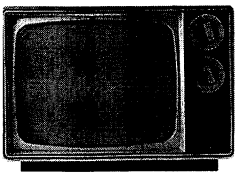

"Do I Look Like a Chick?": Men, Women, and Babies on Sitcom Maternity Stories[1]

Judy Kutulas

On Monday evening, January 19, 1953, forty million Americans watched as the very pregnant Lucy Ricardo (*I Love Lucy*, 1951-57) emerged from her bedroom to declare that it was time to go to the hospital.[2] What followed was a slapstick salute to 1950s gender stereotypes. Lucy, radiant and serene, was left behind in the panic her announcement generated. Husband Ricky had rehearsed the moment, but choked when it actually arrived, spilling her suitcase, losing the phone, and putting her coat on the neighbor. When they reached the hospital, it was dazed Ricky who rode in the wheelchair. The audience modestly bade goodbye to Lucy at the elevator door, thereafter watching Ricky's response to fatherhood. He paced the fathers' waiting room, exchanged comments with the other fathers about the advantages of sons over daughters, and finally fainted at the sight of his son. Fast-forward about forty years to the blended family of Frank Lambert and Carol Foster (*Step by Step*, 1991-present). Frank and Carol got off to the hospital without a hitch and we didn't say goodbye to Carol at the elevator. Instead, we saw her in labor, cranky and demanding. Frank was there too, inadequate and embarrassed. Their children, meanwhile, paced the waiting room no longer reserved for fathers, girls in blissful smiles and boys looking uncomfortable. How long does it take to have a baby, one boy asked another. "How should I know," was the reply, "do I look like a chick?"

Two TV birthing stories, forty years apart, reveal some curious changes and continuities. There is considerably more explicitness in the 1990s story and Carol lacks Lucy's serenity. Ricky's role was to pace and panic; Frank, however, was expected—by Carol as well as the audience—to take part in the birthing process,

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an experience he only appreciated after the fact. In other ways, though, Ricky's and Frank's roles are more alike; both meant well, but were clueless about delivery, clearly believing that having babies was women's work. Supporting characters reinforced their assumptions: the Foster-Lambert girls looked positively dreamy at the prospect of childbirth, while the Ricardos' neighbor, Fred, was too panicked to speak and the Foster-Lambert boys were afraid that knowing too much about babies might compromise their masculinity. These gendered portrayals of people confronting pregnancy reflect the unevenness of social change in America. What divides them is the women's movement of the 1960s and 1970s. We can see the clear impact of the women's movement on Carol's TV birthing experience. She has more control over her delivery and more power than Lucy ever did. But when we look at Frank's birthing experience, he has actually lost control and power relative to his wife. The primary impact of the women's movement on him is what it forces him to do: enter what had been a female space and participate in what had been a female task. Television's maternity stories are cultural documents reflecting and reinforcing tensions in modern society between women who have been changed by the women's movement and men who have not. They are expressions of what Arlie Hochschild calls a "stalled revolution."[3] In these stories, as in the real world they are about, the costs of women's achievements must be absorbed by the women themselves. The larger society has yet to fully accomodate women's changing roles.

Pregnancy is a common TV gimmick. In some cases, writers create maternity stories to accommodate pregnant actresses. In others they are "contrived devices to help freshen a show and allow it to develop in a new direction."[4] Ever since Lucy's very public pregnancy and the equally public arrival of Little Ricky, television writers have mined maternity for its comic possibilities. Maternity is interesting to audiences for many reasons. It is a "common denominator" experience, something with which a fair percentage of the viewing public can relate. It is about physical and emotional change and reactions to change that combine drama, sophisticated sexual commentary, and the kind of slapstick lowbrow humor that usually ensues when a large pregnant woman can't get herself out of a chair. Pregnancy stories are but the first step in a whole sequence of new story lines about infants, toddlers, and precocious children. But, most of all, maternity stories are a safe way of talking about gender. Pregnancy is a trope for exploring our cultural definitions of femininity and masculinity, motherhood and fatherhood, and the ways these constructs have changed over time. Pregnancy stories are not "in-your-face" stories of the women's movement; they are about soft, sweet babies and nurturing parents. But if they seem less threatening because the venue of the nursery is more traditionally a woman's space, so too are they about a topic far more controversial than workplace equality or who initiates a date. These stories cut right to the heart of the differences between men and women and explore the relationship between women's biology and women's choices.

These women's stories are also told against a larger social backdrop. They are necessarily about how society contextualizes women's events, how men receive and react to babies and how the culture talks about men's and women's responsibilities vis-à-vis babies. Maternity stories are a perfect example of the hegemonic dialectic between culture and ideology, reinforcing culturally dominant ideas about motherhood while allowing for the safe exploration of other possibilities.[5] Stories about pregnant women titillate viewers with subversive gender acts, but finally contain that behavior in socially acceptable ways. The discourse of difference they narrate reflects and reinforces contemporary gender disequilibrium and shows us that while the women's movement has had its impact on both society and television, that impact is uneven, uncertain, and still shaped in ways often detrimental to women.

The first maternity stories, on *I Love Lucy* (1951-57), showed us a society in flux, one moving away from wartime gender roles but not yet fully comfortable with the post-war feminine mystique. As many commentators have suggested, Lucy Ricardo was a subversive character inherently suspicious of domesticity.[6] Pregnancy did not quell her rebellion; she still found the world outside her door far more interesting than her womanly domain. But the stories about Lucy's pregnancy also gave voice to postwar anxieties about women's alleged appropriation of men's roles in the preceding decades by depicting what social analyst Philip Wylie called "momism."[7] Wylie argued that American women had grown so powerful that they weakened and emasculated their husbands and sons. Lucy's complete absorption in her pregnancy was a form of momism. She had no time to be Ricky's wife. He had to cope with his own meals and laundry. Eventually, he felt so neglected that he developed pregnancy symptoms and she had to rebuild his ego. The *I Love Lucy* maternity episodes reinforced the series' premise, that men and women were locked in a permanent gender war where any departure from social expectations by either sex was threatening. On some level, though, motherhood gave Ricky the upper hand in that war. Lucy could no longer be quite as subversive, and her subsequent challenges to the system were undertaken on her son's behalf. Motherhood helped rebalance the dynamic in the Ricardo family because, while stories of failed attempts by a housewife to escape domesticity served as a kind of social safety valve, the role of mother was too inviolable to challenge.

