, development, and technique of parental education. Social conditions influencing American marriage, parenthood and children. Experiments in training for marriage and parenthood. Education and the conservation of the home."<sup>149</sup> Because Groves and his writings were central to the movement for education for marriage in the United States, it is worth exploring his ideas and teachings regarding men's role in the family in some depth.

Groves contributed an essay on "The Twentieth Century Home" to *Fathering the Boy*, Frank Cheley's 1926 book of advice for fathers and the first in a series of books for fathers of sons; the piece also ran in *American Youth*. In this essay, Groves noted the economic changes that had made women less dependent on marriage and turned children into an economic burden rather than a boon.<sup>150</sup> In his book, *The Drifting Home*, published in the same year (many of its individual chapters were published in popular magazines before that) Groves catalogued the problems of the "bewildered" home—with mother and father both negligent:

If the mother has been negligent at this point, what must be said of the father? When one catalogues the fathers of one's acquaintance, one soon discovers how few of them give influence or time to their home. Indeed, a code of behavior has become acceptable which requires mostly of the father that he be kind and a good provider; as long as he keeps the pocketbook replenished, he is regarded as having met his obligations.<sup>151</sup>

He argued that if mother limited her responsibilities to housekeeping and father to income earning, there could "be no home in the historic sense of home."<sup>152</sup> Groves called for "growth in parental character" to help the "bewildered home" and promised his

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<sup>146</sup> Ibid.: 729, fn. 22. In 1904, the Iowa House of Representatives considered a bill that would have provided free instruction in the "art of successful matrimony" to all students in the state. In 1912, Good Housekeeping opened magazine "school of practical guidance" on marriage. ———, "Scientific Truth... And Love: The Marriage Education Movement in the United States," *Journal of Social History* 20, no. 4 (1987): 715.

<sup>147</sup> Abraham Stone, "Marriage Education and Marriage Counseling in the United States," *Marriage and Family Living* 11, no. 2 (1949): 715, 38.

<sup>148</sup> Ernest R. Groves, "The First Credit Course in Preparation for Family Living," Ibid.3, no. 3 (1941).

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

<sup>150</sup> ———, "The Twentieth Century Home," in *Fathering the Boy*, ed. Frank H. Cheley (1921), 12-13.

<sup>151</sup> Groves was considering the middle-class as he wrote this, for he lists "blights" of modern home life as "competition, luxury and a lack of preparation for home life." ———, *The Drifting Home* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1926), 3-5.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid., 4.

readers: "Science is now ready to serve the home."<sup>153</sup> Groves felt that fathers, mothers, and children alike were drifting away from the home, each spending more and more time away from home and family, and although he acknowledged benefits to this change, he also warned of dangers and sadness associated with it. The family's functions, he argued, had been largely supplanted by the community, with the teacher, minister, and social worker taking over many parental duties.<sup>154</sup> In *American Marriage and Family Relationships* (1928), Groves also discussed the loss of function for the home with modern economic and social change: "The American family at the present time is suffering from a lack of the cohesion that was provided for it in the past by the importance of its economic function."<sup>155</sup>

Groves wrote about the "passing of man's dominance" in the home, arguing that because of women's education, men's age-old rule of the home had been erased, leaving many young families in conflict.<sup>156</sup> He cautioned that modern men had grown up accustomed to the idea of male dominance in the home, but that authoritarian male rule was no longer tenable: "[I]t is rare for the man entering matrimony to understand how archaic and impossible the conventional thoughts of men with reference to their headship of the family have become."<sup>157</sup> The husband's role, as well as the wife's role, had become more complex, according to Groves.

The declining authority of the father of the family did not translate, Groves argued, into a lesser or easier role for the man; rather it necessitated a more thoughtful, careful balance by the father of his role as breadwinner and his social role in the family. He wrote,

The conscientious husband and father who wishes to do what is right and wise for his family must in these days face the problem of distribution of interests. If he invests too much of himself in economic competition and cannot give to the family what it needs, his failure may lead to his wife's giving too much, so that the family becomes effeminate from the inability of the father to do his part. On the other hand, if the husband becomes too concerned with the family, he soon ceases to make headway in the fierce rivalries of business or the professions.<sup>158</sup>

Groves contended that being a successful husband and father required negotiating this delicate work-family balance successfully.

The expectations for family life had increased, and in order to have a satisfying family life, the father had to adjust his expectations and his contribution.

It is true that from the point of view of power his authority has diminished, but when the significance of his part is considered,

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<sup>153</sup> Ibid., 13-14.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid., 42-43. Ernest R. Groves and William Fielding Ogburn, *American Marriage and Family Relationships* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1928), 19.

<sup>155</sup> Groves and Ogburn, *American Marriage and Family Relationships*. 19, 21.

<sup>156</sup> Groves, *The Drifting Home*, 19-20, 23.

<sup>157</sup> Groves and Ogburn, *American Marriage and Family Relationships*. 31.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid., 39.

more responsibility falls upon him than ever before. It is in the quality of his contacts in the family that the great change appears. He cannot any longer enjoy a satisfying family life if he attempts to limit himself to the getting of an income and the administration of power within the home. He has to make a personal investment in the more subtle aspects of the family or it soon shows a destitution which leads to barrenness and discontent.<sup>159</sup>

Groves worked to interpret changes in family ideals not as an erosion of paternal power, but as a shift in both expectations and responsibilities. The father of the previous generation may have been content to reign as an emotionally distant patriarch, but the modern father would find such a role unsatisfying, leading to “barrenness and discontent.”

Groves’s ideal parents were affectionate and he cautioned against taking behaviorists’ emphasis on the dangers of being overly affectionate too much to heart. Such encouragement of dependency was a true problem, but that so was lack of affection.<sup>160</sup> “In spite of the exaggerated criticism of the family because of the wrong use of its power to influence the life of the child, there is general agreement that the child needs a father and mother, and an affectionate father and mother.”<sup>161</sup> He warned of the “violent hatred” and death wish one son had for his father, a small businessman, who had tyrannically dominated his home.<sup>162</sup> When the father dominates the home, children may still love the father, but they fail to trust their own abilities and judgment; the danger particularly in the case of daughters was the development of a “father fixation.”<sup>163</sup> Groves categorized father’s tyranny as childishness on the part of the parent. In his rules for parents, he emphasized that the parent should not be tyrannical, should not “use commands,” should not “use fear as a whip” and summarized his rules in the following manner. “*The gist of it all is: Don't be emotionally childish if you desire manly and womanly children.*”<sup>164</sup>

Typically, in Groves’s books, he used the word “parent,” but his examples were more often mothers, although fathers were by no means neglected. He typically used the masculine in his examples of children. In his chapter on “Parents Who Haven't Grown Up,” he discussed fathers in particular at some length. The problem, according to Groves, was that “A parent is not a parent when he still remains a child. No adult is more mature than his emotions.... That we have parents who refuse to grow up is one of the recent discoveries of psychology and sociology.”<sup>165</sup> He remarked that many fathers mistakenly believed their sons to have an interest in their fathers’ youthful experiences. Groves warned of fathers’ lack of influence over their sons.<sup>166</sup> Alerting fathers to their sons’ lack of interest in the old man’s glory days was Groves way of reminding fathers

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<sup>159</sup> Ibid., 38.

<sup>160</sup> Groves, *The Drifting Home*, 81-82.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid., 171-72.

<sup>163</sup> Ernest R. Groves and Gladys Hoagland Groves, *Wholesome Parenthood* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1929), 252.

<sup>164</sup> Groves, *The Drifting Home*, 184.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid., 154.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid., 178.

that they should not be childish, should not attempt to remain living in their own memories or seeking the admiration of their children to feed their own egos.<sup>167</sup> Advice authors through the latter 1910s and 1920s emphasized the need for fathers to keep young with their sons and play together companionably with boys, but here Groves cautions that such jubilation must not cross over into emotional immaturity. It is perhaps an indication of the successful propagation of the idea of the youthful father that Groves felt it necessary to issue this warning.

Groves's concern with family cohesion was very common among social commentators in the 1910s and 1920s. He feared that a lack of shared economic purpose coupled with the growing importance of social institutions other than the family in the lives of children was causing a splintering of the American family. He looked to the new science of psychology and sociology to help prescribe a closer, affectionate family model. Fathers should not rule absolutely, he argued, but should work in companionable partnership with their wives to raise the children with affection and maturity.

By 1928, it was clear that education for marriage – not just sex education, but discussions of home-life and family roles-- were becoming more commonplace in universities and colleges, as well as through religious organizations.<sup>168</sup> The Brooklyn Y.M.C.A. offered a series of lectures on marriage and family relations for young men considering marriage that was met with a great deal of interest, prompting more than twenty-five similar courses in YMCAs around the country.<sup>169</sup> The syndicated advice columnist, Arthur Dean, wrote in support of such efforts to educate youth about “the problems of marriage and home life” in colleges and churches in 1928.<sup>170</sup> Not surprisingly, Groves noted the growth of the movement in his summary of changes in family life written in 1928 for *The American Journal of Sociology*. He wrote that among the changes affecting American families in 1927, “Most significant, perhaps, was the notable addition of courses on the family in normal schools and colleges and experiments in pre-marriage education.”<sup>171</sup>

## **Vassar's Euthenics Department's Father Outreach**

In addition to the efforts to educate young men, in the 1920s there was growing interest in incorporating men into parenting groups and classes. Vassar's Euthenics Department received a great deal of attention for its courses educating parents for marriage and parenthood, such as its class on the art of efficient living; the Euthenics department in this women's college made a point of admitting men to its summer session. In 1926, three husbands enrolled in Vassar's summer euthenics programs alongside forty-five women. The program also provided care for twenty-five children between the ages of two and four, who were “used by the adults as subjects of study, analysis and comparison in laboratory work.”<sup>172</sup> The inclusion of three men in the program attracted

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<sup>167</sup> Ibid., 184.

<sup>168</sup> For more information on spread of parent education, consult: American Association for Adult Education, "Hand Book of Adult Education in the United States," ed. Dorothy Rowden (1934).

<sup>169</sup> Fletcher, "Bringing up Fathers": 201-02.

<sup>170</sup> Arthur Dean, "Your Boy and Your Girl," *The Washington Post*, January 14 1928.

<sup>171</sup> Ernest R. Groves, "The Family," *The American Journal of Sociology* 34, no. 1 (1928).

<sup>172</sup> "73 Enter at Vassar for Euthenics Course," *New York Times*, July 9 1926.

the interest of the press and was highlighted in a number of articles about the program.<sup>173</sup> Much of the press received by the program was warmly humorous, teasing that the class would have to grow larger than three husbands before it could accomplish much change, gently mocking the notion that parents needed training, or facetiously wondering if golf would be offered for the fathers in their course of study.<sup>174</sup> In 1926, the head of the program, Professor Annie Louise McLeod, expressed her willingness to educate fathers and her hope (which reads as more vague and half-hearted than realistic or urgent) that men's colleges might also begin educating fathers: "A father of a family asked whether he might come for the month's course. We have accepted him. Certainly if he sees that training for fatherhood is as essential as training for motherhood, we shall not exclude him. Perhaps in time men's colleges will see a possibility of study in this direction."<sup>175</sup>

In its second summer, the Vassar Euthenics program made a larger point of its acceptance of male students, informing the press that it had decided to make the program co-educational and had already admitted twelve men to the program. According to newspaper reports, Professor MacLeod accepted "the registrations of 12 men whose wives attended the first sessions last summer and applied this year for permission to bring their husbands," with the goal "to make men better husbands and fathers."<sup>176</sup> MacLeod issued the following statement:

Because the faculty believes the duty of rearing a family properly devolves equally on the husband and the wife, the School of Euthenics at Vassar college will be co-educational this summer.<sup>177</sup>

It is unclear what the distinction is between the summer of 1926's session, which did not bar men from admittance and had three men in attendance, and the next summer's session, also with a small attendance of husbands. But, in making this statement about the program's co-educational nature, MacLeod certainly garnered a great deal of press attention for the Vassar Euthenics program's summer session. The image of an entire family attending college together for the summer—with the young children in thoroughly modern and scientific nurseries and the parents attending lectures on childrearing together-- was an attractive concept for the press.<sup>178</sup> A typical newspaper article painted the following gently teasing image:

An American father and mother, seated side by side listening to lectures on how to be a happy family, will be able, between classes

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<sup>173</sup> Ibid. "By-Products," *New York Times*, July 11 1926. L. H. R., "Keeping up with the Midsummer Parade," *New York Times*, July 18 1926. "Press Comment," *The Washington Post*, July 10 1926. Rose C. Feld, "Vassar Girls to Study Home-Making as Career," *New York Times*, May 23 1926.

<sup>174</sup> L. H. R., "Keeping up with the Midsummer Parade," *New York Times*, July 18 1926. "Press Comment," *The Washington Post*, July 10 1926. "By-Products," *New York Times*, July 11 1926.

<sup>175</sup> Rose C. Feld, "Vassar Girls to Study Home-Making as Career," *New York Times*, May 23 1926.

<sup>176</sup> "Vassar Will Admit Mere Man into Its Euthenics School," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 10 1927.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid.

<sup>178</sup> See for example: "Whole Family to Attend College Euthenic Course," *The Atlanta Constitution*, March 12 1927. "Home-Making School for Men," *Berkeley Daily Gazette*, July 23 1927. "Vassar Will Admit Mere Man into Its Euthenics School," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 10 1927. "Husbands Invited to Euthenics School," *New York Times*, March 10 1927. "Husbands in Vassar Euthenics Classes," *The Washington Post*, March 10 1927.

this summer, to visit the nursery at Vassar college and gaze on their fondest hope playing with the academic rattles.... In short, says information from the college, the whole family may go to college this summer without disrupting the family group.<sup>179</sup>

MacLeod took care to emphasize that men were not being asked to partake in activities deemed demeaningly feminine, such as cooking or cleaning, but rather to learn the tenets of educated parenting:

'We are encouraged to believe,' said Annie Louise Macleod, director of euthenics, 'that theres [sic] is a growing interest on the part of men as well as women in studying the problems of living, whether from the sociological or personal point of view. While courses such as cookery and household management will naturally be of interest only to the housekeeper, the lectures and conferences on child guidance, economics of the family, social and legal relations of the family, family and individual adjustments and applied evolution, should appeal equally to men and women, and men should have as much to contribute to the group discussions as women.'<sup>180</sup>

The course outline of Vassars Euthenics Department's "For the Study of Certain Phases of Human Relationship and Environmental Influences," included a section on "The Father in the Family" and asked rhetorically in the announcement for the class: "is there anything that would be beneath one's dignity or unnecessary for a father to know? It's not a question of making him wash dishes or cook spinach, but of intelligent cooperation." The course announcement compared a father's taking this course to a businessman's making sure to learn what his "partners and assistants were doing and why they were doing it."<sup>181</sup> Such language reflects a companionate ideal of marriage which emphasized the partnership and cooperation between husband and wife. Another article likewise defended the program by emphasizing this distinction between housekeeping (cooking and cleaning) and parenting in response to a "startling headline on the page of a large daily newspaper" which read: "Men Learn Home-Making." The article concluded with an approving tone: "More power to the men and women who take home-making seriously and seek in modern ways to do it well."<sup>182</sup>

The program's experiment with coeducation changed form over the years. In 1930, almost 100 married women attended the six-week class, sometimes bringing young children to be cared for in the nursery. The program devoted weekends to classes and discussions with husbands. As one article described it, "Week-ends find the husbands of many of the women interested audiences in the classes and eager to give the masculine viewpoint in the discussion groups arranged especially for them." Children, the article

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<sup>179</sup> "Ma, Pa, Kids, Can All Attend Summer College," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 12 1927.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid.

<sup>181</sup> Quoted in Fletcher, "Bringing up Fathers": 202.

<sup>182</sup> "Home-Making School for Men," *The Daily Times*, July 13 1927.



explains, were a "Favorite Topic."<sup>183</sup> The article again emphasized the significance of husbands joining the mothers to bring them in concert with the child training techniques taught by the Euthenics program:

But as much in agreement as the mother may come to be with the ideas and recommendations she has received in classes and from the children's schools, she cannot carry them out at home unless her husband is also in sympathy with them. For this reason most of the women are anxious for their husbands to join them for the week-end lectures. These attempt to give a cross-section of the institute's activities and theories, while special problems are brought up in the discussion groups for men.<sup>184</sup>

Vassar College's brochures for the summer euthenics program do not emphasize male participation or make specific mention of any courses or topics designed with men in mind. In its description of admission, the brochures after 1927 noted that "The Vassar Institute of Euthenics is open to men and women graduates of colleges of approved standing, to teachers, and others having equivalent preparation, and to senior students."<sup>185</sup> Brochures in the early 1930s made reference to husbands in a manner that suggests that even husbands who were in attendance might not have wanted to participate in classes. The brochures' sections on room and board stated "Husbands who wish to come with their wives, joining in recreational activities without registering for the course, may live in the dormitory or at the Alumnae House near the campus, as they prefer. Rates may be had on application."<sup>186</sup> Some years included a list of registrants and did include husbands (there were no cases of men attending without a wife in attendance), but it was not clear from the registration whether the men attended classes or merely lived on campus while their wives did.<sup>187</sup>

Vassar's summer euthenics program self-consciously attempted to promote an ideal of husband and wife cooperation in expert-guided, scientific child rearing. Although the number of fathers who participated was small, the effort to attract and teach husbands demonstrates a change in parenting ideals held by child-rearing and home economics experts. This developing ideal of cooperative parenting and greater father involvement in child-rearing education is also evident in child-rearing advice literature of the early twentieth century.

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<sup>183</sup> Dorothy Woolf, "Euthenics Taught in Vacation Study," *New York Times*, August 3 1930.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>185</sup> Personal Communication with Dean M. Rogers, special collections assistant, Vassar College Libraries. Regarding Folder 11.69, Vassar Summer Institute for Euthenics 1927-1941 Vassar College Subject Files, Archives and Special Collections Library, Vassar College Libraries.

<sup>186</sup> Personal Communication with Dean M. Rogers, special collections assistant, Vassar College Libraries. Regarding Folder 11.69, Vassar Summer Institute for Euthenics 1927-1941 Vassar College Subject Files, Archives and Special Collections Library, Vassar College Libraries.

<sup>187</sup> Personal Communication with Dean M. Rogers, special collections assistant, Vassar College Libraries. Regarding Folder 11.69, Vassar Summer Institute for Euthenics 1927-1941 Vassar College Subject Files, Archives and Special Collections Library, Vassar College Libraries. Brochures searched include all those before 1935.

## Advice Literature:

A 1993 study led by Maxine P. Atkinson and Stephen P. Blackwelder, published in the *Journal of Marriage and Family*, systematically analyzed the content of the *Reader's Guide to Periodic Literature* and discovered that interest in fatherhood in popular magazines fluctuated in the early years of the twentieth century; however, there was a significant and true increase in gender-non-specific articles on parenting, with such articles representing twelve percent of parenting articles in the 1910s and thirty-four percent in the 1920s.<sup>188</sup> In this period, and through the 1960s, interest in “mothering” decreased as interest in “parenting” increased.<sup>189</sup> The authors suggest:

Interest in gender-nonspecific parenting overtook interest in mothering or fathering by the twenties and increased in emphasis in later decades. We suggest that, during the twenties, the conceptualization of parenting began to change from a very gendered view, with mothers and parents regarded as equivalent, to a less gendered perspective.<sup>190</sup>

The authors wisely cautioned against inferring from this data that an interest in fathering had *necessarily* increased. The growth of the term “parenting,” nonetheless indicated a change in values. Atkins and Blackwelder suggested that perhaps the term merely reflected a changed ideal rather than a change in actual behavior. They emphasized that even with a cautious interpretation of the data, the increased use of the term “parent” suggests a significant change in ideals:

[T]he increased use of the term *parenting* may indicate that most people think that fathers and mothers should be engaging in the same behavior regardless of what they actually do. Whether the public has simply relabeled mothering, or has changed its norms about the extent to which both parents should be actively engaged in childrearing, an important cultural change has occurred.<sup>191</sup>

The increased use of the term “parent” in advice articles demonstrates a changing expectation or ideal of father inclusion in the 1920s.

Ralph LaRossa analyzed some popular parenting advice manuals of the early twentieth century, looking for references to fathers.<sup>192</sup> He found that in the seven published editions of L. Emmet Holt’s groundbreaking and popular work devoted to teaching the techniques of modern, scientific childrearing, *The Care and Feeding of Children: A Catechism for the Use of Mothers and Children's Nurses*, between its

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<sup>188</sup> Atkinson and Blackwelder "Fathering in the 20th Century," 980.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid.: 984.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid.

<sup>192</sup> Chapter 3: “Fatherhood and the Baby Doctors” in LaRossa, *The Modernization of Fathers*.

original publication in 1894 and 1914, there was not a single reference to father.<sup>193</sup> Likewise, the Children's Bureau's first and most popular child-rearing manual, which was based on Holt's manual, "Infant Care" (1914) was directed explicitly to "mothers" rather than "parents" and relegated fathers to a helping role, for instance, to protecting the nursing mother from "unnecessary work and worry."<sup>194</sup> This manual had a wide reach, with 1.5 million copies distributed between 1914 and 1921 and 17 million by 1945.<sup>195</sup> The 1921 edition was, by LaRossa's estimation no friendlier to fathers.<sup>196</sup> But the 1929 edition of *Infant Care* had a greater consideration of fathers' role and concluded each section with the reminder that "Parents must work together from the baby's birth to teach him good habits."<sup>197</sup> In discussions of habit training, discussions influenced by behaviorism, fathers were more included.<sup>198</sup> Looking at manuals in the 1920s and 1930s that were popular and important enough to warrant multiple editions, LaRossa concluded that the most progressive texts, generally written by profeminist women, were the most inclusive of fathering, and the most conservative, such as *Infant Care*, tended to be written by pediatricians.<sup>199</sup>

A White House study of families with at least one child between the ages of one and six published in 1936 found widespread use of child-rearing advice literature among women of all classes. Professional and semi-professional fathers, on the other hand, were much more likely than laborers to have read a book of childcare advice within the last year. The report stated, "One-fourth of the fathers and two-thirds of the mothers in class VII [day laborers, urban and rural] read articles on child care as compared with three-fourths of the fathers and practically all of the mothers in class I [professional class]." Twenty to twenty-five percent of fathers among the two lowest socio-economic groups were reported to read child care books and around half of all men in the middle four socio-economic categories were reported to do so.<sup>200</sup> Similar percentages read articles about child-rearing in newspapers and/or magazines.<sup>201</sup>

*Children, the Magazine for Parents* appeared in 1926, boasting that it was sponsored by sixty specialists in children's health, education and welfare. Its editors were among the most prominent figures of the child welfare movement, including Julia Lathrop, of the Children's Bureau; Angelo Patri, a well-known radio personality and

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<sup>193</sup> Ibid., 43.

<sup>194</sup> Italics original. *Infant Care* (1914), pp. 34-35, quoted in Ibid., 46.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid., 47. LaRossa discovered that the 1914 edition of *Infant Care* included the following reference to fathers: "It is a regrettable fact that the few minutes of play that the father has when he gets home at night, which is often almost the only time he has with the child, may result in nervous disturbance of the baby and upset his regular habits." Quoted in ———, *The Modernization of Fatherhood: A Social and Political History* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1997), 47.. This line was deleted in the 1921 edition. In its sections on sick children, the 1921 edition emphasized father's exclusion even more than the previous one, according to LaRossa. ———, *The Modernization of Fatherhood*, 47.

<sup>197</sup> Quoted in LaRossa, *The Modernization of Fatherhood*, 50.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid., 50-51.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid., 62.

<sup>200</sup> Committee on the Infant and Preschool Child, "The Young Child in the Home: A Survey of Three Thousand American Families," in *Report of the Committee on the Infant and Preschool Child: Section III-- Education and Training* (New York: White House Conference on Child Health and Protection, 1936), 11-13.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid., 79.

parenting specialist; Ben Lindsey, Denver's famed juvenile court judge; James E. West, of the Boy Scouts of America; and Mrs. Sidonie Gruenberg of the Child Study Association of America. On the first page of its inaugural issue, the editor wrote, "We recognize that this magazine must intrigue the interests of fathers as well as mothers." The editor further explained that parents should read the magazine together and "discuss it amicably," for the editors "should be distressed to have it used by one side of the house as an argumentative weapon of attack upon the other."<sup>202</sup> A review of the magazine compared it to other magazines about children for mothers, reassuring parents that *Children* contained none of the typical "sugary uplift" and praising the recognition of "the need of instructing parents."<sup>203</sup> From 1932 to 1937 the magazine ran a "For Fathers Only" column.<sup>204</sup>

Advice-givers influenced by the tenets of behaviorism believed that there was danger inherent in a mother's abiding love and believed that the emotional distance of the father was a benefit. There was much discussion of the problem of the too-distant father, but behaviorism's criticism of mothers in some way opened the door for a greater consideration in advice literature of father's role and the "balance" provided by a more "objective" father. There was also a celebration of family togetherness and family solidarity in the 1920s that embraced not a distant, cold father, but a playful, relaxed father who was less burdened by worry than mother.

There was a distinct change in tone and in subject matter of parenting advice columns published in women's magazines and newspapers between 1900 and 1930. Such columns in the first two decades of the twentieth century tended to be addressed exclusively to women and their consideration of fathers was largely limited to the odd letter from a widowed father or to situations in which wives were having problems or disagreements with husbands. The depiction of fathers in one of the most popular of these columns was quite negative. In the 1920s, on the other hand, one popular syndicated newspaper advice columnist offered advice to parents and children and an examination of his column reveals some changes in the perspective and ideals of child-rearing advice givers and popular conceptions of parents' roles in the 1920s.

In the early years of the twentieth century, most published advice-givers in women's magazines and the women's pages of newspapers identified themselves as experienced mothers rather than as doctors, educators or psychologists. Advice columns in the early twentieth century were directed almost exclusively to mothers and, while fathers were not entirely absent from these pages, their involvement was scant. Fathers rarely appeared in such columns, but in one early example, a wife wrote to an expert to settle a parenting debate between herself and her husband; she wrote to the pseudonymous Marion Sprague, who identified herself only as a mother, in a correspondence published by *The Ladies' Home Journal* in 1905, explaining, "Jim and I have fallen into a squabble over spanking.... He says [our son] must be spanked for

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<sup>202</sup> Quoted in "A Magazine for Parents," *New York Times*, September 23 1926.; also, quoted in "A Magazine for Parents. Sixty Specialists in Problems of Young Sponsor Children"(1926) in *The Family*, ed. Rothman, Rothman, and Brown 1979, 103.

<sup>203</sup> "First Aid for Parents," (1926) in *The Family*, ed. Rothman, Rothman, and Brown, 103.. By 1928, Ernest Groves reported with satisfaction that the magazine had increased its population to the point of security. He regarded its success as a sign of progress for the American family. Ernest R. Groves, "The Family," *The American Journal of Sociology* 34, no. 1 (1928).

<sup>204</sup> LaRossa, *The Modernization of Fatherhood*, 127.

naughtiness. I say no. What do you say?" The author responded in agreement with the wife, excusing her involvement by writing, "Well, I dare say that your husband will not mind much what I think, since I do not know at all clearly what it is that he thinks. He will not take me to be imagining myself as an arbitrator between you."<sup>205</sup> In this example, the author's tone is that of a friendly advisor, a fellow mother who simply has more parenting experience than the advice seeker, rather than that of a scientific or professional expert. As with many advice givers of the first decade of the twentieth century, Sprague's expertise rests at least partially on experience as a parent rather than on her formal education. Perhaps because of this casual, or uncredentialed, stance, the author is careful to note the authority of the husband and her lack of authority to contradict him, even as she does so.<sup>206</sup> Marianna Wheeler, superintendent of the Babies' Hospital of New York wrote an advice column for *Harpers' Bazaar* between 1900 and 1909 in which she answered letters about infant care. In approximately seventy columns, only one mentioned fathers: a case of a father, presumably a widower, who was raising a fourteen-month-old and asked for advice on what foods were healthful and could be prepared in his boarding room. Wheeler wrote back with straightforward and practical advice.<sup>207</sup> The lack of male involvement is not terribly surprising, given that the column was about infant care and ran in a women's magazine.

Marion Harland's syndicated advice column was written first for the *Philadelphia North American* (1900-1910) and then the *Chicago Tribune* (1911-1917) and reprinted in twenty-five newspapers. Marion Harland was the pen name of Mary Virginia Terhune, a prolific and successful novelist and writer of domestic manuals, biographies, histories and travelogues. Terhune was married to a Presbyterian minister and had six children, three of whom survived to adulthood.<sup>208</sup> She published twenty-five books on homekeeping, including the very successful *Common Sense in the Household: A Manual of Practical Housewifery* (1871), which sold 100,000 copies in its first ten years and was translated into French, German, and Arabic.<sup>209</sup> When she began writing for the *Chicago Tribune* the paper called her "America's Most Famous Writer on Household Subjects" and a "patron saint of young house-keepers." The paper quoted the editors of *Harper's*

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<sup>205</sup> Marion Sprague, "The Letters of Two Mothers," *The Ladies' Home Journal*, December, 1905 1905. Marion Sprague was the pen name of Annie Ware (Winsor) Allen, educator and founder of the Roger Ascham School in White Plains, New York. Allen worked as a teacher before her marriage at the age of thirty-five. She did not work outside of the home in the early years of her marriage while her children were young, but did serve on the board of the State Training School for Girls in Hudson, New York. She wrote articles for the *Ladies Home Journal* and the advice column, and later authored two books on child raising and on education. She attended, but was not graduated from, Radcliffe. Her papers are housed at Harvard's Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute.

<sup>206</sup> Adapted from Caroline Hinkle, "Child Management in Middle-Class Families in the Early Twentieth Century: Reconsidering Fatherhood in a New Context." Working Paper, Prepared for the Center for Working Families, University of California, Berkeley, 2002.

<sup>207</sup> Marianna Wheeler, "Answers to Mothers," *Harper's Bazaar*, January 1903. I searched these articles for the terms "father," "papa" or "husband" and found only one entry.

<sup>208</sup> All three children became writers and co-wrote books with their mother. Terhune was also the grandmother of Frederic F. Van de Water, author of *Fathers Are Funny* (1939) and other writings about fatherhood, discussed elsewhere in this dissertation.

<sup>209</sup> "Marion Harland (Pen Name); Mary Virginia Terhune," in *Feeding America: The Historic American Cookbook Project* (Michigan State University Library and the Michigan State University Museum, 2005).

*Bazaar* and *Woman's Home Companion* singing her praises, as well.<sup>210</sup> Harland was very successful and well-known author; by 1911 she had been dispersing advice for more than half a century and received 1,200 letters per week from women looking for advice in running their households. She was a professional writer, but was identified first as a homekeeper herself. The *Tribune* enthused:

Marion Harland is a crowning illustration of the fact that a woman can make a fortune by her pen, attain a most enviable reputation as a versatile and successful author, and yet be a perfect housekeeper, a model minister's wife, a devoted mother, a queen in society, and a sympathetic, satisfying friend.<sup>211</sup>

Her column went by a variety of titles, frequently a version of "The Housewife's Exchange" or "School for Housewives," but the column also repeatedly ran under a version of "The Corner for Parents," or "Advice for Parents," or "Advice for Mothers," depending on the topic of the column. The column ran in the women's pages of daily newspapers and was clearly and directly intended for a married female readership.<sup>212</sup>

Although the bulk of her column was taken up with other domestic considerations, the letters published by Harland contained a fair amount of childrearing advice and discussion, particularly her earlier syndicated columns before she moved to the *Tribune*. For example, mothers wrote in about subjects including one's feelings regarding her son's fiancée, the ingratitude of grown children, children's exercise, teething, babies' clothes, and to ask how to encourage a daughter's hair to grow.<sup>213</sup> Men did write to Harland on occasion, as well, but more often to give advice than to request it. For instance, a physician wrote in response to a mother's letter documenting her troubles with an infant to recommend circumcision (he explained that he was risking his reputation by writing because of "the feelings of the medical profession about answering advertisements.") In the same column, Harland indicated that one writer was a common contributor, a man who may or may not have had children of his own, but had a sympathetic understanding of "woman's work and woman's trials."<sup>214</sup> Another father in 1904 wrote to offer advice to a mother who had asked about her son's over-affection for

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<sup>210</sup> Mary Eleanor O'Donnell, "Marion Harland to Write Exclusively for the Tribune: America's Most Famous Writer on Household Subjects Joins the Staff," *Chicago Daily Tribune* (1911).

<sup>211</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>212</sup> *Tribune* readers of the women's pages were encouraged to write to a variety of staff experts for help with their problems. In addition to Harland, writing on "household topics," was an expert prepared to answer question on each of the following: health and hygiene, cooking, business women's problems, beauty problems, social problems, women's political problems, home dressmaking, etiquette, and children. *Ibid.* Although "mothers and teachers" were encouraged to write to Georgene Faulkner, known as the "story lady," for advice on "how to handle the young folks," these letters were not published in her column, which was devoted to children's stories and only contained letters requesting specific tales. "What Shall I Do? Ask the Tribune!," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, January 15 1913.

<sup>213</sup> Marion Harland, "School for Housewives: The Corner for Parents," *Los Angeles Times*, November 27 1902. ———, "School for Housewives: The Parents' Corner," *Los Angeles Times*, October 23 1902. ———, "School for Housewives: For Mothers," *Los Angeles Times*, August 6 1903.

<sup>214</sup> Marion (uncredited) Harland, "The Parents' Corner," *Los Angeles Times*, December 25 1902.

desserts. The father advised offering plentiful good food and predicted this would curb the boy's drive to eat sweets.<sup>215</sup>

One father wrote to Harland to complain of well-to-do families who failed adequately to discipline their children or spend enough time with them, and therefore ruined them.<sup>216</sup> A father of a four-year-old daughter wrote to Harland to say that he had learned enough about the world in his thirty-eight single years to know that he would never allow his daughter to practice "keeping company."<sup>217</sup> He described himself as "an interested daily reader of [Harland's] corner for a long time," someone who had "quoted your opinions on many questions in my own family so often that my wife is inclined to poke fun at me." He then went on to remark at length on Harland's hypocrisy regarding mothers-in-law in her answers to two different writers, complaining that she always protected wives' mothers, but not the husbands'.<sup>218</sup>

A couple of fathers did write in for advice. In one case, a father wrote in to ask how to curb his son's use of slang.<sup>219</sup> In another letter, which understandably angered Harland, a father wrote to complain about his difficult eleven-year-old daughter and to ask the best way "to give her away to some home." Harland wrote back with sympathy for the neglected daughter, explaining that she took it for granted that the girl had "no mother to counteract the evil effects of the father's negligent indifference and lack of natural affection...."<sup>220</sup>

Sometimes women wrote in to discuss problems they were having with their husbands. In a 1903 column, a letter-writer complained that although her husband had a good income, he failed to provide her with sufficient funds to run the house. Harland was outraged by her story and remarked that it was all too common. She suggested that women should consider the cost of all their labor to their husbands, should the men be forced to hire others to complete it. She wrote that she should like to hear only from the "Johns' who read this column" and promised not to publish any letters from wives on the topic:

Will not some business-like Daniel arise and tell us upon what principles husbands so often-- where money is involved-- treat as mindless serfs the women in who hands they are content to trust their honor, and the education, physical and moral, of their

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<sup>215</sup> Marion Harland, "Feeding the Family," *Ibid.*, January 14 1904.

<sup>216</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, "School for Housewives: Duties of Parents to Little Ones," *Los Angeles Times*, July 31 1902.

<sup>217</sup> The subject of courtship brought about some reference to fathers and a letter from a father. One man wrote in to complain that because his own father had been a traveling salesman who made a good living but was distant and cold to his son, the mother of his beloved now denied her approval. Harland wrote back sympathetically, remarking that heredity was often over-emphasized. \_\_\_\_\_, "Advice to Parents," *Los Angeles Times*, April 9 1903. "Miss Libbey" was another advice columnist for the *Chicago Tribune* from the 1910s who answered "social" questions. She responded to one 20-year-old woman who was denied consent to marry by her father. Miss Libbey assumed the father's objection was about the three-year age difference mentioned by the letter-writer and answered that if the writer is sure her young man is worthy of her, there is no reason for her to give him up. Laura Jean Libbey, "Woman and Her Interests: Laura Jean Libbey's Comment and Advice," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, December 13 1911.

<sup>218</sup> Harland, "Feeding the Family," *Los Angeles Times*, January 14 1904.

<sup>219</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, "School for Housewives: For Mothers," *Los Angeles Times*, August 6 1903.

<sup>220</sup> *Ibid.*

children? What has fair-minded John to say? 'I appeal unto Caesar!'<sup>221</sup>

Harland's column only rarely addressed husbands and fathers, and when it did, the discussion of the men was largely negative.

One interesting letter sparked a debate in Harland's column on men's role in the family. First, a mother of five wrote in to complain of her husband's thoughtlessness. She explained that she loved her husband, but found the work of caring for their household and five children challenging and had not a single evening's amusement out in the entirety of their ten-year marriage. She wrote that she was tired "in both body and mind" but would be able to handle it all easily if her husband were more sympathetic:

Yet how little would everything seem if I only knew there was one who would come in and inquire how the day had been spent and if the children were very troublesome-- only a small kind word like that would open the heavens for me.<sup>222</sup>

She continued that she had trained the children "not to be noisy or bother papa after he has been working hard all day" and worked in countless little ways to make her husband's life more pleasant. Defensively, she exclaimed, "'I am not fretting! Only a woman's heart gets starved and things look so dark with the worriment of the children and how to make ends meet....'" Harland responded to this letter, signed "M. J. D.," with a condemnation of the "selfish, inconsiderate husband" who had let his wife "slave her strength away in doing all the work of a family of seven, and never offer[ed] to ease her load by tender encouragement, or by trying to help her in the too heavy task...." She assured the letter-writer, whom she called a "true-hearted heroine," that hundreds shared her sad experience but could not speak of it. Harland pled for husbands to take notice of all their wives do to make their lives more comfortable and to be kind. Harland concluded more optimistically: "Lastly, and I say it with joy unfeigned, there are thousands and tens of thousands of husbands who are neither thoughtless nor selfish in their domestic relations."<sup>223</sup>

In response to "M. J. D.'s" letter, "M. G. A.," also a mother of five children wrote to say she had overcome similar woes simply by asking more of her husband. She wrote, "I wonder if 'M. J. D.,' in the egotism of young motherhood, did not assume burdens voluntarily which should have been shared with the husband from the first?" M. G. A.'s husband, coming directly from the home of "an unselfish mother," failed to appreciate all his wife did for him and the burden this put on her and in response, the letter-writer dropped the tasks she felt her husband could do for himself. She explained, "Of course, there was some indignation and an injured air, but I assured him I would be very glad to look after his clothes if he would wash the dishes and tend the babies. I managed to keep my temper and the affair adjusted itself." However, M. G. A. explained, she brought herself to the point of a nervous breakdown by taking on the full burden of children:

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<sup>221</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, "Housewife's Exchange," *Los Angeles Times*, December 24 1903.

<sup>222</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, "The Housewife's Weekly Exchange," *Los Angeles Times*, January 29 1903.

<sup>223</sup> Ibid.



I shouldered the whole care of the children and plumed myself upon doing a virtuous act. Then when I had virtually shut him out of all that tender care of helpless children which would have been such a developing force in his character, I felt injured to think he was so helpless with them.<sup>224</sup>

She left until she "got rested up a little" and they all learned a lesson from it. The father got "close to his children," the children learned to call on their father, and she learned that she was "not so necessary a part of the household as [she] had supposed." She explained she continued to encourage this closeness between father and children by sharing nighttime responsibilities with him and forcing herself to stay in bed "while he wrestled with a croupy baby." She explained that she was "no longer shy" about asking her husband to help with household chores or asking him to watch the children so she could "get out a little." Furthermore, she described the various ways in which she had simplified her housekeeping, sharing duties with the children and cutting unnecessary work. She ended with an optimistic sentiment: "And remember that what is sheer drudgery to the wife may be a pleasing change for the man of the house. It is worth trying, anyway."<sup>225</sup>

Harland responded to this letter with a highly qualified respect for the writer's efforts and called the letter "an uncommon story" with some "plain truths." She followed her slight compliments with an indirect suggestion that the "average man of the house" would likely scoff at the ideas presented by the letter writer.<sup>226</sup> A couple of weeks later, Harland printed a letter with a more conventional response to "M. J. D.'s" original letter. A woman wrote in to reach out "in love and sympathy" to the distressed writer of the original letter, explaining that the experience described in the letter was just like her own. She wrote of the "injustice and loneliness and forever trying-and-trying! to make things right and to keep the home that it should be." She excused their husbands by explaining, "many a good husband has an unpleasant way of expressing himself" and encouraged the letter-writer to take time for rest and recreation and to avoid self-pity and complaint. She ended her compassionate letter with unwarranted optimism: "I hope you will prove an upliftment to your beloved husband and he will not long appear selfish. He could not really be so, with a lovely family, and a true wife."<sup>227</sup>

About two months after "M. G. A.'s" provocative letter was published and nearly four months after the original letter, Harland published a series of letters about both the original letter and "M. G. A.'s" response. One male correspondent wrote,

IF MEN are allowed to contribute to this department, I wish to congratulate M. G. A. on her reply to M. J. D. I am a married man; my children all grown. And now I look back over the experiences [unreadable two words] astounded at the amount of unconscious selfishness one may practice through careless habits and

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<sup>224</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, "Advice to Mothers," *Los Angeles Times*, March 19 1903.

<sup>225</sup> Ibid.

<sup>226</sup> Ibid.

<sup>227</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, "The Housewife's Weekly Exchange," *Los Angeles Times*, April 2 1903.

thoughtlessness, and I am convinced that much of it needs only to be made apparent to the average man to be dropped.<sup>228</sup>

He encouraged wives to join their husbands in their amusements, and to take on necessary discipline themselves rather than postponing it "until papa comes home." He suggested, "The wise wife will allow the hub to share in the care of the children at all times, encouraging them to make demands upon his time." The author encouraged fathers to be involved, friendly and affectionate:

I like the demonstrative parent-- one who is not afraid that his dignity will suffer, or that his children will lose respect for his authority, if he becomes 'chummy' with them. He gets near to the hearts of his children and inspires their confidence and is a far greater factor in directing of their lives than he could be by standing on his dignity and commanding obedience to his will.<sup>229</sup>

Harland responded to this letter enthusiastically, stating "THIS IS THE KIND OF LETTER IT should do every man or woman good to read. There is never a place lacking in our column for a man who can furnish such a contribution of common sense."<sup>230</sup>

Another letter-writer published in the same column also was "IMPRESSED" by the letter written by "M. J. D." and wrote that she felt the same and was also encouraged by her husband to go out "to places of amusement occasionally." This writer also remarked that husbands tend not to express their appreciation, so it is best to turn to one's children for solace: "When a woman's heart is starved for the words that would cheer and brighten her pathway, it is a blessed thing she has little children to turn to." The writer suggested that perhaps this lack of expressed love and appreciation is what drove women to leave their husbands and offered tips for baking sweet potatoes and reusing fruit cans as footstools before signing off. Harland responded that almost all women knew about that "heart longing" but must remember that husbands may not express their love verbally, but would show it in other ways.<sup>231</sup>

Harland's newspaper advice columns from the first two decades of the twentieth century were explicitly directed to "housewives" and only occasionally touched on fathers and husbands. Some men did write to Harland, and some wives wrote with questions or complaints concerning their husbands. Harland's column was clearly designed to support and uplift wives and mothers by expressing solidarity and offering help. By the 1920s, a new family ideal of friendly togetherness and companionability accompanied an increase in advice directed at "parents" rather than mothers alone.

This trend was exemplified by a newspaper advice column written by Dr. Arthur Dean. In the late 1920s, Arthur Dean, otherwise known as Dr. Dean or The Parent Counselor, had a syndicated newspaper column offering advice to parents. He started

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<sup>228</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, "The Corner for Parents," *Los Angeles Times*, May 21 1903.

<sup>229</sup> Ibid.

<sup>230</sup> Ibid.

<sup>231</sup> Ibid.

each article with a piece of advice or an anecdote about parenting and then answered letters from parents and children. He also promised to answer personally all letters sent to him with a self-addressed, stamped envelope; later columns, in the mid-1930s, referred to the “Arthur Dean Answering Service” which had been “established for the express purpose of answering personal letters from Dr. Dean's readers concerning their problems.”<sup>232</sup> Many of Dean's columns addressed fathering in one form or another—either a mother or child wrote in with a question about the head of household or a father wrote in with a question. In one column, Dean addressed the question of whether or not fathers read his articles. His answer was: “I have no way of telling except by the number of letters I receive from fathers as compared with those I receive from children, young people and mothers.” Dean reported that forty percent of his letters came from children younger than eighteen, thirty percent came from mothers, and the remaining thirty percent was divided among “employed young people, fathers and grandparents.”<sup>233</sup> A White House survey published in 1936 gives some indication of how many men read articles on child care in newspapers. Professional men were most likely to do so, at 67.9 percent, and laborers were least likely to do so, at 20.5 percent reported to do so.<sup>234</sup>

Dean emphasized his intention that the whole family make use of his advice: “This column is written for family participation, whether it appears on the woman's page, next to the editorial columns, or on the sports sheet.”<sup>235</sup> Some of the printed letters were from youth who wanted Dr. Dean to influence their fathers. One such writer noted his father's daily habit of reading the column.<sup>236</sup> In one example, a nineteen-year-old boy in an argument with his father about which evenings he should be allowed to go out wrote to Dr. Dean to ask his opinion, explaining that he and his father had argued and then decided to leave the decision to Dean.<sup>237</sup> The many published letters from fathers and about fathers offer a window into families of the 1920s, but cannot be taken literally. Dean acknowledged in one column that “While the questions are genuine and the answers are genuine as I can make them, I use a certain poetic license in disguising the inquirers” in an effort to maintain complete anonymity and, no doubt, peak readers' interests. He explained, “This business of getting advice on questions submitted to me is, and should be, both delicate and confidential. I intend to keep it so.”<sup>238</sup>

Dean's columns reveal some important changes in popular parenting advice in the early twentieth century. Earlier advice columns were frequently written by women who identified themselves chiefly as experienced mothers and made scant reference to fathers as readers. Dean was a professor of education and an academic lecturer and he made use of his title in his column. His column explicitly directed itself to “parents” rather than “mothers” and a significant portion of his letters and his columns were related to fathers. Fathers wrote in for advice on diverse topics, including teaching sons about sex, getting a

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<sup>232</sup> For example, Arthur Dean, “Your Boy and Your Girl,” *Berkeley Daily Gazette* (1934). ———, “Your Boy and Your Girl,” *Berkeley Daily Gazette*, September 15 1939.

