By Nancy Theriot

Nostalgia on the Right:
Historical Roots of the Idealized Family

Political Research Associates Monograph Series: I
Published by:
Political Research Associates (formerly Midwest Research)
678 Massachusetts Avenue, Suite 205
Cambridge, Massachusetts 02139

Acknowledgments
Arus Tydes Design
Miravea Graphics
Red Sun Press

Political Research Associates is an independent research institute which collects and disseminates information on right-wing political groups and trends. Centralized in its archives is a continuously-updated collection of over one hundred right-wing publications, including newspapers, magazines, newsletters, direct mail appeals, and books. The institute also maintains files of secondary material on individuals, groups, and topics of interest to those researching the right wing. Political Research Associates also offers classes on the American right wing; provides speakers for groups and conferences, publishes educational posters, and prepares, on request, specific research reports on topics pertaining to the political right wing.

The Political Research Associates Monograph Series provides individual authors and researchers an opportunity to explore specific aspects of right-wing activism in depth.

Political Research Associates Staff
Jean V. Hardisty, Director
Margaret Quigley, Archivist
Chip Berlet, Researcher

Second edition, 1990

Nancy Theriot holds a Ph.D. in American Studies from the University of New Mexico, where she taught in the Women's Studies Program. She is now Assistant Professor of History at the University of Louisville in Louisville, Kentucky. Her major research and writing is in the field of U.S. women's history and social history.

All illustrations used in this publication are copyright-free engravings and woodcuts.

ISBN 0-915987-07-4
By Nancy Theriot

Nostalgia on the Right:

Historical Roots of the Idealized Family
Introduction

There are few words in the English language so commonly used, imprecise, and emotion-filled as family. From the time we are preschoolers we speak of our family as a special group of people, and on through adulthood we refer to family ties, family businesses, family emergencies, and family jokes. Just as we each have a personal understanding of these family matters, we are also confident that we know exactly what “family” is. It is, first of all, our own network of kin, which varies in this country depending on racial and ethnic group, social class, generation, and even, to some extent, geographic region. The tremendous diversity of American family styles, however, does not mean that we have no common understanding of the word. In addition to seeing “family” as our own, we also recognize the term as a generic concept for human kinship. This is the basic-unit-of-society definition of “The Family,” which seems to be permanent, ideal, never-changing, and which seems, curiously, to have more reality than our own personal family. Although the family of experience and the family of abstraction are not identical, the two become blurred in our minds so that the emotional weight and powerful connotations of the personal family are passed on to the idealized family.

This dual definition is not a result of vague English diction; family is both experience and ideology. The family of experience has taken a variety of forms in America, differing according to race, class, ethnicity, and urban/rural living. Because of these differences, family form has been one way groups distinguish themselves from one another. From the beginning of the nineteenth century, when urban, white, middle-class Americans began to shape a particular family form in response to the social and economic change they were experiencing, that group also began to define
itself and its particular family form as “all-American” and “natural.” The middle class used its experience of family to define “The Family”—the correct and normal family; they turned their experience into an ideological concept. All other forms of family—the family experiences of Blacks, ethnic minorities, and working-class whites—were measured against this middle-class model and found to be not quite “right.”

Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, this middle-class experience of family, a product of early nineteenth-century social and economic change, has been taken as the norm by policy-makers in government and by conservative reformers. The most recent example of this attitude emerged in the late 1970’s and found its most powerful expression in the 1980’s during Ronald Reagan’s presidency. For what has been called the “New Right,” “The Family” has become political ammunition. The New Right, a coalition of political conservatives and fundamentalist religious activists, calls itself a “pro-family” movement. In the name of the “all-American family” and “traditional American values,” the New Right has initiated and lobbied for legislation which threatens civil liberties in general and seriously challenges many of the human rights gains of the 1960’s and 1970’s. Much of the argument and appeal of this group centers on its mystification of “The Family.” The New Right insists that the real, “all-American family” is one type of arrangement rooted in nature and that any variety represents pathological deviation from the norm. They also assume that this “all-American family” can trace its history to the Mayflower itself, and is very much responsible for America’s greatness. Finally, the New Right argues that “The Family” is good for society, good for its members, and worthy of protection against unnatural cultural forces that weaken it—such as women’s studies programs and sex education—and against deviant individuals—such as feminists, homosexuals, liberals and single mothers—who plot its demise.

Because the experience of family is deep, the ideological use of the word is an effective tool. When conservative ideologues argue that a particular program or law will weaken “The Family,” most of us do not stop to ask: whose family? what kind of family? what values are being promoted and what abuses hidden in the conservatives’ view of the “all-American family”? In order to undefuse “The Family” as political rhetoric, we need to understand that the family-of-experience and “The Family” of ideology have a history. By becoming aware of the psychic and material roots of the idealized family, and the change and variety in American family patterns over time, we can more effectively challenge the “pro-family” rhetoric of the Right.

The purpose of this essay is to offer a historical illumination of both family and “The Family” in America. What we will see is that a particular family form developed among middle-class urban Americans in the early nineteenth century, a form that came to be defined as the “all-American family,” and was used (and continues to be used) as a measure of Americanism and normality. My hope is that historical understanding of the “all-American family” will help us combat the most recent wave of “nostalgia on the right.”
Definitions

Although the 1980's political struggle over "family protection" is more than semantic, much of the Right's appeal is contained in the word "family" itself. Before looking at the history of the family, it is important that we begin with a common understanding in three areas. First, we need to be aware of conservative ideologues' version of the idealized family. Second, we need to look at the variety of family as a lived experience in America today. And finally, we need to speculate on possible reasons for the ideological appeal of the Right's "all-American family," even when it does not represent most Americans' experience of family. After looking at these three areas, we will examine the history of the "all-American family" and its relationship to the variety of American family forms.

The conservatives' idealized family consists of a father-provider, mother-nurturer, and two obedient children, preferably a boy and a girl. This image is most often seen as white and suburban, but a Black suburban variety is becoming more common, so that social class rather than racial group is a defining characteristic of the ideal family. Since the father-provider has a secure, middle-income job relatively untouched by such harsh realities as unemployment or inflation, the mother-nurturer is free to devote all of her time and imagination to unpaid homemaking and child-care. While the provider has more prestige and power than the nurturer within and outside of the family, both are convinced that their roles are biologically natural, socially essential and above all, mutual. The children of this efficient, well-balanced household are grateful for their father's wise discipline and financial provision and for their mother's selfless devotion to their personal needs. These children never show, nor feel, disrespect or anxiety, because they are confident that their parents' decisions, regulations, and chastisements are prompted by

---

1 This essay is based on the author's reading of historical and theoretical work on the family in America. Only concepts or interpretations that are associated with particular individuals, and very specific facts have been footnoted. A partial list of sources can be found in the Bibliography.
the children’s best interests. All members of the ideal family are safe and secure. And if anything is amiss, outsiders are to blame: too much government interference in parents’ prerogatives, too many movies or records promoting other lifestyles, too much sex education in the schools.

This idealized family provides individual nurturance, satisfying relationships, and sheltered privacy. It is well-ordered, secure, and permanent, and its members are cared for and sure of themselves. Sexual and intergenerational relationships are smooth and conflict-free. Such a family is a buffer between the individual and society, a “haven in a heartless world,” a private space where neither government nor uninvited neighbors should interfere. The Right’s idealized family is a symbol and a hope. It embodies sacred, rarely challenged prescriptions about power and gender: the naturalness of male rule, sexual polarity, and monogamous heterosexual coupling. It also expresses the collective hope that order and community, peace and nurturance are obtainable within a certain structure: patriarchal, nuclear bonding.

More than the distorted view of a few reactionaries, the idealized family represents a very common notion of what family is or should be. While we certainly see expressions of this family in the literature and speeches of conservatives, we see also the image in television programming and commercials, on billboards, in magazines, and in the daily press. Children come into contact with the idealized family in their textbooks, in “general audience” movies, and in such forward-looking programming as “Sesame Street.” Whenever commentators cite Census Bureau studies indicating that the American family does not resemble this ideal, those commentators speak of the family as “in trouble” or “under pressure”; no one dares suggest that the “all-American family” is an illusion. Although the New Right used the concept effectively in the 1980's to further its “blueprint for a moral America,” the “all-American family” is more than right-wing propaganda; it is woven into the fabric of popular culture.

But like the yearly Miss America who represents idealized womanhood, the “all-American family” is a collective fantasy. It bears little resemblance to the reality of family in America today. According to the United States Census Bureau, family is a difficult term to define since new forms are continually appearing and traditional patterns are in a state of flux. The
Census Bureau gets around this by counting households instead of fami-
lies, and about 90 percent of American households do not fit the family
image so pervasive in the culture. Even if we disregard the millions of
American households made up of single cohabiting adults and individu-
als living alone, we still are faced with the fact that most of the rest of us
do not live in "all-American family" households.

Two common household types today are re-formed families and female-
headed families. Because the divorce rate doubled between the early
1960's and the mid-1970's, nearly half of all marriages now end in
divorce. Although divorced people remarry more often than not, even
their traditional-looking households (re-formed families) do not conform
to the all-American type. Instead, the pattern of divorce and remarriage
indicates that marriage is becoming more of a life cycle phase than a per-
nament arrangement; it also means that an increasing number of adults
and children are experiencing step-parenthood. While the household
may look like "mom, dad, and the kids," the family often involves one or
two absent parents whom the children may rarely see and a new step-
parent relationship.?

