Radboud University

1970s American Family Life On Television

Shifting Gender Dynamics in the Sitcoms *The Brady Bunch* and *That '70s Show*

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Abstract

The main purpose of this research is to answer the question of how the American family life changed in the 1970s. The subsequent step will be to see how these changes were shown in *The Brady Bunch,* a sitcom from the ‘70s, and in *That ‘70s Show,* a sitcom from the late ‘90s. In the 1970s the economy endured a severe downfall, set into motion by the oil embargo of 1973. The family also changed through the women’s liberation movement, persuading more and more women to join the labor market, making them able to provide for themselves. With the power to provide for themselves, women are more prone to divorce their husbands and take the children with them. Fathers lose their position as the breadwinner and hereby a bit of their authority. Children spend longer periods at home, mostly discovering who they are and developing themselves. These changes are almost invisible in *The Brady Bunch* which portrays a picture-perfect family without any real troubles. These changes permeate *That ‘70s Show* as they represent nearly every aspect of the decade through satire and parody.

Keywords: Brady Bunch, That ‘70s Show, Family life, Feminism, 1970s, Sitcom.

Table of Contents

Title page……………………………………………………………..…..………….………….…...1

Abstract………………………..………………………………….....2

Table of Contents…………………………………………………………………..……………..3

1. Introduction…………………………………………………………………………….…….....5

2. Theoretical Framework ………………………………………..…………………………….8

2.1. Television Theory…………………………………………..…………………………9

2.2. The Sitcom.……………………………………………………....………….……….11

3. The Family Life of the 1970s………………………………………………………..…..15

3.1. The Political Influence on the Family……………….…………………………….15

3.2. Growing Apart: Increasing Divorce Rates ……………………………….…………17

3.3. When Mothers Leave: Changing Female Gender Roles…………………….……18

3.4. A Father at Work and at Home: Changing Male Gender Roles ……………………20

3.5. The Kids are Alright: Changing Children's Pastimes ………………………………22

4. *The Brady Bunch*……………………………………………………………………..….24

4.1. Carol's Resistance………………………………..……………………………………..24

4.2. Mike Opens Up: A Moderation of Male Dominance……………………………......26

4.3. Child's Play…………………………………...…………….........…………….27

4.4. Discussion……………………………………….................................……28

5. *That '70s Show*..…………………..……..…..…..…..…...…..………….....……..........32

5.1. Kitty Declawed: The Other Side to the Feminist Story...34

5.2. Red's Scare…………………….........................……………………….…...…...35

5.3. Groovy Teens………………….………..…...…...…...…...…...………….…...........37

5.4. Discussion……...……..…..……..……........……………………..………………..39

6. Conclusion……………………………………....……….......……….……....……….…42

Works Cited……………………………………........................….......…………………….…….45

Appendices……………………….....….………..…....….…....................…....………………..……...49

1. Introduction

The 1970s were a tumultuous decade: the Beatles break up, terrorists strike at the Munich Olympic Games, Margaret Thatcher becomes the first female Prime Minister of Great Britain. The United States had its own ups and downs: the Watergate Scandal, abortion is legalized through Roe v. Wade, Elvis is found dead, and *Star Wars IV: A New Hope* is released, just to name a few. These are all large, one-time events which incited gradual changes throughout the decade and beyond. Changes caused by events of the sort reverberated through all layers of American society, including the family home. Family life is always changing and the 1970s were no different from any other time in that sense. The 1970s saw the introduction of many factors that changed family life, amongst others: the rise of feminism, the redefinition of gender roles, and the higher cost of living. I intend to reveal how changes in social, economic, and (geo)political spheres affected the everyday lives of American families, specifically by means of shifting gender roles. To do so, I will be providing background information about the decade in the United States to bring across a "structure of feeling."

In more ways than one, the 1970s formed a bridge between the 1960s and the 1980s in America. Obviously the 1970s were the decade linking the other two but there are other connections. The 1960s were a decade of protest; protests against the U.S. involvement in the Vietnam conflict, protests for civil rights by African Americans, and protests for gender equality by women. In the 1980s, there was much less attention for the needs of others in American society and more focus on the accumulation of personal wealth. In providing this "structure of feeling", I will be using Jonathan Bignell's *An Introduction to Television Studies* as the main source for my theoretical framework concerning television studies. This book will provide me with the vocabulary and understanding I need to correctly assess my findings and put them into words. To complete my research, I aim to show how these changes were

translated into American popular culture. To do so, I will take an in-depth look at two sitcoms, one from the 1970s about the contemporary life and one from the late 1990s about life and society in the 1970s.