<sup>233</sup> Arthur Dean, “Your Boy-- Your Girl,” *The Washington Post*, April 15 1929.

<sup>234</sup> Committee on the Infant and Preschool Child, “The Young Child in the Home: A Survey of Three Thousand American Families,” in *Report of the Committee on the Infant and Preschool Child: Section III-- Education and Training* (New York: White House Conference on Child Health and Protection, 1936), 79.

<sup>235</sup> Arthur Dean, “Your Boy-- Your Girl,” *The Washington Post*, April 15 1929.

<sup>236</sup> ———, “Your Boy and Your Girl,” *The Washington Post*, May 2 1928.

<sup>237</sup> For example, ———, “Your Boy and Your Girl,” *The Washington Post*, November 30 1927.

<sup>238</sup> ———, “Your Boy and Your Girl,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, April 13 1927.

son to stop smoking, how to wake up in a better mood, how to get a four-year-old to brush his teeth, and left-handedness.<sup>239</sup> Dean indicated he frequently received letters from fathers asking either how to make a son stop getting in fights, or how to get a son to stand up for himself.<sup>240</sup> A great many fathers' letters asked about their children's education and troubles with teachers or schools.<sup>241</sup>

Several of Dean's columns directly addressed "dads." In 1926, Dean published "DAD'S DECALOGUE" from the superintendent of schools of Philadelphia and recommended mothers or children clip the article and place it under the family head's dinner plate.<sup>242</sup> In another column he recounted a story about Cal Coolidge's son. He wrote that the young Coolidge was working in a tobacco field in 1924 on the day that his father became President. When another worker remarked that if *his* father were President, he would not be working in a tobacco field, young Coolidge supposedly responded, "If my father were your father, you would." Dean wrote in admiration of this robust fathering, and also mentioned that he had seen a picture of Coolidge as governor of Massachusetts working on a soapbox auto with his son. Dean's column celebrated the Coolidge form of fathering—firm, but involved and fair:

Dads are somewhat like pickles-- there are 57 varieties of sweetness and sourness. There's the 'trained' dad whose slogan is, 'It pays to know.' The 'alibi' dad who lets his boy whistle for him. The 'no-account' dad who lets mother do the whistling on the front door step.

Then there's the Coolidge dad-- and may his kind increase!<sup>243</sup>

Dean promoted the idea of an involved, friendly father and promoted the idea that a father was more likely to have a dispassionate, removed perspective on his children than the mother was:

A family must be treated as an indivisible unit. Fathers must share in the discipline of their children. The child needs the interest and guidance of two parents. A mother, in her affection, often sees her child as she wishes him to be. A father sees the child as he ought to be. A mother often gets so tired that she sometimes risks the passing up of discipline. A father's discipline must dove-tail with and supplement a mother's training. The father is not simply the wage-earner, he is the spiritual backbone of the family.<sup>244</sup>

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<sup>239</sup> ———, "Your Boy and Your Girl," *The Atlanta Constitution*, January 9 1926. ———, "Your Boy and Your Girl," *The Washington Post*, October 24 1928. ———, "Your Boy and Your Girl," *The Washington Post*, May 5 1928. ———, "Your Boy and Your Girl," *The Atlanta Constitution*, December 21 1925.

<sup>240</sup> Arthur Dean, "Your Boy and Your Girl," *The Atlanta Constitution*, December 17 1925.

<sup>241</sup> For example, *Ibid.* ———, "Your Boy and Your Girl," *The Washington Post*, October 10 1927. ———, "Your Boy and Your Girl," *The Washington Post*, May 5 1928. ———, "Your Boy and Your Girl," *The Washington Post*, May 17 1928. ———, "Your Boy and Your Girl," *The Washington Post*, October 20 1927.

<sup>242</sup> Arthur Dean, "Your Boy and Your Girl," *The Atlanta Constitution*, January 9 1926.

<sup>243</sup> ———, "Your Boy-- Your Girl," *The Washington Post*, April 6 1929.

<sup>244</sup> *Ibid.*, April 15.

This rather old-fashioned description of fathering put father as the firm, rational, disciplinarian. His idea of father as child-rearing helper to the mother is similar to the ideas put forth by those discussed earlier in this chapter, such as kindergartners, those in the mothercraft movement, and the founders of the Congress of Mothers; however, his emphasis on the father as “the spiritual backbone of the family” is at odds with those authors’ elevation of mothers to the spiritual head of the family. Despite these somewhat old-fashioned ideas about fatherhood, Dean’s column typically promoted a level of permissiveness, friendliness, and understanding from fathers that was more “modern” and showed the influence of writers who were busy promoting the new idea of involved “dads” as pals.

In one such column, he emphasized a father’s role in raising a son, in particular, and asked fathers if they were “Johnny-on-the-spot” in dealing with their sons’ problems. Dean offered a thirteen-question questionnaire “Rating Dad” on “The Job of Being a Father” to be filled in by dads. The questions included many of the key ideas of the father-to-father literature of the 1920s, including asking if the home is a mere “rooming house” for the children and if the father knows his son’s friends and their families, if he is companionable with his son, if he plays with the boy, and if he takes an active interest in school and church activities. Dean invited fathers to send in their questionnaires to be scored.<sup>245</sup> In another article, Dean stressed the importance of designing and decorating a boy’s room to help keep him at home, a topic emphasized by those promoting closer father-son bonds.<sup>246</sup>

Dean was clearly influenced by the writings of Frank Cheley, fathering advice author and editor of the Father and Son Library, quoting his work and recommending Cheley’s *Dad, Whose Boy is Yours*.<sup>247</sup> In another column, he published a letter from a son titled by Dean, “Bud Wants a Dad”: “I wonder if you can help me find out why my Dad and I aren’t good pals like other boys’ Dads are to them. I am crazy about my Dad and I would do anything in the world to please him.” The son complains that his father is very strict and not a friend to him: “Whenever I ask Dad to come and see me play baseball or basketball he is always too busy.” The motherless boy longed for a father to confide in, and Dean explained that he was right to want this: “The trouble, Bud, is that a lot of fathers don’t have quite the right idea of a home. As Christine Frederick writes in a current issue of *Children, the Magazine for Parents*: ‘A home is simply a kind of private hotel operated for the man’s personal comfort and the children must not be too much in evidence.’” Dean explained to the boy that his dad did “not want to be bothered. He is too tired. Your Dad is just missing something good and wholesome by not staying closer in spirit to you. He is a bit careless.” But, Dean added more sympathetically, “it might be that your father misses your mother terribly and somehow he realizes he is not capable of giving you that confidence which he knows your mother would give if she were alive. Perhaps the poor fellow is really lost in the ‘being a dad’ business.” He suggested the lad give his father Cheley’s volume, *Dad, Whose Boy Is Yours? 48 Little Talks with Fathers*

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<sup>245</sup> ———, “Your Boy and Your Girl,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, December 6 1926. The title of this questionnaire may have been inspired by Frank Cheley’s 1923 book, *The Job of Being a Dad*.

<sup>246</sup> ———, “Your Boy and Your Girl,” *The Washington Post*, February 8 1929.

<sup>247</sup> ———, “Your Boy and Your Girl,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, January 10 1927. ———, “Your Boy and Your Girl: A Word to Fathers,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, April 27 1928.

*who Want to Be Real Dads to their Boys* and Dean sent the following message to the errant father: "Dear Dad: To develop Bud you, as his father, must work with him, play with him, dream with him and live with him in his activities and in his ambitions. You must grow with him toward the thing you desire him to become."<sup>248</sup>

In another column, Dean also underscored this theme of befriending one's son. He told the story of a father and son sitting on the front porch together when the boy's friend came for a visit. The son and his friend chatted together and, in the course of this conversation, the son indicated that his father was his good friend, causing the father to shield his face with his book to prevent the son's noticing the tears of gratitude streaming down his face. Dean followed this instructional story with the following advice: "Fathers, it pays wonderfully well to put a little time into the business of being a father."<sup>249</sup>

Dean cautioned fathers to be generous with their children and not to rule "like a czar."<sup>250</sup> In one column a boy wrote him to ask for advice about his stern father:

My father is very strict, but I will say this for him that he always practices what he preaches, only he is so solemn about it. But he never pals up to me like other boys' fathers do. How can I make him? BOY

Dean, fully immersed in the popular ideas of fathering of the 1920s, replied: "For his own sake he should." Dean encouraged the boy to try to appreciate the father as he was, but added: "I should not cease trying to interest him in me."<sup>251</sup> He repeatedly advised fathers to compromise with their children, to trust them to make good decisions, and offer them some amount of independence.<sup>252</sup> He printed a letter from a "DELIGHTFUL DAD" who accepted his son's "'girl fever'" without much intervention, beyond a "few quiet talks" and then conferred with his son about his requests for money, allowing the boy to realize that he ought to earn his own money to spend on girls. The father concluded that his son, now a freshman at college, learned hard-work, responsibility and economy from his efforts and wrote, "'Do I enjoy such a son? I do.'"<sup>253</sup>

Dean offered a column on "Dads and Sons" and pamphlets on the topic of dealing with adolescent boys, as well, to those who wrote to request them. His pamphlet topics included: "Advice to Fathers and Sons; Adolescent Boy; High School Boys' Problems; Boys Smoking; Why a Boy Should Not Quit School; Making Things at Home."<sup>254</sup> In

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<sup>248</sup> Arthur Dean, "Your Boy and Your Girl," *The Washington Post*, May 5 1928.

<sup>249</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, "Your Boy and Your Girl," *The Atlanta Constitution*, April 13 1927.

<sup>250</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, "Your Boy and Your Girl," *The Atlanta Constitution*, January 11 1926.

<sup>251</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, "Your Boy and Your Girl," *The Washington Post*, November 30 1927.

<sup>252</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, "Your Boy and Your Girl," *The Washington Post*, January 14 1928. For example, he advised, "Give your daughter and son the opportunity to prove to you that they should have the car. Possessing license, quality of driving, sharing in expense of maintenance, assuming responsibility in upkeep, days and nights when he or she may have it, making a promise and keeping it." \_\_\_\_\_, "Your Boy and Your Girl," *The Washington Post*, February 11 1928.

<sup>253</sup> Arthur Dean, "Your Boy and Your Girl," *The Washington Post*, December 7 1928. Also, \_\_\_\_\_, "Your Boy and Your Girl," *The Washington Post*, December 7 1928.

<sup>254</sup> Arthur Dean, "Your Boy and Your Girl," *The Washington Post*, May 17 1928. \_\_\_\_\_, "Your Boy and Your Girl," *The Atlanta Constitution*, May 12 1928. Various of these leaflets were also mentioned in the

other columns, he advised fathers specifically to write in for pamphlets on how to address children's teasing, allowance for chores, sex education, meals to build weight, introversion and extroversion, the boy who doesn't know what to do with his spare time, what to do when your son wants a baseball suit you cannot afford, advice on whether a father should encourage his son to continue to write movies despite rejections from filmmakers, as well as other fathering issues.<sup>255</sup>

Fathers are parents, you know, just as much as mothers. They have to help their Johnnie to decide upon a vocation, to take Sammies into back rooms and 'say it with a stick,' to hem and haw as they try to explain to Annabelle that the stork flew over the house and landed on the roof. And last, but not least, they have to furnish the meal ticket which every one from wifey to the baby proceeds most industriously to punch with never-failing regularity. It is no small [sic] matter to be in the business of being a father. He needs all the information available.<sup>256</sup>

Dean argued that fathers needed expert advice to navigate the demanding job of being a successful father.

Dean wrote a column on a survey of 682 boys in Belleville, New Jersey, on the influence of father. The results, Dean wrote, "were quite surprising and, to fathers, not particularly flattering." The boys were asked to pick their heroes, and only two chose "My Dad." Dean smilingly suggested that no father would mind coming second to Babe Ruth or Colonel Lindbergh, but, apparently, "The Manassa Mauler," the heavy-weight boxing champion Jack Dempsey, earned five times as many votes as father. In response, Dean put out his own survey and asked his boy readers to rank each in terms of their importance to the nation.

In another column, Dean published "A Father's Letter to a Boy Over 12" in which an imaginary father writes his son with advice. The letter emphasized traditional education, but also "personality" and popularity. The "Dad" says, "I'd be a poor simp of a father if I didn't want you to have more friends, earn a greater income, spend more wisely, live more efficiently and feel more deeply than I." He emphasized the importance of popularity and personality, writing, "Long after teachers and classmates have forgotten the marks you attained and long after the diploma has faded you will be remembered for your school personality." The letter concluded with the note that there were so many subjects for father and son to discuss together and that Dean could send pamphlets to help on all these subjects.<sup>257</sup>

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following: ———, "Your Boy and Your Girl," *The Washington Post*, July 24 1928. ———, "Your Boy and Your Girl," *The Washington Post*, May 17 1928.

<sup>255</sup> Arthur Dean, "Your Boy and Your Girl," *The Washington Post*, May 17 1928. ———, "Your Boy and Your Girl," *The Washington Post*, January 14 1929. ———, "Your Boy and Your Girl," *The Washington Post*, January 14 1928. ———, "Your Boy and Your Girl," *The Washington Post*, May 2 1928.

<sup>256</sup> Arthur Dean, "Your Boy and Your Girl," *The Washington Post*, May 17 1928.

<sup>257</sup> *Ibid.*, September 4. College students in the 1920s also emphasized the importance of social success over academic achievement, according to historian Paula Fass. "Chapter 4: Work and Play in the Peer Society,"

Dean emphasized a father's place as role model to sons, but he also addressed fathers' frustrations and worries over daughters. In the article that ran the day after Dean's "A Father's Letter to a Boy Over 12" Dean wrote a corresponding "Letter to a Daughter." In this column, Dean imagined a letter written from an apologetic mother, who explains that she is writing on behalf of both parents since,

Your father is an old dear but he's lost when it comes to writing a letter to his daughter at college. The old dear is so busy keeping us alive that his ideas about women fit the eighteenth century. So we have talked things over and I am delegated to write this combination paternal letter. It represents Dad's thoughts as well as my own.<sup>258</sup>

Dean seems to permit fathers more leeway in being un-modern with daughters than sons. This letter, like the imagined letter from a dad to his son, placed academic success lower than overall personal well-being. The daughter's letter emphasized the importance of avoiding "frazzled nerves." The "mother" wrote, "All the algebra and higher mathematics in the universe are not worth a Model T (Dad's phrase) beside good nerves. You'll need them when you have a husband and some children." The letter embraced some new ideals of femininity, encouraging the daughter to participate in sports and have "your little love affairs as I did." The daughter was also encouraged to study and reminded that she could earn her own living and become a "teacher, architect, engineer, [or have an] experimental career in science," but the mother cautions: "Of course, I want you to be 'smart', as Dad says, but I don't want you to be so smart that women and boys will be afraid of you. Have you a brain? Yes, of course; but don't scare people off." The daughter is encouraged to learn domestic science and read up on "new ideas in baby care." The "mother" adds,

I forgot about current events, history... which will keep you up to date. Your mother has kept pretty close to the tub and sink and doesn't know much. Your father belongs to lunch clubs, lodges and societies. He meets people all the time. Without lifting his finger he keeps abreast of the times. All I have is the back yard fence and with all due respect to Mrs. Jones she's a cackling hen. If I had my life to live over again, I'd go in for books, real people music-- anything which would give me a chance to be somebody.<sup>259</sup>

The "mother," like the "Dad" from the boy's letter, expresses her desire that her daughter surpass her.<sup>260</sup> This letter, when taken with the son's, demonstrates Dean's ideas regarding changing gender roles and parenting. The father is unable to keep up with the

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in Paula S. Fass, *The Damned and the Beautiful: American Youth in the 1920's* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977).

<sup>258</sup> Arthur Dean, "Your Boy and Your Girl," *The Washington Post*, January 14 1928.

<sup>259</sup> Ibid.

<sup>260</sup> Ibid.



changes, but the daughter is urged to see the breadth of opportunities in front of her. Yet, she is cautioned not to seem “too smart” or intellectual and to focus on child rearing and home-making. The limits of this are also addressed by describing the imagined mother’s limited worldview and her own frustrated desires.

Although Dean imagined the average father as leaving the letter writing to mother, some fathers did write in to ask for advice about their girls. One father wrote in to ask: "I have two silly daughters, one insists on bobbing her hair and the other is attempting a boyish figure by undereating. Which is the sillier? DISGUSTED DAD." Dean responded that the bobbed hair was nothing to worry about, but the undereating was: "Put a stop to the under-eating craze, Dad."<sup>261</sup> Numerous daughters wrote in for advice on dealing with their fathers. In a typical column, a daughter wrote in to complain about her overprotective father.<sup>262</sup> Another 14-year-old girl complained of her father’s strict ideas of “ladylike” behavior and his refusal to allow her to participate in sports.<sup>263</sup>

Dean devoted an entire column to fathers’ relationships to their daughters in 1927, writing about the “age-old” triangle of father-girl-boy and the problems faced by fathers and daughters when girls start seeing boys romantically. He offered readers a pamphlet of information on the topic, as well.<sup>264</sup> Dean was particularly concerned about the danger of fostering a “father fixation” in daughters and warned that daughters must not become overly attached to their fathers, such that beaux could not compete.<sup>265</sup> Fathers also must be aware of the example they set for their daughters in their own treatment of women, Dean warned. He printed one letter from a girl of sixteen stating that her father was foolish and careless in his relations with other women, despite her mother’s youthful appearance and smiling denial of the problem. Dean interpreted the father’s dalliances as his attempt to deal with aging and cautioned any father facing such a crisis “to renew his youth and live it over again in his growing children. This is the way to abiding love of wife and family. It is the way to a full and happy life. It is the course pursued by the vast majority of men.”<sup>266</sup> The concept of connecting with one’s children as a way of recapturing youthful vitality was one raised over and over again in advice to fathers in the 1920s.

Dean repeatedly fielded questions from both youths and fathers in which he urged fathers to be more accepting of daughters’ romantic lives. He asserted the father’s right to object to specific boys, but advised against outright bans on going out with or entertaining boys in the home and he was liberal about allowing boys and girls to be together unaccompanied late into the night.<sup>267</sup> In one column, a father asked Dean if he was right to refuse to allow his sixteen-year-old daughter to have boys to the house or to

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<sup>261</sup> ———, "Your Boy and Your Girl," *The Atlanta Constitution*, January 10 1927.

<sup>262</sup> ———, "Your Boy and Your Girl," *The Washington Post*, December 29 1927.

<sup>263</sup> ———, "Your Boy and Your Girl," *The Washington Post*, May 5 1928.

<sup>264</sup> ———, "Your Boy and Your Girl," *The Washington Post*, November 4 1927.

<sup>265</sup> See, for example: ———, "Your Boy and Your Girl," *The Washington Post*, May 2 1928. ———, "Your Boy-- Your Girl," *The Washington Post*, April 20 1929. ———, "Your Boy and Your Girl," *The Washington Post*, February 8 1929. ———, "Your Boy and Your Girl," *The Washington Post*, January 14 1928.

<sup>266</sup> Arthur Dean, "Your Boy and Your Girl," *The Atlanta Constitution*, October 23 1928.

<sup>267</sup> See, for example: ———, "Your Boy and Your Girl," *The Atlanta Constitution*, December 17 1925. ———, "Your Boy and Your Girl," *The Washington Post*, May 2 1928. ———, "Your Boy and Your Girl," *The Atlanta Constitution*, May 12 1928. ———, "Your Boy and Your Girl," *The Washington Post*, January 14 1928. ———, "Your Boy and Your Girl," *The Atlanta Constitution*, March 22 1929.

go out at night. Dean responded that he was not.<sup>268</sup> In another instance, he responded to a “DISTURBED FATHER” who asked how late a boy should be entertained in the front parlor by his 17-year-old high-school daughter. Dean suggested that 10:30 was the conventional time for leaving, but joked that one father said that he did not mind his daughter sitting up with her “young man” at night, but did mind when he took the morning paper when he left.<sup>269</sup> His advice to fathers about daughters’ romances was usually reassuring and relaxed, and he tended to think mothers were more rational and calm on the subject. He explained,

A mother usually has more sense in these matters than a father. She wants the daughter to experience the fine love-life she either had or missed. In love affairs mothers have a discerning mind. A father may know a lot about lots of things but he seldom fathoms the love life of a woman. He may be able to analyze his daughter's report card but mighty few fathers can see into a daughter's soul.<sup>270</sup>

However, in one case a “BEWILDERED DAD” wrote in alarm that his 21-year-old, college-student daughter studied at a boy’s rooming house with him, staying until 1:00 a.m. and speaking nightly on the phone for a half hour at a time. Dean responded: “I know of few social ingredients better calculated to wreck the life of your daughter than those you have named. I suggest that you withdraw you daughter from college and introduce her to the real meaning of a purposeful life via a job in an office or store. She is now looking in the bright face of danger.”<sup>271</sup>

Dean’s advice was directed at the whole family and consciously and extensively included dad. The fatherhood promoted by Dean was involved and friendly and his ideal family was democratic and affectionate. While within the discussions of fathering there was a definite emphasis on sons, father-daughter relationships also received extended consideration. This was a vastly different column than earlier parenting advice columns, such as Marion Harland’s, which directed advice more or less exclusively to women.

## Conclusion

Child-rearing advice givers and experts made notable efforts to include men, especially in the latter 1910s and 1920s. As the notion of divine motherhood lost favor, a more inclusive attitude toward parenting grew. Advice literature and parenting organizations more frequently used the gender-neutral term “parent” when discussing child rearing and made efforts to reach out to fathers. The Children’s Bureau and Better Baby Campaigns, kindergarten workers, and child study organizations made efforts to include fathers. The Congress of Mothers, perhaps the most successful parents’ organization ever formed, made repeated and conscientious efforts to attract male membership, even changing its name to reflect this new policy. What started as an organization explicitly limited to mothers, based in a belief in the divinely ordained

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<sup>268</sup> Arthur Dean, “Your Boy and Your Girl,” *The Washington Post*, December 29 1927.

<sup>269</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, “Your Boy and Your Girl,” *The Washington Post*, January 14 1928.

<sup>270</sup> Ibid.

<sup>271</sup> Ibid., July 24.

special role for mothers, became a parenting organization that sought to increase male membership year by year. Colleges and universities likewise sought to bring marriage and parenting education to men, through outreach and mandatory life-education classes. Child-rearing literature increasingly used gender-neutral language and special articles and columns to attempt to draw in male readers. Newspaper childrearing advice columns addressed fathers more frequently in the 1920s than they had in the early years of the twentieth century. This change was significant, but limited. The bulk of readers of child-rearing advice and participants of child-rearing groups and classes remained female, but growing numbers of men participated, as well. Feminists and, increasingly, more conservative advocates of an educated parenthood made conscientious efforts in the 1910s and 1920s to include men. The ideal of a companionate marriage led to a greater sense that husbands and wives should be partners in child-rearing and a more scientific approach to parent education meant that child-rearing knowledge was seen as more accessible to men. Yet, many men rejected inclusion in women-dominated parenting organizations. The trend toward integration of men into parents' groups was in some ways surpassed by the growth of all-male fathers' groups. In the 1910s and 1920s, a group of men worked to create father-only groups to discuss child rearing and to work for the benefit of their children. Numerous fathers' clubs, fathers' group offshoots of the PTA, and books written by and for fathers took shape in the 1920s.

## Chapter 4

### **The Fraternity of Fatherhood: Fathers' Organizations of the Early Twentieth Century**

Parenting organizations and organizations designed to improve children's lives made considered efforts to include fathers in the early years of the twentieth century but in the 1910s and 1920s rather than joining such co-educational groups, some fathers instead formed separate, all-male organizations to discuss parenting and to work toward improving children's day-to-day lives. Within the PTA, for instance, there was a growing trend of fathers' clubs meeting separately from the women's portion of the organization, despite the PTA's admittance and even recruitment of men. In cases where there were not fathers' groups, men were pulled into organizations through fathers' events and special men's meetings rather than simply folded into the overarching organization. Instead of joining child-study groups or parenting clubs, men formed their own organizations. Additionally, although parenting advice books were more inclined to use inclusive terms such as "parents" and to include consideration of fathers in the 1920s, men began to write books on parenting specifically for fathers, to identify the problems, challenges and lessons of parenting as different for men than for women. Fathers did not want to read their wife's books, these authors suggested; they wanted their own books of advice. There was a significant growth of fathers' clubs and fathers' groups that functioned either as off-shoots of larger parenting organizations or as entirely separate entities.

In the 1910s and 1920s, men chose to discuss children's issues and parenting in all-male groups because they saw fathering as different from mothering in an essential way. Fathers wanted to discuss issues they believed were especially relevant to men, or to men and boys. Many of these groups were designed to deal with issues that could easily have been covered by existing groups—for instance, the growth of fathers' clubs in the schools sought to address teen smoking, drop-out rates, the need for new equipment, and issues regarding curricula. Yet, the men in these clubs felt that these matters could or should be addressed by men separately from the women. In part, perhaps, men did not feel comfortable joining female-dominated groups where women leaders set the agenda and tone of meetings. Fathers' groups also had a positive motivation, the belief that fathers had something unique to offer.

#### **Early Fathers' Clubs**

Starting around 1910, schools began to obtain father participation by establishing clubs, projects, and events designed solely for fathers.<sup>1</sup> These efforts were sometimes

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<sup>1</sup> Interest in father-led discussion groups was not strictly limited to school groups. In 1914, a professor at the Hartford School of Religious Pedagogy, Edward P. John, called for the creation of parents' departments within Sunday schools which might set up church-run classes for fathers, imagining classes for men which "would gather from week to week to discuss the ways in which fathers can best fulfill their duties and meet their opportunities in shaping the characters of their adolescent sons." Men might well be more interested

very successful. In one instance in 1908, a St. Louis public school had a Fathers' Club of 250 members—this from a school of only one-thousand pupils. The club met monthly, charged a monthly membership fee, and with the money bought three pianos for the school and outfitted the school's baseball team. The club was a great success and gained some national attention. An article in the *Labor Digest* claimed, "Since the club was organized, it has been noticed that the pupils take greater pride in their school and accomplish more. The theory of the fathers who founded the club is that if the teachers and pupils know that the parents are taking a kindly interest in the school, better work is done."<sup>2</sup> In Missouri in 1912, a club of school fathers helped improve local roads.<sup>3</sup> The fathers of the Rockford, Illinois school district worked on their own to raise money to improve school grounds in 1911 and 1912.<sup>4</sup> *The Tenth Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education* in 1910 recommended that "[i]n the better neighborhoods, upon one or two evenings per month, there should meet a 'Fathers' Club,' devoted to the discussion of civic, industrial, and social topics, and especially to the great American problem of how to bring up a boy in a great city."<sup>5</sup> Atlanta had several active fathers' clubs in the 1910s, but it took a political issue regarding the schools to motivate large numbers of fathers to become involved in the PTA.<sup>6</sup> Adopting the slogan "Wake Up, Daddy!" in 1917, the male members of the west end's Parent-Teacher Association, who called themselves the "daddies," sought to convince the legislature to revise Atlanta's charter to give a percentage of taxes to the public schools.<sup>7</sup> Male representatives from nineteen Atlanta Parent-Teacher Associations worked together toward political change, although their proposal was eventually rejected.<sup>8</sup> After the political failure, the men invited the women to their meeting and the women celebrated the men's efforts, saying: "We are all glad that our 'daddies' have 'waked up'." The ladies further applauded the men for ordering playground equipment for the school.<sup>9</sup>

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in such courses than in more traditional church-run courses, he argued. He acknowledged that it would be difficult to find the right leader for such a course, but suggested that a tactful leader could work just fine even if he lacked formal training. Edward P. St. John, "Co-Operation between Church and Home," in *Parents and Their Problems; Child Welfare in Home, Church and State*, ed. Mary Harmon Weeks (Washington, D.C.: The National Congress of Mothers and Parent-Teacher Associations, 1914), 162-63.

<sup>2</sup> "A Good Scheme," *Labor Digest* 1, no. 7 (1908).

<sup>3</sup> The United States Bureau of Education, "Report of the Commissioner of Education for the Year Ended June 30, 1912," (Washington: 1913), 365.

<sup>4</sup> Elsa Denison, "What Outsiders Are Doing to Aid Work of Public Schools," *New York Times*, June 4 1911, ———, *Helping School Children: Suggestions for Efficient Cooperation With the Public Schools* (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1912).

<sup>5</sup> Edward W. Stitt, "Evening Recreation Centers," in *The Tenth Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education*, ed. S. Chester Parker (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1911), 49-50.

<sup>6</sup> The Children of Davis Street School Civic League (Per O'Neill Stoner, School Secretary) "Davis St. School Children Say Their Fathers' Club Was First One in Atlanta," *The Atlanta Constitution*, May 7 1915.

<sup>7</sup> "Wake up, Daddy! Now the Slogan to Help Schools," *The Atlanta Constitution*, April 21 1917. There were quite a few articles about this, including: "Death of Politics in Schools Urged," *The Atlanta Constitution*, May 1 1917. "Committee to Discuss Daddies' Proposal," *The Atlanta Constitution*, May 16 1917. "Daddies Appear Today at Revision Meeting," *The Atlanta Constitution*, May 30 1917.

<sup>8</sup> "Parents Demand Better Schools," *The Atlanta Constitution*, May 4 1917, "\$900,000 Revenue Urged for Schools," *The Atlanta Constitution*, June 1 1917.

<sup>9</sup> "Daddies' Wake up and Fit out Fine Playground for Peeples Street School," *The Atlanta Constitution*, May 27 1917.

Both through the parents' associations in schools and independently, fathers' clubs sprang up across the country in the first decades of the twentieth century and attracted quite a bit of attention. One early and successful example served as a model for other clubs and community leaders encouraged others to follow its example. The Fathers' Club of Reading, Pennsylvania began as a boys' club and maintained and supervised vegetable garden plots for use by 150 school children. They plowed and measured plots, laid water pipes, furnished seeds and offered prizes and an ice-cream party to participants at the end of the year. By the time this association was seven years old it had raised approximately ten thousand dollars' worth of vegetables.<sup>10</sup> Attendance grew each year, and in 1912 there were eighty dues-paying fathers who held monthly meetings at which an outside speaker made a presentation; in addition to the garden plots, the club "established the playground, the men making practically all of the apparatus, looking after it, and, until [1912], they supervised it."<sup>11</sup> In 1912, the city took over the supervision of the playgrounds. An editorial in the *Journal of Education* celebrated the club's inclusion of fathers with their sons and the *Lewiston Evening Journal* cheered: "This shows what is possible when an earnest man enlists a working men's community in its own behalf."<sup>12</sup>

One of the most well-known and successful early fathers' clubs was the Fathers' Association of Frankford High School in Philadelphia. Founded in 1912 to purchase athletic supplies for boys, by 1921 it was "one of the active and influential civic associations of the city" and had held over eighty meetings.<sup>13</sup> The fathers' association led a campaign for a one-million-dollar building and seven-acre playground and athletic field, and for literary, dramatic and musical activities as well as five college scholarships.<sup>14</sup> The Fathers' Association funded and supported numerous school clubs and activities. In one year, the group provided music instruction to 265 children, supporting the orchestra, boys' glee club, boys' mandolin, girls' chorus, girls' string club, and a quartet. The Association even hired a member of the Philadelphia Orchestra to direct the school orchestra.<sup>15</sup> It offered student prizes and provided both coaching and equipment for athletics for seven hundred students and held nine meetings with a total attendance from seven- to eight-thousand men.<sup>16</sup> There was a similar organization to the Frankford association in the Germantown High School of Philadelphia, which had approximately six hundred fathers as members and there was a Big Four Fathers' Association representing four other Philadelphia schools in the Olney section that was also described as large and active.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Denison, *Helping School Children*, 122-23.

<sup>11</sup> "A Fathers' Club," *Lewiston Evening Journal*, May 28 1912.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Sherman Rogers, "When Fathers Go to School," *New Outlook* 129 (1921), 604, 678-679.

<sup>14</sup> Playground and Recreation Association of America, "A Fathers' Association," *The Playground* 14 (1921), 679.

<sup>15</sup> The Pennsylvania State Department of Public Instruction, "Report of the Survey of the Public Schools of Philadelphia, Book IV," (Philadelphia: The Public Education and Child Labor Association of Pennsylvania, 1922).

<sup>16</sup> Charles Hughes Johnston, Jesse H. Newlon, and Frank G. Picknell, *Junior-Senior High School Administration* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1922), 313.

<sup>17</sup> Philadelphia (Pa.) Board of Public Education, "Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Schools of the City of Philadelphia," (Philadelphia: 1922), 40.

Frankford's Fathers' Association gained in popularity and importance in its first decade. The Association drew national attention and gained praise as "a most interesting and progressive organization."<sup>18</sup> In 1921, the Playground and Recreation Association of America enthused, "Teachers in Frankford say that it has been easier to maintain discipline within the school since the fathers began to show their interest in the work and play of the pupils."<sup>19</sup> The organization benefitted fathers as well, according to this glowing account. Fathers became better informed about the civic and educational problems of the city and "they have in many cases got closer to their own children than ever before and they have had a great deal of good fellowship and fun together."<sup>20</sup> Sherman Rogers, Industrial Correspondent of the *Outlook*, reported that the club was "so eminently successful that scores of inquiries are coming in from all parts of the country asking for information that would be helpful in organizing movements of this kind elsewhere."<sup>21</sup>

Rogers was invited to speak to Frankford's club and described the experience in *Outlook* in 1921. He reported that an audience of 1,500 packed into the auditorium for his speech. The audience was composed of "bankers, manufacturers, merchants, professional men, men representing every craftsmanship, both organized and unorganized, and workmen who were never fortunate enough to have mastered a craft or trade. Here was the melting-pot of that community."<sup>22</sup> To the surprise of the author, he learned that this was a regular sort of meeting.<sup>23</sup> Although this may seem an exaggeration, in fact the average attendance for a monthly meeting was elsewhere reported as eight hundred, with a total membership of at least two thousand, and other big meetings, such as the tenth anniversary, drew audiences of over one thousand.<sup>24</sup>

The fellowship and camaraderie displayed by the men impressed Rogers: "For three and a half hours this large audience became boys again. They were going to school. Class feeling was entirely forgotten. The banker sat alongside and smoked with the laborer. He asked him about his children."<sup>25</sup> After Rogers's speech on the labor problem, the high-school football team took the stage and "bankers and business men had dropped all bars of convention. They were on their feet outdoing the youthful college rooster."<sup>26</sup> As an expert on the labor problem, Rogers used his description of the fathers' meeting to suggest that the shared experience of fatherhood allowed men to overcome class difference and see shared humanity and common purpose. He indirectly proposed

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<sup>18</sup> Instruction, "Report of the Survey of the Public Schools of Philadelphia, Book Iv." The Pennsylvania associations were also alluded to in the *Ladies Home Journal* in 1927: Grace Nies Fletcher, "Bringing up Fathers," *Ladies' Home Journal* 44 (1927): 199.

<sup>19</sup> America, "A Fathers' Association," 679.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Rogers, "When Fathers Go to School," 604.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Johnston, *Junior-Senior High School Administration*, 313. The tenth anniversary meeting had the U.S. Commissioner of Education and the city superintendent as guest speakers and attracted 1,200 members to the audience. "Educational Notes and News," *School and Society* 15, no. 372 (1922): 167, Education, "Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Schools of the City of Philadelphia," 22, Department of Supervisors and Directors of Instruction National Education Association of the United States, "National Conference on Educational Method," *Educational Method* 5 (1926).

<sup>25</sup> Rogers, "When Fathers Go to School," 604.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

that participation in fathers' clubs was a means to ease class tensions in his description of a highly improbable scene: a man wearing a threadbare suit with tears falling from his eyes told the author that he had seen his boss, whom he had never seen in person, standing on his feet cheering the worker's son, a member of the football team. The workingman had thought his boss heartless and was moved to tears when he realized, "He must have a pretty good heart in the middle, after all."<sup>27</sup> The author reportedly watched a manufacturer talking to a carpenter, treating him as an equal. In the businessman's excitement about the football team and in the good cheer of the fathers' meeting, "The old man had become young again."<sup>28</sup> Rogers saw fatherhood clubs as a way to reconnect men to their better youthful selves, and in so doing, to ease class tensions and promote democracy. He told one of the fathers, "This is the biggest thing I have seen in this country. You have the meat of the cocconut right here."<sup>29</sup> The man agreed, but explained "that isn't the way we feel about it. We simply think that this is the fathers going to school again, and, with the monthly attendance we have here.... They have forgotten the present and are living in the past, and yet solidly building for the future."<sup>30</sup> In a sentiment typical of the 1920s, the reporter suggested it is by living in their own past, by reliving their youthful days and connecting to the feelings and enthusiasms of their younger selves that fathers can best build a promising future.

No fathers' club attracted more attention than the Fathers' Club of Council Bluffs, Iowa, which drew the notice of the press nationally and even internationally and was widely discussed in education journals.<sup>31</sup> The Fathers' Club was founded in May, 1913, and, according to local newspaper accounts, was originally treated "With Derision" as members of the city's mothers' clubs "smiled" in response, until they were "forced to take notice" as the fathers' club progressed.<sup>32</sup> The club, which devoted its early attentions to school issues, grew in only a couple of weeks from twelve men to seventy-five.<sup>33</sup> The president and organizer, Stymest Stevenson, was a former grandmaster of the State Lodge of Odd Fellows and therefore had a fair amount of experience with men's

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> From Wellington, New Zealand: "Women in Print," *Evening Post*, 18 May 1914. "Father's Clubs in Omaha Schools," *The Toronto World*, July 22 1914, "Item Notes," *Kindergarten Review* 26 (1915). Kansas State Board of Health, "Bulletin No. 7, "Father's Clubs.," *Biennial Report* (1915). The *Christian Science Monitor* noted the wide discussion of the movement in educational journals in the U.S. "Fathers' Clubs Help Train Children of Council Bluffs," *The Christian Science Monitor*, November 21 1914. By 1914, the club had been mentioned in newspapers and magazines in New York, St. Louis, Des Moines, Sioux City, Omaha and Council Bluffs as well as "innumerable papers in smaller places" and fraternal publications. "Program of the Federated Fathers' Club of Council Bluffs, Iowa, 1914-1915," ed. Federated Fathers' Club (Council Bluffs, Iowa: Federated Fathers' Club, 1914), 17.

<sup>32</sup> "Fathers' Club Is Causing Women to Concede Results," *The Carroll Herald*, October 8 1913. "Fathers' Clubs Work in Interest of School," *Atlanta Constitution*, May 16 1915.

<sup>33</sup> "Fathers' Club Is Causing Women to Concede Results." One article indicated that the initial meeting had "about thirty" of Stevenson's "personal friends" in attendance. "Fathers' Clubs Work in Interest of School." Another article indicated that the initial thirty men had to struggle with the school board to be permitted to meet in a school in the evening, and then were required to meet in the kindergarten room because it was the only one equipped with lights. Isma Dooly, "Atlanta Should Learn Lesson from Federated Fathers' Clubs' Work for Schools in Iowa Town," *Atlanta Constitution*, May 6 1915.



clubs.<sup>34</sup> The Freemasons supported “Brother Stevenson’s” efforts by publishing his program for other men looking to start a fathers’ club and publicizing his efforts through the Freemasons’ newsletter. An article in their newsletter celebrated Stevenson’s success:

The newspapers and magazines all over the country have given space to this organization and Brother Stevenson has been highly commended for the idea of the organization. Other clubs are being formed along the same line in other cities.<sup>35</sup>

A lengthy article about the Fathers’ Club published in *Good Housekeeping* in 1915 predicted that the popularity of such organizations would soon boom. The “ideal of collective fatherhood” was just “waiting to express itself through organizations which can be formed only by men,” the author argued.<sup>36</sup> Calling for such a club in “every school district in America,” the author of this article reported that at least fifty men gathered on a rainy night at the organizational meeting, men from a wide variety of professions.<sup>37</sup> The accomplished newswoman reporting for *Good Housekeeping*, Rheta Childe Dorr, described her thoughts as she attended this meeting: “...as I listened to them talk that night it occurred to me that men who could work hard all day and spend the evening discussing children must represent a very real and permanent community movement.”<sup>38</sup> This club invited speakers such as the city superintendent, principals, members of the board of education and city council, doctors, lawyers, and clergymen to address a wide variety of topics concerning children at its meetings.<sup>39</sup>

Although it was not the first Fathers’ Club in the nation (as an indignant secretary of The Fathers’ Association of Frankford High School in Philadelphia pointed out to *Good Housekeeping* after the magazine credited the Iowa club with being first) Stevenson popularized the idea of a fathers’ club and coined a motto: “Make the Indifferent Different.”<sup>40</sup> The club stated as its purpose as “creating interest in child training among the fathers” and worried that fathers had left all child training to mothers. The club emphasized that most boys who “go wrong” lack attention from their fathers and described the club as modeled on mothers’ clubs.<sup>41</sup> The fathers’ club movement was “heartily endorsed” by the United States Bureau of Education, which hoped to stimulate interest in fathers’ clubs through its home department.<sup>42</sup>

Stevenson dreamed of creating a federation of fathers’ clubs across the nation,

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<sup>34</sup> “Fathers’ Club Is Causing Women to Concede Results.”

<sup>35</sup> Grand Lodge of Iowa Freemasons, “Federated Fathers’ Clubs,” *Grand Lodge Bulletin* 16 (1915): 25.

<sup>36</sup> Rheta Childe Dorr, “Putting It up to the Fathers,” *Good Housekeeping*, May 1915, 502. This sentiment was repeated in the following newspaper article, as well: “Fathers’ Clubs Work in Interest of School.”

<sup>37</sup> Dorr, “Putting It up to the Fathers,” 497, 500.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 500. Dorr had been editor of the woman’s department of the *New York Evening Post*, a staff member at *Hampton’s Magazine* and had investigated labor conditions for women and children in mills and factories, and served as a war correspondent. (From Wikipedia—double check)

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 502..

<sup>40</sup> “Item Notes,” *Good Housekeeping* 61 (1915): unpaginated. Health, “Bulletin No. 7, “Father’s Clubs.”” Dorr, “Putting It up to the Fathers,” 449. Stymest Stevenson, “The Fathers’ Club Idea” (paper presented at the Proceedings of the Annual Session, 1914), 166-67.

<sup>41</sup> “Miami Needs a Fathers’ Club,” *The Miami News*, May 27 1915.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

and had a hand in founding several fathers' clubs in the Midwest. For example, Stevenson formed the first Omaha fathers' club in May of 1913; by 1914 there were operating clubs in every Omaha school but two with a total membership of approximately five hundred men.<sup>43</sup> The Home Education Division of the U.S. Bureau of Education reported that in less than a year, the original Iowa organization spawned at least ten others, with an average membership of fifty men. Each had the question "What sort of father are you?" at the top of its program and the motto "Making the Indifferent Different."<sup>44</sup> By November 1914, fourteen fathers' clubs were federated, organized systematically under the leadership of a central organizing body comprised of leadership from each group.<sup>45</sup> The central leadership provided a program of study for the clubs to follow, with the expectation of monthly meetings. An article in the *Christian Science Monitor* explained that "Running all through the program booklet is the question: 'What sort of a father are you?'"<sup>46</sup> By 1915, nearly one-thousand men were members of the now federated fathers' clubs. The clubs put fatherhood first in men's lives, arguing that the "chief duty of men is not to bear arms, or even to make money, but to take care of children."<sup>47</sup>

The Freemasons published the Federated Fathers' Club program for 1914-1915, which encouraged fathers to reflect on themselves and their role as fathers.<sup>48</sup> In this program, founder Stymest Stevenson wrote

Little did I dream when formulating the Fathers' Club idea that such great interest would be shown in so short a time. The first pebble thrown on the calm sea of facts regarding the present day fatherhood has created wave after wave until the whole United States seems to have come within the circle of its influence, and it bids fair to become more popular than the movies.<sup>49</sup>

One newspaper article reported Stevenson received "enquiries by every mail" about the club.<sup>50</sup> The Federated Fathers' Clubs started in Council Bluffs attracted press coverage in numerous local newspapers, fraternal publications, national magazines, and even international attention, as well as attracting the notice and approval of the Bureau of Education, making the Council Bluff's club more widely known and successful than any

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<sup>43</sup> "Father's Clubs in Omaha Schools." "Interest Taken in Fathers' Club," *Journal Miner*, September 25 1914, 507. Association of Professors and Researchers in Religious Education Religious Education Association, "News and Notes," *Religious Education* 9 (1914).

<sup>44</sup> "Interest Taken in Fathers' Club." Also, "Fathers' Clubs Work in Interest of School."

<sup>45</sup> "Fathers' Clubs Help Train Children of Council Bluffs."

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> "Fathers' Clubs Work in Interest of School." "Fathers' Clubs Connected with Omaha Schools," *The Christian Science Monitor* (1914).

<sup>48</sup> Freemasons, "Federated Fathers' Clubs." The Freemason article noted similar work by Brother Walter L. Stockwell, Grand Secretary of North Dakota who founded the Big Brother organization. "Fathers' Clubs," *The Washington Post*, November 9 1914. This article also noted the relationship to the Big Brother movement.

<sup>49</sup> (17)"Program of the Federated Fathers' Club of Council Bluffs, Iowa, 1914-1915."