Perhaps the most significant development in household and family struc-
ture over the last thirty years has been the rise in the number of female-
headed households. Between 1959 and 1984, the number of female-
headed families (households with children) increased by 168 percent
while the number of male-headed families increased by only 7 percent.
This means that by the late 1980's, 20 percent of all families with children
are father-absent families, and one out of five mothers is a single
parent. If current trends continue, by 1990, 25 percent of all American
children under ten years old will be living in female-headed households.?

In addition to household composition, another striking difference
between the idealized "all-American family" and the family of experience
is in the mother/wife role. In "intact" families, "re-formed" families, and
female-headed families the mother/wife role is rarely a full-time, full-life
job. Since the present fertility rate is less than two children per adult
woman, reproduction and child-rearing are not as life-consuming as they
appear to be in the idealized "all-American family." Furthermore, Ameri-
can women in the 1980's do not usually devote all of their time to the
domestic role. Both from necessity and by choice, 54 percent of mothers
with children under age three work outside the home. The percentage is
higher if we count women with children under eighteen; 64 percent of
married mothers were wage-earners in 1988.4

These bits of information about American families indicate that children,
since the mid-1970's, have lived in a variety of household structures and
family forms. By the late 1980's, millions had experienced their parents'
divorces and grown up in re-formed families or with their mothers.
Ninety percent of children of divorce remain in their mothers' custody,

---

many of them having no relationship with their fathers; a 1983 study found that 50 percent of children with divorced or separated parents had not seen their fathers in the past year. Regardless of household structure, millions of children grow up without the care of the "all-American family’s" full-time mother/homemaker. Thirty-seven percent of working mothers in 1982 relied on child-care centers, nursery schools, or non-relatives outside the home to care for preschoolers and school-age children after school hours. The Census Bureau estimates that in 1985 there were four million latch-key children in American families, children who cared for themselves while their mothers worked. The number of American children living in the "all-American family"—the intact family with a father-provider and full-time mother/homemaker—is small, and diminishing.

The "all-American family" represents only about 10 percent of American households as of the late 1980's. However, it is in many ways beside the point to demonstrate that most American families do not resemble the idealized version. The New Right and conservatives in general do not argue that the "all-American family" is the norm, but that it should be the norm because it is natural. The Right maintains that the variety of family forms and household structures I have briefly described is evidence that "The Family" is in serious trouble. Since the "all-American family" is natural, so the argument goes, unnatural forces must be responsible for its temporary demise.

In the debate over the demise of the "all-American family," therefore, it does little good to point out that most Americans do not experience such a family. That is exactly the point that has conservative policy-makers upset. But confusion and disagreement over "The Family" is not confined to the Right. People of all political persuasions feel nostalgic about the idealized family, whether or not they grew up in one. This is because of the multiplicity of psychological and social "events" taking place in family: the relationship between a mother and her child or children, rivalries and love among siblings, early sexual experimentation with self and others, anger and dependence between children and adults. So much of what is "individual" about each of us has its origin within family and so many intimate, seemingly unique human experiences occur in the family that the concept is loaded and fuzzy. The human family is the social organization of sexuality, reproduction, and survival. It is both biological and social, "natural" and historically contingent, public and private. We need to clarify these apparent contradictions in order to understand our general nostalgia for the "all-American family," the basis of the Right's appeal.

Conservatives claim that family is natural and that gender and generational roles are dictated by biological necessity. In order to recognize this as half-truth, we must first be able to see the truth of the statement. The

---

9 Rix, The American Woman, pp. 69, 88.
4 Rodgers, Poor Women, Poor Families, p. 120.
7 For an interesting analysis of the Left's struggle with the concept of "family," see Barbara Epstein, "Family Politics and the New Left: Learning from Our Own Experience," Socialist Review, 12 (May/August, 1982), 141-162.
family of experience indeed involves physical processes which are common to all animals. Inasmuch as sex and reproduction are biological happenings, there is something "natural," in accordance with nature, about family. But because we humans symbolize and communicate about ourselves and our world, the biological events of family are never outside of culture. Our very experience of biology is contained in a cultural setting where the most basic physical experiences (sex, reproduction, food ingestion, elimination of bodily wastes) are shaped by historical time and geographic space—that is, by the variety of human culture. Family is also biological and social in that we learn the cultural meaning of body within some kind of family. We are socialized into gender roles, sexual mores and reproductive expectations within a family structure. Family, then, involves a blurring of biosocial categories and is the place where that blurring is passed on to the next generation.

Because of the biosocial nature of the family of experience, people of all political persuasions have "naturalistic" assumptions about "The Family." The most deeply embedded assumptions concern mothers and wives. From the point of view of a child (and each of us was once a child in some form of family), the role of the primary caretaker seems to be the most natural, biological fact of family. Although the role of motherhood varies with time and place, women have been and are the primary caretakers of children in all cultures and times that have been studied thus far. It is with the mother that we come to self-consciousness and are introduced into culture through language. Mother is the biosocial mediator. This may partially explain why the mother/wife role seems so based in nature, and why changes in that role can seem not only threatening but unnatural as well. I call attention to mother as the biosocial mediator because it is woman's role in the family, more than anything else, that is the basis of naturalistic thinking on the part of both the Right and the Left (as socialist-feminists have pointed out). In order to see the family as a social construction, we have to resist the tendency, rooted in Everychild's early experience, to view motherhood/womanhood as natural and biologically-based.

---

A second problem associated with naturalistic thinking about women’s family roles is the assumption of patriarchy as outside of history. It is true that for centuries the Western family has been patriarchal, although anthropological and historical studies have indicated that patriarchy has not always existed and that it has been intertwined with the development of the state—in other words, that patriarchy, like motherhood, is historically contingent despite our naturalistic thinking about it.9 The American family, from the colonial period to the present, has been patriarchal, with male power upheld by law, economic opportunity, religion, and custom; but the very connection between patriarchy and socioeconomic institutions indicates the historical, changeable nature of male dominance. Patriarchy has been strengthened or weakened by economic and social developments. As we will see, male control was expressed differently in the preindustrial family and in the nineteenth-century family. The growth of capitalism as the power structure defining the course of industrialization affected the patriarchal nature of the American family. Male control within the family was altered and became linked to the development of capitalism, both ideologically and economically.10

In addition to naturalistic thinking about motherhood and patriarchy, another problem arising from the biosocial nature of family is the assumption that family is “private.” According to this view, the world and the family occupy separate spheres; one (the world) can change constantly while the other (the family) remains static and stable. Even if we are conscious of particular ways “the world” has had an impact on our personal families—for example through war, economic depression, random violence—we think of these experiences as unnatural intrusions. Our families are supposed to be havens from the world, retreats where we can be ourselves, safe places of love and comfort. The public/private split, the sense of family as separate from the world, is a misconception shared by most Americans.

In the 1980’s, the New Right based its pro-family position on this public/private split and articulated its concern about the private family in a legislative “reform” package commonly known as the “Family Protection Act.” Although the political power of the New Right may be less visible now that Ronald Reagan is no longer in office, we should not underestimate the influence of New Right ideas on conservative policy-makers in general. The New Right’s ideas about the relationship between government and family, the public/private split, are shared by less extreme conservatives, and those ideas form part of the basis of the conservative political agenda. Right-wing ideologues maintain that family is a private experience and a private institution, and so government and community

---


should stay out of "family matters," such as domestic violence, child abuse, unwanted pregnancies—just to name a few. Conservative policymakers argue that the government should help protect the privacy of families by providing tax breaks for private schools so that families can privately choose them, by reinstating prayer in public schools so that families can privately decide whether or not their children will pray, by eliminating sex-education programs and contraceptive options for minors so that families can privately control their children's sexuality, and by banning certain individuals and reading materials from school systems and libraries so that families can privately judge the best influence on their children. These are only a sample of the issues the New Right and many less extreme conservatives see as within the very private domain of family.¹¹

Naturalistic thinking about the mother/wife role and the stubborn belief in the public/private split form the core of the idealized "all-American family." It is precisely because the family of experience connects the personal and the political and forms a bridge between the individual and the social that the ideology of family develops. Family ideology is a set of beliefs describing, influencing, and giving meaning to the lived experience of family, and also expressing fears and desires about the self-in-world. Before Americans experienced themselves as isolated from each other, alienated from their work, ill at ease about their "individuality," and surrounded by powerful and hostile social forces, there was no idealization of the private, nuclear family with an isolated mother/wife. White middle-class experience of dramatic social and economic change triggered a specific idealization of family around the turn of the nineteenth century. Today, we are living in a time of new economic uncertainty, and a time of rapid change in work and family relationships, in sexuality and in gender roles; we are also in the process of creating new family ideals. Widespread fear of uncontrollable social, economic, and cultural forces prompts a general nostalgia among many Americans for a half-invented and half-hoped-for memory of family tranquility. The Right's idealized family represents a backward glance to an imagined past which was less complicated and more secure.

In order to break loose from the Right's version of family ideology and insist on a variety of family ideals, we need to see the "all-American family" as a historical construct, representing the interests of a specific social group but echoing the fears and insecurities we all share. In other words, we need to see clearly how this particular family ideal was generalized into the "all-American family." As we look historically at the family of experience and the family of ideology, I will emphasize two categories which are essential to understanding both: gender and social class. The family of experience and the family of ideology shaped and were shaped by changes in women's experience and the dynamics of social class relationships. Tracing the general outlines of family history from the colonial period to the late twentieth century will help to clarify this dialectical interplay of family, gender, and class.