For the show from the 1970s I have opted for *The Brady Bunch*, a family comedy about a blended family; a mother with three daughters from a previous marriage moves in with a father with three sons from a previous marriage and comedy ensues. The show from the 1990s about the 1970s which I will be using is *That '70s Show*, a popular sitcom from the late 1990s portraying the lives of American teens and family life in the 1970s. The reason why I chose two situation comedies is that they will have a relatively similar set-up, require a similar vocabulary in an analysis, and it is more accessible to compare two comedies instead of, say, a comedy and a drama show, because they have the same objectives; to entertain through laughter. Approaching a "text," tends to focus on textual detail at the expense of the initial context and history, this, unfortunately, leads to neglect the way in which television is understood by audiences. This is a definite disadvantage in this research as the viewing of a show, or program, separately, meaning removed from its original time and space, means that I am further removed from the situation in which it was intended to be shown. Topics within a show may not carry or convey the same message as it was originally intended to. This issue is an even larger one in my case as I am not merely viewing a program a week after its broadcast, but over 40 years later, meaning that the "structure of feeling" may be lost to me. However, I will nullify this issue by reading into the "structure of feeling" of the decade to appropriately observe *The Brady Bunch* as a show within its time and place. To achieve this, I will first discuss what family life was like in the 1970s and by subsequently comparing this to the family life presented in *The Brady Bunch.* In my preliminary research I encountered multiple researches exploring the representation of family life in *All In The Family.* However, I was unable to find comparative research which provided an in depth review of family life in

the 1970s connected to two television shows with approximately the same subject but produced in different time periods. This gap in the literature is one I intend to fill. This is in part because it seems to me quite an interesting comparison to make and also because the 1970s were such a decade of change, making it a more dynamic decade. The question I hope to answer with this research is: how did American family life change in the 1970s, and how is this represented in both contemporary and modern popular culture?

2. Theoretical Framework

To determine what the "structure of feeling" is in a time frame, it is imperative to first know what a "structure of feeling" itself is. The term "structure of feeling" was coined by the Welsh cultural academic Raymond Williams. According to Williams, "all developments in cultural form, including [television], express, at the same time, developments in social practice more generally" and Williams himself says that "[cultural forms have to be seen…in themselves [as] disguised social processes" (qtd. in Best 192). This does not mean that changes in television are a direct reaction to wider social changes. To Williams, history is in an unending discourse with the social aspects of society, which leads to the unending modifications in television programming. The term "structure of feeling" indicates the condition of social circumstances at a certain point in time in a certain area, being a city, a country, or even the entire world. A "structure of feeling" combines the objective and subjective layers of experience. Upon decoding the "structure of feeling" from, for example, a television series, it is important that the frame of reference of the encoder is the same, or at least similar, to that of the decoder. A parallel frame of reference is important because otherwise the encoder's intention is lost to the decoder, making it unable to bring across a message completely.

In the process of analyzing both of the sitcoms, I will take a look at the aural aspects of the shows with an emphasis on dialogue. Because a 1970s sitcom such as *The Brady Bunch* brings across its message mainly through spoken word and less through visual imagery, dialogue will be a more effective means of analysis. To perform an analysis, I will need to make a selection of episodes from both of the shows. To start with, the pilot episode of each show will be up for discussion as most television programs use their pilot to showcase their intentions for the show and to profile the characters and the show's setting. For the same reason, I will select a number of episodes from the first season to help set the stage for the

show's image. Furthermore, a selection of episodes of *The Brady Bunch* will be made from later seasons as a means of looking at the show's development within the decade. For *That '70s Show*, I will also select episodes from later seasons to have a good look on how the characters develop according to the time which is depicted.

2.1. Television theory

To go into the intricacies of American family life in the 1970s in the way in which I am, one requires a certain level of media literacy. Though mostly similar, there are several differences between film studies and television studies. Some of the larger differences are, generally speaking, that a movie has a clear end-point whereas television, definitely in the sense of serials, episodes do have little end-points but because there is always something following these end-points, they are experienced more as speedbumps than as stop signs. Meaning that the story, or at least the setting, carries over to the next episode. Furthermore, the time and place of both film and television play a large part in the message it portrays or attempts to convey. This means that, for example, an action movie rated to be viewed only by those of 12 years and older might still be viewed in the afternoon, whereas television show of a certain qualification has a set timeframe within it is allowed to be shown on television, also known as the 'Safe Harbor' in America. In the United States, the FCC, Federal Communications Commission, is the government organ tasked with the censorship of radio and television broadcasters, with the exception of cable operators. The FCC has set the 'Safe Harbor' for the United States between the hours op 10 p.m. and 6 a.m. ("Regulation of Obscenity"). This means that the genre of the television program adds to where it is viewed and by whom, which makes it carry a certain set of semiotics.