<sup>50</sup> "Fathers' Clubs a Great Success," *Waterloo Evening Courier and Reporter*, July 21 1914.

predecessor.<sup>51</sup>

In addition to profiting from lectures from “experts,” the clubs were founded on the idea that men would benefit from discussion with other fathers. Each month, these clubs debated such questions as “Are our children trained for, or away from, the age in which we live?” Linking family matters to larger community issues, they looked at graduation rates, public expenditures, school curricula, juvenile courts, playgrounds, medical inspections, “the sex question,” business education, whether or not women should serve on school boards and the cultural influence of newspapers, magazines, music, and books.<sup>52</sup> A *Washington Post* article from 1914 contended that these conversations made for better fathers: “Such debates are bound to have a good result, waking the father up to the experience of other fathers with their boys.” The article enthused, a father could “profit by the experience of another, and the boys of the future will reap the advantage.”<sup>53</sup> These quotations demonstrate the tendency of fathers’ clubs to focus strongly on sons, almost to the exclusion of daughters. The focus was less on the father-child bond than on the father-son bond, with the presumption that fathers have more to give to sons because of their shared masculinity. Furthermore, the Federated Fathers’ Clubs assumed that fathers had something in common worth discussing, that fatherhood should be addressed by men separately from women because fathering was distinct from mothering and that fathers should work together and support one another. Stevenson explained in the published 1914-1915 programs of the clubs that he was pleased that “Fraternal publications have recognized the fraternity of fatherhood.”<sup>54</sup> Stevenson regarded male parenting as significantly distinct from mothering. Fatherhood was an aspect of masculine identity and there should be a “fraternity” of fathers to help each other become better parents.

Dorr’s *Good Housekeeping* article, in particular, posited the kind of fathering encouraged by the Council Bluffs’ Fathers’ Club as distinctly modern and new. She quoted Stevenson as encouraging fathers to reflect on their own upbringing and compare their fathers’ parenting skills to their mothers’.<sup>55</sup> The comparison, which she suggested was almost always unfavorable to the fathers, was made to spur fathers to greater involvement. Stevenson asked,

Now, what sort of fathers are you, and what are you going to do about it? Leave the whole responsibility of family life to the women, as most men have been doing since Adam, or will you try something new and original? Will you get together with me and

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<sup>51</sup> “Women in Print,” “Father’s Clubs in Omaha Schools.” “Item Notes,” Health, “Bulletin No. 7, “Father’s Clubs.” The *Christian Science Monitor* reported, “News of the movement has been spread widely in educational journals all over America. Educators have been prompt to recognize the possibilities.” “Fathers’ Clubs Help Train Children of Council Bluffs.” By 1914, columns had appeared in newspapers and magazines in New York, St. Louis, Des Moines, Sioux City, Omaha and Council Bluffs as well as “innumerable papers in smaller places.” and fraternal publications. “Program of the Federated Fathers’ Club of Council Bluffs, Iowa, 1914-1915,” 17, Freemasons, “Federated Fathers’ Clubs,” 25.

<sup>52</sup> “For Fathers’ Clubs,” *Moderator-Topics* 35, no. 5 (1914): 86.

<sup>53</sup> “Fathers’ Clubs.”

<sup>54</sup> “Program of the Federated Fathers’ Club of Council Bluffs, Iowa, 1914-1915,” 17. In one instance, the women of a school mothers’ club attempted to organize a fathers’ club. Sue McNamara, “School Mothers to Help Form Fathers’ Club,” *The Des Moines News* (1915).

<sup>55</sup> Stymest Stevenson quoted in Dorr, “Putting It up to the Fathers,” 498-99.

tackle the job of learning how to be an intelligent, efficient father of children?<sup>56</sup>

The club was tied to the professionalization of motherhood—the idea that parents should be taught to parent expertly, modernly, efficiently—yet, this fatherhood club also represents something new in its emphasis on masculinity and fatherhood. The fatherhood clubs self-consciously attempted to promote a new, modern notion of fathering that they contrasted favorably to stuffy, distant, old-fashioned fathering.

In Dorr's *Good Housekeeping* article, for instance, she absorbed Stevenson's message that fathering should be presented as a manly operation, that men should be spurred to greater involvement through an appeal to their masculine pride and encouraged to see *fathering* as a job that was for men only, as opposed to focusing on *parenting*, a cooperative, ungendered occupation. Dorr described the enthusiasm of the Fathers' Club's meeting, writing, "...the business of being a father *was* a man's-sized job. And they wouldn't shirk it any longer!"<sup>57</sup> Their attitude toward children, she emphasized, was distinctly different from that of mothers:

... it became plain that the men were talking about children, not at all as women talk-- not even as you might expect fathers to talk. They talked like explorers, like men who had come lately into a strange continent and now were engaged in the difficult task of evolving civilization out of chaos<sup>58</sup>

Dorr complimented the energy and conscientiousness of the hard-working men, but suggested that they were new to the role of active fathering. Dorr's description of the men as "explorers" hints that fathering is an adventure, masculine and fun.

Dorr's *Good Housekeeping* article, like Sherman Rogers's *New Outlook* article about his talk for the Fathers' Association of the Frankford High School, suggested that fathering could be a common link between men of different social classes, a link that could help ease class tensions and create common ground.<sup>59</sup> Dorr wrote that the fifty men who gathered on a rainy October night to discuss the fathers' club were from a wide variety of occupations, including mail carriers, postal clerks, a baker, a laundry-wagon driver, street cleaners, and a lumber merchant.<sup>60</sup> Reflecting on the club's success in its first year in the 1914-1915 Club program, Stevenson remarked that membership had included the "common, every-day citizen, editors, professors, senators, attorneys, doctors, ministers, judges, business men and mechanics."<sup>61</sup> While both authors remarked on the working-class fathers' attendance, Stevenson emphasized the attendance of professional men.

Although the clubs were primarily for fathers to discuss items of interest to their own children, there were apparently some efforts to cast a wider net of support for

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<sup>56</sup> Stymest Stevenson quoted in *Ibid.*, 499.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 500.

<sup>59</sup> Rogers, "When Fathers Go to School."

<sup>60</sup> Dorr, "Putting It up to the Fathers," 500.

<sup>61</sup> "Program of the Federated Fathers' Club of Council Bluffs, Iowa, 1914-1915," 18.

children generally. Dorr's *Good Housekeeping* article suggested that these efforts to become better fathers could lead to efforts to "father" children in the community more generally. She wrote, "...the meaning-- and the responsibility-- of fatherhood began to expand in the minds of the men. They... now developed a desire to father the children of the entire school district-- of the entire town."<sup>62</sup> Although the fathers' club may have cast its paternal net wider in an effort at community-outreach, its main concerns and goals remained nested in the father's relationship to his own children.<sup>63</sup>

The club in Council Bluffs directly led to numerous fathers' clubs in the Midwest, but it was also held up as a model for fathers in other parts of the nation. An article in an Atlanta, Georgia paper admiring the Iowa club encouraged the men of Atlanta to follow the example of their midwestern countrymen. Indeed, Atlanta had one well-organized fathers' club in 1915, which had been active politically in advocating for the public schools, but the *Atlanta Constitution* hoped to see such a club in every district of the city and declared that the first fathers' club represented "the beginning of a movement." It proposed that street corners near schools be marked with signs asking "What sort of a father are you?" as they did in Council Bluffs, Iowa.<sup>64</sup> The article noted that men had been more successful than the women at obtaining political action on behalf of the schools: "it was when the fathers, the natural protectors of the child, arose as fathers and went to council in the interest of the welfare of the child that the complete and ideal organization has been perfected and set to work."<sup>65</sup> Council Bluff's fathers' club was a model, according to the article, in that it had grown so that it was "permeating every department of the city government."<sup>66</sup> Incidentally, the School Civic League of the Davis Street School wrote to the *Atlanta Constitution* after this article ran to dispute the idea that there was only one such club in Atlanta. According to the letter, the Davis Street School's fathers' club had been active for four years and was the first such club in Atlanta. They wrote in frustration about the lack of attention and support the group had been able to achieve in its efforts to secure a new building for the school.<sup>67</sup>

The clubs in Philadelphia and Iowa were the strongest in the nation, but smaller local fathers' clubs popped up all over the U.S. throughout the latter 1910s. Perhaps pulling from the popularity of the school fathers' associations in Philadelphia, the employees of a saw works company in a suburb of Philadelphia set up a Fathers' Association with monthly meetings.<sup>68</sup> There were numerous "Daddies' Clubs" or auxiliaries of the American Legion formed by fathers of veterans of the First World

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<sup>62</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, "Putting It up to the Fathers," 499.

<sup>63</sup> An Iowa court case from October 1919 mentioned testimony by the president of Kirkwood School Fathers' Club in 1915, suggesting at least some outreach by that fathers' club. Apparently, the President of the Mother's Club reported a case to him and they called on the family together and then together decided to bring the case to the attention of the county. U. G. Whitney Supreme Court of Iowa, Reporter, "Polk County V. Owen, 2-A," *Reports of cases at law and in equity determined by the Supreme Court of the State of Iowa* 187 (1921): 229.

<sup>64</sup> Dooly, "Atlanta Should Learn Lesson from Federated Fathers' Clubs' Work for Schools in Iowa Town."

<sup>65</sup> Ibid. "The Organized Fathers," *Atlanta Constitution*, May 6 1915.

<sup>66</sup> "The Organized Fathers."

<sup>67</sup> The Children of Davis Street School Civic League (Per O'Neill Stoner, School Secretary) "Davis St. School Children Say Their Fathers' Club Was First One in Atlanta."

<sup>68</sup> "Notes," *The National Association of Corporation Schools Bulletin* 5 (1918): 331.

War.<sup>69</sup> While these clubs did not involve parents with young children, or address children's issues, their existence demonstrates that fathers believed there was benefit in meeting as fathers to share camaraderie with other fathers who might have been dealing with similar issues with their sons. Interest in fatherhood also could express itself in quirky ways, such as the organization created in 1915 at the Illinois state fair for fathers who had more than ten children, which elected Governor Edward Dunne as its president.<sup>70</sup> *The Milwaukee Journal* suggested that increasing paternal involvement through fathers' clubs was a matter of national pride. An article stated that German fathers and French fathers were far more involved in the daily lives of their children than American fathers.<sup>71</sup> The article argued that a woman could not bring up a child properly without father's involvement because she could not know enough about boyhood to raise a man, and left alone, she would make her daughters overly feminine and too fussy. This example suggests the ways in which calls for father involvement could imply a desire to return to a more traditional, patriarchal family structure, or a modern "correction" for the perceived diminished status for father. The article heralded the beginning of fathers' clubs and wished for their success: "Hurrah for the Father's club of Illinois. I wish they'd start a Father's club in every state, and that every man with children of his own would join up."<sup>72</sup> Muncie, Indiana had two fathers' clubs in 1915.<sup>73</sup>

Some articles took note of the movement "for the organization of 'Better Fathers' clubs" and the like.<sup>74</sup> Most of these clubs were interested in school issues but met separately from the local Parent Teacher Associations. The attention gained by fathers' clubs was universally positive. One author discussing community organizations mentioned Iowa's fathers' club and called fathers' clubs "a new and promising feature of community life in some cities." The article claimed that in one Iowa city, schools were administered "along lines discussed and decided upon in meetings of fathers," and it was commonly understood that one must be an active member of this organization to have any hope of earning public office.<sup>75</sup>

Despite the attention given to fathers' clubs in newspapers across the country, they were not universally known even among those interested in parenting and fatherhood. A 1919 article arguing for a regular page for fathers in *The Parent's Magazine* did not seem aware of the existence of fathers' clubs, lamenting that "There are no fathers' clubs, fathers' magazines, fathercraft schools or fathercraft books."<sup>76</sup> The 1922 report of the Superintendent of Philadelphia's public schools celebrated the ten-year

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<sup>69</sup> "Fathers' Auxiliary of Legion to Be Formed," *Boston Daily Globe*, June 9 1923.

<sup>70</sup> "Famous Fathers Club Organized; Dunne President," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, September 21 1915. "Dads of Big Families," *Los Angeles Times*, September 21 1915. Winifred Black, "Child Needs Viewpoint of Both His Parents," *The Milwaukee Journal*, November 30 1915.

<sup>71</sup> Black, "Child Needs Viewpoint of Both His Parents."

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> *The Educator-Journal* 16 (1915): 604.

<sup>74</sup> "Better Fathers Needed," *The Editorial* 2 (1916). Clarence Arthur Perry, *Community Center Activities*, vol. 148 (1916), 100.

<sup>75</sup> Robert Perry Shepherd, *Essentials of Community Efficiency: A Statement of the Human Forces and Factors Involved in Making Effective in American Communities, Ideals and Principles and Practices of Social Responsibility and Community Welfare* (Chicago: The Abingdon Press, 1916), 238-39.

<sup>76</sup> Maximilian P.E. Groszmann, "The Fathers' Page," *The Parent's Magazine* 2, no. 6 (1919): 14. This was a publication put out by the Parent's Association of New York, not to be confused with the better-known *Parents' Magazine* which was founded in 1926 and first known as *Children, the Magazine for Parents*.

success of Philadelphia's fathers' associations, but was not aware of any similar organizations in the U.S.<sup>77</sup> Certainly, there were successful and active fathers' groups in the United States in the 1910s and 1920s, and such groups attracted both praise and members, but when the growth of these clubs is compared to the astounding success of the Congress of Mothers (later the PTA), it seems very modest, indeed. Although there were thousands of fathers involved in such clubs and associations, they never attained the status dreamed of by Stevenson who hoped to build an ongoing national federation of fathers' clubs working from a shared program.

## Fathers' Clubs in the 1920s

The growth of fathers' clubs and Dads' clubs continued and many new clubs sprang up around the country in the 1920s. For example, in Enid, Oklahoma, one thousand business men organized a citywide Fathers' Club, leaving their workplaces at noon to parade the streets with child-boosting banners.<sup>78</sup> One Boys' Club simply grew into a men's and fathers' club. Over the course of its 34 year existence, the club came to see many of its members grow up and have sons themselves, and both sons and fathers continued to meet in the Boys' Club.<sup>79</sup> Many publications praised the growth of fathers' clubs and encouraged others to start them. The Boy Scouts of America in their 1924 annual report praised the growth of "Daddies' Clubs," composed of fathers and "friends of scouts." These clubs held activities such as father-and-son hikes.<sup>80</sup>

Most of these clubs were, like the Iowa and Pennsylvania groups, associated with schools. *The American Educational Digest* in 1923 reported on the growth of such clubs and suggested that fathers' clubs were something that benefitted "lucky children in enlightened and up-to-date communities."<sup>81</sup> In the 1920s there was a "Daddies' Club" in Portland, Oregon.<sup>82</sup> Rutherford, New Jersey likewise had a Dad's Club that met at a school auditorium every other Thursday night in the late 1920s.<sup>83</sup> Mobile, Alabama also had a Dads' Club of four hundred members that supported improvements to the playgrounds in 1928.<sup>84</sup> The Northwestern University Settlement of Chicago had a

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<sup>77</sup> Education, "Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Schools of the City of Philadelphia."

<sup>78</sup> James W. Searson, "Better Cities-- Better Citizens," *The Rotarian* 20, no. 5 (1922): 215. For other examples, see Louise Van Voorhis Armstrong, "The Old History Book: An Americanizations Pageant Especially Suited to Lincoln Celebrations," *The Drama* 12 (1922): 125, "State P.-T.A. To Convene," *Los Angeles Times*, May 3 1931.

<sup>79</sup> "Item Notes," *Boys' Club Round Table* 1-3 (1918).

<sup>80</sup> "Annual Report of the Boy Scouts of America," (1924), 17. Although modern scouting is usually led by a father Scout Leader, in the early years of scouting, troop leaders were usually young men who did not yet have children of their own. David I. Macleod, *Building Character in the American Boy: The Boy Scouts, YMCA, and Their Forerunners, 1870-1920* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1983), 208.

<sup>81</sup> "Item Notes," *American Educational Digest* 43 (1923).

<sup>82</sup> "Oregon Home for Veterans," *The Christian Science Monitor*, August 25 1921.

<sup>83</sup> from C.B. [male] to Angelo Patri, Box 12, 29 November 1929, Angelo Patri Papers, Library of Congress. In Ralph LaRossa, *The Modernization of Fatherhood: A Social and Political History* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1997), 92.

<sup>84</sup> National Recreation Association, *The Playground* 22 (1928): 547. "Parent-Teacher Notes," *The Washington Post*, October 27 1929.

fathers' club, as did Oakland, California.<sup>85</sup> The Department of Education in Texas wrote in 1922 that, "Each school should have not only its mothers' club, but also its fathers' club. Both mothers and fathers may be induced to take an interest and a part in the various school activities."<sup>86</sup> The fathers' association at New York's Horace Mann School for Boys helped raise money for a gymnasium in the early 1920s.<sup>87</sup> *The American Educational Digest* reported that Cloversville, New York had a fathers' club and the Fathers' Association of Camden, New Jersey's Cassady School P.T.A. had three hundred men at the organizational meeting in 1923, including many leaders of the community, such as members of the school board and the city commissioner.<sup>88</sup> The *Digest* reported that the association's "purpose [was] to bring fathers and other men of the community together to promote educational interest and to assist in all that pertains to child welfare."<sup>89</sup>

A survey of the National Congress of Parents and Teacher remarked in 1928 that, "It is undoubtedly true that the many fathers' clubs now in existence are serving a splendid purpose in recalling fathers to realizing a sense of obligations and responsibilities which were becoming somewhat obscured."<sup>90</sup> The article explained that in the modern world, both boys and girls must be prepared for work, and fathers, with their knowledge of money and athletics, were better prepared to help children learn how to succeed in business.<sup>91</sup> The survey suggested a program of study for fathers' clubs, which was broken into the following categories for discussion:

- "*The father as a companion.*" Fathers were encouraged to make opportunities for companionship with their sons, for instance by building athletic equipment together, sharing an interest in athletics, discussing current events, science, and literature, etc.
- "*The father as the final authority.*" Fathers were encouraged to discuss the "limitations and weakness of absolute authority and the substitution of a reasonable authority based on wisdom and affection."
- "*A father's leisure.*" The program suggested "a scale of values might be worked out in which the children are listed at the top as the most promising investment, and in which all other investments are kept subordinate, the various other interests and occupations of fathers taking their rank below."
- "*A study of boy nature.*" The program proposed that a discussion of adolescence might remind a father of his own youth, which "[s]upplemented by the psychological knowledge now so easily obtained, may lead to a better

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<sup>85</sup> Armstrong, "The Old History Book: An Americanizations Pageant Especially Suited to Lincoln Celebrations."

<sup>86</sup> Texas Educational Agency, "Bulletin," (The Department of Education, State of Texas, 1922), 14.

<sup>87</sup> Columbia University Teachers College, "Horace Mann School for Boys," *Teachers College Record* 23 (1922): 188.

<sup>88</sup> "Item Notes."

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*: 392.

<sup>90</sup> Martha Sprague Mason, ed., *Parents and Teachers: A Survey of Organized Cooperation of Home, School and Community Prepared under the Auspices of the National Congress of Parents and Teachers* (Boston: Ginn and Co., 1928), 204.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 204-05.



comprehension of boy problems and more successful guidance through his difficult time."<sup>92</sup>

The list of topics highlights the era's new emphasis on a democratic ideal for father-child relationships. Children were encouraged to participate in discussing a father's authority, and affection was thought to be a better means of securing leadership than blanket authority.<sup>93</sup>

Enthusiasm for school-based fathers' clubs grew out of the belief that men would benefit from working with other men for the welfare of their children. Members of fathers' clubs believed that their concerns and projects as parents needed expression in all-male groups. A 1928 survey prepared under the auspices of the National Congress of Parents and Teachers explained,

Certain problems present themselves with more interest to fathers than to mothers, and out of this interest has developed the fathers' club. As in the mothers' club, greater freedom of discussion and greater tendency to decisive action in vital situations have been the rule in these groups. Fathers discuss keenly such subjects as earning and saving, dangers of early smoking, petty gambling, athletics, scholarships, value of business education, school revenue, taxes, and bond issues. From these organizations has resulted vigorous action which has been of great value in the whole parent-teacher movement.<sup>94</sup>

The fathers' club allowed for men—male teachers, principals, and fathers were all usually members—to speak more freely and to work more efficiently, according to this report. It encouraged fathers to “give to school and community affairs the experience and the interest which they now give to business and professional matters.” The survey predicted that such attention would be greatly beneficial for the “oncoming generation.”<sup>95</sup> Fathers' clubs typically met monthly on school grounds to discuss issues regarding parenting and the schools.<sup>96</sup>

While the National Congress of Parents and Teachers encouraged the formation of fathers' clubs in its report, it remained unsatisfied with the typical clubs, which it found “too casual in its nature, too dependent upon the element of entertainment, and too

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 205-06.

<sup>93</sup> A joke from the *Buffalo News* repeated in an African-American newspaper, made a reference to the idea of a father's club. According to the joke, a man got his baby to sleep easily “for the first time in four years” and then refused to shoot at burglar for fear of waking the child. The joke concluded that “proper resolutions of endorsement will doubtless be passed by the Fathers' club.” “Poor Father!,” *The Chicago Defender*, September 25 1915.

<sup>94</sup> Mason, ed., *Parents and Teachers: A Survey of Organized Cooperation of Home, School and Community Prepared under the Auspices of the National Congress of Parents and Teachers*, 160. She concluded, “To encourage this type of fatherhood the fathers' club exists.”

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

short-lived."<sup>97</sup> The report provided its own counterpoint to this concern however forty pages later:

It seems to be generally conceded that fathers' clubs do not always hold to the serious program of mothers' clubs and parent-teacher associations. This, if true, does not necessarily mean that the results obtained are less desirable or valuable.... The more fun the better, in a fathers' club or in any other, only let it be kept in mind that the fun is the means and not the end, and that every program which fails to open the way to wiser fatherhood belongs properly in some other club.<sup>98</sup>

As fatherhood itself began to be associated with fun and playfulness, so too did fathers' clubs. Although their purpose seems to have been sincere and serious in each case, with tangible goals such as fundraising, scholarships, and political action, there was also an emphasis on fun, boyishness, and revelry that did not exist in parents' groups or mothers' groups.

Contemporary ideas about masculinity can be seen in the causes that particularly drew men to the PTAs. Often, political issues or problems launched the formation of a men's group; so could perceived problems with adolescent or young boys. *The Christian Science Monitor*, reporting on the success of the PTA in 1925, noted that parent-teacher groups were "everywhere enlisting the active membership of fathers in local groups. Fathers' associations are forming in many schools where there are boy problems of more than usual complexity."<sup>99</sup> In the Horace Mann School in Kansas City, a fathers' club was begun in 1924, which, according to a member of its executive committee, acted "in the nature of a vigilance committee to see that the neighborhood is kept free from unclean influences."<sup>100</sup>

In addition to separate fathers' councils or meetings within the PTA, numerous branches held special fathers' nights, or fathers' events to bolster father involvement. This reflects both the increasing effort to include fathers and the shift toward holding separate events for fathers rather than trying to fold them into the women's organization. Local branches of the PTA relied on these special nights for fundraising and to bring fathers into the organization and familiarize them with the schools.<sup>101</sup> In Pasadena, children were asked by the PTA to write "'What My Dad Means To Me'" and these unsigned essays were read at a "'special fathers' night'."<sup>102</sup> At one school, the fathers were in charge of conducting this meeting, as well.<sup>103</sup> Many organizations held occasional evening sessions with fathers in mind. For instance, the Truesdell PTA, of Washington, D.C., held annual "dads'" meetings that drew a "large attendance" by fathers. A "Dads' Club" at the Bancroft school in the Washington, D.C. area voted

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 202-03.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 206.

<sup>99</sup> "Parent-Teacher Project," *The Christian Science Monitor* (1925).

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> "State P.-T.A. To Convene.", "Fathers Are Playing the Game," *PTA Magazine* 18 (1923): 93, 282, 384, 425, 559.

<sup>102</sup> "Parent-Teacher Project."

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

unanimously to become a unit of the Parent-Teacher organization of its school in 1930.<sup>104</sup>

Just as fathers' clubs were thought to be more jubilant than mothers' groups, fathers' nights were generally meant to be more fun and lively than average meetings. Perhaps mothers were more inclined to see these meetings as a serious part of their primary occupation, childrearing; whereas the fun of the meeting was emphasized to men in the hopes of attracting father to consider parenting in his leisure time after a day spent at work. A typical report of a fathers' night emphasized the fun had there, declaring the meeting a big success and "ample proof that fathers are not only cooperative workers in the parent-teacher movement, but when called upon are resourceful and highly entertaining."<sup>105</sup> The regular meeting followed a talk on character building by the assistant director of research at the National Educational Association, and included humorous sayings and singing. A newspaper reported that one father "gave an original monologue entitled 'Papa's Observations on the P. T. A.' His droll travesty and pleasant sallies on the workings of the organization were greeted with peals of laughter."<sup>106</sup> South Dakota held a men's program among their yearly Parent Teacher association meetings and *The American Educational Digest* reported in 1923 that "fathers' nights are of common occurrence on nearly all [P.T.A.] programs."<sup>107</sup> P.T.A. reports and recommendations for fathers' nights' events tended to emphasize that meetings should be relaxed, jovial, lively and fun. At the California state convention of the P.T.A. in 1931, one evening was dedicated as "fathers' night" with the presidents of Oakland Dads' clubs, the President of the Council of Dads' clubs, the male president of a junior-high-school's P. -T.A. and "men officers and accredited men delegates."<sup>108</sup>

Detroit schools held Father and Son Weeks with Friday as "Go to School Day" for fathers. This yearly tradition brought 5,525 fathers and sons to high schools and an additional 10,083 fathers and sons to elementary schools to partake of the entertainments in 1921, and was expected to increase in the following year. The Board of Education encouraged schools to put boys at the helm of organizing activities. Students were urged to convince the fathers to attend ("They will secure attendance of their fathers if anybody can do so..."), and the Board of Education offered some sample programs and the further assistance of the YMCA in promoting and planning the week's events. The sample programs included speeches by sons and fathers on topics such as "Our Sons; it's great to be their Dads" and "Father through a Son's Specks," singing, entertainments and "stunts" by the boys, athletic events, both with the father as participant and spectator, tours of the school, group singing and cheers, and refreshments.<sup>109</sup> The emphasis in these fathers' nights and activities was on joviality and good times coupled with speeches by fathers and sons and by experts and educators.

In some instances, these fathers' nights led to the creation of permanent fathers' organizations. In Washington, D.C. in 1929, the Bancroft school's Parent-Teacher association organized its fathers into a "Dads Club" in response to the "lack of a meeting place adequate to care for the large number of parents who wish to attend the night

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<sup>104</sup> "Parent-Teacher Notes," *The Washington Post* 1930.

<sup>105</sup> "Parent-Teacher Activities," *The Washington Post*, April 29 1928.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> "Item Notes," 392.

<sup>108</sup> "State P.-T.A. To Convene."

<sup>109</sup> Detroit Board of Education, Michigan, "Father and Son Week," *Detroit Educational Bulletin* 5 (1922).

meeting and because of the interest manifested by many of the fathers."<sup>110</sup> The Bancroft Dads' Club's first meeting included discussions on the school building, the importance of schools, and a talk by the superintendent on how fathers can help the public schools. The meeting was followed by an invitation to meet with teachers in their rooms, and the entire school was open for "inspection" by the fathers.<sup>111</sup> The clubs also used father-and-son events to recruit members. For instance, the president of the Fathers' Club of the Huntington School gave a speech to more than 250 fathers and their sons at the Boston City Club's 6<sup>th</sup> annual Father and Son banquet of the Huntington School.<sup>112</sup>

In Boston, Belmont High School's Dads' Club supplied trophies for athletic events and provided other support for athletic teams. It also hosted dances for the benefit of charities.<sup>113</sup> Kansas City, Missouri also had a fathers' club that met regularly.<sup>114</sup> In Berkeley California's Garfield School, an "enthusiastic" Fathers' Club was organized with 153 charter members in 1928.<sup>115</sup> There were multiple "Dads' clubs" in Oakland, California, and there was a "Council of Dads' Clubs" in California by 1931.<sup>116</sup> Fathers' clubs associated with schools attracted attention in the popular press and in educational journals and publications of non-profit organizations focused on child study and child life. Almost non-existent before 1908, a large number of fathers' clubs came into existence in the second and third decades of the century.<sup>117</sup>

In the 1920s and 1930s, some of the most successful efforts to attract fathers to parenting and school groups relied on separating the fathers from the mothers. The PTA is an excellent example of this trend. The National Congress of Mothers' name change and its increased emphasis on holding evening meetings and instigating projects to draw fathers into working for the school reflected the desire of club leaders to include fathers in the organization's work; however, the participation of men in the Congress of Parents and Teachers remained low.<sup>118</sup> In 1931, California's Second District (San Francisco)

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<sup>110</sup> "Parent-Teacher Notes."

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> "Huntington School Fathers and Sons Dine," *Boston Daily Globe*, March 15 1925. Also, a fathers' club is mentioned in "Fathers' Club Has Corn Roast," *Boston Daily Globe*, September 21 1924.

<sup>113</sup> "West Roxbury District," *Boston Daily Globe*, November 21 1924. "Roslindale A.L. And Auxiliary to Conduct a Wild West Rodeo," *Boston Daily Globe*, February 16 1925. "Victor Lost Shoe in Last Lap of 880," *Boston Daily Globe*, June 9 1925. "Belmont Plans for Basket Ball," *Boston Daily Globe*, November 6 1925. "Doo Dads Club to Hold Annual Charity Dance," *Boston Daily Globe*, January 25 1926.

<sup>114</sup> "Kansas City, Missouri (?)," *The PTA Magazine* 19 (1924): 272.

<sup>115</sup> "Garfield Junior Hi Forms Fathers' Club," *Berkeley Daily Gazette*, November 8 1928.

<sup>116</sup> "State P.-T.A. To Convene."

<sup>117</sup> Although there are a few scant references to fathers' clubs before 1908, such as one in *Outlook* in 1905 which referred in passing to an uptown school's fathers' club, such clubs were almost unheard of. One author lamented in 1906: "I think I have yet to hear of a 'fathers' club.' Indeed, a prominent New York educator, wishing to reach the fathers, talked not long ago to the New York County Mothers' Club on 'A father's duty to his children;' and one of his most pointed statements was to the effect that to-day the father scarcely is a father at all. He is a bread-winner, money-getter, office-holder, business-man, trolley-car-passenger, club-man, newspaper-reader; but he is charged with scarcely knowing his children, with spending little time with them, sometimes with knowing them only by gaslight and Sunday sunlight." John Coleman Adams, *An Honorable Youth* (Boston: Universalist Publishing House, 1906), 204. Winifred Buck, "Work and Play in the Public Schools," *The Outlook* 80 (1905): 729-30.

<sup>118</sup> African-American men made up a greater portion of the the National Congress of Colored Parents and Teachers in the 1920s and 1930s, than their white counterparts, according to historian Christine Woynshner.

founded the nation's first State Organization of Father Councils.<sup>119</sup> An article in the *California Journal of Elementary Education* emphasized the benefits of involving fathers in the P.T.A. and described the councils as a means to an end: "Remember, Fathers' Councils are not an end in themselves. They are merely a means of bringing dads into the field of education through the P.T.A."<sup>120</sup> In 1933, the *Los Angeles Times* heralded the increased participation of men in the P.T.A., with the Chairman of the fathers' council committee in the first district reporting that ten percent of P.T.A. members were male in California, with 48 fathers' councils in the first district and more forming.<sup>121</sup> The number of fathers' councils increased quickly in Los Angeles and the district's P.T.A. dedicated the year 1934 to increasing fathers' involvement in the organization. In 1934, there were thirty-six fathers' councils in the Tenth District alone (the Tenth District of the Los Angeles area included over 61,000 members in 1934 and was the largest P.T.A. district in the country) and by 1935, the *Los Angeles Times* reported that the district had 170 groups.<sup>122</sup> The California fathers' councils grew exponentially from a few hundred members in 1931, to 19,000 in 1934, and more than 25,000 members in 1935.<sup>123</sup>

California's fathers' councils' successful expansion created an organizational problem and, in 1935, a committee was created to discuss means of coordinating and reorganizing the councils.<sup>124</sup> The president of the fathers' councils repeatedly emphasized that fathers' councils were standing committees of the P.T.A., and not independent

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Woyshner argues that whereas the participation of fathers in the white PTA was "negligible" despite the PTA's name change, the Colored Congress of the 1920s and 1930s had a larger percentage of male leaders and members, but a smaller percentage of black population overall. Christine Woyshner, "'Valuable and Legitimate Services': Black and White Women's Philanthropy through the PTA," in *Women and Philanthropy in Education*, ed. Andrea Walton (Indiana University Press, 2005), 217. One California newspaper reporter observed in 1937, "...the hardest job in the P. -T. A. women have is to drag their menfolks out to organization affairs. For the American father, as we well know, although he is supposed to be an important member of this group, likes to take his children's education for granted by leaving it up to the teacher or his wife." [Series 2, Box 1, Folder 12], Mrs. Joseph (Elizabeth) Morcombe San Francisco, Second District, California Congress of Parents and Teachers (PTA) Records, (SFH 12), San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library, 5.

<sup>119</sup> [Series 2, Box 1, Folder 12], Mrs. Joseph (Elizabeth) Morcombe San Francisco, Second District, California Congress of Parents and Teachers (PTA) Records, (SFH 12), San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library, 11. One comment in a California paper suggests that some of the male participation in the coeducational PTA may have been in name only. Joseph Gary, assistant in the District Attorney's office in the Bay City jokingly promised the woman of Kern County's annual fall conference that he would defend them from charges of petty larceny should they remove fifty cents or a dollar from their unwilling husbands' trouser pockets to pay their husbands' P.T.-A. dues "Hubby's Pants Pockets Not Safe from Wife Now," *Los Angeles Times*, October 28 1931.

<sup>120</sup> Raymond E. Pollich, "Fathers' Councils," *California Journal of Elementary Education* 1 (1932): 117-18.

<sup>121</sup> "Men Increasing P.-T.A. Activity," *Los Angeles Times*, April 28 1933.

<sup>122</sup> Crete Cage, "Fathers' Council of Tenth District P.-T.A. Launches Auto Safety Drive," *Los Angeles Times*, October 1 1935. A 1935 evening symposium on "Father, an Educator" held by Southern California Clubwomen included a speech by a man representing the fathers' council of the 1<sup>st</sup> district entitled "Father as a Homemaker." ———, "Southern California Clubwomen Active Participants at State Federation Conclave," *Los Angeles Times*, May 19 1935.

<sup>123</sup> Crete Cage, "P.-T.A. Conclave Hears Plea for Youth Guidance," *Los Angeles Times*, May 29 1935. The councils also drew the attention of illustrious persons. For instance, Judge Ben Lindsey spoke to the fathers at a 1935 meeting. "Fathers' Council of District Will Convene Tonight," *Los Angeles Times*, March 8 1935.

<sup>124</sup> Crete Cage, "P.-T.A. Fathers' Councils' Rapid Growth Makes Reorganization Imperative," *Los Angeles Times*, July 18 1935.

entities, such as “Dads” clubs.”<sup>125</sup> There was something of a scandal when the leadership of the men’s council was forced to repeatedly deny in the press that there was widespread dissatisfaction among the men’s council membership with the female control of the PTA. There were rampant rumors that the fathers’ council had plans to buck the control of the “petticoat government” and the leadership spent months denying this in the press.<sup>126</sup> The debate regarding whether to separate the PTA into separate men’s and women’s organizations began at the inception of the fathers’ clubs and continued until it reached such a fervor that the State Superintendent of Schools was forced to attend the state executive committee meeting of the PTA in 1936 to speak strongly against the proposed division. The Superintendent “counseled the women to offer activities that would ‘consume masculine interests and energies’” and asked the PTA to organize a cooperative committee between the men’s and women’s groups to study the situation. After this, the PTA became committed to remaining as one organization for all parents.<sup>127</sup>

Efforts to attract men to the PTA appear to have been fairly successful among upper- and middle-class men. According to a White House survey published in 1936, husbands and wives of the professional class attended the PTA in nearly equal percentages (17.5 percent of mothers and 15.5 percent of fathers), with the difference growing wider in lower socio-economic groups, with mothers being approximately twice as likely to participate, overall.<sup>128</sup> It is somewhat difficult to reconcile this report with the California report from 1933 that put male membership at approximately ten percent.<sup>129</sup> Male participation in the Parent-Teacher Associations remains today at approximately ten percent. This paltry number encouraged the organization to elect its first male president in 2009 in hopes of driving up male participation.<sup>130</sup>

## College Events for Fathers

As the PTA sought greater paternal involvement through special events and

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<sup>125</sup> Myra Nye, "P.-T.A. Workers Ask Fathers' Assistance in Drive to Promote Child Welfare," *Los Angeles Times*, August 9 1934. "Fathers Council Will Be Discussed at State Meeting," *Los Angeles Times*, November 11 1935.

<sup>126</sup> Crete Cage, "Separate P.-T.A. Fathers' Council Proposed to Strengthen Tenth District," *Los Angeles Times*, September 12 1935. Cage, "P.-T.A. Conclave Hears Plea for Youth Guidance." "P.-T.A. Council Irons out Problem at Dinner Parley," *Los Angeles Times*, January 16 1936.

<sup>127</sup> Crete Cage, "Division of Fathers', Mothers' P.-T.A. Work Scorned by School Superintendent: Masculine Interest Goal for Program," *Los Angeles Times* 1936.

<sup>128</sup> Paula S. Fass, *The Damned and the Beautiful: American Youth in the 1920's* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 86-87, Committee on the Infant and Preschool Child, "The Young Child in the Home: A Survey of Three Thousand American Families," in *Report of the Committee on the Infant and Preschool Child: Section III-- Education and Training* (New York: White House Conference on Child Health and Protection, 1936), 80-82.

<sup>129</sup> "Men Increasing P.-T.A. Activity."

<sup>130</sup> National Public Radio, ""PTA Welcomes First Male President", "

<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=106027156> An article from the PTA’s webpage explained the significance of the selection: “‘This should prove to men across the country that their participation in PTA is valued, welcomed, and needed,’ said Saylor.” National Parent Teacher Association, "National PTA Ushers in Change," <http://www.pta.org/3272.htm> A blog for the New York Times Magazine also discussed the new president in the context of efforts to increase fathers’ involvement in the PTA and in the lives of children, generally. Lisa Belkin, "Dads in the PTA," in *Motherlode: Adventures in Parenting* (The New York Times Magazine, 2009).

meetings designed specifically for men, so too did many institutions of higher learning. American colleges caught this trend and began hosting father-and-son events to allow fathers the opportunity to familiarize themselves with their sons' academic and social life at college. In addition to this, fraternities and student social groups hosted father-and-son events, explicitly hoping to help forge close friendship between sons and their fathers. In 1920, The *Harvard Alumni Bulletin* reported on the establishment of the "Association of Fathers and Sons of '01"—a purely social club for bringing the members of the Class of 1901 who had sons at Harvard or preparing to attend Harvard together with their sons.<sup>131</sup> The *Bulletin* supposed that this club would be of particular benefit for the fathers. With tongue in cheek, the *Bulletin* explained:

'Bringing up father' has always been a difficult process. In so many ways there is not so great a gulf fixed between the younger and the older generations as there was before the last quarter of the nineteenth century. But in very recent years the younger generation has been moving with much rapidity. The standard by which it measures conduct and life is a new standard, in some respects clearly better than the old... and in some respects, unless we quite misjudge it, not so good. There is no doubt about its being different, and that 'Father,' not yet wholly brought up, has much to learn.<sup>132</sup>

Although the tone is light-hearted, the discussion reveals important things about the relationships of college boys with their fathers. First, the tone is jovial. Second, the presumption is that association with youth is beneficial for the father. Lastly, the *Bulletin* feels that keeping "in touch" with the modern world is something that fathers need youth to achieve. The *Bulletin* remarks to students: "If the sons of 1901 will conceive of themselves as missionaries to the older generation, they may achieve notable results."<sup>133</sup> It is not simply that fathers are encouraged to become closer to their own sons, but rather that they are encouraged to get to know their sons' peers, to spend time with younger men to gain knowledge and understanding about youth in general. The *Bulletin* states that a father "with an open mind and heart" can learn a lot from those of his son's generation:

The better he understands it, the more he will be able to help his own son to gain the footing he must hold some day in the world about him. But let not the missionary spirit be too pronounced. Perhaps, indeed, it is better for the sons not to think about it at all, but merely to indulge their fathers in the quaint idea they have evolved, and come to the meetings, and be themselves.<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> "News and Views: The Education of Fathers," *Harvard Alumni Bulletin* 23, no. 5 (1920): 85.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*: 86.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*

The tone is friendly, but condescending to the fathers. Columbia's alumni association also encouraged alumni to bring their sons to the spring reunion in 1922.<sup>135</sup>

In addition to fathers bringing their sons to events at their alma maters, college students were invited to bring their fathers to special father-son events at some schools. Numerous schools hosted Father's Days and the like.<sup>136</sup> According to the *Banta Greek Exchange*, one fraternity had a Fathers' Club with the purpose of bringing fathers and sons together and allowing fathers to meet "their son's pals and their dads."<sup>137</sup> Boston College seniors hosted their fathers in 1926 as "the first step" in a plan put forward by the president "to give the fathers of the students a clearer outlook on college life."<sup>138</sup> A fraternity at Cornell, inspired by a brother fraternity at the University of Illinois, organized a fathers' club to establish "closer contact between college students and their fathers"—a move that gained praise from numerous leaders of the university.<sup>139</sup> The Holy Cross Fathers' club was formed after a successful father and son day at the college. Three hundred sixty fathers formed the organization at the close of events and planned to ask all future fathers of students to enroll upon their sons' registration.<sup>140</sup> Harvard held an annual field day for fathers and sons in the 1920s, with a luncheon for fathers and sons, and the entire family invited to watch sporting events.<sup>141</sup> At least one women's college also hosted father-daughter sporting events, for Vassar college had an annual father-daughter baseball game during their graduation festivities in the 1920s.<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> "College Association to Hold Spring Reunion in Columbia Dormitory," *Columbia Alumni News* 13, no. 21 (1922). For more on the development of a college youth culture in the 1920s, see Fass, *The Damned and the Beautiful: American Youth in the 1920's*.

<sup>136</sup> Pennsylvania College, the University of Southern California, Northwestern University, Pennsylvania State, American University, Dartmouth, the University of Wisconsin, and Roanoke College all hosted special events for fathers. "Gettysburg 33-0 Victor," *New York Times*, November 14 1926. "What's Doing Today," *Los Angeles Times*, November 10 1926. "Purdue Crumpled by Northwestern," *New York Times*, November 7 1926. "Errors Help Penn State," *New York Times*, May 2 1926. "Annual 'Father's Day' Game at Penn State on Saturday," *New York Times*, October 6 1929. "American University Joins to Greet Bishop of London," *The Washington Post*, October 26 1926. "Form Holy Cross Fathers' Club," *Boston Daily Globe*, June 1 1925. "Dartmouth Fathers' Day Dinner," *New York Times*, March 21 1930. "Sansen Leads Iowa to a 14 to 0 Victory," *New York Times*, October 27 1929. "On Virginia Gridirons," *The Washington Post*, October 25 1929. "Roanoke to Hold Father's Day Fete," *The Washington Post*, October 24 1929.

<sup>137</sup> "Banta's Greek Exchange, Letters," *Banta's Greek Exchange* 15, no. 3 (1927): 233.

<sup>138</sup> "Boston College Seniors to Be Hosts for Father and Son Day," *Boston Daily Globe*, April 17 1926.

<sup>139</sup> "Fathers of Students at Cornell Form Club," *New York Times*, April 10 1927.

<sup>140</sup> "Form Holy Cross Fathers' Club."

<sup>141</sup> "Fathers' and Sons' Day at Harvard," *Boston Daily Globe*, May 10 1926.

<sup>142</sup> "Baseball at Vassar: Fathers to Meet Daughters in a Unique Contest Today," *New York Times*, June 12 1922. "Vassar Students Wind Daisy Chain," *New York Times*, June 8 1926. "Vassar Holds Class Day," *New York Times*, June 11 1929. "Dads Beat Daughters in Vassar Ball Game; Real 'Ump's' Aid Is Vain as Gallantry Dies," *New York Times*, June 13 1922. Father and child athletic events were not confined to college campuses. A yearly father and son golf tournament began in 1914 at the Sleepy Hollow golf course outside of New York City and became so successful, swelling in 1916 to approximately 250 golfers, that it was taken over by the Metropolitan Golf Association, leading to a lengthy argument between golf clubs seeking to host the tournament. ("Father-and-Son Tourney," *New York Times*, March 16 1917. "Fathers and Sons Mobilize on Links," *New York Times*, June 29 1920.) A 1920 article reporting on the event for the *New York Times* celebrated the easy rivalry and camaraderie of fathers and their sons displayed in the event: "The average balling-out that a son and heir gets from his dad as they drag their feet up to the scoreboard and are forced to report a high total is a masterpiece... And on the journey home what choice, delicate retorts are handed back to the fathers, all because of some questionable niblick shot or some flubbed brassie." "Fathers and Sons Mobilize on Links." Golf tournaments for fathers and sons were so



## Father-and-Child Events in Men's Clubs

The newly founded and rapidly growing men's service clubs such as the Rotary (1905), the Kiwanis (1914), and the Lions (1917) hosted many father-and-child events in the 1910s and 1920s. Many of these clubs hosted regular father-and-son dinners and "Boys' Week" events.<sup>143</sup> In 1919, Council Bluffs, home of the famous fathers' club, had a son and father meeting at their local Rotary Club, where a guest speaker described his life as a pioneer seventy-five years before.<sup>144</sup> In Freehold, New Jersey, there was a successful Father and Son Supper.<sup>145</sup> The Atlanta Rotarians began hosting an annual "fathers and sons day" in 1918.<sup>146</sup> In 1920, nearly one hundred boys having lunch at the Rotary Club with their fathers were delighted to meet several film stars who happened to be in town.<sup>147</sup> In 1922, the local newspaper remarked on the pride felt by the sons, who ranged in age from six to forty, at receiving "their 'dad's' invitation" to the lunch.<sup>148</sup> The Santa Monica lodge of the Independent Order of B'nai B'rith scheduled a father-and-son night in 1929 and listened to H. Woodworth Kennedy's talk on the subject of 'Boyology.'<sup>149</sup> Over 250 fathers and sons attended a father-and-son banquet in Lee County, South Carolina in 1921.<sup>150</sup> Numerous men's organizations made some attempt to include sons. The men's club of Delafield, Wisconsin also hosted a yearly father-and-son night after it was founded in 1925.<sup>151</sup> A poem printed in the *Washington Post* in 1922 asked "What Sort of a Rotary Father Are You?" encouraging Rotary club members to take time to play with their sons and answer their questions.<sup>152</sup>

Not all events hosted by men's service clubs were for sons. In Idaho Falls, the "Father and Son Nights" were so successful that one daughter wrote the club to insist that girls also get a special night to dine out "with dad."<sup>153</sup> Efforts to increase father

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successful that they sprouted up around the country, expanded to include grandfathers, and received a great deal of attention in newspapers. "Gives Trophy for Annual Father and Son Tournament," *The New York Times*, June 18 1920. "Wollaston Club to Hold Golf Tournament for Grandfathers," *The New York Times*, May 12 1920. "To Hold Annual Tourney," *The New York Times*, August 20 1920. "To Hold Annual Tourney." "Local Golf," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, August 19 1921. "Fifty-Eight Pairs Enter for Father and Son Golf," *Boston Daily Globe*, August 9 1922. "Father-Son Teams Enter.," *The New York Times*, August 27 1922. "Fathers and Sons-- Do They Look Alike?," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, September 11 1921. There were also father-and-son tennis and bowling tournaments in the early 1920s. John J. Hallahan, "Drawings for Doubles Test," *Boston Daily Globe*, August 20 1921. "Father and Son Bowling Tourney Won by Kaubs," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, January 19 1920.