By the middle of the 1950s, situation comedies increasingly embraced an image of motherhood distinct from the subversive elements Lucy expressed. June Cleaver (*Leave It To Beaver*, 1957-63), Donna Stone (*The Donna Reed Show*, 1958-66), and Margaret Anderson (*Father Knows Best*, 1954-63), better embodied the feminine mystique with their wholehearted commitment to family and their happy submersions into domestic life. Nina Liebman suggests that the plots of these "domestic melodramas" emphasized that dad was in charge on the home front and mom was the family's selfless and mainly invisible servant, not because the family tensions expressed in *I Love Lucy* had been resolved, but

precisely because they had not.[8] Beth Bailey argues in *From Front Porch to Back Seat* that after World War II modern life created such fears about masculinity being imperiled that dating rituals had to artificially rebalance gender relations.[9] The domestic melodramas served a similar function by providing cultural models for modern fathers that depended on subservient roles for mothers. The women of domestic melodramas avoided momism by serving others and deferring to their husbands. This set the stage for stories that emphasized the "valuation of the father [that] occurs to some extent in nearly every episode, especially in conjunction with denigration of the housewife."[10]

Domestic melodramas were part of a larger hegemonic culture that helped shore up men's roles in a changing society, investing in them a status not quite so clear in real life. They spoke to people uncomfortable with what seemed a growing power inequity between men and women. Modern women had allegedly limitless choices, but modern men seemed increasingly constrained. Social commentators warned that the corporate workplace forced them to stifle their natural masculine competitiveness and become team players. Their jobs consumed long hours; the commutes to and from suburbia kept them from their children. Their wives began to perform many traditional paternal tasks, like mowing the lawn and taking sons to Little League.[11] Meanwhile, Freudian psychology, reaching its peak in the 1950s as a force shaping child-rearing advice, warned parents about the importance of clear gender models for boys and girls.[12] Domestic melodramas (re)created a nostalgic world where fathers were at the moral center of the family and mothers selflessly sacrificed their identities for their families. If *I Love Lucy* portrayed a gender war, in shows like *Leave It To Beaver* and *Father Knows Best*, such a war was unnecessary because mothers knew (or learned) their place. Since these series showcased fathers, they only rarely featured maternity plots and those that existed were never about continuing female characters.

The ubiquity of what we might call the father-knows-best plot, though, suggests a society still uneasy with gender roles. Domestic melodramas, after all, relied on invisible mothers to artificially inflate fathers' roles. *Bewitched* (1964-1972) seemed a cultural expression of the feminine mystique, suggesting that a witch would trade her magic for an ad-man and (eventually) two cute children. Beneath the surface, though, lurked the recurring theme of man's emasculation by modern woman, a theme that intensified as the 1960s progressed. Magic powers or not, Samantha Stevens was smarter, stronger, and more independent than husband Darrin, the ultimate corporate yes-man. Nowhere was the disturbed power balance of their marriage clearer than when Samantha became pregnant. In one maternity episode, Darrin tried to help her around the house, but his second shift work interfered with his real job. His boss warned him that women used maternity as an excuse to escape their domestic duties, so Darrin stopped pampering Sam. As revenge, Samantha's mother, Endora, cast a spell on him, making him pregnant too. His stereotyped pregnancy symptoms—mood swings, food cravings, and backache—rendered him even more dysfunctional at work.

The episode contained both a subversive subtext and a more traditional presentation of gender roles. Darrin could not handle pregnancy as well as Samantha could, and he certainly could not do her job around the house. However, notice that Darrin's boss was inherently suspicious of women (even pregnant women) and assumed that Sam plotted to escape her domestic duties; Darrin's way-too-powerful mother-in-law imposed an emasculating condition on Darrin as punishment for mistreating her daughter; and Samantha was still more capable than Darrin was, pregnant or not.

The social context for all this male nervousness was a society where gender roles were in flux, one experiencing *The Feminine Mystique*, *Cosmopolitan*'s celebration of the "single girl," Phyllis Diller's rebellious housewife comedy routines, the *I Hate to Cook Book*, and other expressions of domestic distress.[13] Darrin lived in Philip Wylie's worst nightmare, a world where three generations of females—daughter, wife, and mother-in-law—could humiliate him with the twitch of a nose. The maternity episodes of *Bewitched* equated men's declining power with women's growing strength. They were jittery responses to a world where women seemed to be usurping men's roles.

The Dick Van Dyke Show (1961-66) also portrayed a world reassessing the feminine mystique, but Rob and Laura Petrie were more open to the new mores than the Stevenses.[14] While Darrin had, in Susan Douglas's wonderful phrase, "all the sex appeal of egg albumen,"[15] Rob was romantic and sexy. Laura was a housewife, but with her tight capri pants and glamorous demeanor, she hardly fit the retiring June Cleaver mold. The Petries' was a different marriage than any presented in a previous sitcom. It was a deft version of *McCall*'s "togetherness" ideal,[16] a partnership of equals who co-negotiated the challenges of an outside world, co-parented, and actually seemed to have sex. Part of "togetherness" was the idea that men and women were different, yet formed equal parts of a complementary whole. Certainly we see this in the show's flashback maternity episodes, which featured glowing women and panicked men. The tensions parenthood brought were not between Rob and Laura, but between them as partners and their more traditional parents. In one episode, for instance, they fought their families over their child's name. In another, they had to explain the facts of life to their son after his grandfather told him stories about storks and cabbage patches. *The Dick Van Dyke Show* voiced the quiet rebellion of a postwar generation seeking independence from its old-fashioned parents and finding solace in a homogeneous, suburban, consumer-oriented society. Rob Petrie was actually the WASP alter ego of series creator Carl Reiner. Reiner's characterization of the Petries as modern, perhaps even permissive, parents[17]eliminated much of the gender tension of earlier sitcoms by de-emphasizing the differences between Rob and Laura as parents while demonstrating that they parented differently than their elders.

The quiet rebellion of the Petries and their postwar generation, however, was quickly overshadowed by a much larger and noisier rebellion, that of the baby

boomers. Until the late 1960s, network executives did not much distinguish between heavy viewers of television and likely consumers of advertised products. They pitched their shows at TV's heaviest viewers, who were disproportionately older, rural, and less educated or still children. These audiences liked shows such as *Gilligan's Island* (1964-67), *Petticoat Junction* (1963-71), and *Bonanza* (1959-73) with their predictable plots, simplistic moral lessons, and old-fashioned gender roles. Advertisers accepted high Nielsen ratings as evidence of marketing potential. CBS was the master of this strategy until NBC and ABC tried to undercut its success by promoting their shows as having smaller overall audiences but better demographics. What that meant was that specific segments of the audience were more likely to buy the products featured in the commercials aired between specific shows. It turned out that TV's heaviest viewers were not good consumers. Baby boomers, just coming of age and with considerable disposable cash, a free-spending mentality, and few responsibilities, were. And so began the courting of the 18-to-44-year-old audience and audience segmentation as a programming fact of life.[18] These young viewers were not excited by such fantasy shows as *Gilligan*. They were interested in the war in Vietnam, the beginnings of the women's movement, and the sexual revolution, events and experiences that shaped their identities and made them feel different from their parents. Norman Lear's *All in the Family*, premiering in January 1971, was the first of a new type of programming that catered to the new demographic trend: the so-called relevancy TV.[19]

All in the Family (1971-83) used maternity stories because, like stories about race, religion, and politics, they were vehicles to explore the generation gap between politically liberal, sexually liberated baby boomers and their more conservative, more traditional parents. Lear's show pitted Gloria and Michael Stivic against her parents, Archie and Edith Bunker. It was aimed at younger liberal viewers, but even the gruff and bigoted Archie had his fans, suggesting that the rendering of the characters was sufficiently ambiguous to appeal to both sides of the generation gap.[20] Lear often had Gloria voice the ideas of the then-emerging women's movement, but *All in the Family* was hardly a feminist show. In fact, the feminism it presented was incomplete and misrepresentative, legitimating a few of the movement's goals while establishing the stereotype of the feminist as "a hairy-legged, karate-chopping commando with a chip on her shoulder."[21] Gloria's encounters with feminism made her angry and shrill. Her targets were often vague; men oppressed women in her characterization, but her analysis never got more sophisticated than that. When she liberated her mother it meant dressing her in a pantsuit. Gloria's liberation was equally cosmetic. She continued to work low wage jobs to put her husband through school and helped her mother around the house while the men continued to sit and argue.