The Colonial Family

In the early period of American history, “family” did not exist as an ideal in the way it does today. Puritan ministers spoke to their congregations about “virtuous wives,” “obedient children,” and “wise fathers,” and they described the family as a “little commonwealth.” However, there was no publicly-expressed uneasiness about family and no public celebrations of the virtues of family; the family, in and of itself, was not a subject to discuss. This silence indicates to historians that early Americans saw no options regarding family. To them, membership in a family seemed essential to survival, the form that family took seemed organic and unquestionable, and the roles of women, men, and children seemed obvious and undeniable. To early Americans, family simply was.

The early American family is important to our understanding of later, more familiar family forms. Looking at the colonial experience, we can distinguish three major points which will continue to be relevant throughout American family history. First, the family’s function (its responsibility and ability to take care of the needs of its members) changes in relation to social and economic change and varies among different groups of people living during the same time period. Second, family form (the timing and reasons for family formation in the community) and family structure (the people who live in a household) are embedded in the socioeconomic situation. And third, the ideology of family is built primarily around the woman’s role. If we examine the colonial family in light of these three points, we will begin to see an early model for the Right’s “all-American family.”

According to popular lore, the colonial American family was extremely large, with men and women marrying young, raising many children, living with those children during a short old age, and dying relatively early.

In that golden age long since passed, marriages were made in heaven and lasted until death, and children were loving and obedient toward the older, wiser generation. Women were content with the patriarchal rule of husbands and busied themselves with their children or with designing beautiful quilts for the cold New England winters. Part of this image is totally unfounded, part is somewhat true, and all is taken out of the context of colonial life.

The function, form, and structure of the colonial family was a product of the socioeconomic situation of early America. In the northern colonies, subsistence farming in small communities was the norm, and survival was not a foregone conclusion. The community was important, the church was the strongest institution, and discipline, not personal happiness, was the individual’s goal. The family was in the community, not apart from community, as family survival was impossible without community survival. Far from being a retreat from the world, the family and society were blurred together in interests and, to some extent, in form and structure. Both church and government (which started as one, but did not remain fused for long) could interfere in family life without causing indignation. In fact, Massachusetts enacted laws against such private family matters as wife-beating and severe punishment of children in the seventeenth century, which indicates not only that the community felt obliged and righteous in “interfering” in family matters, but also that colonial families sometimes were not safe places for women and children. Early New Englanders felt that it was not only their right but their religious responsibility to call public attention to the “private” transgressions of their neighbors; the community’s moral, as well as physical, survival was thought to depend on community scrutiny of family conduct. Even the status of membership in a family was not strictly separate from the rest of society, since families included servants and apprentices of various ages to whom the core family was bound by legal, religious, and social obligations. The early American family was not a “private” institution, but rather was intimately connected to community. Just as the family needed community connection in order to survive, the individual also needed family ties in order to live. The colonial family provided for all of the physical needs of its members throughout their lives. The family was, first of all, an economic unit; both food and clothing were produced within the family, and neither was available from any other source. The family was also the socializing and educating unit, as children, servants, and apprentices were taught to read and cipher, to farm or manage a household, to blacksmith or care for infants within the family. In addition, the family served as a health-care unit. The female members of the family, together with a community midwife, assisted the colonial woman in childbirth within the family space. The woman of the family acted as well-baby clinician and emergency room physician; she provided ongoing health maintenance and handled minor illnesses and mishaps. The family was also hospital and nursing home, with the women and girls taking care of the very sick, the old, and the dying.

---

Death itself was within the family's function; the female members prepared the bodies of their kin for burial and converted the family space to a place where final religious and social rites were performed.

Since colonial Americans' material needs were met within the family unit, the few individuals who remained outside family ties were a burden to the community. Legal as well as social and economic pressure was brought to bear on people who wanted a "single" life. For those who were outside of family through misfortune or accident, the community provided an adopted family. The unrelated poor, disabled, sick, or insane, as well as orphans, were entrusted to various families, and the community assisted these families in supporting their wards. Later (in the late eighteenth century), as colonial society became more urban and the number of people in these unattached and unfortunate categories grew, towns created institutions such as poorhouses, pesthouses, hospitals, and asylums to take over what had been family functions. But throughout the colonial period, the overwhelming majority of Americans had their material needs taken care of within the family unit.

Like family function in the early American community, family form also grew out of the unique colonial setting. At that time, marriage was an economic relationship, a joining of property or interests and a working together to improve the initial holdings. In the New England colonies, people married relatively late (at twenty-two or twenty-three for both women and men) because daughters and sons had to wait for dowries or land, together with parental approval, in order to marry. Within a family, marriage was usually in birth order and the rapidity of marriage was dependent on the financial resources of the father. Marriages were made for property reasons, so there were few cross-class marriages. Instead of "love," married couples hoped for friendship and cooperation.

For early Americans, marriage was universal and life-long; single people and divorce were rare. Though colonial marriages lasted a lifetime, the possibility of one spouse dying was high, and remarriage was a necessity. So, many colonial people were involved in more than one marriage during their lives. Divorce was not an option for most, but neither was it desirable; since matrimony was motivated primarily by property considerations, not romantic love, early Americans had less to be disappointed about in their matches and more to lose in terminating a marriage than modern Americans do.
Because children were an advantage in a subsistence farming situation and because the environment of the "new world" was more healthful than that of Europe, the fertility rate was high among American women in the New England and middle colonies. However, the infant mortality rate was also relatively high by modern (although not by old world) standards, and only five to seven children grew to adulthood out of an average of eight to ten pregnancies. The core family, then, consisted of two adults and about six children.

Although this appears to have been a typical nuclear family situation, it was not. Most early Americans lived in large families, but their households were neither nuclear nor extended. Many children, regardless of social class, left their parents' homes in mid-or even early adolescence to be apprentices or servants in other households, and their core family took on a different child or children for the same purposes. So the family was two-generational without being strictly nuclear. But if the colonial family was not nuclear, neither was it extended. It was rare for more than two generations to occupy a residence, but this was not because people died before becoming grandparents. When parents (or a parent) survived into their children's adulthood, the older people lived in a separate house on, or adjacent to, the main family property. One historian has called this arrangement a "modified extended family"; the extended family of popular myth was never a common feature of middle-class American life.14

It is clear that the earliest colonial American family did not fit the image outlined by the Right in important areas. The colonial family was not private, not strictly nuclear, not really extended, and not motivated by "love" or "companionship." But when we move past family form and structure to the roles of individual members, the shadowy patterns for the Right's ideal become visible. The early American family was definitely patriarchal; women and children were under the power of the father. Furthermore, women seemed "natural" and content in their reproductive role, and children were obedient and respectful toward their elders. The early family roles were also sexually specific, with men and older boys doing one kind of labor and women and older girls doing another. It would seem that the colonial period was indeed the golden age of the American family in terms of family roles, and that the Right has cause to claim that modern Americans have fallen from a previous state of family grace. However, each of these patterns was rooted in the specifics of colonial life, and each has a fuller story than the ideal of family that can contain.

Although the colonial family was patriarchal, the father's power was more symbolic than real. Husbands had legal control of all property and represented the family unit to the community whenever necessary. Fathers were powerful in their children's lives, because marriages were arranged and property given or withheld by fathers. But colonial men needed their families in ways that modern men do not. To make a farm successful a man needed the labor of his children and wife. In addition,

simply to care for his own personal needs for clothing and meals a man needed a wife, since men were not trained to do these jobs and the jobs themselves were far more complicated than they are today. Because the colonial farm required laborers and because the man himself required caretaking, the father's position in the family was more contractual and less patriarchal. Certainly he was a patriarch in law, but in daily practice he was more like a foreman in a work crew—a fellow worker with more authority and public accountability than the other workers.

Besides affecting the father's role in the family, colonial life-conditions also determined the children's roles and relationships. The early American child was not treated sentimentally; in fact, children were treated as smaller adults, with jobs and responsibilities increasing with the children's size and growing competence. Children were given no special privilege because of their tender age; neither were they believed to need more recreation or free time than adults. Instead, children were dressed as little adults and were expected to grow into more complicated tasks as they grew into larger versions of the same costume.

Although children performed economically valuable labor during the colonial period, their relationship with their parents was not marked by equality or comradeship. Because of the living situation, children were respectful and obedient toward their elders, especially boys toward their fathers. Boys may have felt respectful because they learned important life skills at their fathers' sides. Colonial fatherhood included the supervision of young boys and the education of older boys in farming and other life-maintenance work. Since the colonial father worked at home, he was available for this child-care and socialization; since the colonial boy did not attend regular school and was expected to perform jobs according to his ever-increasing ability, he was willing and able to learn from his father. In addition, the parent/child relationship, like the marriage relationship, was one of contract, not sentiment. The child owed the parents obedience in exchange for their support of his/her life; the parents owed the child life in exchange for his/her labor on the farm and in the house. The boy who did not keep his side of the bargain could not expect a generous allotment of property upon his father's death; the girl who was disrespectful could not anticipate a proper dowry, and therefore a good match.
Like the colonial child, the early American woman's role in family was dictated by the physical circumstances of the time. With marriage the only economic and social option and with no reliable means of birth control, women necessarily spent most of their adult lives in reproduction and child-care. At first glance the colonial woman appears to be very much like the Right's modern ideal, only with more children; a closer look indicates that woman's earlier family role was more varied and powerful than the later ideal would allow. Besides bearing and rearing children, colonial women manufactured or "finished" all of the products of the farm system. They turned grain into bread, wool into yarn and then into clothing, seasonal harvests into year-round stores of food. They provided the household with clean, mended clothing, regular meals, candles and soap, and they nursed the sick and dying. Women were economically invaluable in the colonial household because none of these essential tasks could be bought and because women alone were trained from childhood to handle these jobs. A man could not maintain a farm or care for children without a wife.