In the decade which is up for discussion, the 1970s, Stuart Hall, a Jamaican cultural theorist, developed and introduced his theory of encoding and decoding to the field of cultural

studies, particularly television studies. Hall's theory appoints a 'source' and a 'receiver', the first sending a message to the latter. For a message to be brought across effectively, both the source and the receiver need to have access to similar frameworks of knowledge, meaning that both parties should apply the same set of semiotics to a certain message as well as the message's presentation. Otherwise, "[w]hat are called 'distortions' or 'misunderstandings' arise precisely from the *lack of equivalence* between the two sides in the communicative exchange" (qtd. in During 94). In the case of television, the 'message' which is produced by the source is constructed by combining parts of different sets of semiotics in order to create a 'message' which can be decoded by a very large audience, instead of the smaller audience of, for example, a personal discussion.

In understanding television, semiotics is one of the most prominent terms to look at. The assumption one has to adapt when looking at a television program with a semiotic approach, is that television has its own 'language'. A language which both the producers of television programs as well as television audiences have learnt to use. Jonathan Bignell, the head of the School of Arts and Communication Design at the University of Reading, states that "[t]he language of television consists of visual and aural signs. Television's visual signs include all the images and graphics that are seen on the screen. Aural signs consist of the speech, sound and music which television produces" (95). Nowadays, as well as in the 1970s, the way semiotics are used to look at television as a language tend to focus more on the visual instead of the aural aspects of television. This does not mean that the aural is unimportant to the semiotics of television. In the 1970s, television screens were relatively small when compared to real life, which made the aural that much more important in relation to the visual within a television show. Watching a television show often had to compete with other activities in the room, e.g. talking to one another, eating a meal, or ironing the family's clothes. In order to 'force' the audience to actually look at the television screen, the aural

aspect of a television show was used to grab the spectator's attention to show them something, which could be an important detail for the entire show, that specific episode, or could grab the audience's gaze for the upcoming commercials. As a part of semiotics, nearly all signs in a television broadcast, iconic or symbolic, carry connotations. An example of connotations which Bignell provides is "the head-on shots of newsreaders, wearing business clothes, seated behind a desk in news programmes not only [denoting] the newsreader in a studio, but [they] have connotations of authority, seriousness and formality which derive from the connotations of desks, office clothes and [a] head-on address to the camera" (96). Connotations such as these are formed by social codes, as well as by the codes that we have learned from watching television and through the conventionalization of news shows. This works the same for shows like sitcoms or documentaries; we have certain expectations when we watch these shows. In a news program viewers expect the newsreaders to speak in a neutral tone and to tell the viewer about events around the world, in a sitcom viewers expect humor and the topics to be relatively superficial, and in a documentary viewers expect a narrated story with the occasional expert providing information on the topic. Connotations determine the way in which viewers approach their television sets.

2.2. The Sitcom

The genre of the 'sitcom' is harder to define than one might think. Its name is a good indicator of this difficulty as the situation comedy can theoretically refer to any situation. Mary M. Dalton, a Professor of Film Studies at Wake Forest University, believes that there are many different angles to define a sitcom from. One option is to define a sitcom by its structure; they consist of "thirty-minute episodes, photographed in a three-camera studio set up in front of a live audience, and built around the situations within the program" (2). Dalton indicates, however, that this concept of sitcom structure is flawed since a comedy show of an

hour long, shot with a single camera, and without an audience might still be considered a sitcom. The point is that most shows which are considered to be sitcoms by critics and researchers fit this short description.