Yet the women's movement did necessitate *All in the Family*'s reconceptualization of the motherhood paradigm. When Gloria discovered she was accidentally pregnant, her mood was not like Lucy's or Samantha's. She was

ambivalent. The show challenged the central assumption of the feminine mystique, that the essence of womanhood was motherhood. And, at the end of the episode, relevancy TV likewise violated the happily-ever-after formula of previous maternity stories by having Gloria miscarry. Relevancy TV thus opened up the traditional maternity plot, allowing women to try on the idea that motherhood wasn't a singular destiny. But Lear undercut Gloria's position as a new woman by juxtaposing a new male stereotype: the new, sensitive man.[22] In the miscarriage episode, for instance, Gloria's mixed feelings as she came to terms with being pregnant and then dealt with her loss were both less interesting and less attractive than her father's fumbling response to her miscarriage. Similarly, later episodes about Gloria's pregnancy were not as compelling as stories about Michael becoming a modern father. Gloria's feminism was a parroting of strident views imposed on others; it made her a more predictable, less pleasant character. Michael, on the other hand, became more nuanced as he tried to mediate between older and newer meanings of manhood. Gloria and Michael were attractive to younger viewers because they were idealistic, sexually expressive, and liberal. But when they rejected traditional gender roles, Michael started to look better than Gloria because he became more sensitive to her feelings and needs and she became less sensitive to his. Michael benefited by his comparison to Archie; he seemed infinitely more willing to help around the house than his father-in-law and treated his wife like a human being. Gloria, by contrast, suffered from the contrast to her mother, who was sweet-tempered, nurturing, and always willing to help others.

All in the Family was not the only show to tackle the women's movement. On shows that continued to attract more traditional audiences, like *The Beverly Hillbillies* (1962-71) and *Green Acres* (1965-71), the women's movement was portrayed as extremist and unnecessary, something perfectly fulfilled housewives embraced because it was trendy and quickly discarded when it no longer suited their purposes.[23] On series more interested in the boomer audience segment, liberation became a workplace concept, which smoothed its extremist possibilities by avoiding the whole question of household roles and responsibilities. On shows like *WKRP* (1978-82) and *Taxi* (1978-83), female characters demanded jobs they deserved and put down men who made sexual advances. Good men supported them and everyone benefited from women's liberation. The only men who didn't seem to appreciate women's new role were unsuccessful womanizers like *WKRP*'s Herb Tarlick or *Taxi*'s Louis DePalma. Husbands and children almost never intruded on workplace shows; characters, male and female, were mostly single, except for the nearly invisible stay-at-home wives like Herb's wife, Bunny. When pregnancy happened on these shows, it happened to those stay-at-homes. It would have been unthinkable to make a single character pregnant in the 1970s.

One of the few 1970s series to show a working woman facing a possible pregnancy was *M*A*S*H* (1972-83). *M*A*S*H* enjoyed a luxury other 1970s

shows did not have: it was set in the bad old days before the women's movement. Thus, its creators were able to explore issues that were perhaps more problematic when set in the present. Army nurse Margaret Hoolihan was the featured woman on the series, an aggressive, highly competent woman who also benefited from her sexual liaisons with powerful men. Midway through the series she married and in one episode she thought she was pregnant. Like Gloria on *All in the Family*, Margaret did not greet this possibility with enthusiasm. She worried that a baby would collapse her shaky long-distance marriage and result in her discharge from the Army. It turned out she wasn't pregnant, but for the span of an episode, the audience was reminded of the kinds of institutional barriers that had once channeled women into the home. This, however, was not the main point of the story. The show ended with everyone expressing disappointment that Margaret was not pregnant, including, in a somewhat muted way, Margaret. This softened her as a character and at least briefly took some of the edge off her kinky sexuality and careerism.[24] Yet, it was the men around her who were the ones who first thought to be disappointed.

The new men who complemented liberated career women like Margaret Hoolihan were the ones interested in babies in 1970s workplace shows. While the working women of 1970s TV concentrated on their careers, the men around them wanted babies. *WKRP*, *M*A*S*H*, and *Taxi*[25] each featured stories about men who wanted to adopt children. These adoption stories helped establish characters' credentials as new, sensitive males, sexy and masculine, but also tender and sweet. If Margaret feared pregnancy because it might interfere with her career, men did not seem to worry about their careers, perhaps because so many of them were underachievers.[26] Of course, conveniently, the stories were also constructed so that the men didn't ever have to make sacrifices to be fathers. The relationship between the ambitious single career women who didn't want babies and the new sensitive males who did was ambiguous on 1970s TV. Since the career women remained single, neither their careerism nor their childlessness directly impacted men. By distinguishing between women who mothered and those who worked, writers avoided offending potential viewers. In the process, however, they implicitly categorized feminism (which was nearly synonymous on TV with women's careers) as selfish, just as they freed men of that label by having them manifest that most stereotypic of female characteristics, baby-love.

One reason why shows like *Taxi* and *M*A*S*H* seemed so much more about men than women was that market segmentation made it possible in the 1970s to create a separate genre of TV by, for, and about women: feminist TV.[27] It was pitched at the smaller but demographically significant audience of young single females who were most interested in stories about women like themselves, well educated, career-oriented, and struggling with a range of new options and opportunities. Shows like *WKRP* used the generation gap to unite younger men and women against their often incompetent or mean-spirited elders, a safer strategy than dealing with contentious gender issues. 1970s TV preferred the

sexual revolution to the women's movement for the same reason, although it coyly evaded promoting a new morality by relying on sexual innuendo and the kind of innocent but seemingly compromising situation for which *Three's Company* was renowned.[28] Feminist TV, by contrast, was all about gender, more explicitly about sex, and often about feminism.