<sup>143</sup> Macleod, *Building Character in the American Boy*, 203.

<sup>144</sup> "Son and Father Meeting," *The Rotarian* 14, no. 5 (1919).

<sup>145</sup> J. A. Van Dis, "Pals: National Father and Son Week, Feb. 16-22, 1920," *Rural Life: Devoted to the Country work of Young Men's Christian Association* 10 (1919): 463. [photo included in article]

<sup>146</sup> "Father and Son Luncheon Held at Rotary Club," *The Atlanta Constitution*, November 8 1922.

<sup>147</sup> "Fathers and Sons Meet Movie Stars at Rotary Club," *The Atlanta Constitution*, December 8 1920.

<sup>148</sup> "Father and Son Luncheon Held at Rotary Club."

<sup>149</sup> "Fraternal Affairs," *The Los Angeles Times*, March 3 1929. 'Boyology' will be discussed at greater length later in this chapter.

<sup>150</sup> "Physical," *Association Men* 47 (1921).

<sup>151</sup> "Folder 1," in *Delafield Men's Club records, 1925-1956* (University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee Libraries. Archives. Milwaukee Manuscript Collection EU, 1925-1956).

<sup>152</sup> "What Sort of a Rotary Father Are You?," *The Washington Post*, February 23 1922.

<sup>153</sup> "Rotary Club Activities," *The Rotarian* (1922): 87.

involvement tended to focus on older children, but not exclusively. The Salt Lake City Rotarians held their first outing for the junior Rotarians, both boys and girls ranging in age from two months to fourteen years old, at a park in 1922: "The 150 Rotarian daddies were kept busy attending to the various needs of their youngsters," assisting with the merry-go-round, boating, clown performances, and other amusements. The amusement this brought the men was emphasized in this *Salt Lake Utah Tribune* article which questioned whether the children "or their daddies had the best time."<sup>154</sup> The Rotary Club of Detroit, Michigan began an annual tradition in 1919 when it held a "Father and Daughter Day," with balloons, dolls, paper hats, tea sets, games and a jazz band. The *Rotoscope* reported "the kiddies livened things for the Daddies, with the result that many Dads had little lunch, but plenty of action."<sup>155</sup> The Kiwanis Club of Washington, D.C. held a "Father and Daughter" day in 1923, which involved a person dressed as a "black mammy" rolling a club-member dressed as an infant in a make-shift carriage; the man, still dressed as an infant, then sang a verse and parodied other club members for the entertainment of the group. Two daughters also sang and danced, one in a colonial costume, to entertain the fathers.<sup>156</sup> "Father and Daughter Day" appears to have been an annual tradition; it was also widely attended in 1929 and held during winter break so that daughters away at school for the academic year would be home to attend.<sup>157</sup>

In addition to father-child picnics and meals, many men's service clubs worked in concert with other organizations to promote and sponsor activities for boys' week or father-and-son week. The Rotary of Austin, Texas promoted Father and Son Week in 1923 and brought Frank H. Gamel, a speaker who worked with boys and their fathers, to discuss the "boy problem." His speech was met with much interest, according to the report of a local paper.<sup>158</sup> In Carthage Missouri, Boys' Week activities culminated in a banquet of nearly two hundred "sons and dads," and a series of lectures by Frank H. Gamel, who also "found time to give personal attention and advice to many boys and parents."<sup>159</sup>

Father and Son banquets were so much a part of the Rotary program that the Rotary Club established in Shanghai hosted a father-and-son banquet during its "Father and Son Week" which quoted a student from the Anglo-Chinese College as saying,

"Every one of us here knows that this is a special week. It is the 'Father and Son' Week. And therefore it may be regarded as perhaps the most joyful and helpful week of the year. Fathers have been taking the opportunity to think especially about their sons, and sons have even devoting more time to thinking about their fathers."<sup>160</sup>

The Boy Week movement was successful enough as a movement that one angry author declared in 1950 that,

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<sup>154</sup> Ibid.: 86.

<sup>155</sup> "Father and Daughter Day," *The Rotarian* 14, no. 5 (1919).

<sup>156</sup> "Kiwanis Daughters Entertain Fathers," *The Washington Post*, March 30 1923.

<sup>157</sup> "Girls Give Dramas at Kiwanis Meeting," *The Washington Post*, December 27 1929.

<sup>158</sup> "Rotary Club Activities," *The Rotarian* (1923): 31.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid.: 98.

<sup>160</sup> W. V. Pennell, "When East Meets West," *The Rotarian* 28, no. 4 (1926): 53.

In the early twenties a movement known as 'Boy Week' threatened to become an institution in America. The theme of 'Boy Week' was 'Be a Pal.' It referred specifically to the father's relationship with his son. It is scarcely possible to say that the patriarchy expired in the United States at that moment but it is certainly one of the monuments commemorating its demise. The degeneration of fatherhood into palhood began some time ago.<sup>161</sup>

This author lamented that the American father had been swindled into giving up his position as patriarch, and was left feeling nothing but "bewildered rejection" in his efforts to become a "pal."<sup>162</sup>

One of the largest service-club efforts at father outreach was the Rotary's fourteen-year-long sponsorship of the well-known physician and lecturer Charles E. Barker. Barker, who had served as medical adviser to William Howard Taft during his presidency, gave a lecture on sex education titled "A Father's Responsibility to His Son" in October 1919 at the International Rotarians conference in Salt Lake City, Utah. According to one observer, men could be heard dismissing this topic when they saw it in the program and a significant number left before it began. Those who remained were "in a skeptical mood," but had their "eyes opened and... were put face to face with a responsibility."<sup>163</sup> The sex-education talk was turned by the Rotary Club into a pamphlet of the same name and Barker was hired to talk to Rotary clubs all over the United States. By the time he resigned in 1933, he had given over six-thousand lectures, addressing approximately 1,140,000 fathers. In response to demand, he also formulated a pamphlet and lecture for mothers, which were only slightly less popular than his talks and pamphlet for men, and he was an even more popular speaker for adolescents, speaking to more than two million of them. All in all, the Rotarian estimated that his pamphlets reached six- to eight-million parents.<sup>164</sup> A glowing portrait of Barker published in the *Rotarian* in 1924 indicated that he had lectured in every state of the union except one, and five provinces in Canada. Generally, he would lecture to the high schools, and then offer a separate lecture for mothers, and one for fathers at times convenient to each group; the lecture for fathers was generally described as the key speech, with members of various local men's clubs specifically invited or the lecture open to the general public.<sup>165</sup>

In his lecture to fathers, Barker would address his "suppositious son Charlie" and describe imaginary interviews with the boy at three critical points in his development.<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> John J. Kane, "The Changing Roles of Father and Mother in Contemporary American Society," *The American Catholic Sociological Review* 11, no. 3 (1950): 1461.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*: 147.

<sup>163</sup> Roger H. Motten, "Unusual Stories of Unusual Men," *The Rotarian* 25, no. 3 (1924): 28.

<sup>164</sup> "Our Readers' Open Forum," *The Rotarian* 42, no. 5 (1933): 40. By 1924, his pamphlet for fathers had already sold 250,000 copies, some of which were purchased for boy leaders to give to boys rather than fathers. Motten, "Unusual Stories of Unusual Men," 63-64.

<sup>165</sup> For example, "Dr. Charles Barker Speaks Three Times Here on Wednesday," *The Atlanta Constitution*, February 16 1921, "To Discuss Parents' Duty," *The Washington Post*, March 24 1921., "More 'Boyology' Talks," *The Washington Post*, April 7 1922.

<sup>166</sup> California State Library, "'A Quail a Day'," *News Notes of California Libraries* 14, no. 3 (1919): 281.

In general, his address suggested that by being straightforward and honest with his son, the father could form a strong bond that would lead the son to seek his advice. For example, before “Charlie’s” marriage, his father warns him to be moderate in his sexual relations and reminds him of why he should trust his father’s advice: “listen to your dad now.... I have talked to you all the way along, and you have been my comrade, boy, and my pal.”<sup>167</sup> He compared this vision of modern, companionable parenting to the less effective method of the previous generation. He told his audience that his own father, like many others, shooed him away when he asked where he came from at the age of five or six, leaving him to learn from the foul-mouthed gardener.<sup>168</sup> His message was one that found a wide and receptive audience.<sup>169</sup>

Another speaker hired by the Rotary Club to bring fathers and sons closer together was Frank H. Gamel, a “counselor of boys.” He met with adolescent boys and with fathers as a more general counselor and adviser, although he seems to have emphasized curbing “self-abuse” as a solution to a wide variety of problems. Advertisements for his lectures read, “Fathers, bring your boys! Boys, bring your fathers!” and he held separate lectures for “JUST DAD.”<sup>170</sup> Gamel was a frequent speaker at Father and Son week events for the Rotary and for Boys’ Week campaigns.<sup>171</sup> One of his lectures was described as a “gripping, heart-searching discussion of some of the things a father owes his son and some of the things which a son owes his father.”<sup>172</sup> As a “confidential advisor” to “thousands of boys,” Gamel, whom the boys called “Daddy,” offered confidentiality and advice to high-school boys across the country on topics such as career choice, “troubles at home, troubles with teachers, personal habits, health, [and] the girls.”<sup>173</sup> He told one interviewer in 1920 that since the end of his war work, he had devoted his time to the development of “*A Short Course in Boyology...*” designed for boys of High School age-- and their fathers.<sup>174</sup> In Gamel’s illustrative

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<sup>167</sup> Charles E. Barker, “A Father’s Responsibility to His Son: Address Delivered Thursday, June 19, before the Tenth Annual Rotary Convention at Salt Lake City, Utah,” ed. International Association of Rotary Clubs (Chicago: International Association of Rotary Clubs, (circa 1919)), 13-14. Barker’s advice to “Charlie” is generally quite tender and sympathetic, but in one instance he was most severe: Charlie must not be a sissy with the girls. He explained, “Be jolly with her and take her by the hand and have a lot of fun. Don’t be a prude! I hate a sissy, Charlie; that is about the worst thing on the face of the earth. Don’t be a sissy, or I’ll beat the everlasting daylights out of you, But I want you to be a man with these girls; go with them, be jolly with them and take them about, but take care of them, boy. They are under your care.” Barker, “A Father’s Responsibility to His Son: Address Delivered Thursday, June 19, before the Tenth Annual Rotary Convention at Salt Lake City, Utah,” 12. The worry about effeminacy displayed by Barker and use of the term “sissy” are typical of a common concern among psychologists and child guidance practitioners with “sissies.” According to historian Julia Grant, in the 1920s especially, such experts fretted that over-protective, smothering mothers created “sissies” who were not “normal” or “real” boys. Julia Grant, “A ‘Real Boy’ and Not a Sissy: Gender, Childhood, and Masculinity, 1890-1940,” *Journal of Social History* 37, no. 4 (2004).

<sup>168</sup> Barker, “A Father’s Responsibility to His Son: Address Delivered Thursday, June 19, before the Tenth Annual Rotary Convention at Salt Lake City, Utah,” 6.

<sup>169</sup> California State Library, “A Quail a Day,” 281.

<sup>170</sup> “Display Ad 100: Free Lectures for Boys and Their Fathers by Frank H. Gamel,” *The Washington Post*, October 16 1921.

<sup>171</sup> “Rotary Club Activities,” 31. “Rotary Club Activities,” 98.

<sup>172</sup> Walter W. Strong, “Boys Work: Frank H. Gamel-- Counselor of Boys,” *The Rotarian* 17, no. 3 (1920): 131.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*: 131-32.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*: 131.

examples, he repeatedly referred to fathers as key to the success of a boy. In one example, a boy refused to attend lectures because his father had asked him to, demonstrating a troubling rebelliousness toward authority, so Gamel "hunted up the father, a prominent business man" to give him some suggestions for helping the boy. Three months later, Gamel reported, he phoned the father to check on their progress and found the boy was much improved.<sup>175</sup>

In another story related in Gamel's pamphlet, which was published by the Washington Rotary Club, Gamel described a healthy, seemingly happy teenaged boy who came to him and explained how much he yearned to be chums with his father. Gamel wrote that the boy said,

"I think he is the finest father in the world, and he couldn't be any more kind to me than he is; but when I see other boys doing things with their dads-- playing ball, and going fishing, and things like that, it just seems as though I can't stand it. He does everything in the world that he can do for me, but-- I don't know whether you can understand what I mean-- I just want him!"<sup>176</sup>

Gamel reported that he wept with the boy after this confession and then spoke to the boy's father, who was a businessman with an excellent reputation. This problem represents an important generational change. The businessman father was fulfilling his responsibilities as a good father of the previous generation, but by 1921, the definition of good father was changing; a good father in the 1920s needed to be more than a kind advisor and provider, he also needed to be his son's chum. The father, upon learning of his son's feelings, wept and explained to Gamel that he had been under stress at work: ""but that is no excuse at all, and I'll fix it, sir! I'll fix it and I thank you, sir!"<sup>177</sup>

Gamel presumed that to be a successful father a man needed to be friends with his son, and many of his stories pointed to this belief. Gamel described a successful father who learned to pal with his son:

Before this boy was a year old his father realized that, if he was to help his son as he should, he must learn how to see the world again through a boy's eyes. He was a busy man; but, realizing that no other duty in life was so important as his duty to the boy for whose destiny he had become responsible, he took time to interest himself in everything that interested the boy, and they were much together. Together they planned their work, and their study, and their play. Together, they talked, sometimes of those unseen things which are eternal. As the years slipped by, they grew closer and closer together, and each became the other's closest chum.<sup>178</sup>

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<sup>175</sup> Ibid.: 132. Also related in Frank H. Gamel, "The Romance of Building Boyhood," ed. Washington Rotary Club (copyright Fred S. Lincoln, 1921), 18-19.

<sup>176</sup> Gamel, "The Romance of Building Boyhood," 12-13.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid., 25.

After the boy left for college, he would write "to his closest chum, his father" for "counsel." One day, the father found his letters bundled with a note in his son's handwriting marked "'To be read when things are getting away.'"<sup>179</sup> The father cried tears of joy realizing that he had succeeded as a father – by being his son's pal in the boy's tender years and seeing the world through the boy's eyes, the father earned his son's trust and was able to serve as his advisor and confidante once the boy reached young adulthood.<sup>180</sup> To Gamel, being a "fine father" was not enough—a father had to be his son's chum. Although he was hired by men's service organizations to speak, he suggested that men should be careful to place their paternal responsibilities ahead of their fraternal ones.<sup>181</sup> Gamel worked with more than 25,000 fathers and sons according to a 1925 report, combining "biology and boyology" to help counsel boys and their fathers.<sup>182</sup>

## Father-and-Son Week

The YMCA's promotion of Father and Son week began in 1909 in Providence, Rhode Island. Providence's boys' work secretary determined that "it would be a good idea to get the fathers to become better acquainted with their sons," and hosted a Father and Son supper with this purpose. The news of this successful supper spread to other Associations and many such suppers followed. The Association's boys' work specialists promoted this father-and-son idea until churches throughout the country began holding special church services, social and athletic activities designed to bring fathers and sons closer together. In 1913, Robert E. Lewis, the general secretary of Cleveland's Association gathered a committee of business and professional men and sent out form letters to about five hundred mayors "urging a New Year's proclamation for fathers and sons to get together and become better chums and companions."<sup>183</sup> A few years later, in 1917, the Boys' Work Committee of the International Committee of the YMCA took up the idea of a National Father and Son Day with state and local boys' work secretaries throughout the country, who heartily approved and expanded the idea, and thereby launched the first national Father and Son Week in February 1918. The Week gained followers each year, and was celebrated in February of 1919 and 1920 "with increasing interest, and larger numbers of fathers and sons attended the various events conducted by the Associations and churches alike."<sup>184</sup>

In the 1920s, many religious organizations made efforts to promote father-son bonds. In 1920, the YMCA-sponsored National Father and Son Week in February was observed by some churches and by special meetings held at the YMCA, but because it coincided with Washington's birthday, many churches instead highlighted the topic of patriotism.<sup>185</sup> In Boston in 1920, the Baptist Social Union held a Father and Son Night

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<sup>179</sup> Ibid.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>181</sup> He told this joke: A boy told his friend that he had no father. The chum sympathetically inquired after the boy's father, to which the boy responded: "Oh, no! my father is not dead. He's a Shriner." Ibid., 20.

<sup>182</sup> "No Title.," *The Motive* 4, no. 2 (1925).

<sup>183</sup> J. A. Van Dis, "Growth of the Father and Son Idea," *Association Men* 47, no. 3 (1921).

<sup>184</sup> Ibid.

<sup>185</sup> "Y.M.C.A. News," *The Chicago Defender*, February 14 1920. "Sermons on Patriotism," *Los Angeles Times*, February 21 1920.

with dinner and guest speakers, which included then-Governor Cal Coolidge.<sup>186</sup> In 1921, more than five hundred Baptists attended a father-and-son church event in Boston.<sup>187</sup> Three hundred Jewish fathers and sons attended a father-and-son dinner and spelling bee hosted by the Alumni Association of the Washington Hebrew congregation in 1921.<sup>188</sup> One author in a religious newspaper explained that the impetus behind “religious folks” celebrating Father and Son Week was eight-fold; these reasons included renewing fathers’ commitment to their parental responsibilities, enhancing sons’ respect and appreciation for their fathers, and leading both to the church. It is interesting that accompanying these more traditional ideas about the father-son relationship and its model in the Christian church, the ideas of boyology are also in this list: “To acquaint fathers more intimately with simple principles of Boy Psychology” and “To create interest on the part of fathers and sons in nature study, woodcraft, and God's great out-of-doors.”<sup>189</sup>

At the same time, Sunday Schools all over the country were likewise celebrating Father and Son Week, but not necessarily coordinating with the Y. 1922’s International Sunday School Convention addressed the issue of Father and Son Week directly, explaining that for several years “without standardization in program or promotion” a great many state associations celebrated “Father and Son Week” with either banquets, some of which “ran into the thousands,” or with an entire week of father-son programs. The confusion was that many state associations chose to celebrate Father and Son Week in the autumn, while others coordinated with the national YMCA, which celebrated Father and Son Week in February. In 1921, the International Sunday School Association worked with the YMCA and the International Boys’ Work Committee and decided to celebrate Father and Son week in November, centered around Armistice Day.<sup>190</sup> Even after this coordinated effort, some churches chose to celebrate father and son days at other times in the year. For instance, in June 1926, many New York City churches observed a “Father and Son Day.” A Reformed Church pastor preached on “Bringing Up Father,” a Methodist Church asked “What Kind of Dad Are You?”; a Presbyterian minister spoke about “The Lure of the World” as it pertains to fathers and sons, and an Episcopal church pondered “The Problem of Our Youth.”<sup>191</sup>

The YMCA promoted “Father and Son Week” with special program suggestions designed to bring fathers and sons closer together “to break down the usual reserve and formalism and really be ‘chums’.”<sup>192</sup> In 1919, one YMCA publication reported that

Father and Son Week observance is gathering momentum. For many years the father and son idea has been emphasized in some special way by local Associations for several years it has been

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<sup>186</sup> “Father and Son Night at Baptist Social Union,” *Boston Daily Globe*, February 3 1920.

<sup>187</sup> “Ex-Missionary Speaks at ‘Father and Son’ Dinner,” *Boston Daily Globe*, February 8 1921.

<sup>188</sup> “Jews, at Dinner, Urged to Stand by Their Faith,” *The Washington Post* (1921).

<sup>189</sup> Rev. Irvin E. Deer, “Are Farthers Side-Stepping?,” *Herald of Gospel Liberty* 115, no. 44 (1923).

<sup>190</sup> Sixteenth International Sunday School Convention, “Organized Sunday School Work in North America, 1918-1922,” ed. Herbert H. Smith (Kansas City, Missouri: 1922), 343-44. Van Dis, “Growth of the Father and Son Idea.”

<sup>191</sup> “Today's Programs in City's Churches,” *New York Times*, June 20 1926.

<sup>192</sup> Van Dis, “Pals: National Father and Son Week, Feb. 16-22, 1920,” 458.

promoted nationally and has been observed in other countries also.<sup>193</sup>

In that same year, the national committee of the YMCA published a booklet with suggestions for those arranging Father and Son Week events.<sup>194</sup> The Y even suggested special toasts for the banquet and games to be played by fathers and sons at their table. One promoter recommended holding frequent father-son events and keeping records of those who attended. The YMCA prepared a folder and promotional poster entitled "The Father and Son Idea" to help promote Father and Son Week in February 1920.<sup>195</sup> Some of these local celebrations were very successful. In Atlanta, for instance, the opening banquet of Father and Son Week in 1920 had 150 fathers and sons; In Lee County, South Carolina, there were more than 250.<sup>196</sup> Detroit's Father and Son Week events in 1920 were attended by 58,000 people.<sup>197</sup> According to the Y, the purpose of the week was "to get the fathers to renew their interest in their paternal obligations; to lead sons to deeper respect and appreciation for their fathers and homes and to lead both fathers and sons to regard the church and Sunday school as necessary to the finest development of their spiritual lives, and to secure their co-operation in the work and support of the church."<sup>198</sup>

The November 1921 edition of *Association Men* was dedicated to Father and Son Week.<sup>199</sup> One article celebrating the success of the movement noted that the Father and Son Week was part of a larger change, a movement of fathers taking greater responsibility for their sons. The author noted that the purpose of Father and Son Week was:

to stimulate the idea for frequent meetings and help fathers to realize their constant responsibility in chumming with their boys. Many have this idea, and the results of the week are being conserved by the organization of Fathers' Clubs, frequent conferences of fathers, Father and Son Clubs, special hikes and camps for Father and Son Week, by father and son working together in the church and Sunday School, by special events in day schools for fathers, and by many other similar activities; all of which are having a wonderful influence upon the boy during the most formative period of his life.<sup>200</sup>

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<sup>193</sup> Young Men's Christian Association of Wisconsin State, "Father and Son Week: February 16-22, 1920," *Wisconsin Red Triangle* 30, no. 4 (1919). The Y used Father and Son Week to promote sex education, as well. Thomas Watson Galloway, of the American Social Hygiene Association, first published his sex education advice in *American Youth*, and later assembled it into a book to promote sex education through the annual "Father and Son" week of the YMCA. William F. Snow, in Thomas Walton Galloway, *The Father and His Boy: The Place of Sex in Manhood Making* (New York: Association Press, 1921), xi.

<sup>194</sup> Wisconsin, "Father and Son Week: February 16-22, 1920," 6.

<sup>195</sup> Van Dis, "Pals: National Father and Son Week, Feb. 16-22, 1920," 464.

<sup>196</sup> "Father and Son Banquet Planned for Friday, Feb. 20," *The Atlanta Constitution*, February 7 1920. "Physical."

<sup>197</sup> "Photograph: Father and Son Week Banquet, Toronto," *Association Men* 47, no. 3 (1921).

<sup>198</sup> "Father and Son Banquet Planned for Friday, Feb. 20." This celebration was also recognized in African-American communities, as reported by the *Chicago Defender*. "Y.M.C.A. News."

<sup>199</sup> "Cover," *Association Men* 47, no. 3 (1921).

<sup>200</sup> Van Dis, "Growth of the Father and Son Idea."



President Harding lent his support to Father and Son Week, urging churches, schools, and clubs to celebrate the week with events to bring fathers and sons together and noting that "The success of this movement during the past four or five years has won for it a distinct place as a most constructive institution for increasing a more sympathetic relationship between father and son and thus strengthening the home ties upon which the strength of our nation depends."<sup>201</sup>

Some advertisers took advantage of this edition of *Association Men* to sell products they claimed could help fathers forge closer relationships with their sons. For instance, a billiard table company reminded fathers that "There are fifty-two 'Father and Son' weeks a year in the home where the man and boy play together." The company promised readers that by playing billiards together "the parent and boy come to understand each other, to confide in each other, to be mutually helpful. In such a home there is no such thing as a boy problem, for the father and son are pals."<sup>202</sup> This advertisement was premised on a positive view of fathers playing with sons and being true pals and confidantes. It emphasized mutual companionship—father confiding in son as well as son confiding in father. Father and Son Week promoted greater father involvement in the lives of sons, but it was also a new sort of involvement: companionable, play-based, and democratic, as well as wise and sympathetic.

## Scouting

The Boy Scouts of America did not draw from the Scouts' fathers, generally, for its leadership; according to historian David Macleod, only thirty-six percent of troop leaders in this period had sons, only a fraction of which would have been Scout age.<sup>203</sup> Increasingly in the 1920s, men's service clubs, such as the Rotary, the Lions, and the Kiwanis, took over sponsorship of Scout troops. By 1930, civic and service clubs overtook the schools as the chief supporters of troops.<sup>204</sup> The Boy Scouts began hosting community-wide father-and-son dinners and annual "boys' week" activities, which, in the words of David MacLeod, "displayed a comprehensive, mildly paternalistic solicitude."<sup>205</sup> In Atlanta in 1920, each scout troop arranged a father-and-son supper, and on one Saturday, each troop arranged a father-and-son hike where the scouts cooked supper for their fathers.<sup>206</sup> The father-and-son dinners could be quite popular—in Logansport, Indiana, which had a population of 20,200, the first Boy Scout Father and Son banquet in 1921 was attended by "477 Scouts and their fathers or adopted fathers."<sup>207</sup>

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<sup>201</sup> Warren G. Harding, "A Message from the President," *Association Men* 47 (1921).

<sup>202</sup> The Brunswick-Balke-Collender Co., "Advertisement: Father and Son Week," *Association Men* 47, no. 3 (1921).

<sup>203</sup> Macleod, *Building Character in the American Boy*, 208. Perhaps British fathers were more likely to serve as troop leaders, for John Crawley, who wrote a book about fatherhood published in the United States, described being "pressed into service" by the Scouts. In his description of the experience, the author's focus was clearly his son and the bond they formed, rather than the troop in general. John Crawley, *Reveries of a Father* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1924), 67-69.

<sup>204</sup> Macleod, *Building Character in the American Boy*, 203.

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>206</sup> "Elaborate Program for Scout Natal Week," *The Atlanta Constitution*, January 25 1920.

<sup>207</sup> "Boys Work," *The Rotarian* 18, no. 4 (1921): 199.

Many troops across the nation celebrated a Father and Son Night during “Good Turn Week” and the dinners were often very popular, filling “the dinner halls to the doors.” The *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* explained,

In this busy commercial and industrial age, with the world and human duty calling so insistently for the man's time, the boy has not had the opportunity for close understanding with the father that should be his. The annual dinner is a step toward a better and more sympathetic understanding; a breaking of the ice of convention, a material acknowledgment of a daily duty of intimacy that should follow the man and his boy through all the years.<sup>208</sup>

The *Atlanta Constitution* approved of these Father and Son dinners, remarking that the scouts were "helping home and home-work-- getting closer to dad, and dad to them, in the spirit of 'All together, for now and for the future!'"<sup>209</sup> Dr. H. W. Hurt, a noted lecturer for the Boy Scouts and chief executive of the Chicago BSA, spoke on the subject of fathers being pals with their sons, giving lectures to professional and civic groups.<sup>210</sup> The Scouts also worked with the Knights of Columbus and other boy workers in leading courses for fathers and boy-workers on “Boyology,” as will be discussed at greater length later in this chapter.<sup>211</sup>

## YMCA Indian Guides

The BSA made some efforts to include fathers in their activities in the 1920s, but it was a new organization that first truly focused on forging closer father-son connections through shared leisure in a father-son club. The YMCA’s Indian Guide Program was started in 1926 with the specific intent of promoting the father’s role as counselor, teacher and friend to his sons. The Indian Guide program was different from the Boy Scouts in its explicit focus on the father-son bond. The first Indian Guide tribe (called the Osages) was founded in 1926 in Richmond Heights, Missouri. The Indian Guides were nationally recognized by the YMCA in 1936, and by 1940, the movement had spread through twelve states with thirty-one tribes in St. Louis alone. In 1938, there were tribes in five states, and by 1940, there were ninety-seven tribes from twelve different states.<sup>212</sup> Attendance in the years leading up to 1940 never averaged below ninety percent.<sup>213</sup>

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<sup>208</sup> Quoted in "Dad and the Boys," *The Atlanta Constitution*, February 15 1920.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid.

<sup>210</sup> "Tells Ad Club of Boy Work," *The Palm Beach Post*, December 22 1921. "Business Men Pledge Aid to Boy Scouts," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, February 8 1922.

<sup>211</sup> "School for Fathers, Now," *Los Angeles Times*, November 6 1927. "K. C. Home for Aged Planned," *The Los Angeles Times*, May 23 1928.

<sup>212</sup> Matilda Rose McLaren, "The Indian Way of Life," in *Friday, Joe. Box 66. Biographical Files. Kautz Family YMCA Archives. University of Minnesota*. (Kautz Family YMCA Archives. University of Minnesota., 1940), 10-11.

<sup>213</sup> Ibid., 4.

The Kautz Family YMCA archives at the University of Minnesota hold the YMCA's early records of the Indian Guides, which includes a history of the early portion of the movement dated 1932, presumably written by the man credited with starting the Indian Guides, Harold S. Keltner.<sup>214</sup> Keltner credits the inception of the idea for the Guides to a former City Boys' Secretary of St. Louis who asked:

Why do you not find a way to help fathers make the home attractive to the boy and become of real assistance to that institution? The school has my boy one night, the church another, the scouts another and soon the 'Y' another. Has it ever occurred to you that many fathers desire (and many more should) to compete with these programs to a certain extent, believing that after all, his contribution is also valuable?<sup>215</sup>

The Guides grew out of the notion, which grew increasingly popular in the 1920s, that the father's friendly relationship to his son ought to be emphasized and encouraged.<sup>216</sup> With this in mind, Keltner sought to bring fathers and sons closer together.

Further inspiration came from Joe Friday, a Christian American Indian of the Ojibway Tribe who was a public speaker with the St. Louis Y. Joe Friday spoke about the traditional childrearing of his tribe, in which sons spent their days with their fathers, being trained and prepared for life. Friday accused the modern American father of "'farm[ing] his boy out' to agencies of organized society, who cannot possibly take the same interest nor know the boy as intimately as the father does."<sup>217</sup> As a report for the Y put it, Keltner listened to Joe Friday and "had a vision of more and more meetings for fathers and sons; doing, exploring, learning together." He pondered, "Would such an organized group furnish that missing link in the modern American home?"<sup>218</sup>

According to Keltner's report, Joe Friday's stories of Indian life held both fathers and sons in rapt attention. He theorized that the reason for Friday's effect on both fathers and sons was that he had "the mind of a child, or rather a child's perspective, making him interesting to dad and son alike. He is the personification of legends, stories, and ancient tales... This understanding gave us timber for our program for fathers and sons."<sup>219</sup> This condescending and romanticized view of Friday and his culture was at the heart of the Guides' program. Native American culture, as it was understood by Keltner, appealed to fathers and sons by linking them to the romance of nature and a perceived time of heroism, simplicity, and respect for the natural world as well as linking the group to the

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<sup>214</sup> On p. 4 the author remarks, "I was chief of this first tribe." The chief of the first tribe was Harold Keltner. "History of Indian Guides," in *Friday, Joe. Box 66. Biographical Files.* (Kautz Family YMCA Archives. University of Minnesota.), 4. The document does not include a date, but the year "1932" is stamped on the back of the page.

<sup>215</sup> Quoted in *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>216</sup> It is possible that Keltner's experiences in war also affected his ideas about fatherhood and its importance. According to a brief internal account of the Guides' history written for the YMCA by Matilda Rose McLaren in 1940, Keltner observed during the First World War that the young men who bore the strains of war best "were invariably the young men who placed father and mother first. They were the young men who had been raised at home." McLaren, "The Indian Way of Life."

<sup>217</sup> "History of Indian Guides," 2.

<sup>218</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, "The Indian Way of Life," 4.

<sup>219</sup> "History of Indian Guides," 2.

pageantry and language of romanticized Native American culture. The Indian Guides adopted terms and language from Native American culture, using “How!” as the affirmative in business meetings, and referring to members as “braves,” dues as “wampum,” homes as “wigwams,” and months as “moons”; members were given Indian names; the leader was called a chief, and in story-telling the “braves” were encouraged to use the broken English of imagined Native Americans of yore. The Indian Guides also made use of a code of conduct and respect supposedly derived from Native American culture, teaching, for instance, reverence for elders by having the fathers sit and the sons stand during meetings.<sup>220</sup>

Despite the emphasis on respect and hierarchy in the Indian Guide meetings and ceremonies, the Guides made use of the 1920s’ new emphasis on friendly, playful fatherhood, as well. The slogan of the Guides was “Pals Forever.”<sup>221</sup> Games and sport were highly emphasized, as was outdoorsmanship and skill at woodcrafts (The Woodcraft League, which used a “family approach” was a model for the Guides). In his description of the Guides’ first meetings, Keltner wrote: “Fathers had real enjoyment in participating with their own boys in indoor games. The competitive phases between the boys themselves were as you can imagine of much concern to their respective dads.” Describing the fathers absorbed in the excitement of the games, wanting their sons to win more than the men would care to admit, Keltner explained: “The dad can’t help himself.” The management of these games was a tricky business, for such competition must be invigorating, but not threatening, in order to entice the fathers to join. Keltner explained, “We have tried to avoid certain competitive activities between fathers which might make them timid about coming to meetings. Fathers are not all willing to compete with each other unless it is in some of the humorous phases such as talk fests.”<sup>222</sup>

Keltner’s description of the fathers who participated in this first group of Indian Guides suggests that they were very involved fathers. In fact, as Keltner described it, the founding fathers’ main concern regarding starting the troop was that their sons would not want to enter the program: “They thought the boys would far rather be alone.”<sup>223</sup> Nonetheless, Keltner and the other founders believed that it would be “comparatively easy to interest boys from nine to twelve years of age, in most of these purposes. Our concern was with the fathers.” To emphasize the importance of the commitment to the Guides, fathers were asked to sign “on birch bark” committing to try for a full year to attend each meeting unless unavoidably prevented from doing so.<sup>224</sup> Keltner advised future Guides’ leaders that each tribe must be forged by the fathers rather than the sons: “Beginning with the boys was not recommended but attempted by one group which failed in its purpose and never got so far as even a charter. The boys could not interest their fathers, it had to be worked the other way around.”<sup>225</sup> The Guides expected perfect attendance, except in cases of illness or business travel, and recorded attendance rates

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<sup>220</sup> Ibid., 12-13.

<sup>221</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, “The Indian Way of Life,” 16.

<sup>222</sup> “History of Indian Guides,” 7. Keltner continued, “In fact a talk fest between two dads is always considered a great occasion in the tribes, mothers and sisters gather to hear it. It can be and is generally the source of greatest amusement and unrestrained laughter.”

<sup>223</sup> Ibid., 3-4.

<sup>224</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>225</sup> Ibid.

between ninety and one-hundred percent; Chiefs of each of the ten tribes met monthly in addition to the regular tribe meetings.<sup>226</sup>

These fathers drew upon the growing body of material designed to help fathers forge closer bonds with their sons. Keltner wrote that the fathers “have found also that they need some books and source material upon which to draw for programs.” In response, he recommended “such materials as the Woodcraft manual, the Nature Magazine, Indian books for boys, handicraft books, recreational methods, and a local paper edited for the special benefit of the Indian Guide tribes and carrying information as to the source of this kind of material.”<sup>227</sup> He assumed a pre-existing level of friendly companionship between these fathers and sons, even guessing that most would have experience woodcrafting together in a shared woodshop:

Fathers and boys now generally have a work shop in the basement where they make bird houses, airplanes, totem poles, and many other articles depending largely upon the father's ability. Fathers and sons are making accurate reports of things which they do and see during their summer vacations. The first councils of the fall are always interesting from this standpoint and many are the objects such as petrified wood, stalactites, etc., are shown before the group upon their return.<sup>228</sup>

The father-and-son bond was key to the mission of the group. Fathers and sons always attended meetings together—if a father had to miss a meeting, the son was not allowed to go, either. Keltner reasoned that this helped to keep fathers’ attendance regular: “We have found occasionally that fathers going home very tired in the evening would not have attended council had it not been for the inescapable insistence of the younger brave that the older should make his presence felt in the tribe on that occasion.”<sup>229</sup> If a boy had no father, he would be permitted to find an “adopted” father for the purpose of joining the Guides, but in no case was a boy allowed to join with a substitute father simply because his own father was unwilling to join, which the leadership felt would be antagonizing to the father.<sup>230</sup>

The ceremonies and rituals of the organization also sought to reinforce the father-son bond. In the initiation ceremony, for example, as the Aims of the tribe were recited, “the father and son hold hands as they stand before the chief and recite these Aims together. This is symbolic of what is expected of them from then on.”<sup>231</sup> In his description of the story-telling portion of the Guides’ program, Keltner wrote about the “wonder in the eyes of the boys, not only at the stories of the other men, but from experiences of their own dads, many of which had never been related to them before around their own firesides.”<sup>232</sup> Every few months the group would hold “Pow-Wows,”

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<sup>226</sup> Ibid., 9-10.

<sup>227</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>228</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>229</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>230</sup> Ibid.

<sup>231</sup> Ibid.

<sup>232</sup> Ibid., 4.

gatherings for the entire family, including mothers and siblings, at which fathers and son pairs "put on stunts of their own" to amuse the group.<sup>233</sup>

In his description of the Guides' activities, Keltner discussed the "thrill" of fathers camping with their sons. This belief that camping with one's son could reconnect a man to his own past, both personal and cultural, was common in the 1920s. Authors claimed that reconnecting with nature and with boys brought a man back to his own past and to his cultural past—back to a simpler, happier time inhabited by boys and lost to men. A camping trip with one's son, or with a group of boys, was not only of benefit to the boys, it was revitalizing in an essential way to the men. Keltner wrote of the yearly four-day Ozarks camping trip undertaken by the St. Louis Guides,

In all my years of camping in the open there are no occasions which thrill me more than on those nights when fathers and sons together sit around the same fire and discuss the same problems and joys together as primitive man has done from time immemorable. The purity of the boys [sic] dreams inspires the fathers and the wisdom of the older braves tempers the judgment and actions of the younger.<sup>234</sup>

The camping trip was a popular success, and included seventy-five campers at the time Keltner wrote his history of the Guides, which are stamped 1932.

The Indian Guides' program was geared toward middle-class and upper-middle-class fathers and boys between the ages of eight and twelve, before they were old enough to join the Boy Scouts.<sup>235</sup> Most of the early and successful tribes were from the suburbs and early Chiefs included a lawyer, a dentist, a reverend, a university teacher, and a bricklayer and general contractor.<sup>236</sup> In his history of the Guides written for the Y's records, Keltner wrote, "It was not a church affair, rather a community one."<sup>237</sup> However, many of the founding members and leaders were Protestant and the "Long House" governing body decided to perpetuate this.<sup>238</sup> The Guides romanticized working with one's hands and W. H. Hefelfinger, who took over leadership of the first tribe when Keltner was required to work on a larger scale forging the Indian Guides nationally, said in an interview for the Y, "There is beauty in the rough hand of the farmer, mason and mechanic; there is skill in the hand of the musician and painter. What is more disgusting than to shake hands with someone whose hand feels like a soft clean mush?"<sup>239</sup> But the actual reception for real blue-collar workers does not appear to have been as embracing. Keltner explained, "In general, the better educated the father is, the more he can see this program and make use of its advantages. His interest increases in direct ratio to his educational background."<sup>240</sup> The Guides "most enthusiastic supporters" included

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<sup>233</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>234</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>235</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>236</sup> Ibid., 5-6.

<sup>237</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>238</sup> Ibid., 11-12.

<sup>239</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, "The Indian Way of Life."

<sup>240</sup> "History of Indian Guides," 13.

ministers, principals, professors and superintendents. In an internal Y record of the Guides' early years, Keltner described the failure of some early joiners of the Guides who lacked the education or imagination to grasp the significance of the "romantic world in which this age boy lives" and the work being done by the Guides. He wrote,

The church janitor, the uneducated restaurant proprietor, were men without these educational backgrounds and they dropped out of their respective tribes early in the game. The janitor read no books, his friends were confined to his own class, and there were few hidden strings to draw upon, so he could make no contribution to the group.... The restaurant proprietor was fond of cheap movies and sensational books. He was only too glad to turn his boy over to the Scouts at the end of the year so that he could regain these two nights a month and give his brain a rest in the reading which suited him.<sup>241</sup>

Keltner's harsh words suggest that these fathers, though one stayed with the program until his son was twelve, were unable to appreciate the romance of the Guides and the importance of their work. He suggested that chiefs would have to find out what contribution each man could make to the group and help those men who had had "the least opportunities for education" because they would "rely more directly, as boys do, upon the chief as leader." He recommended assigning such men "rather definite responsibilities" since their "intellectual contributions are scanty."<sup>242</sup> As Keltner regarded Joe Friday, his co-founder of the Guides, as child-like, so he found those fathers who were less educated. He concluded that such fathers could not be easily mixed with the more educated fathers:

It has been found unwise to associate fathers of this more educated group with those of the less. It is similar to mixing boys of one age with those of another, and expect [sic] to keep both interested in the same program. Then, too, fathers of one class generally feel embarrassed having those of another in their homes particularly when they can't explain to the good wife just who these men and boys are. There is room at this point however, for the more experienced to point a way out of this difficulty.<sup>243</sup>

One problem with this logic is that Keltner also required that the founding fathers of any tribe be of a certain "quality" and position which suggests that it might have been very hard for any working-class group to meet with approval to get started. Additionally, the Depression may have hindered the growth of the Guides as fathers' financial troubles affected their ability to partake in the group. Keltner's early history of the Guides mentions one early tribe that failed as a "result of a financial failure of the two men who were leading the group and dropped out at the end of the year because of embarrassment

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<sup>241</sup> Ibid.

<sup>242</sup> Ibid.

<sup>243</sup> Ibid., 3.

in their situation."<sup>244</sup> The Guides were designed with middle-class boys in mind. The “revitalization” expected for fathers who camped with their boys and the benefits for sons were directed at middle-class families and professional men.

The “home atmosphere” was essential to the Guides. Rather than having meetings in church or school buildings, like the Scouts, the Guides met in the boys’ homes. Each tribe had nine fathers and nine sons, at the most, and each pair took their turn hosting the event. Special invitations were sent from one father and son to the others for each meeting, which, according to Keltner, made fathers feel more obliged to attend and therefore kept attendance high. These invitations were no simple matter. Some suggestions of previous successful invitations offered by Keltner were: “a squirrel skin with the invitation written on the inside; a thin slice of cross section of a tree limb; or a tough oak leaf” or an elaborate map of “wigwams.” The construction of these invitations was meant to be creative and laborious and involve the entire family:

Considerable art work in picture language inciting the braves to council is done frequently by mothers and sons; in fact sisters and the entire family often contribute their artistic taste on paper. We are always wondering what the next invitation will be like and vie that each other have superior ones. Some groups have modeled clay work and had their father bake them with the invitation scratched thereon, in some of our large pottery works here in St. Louis.<sup>245</sup>

Having meetings in the homes of the boys furthered the Guides’ goal of making fathers more involved with the friends of their sons. He explained that with the start of the Guides’ program, “For the first time the fathers began to see the families and homes of the boys who played with their own youngsters.”<sup>246</sup> Problem boys would be influenced by the home environment and Keltner said he had experienced very little bad behavior in the early years of his tribe.<sup>247</sup> Mothers were given a supportive role, but kept firmly apart. They were invited to help with invitations and to provide food, but at the regular meetings the boy host’s mother was expected to leave the men and boys alone together; according to Keltner, she “often [sat] in an adjoining room looking on with apparent satisfaction.”<sup>248</sup> The entire family was invited to “Pow-wows” every two or three months. In the warmer months, “Pow-wows” included father-and-son “stunts,” camp fires, singing, and games; in the winter, families were invited to lectures by outdoorsmen, or appropriately themed motion pictures.<sup>249</sup>

The emphasis on the importance of the home environment highlights the Guides’ commitment to strengthening family bonds and attaching men and boys more firmly to the home, a theme repeated frequently in the writing of those committed to strengthening father-son bonds in the 1920s. The Indian Guides grew out of the belief that middle-class

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<sup>244</sup> Ibid., 6-7.

<sup>245</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>246</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>247</sup> Ibid.

<sup>248</sup> Ibid., 5,10,13-14.

<sup>249</sup> Ibid., 8-9.



fathers and sons could benefit from spending more time together. Like the BSA, the Guides focused on the outdoors, camping, and ritual, but it was significantly different in that the entire purpose of the Guides was to promote closer father-son bonds rooted in companionship, ritual, and shared leisure.