It is, however, even more difficult to explain how the sitcom 'works'. The idea of a sitcom is, of course, to be funny and that this effect is to be reached between the program's text and the audience. According to Bignell, sitcoms are "light entertainment programmes" (60). A recurring element within the narrative structure of sitcoms is the binary opposition. The conflict resulting from a binary opposition provides comedy writers with ample material to use in an episode, or over the course of several episodes even. A binary opposition provides comedy by contrasting opposite values, for example: in *That '70s Show,* the character of Steven Hyde is a thoroughly masculine tough guy, but when his room gets redecorated with large and fluffy pillows, he actually enjoys sleeping in the soft, pink bed. This, in turn, causes hilarity among his friends as they make fun of him for being a rough around the edges guy who enjoys submersing himself in pink pillows and bubble baths ("I Can See For Miles"). Another popular means of creating comedy within the sitcom formula is through the creation of complications, generally caused by a human mistake or error, and confusion. These mistakes or miscommunications may have repercussions throughout the episode with the character who made the mistake attempting to make things right (Newcomb 46). Domestic comedy in the 1950s centered on the father's wisdom with the occasional assist from the mother, and stemmed more and more from the rest of the family as the decades passed. Erica Scharrer, a Communications professor at the University of Massachusetts, believes that the role of the father within the sitcom has changed along with his changing role in the family. Where fathers in the sitcoms of the 1950s were the wise and rational patriarchs, the sitcom fathers of modern times are more likely to blunder or be proven wrong. According to Scharrer "the portrayal of sitcom fathers can be linked to changing social climates in which certain

jokes become "fair game"" (23). Something essential, but not exclusive to sitcoms is the laughter of the audience. Many shows nowadays pride themselves in recording the laughter of a live audience to the shows airing, but this is still not always the case as a lot of sitcoms, in the past and present, use a 'laugh track' to supplement their written, spoken, and comic actions with a boost to their comic effect. Jonathan Bignell writes that "[t]he moments when laughter breaks into the soundtrack provide cues for the audience about what is expected to be funny [and that] [w]ithin the programme text, jokes and comic actions can be identified to some extent as signs of comedy" (132). This means that audiences are, to some extent, told what is supposed to be funny as the laugh track follows the cues of the signs of comedy.

An incremental part of the sitcom is that it presents the private sphere to the public sphere. Sitcoms generally revolve around either a family or a group of close friends. This group of characters has a few television decors in which they spend most of their time and in the case of a family-based sitcom the most preferred set is that of the home. The characters in such a sitcom are shown in their living room, kitchen, basement, or any of their bedrooms. These locations are considered a part of the private sphere, of the home, and by bringing a camera into this home it transcends into the public sphere as it is shown to the viewers on their television sets. In the latter half of the previous century, as well as the start of this one, television ownership has increased dramatically, meaning that an activity which was shared with neighbors, friends, and relatives, namely watching television, has become an increasingly individual activity which makes watching television a part of the private sphere even beyond that of the home. Because domestic comedies involve a lot of typical family situations and humor they are easily related to by viewers which adds a layer of nostalgic humor and laughter to the comedy which is presented to viewers. These situations are similar to those which families and family members may have experienced themselves or at least

provide a plausible alternative. This is another way in which the sitcom works, and is in part what makes it work.

3. The Family Life of the 1970s

3.1. The Political Influence on the Family

There are many parts of family life that changed as a result of national politics in the 1970s in America. America's powerful car culture, for example, had its first major setback in 1973 when the OAPEC put into place an oil embargo on the United States, also known as the first oil shock. This had a definite influence on family life since the price of oil quadrupled from $3 to $12 per barrel, with many gas pump owners having to shut down because they could no longer afford to buy gas ("Energy Crisis"). The poor economic condition of the 1970s called the term 'stagflation' into existence, and for a good reason. Stagflation means that there is an increasing inflation combined with stagnant business activity and a considerable drop in unemployment rates. The reason for this economic downfall of the 1970s is that Americans anticipated prices of all types of goods to keep rising which is why they decided to buy more goods before the prices would skyrocket. By buying all these goods, the demand for them raised prices, which led to employees to call for higher wages and this, in turn, raised prices even higher, causing the U.S. dollar to lose a lot of its value, both domestically and in foreign trade markets. The plummeting value of the dollar caused one of the worst economic crises the United States has ever experienced. As a consequence, a lot of Americans lost their job. Which led to a call for change in the government.