The version of feminism on feminist TV was cautious, however, reflecting TV's market-driven need to avoid contested or controversial values. Strident feminists were stereotypes here too, but sympathetic characters pushed the feminist envelope farther. Feminist TV never advocated radical social transformations. Rather, its focus was the kind of equal rights—especially workplace rights—legitimated by the news media on the grounds of fairness.[29] On *The Mary Tyler Moore Show* (1970-77), for instance, Mary fought for a salary equal to her male predecessor's and more workplace responsibility. When she encountered sexism, it was usually blatant, never part of the system, and easy to correct. But no one ever asked why she was the object of her male coworkers' fantasies, their mother confessor, and the one who always made the coffee. Mary's sexuality was equally vague. She had boyfriends and, occasionally, grappled with the new morality, but in the one relationship clearly established as sexual in the show (with a briefly continuing character named Joe), she settled for a double standard: Joe slept with other women while she was monogamous. Feminist TV gave women strong and flattering portraits of themselves. However, in the process it helped remake feminism into stories about workplace equality and women's prerogative to ask out men, safe topics that empowered the disproportionately female audience without blaming its smaller male viewership. Feminist TV suggested that feminism was perfectly compatible with the institutional structure of the workplace and with good men, like Mary's boss, Lou, even if they never thought of themselves as feminists. Women's gains on these shows were not about men's losses. But feminist TV had more difficulty integrating feminist ideals into the home space and social constructions of motherhood.

Nineteen-seventies feminist TV appealed to a generation of women pursing education and careers, a generation inspired by the women's movement to become more than wives and mothers. Like more mainstream 1970s TV, it often evaded the question of how feminism impacted motherhood by separating mothers from working women, but feminist TV actually showed the characters making the decision to be one or another. The title character on *Rhoda* (1974-78), for example, no sooner returned from her honeymoon than she thought she might be pregnant, the result of confusing seasickness and birth control pills. Her comment upon discovering she was not pregnant, "I have nothing against having a baby, but I think it's something we should plan for," neatly summarized feminist TV's approach to motherhood as an informed, rational choice. Rhoda, thus, didn't rule out having a child (although she never had one) but neither did she regard motherhood as her central mission in life. The notion of motherhood as informed, rational choice meant that feminist TV was pro-choice, at least in the abstract.

After the title character of *Maude* (1972-78), middle-aged and unexpectedly pregnant, opted to terminate her pregnancy in an episode thirty-nine CBS affiliates refused to carry, abortion ceased to be an actual choice on television (although it continues to be mentioned as a right by pregnant characters).[30] Maude's choice was a shocking one for 1973 prime-time; however it was consistent with feminist TV's prioritizing of women's possibilities. Lead characters on feminist TV shows inevitably chose careers over children, rejecting the home in favor of the more tantalizing promises of the public sphere.

In part that was because feminist TV remade the stereotype of the June Cleaver good mother, converting it from a positive role model into a warning for young baby-boomer women about the consequences of housewifery. If June hovered happily in the background in the 1950s, the mothers of feminist TV were more toxic versions of the old-fashioned and demanding parents Rob and Laura Petrie politely battled. They were not fulfilled women; they constantly demanded attention, recognition, and obedience. They wanted daughters who were dutiful and sons-in-law with achievements, not daughters with achievements and no sons-in-law at all. Characters like *Rhoda*'s mother Ida lacked the traditional cachet of TV mothers. While her daughters tried to make sense of the sexual revolution, carved out meaningful careers, and found supportive pseudo-families to nurture them, she wanted them to marry doctors, provide her with grandchildren, and live in the suburbs. The guilt she so skillfully manipulated became the voice of outdated conscience that whispered in her daughters' ears and the psychological force that hampered their quests for self-fulfillment and liberation. Traditional mothers made an easy target, one that helped foster a generational identity for baby boomers without disturbing the notion that the women's movement was compatible with the institutions of the workplace and the values of the men within it. It was not sexism on the job that held modern women back so much, stories of the mother-daughter generation gap told women, as the guilt generated by mothers who valued husbands more than personal achievement and wanted grandchildren more than anything.

Occasionally feminist TV featured maternity stories. One of the ways it redeemed and modernized motherhood was through its presentations of the natural childbirth movement. Natural childbirth existed before the 1970s, but it wasn't until the women's health empowerment movement that followed the publication of books like *Our Bodies, Ourselves* that it became popular.[31] Natural childbirth was about both liberation and extremism on television, blending the symbol of the hippie with that of the empowered woman. Early TV advocates of natural childbirth embraced meditation and Eastern philosophies and wore love beads and ethnic dresses. Yet if natural childbirth was initially presented as a radical idea, those who shared the experience ultimately validated the modern woman's choice. "I thought I was too old fashioned for something like this," declared the grandmother on *One Day at a Time* (1975-84) after witnessing the birth of her great-granddaughter, "but I wouldn't have missed it for the world."

Natural childbirth thus quickly established itself as the norm on feminist TV and soon on most other programming as well.

From the beginning, though, natural childbirth stories were fraught with gender tensions. Husbands in these stories did not want to be in the delivery room with their wives. They were afraid of childbirth, afraid that they were not man enough to withstand whatever torture awaited them there or would be feminized by the experience, yet their wives wanted them there and so, increasingly, did the larger society expect them there. On *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*, for example, dim-witted news anchor Ted was presented as uncharacteristically responsible when he coached his wife through labor. When it came time for her to deliver without a doctor in Mary's bedroom, however, he had to be carried out. "Why didn't somebody tell me childbirth is hell?" he asked. Ted never saw his daughter being born and regretted it only to the extent that he feared his wife would hate him for it. Other TV men managed to survive the experience and, like the grandmother in *One Day at a Time*, were glad thereafter. Feminist TV helped mainstream the idea that men belonged in the delivery room supporting their wives, an idea that gained increased currency in the 1970s.[32] Men got to explore the subversive possibility of hiding in the waiting room like their fathers did; but their wives' expectations triumphed in the end. However much this norm was validated, though, feminist TV made it clear that it was a norm imposed by women on men.

By the end of the 1970s, the women's movement had transformed more than just delivery room stories. The only women who continued to remain true to the 1950s sitcom mom ideal did so in stories set in the 1950s, like *Happy Days* (1974-84). TV mothers were liberated; they donned suits, found jobs, and talked about finding themselves. However, the feminism from which this new female role was derived was neither the radical feminism of the late 1960s (with its roots in radical politics) nor the more moderate feminism of the National Organization for Women, but the cultural feminism that replaced both by the mid-1970s. Cultural feminism celebrated female difference. Women, cultural feminists argued, embodied personal qualities determined by their biology, qualities like nurturance and sharing, qualities that were more socially valuable than traditionally male ones like competition and aggressiveness.[33]

Cultural feminist maternity stories were stories about maternity amazons, powerful in uniquely feminine ways. Writers highlighted women's maternal qualities by contrasting them with men paralyzed at the prospect of assisting at a birth. While vivid, the contrasts were gently established, suggesting that gender difference was natural and acceptable to both sexes. On *Taxi*,[34] for example, a woman delivered her baby in the backseat of a cab, simultaneously doing her Lamaze breathing, nurturing her panicked partner, and cautioning the cabbie not to judge her partner too harshly. On *Family Ties* (1982-89), pregnant Elyse was trapped at a PBS telethon during a snowstorm when she went into labor. Between contractions, she not only facilitated moments of self-discovery for her older

children, but she also made an on-air pitch for funds. She eventually elicited the assistance of her teenage son, but only after slapping him out of his initial panic. In their more unruly moments, both women resented the men around them, but, mostly, they just attended to their womanly work.