Although women had no legal power and held no offices in church or state, their productive role in the family contributed to a positive definition of femininity. The "true woman" of the colonial period was the "helpmeet" of her husband. Her qualities included frugality, common sense, and vigorous health. She was seen as inferior to man in terms of strength and intelligence, but the difference was a matter of degree; women and men were believed to be basically the same, with sex determining quantitative, but not qualitative differences. The sexual division of labor in the colonial family contributed to a sense of mutuality, if not equality, between the sexes.  

It is important to note that woman's family role, in the colonial period and throughout American history, is very closely reflected in the changing ideological notion of femininity. As the family of experience changed and as the idealized family was created and grew, the image of the "true woman" also changed. At first, the "true" American woman was simply the one who could perform well within the colonial family. But later, as the ideology of family developed and there began to be a discrepancy between reality and image, the "true woman" was the one who could fit into the ideal family, and feminine characteristics were defined according to the needs of that imagined and hoped-for family. One consequence of the connection between the idealized family and "true womanhood" is that women were (and are) held accountable for the well-being of the "all-American family," and efforts to "strengthen the family" always involved (and involve) social, economic, and legal pressure on women to conform to a certain sense of feminine behavior. The Right is the most recent, but not the first group to claim that the family would prosper if only woman would be "true to her nature." Another consequence of the connection between the idealized family and idealized femininity was

---

(and is) that the "true woman" is a middle-class woman. As we will see, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries this has meant that reformers who attempt to "save" the families of the working class and the poor have very specific suggestions to improve the women of these families. If only the mother/wife were to adopt the standards and behavior of middle-class womanhood, so the reformers argue, her family would benefit greatly.

Before going on to the nineteenth century, one qualifying point about the colonial family deserves comment. The family we have been considering was the common experience only among white settlers in the New England colonies. Although the middle colonies varied only slightly in family form, function, and structure, the southern colonies developed entirely different family patterns because of different material conditions. The southern colonies differed from the New England colonies in many ways: the land and climate were different; the white settlers were of a different social class and a more diverse national background; the religious, economic, and political forces were different; the reasons for, and patterns of, emigration from Europe were different; and the south contained many Black slaves.

The different material conditions in the north and the south resulted in very different family patterns for white colonists. Compared to New Englanders, southern whites married at first earlier and then later, had fewer children and less community dependence and contact, had more cross-class marriages, and had more diversity of family form in general. When we consider the family patterns of slaves, still more diversity emerges. Unlike southern whites, Black slaves had to contend with forced marriage and separation, marriage possibilities dependent on local sex ratios and masters' whims, and household structure determined by plantation size. These and other factors resulting from slavery shaped the Black family experience. The difference between New England and southern white families, and between white and Black families in the same region is important to note since it demonstrates further a point we have seen all along—that family is embedded in the social, economic, and cultural situation and does not take a "natural" form independent of history.

Whether we focus on New England or take a wider perspective, the history of the colonial family illuminates several weaknesses in the Right's position. First, the colonial experience illustrates that family is historically contingent; the form, structure, function, and roles of the early American family were products of the time and environment. Second, the history of the colonial New England family demonstrates the mythic quality of the "all-American family" by failing to correspond to the ideal in several important areas; the colonial family was not private, nuclear, or sentimentally bound, and the woman was not economically dependent on the man, but instead provided essential labor in the subsistence household.
But there are still unanswered questions. When and why was the ideal family created? Did it ever reflect American family life? Who is responsible for its invention? And what does any of this have to do with modern Americans? In the next section, as we look at changes in American life and American families during the nineteenth century, we will concentrate again on the experience of northeastern whites in the "middling" class. It is from this group that the idealized family emerged. By following the northeastern middle class from a rural, agricultural environment to an urban, commercial setting, we will explore the process of idealizing a certain family type, and the consequences of that idealization for women in general and for families that were not middle class.
The Nineteenth-Century Family

Although the experience of family remained fairly constant through most of the colonial period, in the last part of the eighteenth century small changes were beginning to appear. The American Revolution brought legal change in women's dowry rights, in ease of divorce, and in laws determining children's inheritance. There was a decline in overt bargaining by parents to secure proper marriages for their children, and the idea of free choice of marriage partners prompted by romantic love was beginning to gain popularity. Marriage was becoming more personal and less economic, especially among genteel urban dwellers. There was also a rise in the percentage of single women in the population during the revolutionary period, although women's economic options had not improved. Sexuality might have been a little freer (or women a little less protected by community) because the percentage of children born outside of marriage increased during the revolutionary years. In spite of these changes, which primarily affected the middle and upper classes in the country's three urban centers, most families in 1800 resembled the colonial family of one hundred years earlier.

However, in the first two decades of the nineteenth century, American society was in the early stages of a century of change. The economy, the social structure, cultural values and institutions, the very physical dimensions of the country—all changed radically over the course of the century. These changes resulted in new class, race, and gender relationships and had a profound impact on the families of all Americans. The ideology of family, the concept of the “all-American family,” was born from this socioeconomic and cultural flux. A look at nineteenth-century family patterns reveals how sweeping socioeconomic and cultural change affected families and individuals and stimulated the creation of ideology.

On the most basic demographic level the United States changed tremendously over the course of the nineteenth century. The population grew enormously while the fertility rate steadily dropped, residential patterns were altered, life expectancy lengthened, and racial and ethnic diversity became more characteristic. The relatively homogeneous five million
Americans in 1800 lived mostly on the east coast or at least east of the Appalachian Mountains. Since the average fertility rate was about seven live births per adult woman, family size was still relatively large. Americans in 1800 lived primarily in small villages or isolated farms, with children settling close to the parental domicile. The average American lived within the small community of his/her birth, known by neighbors and close to kin, for about forty-eight years. Only 7 percent lived in cities.

Over the course of the century, however, both population and living arrangements changed drastically. No longer ethnically or economically homogeneous, the ninety million Americans in 1900 were scattered over the entire continent, were continually on the move, were living until their mid-sixties, and were living increasingly in cities (about 40 percent by 1900). Toward the end of the century, the white population was confronted with thirty million "new" Americans, with languages, customs, and appearances not fitting the traditional British, Protestant mold. This ethnic diversity, together with the new visibility of freed Blacks, meant that the American family was many different things by 1900. Family size, community/kinship patterns, family economy, household composition, gender and generational roles—all of these family characteristics differed according to race and ethnicity. Underlying these differences in family styles, and prompting changes in the white middle-class family as well, was the development of commercial, and then industrial capitalism over the course of the century.

The gradual transition from subsistence agriculture and a colonial economy tied to trade with England, to a wider and more complicated network of regional, intra-colonial commerce had begun before the American Revolution. However, it was in the early nineteenth century that an interdependent commercial economy developed in the new American states. Encouraged and subsidized by local, state and national government, wealthy individuals and small corporations began to provide the river transportation, canal networks, railroad lines, and warehouses which made possible a national, commercial economy. Middle-class farmers competed for the market, expanded their holdings when possible, and oftentimes moved west in search of better or more land. It was no longer wise for fathers to give portions of land to sons, as the market favored larger, rather than smaller farms, especially after the development of agricultural machinery.
Middle-class sons began to move west or into the rapidly expanding cities to seek their fortunes. The cities, products of the commercial revolution, were disruptive for the middle-class family in several ways. Although the city provided economic opportunity for the young man, it also freed him from paternal control and family influence. This greatly disturbed middle-class families, as the numerous books of “advice to young men” about how to preserve virtue and choose friends in urban environments testify.\(^\text{16}\) The city was disruptive of the traditional middle-class family also in that land was not the basis of social position. It was imperative for parents to fit their children for non-agricultural employment that assured the same class power as landholding once did. Education of sons became essential, so that children, once an asset to the family, increasingly became a liability; urban, middle-class families were the first to limit fertility.

Still another way the city strained the middle-class family was in disrupting the family/community connection. In the city, the family was an atomized unit instead of a part of a larger community. People responded to this sense of isolation by forming organizations of “like-minded” individuals (churches, mothers’ groups, benevolent societies, etc.) to try to invent a new sense of community based on individuals instead of families.\(^\text{17}\) Part of the reason the middle-class family felt the need for community was because the city contained “strangers” in terms of work and class, and increasingly, religion and ethnicity (as we will investigate later). Another reason the middle-class family felt atomized and powerless was that the city, because of its size, was organized by bureaus, agencies, sanitation boards, city governments, and new institutions such as orphanages and hospitals. While these institutions were set up and run by the middle class in order to provide order and assert control over chaotic social forces, still these new forms took control away from the individual and the family and vested it in an impersonal agent of Society. Unlike the colonial church and local government, institutions intimately connected to family in interests and membership, these new nineteenth-century urban institutions challenged family (and especially paternal) authority and set up a new relationship between family and community. The family became a more “sacred” unit for the middle class as it became the only unit of community and the only membership untainted by the materialism of the marketplace and unchallenged by the secular values of the city. For urban middle-class people, disconnected from community roots and surrounded by the money-driven, spiritually neutral city, the family seemed to be the last stronghold of traditional American values.