One of the largest issues in American politics in the 1970s had already started all the way back in 1955; the Vietnam War. Already in the 1960s there were large scale protests against the Vietnam War, the most prominent one being the protest taking place on October 21, 1967 with an estimated 100,000 protesters present ("100,000 people march"). Powerful images remain also of Vietnam War veterans protesting the very same war in which they fought. In April of 1971, over a thousand injured and demobilized Vietnam War veterans flung their medals at the steps of the Capitol to show the American public that the medals

earned in the Vietnam War were worthless (Appendix B). Another politically defining aspect of the 1970s was the first, and thus far only, presidential resignation in the nation's history. President Richard Milhous Nixon resigned from the oval office on August 9, 1974 after the confirmation that the Watergate scandal was real. The scandal was named after the hotel in which five burglars were arrested as they were planting covert listening devices in the offices of the Democratic National Committee. The arrest of these men led to further investigation which uncovered an enormous underground web of operatives working illegally for the reelection of Richard Nixon as president. While maintaining not to be involved in the scheme by memorable words such as "I'm not a crook," Nixon eventually caves to the pressure of the House of Representatives, which had started an impeachment procedure against Nixon, and he resigns almost a year after he terminated the U.S. deployment in Vietnam ("Top 10 Unfortunate"). Because so many Americans saw the end of the Vietnam War as long overdue combined with the feelings of betrayal stemming from the Watergate scandal, the faith in the U.S. government fell ("The Watergate Story"). Furthermore, the economic decline, and accordingly the decline of the standard of living, marks the 1970s as a decade of change and necessary reform. Because the image of the government was in decline, many households changed their orientation and became a lot more critical of the U.S. government, both local and national.

The "structure of feeling" of Americans in the 1970s is formed by these events. Americans feel that the government has let them down time and time again. The American people, the government as well as its citizens, feel that there is a need to change things, to reorganize things politically, economically, and socially. As a result, America's car culture was downsized, the Vietnam War came to an official end, and so did Nixon's presidency. Within the family these changes affected their approach to politicians and raised the skepticism family members would have in respect to politics. More influential within the

family were the changes to the family's budget. The cutbacks families were required to make meant that they could no longer afford some of the luxuries they had grown accustomed to. The car became a necessary burden for some families while others had to move to a smaller house because they could not afford the mortgage anymore.

3.2. Growing Apart: Increasing Divorce Rates

Besides the economy, other important influences were changing the structure of the American home. For one thing, the chances that a marriage were to fail and end in divorce more than doubled through the 1970s (Appendix C). An increasing divorce rate in the 1970s automatically meant that the build-up of the average family changed drastically. A testament to this is the statistic that between 1970 and 2003 the number of households of married couples with their own children fell from 40 percent to just 23 percent. This means that in 1970, nearly half of all households were married couples with children which dropped down to less than a quarter in 30 years. Children of divorced parents were faced with a choice: whether to live with their mother or with their father. Between 1970 and 1980 the percentage of children living with their mother as opposed to with their father or in two parent homes went from 10% to 20% (Appendix D). The causes for children living with only their mother at the head of the household also changed drastically starting in the 1970s. In 1968, around 5% of single mothers had never married, this grew to approximately 25% in 1982, meaning that more mothers chose to raise their children without the father and to abstain from marriage. The number of mothers who were single because of a divorce went from 27% in 1968 to 43% in 1980, again showing the increased divorce rate in the 1970s as well as an increasing number of mothers who raise their children as a single parent (Appendix E). Also, the number of people within a household decreased from 3.14 in 1970 to 2.76 in 1980. This might not seem like such a large difference, but since most households were married households and a

married couple already means that two people make up that household, leaving little room for children between the numbers 2 and 2.76 (Appendix F).

Changes within the family, however, are not limited to family composition and the number of children a married or unmarried couple has. Changes within the family unit entailed the different attitudes which members of the family had of themselves, towards each other, and towards life in general. Tied in with this was a decline in the level of familism which a family exhibited. Before, but increasingly so in the 1970s, the cultural value of familism weakened and made way for different, more individual values such as self-fulfillment. The main point of familism is that the family should stick together and take care of itself. With an increasing amount of families torn apart by divorce, the value of familism is a difficult one to uphold (Popenoe 537).

As noted before, the “structure of feeling” of the 1970s was one of reorganization. This counted double in the family home as mother’s leaving meant that more and more households consisted of half a family.

3.3. When Mothers Leave: Changing Female Gender Roles

In the 1970s, there is an increase in women-headed homes. With more women heading households, more women needed to earn a living to take care of themselves as well as any children over which they had gained custody. With women having increased their financial independence, they were less inclined to remain in a bad partnership because they could not afford to live and provide for themselves. One of the larger causes for the rise in divorces, women-headed homes, and more women entering the labor force was Second-wave feminism. Women organized to protest for equal rights for men and women as they felt that they deserved an equal salary to that of a man in the same function. Protests were also directed at men’s sexual objectification of women.