These were television's superwomen. It is not hard to see why they were so popular; they had something for everyone. Women saw women who were strong, independent, and across-the-board competent while men saw women who did not rock the boat or expect them to change. Advertisers loved superwomen because they were easy to sell products to; they were desperate for convenience foods and laborsaving devices that would facilitate the second shift that neither the programs nor the commercials sandwiched between them ever showed. Family shows of the early 1980s used the values of cultural feminism to jazz up old stereotypes in ways that showcased only the advantages of gender equity. Mothers got fancy titles, dress-for-success suits and husbands who helped with the dishes, and nobody had to consider the social and individual costs of working motherhood or the degree to which women's liberation seemed to make more work for mother.

Cultural feminism brought the working mother to the small screen; once there, she became a politicized figure. Demographically speaking, it was impossible for programmers to ignore the working mother, who by 1990 was part of a powerful majority force. By the middle 1980s, the superwoman image had grown tired, as had millions of would-be superwomen. They did not want to see female characters who invisibly but efficiently accomplished all that they could not. But featuring any very accurate version of working women's home lives was a problem, for the reality was that they did much more than their share around the house and men did much less.[35] How, then, could programmers represent the second shift so that women's extra work was acknowledged without advocating a radical transformation of either the workplace or the home that might alienate advertisers, male viewers, and stay-at-home wives? The solution was simple: substitute guilt for practical second shift problems as the real obstacle to women's self-fulfillment, guilt over missing first steps, leaving children in daycare, neglecting husbands, and not baking cookies, guilt, in short, over not living up to the June Cleaver ideal. By the 1980s, working women didn't need their 1950s mothers to remind them of the costs of liberation. They reminded themselves. "I'm missing everything," wailed Charlene on *Designing Women* (1986-93) just before she quit her job to become a stay-at-home mom.

Like the notion of workplace equality, the concept of guilt allowed television writers to incorporate women's new experiences into their stories without disturbing traditional gender roles. However, these stories were particularly potent in their impact because working mothers had few other cultural models. While a percentage of their mothers had worked and raised families, they usually hadn't returned to work as soon after having their children or for as many hours as their daughters did.[36] When working mothers looked to TV to see what having

it all was all about, they saw a series of images to tug at their heart-strings: neglected children, messy houses, and unsatisfied husbands. Curiously all of these problems became women's fault. Even such a feminist's dream husband as Harvey Lacey (*Cagney and Lacey*, 1982-88), supportive and willing to clean the oven, got angry when the childcare arrangements his wife made came undone. Thus, part of the guilt working mothers absorbed had to do with the degree to which they disturbed the 1950s ideal with their "liberated" expectations about who would work the second shift. They gained fulfillment; their husbands lost hot meals and matched socks and their children lost mommy. A ubiquitous symbol of both women's guilt on 1980s TV and their husbands' wistful longing for wives just like their mothers was the super-competent, usually buxom, nanny figure who captured a family's love with her low-cut blouses and complete subservience. Such characters on shows like *Wings*, *Designing Women*, and *Growing Pains* (1985-92)[37] implicitly threatened female viewers with the consequences of working motherhood while quietly asserting that real women nurtured and career women did not. Maternal guilt stories redirected attention from what men didn't do to what women couldn't do.

Meanwhile, *Murphy Brown*'s (1988-1998) 1992 TV pregnancy triggered a cultural debate over the social costs of women's liberation. Vice President Dan Quayle denounced the series' portrayal of Murphy's single pregnancy, arguing that the show "glamorized" having a child out of wedlock as "just another lifestyle choice."[38] To proponents of the Republicans' version of family values Murphy's feminism was at fault. They characterized her as a selfish man-hater who was so stuffed full of feminist propaganda that she believed she could create a family without a father figure. Ironically, while feminist in many of its dimensions, Murphy's contemplation of motherhood suggested just how much television had already accepted a cultural feminist view of gender difference. Murphy and the father of her child, her ex-husband Jake, were a far cry from the liberated woman and new sensitive man of the 1970s. She chose to have the child, accepting the sacrifices that would entail. He, on the other hand, ruled out playing any role in his child's life because it would interfere with his work. And when having it all became too complicated for Murphy, she cut back on the job. Even though her persona was brash and demanding (qualities coded "feminist" on TV) she made no "feminist" demands at her workplace. Flex-time? On site childcare? She never asked for any of these things. Murphy Brown's single pregnancy generated heated political rhetoric about the extent to which women's choices had social costs, but, in reality, the producers of the show had already assimilated aspects of the backlash in their portrait of an unfeminine woman feminized by motherhood.[39]

As the *Murphy Brown* example suggests, the backlash of the 1980s quickly found its way into prime time. *Murphy* producer Diane English publicly disputed the Republicans' critique of the social costs of liberation while suggesting that its actual costs were more personal. While her rendering of modern women's reality

was muted and complex, other shows incorporated a more simplistic version of the backlash into their portrayals of women struggling to balance personal and professional lives. As Susan Faludi has argued, the backlash ostensibly warned women that the pursuit of feminism made them "miserable," although its real intention was politically motivated, to encourage women back into the traditional domestic sphere.[40] Post-feminist TV became the cultural adjunct to the backlash, with its biased presentations of choices for women. Since modern television could no more go back to traditional portrayals of motherhood than society could go back to that ideal, post-feminist TV presents lots of ways women might be: single, married, working, housewives, and mothers. One choice, motherhood, stands out as better than the others, however, even though motherhood doesn't automatically preclude all other choices. Post-feminist TV has found its highest expression in family dramas like *thirtysomething* (1987-91),[41] *Sisters* (1991-96), and *Dr. Quinn, Medicine Woman* (1993-present),[42] perhaps because the longer format and soap opera-like presentation more effectively showcases the tensions and ambivalence that writers attribute to modern women. Yet sitcoms have also gone post-feminist. Their characters grapple with the complex meaning of modern motherhood. They do so without validating the 1950s family ideal, but neither do they reinforce a 1970s version of the driven career woman who is "going to make it after all."[43] Instead, their female characters struggle painfully to mediate between those two extremes in order to find some functional way to have it all, to be wives and mothers and workers and women.