## Boyology

The Y's Indian Guide program was a Protestant response to the felt need to bring middle-class sons closer to their fathers, to celebrate boyhood and reinvigorate middle-class men by reconnecting them to their youth. These ideas were not limited to Protestants, and the Knights of Columbus launched their own programs designed with similar purpose, but based on Catholic teachings. The Knights of Columbus had a very successful program of boywork and expanded this program in the 1920s in an attempt to bring fathers and sons closer together. Under the leadership of Brother Barnabas McDonald, F.S.C., the Knights launched a course of study in "Boyology" for fathers and boyworkers.<sup>250</sup> "Boyology," a word popular in the 1920s, was used to describe the study of boys—boys' psychology, culture and development. It was an outgrowth of the idea that the needs of middle-class boys were being neglected in an increasingly "feminized" child's world in the early twentieth century.<sup>251</sup> Boys needed more male attention, according to this idea, and boyworkers in the Scouts and other such clubs, were to provide it. This idea was popular in the early years of the twentieth century, with the popularization of G. Stanley Hall's work, but, surprisingly, it was not until the 1920s that it became common to consider father's role in providing this bolstering male influence on

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<sup>250</sup> Brother Barnabas was a member of the New York Province of the order of Christian Brothers, but took an extended leave to work for the Boys' Bureau of the Knights of Columbus. "Brother Barnabas Dies in New Mexico," *New York Times*, April 24 1929.

<sup>251</sup> See, for example: William Byron Forbush, *The Boy Problem; a Study in Social Pedagogy*, 3d ed. (The Pilgrim Press, 1902). The crisis of gender at the turn of the century is described by: Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995). E. Anthony Rotundo, *American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1993). For example, in this discussion of the benefit of Boyology courses, Knights of Columbus worker Brother Barnabas McDonald discussed the increased influence of women in the lives of boys, the lack of time spent by fathers with sons, and the need for more male role models. Brother Barnabas wrote, the job of educating our boyhood has been turned over largely to women, but "the boy craves and needs the companionship and friendship of an adult of his own sex." Brother Barnabas reiterated the common concern that urbanization had divided families, explaining that always in the past, fathers and their sons had worked and relaxed together, but that with urbanization, fathers and sons spent more and more time apart. Brother Barnabas ; "Brother Barnabas" [McDonald], "A Man Companion for Every Boy," in *Columbia* (Columbian Squires Record Group. Knights of Columbus Archive.: 1924). In another example, a newspaper article reported that Bishop John H Cantwell, speaking at the graduation of the Knights of Columbus's "Boyology" course, said that "upon reaching a certain stage in his development the boy should come under the sterner influence of his father. The bishop deplored the fact that in America the education and upbringing of the boy are left so nearly exclusively in the hands of women""Men Graduate in 'Boyology'," *Los Angeles Times*, November 24 1927.

the boy. There were radio programs on “Boyology” and colleges even offered “boyology” classes to help train boyworkers in the 1920s.<sup>252</sup>

A Knights of Columbus pamphlet advertising the boyology course directly appealed to fathers, asking them questions such as “*What Does Your Boy Do?*”; “*Will You Assure Your Boy of Proper Leisure-time Guidance?*”; and “*Do You Really Know Your Boy?*” The pamphlet challenged fathers to attend, asking: “Is it worth your while to spend a few evenings to guarantee him the best of your ability as a ‘Dad’...?” and again, at the close of the pamphlet, asking: “Will you accept the challenge?”<sup>253</sup> The pamphlet suggested that fathers who attended the Boyology classes would learn about the programs that would best fill their boys’ leisure time with appropriately supervised activities, programs from organizations such as the boys’ clubs, Scouts, Big Brothers, National Recreation, and the American Red Cross.<sup>254</sup> Brother Barnabas, in advertising his upcoming Boyology course, told the *Los Angeles Times*, “Motion pictures, automobiles and golf leave boys no time to pal with their dads... Fraternizing of the father with the boy has gone out of fashion.”<sup>255</sup> In its description of the purpose of the course, the Boys’ Bureau of the Knights of Columbus promised that it would help men “Be better fathers because of their increased knowledge of the nature of their boys and the ways of properly molding young character.”<sup>256</sup>

The executive Secretary of the Big Brother Federation at a meeting of the International Boys’ Work Council of the National Conference of Social Work recommended that “men who are successful fathers” ought to take this course in boyology; he predicted that these educated fathers could have a huge positive impact on their communities overall by using what they learned from it. He presented fathering as a subject to be studied in the manner of a passionate hobby, saying with light-hearted urging: “And let them study [boyology] seriously as they would their golf form or their bridge.”<sup>257</sup> Rather than focusing on giving to the community, or volunteering with the poor, this movement sought to make better middle-class fathers for middle-class boys and believed that this, in and of itself, would be of service to the entire nation.

The boyology classes also accompanied a movement to establish Knights of Columbus Squires groups for boys. The Boyology classes were meant both to educate fathers and to encourage men to volunteer their time in the service of other boys. Brother Barnabas focused on the course’s success in gaining new volunteers for Boy Work when he defended the program to his skeptical religious superiors, but he also gave concrete

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<sup>252</sup> “Today’s Radio Program,” *New York Times*, September 4 1924. “Boy Scouts,” *The New York Times*, February 3 1924. “Boy Scouts.” “Calls Boyology Science Opening Modern Epoch,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, January 21 1926.

<sup>253</sup> “Community Boyology Institutes for Business and Professional Men and All Fathers. Knights of Columbus Supreme Council Archives Sc-15-1-260-091,” ed. The Knights of Columbus Supreme Council Boy Life Bureau (Undated).

<sup>254</sup> Ibid.

<sup>255</sup> “Catholics Discuss Boys,” *Los Angeles Times*, September 7 1927.

<sup>256</sup> “Knights of Columbus Supreme Council Boy Life Bureau Thirty-Hour Course in Boyology for Business and Professional Men,” in *File Reference Knights of Columbus Supreme Council Archives SC-15-0260-013*, ed. Knights of Columbus (New Haven, CT: 1927). Also, “Brief Courses in Boyology,” *Columbia* (1927)., “School for Fathers, Now.”

<sup>257</sup> “‘Boyology’ Class Recommended to Business Men,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, May 5 1928.

parenting suggestions to fathers in his speeches.<sup>258</sup> Training boyworkers and training “Dads” were the twin purposes of the Knights of Columbus boyology classes. In a 1926 speech to a “group of workers” in Fort Worth, Texas, near the end of his working life, Brother Barnabas was reported by the *Forth Worth Press* as saying,

“Suppose, dads, you have a shaggy lawn you want Jack to cut before you return from work,” he continued, “Don't say, 'I want you to have that lawn cut before I come home. And it had better be cut. Do you hear?' That way is all wrong. Dad should put it something like this: 'Jack, you get that lawn cut today, and we'll do a little fishing when I come home.' I guarantee the results.”<sup>259</sup>

Barnabas promoted this ideal of friendly, involved fathering; he wanted to convince fathers to extend their reach, to be better dads and to volunteer some of their time to spend with boys who were not as lucky. One pamphlet explained to fathers: “Your boy may be influenced by the boy without a good 'Dad.' Your neighbor's boy can also be helped by your influences.”<sup>260</sup> The same pamphlet further explained the aim of the boyology classes: “It aims to further Boys' Work for all Boys, as well as to make better understanding 'Dads.’”<sup>261</sup>

The Knights of Columbus’s advertisements further promised that the approach would be worth fathers’ time: “The method is very practical, embracing lectures by authorities, interspersed with demonstration and morale periods wherein good fellowship and wholesome fun prevail.”<sup>262</sup> In internal documents, the Knights of Columbus explained the reasoning behind asking fathers to act like boys themselves:

The method is to teach men about boys by making them boys again so they will acquire the prime viewpoint. This viewpoint is secured through actually doing the things boys like to do, i.e. form organized groups, play competitive games, present stunts, sing spirited songs, and in general play the part of boys.<sup>263</sup>

At the final banquet attended by women, but not children, the men put on songs and stunts.<sup>264</sup> Acting like a boy not only allowed men to better understand their sons, it helped the men themselves be better men, according to the philosophy of the Boys’ Bureau of the Knights of Columbus. The Bureau explained that the purpose of this course was, in part, to help men “Grow younger and healthier in body, mind and spirit

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<sup>258</sup> For examples of Brother Barnabas’s struggles to convince his religious superiors of the value of his work, see W. J. Battersby, *Brother Barnabas: Pioneer in Modern Social Service* (Winona, Minnesota: St. Mary's College Press, 1970), 90-94, 172-74.

<sup>259</sup> “Plea is Given for Boys.” *The Fort Worth Press*, Feb, 1926. Quoted in *Ibid.*, 147.

<sup>260</sup> “Community Boyology Institutes for Business and Professional Men and All Fathers. Knights of Columbus Supreme Council Archives Sc-15-1-260-091.”

<sup>261</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>262</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>263</sup> “Brief Courses in Boyology.”

<sup>264</sup> “Knights of Columbus Supreme Council Boy Life Bureau Thirty-Hour Course in Boyology for Business and Professional Men,” 6.

because of the attainment of the boyish viewpoint and the mastering of the secret of perpetual youth, the palship of man with boy."<sup>265</sup> Contact with boys, according to this viewpoint, helped men stay young and, in the 1920s, staying young was highly valued.

The method of the course—the return to boyhood for the men—was emphasized by the *Los Angeles Times* in a 1927 article entitled “Grown-Ups Will Return to Boyhood.” Under the subtitle “*Gangs of Men to Cavort Youthfully in Class for Study of Youngsters*,” this article explained that “Fifty ‘gangs’ of men of every age, each with a ‘gang leader,’ will be seen in childish romps and boyish competitions during the ten consecutive nights of a course in ‘boyology’ . . .”<sup>266</sup> The closing banquet included a long list of speakers from educational, boyworker, and religious backgrounds, and a class representative, but it also had a playful element. The graduates, in “colored paper caps . . . periodically gave vent to ‘gang’ yells, catcalls, Indian war cries and whistles.”<sup>267</sup> Rather than regarding such childish behavior as beneath their dignity, these men regarded such boyishness as essential to learning how to relate to and lead boys. In his June 1926 report for the Knights of Columbus, Brother Barnabas described this method and its benefits:

Our method has been to give the boyologist students a keen insight into the nature and the needs of the Boy by helping these men return in spirit and action to their boyhood days. Our boyology students congregate for ten evenings in the Knights of Columbus Building to sing songs, to play games, and relive again the gang life of their happy boyhood. Thus the men are give the best time they have enjoyed since their childhood. They call each other by their first names. They compete in group and individual contests. They give their yells. They work up their stunts. In fact, by becoming boys again, our business and professional men gain anew an understanding of their own and other boys that would be impossible by other means.<sup>268</sup>

This report makes explicit the idea behind the boyology course—that men could better understand their sons and other boys by re-living, in some small way, their own boyhood. Additionally, Brother Barnabas suggested that his students’ best days were behind them, that boyhood was the happiest time in a male’s life. This notion, this admiration of youth, was a significant departure from earlier American ideas about childhood and adulthood.

In the 1920s, fathers were increasingly told to expect tremendous fulfillment from parenting their sons. In addition to the new emphasis on revitalization and a regaining of youthful ideals and enthusiasms, fathers were encouraged to see their connection with their sons as bringing great happiness. Advertisements and articles discussed the manner in which spending time with one’s sons could lift a father’s spirits and renew his energy.

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<sup>265</sup> Ibid., 7. Also, “Brief Courses in Boyology.”

<sup>266</sup> “Grown-Ups Will Return to Boyhood,” *Los Angeles Times*, November 13 1927.

<sup>267</sup> “Preparing for Get-Together ‘Feed,’” *Los Angeles Times*, November 22 1927. “Men Graduate in ‘Boyology’.”

<sup>268</sup> Quoted in Battersby, *Brother Barnabas: Pioneer in Modern Social Service*, 149.

The Boyology classes drew from these ideas as well. By connecting to their sons' youthful vitality, these fathers were promised "the secret of perpetual youth" and also told that they could "Attain the maximum of earthly happiness because of the realization of duty well done and the securing of the undiluted friendship and gratitude of the boy, that most genuine of God's creatures."<sup>269</sup> Boys were presumed to be pure and good, and their energy and high jinx were something to be celebrated and channeled rather than overcome. Whereas, in earlier literature, fathers were told of the necessity of taming the boy, articles and "boyology" classes in the 1920s encouraged fathers to draw energy from that exuberance and identified it as pure, genuine, and even Godly.

The Knights of Columbus's boyology course was thirty hours long, stretching over nine or ten consecutive evenings or an entire weekend, open to men of all faiths, and generally offered free of charge. The classes offered in cities in the United States and Canada typically received a fair amount of attention in the local press.<sup>270</sup> The Knights of Columbus's advisory information about the Boyology course recommended that classes be kept to no more than two hundred men, but reports of individual courses suggest that enrollment often ran higher than that.<sup>271</sup> In New York City, the course was promoted with several articles in the *New York Times* and nearly three hundred men of many faiths attended with almost two hundred "students" receiving diplomas at the end of it.<sup>272</sup> St. Paul, Minnesota had over 260 "business and professional men" in its 1926 course.<sup>273</sup> In order to be graduated, boyology students needed to attend seven of the ten sessions, but the majority of graduates attended all classes. The following cities, with the number of graduates listed parenthetically, hosted boyology classes in 1926: Grand Rapids (143), Calgary, Alberta (57), Pembroke, Ontario (57), Pittsburgh (197), South Bend (119), Green Bay (75), Waukegan (43), Buffalo (247), Springfield (110), and Savannah (86).<sup>274</sup> There were also boyology courses in Baltimore, Philadelphia, Washington and New Jersey.<sup>275</sup> In a letter to a religious superior in December 1926, Brother Barnabas noted that more than six thousand "business and professional men in the United States and Canada" had taken the course.<sup>276</sup> Between 1925 and 1935, 75,000 men attended boyology institutes in 187 cities in the U.S. and Canada. The courses were run by volunteer faculty.<sup>277</sup> One instructor, a former student of Brother Barnabas's from Notre

<sup>269</sup> "Brief Courses in Boyology." Also, "School for Fathers, Now."

<sup>270</sup> Battersby wrote, "Not only did large numbers flock to take part in the Boyology courses, but the Press gave ample coverage wherever such a course was given." In 1924 and 1925, for example, there were articles in *The Catholic News* of New York, *The South Bend News-Times*, *The Dubuque American Tribune*, *The Duluth Herald*, and *The Fort Worth Press*. Battersby, *Brother Barnabas: Pioneer in Modern Social Service*, 146-47.

<sup>271</sup> "Brief Courses in Boyology." Christopher J. Kauffman, *Faith and Fraternalism: The History of the Knights of Columbus, 1882-1982* (New York: Harper and Row, 1982), 257.

<sup>272</sup> "Knights of Columbus News and Notes," *Columbia* (1927). Also, "City Brevities," *New York Times*, October 5 1927. "Lectures on 'Boyology,'" *New York Times*, September 12 1927.

<sup>273</sup> "Boy Work in St. Paul," *Columbia* (1926).

<sup>274</sup> Brother Barnabus, Report to the Knights of Columbus, June, 1926. Quoted in Battersby, *Brother Barnabas: Pioneer in Modern Social Service*. The Pittsburgh class had 259 men registered. (Letter dated Pittsburgh, Dec. 10, 1825. Lincoln Hall Archives) in ———, *Brother Barnabas: Pioneer in Modern Social Service*, 146.

<sup>275</sup> "Boy Work in St. Paul."

<sup>276</sup> Letter dated Benildus Hall, Toronto. Dec. 28, 1926. Lincoln Hall Archives. Quoted in Battersby, *Brother Barnabas: Pioneer in Modern Social Service*, 154.

<sup>277</sup> Kauffman, *Faith and Fraternalism: The History of the Knights of Columbus, 1882-1982*, 257.

Dame's Boy Guidance course, Joseph D. Becker, national field secretary of the Knights of Columbus, gave the course in ten large eastern cities and Los Angeles before the close of 1927.<sup>278</sup> Between the spring of 1927 and the spring of 1928, five California cities (including Los Angeles) hosted Knights of Columbus 'boyology' classes, and in May 1928, the Knights passed a resolution endorsing the course.<sup>279</sup> Contemporary reports noted that the courses attracted not only Catholics, but also Protestant and Jewish men.<sup>280</sup> The courses were intended for "business and professional" men, but, interestingly, Brother Barnabas was proud of the cosmopolitan nature of the classes and remarked favorably on the inclusion of five African-American men in a course in Savannah, Georgia.<sup>281</sup>

Los Angeles hosted a very successful course held on ten consecutive evenings in November, 1927; the boyology course was the subject of no fewer than seven *Los Angeles Times* articles.<sup>282</sup> At the close of the course, Becker claimed, "Attendance at the boyology course, which has had the backing of leaders in the city's civic life irrespective of religious affiliation, has been the greatest of any city in which it has been held."<sup>283</sup> A week before the course began there were already four hundred men enrolled and approximately the same number attended the first session.<sup>284</sup> Another article claimed the course had over six hundred students.<sup>285</sup> Several hundred completed the required classes to receive diplomas, and over eight hundred men and women attended the celebratory closing banquet.<sup>286</sup> Upon his arrival to teach the boyology class, Becker received messages of support from a long list of Los Angeles notables, including the mayor, religious leaders, judges, the superintendent and other school-workers, and numerous boy-workers.<sup>287</sup> Joseph D. Becker, who led the course, was assisted by local educators and the heads of boys' organizations, such as the head of the Woodcrafters' League of America, E. B. De Groot, executive head of the Boy Scouts of America, Los Angeles's Superintendent of Municipal Playgrounds, the heads of the Catholic Big Brothers, the Jewish Big Brothers, and the American National Red Cross.<sup>288</sup> A newspaper article reported that "Notables representing practically every civic organization in the city are expected to attend" the final banquet.<sup>289</sup>

<sup>278</sup> "Grown-Ups Will Return to Boyhood."

<sup>279</sup> "K. C. Home for Aged Planned."

<sup>280</sup> For example, "School for Fathers, Now."

<sup>281</sup> "It has often been said that the colored man is given no chance in the South. The fact that five colored men were permitted by the students of the Boyology course to participate in our program in Savannah seems to belie this statement." Brother Barnabas, Report to the Knights of Columbus, June 1926. Quoted in (152) Battersby, *Brother Barnabas: Pioneer in Modern Social Service*.

<sup>282</sup> "School for Fathers, Now." "Leader of Boys' Work Welcomed," *Los Angeles Times*, November 9 1927. "Grown-Ups Will Return to Boyhood.", "Men Get Course in Boyology," *Los Angeles Times*, November 14 1927, "Preparing for Get-Together 'Feed'." "Men Graduate in 'Boyology'." "Boyology Class Banquet Tonight," *Los Angeles Times*, November 23 1927. A September lecture by Brother Barnabas on boyology at a meeting of Catholic charities inspired Los Angelenos to hold the boyology course a couple of months later. "Bishop to Head Church Charity," *Los Angeles Times*, September 9 1927, "Catholics Discuss Boys."

<sup>283</sup> "Preparing for Get-Together 'Feed'."

<sup>284</sup> "School for Fathers, Now." "Grown-Ups Will Return to Boyhood."

<sup>285</sup> "Preparing for Get-Together 'Feed'."

<sup>286</sup> "Men Graduate in 'Boyology'."

<sup>287</sup> "Leader of Boys' Work Welcomed."

<sup>288</sup> "Grown-Ups Will Return to Boyhood."

<sup>289</sup> "Boyology Class Banquet Tonight."

The publicity for the Los Angeles course particularly emphasized the participation of fathers. One article entitled "School for Fathers, Now" explained, "The educational training is not only for the purpose of providing new leaders for boy character-building agencies but to aid fathers in holding closer fellowship with their sons."<sup>290</sup> Another article printed a few days later again emphasized that the course was "not only to provide new adult leaders for boy organizations, but equally to bring fathers in better contact with their sons."<sup>291</sup> A third article likewise explained that the course was "for the father who wants to be in closer intimacy with his son and other boys in the same block."<sup>292</sup> An article celebrating the success of the course remarked that, "Its purpose has been to make fathers, and future fathers, understand the ideals of boyhood, by 'becoming boys again' and later helping to direct the 'gang spirit' into healthful, upright American channels."<sup>293</sup>

The Knights of Columbus boyology courses drew on modern ideals of the 1920s, emphasizing the importance of the father-son bond and proposing an ideal of friendly fatherhood which celebrated Dads' pulling from their experience as boys, even reliving these experiences, to see their sons' perspectives with empathy and understanding. Boyology supposed that boyhood was an ideal time of excellent values and purity and that men and boys both would benefit from dads' reinhabiting their own youthful mindsets to reconnect with this earlier, purer version of themselves and bonding with their sons in a playful, jubilant fashion.

## Advice Books for Fathers

Fathers in the 1920s met separately from their wives to discuss parenting in groups that focused on fathers' relationships to sons, on their shared masculinity, and on the value of youthfulness. Men offered courses to fathers on how to better parent their sons and formed clubs for fathers and sons to play and learn together in the 1920s. It is not surprising, then, that there was also an increase in books for fathers by fathers in the first decades of the twentieth century. In the words of sociologist Ralph LaRossa, "Historians of fatherhood do not generally acknowledge that the early twentieth century witnessed an upsurge in what may be termed *father-to-father* books."<sup>294</sup> 1919 saw the hugely successful release of Theodore Roosevelt's *Letters to His Children*, which solidified the ex-President's reputation as an involved, active, playful father.<sup>295</sup> The

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<sup>290</sup> "School for Fathers, Now."

<sup>291</sup> "Leader of Boys' Work Welcomed."

<sup>292</sup> "Grown-Ups Will Return to Boyhood."

<sup>293</sup> "Preparing for Get-Together 'Feed'."

<sup>294</sup> LaRossa, *The Modernization of Fatherhood*, 93.

<sup>295</sup> Theodore Roosevelt, with biographical essay and notes by Joan Paterson Kerr, *A Bully Father: Theodore Roosevelt's Letters to His Children* (New York: Random House, 1995). Theodore Roosevelt, "Letters to His Children." ed Joseph Bucklin Bishop. (Place Published: The Project Gutenberg EBook, release date April 22, 2006. His 1913 autobiography, reprinted many times, also emphasized the fun he had as an involved father and the role his own father had in turning him from a sickly boy into a vigorous man. ———, *Theodore Roosevelt, an Autobiography* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1921). Also, ———, *All in the Family* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1929). As one reviewer put it, "His letters show the late President as he was, simple, kindly, boyish-spirited, adoring parent, chum and confidant of his children. They let the reader 'in' upon his romps and antics with the youngsters; give a queer and intimate close-up of joyous pillow fights, of obstacle races in the corridor of the White House; the hay romps in the old barn at Sagamore Hill; the after dinner children's hour at the White House, when he used to tell the little

Father and Son Library, first published in 1921, was edited by Frank H. Cheley, who was a prolific author of books and articles of advice for fathers. In the introduction to the first volume of the series, *Fathering the Boy* (1921), Cheley explained the intent behind and origins of the Father and Son Library: "The FATHER AND SON LIBRARY has been carefully built by an extensive editorial board of specialists in boy training and development... and has as its single purpose *the practical aiding of the father in the home in providing for his boy a sound normal growth and education.*"<sup>296</sup> Cheley intended the first volume to be a "hand-book for fathers," writing, "we cannot too strongly urge that every father give this volume a careful and thorough reading once every year, in order that he may keep constantly before him the fundamental facts of boy life."<sup>297</sup> The Father and Son Library, published by the University Society, was made up of twenty volumes, each designed to promote a close relationship between fathers and sons. The books covered topics such as sports, mechanics, tools and handicrafts, reading, camping, hobbies, pets, gardening, citizenship, business education, and thrift. In addition to acting as editor-in-chief for the series, Cheley wrote the first book of the series, *Fathering the Boy*, and the tenth volume, which was on camping, and edited the last volume, entitled *The Building of Boyhood*. Cheley's first book of fathering advice, *Adventures of a Prodigal Father* (1916), predated the Library by five years, and in addition to *Fathering the Boy* (1921), Cheley also wrote *The Job of Being a Dad* (1923), and *Dad, Whose Boy is Yours: Forty-Eight Little Talks with Fathers Who Want To Be Real Dads to their Real Boys* (1926).<sup>298</sup> He also published advice articles from his books in the *Boston Daily Globe*. Between November 1923 and January 1924, Cheley published thirty-nine short articles on "The Job of Being a Dad."<sup>299</sup> In November 1925, he published a shorter series of advice articles in the paper under the title "Some Dads I Have Met."<sup>300</sup>

The Father and Son Library attracted the attention of those interested in building closer bonds between fathers and sons. In 1928, the syndicated advice columnist Arthur Dean suggested that fathers read Cheley's pocket-sized edition of *Dad, Whose Boy Is Yours?* which could be read by businessmen in ten-minute increments while waiting for a train.<sup>301</sup> The Father and Son Library was advertised in the YMCA's *Association Men*.

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ones hunting stories, or read to them; they show the true family side of this strenuous man's nature.... When they were all young his letters are like those of a young play-mate, gradually growing more mature and containing more and more sage advice as the ages of the children advance." "Roosevelt as an Artist," *Boston Daily Globe*, October 26 1919. Also praised in Philip E. Howard, *Father and Son: An Intimate Study* (Philadelphia: The Sunday School Times Company, 1922).

<sup>296</sup> Frank H. Cheley, ed., *Fathering the Boy, a Handbook for the Fathers and Leaders of Boys*, vol. 1, Father and Son Library: A Practical Home Plan of All Round Development for the Boy (New York: The University Society Incorporated, 1921), xiii. This is not to be confused with another "Father and Son Library" published in the 1920s by J.H. Sears & Co. That library consisted of reprinted adventure classics and short adventure stories designed to be read by fathers and sons. "Display Ad 58-- No Title," *New York Times*, September 25 1927, "Horror Tales in the Nth Degree," *New York Times*, November 25 1928.

<sup>297</sup> Cheley, ed., *Fathering the Boy, a Handbook for the Fathers and Leaders of Boys*, xiii-xiv.

<sup>298</sup> Frank H. Cheley, *The Adventure of a Prodigal Father* (New York: Association Press, 1916). Cheley, ed., *Fathering the Boy, a Handbook for the Fathers and Leaders of Boys*. Frank Hobart Cheley, *The Job of Being a Dad* (Boston, Chicago: W. A. Wilde Company, 1923). Frank H. Cheley, *Dad, Whose Boy Is Yours: Forty-Eight Little Talks with Fathers Who Want to Be Real Dads to Their Real Boys* (Boston: W. A. Wilde Company, 1926).

<sup>299</sup> Frank H. Cheley, *The Boston Daily Globe* 1923-1924.

<sup>300</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, *Boston Daily Globe* 1925.

<sup>301</sup> Arthur Dean, "Your Boy and Your Girl: A Word to Fathers," *The Atlanta Constitution*, April 27 1928.



One ad told of a father's "merry laugh" in response to seeing his son's dripping form after the boy returned home after falling in a creek. The advertisement explained, "Every father *ought* to understand his boy. Many try to *only when it is too late!*"<sup>302</sup> Another large ad prominently positioned ran in the special Father-and-Son-Week issue in November 1921. The advertisement was written from the perspective of the son and described a father who was patient, interested, and attentive. When the father returns from work, worn out from a day of business concerns, he resists the urge to decline when his son asks him to come meet a new pet rabbit after dinner. The "son" explains, "my Dad is a regular fellow. He wouldn't say, 'Don't bother me, Son. I'm too busy.' No, sir. He once told me how his Dad had treated him that way" and he "determined we'd never be like that." The advertisement suggested that modern fathers should make a choice to parent differently from their own fathers, to be more involved, sympathetic, and friendly. This happy boy explains, "my Dad is my best chum; we work and play and study together just like any two fellows."<sup>303</sup> But this idealized father is not merely a chum-- the imagined appreciative son notes that his father's greater experience helps secure the comfort of the rabbits, as father and son work together to keep the animals.

After their time together, the son and father return to their work—the son to his studies and the father to his business—and the son explained, "but neither of us cared, for we were happy." The father has been energized by spending time with his son, and the son is willing to perform his duties once he has had time to share his hobby with his dad. The happy father-son relationship painted here is, we are told, the product of the father's conscious efforts to parent differently from his own father, efforts realized with the help of the Father and Son Library. The boy narrator tells his reader: "Gee, but it's good to have a Dad that's a regular fellow. Ask your Dad about getting a set of the Father and Son Library. That's how my Dad and I got together."<sup>304</sup> This same advertisement also ran in *Boys Life*, the magazine of the Boy Scouts of America.<sup>305</sup>

The advertisements assured fathers that the library was "created to meet a need—the need for better understanding, closer fellowships between fathers and sons." The ads promised the library was full of practical and expert knowledge: "It gives authoritative information on boy life and interests; it encourages father and sons to *work, play, study, dream* and *plan together*."<sup>306</sup> These ads show the combination of respect for expertise and authority, the belief in learning from "professional" boyworkers, and, at the same time, skepticism with intellectualism. The ads promised useful, practical suggestions rather than theoretical ones. On the one hand, the ad boasted of 1,500 articles written by "eminent authorities"; on the other hand, it promised that the library's information came from those with practical experience, rather than "*side--line theorists*."<sup>307</sup>

The Father and Son Library also distributed a booklet free of charge entitled "Some Reasons Why Some Men Are Successful Fathers" and a monthly bulletin called

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<sup>302</sup> "Advertisement: Better Boys-- Better Men," *Association Men* 47 (1921).

<sup>303</sup> The Father and Son League, "Advertisement: My Dad Is a Regular Fellow," *Association Men* 47, no. 3 (1921).

<sup>304</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>305</sup> "Advertisement: My Dad Is a Regular Fellow," *Boys' Life: The Boy Scouts' Magazine* 11, no. 11 (1921). A separate advertisement for the Father and Son Library ran in *The Playground*: "Book Reviews," *The Playground* 16 (1923).

<sup>306</sup> League, "Advertisement: My Dad Is a Regular Fellow."

<sup>307</sup> *Ibid.*

“Better Boys—Better Men” put out for members of the Father and Son League, located in Denver.<sup>308</sup> The bulletin, according to advertisements, was “a snappy, happy bulletin of helpful suggestions and information.”<sup>309</sup> The issues from January and February 1923 included subjects such as “To the Father of a Boy”; “The Prodigal Father”; “What’s the Matter with Father?”; “Dad”; “Is Your Boy a Thoroughbred?”; “Is the Modern Parent a Failure?” and a handbook on “The Father and Son Idea.”<sup>310</sup> The Bulletin does not seem to have survived long, but it was registered for a copyright in both 1922 and 1923 and was still carried as a monthly serial by Buffalo’s public library in 1925.<sup>311</sup>

In the 1920s, parenting advice books and articles on the daily care of young children increasingly used the term “parent,” rather than “mother,” and were more likely to include examples with fathers, but these father-to-father books filled a different niche. These books supposed that *fathering* was essentially different from *mothering*. Most of the books focused on father’s role as role model, focusing on sons. When older daughters were discussed, it was most commonly still father’s position as role model that was considered, with the father’s role (or lack of power) in influencing his daughter’s choice of suitors the focus. Books about fathering infants were less focused on sons, but instead emphasized the special, masculine, fun-loving approach of fathers, as compared to a mother’s more cautious, serious, gentle manner.

Authors writing for fathers outside of the Father Son Library shared its sense that parenting books written with mothers in mind would not suffice to educate and prepare fathers; these authors believed more books for fathers, by fathers, were necessary. In 1927, in an article in *The Ladies Home Journal*, Franklin P. Adams explained that during his wife’s pregnancy, she read a book called *Getting Ready to Be a Mother*, and she “frequently read parts of it aloud to [him].” Unfortunately, he did not find this to be adequate preparation for the birth of his son:

when this child upset all my habits and knocked all my plans into a cocked perambulator, I was more astonished than if I had been prepared for such a domestic earthquake. I blame, and blame unreservedly, the publishers. Why have they commissioned nobody to write, to fill and eternally felt want, a book called *Getting Ready to be a Father?* Such a book would have helped us all, from -- in the order named-- me to Cain's father.<sup>312</sup>

Fairfax Downey, in *Father’s First Two Years* (1925) likewise lamented the lack of training available for new fathers, but also lamented the lack of attention given the father, not in comparison to the mother, but rather *in comparison to the baby*:

But New Fathers? For centuries, they have gone uncoached, unhonored and unnoticed. They have carried on in that

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<sup>308</sup> “Better Boys-- Better Men. Copyrighted University Society, Inc, Ny [9345-9350] 1922.,” *Catalog of copyright entries, part 2* 17-18 (1923): 279.

<sup>309</sup> “Advertisement: Better Boys-- Better Men.”

<sup>310</sup> “Received by Editor,” *Moderator-Topics* 43, no. 32 (1923).

<sup>311</sup> The University Society of New York held the copyright for *Better Boys—Better Men* in 1922 and 1923. I have not been able to locate any copies of this bulletin.

<sup>312</sup> Franklin P. Adams, “There’s No Place at Home,” *The Ladies’ Home Journal*, October 1927, 36.

inconspicuous-- but indispensable, mind you-- part they played first as the bridegroom at the wedding. No one has seemed to care how *they* got on, what *they* weighed. The early periods of their fatherhood have been characterized by lamentable indifference as to what they ate or how. Their only training, how to avoid being in the way; their happiest lot, self-effacement. To be brutally frank, nobody gives a darn whether their hair curls or not-- or even whether it stays in.<sup>313</sup>

This was a common theme in men's writings about becoming a new father, as was discussed at greater length in a previous chapter.

Kenneth M. Walker, who co-authored *On Being a Father* (1929) with his wife Eileen M. Walker, realized after the birth of his son that a book for fathers was needed. Although his wife had read to him from her book of advice for those about to become mothers, he felt he was completely unprepared for the extent to which a baby would affect his life and daily routines.<sup>314</sup> Other men agreed with him, and he came to believe that "A book for fathers, that was what was wanted--something that would tell a man what to expect and how when the chance came along, he could help. No 'Radiant Fatherhood' or anything sentimental, but just a plain and matter-of-fact guide to the difficult job of being a father."<sup>315</sup> Walker's book is humorous in tone, but also sincere in its desire to discuss fatherhood and help men prepare for becoming a father. In his introduction to Walker's book, Cecil Delisle Burns wrote, "However, hampered as we are, we have produced some excellent fathers and may yet do better, with the assistance of books like this. What does it matter whether you agree with the authors? The main point is that attention is called to a vast field of investigation that has been neglected. There are no 'authorities' on being a father."<sup>316</sup>

The advice of child-rearing "experts" was not enough, according to these authors. Fathers needed their own literature. Walker lampooned psychologists' childrearing advice, which grew greatly in popularity and importance in the 1920s, but often seemed to contradict itself:

Father should read all the books on child psychology. For then he will learn that too much affection will spoil a child and make him too dependent; he will grow up without will power. Too little affection will cause the child to feel so inferior that he will do anything to gain approbation and affection; he will feel himself disliked; he will become rebellious and antisocial. Don't let him suck his thumb, they tell Father; let him utterly alone, they tell Father.<sup>317</sup>

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<sup>313</sup> Fairfax Davis Downey, *Father's First Two Years* (New York: Minton, Balch & Co., 1925), 11.

<sup>314</sup> K.M and E.M. Walker, *On Being a Father*, First ed. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1929), 36.

<sup>315</sup> *Ibid.*, 11-12.

<sup>316</sup> Cecil Delisle Burns in *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>317</sup> Adams, "There's No Place at Home," 187.

Philip E. Howard, in his sex education book *Father and Son: An Intimate Study*, invited his readers in for a confidential discussion. Pondering questions about a father's purpose and role in the modern family, he asked, "SHALL we talk together very plainly about it?" and "What is it to be a father, anyway?"<sup>318</sup> Howard noted that fathers spent years studying their professions, and wondered how many had studied "the best that can be found on how to be a real father?"<sup>319</sup> He looked at his book as a part of a movement to educate fathers but confessed that he saw himself more as student than teacher: "What may seem to be an attempt at brotherly counsel in some of these chapters is really confession, but a father who keenly realizes that he is still an undergraduate student in the school for fathers."<sup>320</sup>

In *Fathers and Sons* (1927), Samuel Drury, an educator and Protestant Episcopal priest, lamented the lack of "books to recommend on the relationship of fathers and sons," a lack he called "significant" and "disappointing."<sup>321</sup> He recommended a list of books that included Cheley's *Job of Being a Dad* and Roosevelt's *Letters to His Children* and addressed his own book to "the man who wants to be a better father."<sup>322</sup> Drury assumed that fatherhood was central in men's emotional lives and that fathering was a serious and difficult pursuit. He said about his book: "It is built around the conviction that on the day the boy is born the father's travail begins and that from that day he has an inescapable job, compounded of pain and joy. For of course we get our principal pleasure and sorrow from our children; the thrills and knock-outs of life alike center at the family hearth."<sup>323</sup> He assured readers that men yearned to be good fathers: "Fathers hope, however dumbly or awkwardly, to be better fathers, and to count in a boy's expanding life. And it is precisely to fortify this hope, this deep desire to be an ideal father, that these chapters are prepared."<sup>324</sup>

Edgar Albert Guest, a well-known newspaper columnist and writer of home-spun verse, wrote in his advice book for fathers that he had always taken fatherhood seriously, but once his son turned ten, he realized that it was time to take over from the boy's mother in raising the son. This started Guest wondering how to find success as a father.<sup>325</sup> Guest's book pondered the difficulty of balancing work and public commitments with the necessity of spending time with his son. Over and over Guest insisted that time with the boy should be prioritized over earning money or spending time in other leisure pursuits, and his introduction ended with a note that the author was being hailed by his son to play marbles and so he must stop writing.<sup>326</sup>

Thomas Walton Galloway, Associate Director of Educational Activities of the American Social Hygiene Association, in 1921 assumed that fathers would be intimately familiar with the recommendation to pal with the boy, with the benefits of friendly comradeship between fathers and sons, writing:

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<sup>318</sup> Howard, *Father and Son: An Intimate Study*, 7.

<sup>319</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>320</sup> *Ibid.*, Dedication.

<sup>321</sup> Samuel S. Drury, *Fathers and Sons* (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1927), viii.

<sup>322</sup> *Ibid.*, ix.

<sup>323</sup> *Ibid.*, vii.

<sup>324</sup> *Ibid.* ix-x

<sup>325</sup> Edgar A. Guest, *My Job as a Father and What My Father Did for Me* (Chicago: The Reilly & Lee Co., 1923), 7-8.

<sup>326</sup> Guest, *My Job as a Father and What My Father Did for Me*, 34-35.

You don't need that I should say over to you what you've heard a thousand times: 'Be chummy with your boy'; 'Hike and camp and read together'; 'Deserve and keep his confidence'; 'Keep young with him'; 'Get his point of view.' Nor yet do I need to say that boys admire men, want to be men; that men influence them greatly; and that you, if you've been a sane father at all, have a big place in his unconscious, if not in his conscious, ideals. All these things are true enough, and much might be said about them; but you have heard them often.<sup>327</sup>

Such advice as to “keep young” with your son, or to “be chummy” with him would have seemed odd in 1900, but by 1921, it was ubiquitous.

Father-to-father advice was premised on the idea that men needed their own advice literature. Many men did read advice literature and had it read to them by their wives, as well. By the early 1930s, more than half of fathers who were professional, semi-professional, managerial, major clerical workers, skilled mechanics or retail businessmen read advice books; roughly the same percent read child care articles in magazines or newspapers. Slightly less than half of farmers did so.<sup>328</sup> Some male authors described advice written primarily for mothers as inadequate and pulled from new ideas about friendly, involved fathering and the tenets of boyology to write their own books on parenting. A subset of these advice books were humorous, demonstrating a new depiction of fathering as somewhat comic business, to be winked at and spoken of with a certain lightness, which did not mean that these writers were insincere in their professed desire to offer advice to men on parenting. It was through their humor that these authors sought to separate themselves from the more feminine and sentimental writings on motherhood. Sentiment was left to the ladies, they suggested, and these books for men professed to take a more honest, blunt and mirthful look at the trials and joys of parenting.

## Conclusion

In the late 1910s and 1920s, there was a growing sense of the importance of father-son togetherness, a belief that men must fix what modern, urban life had changed. When the United States was agrarian, sociologists argued, fathers and sons worked together by necessity and the entire family felt a sense of shared purpose. As American middle-class society changed and men left the home for work and children for school and other leisure activities, the family's shared purpose became obscured and fathers no longer had long hours to share with their sons. For this reason, advocates of closer father-son bonds argued that fathers needed to make new, conscious efforts to become close to their sons, to work and play with their families more and to recreate a shared sense of common endeavor. Accompanying this growing concern was a reverence for boyhood, which began in the early 1900s, and a newer celebration of youthfulness

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<sup>327</sup> Galloway, *The Father and His Boy*, 7.

<sup>328</sup> Committee on the Infant and Preschool Child, "The Young Child in the Home: A Survey of Three Thousand American Families," 12, 78.

generally. Men interested in promoting a new, friendlier fatherhood believed that men could be revitalized and refreshed by revisiting their own youths in their imagination and recapturing their youthful zestfulness and ideals by connecting with their sons. By becoming a pal to their sons, men would be better fathers and retain their youth longer. The fatherhood clubs, father-and-son activities, and father-to-father literature all focused strongly on sons. It is not clear to what extent girls suffered from this exclusion. Daughters were not entirely excluded, but their attitude toward father was generally portrayed as condescending, in exasperation or fondness. The new father-child relationship ideal that arose during this period of increased father's clubs and literature was one of friendly, cheerful togetherness and, to a large extent, a focus on shared masculinity between fathers and sons. The men who read books specifically for fathers, joined fathers' clubs or father-son groups, or took fathering classes did so from an implicit belief that fathers had something unique to each other. Although the 1920s saw the rise of smaller, more child-centered families and an ideal of close-knit families, these men also believed that men and boys needed to carve their own space and work together to forge better father-son relationships.

## Chapter 5

### Humor and Condescension in Portrayals of Fatherhood, 1900 to 1930

SHE: They tell me you were arrested for disorderly conduct the other day.

HE: Yes, I tried being a pal to my boy.<sup>1</sup>

This joke from *American Humor*, which was also published in *Life* in 1928, referenced the growing expectation that fathers pal with their sons and the awkwardness that was sometimes the result. Another published in *The Washington Post* in 1921 similarly depicted fathers as being boy-like in their enthusiasms and united with their sons in their interests as opposed to the spoilsport women who sought to disrupt their fun. In the cartoon, an elderly woman sees a boy fishing on Sunday and scolds him, asking him what his father would say if he knew. The boy responds that he does not know and recommends she ask him, telling her "THAT'S HIM A LITTLE FURTHER DOWN STREAM."<sup>2</sup> A comic depiction of the thoughts of a three-year-old girl published in *The Chicago Tribune* in 1921 also reflected the idea that fathers were more fun than mothers. The girl thinks to herself that she "OUGHT TO BE MORE DIGNIFIED-- MORE LIKE MY MOTHER." But, in the next frame, giggling, the tot thinks, "MY DADDY ISN'T ONE BIT DIGNIFIED...." The father who is less "dignified" is better able to appreciate the child's energy and humor. The child thinks, "DAD SAYS I'M FULL OF PEP-- MOTHER SAYS I'M JUST AWFUL."<sup>3</sup> Jokes such as these displayed the changing ideal of fatherhood, the ideal of the modern "dad" who was playful, jubilant and friendly with his children. This departure from the staid image of the nineteenth-century patriarch was accompanied by a tendency among humorists and other authors to complain about the father's "fall" from respected and feared patriarch to mere pal.

With the new ideal of "dad" came an increasing tendency for men to complain about their lack of status as fathers. Fathers complained of being excluded from their children's lives by hovering wives, complained of being the last consideration of their families, of working without satisfactory compensation in thanks and respect. But such complaining was usually done in a light-hearted manner. Numerous authors called out to Americans to "give Dad a little credit," protesting the monopoly on sentimental praise held by the American mother. The growth of these claims accompanied the rise of Father's Day from something of a joke to a sincere, if half-hearted, holiday. This trend is suggestive both of increasing attention to the importance of parenting in the lives of men and a change in attitudes toward fathers. The tendency of men to jokingly protest their

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<sup>1</sup> Originally *American Humor*. America's Humor, "Our Foolish Contemporaries: Father's Day in Court," *Life*, February 2 1928.

<sup>2</sup> "Little Jimmy: Like Father Like Son," *The Washington Post*, September 8 1921.

<sup>3</sup> "Wonder What a Three Year Old Girl Thinks About," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 29 1921.

lack of status was, in part, a response to the partial erosion of patriarchal authority wrought by feminist advances; but it also reveals a desire among fathers to laugh at themselves and to exaggerate and accentuate the extent to which they had abandoned the autocracy of nineteenth-century fatherhood in favor of a friendlier, more obliging twentieth-century ideal.

The new ideal “Dad” was a modernization of the serious and, at worst, tyrannical image of previous generations. The new “modern” ideal went hand-in-hand with the adoption of a more democratic family model. Some modern fathers, or “dads,” adopted a posture of being their family’s good-natured, lightheartedly long-suffering last consideration. Pushing against the old-fashioned image of father as blustering ruler of the home, new “dads” instead depicted themselves as the least considered person in the family. Clarence Day’s memoir *Life with Father*, first published in 1936, is often cited as an example of the erosion of respect for father, but it is important to note that this memoir is about a decidedly old-fashioned, nineteenth-century style patriarch. The autobiographical stories take place in the 1890s and it is the father’s old-fashioned ideas that are the brunt of the joke. The joking posture of the new “dads” does not mean that fathers truly had lost all the authority traditionally held by the head of the household. Rather, it shows a playful use of new democratic ideals of family life. As good humor, family democracy and friendliness were increasingly valued by “modern” middle-class fathers, fathers who depicted themselves as the family’s last consideration were seen less as weak than as good sports—the very opposite of the previous generation of fathers who were being indirectly maligned as old-fashioned autocrats.