While the city, created by the commercial economy, put stress on the traditional middle-class family, the beginning of industrial capitalism initiated a more far-reaching transformation. In the early years of the


nineteenth century some wealthy Americans began to pool their money and form corporations for manufacturing ventures. Technological innovation made it possible to produce necessary and useful items once handmade by housewives and artisans, such as thread, cloth, shoes, and printed material. As production increasingly moved from home and private shop to factory, traditional gender relationships were disrupted and new class relationships were created. Both changes, in gender and class, affected family economy and triggered new ways of thinking about women, men, children, and social relationships.

Because industrial capitalism changed the nature and location of productive labor, it created a split between home and work that had far-reaching consequences for each middle-class family member. This change brought value shifts, confusion about role expectations, and a new belief in qualitative differences between the sexes. The change in the nature of work and the split between home and work also set childhood apart as a separate, unique stage of life for middle-class children. For the first time, “The Family” became objectified and talked about as an entity with a life (or illness) of its own. For the first time too, a specific family style came to be seen as the “right” style, and a portion of the middle class sought to reform, redeem, and purify America by universalizing its version of the ideal family. In order to understand this ideal family, which affected but did not represent all Americans, it is helpful to look closely at the impact of industrial capitalism on the separate experiences of men and women.

For many American men, the change in the nature of work brought a loss of control and a loss of meaning. The new economic system altered work patterns, changed the meaning of work in a man’s life, and created an ever-widening economic gap between producers and owners and between the skilled and the unskilled. Middle-class artisans saw their labor devalued, as machinery and unskilled workers replaced their slower, more controlled, highly trained work. Artisans who continued in their trade as skilled workers for another man found that they had little control over working schedule or product; their time and the product of their labor belonged to someone else. In addition, they faced the constant possibility of newer machinery rendering their skills superfluous. Increasingly, middle-class sons of artisans turned to professional or business-support jobs to retain their economic and social status; production had been de-skilled and rendered undesirable to the middle class.

Men who were not from the “middling classes,” and who in a traditional economy were landless laborers on other men’s farms, also found the transition to a new industrial order difficult. The work of the unskilled was no longer tied to seasonal flux or the rhythm of the day, but was by the clock and according to someone else’s schedule. There was no control over working hours and little relationship between hours worked and goods produced (from the workers’ point of view). Not only was the work routine established by someone else, but the steadiness of work was also dependent on the precarious uncertainties of the market; both working-class and middle-class workers struggled with serious depressions and recessions throughout the nineteenth century, when unions were in their infancy and unemployment insurance was not yet imagined. In addition, the traditional relationship between work and success was muddled for both classes, as one man’s sixteen hour day in
back-breaking labor earned minimum survival while another man's white-collar day brought middle-class comfort. The discrepancy between social classes was further accentuated by the growth of professions and clerical jobs which were increasingly set apart as middle-class jobs because of educational requirements. Once a dependable part of life a man could measure his worth by, work became an area of uncertainty and stress over the course of the nineteenth century.

But men were not the only ones whose work was affected by industrial capitalism; women's work was also altered. As production moved outside the home and into the factories, middle-class farmers' daughters were the first to operate the machinery. It seemed only logical to textile manufacturers that women should do the work, since women traditionally produced cloth in the home. Manufacturers assured farm families that their daughters would be given the opportunity to be productive and to improve their minds in a safe, respectable atmosphere. The companies required that the young women live in boarding houses run by respectable matrons who imposed strict curfews, and that they attend church on Sundays. Lectures, classes, and a library were provided for the women's "self-improvement." This offer seemed very attractive to families and to young women with time to fill between adolescence and marriage. Thus, the first industrial working class in the United States was composed of women between the ages of seventeen and twenty-five from middle-class New England farm families.

This was not to last, however. Within a very short time working conditions deteriorated, women were required to work more looms at a faster pace, and it became clear that women who worked in the mills for very long developed respiratory diseases. Gradually, the middle-class farmers' daughters withdrew from the unhealthful atmosphere, long hours, and low pay of factory work. They were replaced by Irish immigrant women who were landless and poor. With families to help support and with no choice about whether or not to work for pay, these women (and their brothers, fathers, and husbands) accepted working conditions and pay scales that middle-class farmers' daughters could afford to shun.
Because it was "women's work" and seen as "extra" to the family, and because these new women workers were so desperate, the work reserved for women was (and is) the lowest paid. As the first wave of women workers gave way to the second, the middle class began to associate working women with dire necessity; no family wanted its daughters laboring under such conditions; no young woman thought of wage labor as an appropriate life choice. Although daughters of the middle class sometimes worked at summer teaching, and although later in the century other "genteel" occupations would become available to educated (and thus, middle-class) young women, working outside the home was seen as a desperate move no woman would choose if she could avoid it.

Perhaps because the work was so hard, or perhaps because of the cultural hegemony of the middle class, this negative attitude toward women working outside the home was also held by the working class. Although ethnic groups varied in the intensity of their feelings about working women, and in their feelings about which woman (wife or daughter) should work if necessary, still there was widespread agreement that women working outside the home was indicative of "hard times" for the family. The nineteenth-century labor movement, composed of immigrant ethnic minorities and native-born working men, was almost entirely opposed to organizing women because the men thought women should be at home. In spite of this attitude, however, women worked in factories and laundries, as domestic servants in the homes of middle-class women, and in their own homes taking in laundry, boarders, and items such as garments and artificial flowers to "finish" for factory contractors. Working-class women, both native-born and immigrant ethnic minorities, worked in and outside the home for wages—for the lowest wages and in the worst conditions. It is no wonder, given such wages and conditions, that working-class people shared the middle-class attitude that women should not (ideally) work outside the home.

However, as production increasingly left the home for the factory, the economic status of the woman in the home deteriorated. No longer was the housewife's labor contributing to family survival, unless she took in boarders, laundry, or piece work—in other words, unless she was tied to money-producing activities. The traditional work of the woman in the home, the necessary items and services she used to provide for her family, became part of the market economy in the nineteenth century. No longer were these items and services produced by women; instead they were bought primarily with man-made dollars. So the home became a "non-productive" realm, and the woman in the home became increasingly dependent on a male wage-earner. This was true for the working class and landless poor as well as for the middle class. Although many working-class women worked in their homes for wages, the home itself was no longer the place of production for the family—the wage-world was.

This change in the nature and location of productive activity also had an impact on children's lives. In the traditional agricultural economy and in the early commercial economy, children's labor had been essential to the family and children had been expected to work on the family's behalf. With the transition to industrial capitalism, children's work was problematic. Throughout the nineteenth century, children of the rural poor
continued to provide necessary agricultural labor for their families; this was the experience of the vast majority of Black children as well as the children of poor whites in the South. In urban areas, however, the situation was different. Depending on the city or town, there were factory jobs for children or there were ways for children to help their families by scavenging, doing odd jobs, and peddling goods. But unlike children's traditional, home-bound (farm-bound) labor, these urban jobs undermined parental authority and control, in that child laborers were accountable to people other than their parents and the jobs were tied to the wage system instead of the home. In addition, the work itself was dangerous and exhausting in a way that the earlier work had not been. Only families that needed children's wages in order to survive urged their children to work. In the middle class, children were exempted from wage labor just as women were; mother and children occupied the non-productive sphere of the home.

It should not be surprising that these radical changes in the nature and location of work, brought on by the transition to industrial capitalism, should have an impact on people's thinking about gender, childhood, and family. We have already seen how changes in the nature of work brought a sense of loss of control and loss of meaning for American men. Since the family increasingly depended on the man's wages for survival, men began to associate being a good man with being a good provider. That meant commanding the highest possible price for one's labor and competing successfully against other men for the highest price. No matter the personal value of the work or the individual's repugnance for the job, a man was a man if he earned well. The masculine skills, then, became those associated with money-getting: bargaining aggressively for the best deal, attending to the market value, not the moral value, of labor or a product, and competing successfully, fairly or otherwise, for jobs or promotions. Similarly, those personal traits that were not conducive to marketplace advancement were thought of as not masculine. Emotional receptivity, nurturance, piety, the ability to relate closely with others, the willingness to show feelings—these were increasingly seen as feminine characteristics unbecoming of true manhood. Somehow a man's sexual identity became connected to his work performance in an amoral, increasingly mechanical and scientific arena. For men not too far removed from a deeply religious colonial heritage, this equation of manliness with worldly success-at-any-price was a difficult transition.

Besides prompting the creation of a new meaning of manhood, the new experience of work also led to a new meaning of "home" for men. Taking men and productive labor out of the home created a split between public and private, home and world, feminine and masculine "spheres." The nineteenth-century man was driven out of the family space for most of the day. He was disconnected from the workings of the home and from the parenting of the children. The absence of fathers was a frequent complaint among nineteenth-century popular writers, as work drew the man into the public world. Home became, for the middle-class man, a retreat from the harsh, materialistic work world; he expected nurturance and psychological comfort there because the place of labor was devoid of

humanistic values. Home became a symbol of the security, love, individual attention, and meaning lacking in the “world.” As one nineteenth-century man put it, home assured a man that “there at least you are beloved; that there you are understood; that there your errors will meet ever with the gentlest forgiveness . . . and that there you may be entirely and joyfully—yourself.” Of course the home itself did not provide this; the woman who presided over the hearth was expected to supply the sentiment and warmth, the selfless devotion and careful personal attention which was absent in the commercial world. In order to fulfill this role, the woman was thought of (and thought of herself) as having a different nature than the man. This sexual polarity, born of economic change, affected people’s relationships and heightened the tendency to typecast women and men.