Post-feminist TV has introduced a new story line: the baby-longing plot.[44] This plot reinforces the complexity of modern women's choices while privileging the choice of motherhood. Post-feminist female characters voice the central theme of the backlash when they suddenly want babies and aren't sure they can have them any longer. The stories begin when a high-achieving woman comes into contact with a baby, a baby blanket, or even a whiff of baby powder. Suddenly she has to have a baby. This yearning is presented as beyond women's rational control. "I thought it would just go away," anchorwoman Christine Armstrong (*Coach*, 1989-97) told her husband, "but it hasn't. It's just gotten stronger." The baby yearning story inverts the fear-of-pregnancy story of feminist TV. Post-feminist TV women don't get accidentally pregnant; they pursue pregnancy with an intensity that threatens their careers and marriages, although most of these stories skirt the career conflict by presenting the workplace as hesitantly accommodating of women's biological roles. The system itself doesn't block women's achievement in these plots. Post-feminist TV reiterates the cultural message that the larger world doesn't obstruct women's opportunities, that women's problems in the workplace have all been solved. Women's biology limits women in these stories. Wombs hijack their rationality. Baby-yearning plots emphasize the implicit backlash threat: pursue your career at your own risk if you are female because the day will come when you will want children and everything else you have achieved will pale by comparison. Baby-longing stories

actually confirm what the shrill toxic mothers of the early feminist era once warned: that women would regret not having husbands, babies, and nice houses in the suburbs.

The baby-longing story of post-feminist TV doesn't stop there, though. The resolution of the plots picks up on the submerged gender tension of natural childbirth stories, only in baby-longing stories the expectations imposed on men are not so socially sanctioned as men's presence in the delivery room. Women's fertility demands are induced by hormones, irrational, and specifically about men's sexual performance. On shows like *Coach* and *Roseanne* (1988-97) bewildered husbands are asked to reduce sex to its lowest common denominator, procreation. Men prove their love by supplying sex on demand or sperm in a cup. If they fail, their masculinity is slyly assailed or at least becomes the subject of self-doubt.[45] These stories have broad appeal with their sexual overtones and attacks on men's egos. They appear modern because their casual and explicit representations of the mechanics of reproduction are expressions of television's new sexual openness. They expand the potential audience for maternity stories by embracing the younger, single Generation X audience more interested in sex than family.[46] They are also stories that challenge us to rethink our gendered assumptions about sexuality by showing sexually aggressive women pursuing nervous men who are told—often in no uncertain terms—that they don't measure up.

But fertility stories undercut their potential feminist messages by containing those subversive messages, repackaging traditional characterizations of gender difference with sexual explicitness. These stories are not new, thematically speaking. While Lucy yearned for romance, Ricky was a sucker for a sultry blond. Today's version of that gender difference is that women want love, commitment, and babies, while men want sex and proof that they are studs. Female characters like Rebecca Howe (*Cheers*, 1982-93) Christine Armstrong (*Coach*), and Jamie Buchman (*Mad About You*, 1992-present) want babies because they are, as Jamie said, "ready" to be mothers. The desire to nurture others is presented as natural, so TV women who confront infertility feel unwomanly, sad, and guilty. When their partners worry about having "less sperm than a lady bug,"[47] they feel unmasculine, but their procreative insecurity is entirely sexual. It's not their biological clocks that are ticking; it's a fear of sexual inadequacy that shapes their responses. Post-feminist TV is as premised on gender difference as pre-feminist TV. We just do not see it because all the sexual banter and sexual situations block our view.

Post-feminist maternity stories are not only discourses of difference; so too are they expressions of gender imbalance. Women on post-feminist shows use pregnancy as an opportunity to demean and emasculate men. At the very point when they are supposed to be sweet madonnas, they turn out to be angry, demanding, and resentful of men, "a big, hormonal freak," as Zoe characterized her half-sister on *Cybill* (1994-98). These hormonally-hyped women positively relish embarrassing their partners. On *Roseanne*, the title character forced her

husband to give up his usual jockey shorts for boxers because she heard on *Oprah* that this improves a man's sperm count. "I'm a brief man," he complained. "Tell me about it," she replied, slyly skewering his sexual performance even while warning him that "we're going again in twenty minutes." The woman-out-of-control element so clearly a part of Roseanne's maternity stories becomes especially pronounced on post-feminist TV set in gynecological spaces like obstetricians' offices and birthing rooms. The humiliations that await men there are stories of women with too much power who use it as revenge in sitcom versions of penis envy and mom-to-be-ism. Television delivery rooms have become battlegrounds between rational men and pain-crazed women intent upon inflicting pain. When Caroline and Richard (*Caroline in the City*, 1994-present) delivered a baby, the woman in labor demanded to squeeze his hand rather than hers. "If I'm going through this," she asserted, "some man must feel pain." These stories are classic examples of the ways in which cultural hegemony functions, expressing and containing a subversive feminist subtext of power and rebellion within a larger context of male rationality and authority. Post-feminist TV simultaneously validates such previously TV-taboo biological experiences as menstruation, delivery, and menopause and men's sense that those experiences are weird, dangerous, and threatening.

But the very construction of the post-feminist maternity narrative finally reminds us how the power relationship is supposed to function. Inevitably post-feminist pregnant women follow up their angry moments with weepy, apologetic ones and then their guilt and remorse finally give way to sweet smiles, tender glances, and a particularly poignant moment, like feeling the fetus move for the first time or actually giving birth. Jamie on *Mad About You* berated her husband during labor, forbidding only him to speak and squeezing his fingers so hard he dropped to the floor in pain. After she delivered, though, she was at peace and loving. Even Murphy Brown, who took potshots at every male in sight during her labor, came out of the delivery room singing "you make me feel like a natural woman." Those same hormones that facilitate gender rebellion also define and limit women as peacemakers, nesters, and nurturers. When Jamie first contemplated motherhood, she thought it "so not fair" when husband Paul suggested she'd "have to make the bigger sacrifice." Soon, though, she conceded his point; "I'm the mommy," she agreed. Then her confidence returned. "I can do this," she said of blending motherhood and the high-powered job she wanted. She began to plan precisely how she would do it. In a few short lines, thus, *Mad About You* characterizes babies as women's work that women can—and should—manage on their own. As for Paul's role in all this, he assured Jamie he'd be the perfect supportive husband. Will he get up for 3 o'clock feedings, she wondered, slightly skeptical of his declaration. "To tell you the truth, I'm rarely hungry at 3 a.m.," was his reply. There is a clear maternity double standard here: Jamie will contribute more than half the skill and half the time to raise their child and Paul will help out when it doesn't interfere with his sleep.

Post-feminist stories about what happens after the baby arrives carry these gender differences into the second shift. They proceed from the premise that men and women are different, that maternal hormones shape women's experiences, and that departing from the norms defined by these experiences and hormones induces guilt. Second shift stories on post-feminist TV are rarely about struggles over who cleans and who cooks. These issues aren't resolved, just ignored. Post-feminist second shift stories are about women's struggles to bring balance to their lives and strike, as Jamie declared on her first day back to work after her daughter was born, "the delicate balance that society demands of *me*" (my emphasis). Tending babies, like wanting them, is automatic, so automatic that even the space alien on *Third Rock From the Sun* who inhabits a female body grasped it immediately. "It sounds crazy," she reported of the first baby she watched, "but I cannot do enough for him. The more he needs me, the more I need him."