Fathers were the butt of more jokes in the late 1910s and 1920s, a trend that bothered and frustrated some contemporary writers who felt it revealed a lack of importance and respect for the family head. This humor has been interpreted by both contemporary critics and by social scientists looking back as demonstrating a lack of respect or authority for fathers. In 1994, psychologist Shari Thurer referred to Dagwood and Blondie comic strips of the 1930s and Clarence Day’s memoir *Life with Father* as evidence of the erosion of paternal authority. “With regard to child rearing,” she wrote, the father “was replaced by the medical or psychological expert, who was installed in the home as the new source of patriarchal authority.”<sup>4</sup> Sociologist Ralph LaRossa argued that the humor directed at father indicated a decreasing respect for father’s role, a change which accompanied his demotion from role model to playmate.<sup>5</sup> Certainly, the humor is indication of a change in father’s role in the family, but not necessarily a change that indicates a lack of respect or importance. I would argue that the humor, which was usually created by men, indicates that men *wanted* to be teased. The humor was not meant to be challenging or subversive; it was not seriously upsetting but rather mainstream and mild. The jokes about father’s lack of power and incompetence at domestic tasks and parenting demonstrate not that father had actually lost his authority, but rather that the ideal of fatherhood had shifted to celebrate a more democratic ideal. Fathers were in on the joke—in fact, they were making the jokes. Fathers were not being laughed at so much as they were laughing at themselves. The rise of humor poking fun at

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<sup>4</sup> Shari L. Thurer, *The Myths of Motherhood: How Culture Reinvents the Good Mother* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1994), 228.

<sup>5</sup> Ralph LaRossa, *The Modernization of Fatherhood: A Social and Political History* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1997), 142-43.



fathers in the 1920s suggests that accompanying the changing ideals of fatherhood came a new willingness or ability to tease fathers. Good-hearted grumbling about lack of respect was part of the way these authors worked through real changes brought about by feminism and a new, less hierarchical family ideal. These jokes should not be read as a direct reflection of the status afforded father, for they more likely represented a change in how fathers wanted to be regarded, a change in ideals which increasingly valued good humor and a democratic family structure and rejected the image of a stern autocrat as hopelessly old-fashioned.

The origins and early celebrations of Father's Day demonstrate the complicated intermingling of many of these issues. Sincere well-wishers were met with sarcastic commentators at every turn in the early efforts to bring Father's Day to the national stage. And many of those sneering at the attempt were themselves fathers. The mix of comedy, sincere appreciation, condescension, and annoyance makes for rich material to examine reactions to the changing ideals of fatherhood between 1900 and 1930.

## **Father's Day**

Father's Day was intended as a celebration and recognition of the contributions and sacrifices of fathers in the tradition of Mother's Day and, to a lesser extent, Children's Day. Mother's Day had a history dating to the Civil War era, but started in its modern form in 1908 when it was very successful, becoming an official U.S. holiday in 1914. Children's Day began in the 1850s and by 1883, nearly all states officially acknowledged it. Father's Day was not as immediate a success as Mother's Day, although it started just after the modern incarnation of that holiday, and was the butt of jokes throughout the 1910s and 1920s. For every time Father's Day was discussed with sincerity, it was probably twice mentioned with tittering bemusement. Additionally, among the sincere attempts to initiate the holiday, there was a tendency to focus on the lack of respect afforded fathers. In discussion of early celebrations of the holiday, there was frequent mention of what a sad affair it was in comparison to Mother's Day and even Children's Day, the implication being that poor old dad did not garner the same sentimentality as his wife or his children. Most of these articles were written by men--fathers, often-- and they represent the changing ideal of fatherhood as understood by men themselves.

There was a trend of fathers laughing about being the last consideration, but responses to Father's Day suggest that fathers were conflicted and uncomfortable with the sincere suggestion that they were truly in need of more attention. Numerous mentions of men's embarrassment at being celebrated coupled with reports of men's grumbling annoyance about the small inconveniences of the holiday suggest that fathers were uncomfortable with seeing their half-joking protests at being the least considered family member taken seriously. Father's Day smacked of condescension and, by and large, fathers seem to have avoided or rejected it. Men may have been more comfortable with humorous complaints and grumbling than they were with the more sincere versions of Father's Day.

The idea for Father's Day grew from several different independent sources around the same time in response to the success of Mother's Day. Credit for the idea of Father's

Day is generally given to Sonora Dodd, who initiated the first official celebration in Spokane, Washington in 1910.<sup>6</sup> Beginning around 1908, the idea of a national Father's Day was discussed in the media across the country with a combination of sincere interest and comical bemusement. A short 1908 editorial suggesting in the *Boston Daily Globe* that there ought to be a Father's Day prompted another writer to respond cheekily, "It might not be out of place to give the old man a chance. He's useful when the bills come to be paid."<sup>7</sup> In the following years, there were numerous such quips in newspapers, suggesting a "father's day" in response to Mother's Day, but not with a seriousness of purpose.<sup>8</sup> Some authors learned about Spokane's efforts to promote Father's Day and spoke humorously about it.<sup>9</sup> One quip suggested that the idea was a joke, asking, "Why can't they leave him alone and not be all the time joshing him?"<sup>10</sup> Quite a few articles wondered about the expansions of special "days," teasing that soon everyone—brothers, sisters, cousins, uncles—would have his own day of celebration.<sup>11</sup>

Father's Day was almost always discussed in relation to Mother's Day and sometimes in relation to Children's Day, as well. In 1910, Nebraska men inaugurated a Fathers' Day and attempted to have it legalized in the legislature as a state holiday. A man speaking for the movement explained, "We have no desire to belittle the efforts of those who have succeeded in making Mothers' Day a pronounced success, but the time has come when some recognition ought to be given to the fathers. Everybody is telling what the mothers have done but not a voice is raised in behalf of poor, down-trodden father."<sup>12</sup> Spokane's Rev. William J. Hindley gave credit to his town when he said, "I'm glad there will be an opportunity to speak a few kind words in public for the 'old man' who is entitled to a lot of praise; in fact, I do not believe any of us can say in words more than 'dad' deserves. I am proud, too, that the movement originated in Spokane, and I hope it will be generally observed in a national way."<sup>13</sup>

Some argued with sincerity that fathers should be honored with a special day.<sup>14</sup> A few papers printed poems supporting the sentimental goals of Father's Day. A 1909 poem published in the *New York Times* and a 1913 verse printed in *Colman's Rural World* celebrated the toil and self-sacrifice of fathers who brought home their paychecks.<sup>15</sup> Early, sincere pleas for Father's Day were often followed with mocking

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<sup>6</sup> The *Los Angeles Times* in 1925 decried the wrangling for credit over the invention of Father's Day, suggesting the focus should be on the importance of the idea rather than assigning credit for it. Harry Carr, "The Lancer," *Los Angeles Times*, June 19 1925.

<sup>7</sup> "Editorial Points," *Boston Daily Globe*, May 19 1908, "Editorial Points."

<sup>8</sup> For example, "Editorial Pen Points," *Los Angeles Times*, April 27 1909. Richard Henry Little, "Round About Chilcago," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 15 1911, The Staff, "Pen Points: By the Staff," *Los Angeles Times*, July 7 1911.

<sup>9</sup> "Editorial Pen Points," *Los Angeles Times*, July 25 1910. "Editorial Pen Points." Staff, "Pen Points: By the Staff." The following combined seeming approval with sly belittling humor: "Red Rose and Pat on Back Once a Year for Father," *The Atlanta Constitution*, July 13 1910.

<sup>10</sup> "Editorial Pen Points."

<sup>11</sup> "Days," *The Washington Post*, July 30 1911.. Little, "Round About Chilcago."

<sup>12</sup> Quoted in "Nebraska Men Want the Same Recognition as Is Given Mothers," *University Missourian*, June 5 1910.

<sup>13</sup> "Fathers' Day," *The Colville Examiner*, June 11 1910.

<sup>14</sup> For example, H. G. Rowe, "Father's Day," *Herald of Gospel Liberty* 102, no. 21 (1910). Margaret E. Sangster, "Mother's Day," *San Francisco Chronicle*, May 14 1911.

<sup>15</sup> A. F. Dyer, "Fathers' Day," *New York Times*, May 12 1909. Albert Vassar, "Home Circle," *Colman's Rural World* 66, no. 25 (1913). Also, Tom W. Jackson, "Father's Day," *New York Times*, October 8 1913.

commentary. In 1911, one reverend successfully argued that Presbyterian churches around the country should celebrate Mother's Day. A man from Oklahoma responded to this resolution by suggesting that fathers as well as mothers should be remembered; his earnest plea for a day to honor fathers was met with laughter.<sup>16</sup> The *Los Angeles Times* reported in 1911, "A disposition to have fun with the nation [sic] of Father's day is not infrequent."<sup>17</sup>

Those arguing in earnest for a day for fathers often complained about the lack of tributes to fathers as compared to mothers. One such letter to the editor from a daughter complained that there were "hundreds" of songs written for mothers, but only two for fathers and those "were not to his credit": "Father, Dear Father Come Home" and "The Old Man's Drunk Again."<sup>18</sup> Another noted that "'daddy'" deserved "his remembrance as well as 'mamma'" and noted the efforts of fathers to provide for their families. This author complained that father had "seldom if ever met with a due regard from the poets--some of whom indeed have invoked the muse to bespatter father with numerous opprobrious phrases and epithets."<sup>19</sup> One article from the *Medical Sentinel* of Portland suggested that Father's Day was particularly necessary because of the lack of praise typically given to father:

The tendency of modern times, however, has been more in the line of looking upon the father as the necessary drudge, carrying his responsibilities without any special laudation upon the part of the public or mark of approval, in which modest attitude the father has quietly acquiesced, because he has felt that he was merely carrying responsibilities which Nature intended for him. With women crowding to the front in every walk of life, and in many cases sharp competitors of men, a man who has been a worthy father is certainly entitled to some mark of distinction and approbation, and we are glad to see this 'Fathers Day' movement.<sup>20</sup>

This author regarded Father's Day as a necessary tribute to men who had been forced by the changes wrought by the women's movement into competition with aggressive women. This blatantly anti-feminist viewpoint welcomed a celebration of fathers, who were painted as the quiet, toiling victims of feminism.

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<sup>16</sup> "Would Bar Liquor from State Dinners," *New York Times*, May 28 1911. For other examples following this pattern, see, Justice, "'a Fathers' Day' Suggested," *New York Times*, June 11 1914. More Justice, "Holidays for All. Including Grandma, Aunty, Baby, and the Household Pet," *New York Times*, June 14 1914. And also, Jack Cattell, "Letter to the Editor 1-- No Title. Holidays for All.," *New York Times*, June 14 1914, ———, "November 22 for Fathers' Day," *New York Times*, June 23 1914.

<sup>17</sup> W. J. Williamson, Dr., "In the Churches Yesterday," *Los Angeles Times*, August 14 1911.

<sup>18</sup> A Daughter, "Letters to the Times: Papa's Day, Hey?," *Los Angeles Times*, May 5 1909.

<sup>19</sup> "Secular and Religious," *New York Observer and Chronicle*, June 1 1911.

<sup>20</sup> "Father's Day," *Medical Sentinel* 19 (1911): 275. *The Medical Sentinel* was published with the collaboration of officers of the state and district medical societies of Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Montana and Utah, and was known until 1894 as *The Pacific Medical Record of Portland, Oregon*. It should not be confused with the publication of the same name which served until 2003 as the publication of the ultra-conservative political advocacy medical group the Association of American Physicians and Surgeons, which was not founded until 1943.

Many early discussions and quips about Father's Day suggested that it was about time father got some respect back, as he had been badly maligned in the previous few years. In a parody of the popular song "Everybody Works But Father," one poem published in the *New York Times* put forth in 1913 the idea that "Everybody plays but father" who must work to pay the bills:

Everybody plays but father--  
He has to stay in the jam  
And slave for the pleasure-seekers.  
But they never givadam.<sup>21</sup>

One piece in *The Washington Post* in 1913 declared. "Too long has father been looked upon as a necessary evil, too long, in this country at least, has he been the tail, and not the head." The article then suggested that Father's Day was a small concession: "For twenty-four hours out of the year, if no more, he will rule supreme.... It is not much, but it is much better than nothing."<sup>22</sup> A later 1913 article about the proposed holiday in *The Washington Post* also found insult in the popular song "Everybody Works But Father":

When the song, 'Everybody Works but Father,' was written several years ago, everybody laughed but father. The breadwinner of the family naturally could see nothing funny in a song that libeled his life of toil and self-denial. He sorrowfully concluded that he would never get his just desserts in this vale of tears, and that he might as well resign himself to the inevitable.<sup>23</sup>

The piece argued that father should be allowed to do just as he liked on his day, for "They can make him stand around and realize his own insignificance on Monday, as usual."<sup>24</sup> Many of these complaints seem to combine sentimentality and an appreciation for fathers' sacrifices with humor and comically exaggerated pity. One joking piece calling for "Father's Night Out" in 1915 justified the need for it this way:

Poor dad gets mighty little pleasure out of life, I'm here to tell you.  
He slaves all day in the office to get money for mother and the girls  
to give to the poor summer resort hotel proprietors, who have large  
families to support and have a great struggle trying to make both  
ends meat and vegetable.

Poor old dad-- he has a hard time working the boy's way through  
college and letting the boy get credit for it.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> W. J. Lampton, "The Summer Father," *New York Times*, August 14 1913.

<sup>22</sup> "Father's Day," *The Washington Post*, August 3 1913.

<sup>23</sup> "'Father's Day'," *The Washington Post*, October 6 1913.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> "Fathers' Night Vs. Mothers' Day; Give Dad a Show, Says Writer; Let Him Enjoy White Lights," *The Washington Post*, August 1 1915.

This author emphasized the burdens put on father by middle-class expectations and expenses and the added trouble of the increasingly child-focused home, in which middle-class parents kept their children at home longer and struggled to help them succeed.

The movement gained momentum and the idea of Father's Day was widely mentioned and observed throughout the U.S.<sup>26</sup> In 1913, at the urging of Charlotte K. Kirkbride and Carrie Sternberg, Delaware granted a charter to acknowledge Father's Day as the first Sunday in June. Representative J. Hampton Moore of Pennsylvania, a father of eight, introduced a bill in Congress to acknowledge Father's Day as the first Sunday in June in this same year.<sup>27</sup> This bill became the object of humor, both with other Congressmen and newspaper humorists, and ultimately failed.<sup>28</sup> In 1919, Representative Snell of New York submitted a bill to make Father's Day the third Sunday in June.<sup>29</sup> This also became the subject of humor in newspapers and also failed.<sup>30</sup> Harry C. Meek, of the Uptown Lions Club of Chicago began promoting Father's Day in 1915, apparently first believing the idea to be his own; Meek worked with the support of the Lions to gain recognition for Father's Day in the latter 1910s and early 1920s.<sup>31</sup> In 1920, a charter was granted by the state of Virginia to commission the National Fathers' Day Association, Inc., which worked to set aside the second Sunday of June each year as Fathers' Day.<sup>32</sup> Although President Coolidge refused to proclaim the day, he did recommend it be

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<sup>26</sup> "Pastor 2 Years at Church," *The Washington Post*, May 29 1911. "Father's Innings," *Los Angeles Times*, May 23 1914. The Staff, "Pen Points: By the Staff," *Los Angeles Times*, May 23 1914, "Last Day of Potlatch," *San Francisco Chronicle*, July 19 1914. "Cities and Towns of South of Tehachepi's Top-- Los Angeles County News," *Los Angeles Times*, June 22 1914. "Photo Standalone 6-- No Title," *New York Times*, May 21 1916, "Fathers' Day Is Observed," *Christian Science Monitor*, June 22 1914, "The News of the Week at Home and Abroad," *Herald of Gospel Liberty* 105, no. 32 (1913). "Father to Have His Day," *Colman's Rural World* 66, no. 21 (1913).

In 1911, Father's Day was reportedly widely celebrated on the west coast and even in Honolulu. By 1914, it was observed in Germany, Sweden, India, Japan, Mexico and Canada, as well. "What Women Are Doing," *The Washington Post*, October 1 1911. "Women's Work, Women's Clubs," *Los Angeles Times*, June 6 1911. "Fathers' Day Is Observed."

<sup>27</sup> This effort was noted in the press. "Father to Have His Day," *New York Times*, October 3 1913. The YMCA worked to spread the acknowledgment of Father's Day in 1913, celebrating it in February, presumably as part of Father and Son Week celebrations. The Y encouraged fathers to become closer to their sons. "Boys Inaugurate 'Fathers' Day'," *San Francisco Chronicle*, February 17 1913. "In the Limelight," *Los Angeles Times*, October 12 1913. "Now for 'Father's Day,'" *The Washington Post*, October 3 1913. "Congress Condensed," *The Washington Post*, October 3 1913. "Queries from Times Readers and Answers to Them," *New York Times*, May 21 1916. Father's Day was mentioned in a contemporary almanac: "Fathers' Day," in *The World Almanac and Book of Facts* (New York: The Press Publishing Co., 1914).

<sup>28</sup> "Lewis Fathers' Day Founder? 'No,' Sys Senator, 'Er-I'm Not'," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, August 8 1913. The Staff, "Pen Points," *Los Angeles Times*, August 4 1913. ———, "Pen Points: By the Staff," *Los Angeles Times*, September 3 1913.

<sup>29</sup> "Third Sunday in June Fathers' Day," *Los Angeles Times*, June 26 1919.

<sup>30</sup> The Staff, "Pen Points," *Los Angeles Times*, July 5 1919.

<sup>31</sup> The Lions crowned him the "Originator of Father's Day."

<sup>32</sup> Miss Kate R. Swineford, of Drewerys Bluff, Va., was the founder of the association. "Will Have Annual 'Father's' Day," *The Washington Post*, May 13 1921. In 1924 Father's Day was still considered a "movement" by some. "Three Changes of Legitimate Bills," *Los Angeles Times*, June 15 1924.

observed in all states in 1924. The day was not established permanently until 1972 when President Nixon signed a Congressional resolution.<sup>33</sup>

Not everyone regarded the advent of Father's Day as a positive development. According to the *Los Angeles Times* three hundred women, many from Los Angeles, wrote to the mayor of Taft, California to criticize the mayor's proclamation establishing a Father's Day in that town in 1914. According to the report, these letters enquired why fathers should have a day any more than uncles, cousins or aunts, and that some of the letters were "extremely emphatic."<sup>34</sup> A joke in the newspaper referred to these objections: "Many local women seem to object to having a Father's Day. The subject is too serious for levity, but can the objection be based on the fallacious argument that father already has too many nights?"<sup>35</sup> In Cincinnati that same year, according to the *Washington Post*, the Twentieth Century Club "officially went on record as opposed to fathers' day, and if the women of this prominent suffragist organization have their way poor old dad won't have a 'day.'"<sup>36</sup> The clubwomen unanimously opposed the Father's Day idea, saying that humane society statistics demonstrated that "that fathers are very defective, while mothers as a class are not."<sup>37</sup> As late as 1929, there was an article suggesting that Father's Day was not necessary and was an unjust encroachment on Mother's Day. The Methodist Episcopal reverend W.L.Y. Davis argued in the *Los Angeles Times* "there is no demand for Dad's Day." Furthermore, he argued, Independence Day, Memorial Day, Washington and Lincoln's birthdays, and "pay day" were all already fathers' days, whereas women only had one day. The author felt that creating a Father's Day detracted from the specialness of Mother's Day: "Why begrudge mother her one day?"<sup>38</sup>

Although the idea of Father's Day spread, early Father's Day celebrations were not particularly successful. One article in the *Washington Post* in 1914 complained that although the previous day had been Father's Day, "no one ever would have known by outward signs in Washington that the 'poor old man' was being accorded the homage and approbation that are his due." The lack of celebration, according to this article, was not of particular concern to fathers: "It may as well be admitted that father was not steeped in dejection at the failure of nearly every one to accord him his due."<sup>39</sup> Fathers, the author suggested, were probably just as glad that no one made a fuss over them. A quip in *The Independent* suggested Father's Day's lack of popularity when it called it the day "when we wear a rose and everybody asks why."<sup>40</sup> A joke published in 1918 indicated that there was no such thing as Father's Day with no irony.<sup>41</sup> In 1920, one writer put a more

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<sup>33</sup> His action eliminated the need for an annual designation and put Father's Day on the same continuing basis as Mother's Day. Myers, Robert J. and Editors of Hallmark Cards Myers, *The Complete Book of American Holidays* (New York: Doubleday and Co., 1972).

<sup>34</sup> "What's Wrong with Daddy?," *Los Angeles Times*, June 15 1914.

<sup>35</sup> "Twisting the Scriptures," *Los Angeles Times*, June 17 1914.

<sup>36</sup> "Opposed to 'Father's Day'," *The Washington Post*, May 29 1914.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> W. L. Y. Davis, "Mothers and Fathers," *Los Angeles Times*, May 11 1929.

<sup>39</sup> "'Twas 'Fathers' Day,' but Being Stoic, Father Barely Knew the Fact at All," *The Washington Post*, June 22 1914.

<sup>40</sup> "Take-It-Back Day," *The Independent* 83, no. 3477 (1915).

<sup>41</sup> "Bright Sayings of the Children," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, July 9 1918.

positive spin on the lack of enthusiasm for Father's Day: "Fathers' Day is not creating quite the same ripple of sentimental excitement that Mothers' Day does. Perhaps father does not need recommending. Perhaps his claims to gratitude and appreciation are more comfortably established."<sup>42</sup> The rest of the article argued against this by expressing pity for poor, neglected fathers. One quip in 1925 spoke of "POOR OLD DAD" and said Father's Day received "almost as much splurge as would be caused by a pollywog falling into the ocean. But, then, every pay day the family remembers father."<sup>43</sup> An article in *Los Angeles Times* complained at the lack of celebration compared to Mother's Day and the cheapness and lack of sentiment of the Father's Day cards created for the occasion.<sup>44</sup> In 1929, the *Los Angeles Times* reported "THERE were no parades, no banquets, no fireworks and no oratorical flapdoodle to distinguish it from any other day in the year; but, believe it or not, yesterday was Father's Day in these United States."<sup>45</sup>

By 1924, there were gifts considered traditional for the day and the day was "generally observed throughout the country" however small these celebrations.<sup>46</sup> One advertisement emphasized the burdens of fatherhood, suggesting father's gift be something better than a necktie, for "*He Has Enough Round His Neck Already.*"<sup>47</sup> Another in 1924 boasted of being the first in Chicago to publicly recognize Father's Day.<sup>48</sup> In 1925, an error led to mix-ups about the date and problems for advertisers. 85,000 display cards printed and shipped all over the country had the incorrect date for Father's Day on them, which caused protests from American Legion, the Boy Scouts, numerous trade associations and various women's clubs.<sup>49</sup> The day was "celebrated on a nationwide scale" and therefore the date mix-up was estimated to have caused significant financial loss; one article fretted that the mistake could "result in spoiling a holiday almost before it has been created." The article noted that this was of less concern to fathers than to mothers and storeowners.<sup>50</sup> Another joked that father already had enough neckties: "If he had any emotion, it was relief at the thought of what the tobacconists might have done to him."<sup>51</sup> In spite of the mix-up, Father's Day was more widely celebrated in 1925 than ever before.<sup>52</sup> The various changes in date were the subject of wry observation of a 1927 *New York Times* article which imagined a father with grown children spread around the country receiving remembrances at all different times of the

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<sup>42</sup> Alma Whitaker, "Of Interest to Women; the Last Word," *The Los Angeles Times*, June 20 1923.

<sup>43</sup> "Second Childhood," *Los Angeles Times*, June 24 1925.

<sup>44</sup> A. D. Wooldridge, "Father Is Having His Day," *Los Angeles Times*, June 15 1924.

The Hudson Library and Historical Society holds one early, but undated, Father's Day card. It has a short poem thanking father for his kindness and was meant to accompany a "little gift." With thanks to Gwen Mayer, Archivist, and Joe Kelleher, Volunteer. "Series 4. Mother's Day/Father's Day, Mf1 ", in *Greeting Card Collection G14* (Hudson, OH: Hudson Library & Historical Society ).

<sup>45</sup> "Dear Old Dad Has His Day," *Los Angeles Times*, June 17 1929.

<sup>46</sup> "Today Is Dedicated to the Honor of 'Dad'," *The Washington Post*, June 15 1924.

<sup>47</sup> "Display Ad 3-- No Title," *New York Times*, June 14 1924. Another advertisement with the same slogan: "Display Ad 1-- No Title," *The Washington Post*, June 14 1924.

<sup>48</sup> "Display Ad 7," *Chicago Daily Tribune* (1924).

<sup>49</sup> "Wrong Guess Caused Father's Day Mix-Up," *The New York Times*, June 5 1925.

<sup>50</sup> "Date Mix-up May Ruin Father's Day," *New York Times*, June 4 1925.

<sup>51</sup> "Father's Day," *New York Times*, June 6 1925.

<sup>52</sup> "Father's Day Date Settled; Is Here Now," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 20 1926. Even in 1926, after many considered the celebration a national one, one report declared it to be a failure, remarking "but Father's Day has never reached the national calendar." "National Father's Day Project Has Languished Twenty Years," *New York Times*, May 23 1926.

year to coordinate with the various dates assigned to Father's Day in different areas of the country.<sup>53</sup>

Although many of the mentions of Father's Day were humorous or suggested a lack of fully sincere enthusiasm for the holiday, there were also sincere and sentimental notices of the day. Some of the advertisements for gifts for Father's Day included charming and sentimental depictions of fathers receiving gifts from their children.<sup>54</sup> In 1926, thirteen New York area radio stations observed the day by broadcasting a scene set in a "typical American home, the events themselves taking place in father's 'den'" as demonstrations of the various celebrations for Father's Day.<sup>55</sup> A 1923 poem and a 1924 article mentioned father's self-sacrifice on behalf of his children in its discussion of Father's Day.<sup>56</sup> A *Washington Post* article in 1927 suggested sincerely that fathers should be honored all year long: "Father's Day can not do more than impress life's blessings upon a man whose children supply his inspiration in the hours of toil and absorb his interest and affection in his hours of relaxation. The span of life alone can measure Father's Day."<sup>57</sup> One Father's Day poem published in *The Chicago Daily Tribune* in 1928 concluded with the sentiment that although the author's father had not been skilled at earning money, "He gave me himself-- a comrade true."<sup>58</sup> In 1930, *The Washington Post* published a Father's Day poem by a ten-year-old girl in tribute to her "generous and forgiving" father.<sup>59</sup>

In the late 1920s, Father's Day had a modest impact on church leaders, some of whom tailored their sermons to the day. In New York in 1926, one reverend in the west side Methodist Episcopal church celebrated that father was now a companion rather than a despot: "'The companion father is taking over more responsibility for the bringing up of his boys and girls.'"<sup>60</sup> A different M.E. pastor asked "What Kind of Father Are You?"<sup>61</sup> In Chicago, the pastor of the Pacific Congregational church was apparently the only minister to preach a Father's Day sermon. The newspaper account of this suggested that "Frequent changes in the date of Father's day is believed reason [sic] for its lack of general observance."<sup>62</sup>

In 1927, the Father's Day service at the West Side M.E. Church focused on Charles Lindbergh's relationship with his mother and on the importance of democratization and companionship in the family circle.<sup>63</sup> In Chicago, in 1927, more pastors acknowledged Father's Day than in the previous year, but the pastors seem to have been more focused on prompting improvement among the flock's fathers than in celebrating them. Although one Congregational minister addressed the often-

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<sup>53</sup> "Father's Day Dawns-- over His Protest; Ties and Cigars to Be His Lot, Then Obscurity," *New York Times*, June 19 1927.

<sup>54</sup> One such advertisement included a little poem for dad. "Disply Ad 20--No Title," *New York Times*, June 18 1926. "Display Ad 17-- No Title," *New York Times*, June 14 1926.

<sup>55</sup> "Events Scheduled for Broadcasting," *New York Times*, June 13 1926.

<sup>56</sup> H. B. Press, "'Daddy's Day'," *Los Angeles Times*, June 14 1923. Wooldridge, "Father Is Having His Day."

<sup>57</sup> "Father's Day," *The Washington Post*, June 19 1927.

<sup>58</sup> Ella M. "A Line O' Type or Two," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 16 1928.

<sup>59</sup> "Father's Day," *The Washington Post*, June 22 1930.

<sup>60</sup> Rev. C. E. Wagner quoted in "Hails Overthrow of Family Monarch," *New York Times*, June 21 1926.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> Rev. W. B. Norton, "'Twas Father's Day, but Only Father Knew It," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 21 1926.

<sup>63</sup> "Envisions Women as Stronger Sex," *New York Times*, June 20 1927.



unappreciated average hard-working, self-denying father, the other four sermons described focused on the failures of fathers, discussing the “prodigal father,” father’s failure to enforce discipline in the home, and the importance of sexual purity for those intending to become fathers.<sup>64</sup> One quoted President Taft who spoke about the necessity of a father taking charge of discipline in the home.<sup>65</sup>

In 1929, a Baptist pastor in Chicago was reported as encouraging his congregation to give father credit, noting that in many families, “dad is recognized as the provider, but he isn’t appreciated... The tender sentiments are saved for mother. Let us give to him the love and affection that he longs for and deserves.”<sup>66</sup> Los Angeles churches celebrated Father’s Day in 1930 with such themes as the prodigal son, celebrating a father’s forgiveness.<sup>67</sup> A 1930 piece in the *Washington Post* suggested that there was not much enthusiasm amongst church leaders for Father’s Days, suggesting that perhaps this was because “every Sunday and every day is dedicated to him.” The day also coincided with Children’s Day in many churches, which was celebrated instead.<sup>68</sup>

## Father’s Day Humor

There were several points of humor made again and again regarding Father’s Day in the 1910s and 1920s. When Father’s Day was first suggested, many humorists commented that it was merely part of a trend of giving everyone and everything its own “day” of celebration.<sup>69</sup> Another frequent point of jest was that payday was already Father’s Day.<sup>70</sup> In addition to these jokes about Father’s Day being unnecessary, were a variety of jokes that played with the idea of father as the family’s last consideration. In the mid-1920s, a Pennsylvania Bible Class chose the dandelion as the official flower of father’s day “because the more it is trampled on the better it grows.” This bit of comedy was repeated a fair amount in the press.<sup>71</sup> One joked the thistle could also work, or poppy, which means “oblivion.”<sup>72</sup> Jokes about unwanted gifts were common, and,

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<sup>64</sup> ———, “Father Has His Day and Hears a Few Kind Words in His Behalf,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 20 1927. ———, “Fathers Lauded and Criticized by Ministers,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, February 21 1927.

<sup>65</sup> Norton, “Fathers Lauded and Criticized by Ministers.”

<sup>66</sup> “Carewes Wed Again, to Sail for Europe Soon,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 17 1929.

<sup>67</sup> “Homily on Father’s Day Drawn from Prodigal,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 16 1930.

<sup>68</sup> “Few Pastors to Speak on ‘Father’ Tomorrow,” *The Washington Post*, June 14 1930.

<sup>69</sup> “Father’s Day.” Caroline B. King, “The Mother of Mothers’ Day,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 11 1913. More Justice, “Holidays for All. Including Grandma, Aunty, Baby, and the Household Pet.” “The Standardization of Holidays,” *The Independent* 78, no. 3421 (1914). Henry Woodward Hulbert, “Why Not a Home Day? And Thus Honor Fathers, Mothers, and Children at the Same Time,” *New York Times*, May 26 1916. . “Article 3-- No Title,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, June 27 1919. In a late variation of this joke, one quip suggested that Father’s Day only existed because someone had found an extra day in the calendar and couldn’t think what else to do with it. Harry Carr, “The Lancer,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 20 1927.

<sup>70</sup> Staff, “Pen Points.”, ———, “Pen Points: By the Staff.”, “Life Lines,” *Life*, July 16 1925. “Pen Points,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 8 1925. “A Line O’ Type or Two.”

<sup>71</sup> “This Is Called ‘Father’s Day’; Official Flower Dandelion,” in *The Family*, ed. Sheila M. Rothman David J. Rothman, and Gene Brown (New York: Arno Press, 1924 (1979)). “This Is Called ‘Father’s Day’; Official Flower Dandelion,” *New York Times*, June 15 1924. “Father’s Day Brings Rush on Cigar Stores; Longest Day Dedicated to Glorifying Dad,” *New York Times*, June 22 1925. Norton, “’Twas Father’s Day, but Only Father Knew It.”, “Father’s Day Date Settled; Is Here Now.”

<sup>72</sup> “Father’s Day,” *The Independent* 115, no. 3918 (1925).

especially, complaints and jokes about the fact that father would ultimately pay for these acknowledgements.<sup>73</sup>

One article in *The Washington Post* in 1927 painted an unsentimental portrait of a father's day scene in the average home. In the humorous story the author claims to have interviewed a suburban dad who told him:

'this Father's Day is a great institution. I don't see that anybody can object to it except father himself. He comes to the breakfast table and finds everybody beaming for the first time in 365 days. Adjacent to his plate, which carries a load of storage eggs and sodden pancakes, he picks up a festooned box, in white, red and blue colors, with price tag still upon it and also the advertisement, 'give him cigars; it's Father's Day.'<sup>74</sup>

In addition to this, father receives a necktie "with hues as atrocious as one in-law might wish upon another" along with some cards from the children and flowers in a vase. "And who pays for all this?" the interviewed dad asks his family, who happily reply that he does. This answer is meekly accepted by "an indulgent dad."<sup>75</sup> Another *New York Times* article in 1927 stated, "Fathers aren't whooping it up, for they realize they will have to pay the bills."<sup>76</sup> One man interviewed for a 1928 *New York Times* article explained that a man preferred to pick his own cigars, since he would pay either way.<sup>77</sup> Some of these complaints were fairly bitter. The *Chicago Daily Tribune* scoffed in 1928, "DAD'S DAY! Yes, poor old Dad, the bozo who furnishes the gasoline to keep the family engine running." The paper huffed that father would get a little present, and pay for it himself.<sup>78</sup>

These jokes may seem on the surface to emphasize father as the family's last consideration, but in fact they also served to reinforce father's status as head of the house and controller of the family finances, as did the numerous jokes about "father's day" being "payday." When "an indulgent dad" acknowledged that he would pay for his gifts, it subtly changed the celebration from one given to him, to one provided by him. Mother's Day articles never objected on the grounds that her gifts came out of the family's budget, nor did writers commenting on Christmas, anniversary or birthday presents find the prospect of wives or children buying presents for their husbands or fathers ridiculous. Such articles did not typically mention who paid the bills. This may have been a common theme among Father's Day quips because of the condescension authors found inherent in the holiday. Rather than allow fathers to be celebrated quietly with the same patronizing attitude shown toward mothers, these authors objected by asserting the father's power as controller of the purse and as breadwinner.

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<sup>73</sup> See for example, Staff, "Pen Points: By the Staff.", ———, "Pen Points." "Father's Day." "Rose Market Quiet for Father's Day," *New York Times*, June 17 1928. "This Is Father's Day, and Retailers Profit," *The New York Times*, June 16 1929, "This Is Fathers' Day, and Retailers Profit," *New York Times*, June 16 1929.

<sup>74</sup> Theodore Tiller, "Father's Day; He Knows; He'll Pay the Bills, Too," *The Washington Post*, June 19 1927.

<sup>75</sup> Quoted in *Ibid.*

<sup>76</sup> "Father's Day Dawns-- over His Protest; Ties and Cigars to Be His Lot, Then Obscurity."

<sup>77</sup> "Fathers and Children," *New York Times*, June 18 1928.

<sup>78</sup> "A Line O' Type or Two."

One of the most common complaints about Father's Day was that father did not want it and it only existed because of the support of the slipper, tie and cigar manufacturers and haberdashers.<sup>79</sup> This was not merely a joke—the New York state Association of Retail Clothiers and Furnishers worked hard to promote Father's Day.<sup>80</sup> One article had the subtitle, "*Tobacconists and Everybody but Dad Push Sales of 'Little Remembrances.'*" It explained "Today is Father's Day. It has been so decreed by act of Congress and by the consent of florists, haberdashers, tobacconists, stationers and almost everybody but dad, who ultimately pays for the 'little remembrances' anyway."<sup>81</sup>

Father's Day articles and jokes frequently referred to the unwanted gifts received by fathers for their special day. A *Washington Post* article said that "Dear old Dad" always gave the gifts, but on Father's Day he got them: "Nothing was too good for the 'old man...loud neckties for him that he'll never wear. Those fancy sox that he'd be ashamed to show. The big cake with 'Father' scrawled across it."<sup>82</sup> Another quipped that merchants were relieved by the mild rise in sales from Father's Day in 1929, since it allowed them to sell "neckties which they had feared would remain indefinitely in stock if father went on selecting his own cravats."<sup>83</sup> A father wrote the *New York Times* in 1929 to plea for children and women to stop buying unwanted tobacco and neckties on Father's Day.<sup>84</sup>

Some articles and quips asserted that each father should get to do as he likes on his day.<sup>85</sup> *Life* magazine in 1913 sympathized comically with father's burdens suggesting that Father's Day would not really afford him any rest: "If everybody... would let up on father for one day, that would be the right kind of a 'Father's Day.'"<sup>86</sup> One *Los Angeles Times* article in 1914 emphasized the common idea that the home had been feminized in such a way that it was no longer comfortable for father. According to this article, the mayor of Taft, California had proclaimed that to celebrate Father's Day,

father can go out with the boys, drop his week's wages in a poker game or smoke in the parlor with his with his feet on the piano on June 22 if he desires. As a result many previously meek fathers have been going home in a more joyous mood.<sup>87</sup>

Several joking comments suggested that fathers would prefer a night of their own to a Father's Day.<sup>88</sup> One such article published in 1915 explained that a handful of fathers might prefer permission to spend a night out carousing to a daytime celebration at home:

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<sup>79</sup> "This Is Called 'Father's Day'; Official Flower Dandelion." (sort of: "Date Mix-up May Ruin Father's Day.") "Father's Day Brings Rush on Cigar Stores; Longest Day Dedicated to Glorifying Dad." "The Theatre," *Wall Street Journal*, November 14 1927, "Dear Old Dad Has His Day."

<sup>80</sup> "To Discuss Father's Day Plans," *New York Times*, May 19 1928.

<sup>81</sup> "This Is Father's Day, and Retailers Profit."

<sup>82</sup> "Gets Little Credit Usually, but Dad Has His Day at Last," *The Washington Post*, June 17 1929.

<sup>83</sup> "This Is Fathers' Day, and Retailers Profit."

<sup>84</sup> C. W. P., "A Father's Day Plea," *New York Times*, June 14 1929.

<sup>85</sup> "'Father's Day!'"

<sup>86</sup> "What Father Needs," *Life*, November 6 1913.

<sup>87</sup> "Millenium for a Day," *Los Angeles Times*, June 6 1914.

<sup>88</sup> For example, Originally in *Louisville Courier-Journal*. "Man to Man," *Life* 75, no. 1939 (1920).

"Longest and Shortest Days," *Los Angeles Times*, December 15 1918.

Just a few, a small few, would like to beat it for the white lights and pink tights. Would be very, very happy to hike to a cabaret and hear the latest songs and see the newest dances, and with bookkeeping instinct, look at the fascinating, dipping, trotting women to see if the figures are correct.... You never can tell. Now, father might be, as mother says, the best man under the sun; but, Lord, you ought to see him when the stars come out.<sup>89</sup>

In 1930, Will Rogers wrote a letter to the editor of the *New York Times*: "I propose a Father's Day. No flowers, no fuss-- just let him use the car himself and go where he wants to. But we will never live to see such a contented day."<sup>90</sup>

Many articles and jokes about Father's Day focused on father's lack of enthusiasm for the day.<sup>91</sup> Others expressed men's lack of zeal for the day with more sincerity. In 1910, one opinion piece printed in *The Washington Herald* and other newspapers suggested that it should be left to the fathers to decide whether to have a special day or not and quoted Governor Hay of Washington state who felt Father's Day was unnecessary.<sup>92</sup> In 1913, *The Youth's Companion* published a short story about a widowed father who was surprised by the attention from all his grown children for Father's Day, as previously June had been "a month blessedly free from the celebrations he dreaded." His children's condescending notice of Father's Day and tendency to treat him as an ailing, elderly man prompted him to reassert himself in his work and to remarry.<sup>93</sup> One *New York Times* reporter interviewed three fathers in 1928, none of whom wanted the holiday, one calling it "hooley" and another claiming it made him "sick."<sup>94</sup>

Yet, some articles suggested that this paternal lack of interest was not entirely genuine, that fathers demurred simply because they were embarrassed or unused to the attention. Journalist and humorist Helen Rowland explained that the father who called the day silly was really "Yearning to be 'fussed over.'" Although he may pretend not to enjoy it, father was really a "Poor, tired, hustling, over-worked hearty-hungry thing," according to this 1919 article.<sup>95</sup> A 1928 article in *The New York Times* similarly suggested that father "concealed his anticipation" as he watched Saturday's Children's Day celebrations, knowing the following day would be his special day. But, according to the report, all the poor fathers were disappointed in their hopes when they discovered that their day was forgotten.<sup>96</sup> As the holiday became more standardized and entrenched, advertisements suggested that forgetting one's father would cause hurt feelings. "[B]eing a father he doesn't expect much" explained one Brill Brothers ad, but "You can't afford

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<sup>89</sup> "Fathers' Night Vs. Mothers' Day; Give Dad a Show, Says Writer; Let Him Enjoy White Lights."

<sup>90</sup> Will Rogers, "Will Rogers Muses a Bit on Day Set Aside for Mother," *New York Times*, May 12 1930.

<sup>91</sup> For example, Wooldridge, "Father Is Having His Day." "Date Mix-up May Ruin Father's Day." "Father's Day." "The Special Week Fad," *Los Angeles Times*, May 9 1927, "This Is Fathers' Day, and Retailers Profit."

<sup>92</sup> Thomas Shelby, "Shall Father Have a Day All His Own?," *The Washington Herald*, July 31 1910. Also printed in *The Youngstown Vindicator*, Youngstown, OH, July 31, 1910 p. 20

<sup>93</sup> Elsie Singmaster, "Father's Day," *The Youth's Companion*, September 25 1913.

<sup>94</sup> "Rose Market Quiet for Father's Day."

<sup>95</sup> Helen Rowland, "The Man of It," *The Washington Post*, May 26 1919.

<sup>96</sup> "Fathers and Children."

to forget him.”<sup>97</sup> An advertisement for Weber and Heilbroner in 1927 read: "Must make a man feel pretty blue if he doesn't receive some sort of a remembrance on Father's Day. Forlorn and lonely and forgotten. Especially when he hears other men in the office telling what they received-- and remembers that *his* folks didn't think he was worth bothering about."<sup>98</sup> One 1930 advertisement suggested that children were likely to forget about Father's Day until the last possible moment, but could still “sneak downtown on Monday morning and select his gift.”<sup>99</sup>

Alma Whitaker, a star reporter of the *Los Angeles Times*, took a particular interest in Father's Day, writing several articles in the 1920s that sought to make sense of the holiday; she used sharp wit on the occasion to discuss changes in modern family relationships. She wrote in 1923 that Father's Day had gone from being “a joke” to “deadly earnest,” such that a father would be disappointed if the day were not acknowledged. The author saw the possibility of this change as an erosion of respect for fathers:

In fact, we are deliberately creating a little self-pity in father. And what father is going to gain in sympathy he is going to lose in prestige. Of course, you may say that he never had any prestige, and that sympathy is better than nothing. But that is just a vaudeville joke. Father was the head of the family, father was the orbit round which the family revolved. Father did have the last word, even if it was an eloquently silent last word.... Father was socially, morally, legally, the boss.<sup>100</sup>

The author explained, fathers in the past were given respect rather than sympathy and "That is why he laughed when Father's Day was suggested. What need had he of Father's Day?" The entire enterprise, according to this author, “savors of some suffragetty propaganda, some feminist intrigue to belittle father and undermine his lordly prestige. A base intrigue to label father a 'poor thing' to decoy him into introspection and self-pity, to expose his weaknesses and failures.”<sup>101</sup> Whitaker teased out the condescension inherent in Father's Day and the way in which it brought fathers one small step closer to women in status and she then made light of the discomfort this caused. Whitaker suggested that criticism of mothers by “preachers and welfare workers” necessitated a Mother's Day, and that the onslaught of criticism of fathers by suffragettes had brought about a need for a Father's Day: “And fathers ought to be glad and relieved that Father's Day isn't making the same sentimental mushy hit.”<sup>102</sup> She compared this to the truism about a truly fine wine going uncommended upon while a bad wine is praised, for a fine wine needs no recommending.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> "Display Ad 8-- No Title," *New York Times*, June 18 1926.

<sup>98</sup> "Display Ad 6-- No Title," *New York Times*, June 15 1927.

<sup>99</sup> Olive Gray, "The New in Stores and Homes," *Los Angeles Times*, June 15 1930.

<sup>100</sup> Whitaker, "Of Interest to Women; the Last Word."

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*

The next year for Father's Day, Whitaker noted the lack of poems and tributes to fathers and encouraged families to pay tribute to father through small acts of loving attention, such as preparing his favorite meal or darning his socks. She asserted that "father is rather an old dear" who might at first seem startled, or even "suspicious," of such attentions, "But he'll like it. You bet he'll like it." Whitaker here echoed others who asserted that fathers were secretly pleased by the attention granted to them on their day. She also acknowledged the trend of cynical suggestions that presents were worthless to fathers because he had to pay for them.<sup>104</sup> Whitaker again pointed out the condescension inherent in the holiday: "there is something a trifle ominous about this institution of a Father's Day. Through all these centuries father has not needed defending and so inspired no defense." It was as if, she commented, father now was felt to need "a little encouragement, a little petting, a little boosting."<sup>105</sup> Here she implicitly refers to her theory that Father's Day was a response to the new criticisms of fathers brought by the women's movement.

In 1926, Whitaker again pointed out the tendency to pity inherent in Father's Day, remarking that the day reminds us "we should not only love father-- but pity him...."<sup>106</sup> Whitaker's 1928 Father's Day article asked, "What sort of emotions does Father's Day arouse in you, father, dear? Does it embarrass you a trifle and make you disturbingly introspective?" Whitaker referred to the new expectations of a "Dad" when she explained, Father's Day "excites little but eloquent admonitions anent your neglected duties. It seems you have failed in appropriate paliness with your son. That seems to be your chief offense." Whitaker suggested that what was needed was fathers "that can be neither humorously pitied in vaudeville nor fatuously patronized on Father's Day."<sup>107</sup> Whitaker wrote a series of questions to fathers about Father's Day, including, "Do you feel that there is a subtle indelicacy about it all-- this impassioned urging of your offspring to be nice to you, for all the world as though you had lost control?" and "Do you like being advertised as a 'poor dear' who isn't always receiving a fair deal? Does it make you ponder on just where fathers slipped up on being the righteous, beloved and wholesomely feared head of the family?"<sup>108</sup> She asked if it indicated an end of patriarchy and whether fathers could laugh about it.