The father/son relationship was also affected by changes in work and the home/work separation. A father no longer had skills to teach his sons; instead, the younger generation had to be trained outside the family to fill positions sometimes unimaginable by the father’s generation. The increased education of middle-class sons, another product of the altered work pattern, also meant that younger boys and men were less likely to seek advice from older men and were less respectful of the older generation. Nineteenth-century fathers did not have as much influence over their sons as colonial fathers had, as young men made their own decisions about when to leave home and what sort of job preparation to seek. The father/son relationship was also affected by the simple absence of the father. Middle-class boys grew up within the feminine domain of home, where religious virtues were highly valued and the “world” was seen as corrupt at best and demonic at worst. Boys who spent their early years in the sacred domestic space could not help but feel at least a little suspicious of the man who daily ventured into the sordid world and who had little connection to the activities of home life. In addition, those same boys were economically dependent upon their fathers, at least partially, until late adolescence—a situation that must have caused some resentment among fathers and some guilt among sons. Historians have

19 Quoted from an 1852 publication, Revenues of a Bachelor, in William Bridges, “Family Patterns and Social Values in America, 1825–1875,” American Quarterly, 18 (1965), 3–12.
further suggested that the actual transition into an adult male role was difficult for sons because fathers were not close enough to bridge the chasm between home and world. By the end of the nineteenth century, fatherhood had become a social role bereft of most of its former potency. Middle-class men not only lost control over their work and their sons, but they also were denied power in the newly created home sphere. As the century progressed, women’s power over domestic life grew. Marriage laws were reformed so that women had more rights over their earnings or premarital property (if any), more freedom to end unsatisfactory marriages, and more power over the destiny of children in the case of divorce. Besides these legal changes, there is evidence that men were losing sexual control within marriage also. Throughout the nineteenth century, especially among native-born whites, the population declined steadily without modern birth control technology. Historians of nineteenth-century sexuality are convinced that women were responsible for this fertility decline and that they used abstinence as their principal method of birth control. Toward the end of the century, after the medical profession led a successful campaign to criminalize abortion, abstinence was the only reliable method of birth control and the one recommended by sex reformers and “voluntary motherhood” crusaders. Personal as well as public sources indicate that the nineteenth-century fertility decline was the result of increased female domestic power to curb the sexual demands of husbands. Over the course of the nineteenth century, middle-class men experienced a loss of control within the sphere of intimacy as well as within the economic sphere.

The free-born American man in 1880 was less sure of his world and less in control of his life than his great-grandfather had been. His sense of personal worth and manliness was tied to material success in a bewildering economic system over which he had no real power. Out of his search for meaning and potency, for a sense of calm and certainty that his emotional needs would be met, the American man, especially the middle-class man, was partially responsible for the creation of the idealized “all-American family.” Within that ideal, the husband/father, because of his sex, had sole right to the political and economic activity of the world. Any woman who dared to venture into his territory of wage-earning and politics was seen as “unsexed” and therefore unnatural. By virtue of his manhood, the ideal husband/father was superior to women and had wage-earning power in the money economy. He need not worry about religion or morality because his ideal wife was the keeper of his soul and the moral guardian of his children. He was respected and obeyed at home for the wage he earned upon which the entire family depended. Because he ventured into the heartless world to toil for the sake of his family, the ideal husband/father deserved and required a calm, well-ordered homelife with an attentive wife and obedient children. If the marketplace was unpredictable and unloving, the home should be stable and nurturing. If the employer and co-workers were overbearing and competitive, the homebodies should be deferential and dependable. If the job, the political atmosphere, and the new social order were chaotic and amoral, the home sphere should be well-ordered and pious. By helping to create the “all-American family,” the American man in the midst of social and economic change could fit meaningfully and sanely within the new capitalist order, and still feel safe, worthy, and cared-for.
But the ideal was not a purely masculine invention. Women, too, were
affected by the rise of industrial capitalism and were forced to create a
new source of status and meaning for themselves. Although the middle-
class woman rarely participated in wage-earning activity after the first
wave of farmers’ daughters in the textile mills, the economic and social
changes in male work altered her position as profoundly as it did her
husband’s. As we have seen, the industrial economy took production
out of the home and left the woman economically dependent. Although
the housewife’s job was awesome by late twentieth-century standards
and still included sewing all of the family’s clothes, washing by hand,
preparing and storing food, and purchasing ready-made items for the
home and family members, none of these jobs was money-producing,
and therefore none was a source of status or self-esteem in a market
economy. The new economic order vested power in money-wages and
left women little or no access to this source of power. For all women,
regardless of economic class, marriage to a man of the same (or higher)
class was not only the best, but the only route to economic well-being.
And into the nineteenth-century marriage, the woman brought depen-
dency, not productivity. Her economic status, *vis à vis* the men in her
class, had declined.

Women’s social status was also adversely affected by early nineteenth-
century economic change. With men leaving home to work, the separate
spheres of women and men became a physical reality. The female place
was the powerless, emotive realm of the home, while everything outside
the home was claimed as a male stage. During the nineteenth century,
the world, the male sphere, was teeming with economic and political
opportunities for an increasing number of American men. Higher edu-
cation and professional training were becoming available to more and
more men and boys. New jobs and professions were blossoming, offer-
ing economic security and social prestige. The franchise was extended to
all white men twenty-one years and older, regardless of property or
class. Separate spheres resulted in a loss of social status for women rela-
tive to men, because the male sphere was expanding while the female
sphere was contracting.20 Physically separate spheres altered the social
status of women and men by increasing the discrepancy between male
and female life-options, male and female education, male and female
expectations. The home sphere was relatively more confining in the
nineteenth century than it had been in the seventeenth and eighteenth
centuries.

Besides adversely affecting the economic and social status of women, the
new economic realities of the nineteenth century also resulted in the iso-
lation of many women and children in the non-productive home. The
simple presence of women and children in the home, in the absence of
men, made child-care a major and exclusively female activity. Common
schools, which developed during the early part of the century, may have
actually made the child-care responsibilities of women even more intense.

---

Since the schools took older children out of the home for a significant part of the day, they were not available, as in earlier times, to care for the younger siblings. There was no alternative to mother-care; a woman’s young children were her constant companions.

Reproduction and child-care, domestic service, and the physical and emotional care of husbands were the life-activities of women after the turn of the nineteenth century. Just as changes in male work led to a new image of manhood, the middle-class woman’s narrowed “job description” and the separate sphere which she occupied produced a new image of womanhood. Unlike the colonial and revolutionary feminine image, which was based on quantitative differences between the sexes, the nineteenth-century “true woman” was qualitatively different from her husband. Femininity was bound by the female body, just as the woman was bound within the home sphere. In fact, the female body and bodily functions became a metaphor for feminine traits. Women were thought to be passive, altruistic, nurturing, and domestic because of their female anatomy and physical role in reproduction. The strict dichotomization of sexual traits was an outgrowth of the separate spheres and separate work of women and men. It became clear that women were “naturally” disposed to all those characteristics that were superfluous or dangerous in the marketplace. The ideal woman became the emotional, self-sacrificing, religious “shadow” of the ideal man’s cold, self-seeking, secular marketplace personality.²¹

This new sexual polarity based on qualitative sexual difference was not conducive to close relationships between women and men. Because of separate spheres, and perhaps because marriages were not very satisfying relationships for many women, there was a strong sense of female community in the nineteenth century. Women were closer to female kin and women friends than they were to their husbands. Foreign observers noticed a “coldness” in American marriages and commented that women seemed closer to their children than to their husbands. Popular writers chided American men for being away from home too much and leaving their wives with nothing but domestic cares. Since female work was unpaid, both women and men tended to think little of it, so that one partner in the marriage was the breadwinner and the other was the domestic servant. The traditional partnership between women and men that had been necessary for survival gave way to economic dependence in which the woman provided domestic and sexual services in return for her husband’s financial support. Some people began to point out the very close resemblance of middle-class marriage to prostitution.

Separate spheres and the notion of qualitative sexual differences also rendered woman’s human status suspect. A woman’s femininity was reason to deny her entrance into the male-controlled world. Physical femaleness was seen as reason enough to deny women access to higher education (women’s reproductive organs would atrophy if they were educated), to deny women voting rights (women’s moral sensitivity, rooted in their wombs, would vanish if they were exposed to political decision-making), and even to deny women rights over their very bodies (women’s natural propensity to value fashion and ease over maternal sacrifice would devastate the race if they were allowed access to abortion). In accordance with separate spheres, a woman who dared to speak in public or to engage in a male wage-earning occupation was considered “unsexed.”

---

A small minority of American women sensed the discrepancy between the separate spheres of women and men in terms of power and prestige and organized a social movement to improve the legal and social status of women. But most American women responded differently. Before mid-century, women had come up with an ideal of family and mother that turned separate spheres to women's advantage and made the idealized home the new source of female status. All the traits that were liabilities for world activity became evidence of women's moral superiority. Women were submissive and self-sacrificing, just as the divine Savior was; women were willing to suffer pain in childbirth and motherhood, just as Christ was a willing sufferer; women were bound to the family good by a sense of duty, just as Jesus was in service to the will of his Father. To compensate for economic and social status loss, many nineteenth-century women elevated domesticity to a religion and then to a science, turned child-raising into a sacred mission only a woman's special nature could fathom, and used motherhood itself as an argument for female suffrage and higher education for women. By the end of the century, women had carved status, domestic power, and even a bit of political influence from an idealized home and family.23

Although she had no power in the world, the woman in the ideal family could think of herself as the high priestess of the domestic realm. She alone could properly supervise and manage the home; she alone was responsible for the details of personal care of her husband and offspring. And, of course, the home influence kept husbands on the righteous path and instilled moral values in children. By managing the home, a woman saved her husband from vice and started her children on the path of Christian virtue. The idealized home and family gave a new sense of status to women whose productive role was eliminated by industrial capitalism.