Meanwhile, on *Mad About You*, Jamie's excitement at her new job melts away after learning from Paul that baby Mabel is sucking her toes. "She never did that," she says, alarmed at what she's missing. So she hatches a scheme to get fired, an *I-Love-Lucy*-meets-the-1990s scheme that requires Paul to phone, beep, and fax her at work to persuade her boss that "I can't cut the cord." Try as she might, she cannot get fired. The more she is faxed and phoned, the more impressed her co-workers are by her juggling act. In this story, having it all is not a real problem. Jamie steps right into her dream job, her husband supports her and watches Mabel, her employer is supportive, and her coworkers admire her. The problem is Jamie really can't cut the cord and her intense need to be with her baby and her feeling that doing anything else would be unfulfilling shape her life. Post-feminist TV does not suggest that Jamie's life has been narrowed or limited by her baby. Rather, the fact that she feels guilt over returning to work suggests that being with her baby is the natural choice for a woman.

The logic of Jamie's choice is further reinforced by the almost invisible portrayal of the logistics of the second shift that serves as the backdrop for her decision. On *Mad About You*, Jamie and Paul eat out more than at home, no one ever seems to clean the house, and a professional comes in daily to walk their dog. Thus, Jamie isn't exactly burdened by the second shift. Paul, moreover, helps around the house; in various episodes we see him running errands, shopping, and changing diapers. But it is clear that Jamie is the one who manages the home and makes the decisions about Mabel's upbringing. Paul merely follows her instructions. His solo forays into the second shift are characterized by a kind of cute ineptitude. He buys a parking space even though they have no car, for example, wears old disco shirts because he can't be bothered collecting his clean shirts from the laundry, and concentrates his entire second shift energies on baking exotic bread in a bread machine. Paul does not manifest baby incompetence, but a number of other male characters on post-feminist TV do. Several have actually misplaced babies.[48] If women's hormones make them want babies, want to nurture babies, and want to stay home with babies, men's "tiny, insignificant guy

hormones," as Dan called them on *Roseanne*, make anything they do at all around the house a miracle. They legitimate men's efforts while excusing their shortcomings. And, they intensify women's guilt by suggesting that they are the only people who can take care of the baby properly and make sure the house runs smoothly. Post-feminist TV has turned having it all into doing it all.

The common thread that seems to weave its way through maternity plots from Lucy and Ricky to Jamie and Paul is guilt: specifically women's guilt. While the outside world told Lucy how to be a mother via the feminine mystique and Rhoda's mother constantly reminded Rhoda that she wasn't getting any younger, modern TV women seem to have internalized the guilt that used to come from the larger society. This guilt is a direct outgrowth of what Arlie Hochschild calls the "cultural cover-up" that decontextualizes the women's movement, transforming it from liberation per se into ways women must make accommodations in their lives if they are going to be liberated.[49] Television shows reinforce ubiquitous social messages about having it all, simultaneously validating that goal while failing to suggest adequate institutional means to reach it because doing so would disturb the status quo in frightening ways. Television's home fires remain gendered spaces, women's spaces, spaces where men "help" but can't handle half the load. In many ways, such stories flatter women with their superwomanesque overtones. Yet, modern women know all too well the downside of the superwoman mystique; it means a double burden of work at home and at the office. And so, instead, women are offered a more subtle, more ironic and, thus, more convincing portrait of themselves as rueful jugglers who know they cannot hold all the balls in the air simultaneously but struggle on to do so nevertheless, always mindful of the consequences when they do finally drop them. But it is not straying spouses, buxom nannies, babies who learn to walk when they are working, ticking biological clocks, or guilt-tripping mothers modern women have to fear. Rather it is a society where institutions are not willing to accommodate workers who are also parents and men who are not ready to give up their traditional privileges, a society that has not yet caught up with women's expectations. Television both echoes and contributes to a female experience where pervasive social guilt about never being good enough turns liberation back onto women and makes its limitations their fault.

Notes

1. I wish to thank the many people who read drafts of this, discussed ideas with me, or contributed to my knowledge of sitcoms: Barbara Boyd, Michael Fitzgerald, Megan Gramling, Frieda Knobloch, Alexandra Kutulas, Dolores Peters, Dana Quealy, Jill Watts, several classes of Media & American Society, and the History Department Colloquium at St. Olaf College.

2. See the *I Love Lucy* entry in Jane and Michael Stern, *Encyclopedia of Pop Culture* (New York, 1987), 240.

3. *The Second Shift*, paperback edition (New York, 1989), 11-21.

4. Bill Bruns, "TV's Baby Formula," *TV Guide*, April 20, 1991, 6.

5. The underlying conceptual assumptions of this essay come from Antonio Gramsci and his more recent followers. I have particularly relied on Janine Basinger's interpretation of women's films, *A Woman's View: How Hollywood Spoke to Women, 1930-1960* (Hanover,

New Hampshire, 1993) as a model, as well as drawing ideas from Andrea Press, *Women Watching Television: Gender, Class, and Generation in the American Television Experience* (Philadelphia, 1991); the essays in *Private Screenings: Television and the Female Consumer*, ed. by Lynn Spigel and Denise Mann (Minneapolis, 1992); and the many books about specific shows cited below.

6. See Patricia Melloncamp's essay on Lucy reprinted in her *High Anxiety* (Bloomington, 1992), 322-333 or Gerard Jones, *Honey, I'm Home* (New York, 1992), 62-75.

7. Wylie's comments on momism come from his book, *Generation of Vipers* (New York, 1942). See also Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre English, *For Her Own Good* (New York, 1978), chapter 7; Lynn Spigel, *Make Room for TV* (Chicago, 1992), 61-62; and Michael Rogin, *Ronald Reagan, the Movie and Other Episodes in Political Demonology* (Berkeley, 1987), 242-243.

8. *Living Room Lectures* (Austin, 1995). See also Muriel Cantor, "Prime-Time Fathers," *Critical Studies in Mass Communications*, 7 (Sept., 1990), 279-280 and Mary Beth Haralovich, "Sitcoms and Suburbs," *Quarterly Review of Film*, 11 (May, 1989), 61-83.

9. (Baltimore, 1988), 97-118.

10. Leibman, *Living Room Lectures*, 275.

11. See, for example, David Riesman, *The Lonely Crowd* (New Haven, 1950); William Whyte, *The Organization Man* (New York, 1956), and Vance Packard, *The Status Seekers* (New York, 1959), three contemporary expressions of anxiety concerning the modern workplace. On the impact of this on the family, see Steven Mintz and Susan Kellogg, *Domestic Revolutions* (New York, 1988), 196 or Michael Kimmel, *Manhood in America: A Cultural History* (New York, 1996), 238-241.