It is difficult to put a finger on the exact start of the second wave of feminism, but Martha Rampton, a researcher at the Pacific University of Oregon puts the start in the late 1960s, continuing into the 1990s in the United States. Amidst the protests against the Vietnam War and of civil rights movements, Women's rights movements gained a voice of their own, which was more and more a radical one. The second wave of feminism was launched by women protesting against the Miss America pageants of 1968 and 1969 in Atlantic City. The most pressing issue for the Second-wave feminists was to have the Equal Rights Amendment passed (Rampton). The proposed amendment starts out by pleading that "[e]quality of rights under the law shall not be abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex" ("The Equal Rights"). Even though the Equal Rights Amendment was, unfortunately, never passed before the request expired in 1982, this does not mean that the Women's rights movement and Second-wave feminism as a whole had nothing to show for themselves. Second-wave feminism has had a lasting influence on the American economy and American family life. With the drive of feminism, the United States labor market opened up to women looking for a job, both full and part-time. More jobs became available for women and there were more women avidly taking to those jobs, in large part because more women found themselves having to take responsibility of their children as a single parent due to a separation or a divorce. According to Suzanne M. Bianchi, an American sociologist, "[t]he hours of market work reported by mothers in the historical series of time diaries more than doubled (from 8 to 19 hours per week, averaged over all mothers including those doing no paid work) between 1965 and 1985" (Bianchi et al. 1-2). The fact that more mothers started working and started working more, means that another pastime has lost these hours. Bianchi's research indicates that mothers who started working spent less time each week to keep up with housework, whereas fathers started spending more time on housework. All in total, mothers more or less 'traded' the hours they spent on housework for the hours they spent on market

work, while they maintained the same hours for childcare. Furthermore, there were more couples living as dual-earners, working 80 hours a week and upwards combined, this was already at an astounding 60% in 1965. The striking difference, however, was the boost to the number of dual-earning families with children which rose from 28% to 61%. These statistics are based on information gathered in the ATUS, or American Time Use Survey, performed by the Bureau of labor statistics. With women making the move into the labor market, their focus slightly shifts away from housework and their children. Women want to provide for their children, so they take up jobs, but at the same time they also want to take care of their children. These two conflicting goals create a situation for women in the 1970s in which the children often win out on their mother's career. This means that even though the numbers for female employment go up considerably, for most women their children, or planned children are too much of a restraint to enter the workforce.

3.4. A Father at Work and at Home: Changing Male Gender Roles

With women gaining more ground and power in the labor market and men's position as the only provider in the family in decline, the position of the sitcom father also changed. The father used to enjoy a position above criticism in the 1950s and thusly would not be the subject of jokes, both on television as well as in real life (Scharrer 23). Fathers held this place in the family due to their vital role as the family's breadwinner. Most children either chose or were court mandated to stay with their mother after a divorce instead of with their father, making divorce the main reason for children under the age of 18 living with their father as the single parent. In 1968 the main reason for a child to live with their father only was separation, followed by the death of the mother in second place. By 1975, however, divorce became the main reason (Appendix G). Just as for mothers, the time allocation for fathers changed in the 1970s. Where fathers spent an average of four hours a week on housework in 1965, this

intensified to ten hours a week in 1985, meaning that fathers more than doubled their efforts in the household (Bianchi et al. 2). As women are less likely to be at home full time, men have had to find a way to deal with a new type of fatherhood, mainly meaning that they would spend more time taking care of the home and the children while still working a full time job. While men traditionally established their quality as a father and a partner by being a proficient provider, their job description changed to become more of a direct caregiver with more outspoken duties. These changes to gender and family roles for both men and women have also had their influences on men's attitudes towards them. Teresa Ciabattari, an associate Professor of Sociology at the Pacific Lutheran University, describes how men of all ages were somewhat reluctant when it came to women in the labor force in the 1970s. Men in the 1970s believed that they should be the ones providing for their families. Also, the majority of men considered a working mother would be detrimental to the care for her child or children. In the 1990s, the results of the same research yielded different and clear results. This time, men were a lot more open to the idea of women at work as well as seeing less harm in a working mother. The biggest differences in men's opinions took place in the 1970s as "the number of men in the baby boom [survey] agreeing that it is better if men work and women tend to the home dropped by 12 percentage points between the 1970s and 1980s but only 3 percentage points between the 1980s and 1990s" (583). This means that the 1970s were a veritable turn around decade for men's opinions on women in the workforce, quite possibly because men were getting used to seeing women in the workplace. Ciabattari's research shows that men were more conservative before the 1970s but also shows that around 40% of men still feel that a working mother cannot establish a warm relationship with her children, meaning that although men have generally become less conservative, they have not become liberal.