Besides turning the home into sacred space, women contributed to the idealized family by insisting that childhood was a special time of life and the child's very immortal soul was a woman's true mission. Children needed the attention and care only a mother could give in order to grow up healthy and moral. In fact, women were so attuned to the special nature of children that they, not men, should be elementary school teachers; after all, the elementary school, and especially the kindergarten, carried on the mother's work. Instead of the earlier view of children as small adults, the nineteenth-century parent saw the child as malleable and perfectible. It was the woman's mission to shape the child in the proper mold so that salvation, happiness, and success would await the child as adult. Women wrote of motherhood as the most powerful and most important position in the world.

But for a woman to perform her mothering and domestic functions well, she needed education. And she also needed the assistance of the law to protect her role from masculine interference. Divorce law reform and

changes in child custody decisions (so that mothers were awarded custody of children of “tender years”) were won based on “woman’s special nature.” Once women took on the ideal of pure motherhood, “woman’s special nature” could also be used as an argument for female extension into the masculine world. Women were so good at home management, why not city management? Women were naturally altruistic; why not have them be public servants? Women were so moral they certainly should be given the ballot to help steer the country on the righteous path. The idea of woman’s nature, which grew out of separate spheres and the new economic order, was used by the end of the century to support women’s rights in the male sphere.

Although the ideal family and especially the ideal woman appears to be antithetical to women’s human rights (and we are still struggling with the legal, social, and economic constraints of “true womanhood”), women, like men, benefited from family ideology and contributed to its formation. The “system” does not create ideology; people do. Within the material constraints of their lives, people attempt to make sense out of self and world. They take the real experience of their socioeconomic situation and tell themselves a story about it. The story helps them live their lives meaningfully and with a sense of personal power and worth within a world that is confusing.  

By the close of the nineteenth century, the Right’s idealized family was established in the American psyche. Far from representing any natural family form, the “all-American family” was a response to the capitalist-shaped industrial revolution. Americans, especially in the middle class, formed the ideal in reaction to their experience of disruptive socioeconomic change. Although the middle class could approximate the form of the ideal family (father/provider, full-time mother/homemaker, three obedient, clean, healthy children), the form did not bring much comfort or contentment. As soon as divorce became available, women ended marriages in numbers large enough to cause a national stir. Women also

---

24 For an elaboration of this idea, see Nancy M. Theriot, The Biosocial Construction of Femininity: Mothers and Daughters in Nineteenth-Century America (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1986). I do not mean to imply that powerful groups or political-economic structures have no role in the formation of ideology. Rather, I see people as Marx once described them: freely responding to conditions they don’t freely choose. The “system” and powerful groups within it are the most important conditions the powerless face.
expressed their disdain for the ideal family by not marrying; in the late nineteenth century, about 12 percent of white women remained blissfully single. And even with motherhood elevated to a cult, white women by the century’s end were having so few children that white men began to talk nervously of “race suicide.” Men were not altogether pleased with the ideal family either, as prostitution flourished in the late-century period to provide Victorian husbands with extra-marital, extra-familial satisfaction. Reformers saw domestic violence on the increase, and throughout the century numerous religious and secular experiments were launched as alternatives to the ideal family. Even the people who created the myth found it difficult to live within it.

But what of those who could not, or would not, live within the “all-American family”? This is an especially important question for us today, as an overwhelming majority of Americans do not live within that ideal family. What about nineteenth-century people who were not middle class and who were not native, white, Anglo-Saxon Protestants? As we have seen, middle-class and working-class women and men shared the experience of social and economic disruption. Working-class people also shared middle-class ideas about working women, as we have seen, and Black sharecroppers as well as ethnically-diverse industrial workers attempted in their family styles to keep the woman in the home. They were, for the most part, unsuccessful because the woman’s labor was essential to family survival; but the fact that they tried indicates the extent to which the idealized notion of family was not simply a middle-class concern. Similarly, non-white and/or non-middle-class families attempted to keep children home or in school instead of sending them to work. However, it was rarely possible to keep all the children unemployed; sometimes the youngest or sometimes the girls (because they could not get jobs which were as lucrative as the boys’) were allowed to attend school instead of work. Family survival patterns of the working class indicate that the middle-class idealization of a certain kind of family was at least partially shared by the working class.

Whether or not working-class and poor people shared middle-class ideas about family, they were subject to official middle-class values and ever-present middle-class reformers. Education is a case in point. Common school education, the provision of elementary education to all white (and after the Civil War, Black and white) children was a reform urged by the middle class in order to insure “common American values.” Kindergarten education was seen as especially important to immigrant children; if the children were in classrooms at a young age they could be taught “proper” hygiene and English, as well as the pledge of allegiance. The common school was seen as a path to Americanization, which included middle-class values as well as civics. It is no wonder that middle-class reformers successfully campaigned for compulsory education laws and child labor laws, both potentially disastrous for the working-class family.
Middle-class reformers and the state, run by middle-class bureaucrats, asserted influence among working-class Americans, both immigrant and native born, in other ways as well. From mid-century on, children could be taken away from families for activities that were offenses to the middle class and survival skills to the families themselves. Similarly, young women of the poor or working class found that their sexual activity not only offended middle-class people, but prompted reforms in “age of consent” laws. The middle class was also behind new laws to limit the hours of women’s employment and to limit women’s night work.

In various ways, the ideology of the “all-American family” imposed itself on all Americans. We have gone through the nineteenth-century family experience in detail because the beginnings of the idealized family of the late twentieth century can be found in the response of the middle class to socioeconomic change in the nineteenth century. It is a mistake to assume that family ideology was confined to the middle class; the “all-American family” affected working-class and poor people as much as it did middle-class people, possibly more. Although the ideal was altered a bit with new twentieth-century conditions, the basic outline of the “all-American family” was created in the nineteenth century by people who experienced their world in social and economic flux.
The "All-American Family" in the Twentieth Century

The twentieth century brought its own version of socioeconomic change, perhaps more subtle than that of the nineteenth century but just as disruptive. The mature industrial economy of the turn-of-the-century period, characterized by monopoly capitalism, intensified urbanization, a new class of workers, and a growing consumer goods market, especially affected the lives of children and women. As the century progressed these two groups experienced more and more autonomy relative to fathers (or family units) and husbands, even while they remained economically oppressed.

The two factors increasing the autonomy and individualism of children and adolescents were education and the beginning of a "mass culture" based on consumer goods and activities. As a greater percentage of American children, eventually including the children of immigrants, experienced age-segregated, standardized education, adults outside the family and peer groups outside the kin group asserted more influence on values and behavior than the family did. The increasing availability of education from 1900 to our own time has produced an education gap as well as a generation gap in many American families. In the early part of the century it was common for immigrant parents who did not speak English to have at least one child who went through American elementary school. By the 1920's, high school education became a common experience for adolescents whose parents had only finished elementary school. And in the post-World War II era, thousands of American parents who were high school graduates saw their children graduate from universities. One side effect of this trend has been a decrease in parental control over children and adolescents and an increase in the power of "outsiders" such as teachers, educational institutions, and friends to influence the values and lifestyle choices of the young.

Similarly, the rise of the consumer economy in the twentieth century has eroded family influence over children and adolescents. One major development in the twentieth century has been the proliferation of goods, services, and activities available for individuals to purchase and participate in. Accompanying this change, not coincidentally but necessarily, has
been an increase in discretionary income, even among working-class people, and the rise of the advertising industry as a market creator. First radio and then television, in programming as well as advertising, have helped to spread the basic message of a consumer economy, that “you are what you buy.” The growing consumer economy has affected the relationship between parents and children in at least two ways. First, children and adolescents are targeted as individual buyers. Although when young they have to depend on parents for the money and permission to consume, still the appeal is to the child herself/himself, not to the family as a unit. The twentieth-century child, socialized in an age-segregated environment within a consumption-oriented economy, comes to regard herself/himself as the source of preferences and attitudes about goods and activities, instead of accepting preferences, attitudes, and values from parents or family tradition. The consumer economy separates family members into individual buyers; through buying, each shares in a mass culture out of family control. The second way this economic development has affected parents and children is in giving physical expression to the generation gap; the music, clothing, hair products and styles of the young make visible their separateness from family.
It is not difficult to understand why adults in the 1970's and 1980's might have felt a loss of control over their children. Indeed, there has been an educational and value gap growing between the generations since the early twentieth century. Just as the age-segregated educational system fosters a sense of separateness from adults/(family) and the consumer economy sees the young person as a separate individual with purchasing potential, government defines children's rights as separate individuals. Government has added to parents' loss of control by insisting on child labor laws and compulsory education, and by guaranteeing children the right to such things as medical care (even when the parents refuse it), birth control information (even when the parents prefer children's ignorance) and freedom from parental abuse. As acceptable as these government measures may seem, each of them was contested by some parents at the time of their enactment. Since the nineteenth century, parents at all levels of the socioeconomic system have lost control over their children.