12. See the 1946 edition of Benjamin Spock's *The Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care* (New York, 1946), 254-5. Early editions of Erik Erikson's classic, *Childhood and Society* (New York, 1950) were laced with cautionary tales of parents who violate gender norms. See also Arlene Skolnick, *Embattled Paradise* (New York, 1991), 68-72; Nancy Pottishman Weiss, "Mother, the Invention of Necessity: Dr. Benjamin Spock's *Baby and Child Care*," *Growing Up in America*, ed. by N. Ray Hiner and Joseph M. Hawes (Urbana, 1985), 291; and Kimmel, *Manhood in America*, 246-247

13. Sara Evans talks about the socio-political forces that helped break down the feminine mystique in her *Personal Politics* (New York, 1979), chapter 1. On the crisis of manhood see Kimmel, *Manhood in America*, 61-64.

14. See David Marc, *Comic Visions* (Boston, 1989), chapter 3.

15. *Where the Girls Are* (New York, 1994), 128.

16. The term was coined in 1954. See Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*, 2nd ed. (New York, 1963), 47-49.

17. The Petries did occasionally mention Dr. Spock and consult other child care books when son Ritchie got into trouble. Their parenting style was very much in the Spock tradition.

18. Todd Gitlin, *Inside Prime Time*, paperback ed. (New York, 1983), 59-61 and 205-210 traces these changes in more detail.

19. The term is Gitlin's, chapter 10. On relevancy TV see also Robert J. Thompson, *Television's Second Golden Age* (Syracuse, 1996), 55.

20. See Jones, *Honey I'm Home*, 206-207.

21. Douglas, *Where the Girls Are*, 165.

22. On the new sensitive male see Kimmel, *Manhood in America*, 282-290.

23. See, for example, Susan Douglas on women's liberation-themed episodes of *The Beverly Hillbillies* and *Green Acres*, *Where the Girls Are*, 196-198.

24. It wasn't until quite late in the series run that Margaret became a fully fleshed out character, as demonstrated by the dropping of her demeaning nickname, Hot Lips. See Jones, *Honey I'm Home*, 239-240 and Robert J. Thompson, *Television's Second Golden Age*, 145.

25. On *WKRP*, disk jockey Johnnie Fever found an abandoned baby he wanted to keep. On *M*A*S*H*, Trapper John arranged to adopt a Korean orphan, and on *Taxi*, Tony wanted to adopt an orphaned boy.

26. Contrast, for example, *Taxi*'s Alex Reger, who just wanted to be a cabbie with his co-worker Elaine Nardo, single mother of two, taxi driver and part-time assistant at an art gallery, or ambitious Bailey Quarters on *WKRP* with burnt-out Johnnie Fever.

27. Susan Douglas notes that in the early 1970s, 70 percent of all TV characters were male, see *Where the Girls Are*, 200. Ella Baker, *Prime Time Families* (Berkeley, 1989), 85, talks about the demographics of television about women. On feminist TV as a genre, see Bonnie Dow, *Prime-Time Feminism: Television, Media Culture, and the Women's Movement Since 1970* (Philadelphia, 1996).

28. See Jones, *Honey I'm Home*, 236. The show also played to the generation gap by contrasting the sexy younger generation to their elders, represented by the sex-starved landlady, Mrs. Roper, and her apparently inadequate husband.

29. See Douglas, *Where the Girls Are*, 169-170.

30. See "TV Shouts Baby (and Barely Whispers Abortion)," *New York Times*, May 21, 1992, 27.

31. See Judith Waltzer Leavitt, *Brought to Bed* (New York, 1986), epilogue or Richard and Dorothy Wertz, *Lying In*, 2nd edition, revised (New Haven, 1977), chapter 6.

32. In the early 1970s, fewer than 25 percent of all fathers were present at the birth of their children. Today, more than 80 percent are. See Scott Coltrane, "Families and Gender Equity, *National Forum*, 77 (Spring, 1997), 31-34.

33. Alice Echols, *Daring to Be Bad: Radical Feminism in America, 1967-1975* (Minneapolis, 1989), chapter 6.

34. *Taxi* had one foot in the 1970s and one in the 1980s, which is why I have used it to illustrate two different kinds of TV.

35. Estimates vary depending on the source, but all agree that men do far less than women around the house. For one set of comparisons see Hochschild, *The Second Shift*, 1-10.

36. In 1960, 30.5% of all married women worked. In 1990, 58.4% did and the figure continues to rise. Today more than half of all mothers of infants work.

37. On *Wings*, the story, featuring *Cheers*' regulars Frasier and his wife, Lilith, involved his fixation with their son's unseen nanny, Dagmar, and her large breasts. On *Designing Women*, a temporary nanny named Ursula engaged during a group vacation had a master's degree in child development, gourmet cooking skills, a beauty title, Olympic swimming skills, and, like Dagmar, large breasts. On *Growing Pains*, the nanny was a cute teenaged girl. Contrast these with the portrayal, only a few years before, of the cute and sweet, but completely incompetent housekeeper Alex hired on *Family Ties*.

38. The quotations may be found in the *New York Times*, September 4, 1992, 12.

39. Bonnie Dow uses the feminist/feminine distinction to talk about Murphy Brown in an article written before Murphy's pregnancy. See "Femininity and Feminism in *Murphy Brown*," *The Southern Communication Journal* 57 (Winter, 1992), 143-155.

40. Faludi, *Backlash: The Undeclared War against American Women* (New York, 1991), *passim*. The quotation is from page ix.

41. On *thirtysomething* as post-feminist TV see Margaret Heide, *Television Culture and Women's Lives: thirtysomething and the Contradictions of Gender* (Philadelphia, 1995); Jane Connelly Loeb, "Rhetorical and Ideological Conservatism in *thirtysomething*," *Critical Studies in Mass Communications* 7 (Sept., 1990), 249-260; and Elsbeth Probyn, "New Traditionalism and Post-Feminism," *Screen* 31 (Summer 1990), 147-159.

42. See Dow, *Prime-Time Feminism*, 164-202. She calls Dr. Quinn's brand of feminism "maternal feminism."

43. The quotation is part of the theme song for *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*.

44. Baby-longing plots have appeared on *Cheers*, *The Cosby Show*, *Roseanne*, *Dr. Quinn, Medicine Woman*, *Ally McBeal*, *The Nanny*, *Coach*, *Sisters*, *Friends*, *Mad About You*, and *Home Improvement*, to name but a few.

45. In many ways, plots that focus on various male sexual inadequacies created by baby-making demands are male guilt stories, although notice that the guilt is triggered by women's demands. These stories tell of men who feel bad when they can't measure up to sexually-liberated women's demands.

46. On the next generation of TV viewers and shows that appeal to them see Rob Owen, *Gen X TV: The Brady Bunch to Melrose Place* (Syracuse, 1997).

47. As Hayden said to Christine on *Coach*.

48. This occurs on both *Friends* and *Step by Step*.

49. Hochschild, *The Second Shift*, chapter 2.