3.5. The Kids are Alright: Changing Children's Pastimes

The 1970s were a decade in which childhood changed quite a bit. As mentioned before, there was less time spent on taking care of the children. As a consequence of this, the period in which children are nurtured and cared for grew larger and larger and moved to older ages, at least in families in which the financial means allowed for it. Bianchi mentions that partly "due to economic changes [...] children are increasingly viewed as needing schooling beyond high school if they are to be successfully launched into [a] competitive labor market" (Bianchi et al. 7). This led to children living at home for longer periods than before as well as parents increasing support, financially and emotionally, for their children beyond high school and if possible through college. With children putting jobs, marriage, and having children of their own on hold, their adolescence became a time for developing themselves by means of relationships, education, taking trips, and sometimes narcotics. With the effective extension of childhood in the 1970s children came to expect more care from their parents, once more, this was only the case within families with the means to allow for it. In and around the 1970s, being an American child changed from being encouraged to join the labor force as soon as possible to being given the space to do what they wanted to do. Simultaneously, being a parent became less about providing for the house, with the father working to provide and the mother working to keep the house clean and its residents fed, and more about providing for the home, with more time spent on the children and their education and passions. From the 1970s onward, parents changed their opinions on what children supposedly needed. With children spending more time at home instead of working, they needed a more labor-intensive brand of upbringing. Effectively, parents felt more inclination to 'produce' a 'quality' child and did not mind spending more time and effort on their additional education and upbringing, meaning that parents would take time off from work to bring their children to and from their extra-curricular activities. The family life became more focused on the upbringing of the

children in the 1970s and thusly children were given more time to find out what they wanted in life.

By giving children time to find out what they wanted in life, parents meant that children should find out what their hobbies, passions, and professional interests are. Many teens, however, used the elongated time of protection by their parents to find out more about the world in a different way than their parents had intended. Recreational drug use had already hit the United States in the 1960s, but it did not slow down in the 1970s. If anything, it took off. The 1960s and 1970s "witnessed America's first widespread youthful polydrug epidemic [in which] [m]arihuana, and to a lesser extent LSD, became sacraments within a drug-experimenting youth subculture […]. This period was marked by an increased perception of marihuana as a relatively benign drug," and 1979 was the absolute high point for recreational drug use as 30.9% of 12-17 year olds admitted, anonymously, to have used illicit drugs and an astounding 60.4% of high school seniors admitted the same (White 20). Besides the abundance of narcotic usage, the 1970s inherited something else from the 1960s: the sexual revolution. The sexual revolution came about as the response of American youth with openness to their parents' repression of sexual drive. In the late 1960s and the entire 1970s there was a move within the intimacy culture which increased romantic detachment from sex and made sex a source of pleasure and self-expression. In other words, youth culture made the shift to free love (Mankowski 9).

4. The Brady Bunch

The television show *The Brady Bunch* is an American situation comedy, or sitcom, which aired from September 26, 1969 to March 8, 1974. *The Brady Bunch* was produced by Redwood Productions and Paramount Television and was broadcast by ABC for five years. The show has an iconic opening sequence in which all of the show's nine characters are introduced by showing their faces in nine cubes. In the DVD commentary, Sherwood Schwartz, the creator, producer, and writer of the Brady Bunch, says "[he] devised this nine piece design because television is a close up medium, and the only way to introduce nine people up front on the show is with a close up, and so I devised this checkerboard at the time" (*The Brady Bunch*). The show revolves around a blended family of eight; a father and his three sons from an earlier marriage and a mother with three daughters from an earlier marriage and they are joined by the father's housekeeper. The father's name is Mike Brady, played by Robert Reed, and his sons were named Greg, Peter, and Bobby, played by Barry Willams, Christopher Knight, and Mike Lookinland respectively. The mother is named Carol Brady, portrayed by Florence Henderson, and her daughters were named Marcia, Jan, and Cindy, played by Maureen McCormick, Eve Plumb, and Susan Olsen respectively and the housekeeper, Alice, was played by Ann B. Davis. In the pilot of the series, Mike and Carol get married and go on their honeymoon, but the rest of the series takes place pretty much indoors, in the 'Brady house.' Mike is employed as an architect while Carol is a stay at home mother.