Whitaker suggested that feminism had brought about enough advances for women that men were beginning to be condescended to in the same manner as women and that this was both confusing and annoying for men. She used "baby talk" to ask father if mean feminists were ruining things for him:

And then, forsooth, this Father's Day... sometimes honored with such suspicious acclaim, sometimes passed over with such unconcerned indifference, the former embarrassing you, the latter strangely annoying you... what agencies are at work to irritate your masculine self-consciousness...<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> Alma Whitaker, "Of Interest to Women. The Last Word. Dear Father.," *Los Angeles Times*, June 10 1924.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, "Father, Dear Father," *Los Angeles Times*, June 20 1926.

<sup>107</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, "Father's Day," *Los Angeles Times*, June 17 1928.

<sup>108</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, "Sweet Daddy!," *Los Angeles Times*, June 17 1928.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

Whitaker cited other examples of professional women earning success and using it to jokingly speak about men in the same annoying and condescending manner typically applied to women. For example, she described a professional woman at a business meeting remarking that she could not make certain jokes because there were gentlemen present.<sup>110</sup> In both 1926 and 1928, the *Los Angeles Times* accompanied Whitaker's provocative piece with a more sentimental, celebratory Father's Day item.<sup>111</sup> In 1929, Whitaker continued her tradition of using Father's Day to examine social change when she wrote a Father's Day column celebrating stepfathers, explaining that they were increasing in number because of the rise of the divorce rate.<sup>112</sup>

The joking and pity continued as the holiday became more entrenched through the 1920s. For instance, one quip in 1927 remarked: "For 364 days of the year he is a poor, down-trodden, unconsidered (though very necessary) nonentity, but today he will get a little respect and courtesy. That is, he will if he's lucky."<sup>113</sup> A 1929 *Washington Post* piece on the holiday likewise indicated: "And just for a day he's the monarch of all he surveys."<sup>114</sup> A 1927 article remarked, "Time was when ribald scoffers could haw-haw loudly and point out with much truth that '[Father's Day] doesn't mean anything.' But that time has passed." The celebration grew in permanence each year, according to this account, and was less a subject for "'wise-cracking'" than it had been in the beginning. The article acknowledged,

Undoubtedly the very idea of getting sentimental over the Old Man has a certain comical slant.... The 1926 crop of 'wise-cracks' ran to large proportions. Pretty nearly every 'column' printed one or more. One paper even had a contest of the kind.... [but] behind the funny side of the occasion tomorrow is the basic thought of showing honor, respect and love to the dear old boy.<sup>115</sup>

Commentators combined condescension, sincere appreciation, and comedy in the discussion of Father's Day.

Even as the acknowledgments of Father's Day grew, press reports continued to note that it was far less successful than Mother's Day and that "Efforts to win it national observance have not been crowned with brilliant success."<sup>116</sup> In fact, in 1928 florists in New York noted no increase in sales despite the efforts of those promoting Father's Day to put forward the red rose as the day's official flower. There was an increased sale of

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<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> In 1926, it was a short story highlighting the love shared by a father and son imperiled by war; in 1928, a poem which read in part: "Greetings to you, dear old dad,/ Greatest pal I ever had" Ellanore J. Parker, "Father's Day," *Los Angeles Times*, June 20 1926, Mary Ellen M. Chambers, "Greetings to Dad," *Los Angeles Times*, June 17 1928.

<sup>112</sup> Alma Whitaker, "Dad's Day," *Los Angeles Times*, June 16 1929.

<sup>113</sup> "Father's Day Dawns-- over His Protest; Ties and Cigars to Be His Lot, Then Obscurity."

<sup>114</sup> "Gets Little Credit Usually, but Dad Has His Day at Last."

<sup>115</sup> "Papa Has His Day to Shine," *Los Angeles Times*, June 18 1927.

<sup>116</sup> "Father's Day Gets Just Minor Notice," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 18 1928. "Rose Market Quiet for Father's Day."

cigars, but only the less expensive varieties, according to a tobacconist quoted by the *Times* as saying "A lot of persons seem to think anything is good enough for 'the old man.'"<sup>117</sup> A 1928 letter to the editor published in the *New York Times* remarked that he had not heard about Father's day ahead of the date, unlike the well-advertised Mother's Day; the letter emphasized the slight inherent in this lack of celebration by coupling the complaint with a story about a self-sacrificing father who lost his job at forty-six and could not find another, while his carefree and irresponsible flapper daughter found it easy to gain employment.<sup>118</sup> The letter combined several complaints about the younger generation, touching on fiscal irresponsibility, the competition of women in the workplace, a prizing of youthfulness over the wisdom of age, and a lack of respect for fathers.

## "Poor Dad"

The idea of a "poor father" who gets none of the credit and thanks afforded mother also showed up in jokes, articles, and songs not related specifically to Father's Day. Historian John Demos, in his 1986 essay "The Changing Faces of Fatherhood," noted that the use of the newly coined affectionate title "dad" slipped easily into the patronizing "poor dad."<sup>119</sup> References to "poor father" were not entirely new in the 1920s. As early as 1889, one song described a father listening to "songs of mother dear, But not a word for poor old dad there falls upon his ear...." In this sentimental song, the elderly father allows tears to fall when he finally gets his song "to let him know they lov'd him too as well as mother dear."<sup>120</sup> This type of sentiment grew and became vastly more popular in the 1910s and 1920s, but it was commonly mixed with humor as cultural sensibilities shifted away from the overt sentimentality of the 1890s.

The idea that fathers received less positive attention and thanks than mothers was remarked upon, certainly in discussions of the advent of Father's Day, but also in other settings. An article in the *Kindergarten Review* in 1911 noted that it was commonly said that fathers were less praised in songs, poems, and stories than mothers, but qualified that this was "only superficially true. In Shakespeare and the Bible the father receives his full meed of honor."<sup>121</sup> The idea of giving a little credit to father in the midst of more wide-sweeping mother appreciation coincided with the growing movement to support a Father's Day. A short poem published in the *Los Angeles Times* in 1913 remarked regarding mother love, "But when you praise it don't forget / That father pays the bills."<sup>122</sup> A 1916 song included in its chorus:

Keep right on praising mother, but remember there's an-  
other And give a little credit to your

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<sup>117</sup> "Rose Market Quiet for Father's Day." Also noted in and compared to success of Children's Day the day before: "Fathers and Children."

<sup>118</sup> Clement Schwinges, "Youth Will Be Served," *New York Times*, June 15 1928.

<sup>119</sup> John Demos, "The Changing Faces of Fatherhood," in *Past, Present, and Personal: The Family and the Life Course in American History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986).

<sup>120</sup> Getz, Thomas P. (words) Getz, C. H. Reed (music), *Song for Dear Old Father* (San Francisco: J.P. Broder and Co., 1889), song.

<sup>121</sup> Estelle M. Hurl, "In Praise of Fathers," *Kindergarten Review* 21 (1911): 386.

<sup>122</sup> Minna Irving, "Bits of Verse," *Los Angeles Times*, February 23 1913.



Frank Cheley, author of numerous books on fathering, also wondered why mother received so much more credit than fathers. "For years and years we have idealized mothers in song and story and, bless their hearts, they deserve it all.... and yet what about Dad?" he asked in *The Job of Being a Dad* (1923).<sup>124</sup> One author in *The Literary Review* in 1923 wrote an account of various unsympathetic portrayals of fathers in fiction.<sup>125</sup>

In addition to being less praised than mothers, fathers were repeatedly described as being overlooked by their families. In *A Vocabulary for Young Fathers* (1908) the anonymous author made repeated joking references to a father's opinion in childrearing matters being overruled and to father being told what to do by "mothers, grandmothers, aunts, nurses and other females."<sup>126</sup> This is an early example of this sort of humor—amusement about the father as the family's last consideration, as ignored and shoved to the side by women who were far more central in the lives of their children. This idea of father as the family's least concern could be taken to extremes for comedic purposes. One joke published in 1908 pretended to quote from a letter from one son to another:

The folks is well; I guess that's all--  
But stop! I 'most forgot 'bout dad--  
I 'xpect the news'll make you sad.  
You knew that dad was getting old;  
Just sixty years had o'er him roll'd.  
And so, I must regret to say,  
*We chloroformed poor dad to-day.*<sup>127</sup>

The humorist Fairfax Downey wrote in his book, *Father's First Two Years* (1925), "Let father here have the last word in this, his book. He may never get it anywhere else."<sup>128</sup> Repeating this theme, in the section on child training, Downey reiterated that mother held the final decision-making in her hands:

*Fathers who have served in the army or navy are anxious to organize offspring so that they will snap to it at the word of command. To that end they constitute themselves a Court Martial, only to find their decisions superseded by mothers more highly constituted into a Court Partial.*<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> William (lyricist) Tracey, "Give a Little Credit to Your Dad; Why Don't You Say a Word for Poor Old Father," (1916).

<sup>124</sup> Frank Hobart Cheley, *The Job of Being a Dad* (Boston, Chicago: W. A. Wilde Company, 1923), 54.

<sup>125</sup> George B. Dutton, "The New Curiosity Shop; Prodigal Fathers," *The Literary Review* (1923).

<sup>126</sup> For example, O.N.E., *A Vocabulary for Young Fathers* (New York: Dodge Publishing Co., 1908), 27-29, 33-35, 37, 47, 52, 53-54

<sup>127</sup> From *Maryland Medical Journal*. BILL, "A Letter from Home," *Health* 58, no. 2 (1908).

<sup>128</sup> Quoted in "Bittersweets of the Male Parent," *New York Times*, August 23 1925.

<sup>129</sup> Fairfax Davis Downey, *Father's First Two Years* (New York: Minton, Balch & Co., 1925), 53. Italics in original.

Many chapters included the idea that fathers' contributions were not appreciated, that he did not get to do what he wanted. A reviewer noted that there was no barb in the humor, though, "even if the author does now and then hit a foible of fond parenthood or a folly of the time square in the eye. For he does it with such laughing good humor as to disguise its truth."<sup>130</sup> Frank Cheley in his efforts to promote the idea of fatherhood as an important calling felt the need to defend father: "The world often points its finger at him, is critical of him, makes fun of him as well as light of him, but the fact still remains there is no bigger job in all of God's green earth than delivering on the Dad business."<sup>131</sup>

In a 1923 *American Magazine* article, the founder and editor of the *Independent* William Oscar Saunders wrote about the lack of attention given to fathers. He explained,

NONE of us ever paid much attention to Father. Nobody does. Fathers are a sorry, prosaic, unromantic, uninteresting lot, as a rule. They seldom take time to get acquainted with the family, and at such times as they do loosen up and try to be companionable they are awkward about it and leave everyone feeling a bit uncomfortable.<sup>132</sup>

Saunders accused readers of failing to consider the reasons behind father's distance or seriousness. Writing about his own relationship with his father, he wrote, "If he looked seedy, worn, and commonplace, it never occurred to us that it was because he neglected himself and sacrificed much so that the rest of us might have what we needed...."<sup>133</sup>

Saunders urged his readers to reach out to their own fathers: "If he has forgotten how to play, the probability is that he has never had time to play. Get hold of him; het him out of himself; make a chum of him once. Your dad may be the loneliest creature on earth, and hungry for understanding, sympathy, and friendship."<sup>134</sup> This sentimental portrait of a regret-laden son remembering his father's sacrifices drew on the idea that father might be "hungry" for his children's companionship. It also alluded to children's potential feelings of disappointment at their fathers' lack of the friendliness and playfulness that was so promoted in the 1920s.

The idea that "poor father" had recently become the butt of jokes and the object of pity was the subject of an article in the *Independent* in 1925. The article referred to a bit of newspaper humor which suggested that the den was where all the broken furniture was put in a room "for pa" by his wife:

if such comments were rare or occasional, they would have no significance whatever.... But as a matter of fact, even a superficial acquaintance with contemporary publications discloses that contemptuous jests about father are the mainstay of our humoristic

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<sup>130</sup> "Bittersweets of the Male Parent."

<sup>131</sup> Cheley, *The Job of Being a Dad*, 55-56.

<sup>132</sup> William Oscar Saunders, "Getting Acquainted with Father; a Confession," *American Magazine* 95 (1923): 39.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*: 39.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*: 177.

literature. They are made the text for popular songs of which 'Everybody Works But Father' was a fitting progenitor.<sup>135</sup>

As further evidence of the lack of respect afforded fathers in the United States, the author noted that before Christmas in 1923 in New York he noted that the only crowded portion of department stores on the day before Christmas were the men's departments, where people were doing their holiday shopping for father at the last minute.<sup>136</sup> The article suggested that throughout Europe and England the father was afforded more respect and had more power, but in the United States, fathers lost power after the Civil War:

From being erect, dominating, and respected he has dropped to the level where he can be 'poored.'... He is an adjunct of the family, but not its director. He functions as a meal ticket with no voice in the distribution. His place is secondary and ancillary. When not the butt of family ridicule he is the object of benevolent and amused toleration. In his most favorable position he is 'a dear old thing, anyhow.'<sup>137</sup>

This humor supposes that men had lost status and become the butt of jokes as compared to the more respected and feared fathers of previous generations. The backdrop of these quips and articles is the fear and discomfort around the changes wrought by feminism and the changed social mores about women's rights and roles. The perceived demotion of men is a supposed result of such changes and the humor is a means of addressing the fears that accompanied them.

In Father's Day discussions, fathering advice books and elsewhere, authors contended that father's wishes were the last consideration of his family, that authors and poets had no interest in his sacrifices, that nobody remembered his special day. But despite the inroads of feminism in the 1910s and 1920s, fathers retained substantial power in society and at home. Women won the right to vote in 1919, but men still had greater political and legal rights, as women only rarely served on juries and in government in the 1920s. Middle-class fathers were expected to use their wages to support their families, but as the breadwinners, they had final control over the family's money. The trend toward calling fathers "dear" and expressing pity for them may reflect a changing cultural ideal that valued a more egalitarian family ethos. Rather than authoritarians, modern fathers were presented as kind-hearted, relaxed, and decidedly un-tyrannical; they put their families first. But this changing ideal was not without its critics.

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<sup>135</sup> Merle Farmer Murphy, "'Poor Dad!': The Descent of Man as Evidenced by the Decline and Fall of the American Father," *The Independent* 114 (1925): 127. This article is also discussed in LaRossa, *The Modernization of Fatherhood*. #141

<sup>136</sup> Murphy, "'Poor Dad!'," 129.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

## Funny Fathers

Cartoons are a rich source of material for anyone attempting to understand the fears and assumptions of an era. In the words of sociologist Ralph LaRossa and his colleagues, "Few cultural artifacts capture, so succinctly and so strongly, popular stereotypes as much as cartoons do, which is why the social scientific study of the cartoon has had such a long and distinguished history."<sup>138</sup> Cartoons serve to reinforce cultural norms and address cultural changes. In 1991, a group of sociologists headed by Ralph LaRossa analyzed every single-panel family cartoon published in the *Saturday Evening Post* in 1924, 1928, 1932, 1936, 1940, and 1944, including ones in which parents were off-stage. LaRossa and his colleagues carefully analyzed these cartoons for depictions of behavior that could be characterized as "incompetent," identifying examples in which mothers or fathers were depicted as "ignorant, inadequate, incapable, ineffectual, inefficient, inept, stupid, unable, unfit and weak."<sup>139</sup> The *Post's* conservative editorial viewpoint and its status as the "premier middle-class (or, more accurately, *white* middle-class) family magazine in America" meant that cultural changes acknowledged by the *Post* likely reflected those generally accepted in middle-class culture.<sup>140</sup>

The authors concluded that fathers were more likely than mothers to be depicted as incompetent in the 1920s. Father figures were depicted as incompetent in *Saturday Evening Post* family cartoons sixty-nine percent of the time in the 1920s samples, whereas mothers were depicted as incompetent only thirty-five percent of the time in the same years. By contrast, the samples from the 1930s and 1940s revealed no statistically relevant difference in the frequency with which mothers and fathers were depicted as incompetent, with numbers hovering around fifty percent of the cartoon depictions.<sup>141</sup> Both mothers and father figures who were depicted as incompetent were most frequently incompetent in child socialization and discipline:

In the 1920s, 42% of the family cartoons show, in a humorous way, one or both parents as having failed to teach or instill proper behavior in the child, as unable to control the child's behavior, or as doing something likely to have a negative effect on the child's self-concept.<sup>142</sup>

In the earliest family cartoons in the *Saturday Evening Post* in the 1920s, fathers were shown as incompetent in a majority of cartoons. LaRossa, et. al. suggest that the real target of the cartoons of this conservative magazine may have been the social changes brought about by feminism and other social movements; these cartoons may have been meant to demonstrate how ridiculous men could become under the new system.<sup>143</sup> Before

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<sup>138</sup> Ralph LaRossa, Betty Ann Gordon, Ronald Jay Wilson, Annette Bairan, and Charles Jaret, "The Fluctuating Image of the Twentieth-Century American Father," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 53 (1991): 988.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*: 990. The authors looked for behaviors that matched any first-order synonym of "incompetent" or "incompetence."

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*: 989.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*: 992.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*: 994-95.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*: 996-97.

1920, the *Post* did not run family cartoons, favoring instead political humor, but other magazine and newspaper sources suggest that the father served as a butt of comedy well before 1924 and was also depicted as bumbling and silly. Comic strips such as “The Newlyweds,” which began in 1904, and “Sammy Spankem,” which began in 1912, depicted middle-class fathers as ridiculous in the first two decades of the twentieth century. Comics and jokes from sources other than the *Saturday Evening Post* also suggest that humorists and cartoonists were poking fun at the social changes in part brought about by the women’s movement, but not necessarily in an entirely negative way.

## Feminism and Club-going Wives

A variation, or perhaps progenitor, of the theme of father as his family’s last consideration appeared from the early 1900s in cartoons about club-going women abandoning the home and its concerns for political or social reasons. These humor pieces poked fun at mothers who were interested in causes outside the domestic sphere and at the fathers who were left bewildered or frustrated by the change. In *Cosmopolitan* in 1899, for instance, a comic poem credited to a father of eight began:

Old Mother Goose became quite new,  
And joined a woman's club;  
She left poor Father Goose at home  
To care for Sis and Bub.

*Cosmopolitan* was a magazine aimed at middle-class women, and the poem served not primarily to tease the emasculated father, but rather to warn the club-going mother. It concluded:

When Mother Goose at last returned  
For her there was no use;  
The goslings much preferred to hear  
The tales of Father Goose.<sup>144</sup>

Another comic published in 1900 in the *Chicago Daily Tribune* depicted a family with dirty, ragged children and smartly dressed parents. The father complains to the mother that this is a disgrace and the wife replies that she has no time to bother about it because she is off to a meeting of the “Society for Clothing Poor Children.” Her husband responds that she should call the society’s attention to their own children.<sup>145</sup> A 1901 quip played with the same sort of irony with a “Daughter Housekeeper” asking her “papa” if he would mind cold mutton for dinner since she had a cookery class to attend.<sup>146</sup> A 1915 comedy film titled *The Sufferin’ Baby* showed the husband of a suffragette attempting to care for their baby while his wife spoke at a fair for the Cause. The father forgets his

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<sup>144</sup> “The Child’s Proper Development,” *Cosmopolitan*, November 1899.

<sup>145</sup> “Comic 2-- No Title,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, January 14 1900.

<sup>146</sup> “And Papa Pays for Cooking Lessons,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 3 1901.

charge when he is tempted by a neighbor to attend the fair and endangers the infant by packing the baby in a suitcase and putting it in between the wheels of an airplane that takes off.<sup>147</sup> Although this film depicted the father as incompetent, its real target is the suffragette mother. These pieces of humor were intended primarily as criticisms of mothers, and only secondarily took aim at the fathers who allowed themselves to be emasculated by modern women.

## Courtship

Humor about fatherhood between 1900 and 1915 often related to the courtship of the younger generation. This material was fertile ground for an examination by humorists of changing social and sexual mores. By no means was all of this comic material at the expense of fathers; the courting youth were often the target. Some comics focused on father's nonchalance in the face of his offspring's overly dramatic immaturity, or on father's comically exaggerated lack of concern regarding his child (usually his daughter). In one example, a 1900 comic suggested that a father was not interested in his daughter's returning after she eloped.<sup>148</sup> Another joke was about a petulant daughter who threatens to run off with a coachman. To the daughter's surprise, this threat pleases her father since he owes the coachman wages.<sup>149</sup> Many of the jokes mocked the suitor's youth and naïveté or his comical overconfidence. Quite a few cartoons depicted a young man hoping for financial help from the father of the bride or otherwise betraying his lack of sound financial planning.<sup>150</sup> Other comics showed the young suitor foiled by a wiser father. In one 1900 comic from *Punch* and the *Chicago Tribune*, a suitor lied to a father about his income, only to have the father borrow money from him.<sup>151</sup> Numerous cartoons, jokes and short films depicted fathers physically kicking suitors out the door.<sup>152</sup>

Stories and jokes of fathers denying permission to suitors unfairly and being ignored by the young couple were fairly popular before 1910 in comics. Often these comics included the father forgiving his daughter after the marriage.<sup>153</sup> A *Chicago Tribune* joke from 1900 indicated that a father had refused a potential son-in-law's

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<sup>147</sup> Will Louis, "The Sufferin' Baby," (Thomas A. Edison, Inc., 1915).

<sup>148</sup> "An Elopement," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, February 4 1900.

<sup>149</sup> "A Stroke of Luck," *Harper's Weekly*, January 11 1908. Another example of a father being comically willing to give his permission: "Confiding," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, April 14 1901.

<sup>150</sup> "Comic 2-- No Title.", "Sure to Be Plenty," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, October 6 1901, "Comic 2-- No Title," *Los Angeles Times*, April 5 1903, "Don't Kick Him, Father," *Boston Daily Globe*, July 23 1915, "Foolish Limericks Now and Then Are Relished by the Best of Men.," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, September 11 1910, "A Good Sign," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 16 1901.

<sup>151</sup> "Comic 1-- No Title," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, August 19 1900. For another example, see "A Good Sign."

<sup>152</sup> For example, "Comic 1-- No Title," *Los Angeles Times*, March 18 1901. "Comic 2-- No Title," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, February 23 1902. "Don't Kick Him, Father.", "Foolish Limericks Now and Then Are Relished by the Best of Men.", "Interrupted Lovers," (Thomas A. Edison, Inc., 1896). "Maude's Naughty Little Brother," (Thomas A. Edison, Inc., 1900). This continued in the 1920s: "Moon Mullins," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 11 1924.

<sup>153</sup> For example, "Comic 3-- No Title," *The Atlanta Constitution*, April 21 1907. "Comic 1-- No Title," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, April 21 1907. "Comic 5-- No Title," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, January 26 1908, "Comic 3-- No Title," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 7 1908.

request in order to test the suitor's mettle, for the father assumed that a worthy young man would ignore such paternal objections.<sup>154</sup> The plot of true love foiled was popular fodder for films and many comedies and dramas involved the notion of fathers keeping lovers apart. In one 1918 silent comedy film, the heroine was locked in her room by her father who was attempting to force her to marry the nephew of his business partner. The heroine ran away and was pursued by her father who continued to try to trick her into marrying the man of his choice, only to have her fall in love with a reporter of whom the heroine's father eventually came to approve.<sup>155</sup> A 1926 film also told a tale of a suitor wooing the daughter of his employer and struggling to overcome the man's objections. In *The Thrill Hunter* the young man was an author whose books were judged by his sweetheart's father to "lack pep." The suitor had an elaborate dream in which he rescues his sweetheart and her father; he then turned the dream into a best-selling book, winning over his love-interest's father.<sup>156</sup> Sometimes these comedies involved the young people tricking the unfair father. In one short film released in 1912, a cattle rancher father refused to allow the marriage of his daughter until her suitor had amassed a sufficient amount of money, which he did by "rustling" cattle from the man's ranch with the help of the future bride.<sup>157</sup> In a slapstick comedy in 1917, a title-hungry father mistook his daughter's love interest for a count and therefore helped them elope.<sup>158</sup>

Many of the courtship quips were about daughters ignoring their fathers' opinions. These jokes appear to represent efforts to address changing social and sexual mores for young women. For example, a 1900 joke had a daughter responding to a father's suggestion that she settle down with an older man of about fifty who would be old enough to care for her by saying: "I would much rather have two of 25."<sup>159</sup> In another 1900 joke a daughter defended herself when her angry father confronted her after seeing her kissing a boy, replying "but he kissed me first, pa."<sup>160</sup> A 1914 joke published in the *Los Angeles Times* suggested the best way to keep one's daughter from running away with a suitor is to give your full consent.<sup>161</sup>

A 1905 comical essay written from the perspective of a young man in *Women's Home Companion* categorized girls' fathers like insurance risks ranging from "good" to "extra hazardous." The essay mocked friendly fathers' bad cigars and friendly attitudes and the hazardous father's hostile refusals, joking about flattering these men and giving them attention. The essay ended with the comical suggestion that suitors organize to help one another.<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> "Comic 1-- No Title."

<sup>155</sup> Albert Parker, "Waifs / Astra," (Pathé Exchange, 1918).

<sup>156</sup> Eugene De Rue, "The Thrill Hunter", ed. Janet Crothers Adaptation (Waldorf Pictures 1926).

<sup>157</sup> "The \$2500 Bride", (Pathé Frères Films, 1912).

<sup>158</sup> "Bliss," (Pathe Exchange, 1917).

<sup>159</sup> "Comic 1-- No Title."

<sup>160</sup> "Easily Explained," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 18 1900.

<sup>161</sup> "Twisting the Scriptures." There were some examples of daughters' accepting the judgement of their fathers, as well: In one short comedic film, a sympathetic father convinces his daughter not to elope, and the young couple learns about some of the difficulties with conventional weddings, such as useless gifts and a complaining minister. Jack Eaton, "The Bride" (Thomas A. Edison, Inc., 1918). In a light-hearted story published in the *New York Times* in 1909, a frivolous girl realized her father was right to deny her permission to get married. "Humor / Courtship."

<sup>162</sup> Henry J. Leahy, "Girls' Fathers I Have Met," *Woman's Home Companion* 32 (1905): 11. Also discussed in, LaRossa, *The Modernization of Fatherhood*, 136-37.

The popular syndicated comic strip *Harold Teen* was something of a style-maker among the blooming adolescent culture of the 1920s. In 1928, the comic strip was made into a full-length comedy film.<sup>163</sup> The antics of Harold, a high-school boy, often involved courtship. The comicstrip continued many of the themes from courtship jokes from the 1900s and 1910s. Harold's father often found his son's behavior and choices ridiculous, such as his expenditures on clothes and his fashion choices and denied Harold's more ridiculous requests.<sup>164</sup> In one strip in 1919, Harold got his hair done and spent much of the strip primping and wearing his mother's silk stocking on his head to sleep in, all in hopes of impressing a girl.<sup>165</sup> In another, Harold's mother was concerned about his moping and mooning over his girlfriend Lillums, so the father had his son rake the yard, thereby curing him with hard work.<sup>166</sup> Learning that band leaders earned high salaries, Harold told his father he no longer intended to go to college because he was going to lead a jazz band, causing his father to flip backwards over the couch in a comical depiction of shock.<sup>167</sup> The father of Harold's girlfriend, Lillums, was also often annoyed by Harold's antics.<sup>168</sup>

*Harold Teen* pulled from many of the established comedic themes about courtship. For instance, it made use of the comic trope of a father booting a suitor out the door.<sup>169</sup> It also depicted fathers as overly friendly and anxious to befriend suitors. In one strip, Lillums' father offers a caller (one of Harold's romantic rivals) a cigar, only to have the boy take a whole handful, proving Lillums' contention that the boy was crude.<sup>170</sup> The youths also frequently trick their fathers. In one such strip, Harold found that he kept getting roped into playing checkers with Lillums' father, so he tricked his own father into coming with him to Lillums' house to distract her father by visiting with him.<sup>171</sup> Another strip similarly portrayed Lillums' father as greeting Harold heartily and inviting him to

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<sup>163</sup> *The American Film Institute Catalog of Motion Pictures. Feature Films, 1921-1930*, (Berkeley University of California Press, 1997 (1971)), 326.

<sup>164</sup> "Harold Teen--Dad Solves the Problems," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, September 18 1924. "Harold Teen--Fame Is Fleeting," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, December 20 1929. "Harold Teen-- Pa Was Thinking How Harold Would Look in One," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, January 22 1923.

Harold sometimes called his father "Dad", as did Lillums with her father, although the men also were sometimes referred to by other titles, such as "Papa", and "Pop." For example, "Harold Teen-- Fame Is Fleeting." "Harold Teen-- What Dad Don't Know Won't Stir up a Fuss," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, August 3 1922. "Harold Teen-- the First Day Out," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, August 30 1922. "Harold Teen-- Harold Passes the Buck to Dad!," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, April 13 1921.

<sup>165</sup> "The Love Life of Harold Teen," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 18 1919.

<sup>166</sup> "Harold Teen-- Hard Work Is Dad's Antidote!," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 31 1921. Harold also had various jobs. For example, in one strip, Harold got a job as a caddie to show his father he could support himself. "Harold Teen-- the First Day Out." Another time, Harold's father got him a job in a department store. "Harold Teen-- Whadd'ye Mean, Good News, Ma?," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, December 12 1923.

<sup>167</sup> "Harold Teen-- There Are Careers and Careers," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, February 15 1926.

<sup>168</sup> For example, "Harold Teen--Goofy! Detour That Airship," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, August 21 1929.

<sup>169</sup> "Harold Teen--Dad Evidently Took a Hand!," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 14 1921. In another example, Lillums's younger brothers throw their father's boot at Harold as the youth is attempting to serenade the (absent) Lillums and Harold runs away imagining Lillums' angry father is chasing him.

"Harold Teen-- Putting Pop's Boots to Harold!," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, November 25 1920.

<sup>170</sup> "Harold Teen--He Has Taking Ways," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, January 14 1925.

<sup>171</sup> "Harold Teen-- Harold Passes the Buck to Dad!."



play checkers. Harold eventually goes off to snuggle with Lillums in the middle of the checkers game while her oblivious father obsesses over the checkerboard, not noticing Harold's absence.<sup>172</sup> Harold's father's inability to understand teen lingo is the means of Harold's gaining privacy to kiss Lillums in another strip.<sup>173</sup> These images of overly friendly fathers who cannot understand teen culture are suggestive of the power of youth culture in the 1920s; these fictional fathers were outsiders from the world of adolescents and were depicted as longing to be connected to their growing children and to be "insiders" to the world and language of youth.

The men of the fathers' generation were sometimes the ones who outsmarted the teens, such as the time Lillums' father asked Harold to allow him to examine his saxophone, slyly preventing the youth from assailing the family with his musical efforts.<sup>174</sup> A similar joke with Lillums' father insulting Harold's musical skill with a ukulele ran in 1920.<sup>175</sup> Sometimes Lillums' father was more of an obstacle, interfering and sending Harold home.<sup>176</sup> In 1926, Harold was disappointed that his father didn't take more seriously his petulant threats to run away.<sup>177</sup> Jokes around courting boys' inability to support a wife also showed up in *Harold Teen*. In one strip a boy other than Harold asks a father for his permission to marry his daughter and is rejected because the father considers the boy unable to support the daughter financially. The father says the youth would not even be able to keep his intended in clothes, and the boy responds that girls "DON'T WEAR SO MANY NOW-A-DAYS!"<sup>178</sup> In another strip, a father is pleased to learn his son is getting a job for the summer vacation, not realizing that he is hoping to save up enough money to marry.<sup>179</sup> *Harold Teen* was the first comic strip to depict the culture of high-school students. Fathers were outsiders to this adolescent culture and chiefly appeared as obstacles to be overcome by the youths.

## Misbehaving Children and their Fathers

A fair number of jokes in the late 1800s and early 1900s represented fathers inflicting corporal punishment on misbehaving children. For example, in one 1894 joke a father solemnly tells his son who is about to be punished that it will hurt the father more than it will hurt the boy, to which his son "sympathetically" replies: "'Well, don't be too rough on yourself, dad; I ain't worth it.'"<sup>180</sup> Another alluded to a boy's punishment when he tells the teacher he cannot sit because "'Pa fell over a chair this mornin' and I laughed"<sup>181</sup> Similar quips referred to fathers threatening to punish misbehaving boys or

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<sup>172</sup> "Harold Teen," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, February 7 1926.

<sup>173</sup> "Harold Teen-- What Dad Don't Know Won't Stir up a Fuss."

<sup>174</sup> "Harold Teen-- Pop Applies the Silencer," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, February 14 1924.

<sup>175</sup> "Harold Teen-- Just a Gentle Hint!," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, November 26 1920.

<sup>176</sup> "Harold Teen-- Now It's Dad Who Loses the Sleep," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, April 29 1927.

<sup>177</sup> "Harold Teen-- a Little Solace from the Sweet Sheba," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, April 24 1926.

<sup>178</sup> "Harold Teen-- but They Cost More," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, July 16 1929.

<sup>179</sup> "Harold Teen-- If Dad Only Knew," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 10 1925.

<sup>180</sup> "Filial Solicitude," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, July 15 1894.

<sup>181</sup> "Untitled Comic," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, November 3 1901.

doing so.<sup>182</sup> In one *Chicago Daily Tribune* comic in 1902, the implication is that the father has put the son in a cast and beat him severely after the boy put the father's chair on roller-skates causing the father to have an accident.<sup>183</sup>

*Buster Brown* first ran in the *New York Herald* 1902. The strip was the creation of Richard Outcault who had acquired some fame with his "Yellow Kid" comic strip a few years earlier. Buster Brown was a middle-class boy who looked like Little Lord Fauntleroy, an iconic image of Victorian childhood innocence, but behaved mischievously and played tricks on adults.<sup>184</sup> Buster Brown and his bulldog Tige were well known, appearing in twenty-four newspapers across the United States by 1908. Buster Brown's image was licensed to numerous advertisers, including a variety of manufacturers at the St. Louis World's Fair in 1904.<sup>185</sup> By 1921, when Buster Brown retired, his image appeared on toys, shoes, bread and in stage adaptations.<sup>186</sup>

It was Buster's mother who usually faced Buster's weekly high jinx and she who most often punished him. When Buster spilled soda on a lady's dress, Buster's mother was shown beating the boy on his backside with a switch as he yells that the spill was an accident. At the strip's conclusion, in which Buster contemplated the week's "lesson," which often revealed a comical failure on Buster's part to repent, Buster remarked, "IT'S A SCIENTIFIC FACT THAT IF MA DON'T MEND HER TEMPER SHE WILL GET SICK. POOR MA."<sup>187</sup> In other columns, Buster's mother whisks him away or sends him to his room.<sup>188</sup> Buster's father also sometimes doled out punishment, but he rarely appeared front-and-center in the strip. In one example, after Buster has tricked his mother into calling a doctor unnecessarily, Buster tells the reader that after the bill arrived his father extracted payment "OUT OF MY HIDE." But Buster makes this about his relationship with the doctor, not his father, vowing to seek revenge on the physician.<sup>189</sup> The father appears in the strip as a background figure—for instance, when Buster runs away, or is accidentally thought to have run away, it is both parents who collect him from the police station. As the mother tenderly embraces her son, the father is in the background shaking the policeman's hand, or, in another case, offering the police captain a bag of cash.<sup>190</sup> He appears to be grateful to see discipline provided by authorities since he cannot do it himself.

The "Sammy Spankem" comic strips, which ran weekly in 1912 in the *Boston Daily Globe*, put the father-son relationship in the center. The same theme repeated again and again in these comics -- usually while attempting to help or amuse his boy, the father

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<sup>182</sup> See for example: A. D. Reed, "Zeke Thought One Good Turn Deserved Another," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, September 11 1910. "The Adventures of Willie and Bill," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, April 21 1912. In one a man remembers his father's corporal punishment: "No Title," *Puck* 74, no. 1906 (1913).

<sup>183</sup> "Tommy Jones and His Home Made Automobile," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 22 1902.

<sup>184</sup> Ian Gordon, *Comic Strips and Consumer Culture, 1890-1945* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1998), 43. Gary S. Cross, *The Cute and the Cool: Wonderous Innocence and Modern American Children's Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 60.

<sup>185</sup> Gordon, *Comic Strips and Consumer Culture, 1890-1945*, 48-49.

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*, 80.

<sup>187</sup> "Buster Brown at the Soda Water Fountain," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 31 1903.

<sup>188</sup> "Buster Brown in the Attic," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, December 3 1905. "Buster Brown Has an April Shower," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, April 10 1904.

<sup>189</sup> "Buster Brown Gets Another Joke on the Doctor," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 10 1903.

<sup>190</sup> "Buster Brown Has an April Shower." "Buster Brown Goes to Work," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, October 18 1903.

is led by his son into one sort of ridiculous situation or another and ends up falling over, getting wet, or landing in some similarly humiliating position. Seeing this would cause the son to laugh heartily at his father.<sup>191</sup> Each comic strip ended with the child being spanked vigorously but, like Buster Brown, not necessarily displaying any true regret. These comics addressed the changing power structure of middle-class homes that increasingly valued a more egalitarian structure. Historian Paula Fass argued in *The Damned and the Beautiful* (1977) that falling family sizes contributed to the creation of a more child-centered family that valued affection and democratized relationships in the family. Furthermore, the "emotional family unit became more and more separated from other social institutions and freed of direct responsibility to them."<sup>192</sup> In *Pricing the Priceless Child* (1985), historian Viviana Zelizer showed that between 1870 and 1930 there was a process she calls the "sacralization" of children's lives, an investment in children with "sentimental or religious meaning."<sup>193</sup> Comics took aim at these changes by exaggerating and mocking such insularity, child-centeredness and family democracy. Mocking middle-class parents' efforts to please their children, humorists took particular aim at father. Perhaps this was because father had the farthest to fall and the image of a weak, eager-to-please father attempting to make friends with his son contrasted humorously and jarringly against an earlier ideal of father as a stern patriarch.

By the latter 1910s or 1920s, cultural mores had changes so that such extreme depictions of corporal punishment were no longer common items in funny pages, but the theme of misbehavior and punishment remained popular. By the 1920s, the image of a tyrannical or physically abusive father was no longer frequently depicted as funny because changing mores had made tyranny a more serious and less amusing charge against fathers. One interesting 1913 comic in the *Chicago Daily Tribune* addressed the ways in which fathers' responsibility for discipline had begun to seem problematic. A father returning home in a good mood, because of success at work, buys a box of candy to surprise his son. On the way in, the happy father is accosted by his angry wife who insists he punish his sulking son who has misbehaved. The father's posture deflates and he shakes his fist and replies "WHY DON'T YOU PUNISH HIM YOURSELF-- I DON'T FEEL SORE AT ANYBODY. I REFUSE THE JOB'." The father reads a paper instead while his wife berates him, exclaiming that if the son "TURNS OUT A CRIMINAL" it will be the father's fault. The father winks at his son who is giggling next to him.<sup>194</sup> This comic depicts the father's rejection of his traditional role of family disciplinarian and his alliance with his young son rather than with his wife; the father is playful—bringing treats, refusing to punish the boy, and winking at him. A 1922

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<sup>191</sup> For example, "Laugh and the World Laughs with You. Sammy Spankem-- He Induces His Father to Try a Laundry Trick," *Boston Daily Globe*, July 28 1912, "Sammy Spankem-- Sammy Stays Dry, but Not So with Father," *Boston Daily Globe*, October 20 1912.. "Sammy Spankem-- He Gets His Father Damp Again," *Boston Daily Globe*, September 29 1912. Also, Edison Films produced an 1899 short film of a girl tickling her papa, who then falls over backwards in his chair, causing the girl to laugh. We do not get to see the father's reaction to the trick. "Little Mischief," (Thomas A. Edison, Inc., 1899).

<sup>192</sup> Paula S. Fass, *The Damned and the Beautiful: American Youth in the 1920's* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 55.

<sup>193</sup> Viviana A. Zelizer, *Pricing the Priceless Child: The Changing Social Value of Children* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994 ), 11.

<sup>194</sup> "It's a Gay Life, but When Paternal Duty's to Be Done Father's Position Is Peculiarly Difficult," *Chicago Daily Tribune* (1913). "It's a Gay Life" was a comic strip that addressed middle-class married life. It ran from 1913-1914 in the *Chicago Tribune*.

*Washington Post* comic made a less “rebellious” comment on this same phenomenon of father’s punishing boys upon returning from work when a naughty son reminded his mother of her earlier conversation with a female visitor in which they agreed that husbands should not be troubled with household cares upon their return from the office.<sup>195</sup> In his 1928 comic essay on spanking his son, Frederic F. Van de Water, author of other humorous works on fatherhood, described being told by his wife to punish their son for punching a girl bigger than himself in self-defense. Although the author disagreed with his wife’s belief that the boy needed to be punished, he felt obliged to spank the boy as the wife requested.<sup>196</sup>

## The Father as Ridiculous

In one comic strip that began a couple of years after *Buster Brown*, the father became more central and a source of comedy. George McManus is best known for his comic strip *Bringing Up Father*, which is about a nouveau-riche Irish-American family and focused on the socially ambitious mother and daughter’s efforts to keep the father from sliding into working-class mannerisms and habits. But eight years before starting *Bringing Up Father*, McManus launched a successful strip called *The Newlyweds* at the *New York World* about a middle-class family. It began in 1904 and is sometimes considered the first “family strip.”<sup>197</sup> *The Newlyweds* focused on a couple’s efforts to please their infant son, “Snookums.” Baby Snookums was briefly a commercial success; his image sold as china figures and dolls.<sup>198</sup> *The Newlyweds* was turned into a series of cartoon moving pictures in 1913 with thirteen animated films appearing between March 1913 and January 1914. It was the first cartoon series with a recurring cast of characters to appear regularly and was the first film described as an “animated cartoon.”<sup>199</sup> The repeated theme of the comic and the animated films focused on both mother and father humorously attempting to cater to the child’s whims as they admired the toddler’s every utterance and action; but it is the father who is repeatedly put in ridiculous situations as the elegant, Gibson-Girl-like mother looks on.

In the early days of the strip, the father, who refers to himself as the boy’s “papa,” repeatedly stumbled over every situation with the baby—losing the baby, etc.<sup>200</sup> The father is shown to be a devoted caregiver, often shown as up at night with his infant, taking shifts in care with his wife and coming home early from work when Snookums is getting a new tooth.<sup>201</sup> The father’s extreme fatherly pride is often the butt of jokes, but the mother is right alongside him in most cases, sharing his exaggerated parental pride for

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<sup>195</sup> “Little Jimmie: Not Proper News for Father,” *The Washington Post*, June 13 1922.

<sup>196</sup> Frederic F. Van de Water, “My Son Gets Spanked,” *Harper’s Monthly Magazine* 1928, 429-34.

<sup>197</sup> Jerry Robinson, *The Comics: An Illustrated History of Comic Strip Art 1895-2010* (Milwaukie, Oregon: Dark Horse Books, 2011), 85.

<sup>198</sup> Cross, *The Cute and the Cool: Wonderous Innocence and Modern American Children’s Culture*, 63.

<sup>199</sup> Donald Crafton, *Before Mickey: The Animated Film, 1898-1928* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1993 (1982)), 83.

<sup>200</sup> Cross, *The Cute and the Cool: Wonderous Innocence and Modern American Children’s Culture*, 63.

<sup>201</sup> “The Newly Weds-- Baby Gets a New Tooth” in George MacManus, *The Newlyweds’ Baby* (Lexington, KY: CreateSpace, 2010), unpaginated. (This book contains dailies from 1907 to 1908). “The Newlywed Baby Isn’t A Bit Sleepy” in MacManus, *The Newlyweds’ Baby*, unpaginated. “The Newly Weds-- He Gets a Hobby Horse.” In ———, *The Newlyweds’ Baby*, unpaginated.

comic purposes. In one 1907 strip, the father sees Snookums take his first step, then calls an entire party of adults in to watch. Of course, Snookums will not reproduce the act, and everyone doubts that it ever happened. The comic ends with an official affidavit signed by Mr. Newlywed certifying that Snookums did walk at the incredibly early age of 11 months, 13 days, and that anyone saying otherwise will be prosecuted for libel.<sup>202</sup> When both parents are united in a purpose in the comic strip, it is the father who is enacting it in a ridiculous way. For instance, in a 1914 strip the mother frets that Snookums' nap will be ruined, so father runs around shushing everyone who makes a peep, only to discover that Snookums is awake and banging on a drum.<sup>203</sup>

Both parents indulge the boy, but it is the father who typically bears the brunt of the resulting difficulty. The mother seems to be "in charge" in the relationship, with the father doing her bidding. She is usually calm and elegant, whereas he is bumbling and excitable. In one such instance, Snookums picks a flower and the mother notices a bee on it. She yells in alarm and tells the father to take the flower away from Snookums. But, upon having his flower snatched away, Snookums cries. The father attempts to reassure him, offering to get him a new one, and then the father is stung. As the father screams in pain, the mother angrily tells him not to frighten Snookums. But Snookums is delighted by his father's dance, so the mother tells father to keep at it.<sup>204</sup> Similarly, in another strip, the mother does not want the father, who is wearing a new suit, to run away when Snookums sprays him with a hose because the baby is having so much fun.<sup>205</sup>

The father's efforts to entertain and please his son are exaggerated to the point of absurdity. He allows Snookums to amuse himself by pelting him with eggs.<sup>206</sup> He spends his train fare on the cost of a long-distance call rather than stop Snookums from having the fun of babbling at him.<sup>207</sup> He discards a song he has written that he believes could earn at least a million dollars when he learns that Snookums does not care for it.<sup>208</sup> His efforts to allow Snookums to have his way and keep the toddler from crying land him in trouble with outsiders and in each case he defends his son's right to do as he pleases.<sup>209</sup> The overindulgence and pampering of the middle-class child seems to be the butt of the joke here, and the father is stripped of his stern authority and shown instead to be slavishly devoted to the pleasure and whims of his child and the requests of his wife. McManus played with ideas of the more child-centered family and the increasingly high

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<sup>202</sup> "The Newlyweds: Baby Takes Its First Step," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, September 1 1907.