Similarly, socioeconomic change has loosened the control of husbands over wives. The shift in the economy in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to managerial, professional, service, and business-support occupations opened up job opportunities for elite women who were the first of their sex to obtain a college education, for middle-class young women who were high school-educated, and eventually for the daughters of the working class. Elite women, at first choosing work instead of marriage, carved careers for themselves as physicians, social workers, academicians, and government experts; as the century progressed many of these women began to expect careers in addition to marriage. More and more middle-class women occupied themselves in a sex-mixed work environment between school and marriage, an experience that would contribute to changing expectations about marriage and relationships. And the daughters of working-class families were welcomed into service occupations, the ever-expanding consumer goods industries such as garment making, and, the more fortunate, into government "pink collar" jobs resulting from the expansion of government bureaucracy beginning in the twentieth century.

Although most of these women, from the elite to the working class, worked in "women's jobs," the opening of the market to more and more women workers eroded the earlier identity of woman and home, of womanhood and motherhood. Instead, it created the possibility that the interests of women, children, and the family unit might be contradictory. World War II boosted this economic trend of women's greater participation in wage labor and also invited a new group—married women—into the work force. The most dramatic change in the composition of the labor force since World War II has been the steady increase in married women's participation.

Because government, professions, and industry (both production and service) claimed the woman worker as a worker, not a woman, the move of more and more women into paid labor was one of several twentieth-century developments that loosened the woman/family connection and facilitated a growing sense of individualism and self-determination in the family member previously most embedded in the family unit. This is not to say that women gained equality in the economic sphere. Even in the late 1980's, women earned considerably less than three-quarters of what
men earned, due more to a sex-segregated job structure than to sex differences in pay for the same job. However, there is evidence that wage labor increases women's power within marriage, if only slightly, and that it allows women to choose to end bad marriages more easily. Married women's labor force participation, together with the gradual development since the 1930's of social welfare for women and children, have loosened the control of husbands over wives. Although women's low wages have kept them economically disadvantaged, especially when living as heads of households with their children, and although social welfare has replaced marital control with state regulation of women's lives, it is still clear that women's power relative to men has been enhanced due to economic change.²⁵

Women's expanded economic role in the twentieth century was due to the new business, professional, and service demands of the developing consumer economy. In addition to offering women more wage-earning possibilities, the changing economy also set the stage for new attitudes toward sexuality and marriage by shifting the emphasis from family membership to individualism. As adolescents of both sexes began to share a common educational experience, and young women and men began to associate with each other in work environments and in new sexually-mixed pastimes such as bicycling, spectator sports, motoring, and movie-going, the "separate spheres" of the nineteenth century began to crumble. Women began to define themselves less in terms of the motherhood role that had been central to the nineteenth-century woman's community and more in terms of a romantic companion role that would become the core of femininity in the twentieth century. By the 1920's the woman-consumer was offered new products such as nylons, ready-made clothing in hundreds of styles and colors, cosmetics, and hair-care products and services to enhance her possibilities as a romantic companion; she was also provided with deodorant, mouth wash, and new slimming techniques such as cigarette-smoking to help her cope with her imperfections. And by the 1920's also, the diaphragm was a widely available contraceptive device (though still illegal), so that the woman/romantic companion could enjoy sex without the worry of possible motherhood.

The marriage of the nineteenth century, based on sex-segregated spheres of home and world, gave way to the companionate marriage of the twentieth century, based on intense heterosexual intimacy and high expectations of personal happiness. Women as well as men began to see themselves as individuals in the marriage, and so the relationship between the two individuals became more important than "the family" as a unit. Ironically, the result of regarding women's marital happiness as important has been a divorce rate accelerating since the early twentieth century (historically, women have initiated the majority of divorces). The socioeconomic changes of the twentieth century have resulted in a shift in women's sense of identity, from mother-in-family to individual-withchoices.

In the political arena too, women have emerged as individuals in the twentieth century. Woman's suffrage, finally achieved in 1920, can be seen as symbolic of the shift in orientation I have been describing. One of the major arguments against woman's suffrage was that women were represented by the men in their families, by their fathers or husbands; women were not individuals, but were family members, as far as the law was concerned. The vote both symbolized and actualized women's individual admission into the "world" sphere. By the late 1960's and early 1970's, a new women's movement expressed the demands of the woman-citizen and articulated a critique of the sexual politics of the family. Women-as-individuals—politically, sexually, and economically disconnected from "the family unit"—became a collective political force.

As Americans entered the decade of the 1980's, changes in generational and gender relationships that had been developing since the beginning of the century became the target of the political Right; the "all-American family" became the symbol of a lost past, a lost innocence, that once restored, would bring about a national state of grace. It is important to remember that the nineteenth-century idealization of family was in part an attempt to assert control over socioeconomic change that was beyond individual choice, and to create meaningful roles in the wake of dramatic change. In the late twentieth century, individual Americans feel (and are) less in control of the political economy, the environment, and the direction of technology than any previous generation of Americans. Nostalgia for the "all-American family" is partially a response to this powerlessness: a reassertion of natural roles, unconditional love, and respectful community which guarantees personal power and psychological safety. Although used politically by the Right, this nostalgia knows no political boundary. Especially among white, middle-class Americans, changes in gender and generational roles have been seen by many as confusing and threatening, so that a return to the "all-American family" seems to be a logical first step toward a safer and saner community.

Contemporary men of all political persuasions have been affected by a sense of status loss and loss of control in relationships with women. About one half of all marriages end in divorce, with women still initiating most divorces. In spite of the fact that most men are better off economically after a divorce than women are, men are more likely than women to have adjustment problems after marriages end. As of the 1980's most divorced fathers have not worked out a meaningful way to stay in their children's lives, which must cause many men emotional pain. In the area of sexuality, male control and male status have also waned over the last thirty years, with modern sex research putting more pressure on male performance and suggesting that women are capable
of experiencing shocking levels of sexual excitement. Because of the women's movement and the gay rights movement, lesbianism is less often seen as deviant, and more women are asserting their sexual preference for female partners. It was so much easier on male ego when heterosexuality was seen as the only normal sexual contact and when female orgasm was believed to be accidental and always related to vaginal penetration. Another far-reaching change in sexual politics has been the availability of effective birth control and the ability of women to prevent pregnancy and obtain abortions without their male partners' knowledge or permission.

In the economic realm also, modern sex roles can be a source of status loss for men. Most women, even married women with children, are wage-earners and much less dependent on husbands than nineteenth-century women were. Male control of the 'world' sphere is still a reality in terms of hierarchy and pay, but women have invaded this sphere in unprecedented numbers since World War II. The idea of affirmative action, no matter the actual implementation, threatens male dominance in what used to be an exclusive area of male control. All of these changes in sexuality and sex roles, many in response to the contemporary women's movement, have significantly reduced male status and power.

It is not accidental that the current idealization of family celebrates women's traditional roles in relation to men, children, and money-making. If only women would remain in the home sphere and not compete with men in the world, if only women would understand their natural responsibility toward the young and not demand child-care and reproductive rights, if only women would allow themselves lady-like surrender in a sexual encounter and not evaluate and complain about male performance—in short, if only women would be "real women," men could be "real men" and the world would be a lot less confusing. The ideal family is a fantasy that restores male status and serves as a coping mechanism in the face of rapid social change, alienating work demands, and a political economy beyond individual control. It is this fantasy which fuels the current attacks by the political Right on women's rights, including reproductive choice.

Although the "all-American family" is anti-feminist, it is not a male conspiracy; the image of family appeals to many women also. Over the past thirty years, the changes that have disturbed American men have revolutionized the lives of American women. Feminine sex roles that were standard and accepted two generations ago are not mentioned today in intelligent circles without apology. But there is a "catch-22" in the culture's celebration of the liberated woman. In the 1980's, women are told that they can do and be whatever they want as long as they: remain feminine and have at least two children, maintain responsibility for home and family while launching successful careers, be sexually free while keeping sexual relationships meaningful and taking full responsibility for birth control, assert themselves politically and economically while maintaining a sense of humor about the wage discrepancy between women and men. If American men are rendered less powerful by the changing times, American women are caught in a quagmire of contradictory messages, impossible expectations, and pseudo-choices about their lives. The nostalgic ideology of family restricts women's lives, but it also
provides clear boundaries, realizable goals, and safe definitions. By rededicating themselves to hearth and home, exploring the 101 marvels of their microwave ovens, getting involved in PTA and Cub Scouts—by dusting off the feminine mystique and devoting themselves to the “all-American family”—women can avoid role confusion, boring and low-paying jobs, and existential dread. Family ideology offers women an escape from the choice and confusion of “the world” into the sureness and comfort of “home and family.” The invitation is difficult for many modern women to resist because the world offers women what it offers men (only for less pay): alienated labor and disrupted community. It should not surprise us that many high-achieving women who have been successful in the sphere of the world are having second thoughts about their life choices.

For the past thirty years, there has been growing uneasiness with the fruits of our socioeconomic system. Just as middle-class reformers in the nineteenth century believed that universal acceptance of the “all-American family” would solve the problems of rapid industrialization, right-wing ideologues today likewise promise that “strengthening the all-American family” will ease the problems of our advanced industrial society. We are told that the ideal family will end sex-role uncertainty, provide a stable community, and restore balance and sanity to personal life. But, as we have seen, the “all-American family” is a nostalgic fantasy which never existed in its pure form for many Americans and which contained (and contains) widespread unhappiness, sexual abuse, and domestic tyranny for some of those living within it. The answer to our problems is not a “return” to the “all-American family,” but rather a revisioning of our national possibilities. We need to confront the personal and social disruption that has accompanied capitalist modernization not by looking backward to a past that never was, but by working toward an equitable and caring future for all our various families.
Selected Bibliography

Books


**Articles**