<sup>203</sup> "The Newlyweds-- Snookums Doesn't Mind a Little Noise," *San Francisco Chronicle*, October 4 1914.

<sup>204</sup> "The Newlyweds-- Snookums Likes Plenty of Action," *San Francisco Chronicle*, August 23 1914.

<sup>205</sup> "The Newlyweds-- Palm Beach Suits Are All Right in Their Place," *San Francisco Chronicle*, July 16 1916.

<sup>206</sup> "The Newlyweds-- Snookums Corners the Egg Market," *San Francisco Chronicle*, July 12 1914.

<sup>207</sup> "The Newlyweds-- Long Distance Tolls Don't Worry Snookums," *San Francisco Chronicle*, November 12 1916.

<sup>208</sup> "The Newlyweds--a Little Music Criticism by Snookums," *San Francisco Chronicle*, May 21 1916.

<sup>209</sup> For instance, both mother and father admire Snookums' artistic abilities when the boy paints over the work of an artist; they defend him after he rings a dinner bell, calling farmers in a stampede expecting their dinner; the father defends Snookums against an angry farmer after Snookums pulls out all the carrots for his own amusement; Mr. Newlywed is arrested when he attempts to knock over a mailbox to retrieve a mailed letter Snookums wanted back "The Newlyweds-- Snookums Goes in for Art," *San Francisco Chronicle*, July 5 1914. "The Newlyweds-- Snookums Causes a Stampede," *San Francisco Chronicle* (1914). "The Newlyweds-- Snookums Goes in for Agriculture," *San Francisco Chronicle*, August 2 1914. "The Newlyweds-- Snookums Is Perfectly Contented," *San Francisco Chronicle*, November 5 1916.

social value placed on children by bringing these ideas to comical extremes, as if to show the ridiculousness of taking these trends to their logical conclusion.

These comical exaggerations draw upon the idea, prevalent in the 1910s and 1920s, of father as the family's last consideration, of father as the downtrodden parent who sacrifices his own comfort in order to bring pleasure to his family. He is ready to do his wife's bidding and to please his infant and he does not seem to mind much how much discomfort it causes him or what a fool he appears. This may be a continuation of age-old jokes about hen-pecked husbands, but now children, too, are seen as in charge of the man of the house. Just as old jokes about hen-pecked men did not mean that men had lost all patriarchal authority, neither do these jokes mean that fathers were truly the last consideration in their families. This humor exaggerated the child-focus of middle-class families and the extent to which family hierarchies had been inverted, imagining a home in which the husband and father completely subverted his own needs to those of his child.

### ***Gasoline Alley: A Kinder Comical Depiction of Fatherhood in the 1920s***

Although the 1920s are often cited as a period of increased comedy at the expense of a bumbling father, one of the most popular comic strips of the decade, *Gasoline Alley*, depicted a warm, kind, and responsible vision of fatherhood despite the early mishaps of its central character when he unexpectedly became an infant's primary caregiver.

*Gasoline Alley* was first published in the *Chicago Tribune* in 1919, and was then picked up by the *Los Angeles Times* in 1922, the *Washington Post* and the *Atlanta Constitution* in 1923. By mid-decade it appeared in approximately 150 newspapers around the nation.<sup>210</sup> On February 14, 1921 the comic strip's creator, Frank O. King, began to feature the relationship that would lie at the heart of the comic when Walt, a bachelor, found a baby on his doorstep. Walt raises the infant, whom he called Skee-zix, on his own until his marriage in 1926 and the relationship between Walt and Skee-zix remained the center of the comic. Walt had a middle-class or upper-middle-class lifestyle and no employment until 1928 when his financial situation worsened and he was forced to take a job as a sales manager for a furniture company.<sup>211</sup> Unlike most comic strips, the characters of *Gasoline Alley* aged in real time and so the strip depicted the relationship between Walt and Skee-zix as both aged. *Gasoline Alley* is still running today (with Walt more than 111 years old), but its popular height was in the mid-1920s. Skee-zix's image was used to market a wide variety of products in the 1920s, such as candy bars, a writing tablet, watches, a radio toy, a china set, shoes, playing cards, coloring books, crayons, and a toothbrush holder. Skee-zix had his own doll, which sold 1.75 million copies by 1928.<sup>212</sup> The relationship between Skee-zix and Walt in many ways represents an ideal father-son relationship as it was understood in the 1920s. Walt and Skee-zix are companions; they hike and camp together and enjoy various leisure activities; they

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<sup>210</sup> Jeet Heer "Introduction" in Frank O. King, *Walt & Skee-zix. 1925 & 1926*. (Montreal: Drawn and Quarterly Books, 2007), 17.

<sup>211</sup> Gordon, *Comic Strips and Consumer Culture, 1890-1945*, 111-12. The characters all spent significant amounts of money on cars, clothes, toys and trips.

<sup>212</sup> C. Ware. "Skee-zix for Sale" A Semi-Comprehensive Catalog of the Merchandise of 'Gasoline Alley,'" in King, *Walt & Skee-zix. 1925 & 1926.*, 24-61.

discuss life decisions and have a masculine bond even when the boy is an infant. Many of the themes of the idealized father-child relationship from the 1920s are evident in the comic and the comic is very much representative of the changing ideas about middle-class fatherhood of the 1920s, but the fathers in *Gasoline Alley* are not ridiculous.

Skeezix was not *Gasoline Alley*'s first baby. In 1920, one of the men from the Alley, Bill, became a father. He was depicted as nervous at the hospital waiting for the baby to arrive and then proudly passing out cigars to his friends.<sup>213</sup> In the hospital after the baby arrived, he was shushed by the nurse, told not to smoke, and ordered to go to the drugstore to purchase a long list of items for the baby, all of which he does obediently.<sup>214</sup> In a later strip, the father stands apart mumbling about his lack of importance and feeling left out as a group of women swarm the new baby: "GOSH! A FATHER IS ABOUT AS IMPORTANT AROUND HERE AS A FOLDING CORKSCREW AT A DRY PARTY! LISTEN TO THAT BABY-TALK! THEY'LL MAKE A SISSY OUT OF HIM!"<sup>215</sup> This depiction of fathers feeling left out of the birth and early days of their children's infancy, as well as the father's fear that his son will be over-feminized by the dominance of women in his life, is a recurring theme in the 1920s. However, this bit of sulking on the part of the father does not preclude his involvement in the daily life of raising his baby. A strip about naming the baby shows Bill (the father) discussing it with his male friends and indicates that he and his wife are working cooperatively to find a name they both like.<sup>216</sup> The father brags to his friends in the following strips about his infant son and mentions being up all night with the baby.<sup>217</sup>

*Gasoline Alley* frequently depicted men discussing child-rearing together. The men are supportive and interested when Bill has his first child. They ask after the baby and listen patiently to the proud father. In one strip the men at the garage compare babies to cars and suggest that Bill will be less excited after the baby is less new.<sup>218</sup> The comic strip depicted the men disagreeing about childrearing decisions, as well. In one strip, one of the men, Avery, has spanked his son and is telling the boy it is his own fault, for he was warned that it would happen. When Bill, the new father, approaches them, he tells Avery that physically punishing is not the best way, and that he plans to reason with his son rather than spank him. Avery thinks to himself, "THESE NEW FATHERS GIVE ME A PAIN! YOU JUST WAIT!"<sup>219</sup>

One strip depicted a common image of the father sympathizing with his son while reluctantly backing-up his wife's more "grown up" mandates. On March 14, 1920, Avery told his son to follow his mother's command and take his castor oil, but then, remembering the awful taste of castor oil, brought his son some candy to eat

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<sup>213</sup> "Gasoline Alley-- Suspense!," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 16 1920. Bill was very proud after the birth of his son: "Gasoline Alley-- Good News!," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 17 1920.

<sup>214</sup> "Gasoline Alley-- Father Gets His Orders," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 19 1920. King himself had a prolonged stay at the Chicago Lying In Hospital in 1916 as his wife, Delia, recovered from the birth of their eleven-pound son and her pubiotomy. Frank King's diaries reveal that he was very friendly with the nurses, buying them candy and composing a humorous poem that revealed his giddy excitement at the birth of his son. Frank and Delia King lost a baby to stillbirth in 1911. Jeet Heer, "Introduction," in Frank O. King, *Walt and Skeezix. 1923 & 1924*. (Montreal: Drawn & Quarterly Books, 2006), 43-44.

<sup>215</sup> "Gasoline Alley-- Company," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 18 1920.

<sup>216</sup> "Gasoline Alley-- Choosing a Label," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 24 1920.

<sup>217</sup> "Gasoline Alley-- the New Baby," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 27 1920.

<sup>218</sup> "Gasoline Alley-- Bill Overdue," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 22 1920.

<sup>219</sup> "Gasoline Alley-- Ask Bill; He's Been a Father for Ten Days," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 28 1920.

afterwards.<sup>220</sup> This was a typical image from the 1920s of a father sympathizing with his son's perspective, even as he is required to play the enforcer to his wife. Women, on the other hand, were not depicted as conflicted when insisting that their children do something unpleasant for their own good. The image of a good father makes him more child-like than his wife, but these men were not depicted as irresponsible. Rather, they are admirably sympathetic to their children.

In 1921, the bachelor Walt became a father when he found a baby on his doorstep with a note asking Walt to care for him.<sup>221</sup> Walt called the baby his "stepson" meaning he was left on his step.<sup>222</sup> Walt's lack of experience was the source of humor in the beginning of this storyline. As women gather around him to figure out what things they will need, it is revealed that Walt believes the infant to be a girl, when it is actually a boy.<sup>223</sup> Walt is nervous, overwhelmed, and confused by the new responsibility, although many of the jokes about his lack of knowledge may be specific to his being a bachelor, the teasing about his nervousness and over-protectiveness seem comparable to jokes one might see about any new parent, male or female.<sup>224</sup> Walt demonstrated his comical lack of knowledge about infants when he corrected Bill, who suggested the baby was no more than three days old when he was left on Walt's doorstep, exclaiming, "THREE DAYS YOUR GRANDMOTHER! HE WAS NINE DAYS AT LEAST! HE HAD HIS EYES OPEN!"<sup>225</sup>

Walt is also extremely proud of his infant and urges everyone to admire the boy; he is insulted when the baby is occasionally mistaken for a girl.<sup>226</sup> Other strips showed Walt caring tenderly for the baby, asking advice of the doctor, and chastising himself for small mistakes in his determination to take good care of the infant. There were several jokes about his fussiness in finding a nurse, as he fired nurses for crimes such as using slang and wasting the baby's time until he settled on the nurse who would become a regular part of the comic strip, Rachel, a grotesquely drawn black woman whose warm attachment to Skeezix and bossy ways satisfy Walt.<sup>227</sup> His precise and over-involved instructions on the care of Skeezix, and Rachel's respectful attitude but calm resolve to do as she thinks is best are an on-going source of comedy.<sup>228</sup>

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<sup>220</sup> "Gasoline Alley-- Avery Gets an Absent Treatment," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 14 1920.

<sup>221</sup> "Gasoline Alley-- a Valentine," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, February 14 1921.

<sup>222</sup> "Gasoline Alley-- Speaking of Relatives," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 22 1921.

<sup>223</sup> "Gasoline Alley-- the Neighbors Provide for Walt's Doorstep Baby," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, February 16 1921.

<sup>224</sup> February 19, 1921 in Frank O. King, *Walt & Skeezix. 1921 & 1922* (Montreal: Drawn & Quarterly Books, 2005).

<sup>225</sup> "Gasoline Alley-- How Old Is Skeezix?," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, February 21 1921.

<sup>226</sup> April 6, 1921; November 11, 1921 in King, *Walt & Skeezix. 1921 & 1922*.

<sup>227</sup> "Gasoline Alley-- Picking as Mechanician for Skeezix," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 9 1921.

"Gasoline Alley-- Good-by-- and Don't Hurry Back," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 14 1921, "Gasoline Alley-- in Which the Nurse Gets Fired," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 19 1921. The character of Rachel conforms to many stereotypes about black "mammies" but also was interesting in that she was one of the first comic strip depictions of an African American domestic worker that showed her having a life and family and friends away from the family she worked for. Jeet Heer, "Introduction," in — — —, *Walt and Skeezix. 1923 & 1924.*, 10.

<sup>228</sup> March 9, 1921; March 14, 1921; March 19, 1921; April 7, 1921; April 8, 1921; April 12, 1921; April 25, 1921; April 26, 1921; April 28, 1921; April 29, 1921 in King, *Walt & Skeezix. 1921 & 1922*.



One oft-repeated theme was Walt's tendency to compare the infant to a car. When the baby keeps him up all night, Walt calls the doctor, diagnosing his baby as "OUT OF ADJUSTMENT" and asking the doctor to "FIX IT."<sup>229</sup> He continues to use car metaphors as he celebrates his newfound competence in infant feeding and diapering.<sup>230</sup> There are numerous jokes about Walt comparing the baby's carriage to a car, as he purchases one carriage, and later a second, and makes adjustments such as "headlights" to make them more accommodating.<sup>231</sup> These jokes played on the new love held by American middle-class men for cars and on the idea that men had a special way of caring for infants. Other strips also celebrated the masculine, unconventional way in which Walt cares for Skee-zix. For instance, on May 10, 1921, Walt is reading and expresses his admiration for the way Indians raised their children. After this, we see Skee-zix happily in a papoose as Walt works on his car.<sup>232</sup> It was common in the 1920s to highlight the special, masculine way in which men interacted with babies, and Walt's status as a bachelor exaggerated these characteristics.

Plot points in *Gasoline Alley* also demonstrate the ascendancy of expert childrearing advice and served to advertise events such as Baby Week and child welfare clinics. Walt relied not only on the doctor (his friend, Doc), but also on other sources of expert childrearing advice. He enters Skee-zix in a Baby Week Contest but is comically disgusted by the poor judging after Skee-zix does not win.<sup>233</sup> He takes the baby for evaluation at an infant wellness station and consults child-rearing advice literature.<sup>234</sup> At one point, while bathing Skee-zix and at another when trying to treat him after the baby is pricked by a diaper pin, the new father consults a manual for advice, only to realize that he has accidentally pulled a manual on how to care for automobiles off the shelf rather than one on how to care for infants.<sup>235</sup> He adopts some of the tenets of behaviorism, asking his mother not to rock the baby and attempting to break his son's thumb-sucking habit.<sup>236</sup> In a humorous reference to the emphasis on the importance of starting infant habit training early, Walt, who has been caring for Skee-zix since the baby was three days old, jokingly tells the baby who is crying impatiently for his bottle, "I CAN SEE YOU'VE BEEN HUMORED! BELIEVE ME, IF I'D GOT YOU YOUNG ENOUGH

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<sup>229</sup> "Gasoline Alley-- the Gears Slipped 12 Hours Ahead," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, February 17 1921. Also, nervously wants doctor to check the infant and keeps making comparisons to cars: "Gasoline Alley-- It Must Be Shopworn or Something," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, February 18 1921. February 18, 1921, February 23, 1921, February 25, 1921, March 7, 1921; March 10, 1921; March 24, 1921; April 13, 1921 in — — —, *Walt & Skee-zix. 1921 & 1922*.

<sup>230</sup> "Gasoline Alley-- Care and Operation," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, February 23 1921. "Gasoline Alley-- Live and Learn," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 7 1921. "Gasoline Alley-- Try Rubbing on a Wax Coat," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 10 1921.

<sup>231</sup> March 3, 1921; March 23, 1921; March 26, 1921; April 15, 1921; April 22, 1921; May 21, 1921; May 24, 1921 King, *Walt & Skee-zix. 1921 & 1922*.

<sup>232</sup> May 10, 1921 in *Ibid.*. Also, on March 29, 1921, Skee-zix likes the sound of the engine: — — —, *Walt & Skee-zix. 1921 & 1922*.

<sup>233</sup> May 2, 1921; May 3, 1921; May 4, 1921 in King, *Walt & Skee-zix. 1921 & 1922*.

<sup>234</sup> May 6, 1921 in "Gasoline Alley-- Care and Operation."

<sup>235</sup> June 16, 1921; July 29, 1921 in — — —, *Walt & Skee-zix. 1921 & 1922*. On July 6, 1921, Walt looked up how long the fontanel should remain open in a infant care book. In — — —, *Walt & Skee-zix. 1921 & 1922*.

<sup>236</sup> December 21, 1921; July 1, 1921 in King, *Walt & Skee-zix. 1921 & 1922*.

I'D HAVE BROUGHT YOU UP BETTER!"<sup>237</sup> Sometimes Walt seems overwhelmed by his duties, and in one strip he hangs the baby on the line with the wash, apparently distracted by his other domestic concerns.<sup>238</sup> But, overall, Walt becomes an increasingly accomplished and comfortable parent to the baby. In one strip Walt chats with a group of mothers about proper infant care, offering them advice about feedings.<sup>239</sup> In 1928, after Walt is married and has a second baby, he brings a large pile of books on "BRINGING UP BABIES" as well as "BEHAVIORISM AND INFANT PSYCHOLOGY" home to his wife; he later marvels at his wife's seemingly instinctive ability to care for the baby.<sup>240</sup> He tries to convince his wife to follow the tenets of 1920s infant training advice, but his wife insists on singing to the baby and rocking him.<sup>241</sup> This implicit idea that expert advice is more needed for men than women, who supposedly have an instinct for childcare, also appeared in the father-to-father childrearing advice of the 1920s.

Walt shows both his babies off to his friends and they discuss the infants.<sup>242</sup> In a 1921 strip, Walt's friends tease the bachelor when he returns to his passionate hobby of working on his car, saying, "YOU LOOK MORE NATURAL WITH A RUBBER NIPPLE IN YOUR HAND THAN A RUBBER TIRE."<sup>243</sup> There were references to advice he was given by his male friends from the garage and his friends look on with approval as he bonds with the baby Skee-zix.<sup>244</sup> The men have a caring and affectionate attitude toward Skee-zix as he grows.

In 1923 Walt became the Skee-zix's "LEGAL FATHER" and decides the boy should no longer call him "Uncle Walt." He had trouble deciding what he would like to be called, pondering,

I HATE TO START HIM CALLING ME 'FATHER.' THAT  
SOUNDS TOO OLD AND DIGNIFIED, AND HE'LL SOON BE  
CALLING ME 'THE OLD MAN' IF I DO!

AND GOSH, WOULDN'T IT SOUND FUNNY TO HAVE  
SKEEZIX RUNNING AROUND CALLING ME 'DADDY'! I  
DON'T KNOW WHAT ELSE IT COULD BE THOUGH.

As he wonders, his son, Skee-zix, comes up behind him with a popgun and says, "POP!" and so it is decided.<sup>245</sup> The comic does not make explicit why Walt is reluctant to accept the more modern "Daddy" or "Dad," but he seems to find "Pop" to be suitably casual and

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<sup>237</sup> March 1, 1921 in

<sup>238</sup> "Gasoline Alley-- Walt as a Householder," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 21 1921.

<sup>239</sup> "Gasoline Alley-- Walt Is an Authority on Mixtures," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 17 1921.

<sup>240</sup> May 16, 1928 and June 1, 1928 in Frank O. King, *Walt and Skee-zix. 1927 & 1928* (Montreal: Drawn and Quarterly Books, 2010).

<sup>241</sup> June 9, 1928; June 12, 1928 in *Ibid.*

<sup>242</sup> February 22, 1921; February 26, 1921 in King, *Walt & Skee-zix. 1921 & 1922*. May 30, 1928 in — — —, *Walt and Skee-zix. 1927 & 1928*.

<sup>243</sup> "Gasoline Alley-- Recreation," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 5 1921.

<sup>244</sup> "Gasoline Alley-- Try Rubbing on a Wax Coat." "Gasoline Alley-- Treating Him Rough," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 21 1921. February 26, 1921 in King, *Walt & Skee-zix. 1921 & 1922*.

<sup>245</sup> "Gasoline Alley: Merely a Suggestion, You Understand," *The Atlanta Constitution*, February 17 1923.

friendly as an alternative.<sup>246</sup> Despite this determination, Skeezi actually continued to call his father “Uncle Walt” and the issue was addressed once more upon Walt’s marriage to Phyllis Blossom, whom Skeezi called “Auntie Bossom.” In that example, Walt asks Skeezi if he would like to call him “Daddy” and Phyllis “Mama,” but the boy decided to continue calling them Uncle and Auntie.<sup>247</sup> It is typical of their relationship that Walt discussed this with his son and respected his son’s decision.

The relationship between Walt and his young son is affectionate, involved, devoted, and companionate. Walt cares for his son’s physical needs, such as feeding him, bathing him, and putting him to bed, even after Walt’s marriage to Phyllis. Walt is Skeezi’s role model and the boy is often drawn fondly and comically mirroring his father’s behaviors. Walt is strongly bonded to his son and discusses his thoughts and concerns with the young boy “man to man,” using him as a sort of sounding board, and also allowing Skeezi to voice his opinion about various life changes, such as whether he wants Auntie Blossom to become his mother, and whether he would prefer to live with his biological father or mother, after they each make a separate claim upon him and each kidnaps the boy in separate on-going dramatic storylines. Several plot-points highlighted the sentimental side of Walt. In May 1921 Skeezi became very ill and Walt said the illness made him realize how much the boy meant to him.<sup>248</sup> The kidnappings and custody threats also emphasize Walt’s attachment to his son.<sup>249</sup> Each year, Walt marks the anniversary of the day Skeezi arrived on his step with warm memories of how much he has enjoyed being the boy’s father.<sup>250</sup> When his second son, Corky, is born in 1928, Walt is similarly devoted.<sup>251</sup>

Walt’s style of discipline is gentle and reasoned. He talks over problems with his son, squatting down to talk with the boy eye-to-eye and speaking respectfully, addressing Skeezi as a friend. There are occasional references to spanking, but Walt is portrayed as indulgent, gentle and caring.<sup>252</sup> When Skeezi’s younger brother is born, Walt affectionately reassures the jealous Skeezi of his love.<sup>253</sup> Walt plays with his son and tells him stories.<sup>254</sup> Many of these behaviors were very typical of fathering advice literature of the day—he hikes and camps with his son, plays games with him, talks over things in a reasoned way and treats his son as a pal.<sup>255</sup> Walt and Phyllis’s marriage is loving, affectionate, and companionate—the two share leisure activities, mark

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<sup>246</sup> Ibid. A strip in 1930 similarly addresses the word “Daddy” when Walt and Phyllis’s baby, Corky, calls his father “Walt” after hearing his brother call him “Uncle Walt.” Phyllis tries to get the baby to call Walt “Daddy” only to have Corky call every man *but* his father “Daddy.” “Gasoline Alley,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, January 5 1930.

<sup>247</sup> October 9, 1926 in King, *Walt & Skeezi. 1925 & 1926*.

<sup>248</sup> May 18, 1921. The illness happens between May 16 and May 19, 1921, when Walt learns the crisis is over. In — — —, *Walt & Skeezi. 1921 & 1922*.

<sup>249</sup> For example, November 10, 1925 in — — —, *Walt & Skeezi. 1925 & 1926*.

<sup>250</sup> February 14, 1921 was the day he found Skeezi.

<sup>251</sup> For example, on June 7, 1928 and June 8, 1928 Walt rushes home from work, excited to see the baby and imagines what the baby is doing throughout the day. In King, *Walt and Skeezi. 1927 & 1928*.

<sup>252</sup> For example, January 23, 1922 in — — —, *Walt & Skeezi. 1921 & 1922*. April 3, 1926; May 12, 1926; July 10, 1926; October 9, 1926 in — — —, *Walt & Skeezi. 1925 & 1926*.

<sup>253</sup> June 19, 1928 in King, *Walt and Skeezi. 1927 & 1928*.

<sup>254</sup> For example, June 18, 1925; May 7, 1926; November 20, 1926 in — — —, *Walt & Skeezi. 1925 & 1926*.

<sup>255</sup> For example, December 11, 1925; April 9, 1926; December 21, 1926 in Ibid.

anniversaries affectionately, and discuss childcare issues, such as when Skee-zix should start kindergarten, together. In one respect, their relationship does not seem to match the trends of the 1920s—it is Walt who is more worried about Skee-zix when he is abducted and when custody is under review by the courts—his wife bolsters him with her optimism.<sup>256</sup> Throughout the run of the comic in the 1920s, Walt is often shown to be nervous and worried about Skee-zix, pacing and fretting as his relationship with his son is repeatedly threatened by others who also claim custody or when his son is ill. He is also more fretful than his wife over his second son, Corky.<sup>257</sup> Walt is a loving, devoted, and gentle father.

## Conclusion

Comics and jokes used humor to address real changes in middle-class culture--the rise of the democratic family ideal and new importance given to children. Humorists found the element of the ridiculous in these changes—fathers bumbling in their unfamiliar, untested role as caregiver, fathers making themselves ridiculous in their efforts to pal with their offspring; family hierarchies turned upside down such that father was the last consideration. The gentler humor of one of the most popular strips, *Gasoline Alley*, depicted an idealized father-son relationship, one that was friendly, involved, and filled with mutual respect and shared masculine interests.

Another form of humor was the use of condescension, typified by the common phrase “poor Dad.” The rise of Father’s Day shows the tension between father’s reluctance to give up their authority and their desire to throw off the nineteenth-century

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<sup>256</sup> For example, May 6, 1927 in — — —, *Walt and Skee-zix. 1927 & 1928.*

<sup>257</sup> Doctoral student and Canadian journalist Jeet Heer surmised in his introduction to the compiled dailies of *Gasoline Alley* that Walt’s close relationship with Skee-zix was drawn both from real events documented in King’s diaries, such as his son’s bout of Scarlet Fever which mirrored Skee-zix’s serious case of measles; and a fantasy of a close relationship King wished for but did not have with his own son. King and his wife sent their son to boarding school when he was about seven years old. The younger King would later tell his wife, “I never knew who my parents were,” explaining that he “only saw them in the summer.” Heer posits that this decision to send the boy away to school was probably at the behest of King’s wife, who was uneasy around children and committed to upholding her high social position (she was from a higher social class than her husband). Heer noted that in the comic strip, Walt and Skee-zix’s close relationship is often threatened by women, particularly the “well-born and haughty Madame Octave.” Jeet Heer, “Introduction” in — — —, *Walt and Skee-zix. 1923 & 1924.*, 43-44.

The trend with sociologists and parenting advice givers in the latter 1910s and 1920s was to posit the father as either the cool-headed, objective parent counteracting the overly protective and emotional mother, or to imagine father as a light-hearted, cheerful force to lift the worrying mother’s spirits. In *Gasoline Alley*, however, the father is a worrier. Other comic strips likewise depicted fathers as worrying. For instance, both parents of *The Newlyweds* are comically over-concerned, thinking Snookums has pneumonia when his nose is tickled by some pepper and he sneezes. The father, in particular, panics when they cannot find Snookums for a minute. Assuming he has been kidnapped, Mr. Newlywed runs to the police station. On May 19, 1929, in one of the infrequent instances in which *The Gumps* addressed parenthood, Min Gump, the mother from the comic, was crying thinking about how a tramp had once been the pride of his mother’s heart, and worrying that the same might happen to her son. Andy (the father) attempts to soothe her, but is infected by her worry and calls their puzzled young son in from playing to lecture him about avoiding criminals. November 10, 1925 in — — —, *Walt & Skee-zix. 1925 & 1926* June 14, 1928 in — — —, *Walt and Skee-zix. 1927 & 1928.*; “The Newlyweds-- No Wonder the Poor Child Sneezed,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, September 10 1916. “The Newlyweds-- Snookums Will Have His Little Joke,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, April 9 1916. “The Gumps,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 19 1929.

image of fathers as stuffy patriarchs. Many men balked at the idea that they could be celebrated with the same sentimentality as mothers, considering sentimentality condescending. The use of humor and exaggerated grumpiness expressed men's belief that they did not "need" the holiday. Frequent mention of men's control over the family purse in these jokes served to reinforce men's status as family head. Grumbling about being the family's last consideration, on the other hand, served to demonstrate the father's good humor and the extent to which he had adopted a child-centered focus for the middle-class family.

## Epilogue

### Reflections on Being in the First Generation of “Dads” : Frederic Van de Water Looks Back

This dissertation’s Introduction began with a description of the 1925 autobiographical essay of Frederic F. Van de Water (1890-1968), who described himself as a “Dub Father.” For Van de Water, writing about family relationships and parenting was a family tradition. His grandmother, Mary Virginia Hawes Terhune (better known under her pen name Marion Harland), was the famous advice columnist and homemaking authority whose column was discussed at length in the third chapter of this dissertation. His mother was a novelist and short-story writer who also collaborated with her mother on a book of etiquette in 1905 and wrote a column for *Good Housekeeping* answering reader letters and offering advice on “matrimonial partnership.” In 1913 she wrote an article about changing role of fathers, on the growing expectation that fathers take an interest in their infants and the tendency of husbands to feel excluded and ignored by their wives after the birth of a baby.<sup>1</sup> Her son, Frederic, would take up these points in his autobiographical writing.

Frederic Van de Water worked as a reporter, editor, and book critic for the *New York Tribune* and then as a staff writer for the *Ladies’ Home Journal* and book critic for the *New York Evening Post*. He published more than twenty books which included biography, travel books, books on history, and detective stories, in addition to autobiographical stories about his family life and fatherhood. Van de Water and his wife, Eleanor Gay, had their first and only child, Frederic, Jr., on November 30, 1918. Throughout his career, Van de Water wrote repeatedly about his experiences as a father to Frederic, Jr., providing insight into the experience of being a middle-class father in the 1920s.

In the 1930s, Frederic Van de Water continued to publish articles reflecting on his experiences as a father in *Harper’s Monthly*, *Parents Magazine*, *Woman’s Home Companion*, and *The Washington Post* many of which were compiled and expanded in 1939 into his book *Fathers Are Funny*.<sup>2</sup> As Van de Water reflected on his experiences raising his son and wondered about their future together as his son approached full adulthood, he reflected on the promises and frustrations of the new ideal of fatherhood described in this dissertation. Van de Water saw himself as a “typical father,” and

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<sup>1</sup> Virginia Terhune Van de Water, "Personal Talks with Wives," *Good Housekeeping*, February 1913. Frederic Van de Water’s grandfather, aunts, uncles and other relatives were also authors, members of the well-to-do literary Terhune family, and most of them touched on homemaking and family relationships in their writing.

<sup>2</sup> Frederic F. Van de Water, "Unbent Twig," *Woman's Home Companion* 1932. ———, "Fathers Are Different," *Harper's Monthly Magazine* 1933. ———, "Father Falts," *Parents' Magazine*, December 1935. ———, "A Dirge for Dignity," *Harper's Monthly Magazine*, May 1932. ———, "Youth's Realm," *The Washington Post*, March 8 1938. ———, *Fathers Are Funny* (New York: The John Day Company, 1939).

supposed that he spoke for millions more who were like him.<sup>3</sup> One reviewer promised that “fathers everywhere will see in it their own experiences and will revel in the book on this account.”<sup>4</sup>

In the introduction to his 1939 book, Van de Water addressed his twenty-year-old son directly, explaining his feelings about fathering through the 1920s:

Fatherhood, for me, has been less a job than an unstable and surprising combination of adventure, blindman's buff, guerilla warfare and crossword puzzle. These have been its constant elements. From time to time, the enterprise has presented other, more novel features, such as hanging by the thumbs and incipient apoplexy.<sup>5</sup>

The vision of fatherhood as an adventure and puzzle reflected ideas common in fathering literature of the 1920s, but in 1939, and throughout his writing, Van de Water was less unambiguously enthusiastic than those promoting involved, friendly fathering as rewarding fun. He described his wife and himself as having worked together in raising young Frederic, but the author did not regard the father's role as the “fun” one—quite the opposite: “She and I, as far as man and woman may, have shared the travail of rearing you. She has had trouble in that task but also a great amount of fun. I have had trouble and the fun has been limited, generally, to innumerable opportunities to laugh at myself.”<sup>6</sup> He explained that he had no way to know whether he would have been happier childless: “Paternity is a twenty-four hour a day, seven day week job. For twenty years I have had no holiday, no opportunity to discover whether life were pleasanter without my task.”<sup>7</sup> He regarded his role as essential, in the end, despite his fears expressed in his 1925 article that the son's relationship with his mother left little room for father. In 1939, he wrote to his son, “I have collaborated with many persons in training you, but mine has been the role of resident instructor. I am chiefly responsible for your current mental, moral and physical condition.”<sup>8</sup>

To a large extent, Van de Water described feeling let down by the promises made to him regarding parenting, the promises of the changing ideal of fatherhood described in the first chapter of this dissertation. For instance, he repeatedly wrote about the promise that children would “keep you young.” In 1932, as the parent of a thirteen-year-old, he wrote about how he did not like facing “Age” or “Dignity,” which he suggested were the same thing.<sup>9</sup> This widespread negative view toward aging and maturity and the belief that children could be an antidote to it was new in the 1920s. Van de Water did not find truth in the widespread promise that being in the company of children kept you young. In 1939 he reflected on the changes wrought on his and his wife's social life by the birth of their son: “Only gradually, I have learned that the child whom you have been told will

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<sup>3</sup> Van de Water, *Fathers Are Funny*, 19.

<sup>4</sup> John E. Drewry, “New Book News,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, June 16 1940.

<sup>5</sup> Van de Water, *Fathers Are Funny*, 12.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 12-13.

<sup>9</sup> ———, “A Dirge for Dignity,” 763.

prolong your youth, takes, as its first aggressive act, the last of youth away."<sup>10</sup> And he wrote a comic article for *The Washington Post* in 1938 in which he described how he found that being in the company of his collegiate son and the boy's friends during summer break made him feel ancient rather than affording him the promised revigoration. He remarked sarcastically, "At 47 I am being 'kept young' by my child and his friends—as young as the returning Rip Van Winkle."<sup>11</sup>

He also found that he was unable to uphold the ideal of being a playmate to one's boy. In a chapter entitled "Just Splendid Pals," Van de Water reflected on a problem from his early years of parenthood. He explained, "There is little more reason why son and father should be interested in the same things than there is to expect that two men with the same color hair should have identical political opinions."<sup>12</sup> Van de Water wrote that by the time his son was eight, he could find few tastes that he and his son shared: "I still shudder when I look back at my clumsy and wholly unsuccessful efforts to interest you in my hobbies or to participate in yours."<sup>13</sup> Van de Water and his own father did not share interests, either, he reflected, but the difference was that unlike his own father, Van de Water, fathering in the 1920s, felt pressured to attempt to be pals with his son in order to be a good father:

But I did endure the ordeal of trying to be your age and take part in some of your pastimes. Drearly and clumsily, I played at lead soldiers with you or, uninvited, helped you operate your electric train. We did not have the same idea of what constituted pleasure. I was fraudulently enthusiastic, you were politely puzzled and we both were profoundly bored.... At last, wisely, I abandoned my attempts to share in your childish pursuits and withdrew permanently with the uneasy consciousness that all I had quickened in you was the suspicion that I was a fool.<sup>14</sup>

He abandoned his efforts in his son's early childhood because he was sure that they would "find some common ground for intimacy and become, father and son, just splendid pals" but, he wrote regretfully, that had not happened.<sup>15</sup> As he aged, Van de Water abandoned some of these expectations, explaining, "Lack of real intimacy between us no longer quickens in me the guilty feeling that I am being false to my trust as a father."<sup>16</sup> He concluded, in a light tone, that perhaps by the time they reached fifty and seventy-eight, they would achieve this-- "We are not yet pals-- but hope persists."<sup>17</sup> Van de Water adopted the new ideals of fatherhood even as he believed he had failed to live up to them. The concept of becoming a "pal" to one's son was so prevalent by the mid-1920s

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<sup>10</sup> ———, *Fathers Are Funny*, 27.

<sup>11</sup> ———, "Youth's Realm."

<sup>12</sup> ———, *Fathers Are Funny*, 75.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 79.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 80.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.



that, unlike his own father, Van de Water felt required to attempt it and was disappointed when it did not have the promised result of bringing him and his son into close companionship.

As he wrote about fatherhood, Van de Water imagined himself aligned with other men and dedicated his book to them. In 1925 Van de Water wrote about the need for advice books for fathers, and in 1939 he remarked again on the troubling lack of professional assistance offered fathers, explaining that it was his son rather than books that educated him in the main.<sup>18</sup> He remarked that he and fathers like him relied on the example of their own fathers because they had “no other guide,” no “professional school for fathers.”<sup>19</sup> He implied that the mother-child bond was less fraught for the mother because she had the assistance of college courses, instinct, sentiment and tradition, whereas fatherhood was self-taught. He wrote, “Most of a mother’s anguish is over at birth. A father’s is just beginning.”<sup>20</sup> Although his was a book of humor rather than advice, he clearly hoped it would fill a void and help fathers feel uplifted by reading that their feelings were shared by another. He wrote of his fellow fathers,

Perhaps their chief sensation, as their sons stand on majority’s brink, is akin to mine-- a sense of bruised breathlessness and a devout thankfulness that things are no worse, which is kin to feelings the survivors of an automobile smash-up share.<sup>21</sup>

He did occasionally mention his wife in his book, but the focus of the book is on his fellow fathers.

He referred to all the other confused fathers who felt they were failing to enjoy fatherhood as much as they were told they should, who failed to feel that they were being the best father they could be, as “dubs” and as members of a “fraternity” of fathers:

We are the dubs, who secretly wonder whether the violence and mystification of our long initiation has not been too stiff a price to pay for our current rank in a fraternity whose members, after all, enjoy no great amount of popular esteem, except as reliable stooges, and no special privileges at all.<sup>22</sup>

Van de Water believed that fathering was essentially different from mothering and much less sentimental:

I suspect, furthermore, that much of the current stencil rapture over parenthood originally was uttered by women. I have no longing to argue with them over the reputed delights and satisfactions of being a mother. I only point out that, as far as

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 45.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 51. He also wrote, “No college invites its students to enroll in a course on fatherhood and its problems.” ———, *Fathers Are Funny*, 45.

<sup>20</sup> Van de Water, *Fathers Are Funny*, 60.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 29.

I am aware, I am not even remotely maternal. I dwell, like all male parents, outside the radiance that perpetually suffuses Motherhood.<sup>23</sup>

In this way he mirrors the trends outlined in this dissertation toward men seeing fatherhood as an adventure and trial to be discussed among men and by men, as opposed to focusing on more gender-neutral shared parenting. He also reinforced the idea of fathering as a masculine activity by separating it from mothering, a trend also examined in this dissertation.

Van de Water commented on the idea that fathers did not receive the same tributes as mothers, an idea commonly discussed in the 1920s. He wrote, "I know of few canvases and fewer books about fathers" and complained, as many of his contemporaries did, that the only song in tribute to father that he could think of was "Everybody Works But Father."<sup>24</sup> Van de Water had an interesting theory to explain this disparity:

In art paternity furnishes good comic strip material-- nothing more.

This is not complaint. I understand why mothers are sanctified and fathers are-- different. Anyone must who has been a father himself. My defense is entirely negative. After thirteen years of paternity my sole rebuttal to slurs against it is the suggestion that perhaps fathers don't like their roles any more than the audience seems to. I undertook paternity eagerly. I hope to play it through to the end, clumsily, unhappily, like most fathers but not so mutely. I don't like it at all. Neither, I suspect, do many more stalwartly reticent males.<sup>25</sup>

Van de Water rejected the efforts of his contemporaries to promote fatherhood as joyful and exciting; instead, he felt the burden of the task fully and felt unable to live up to the expectation that he embrace it enthusiastically, finding his efforts to become pals with his son pointless, foolish, and boring. He was similarly cranky about the growth of Father's Day and, like many of his contemporaries, found the holiday wanting: "Even the recently fabricated Father's Day has an 'I-know-he-is-but-let's-give-the-old-goat-a-break' flavor. Grandfathers, sometimes, are accorded a respect, unaccompanied by mirth. Not fathers."<sup>26</sup> Van de Water addressed the role of fathers as the butt of jokes and suggested it might be attributed to the growing celebration of youth: "The American credo regards fathers as always reliable clowns, as permanent stooges. I am not sure why this should be, though perhaps the national worship of youth is responsible, but for twenty years I have been wholly aware that it is so."<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>24</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, "Fathers Are Different," 31.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 32.

<sup>26</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, *Fathers Are Funny*, 31.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

Importantly, although Van de Water discussed the disappointments with the new ideals of modern fatherhood, he explicitly and repeatedly affirmed that he would not want to go back to the ideals of the previous generation. To his son, he wrote: "Despite the current mirthful disregard visited upon fathers, I do not yearn for the good old days....If my fatherhood has to have tribute from you, I prefer that it be laughter rather than dread."<sup>28</sup> He continued,

You laugh at me, often and openly. I am more glad than sorry this is so. If my paternity should cease to be accompanied by merriment, I should be lonely after twenty years of such hand in hand association. I prefer your candid laughter and the mild friendship it implies to fear and the scornful, covert mirth.<sup>29</sup>

This quotation reflects changing emotional mores of the 1920s. Rather than stern respect or deeply felt love, Van de Water dismissively, light-heartedly described his son's feelings for him as "mild friendship," which he considered to be satisfactory. This sort of attitude is at the root of much of the humor about fathers in the 1920s, a tendency among father authors to be light-heartedly dismissive of their own importance in the family does not reflect a real lack of importance, but rather a mode of self-expression that prized this sort of breezy humility. Van de Water saw the laughter of his son as evidence of the modern, friendly relationship between them, and while he did not fail to see problems with it, he found it superior to the "old-fashioned" model of sons fearing their fathers.<sup>30</sup> Van de Water regarded his own fathering as different from his own father's and believed that his relationship with his son reflected the changing times in which he lived. His analysis and depiction of his parenting reflects the impact of the changing ideal of fatherhood and the successes and failures experienced by one man who attempted to live up to these new ideals.

There is evidence that father involvement fell in the 1930s. Three studies—the Middletown Study, the Oakland Growth Study, and the American Home Economics Association Study-- addressing father involvement in the 1920s and 1930s report that fathers' participation in their children's lives decreased in the 1930s.<sup>31</sup> Ralph LaRossa and Donald C. Reitzes found that fathers who wrote to parenting advice authority Angelo Patri wrote shorter letters in the 1930s than in the 1920s and mentioned fewer parenting behaviors.<sup>32</sup> The Great Depression brought not just job loss, but a decrease in income for middle-class fathers who remained employed, with even doctors, lawyers, and skilled stenographers experiencing severe pay decreases. Fathers who did not lose their jobs

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 33-34.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>30</sup> He wrote that there were "times... when I envy the fathers of a century ago" who were unquestioned by their offspring for their greater "self-confidence and serenity" as parents; but, he concluded, fathers in those times were in actuality "no more important that [sic] I myself feel frequently." Ibid., 18.

<sup>31</sup> Ralph LaRossa and Donald C. Reitzes, "Continuity and Change in Middle Class Fatherhood, 1925-1939: The Culture-Conduct Connection," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 55, no. 2 (1993): 456.

<sup>32</sup> Their use of statistical controls further "reinforces the case for the negative effect of the Depression on father involvement." Ibid.: 462.

were likely to have been more stressed by and focused on breadwinning.<sup>33</sup> The Indian Guides' records describe leaders and members who were embarrassed or stressed by their financial situation leaving the organization.<sup>34</sup> Such evidence suggests that the period between the mid-1910s and the early 1930s may have represented a high-point in paternal involvement, with economic and social conditions contributing to a greater role played by fathers in the lives of their children. But there is also evidence, such as the booming success of California's PTA men's groups in the 1930s, that suggests that increased father involvement continued. It is clear that many of the new expectations for fathers that developed in the late 1910s and 1920s remain relevant even today. For instance, historian Gary Cross has explored the link between the celebration of boyishness in the 1920s and a contemporary reluctance among men to give up the trappings of youth in *Men to Boys: The Making of Modern Immaturity* (2008).<sup>35</sup>

Between 1900 and 1930, a new ideal of fatherhood came to the fore. As early as 1900, authors worked to encourage men to take a more active role in childrearing and these efforts expanded around 1915. A wide variety of authors, educators, journalists, and academics worked to promote the idea of fatherhood as fun and masculine in an effort to tie men more closely to their homes. Such authors hoped their efforts would lower divorce rates as well as help middle-class boys by providing a less female-dominated upbringing. Furthermore, writers promoting involved, playful fatherhood believed this mode of childrearing would provide men with a connection to their own more youthful selves and a sense of meaningful purpose in their families beyond breadwinning. Men were encouraged to put fathering at the center of their lives, to spend leisure time with their families and to take on a new set of emotional tasks—to be light-hearted and relaxed with children, to be playful, even mildly rebellious about mother's wishes. All of this was approached as a means to an end, as a way of both bringing sons and fathers in closer comradeship, and attracting men to parenting by describing it as fun, modern, masculine, and a way to connect to one's youthful ideals and fight ennui. After a day of hard work in a corporate setting, men were encouraged to rediscover their boyhood joys by playing with their sons, thereby both reinvigorating themselves and finding an important and meaningful way to guide and connect with their sons. Men such as Van de Water openly contemplated the ways in which the elevation of mother's status in the home had left men feeling peripheral, even as they celebrated modern, democratic family structure. Van de Water's autobiographical work suggests the ways in which this ideal was seriously flawed, but the discussion of men as "playmates" to boys did not reflect a real rejection of adulthood responsibilities so much as an effort to carve out a special, appealing way for men to find true connection to their children-- especially sons-- and to create a role for themselves and purpose in their modern families.

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<sup>33</sup> Mintz and Kellogg in *Ibid.*: 462.

<sup>34</sup> "History of Indian Guides," in *Friday, Joe. Box 66. Biographical Files.* (Kautz Family YMCA Archives. University of Minnesota.), 6-7.

<sup>35</sup> Gary Cross, *Men to Boys: The Making of Modern Immaturity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008).