4.1. Carol's Resistance

In the show's pilot, it is revealed to the viewer that Mike's first wife had passed away, making him a widower. The reason for Carol to have gotten out of wedlock is never revealed making it likely that Carol has come out of divorce. In interviews, Sherwood Schwartz has

said that he always intended for Carol to be a divorcé and that he also wrote for her part as a divorcé throughout the series but that ABC did not want the topic of divorce on a family show (“CBS to develop”). ABC’s reluctance to have one of the main characters divorced shows the conservative nature of the early 1970s with divorce being such a taboo even though the divorce rate was very high and it was a definite part of American society. Also, throughout the entire first season it is pointed out that Alice and Carol are proficient in household chores, in one episode Mike goes to Alice to have a button sewn onto his shirt, when Alice mentions that Carol might be able to help him he replies “[y]eah, I guess Carol could sew a button” which indicates that he does not actually know whether Carol can sew a button onto a shirt, but he assumes that she can since she is a woman (“Alice Doesn’t Live Here Anymore”).

When the entire family are moving Carol and the girls’ stuff into Mike and the boys’ house, the boys do not want to share their clubhouse. When Mike tells Carol that there are certain places where girls are not permitted she notes that if the boys would want to play in the girls’ dollhouse there would not be a problem, Mike then replies that if “[his] boys want to play in anyone’s dollhouse [he’d] take them to a psychiatrist,” indicating how conservative he is (“A Clubhouse Is Not A Home”). Carol does not take kindly to his remark and as the situation escalates, Carol and the girls decide to build their own girls clubhouse next to the boys’ clubhouse but they are shown fumbling and terrible at construction. At this point Mike and the boys step in to show them how it is done, showing an overpowering masculine gender role and this corresponds with research done by Ciabattari as men are conservative about their gender roles (“A Clubhouse Is Not A Home”). This same episode, however, has signs that connote strongly to Second-wave feminism. The first being Carol’s reluctance to accept the exclusivity of the boys’ clubhouse up to the point where she decides that they should build their own. Another sign within this episode, ironically, is a sign with which the girls picket in order to have the boys allow them into their clubhouse and the sign reads “[w]omen’s rights

now!" and displaying this is a very progressive choice of the director, producer, and writer, not to mention of the network executives ("A Clubhouse Is Not A Home").

4.2. Mike Opens Up: A Moderation of Male Dominance

There are other instances in which the show exhibits attention to social changes albeit mostly in reference to feminism. In the first season there is an episode in which an outbreak of the measles has both parents running around the house to take care of their children and, unaware that the other has done so, they call their doctors to ask for a house call. The Brady boys had been going to Doctor Cameron, a male doctor, all their lives, while the girls had been taken care of by Doctor Porter, a female doctor. As both doctors arrive at the Brady residence it soon becomes clear that the boys have no interest in being treated by a woman and the girls feel the same way about a man. When the children are getting their rest in their bedrooms, the discussion falls to the point of the doctors and Greg says that "men are supposed to be doctors [and] women are supposed to be nurses [and] everybody knows men doctors are better than women doctors" which does not go of well with the girls ("Is There A Doctor In The House?"). Carol and Mike meanwhile are trying to decide which doctor to choose for their children and in their discussion Mike also seems to feel that men are more suited to be a doctor. Mike does not come on strong in his opinion, but the picture that Mike portrays throughout the show's lifespan sticks firmly to the male dominated household. The situation with the doctors is a reflection of the new position which women were taking in the workforce and society as a whole. The situation opens discussions about equality between men and women and since this topic was shared with viewers at home it may well have led to discussion about gender equality in the homes. The introduction of the topic into the public sphere is definitely a progressive step and within a family with four males and four females, as Alice remains impartial in nearly every discussion, creates a great deal of comedy through

the use of binary oppositions. The episode, however, does not give an answer to the question of which gender makes for the best doctors, there is hardly a resolution to it as in the end Mike and Carol choose to keep Doctor Porter to take care of the girls when they get sick and Doctor Cameron to take care of the boys if they fall ill, bringing them back the status quo. Mike, feeling that it is only natural that the boys do not want to be treated by a female doctor, more or less plays nice by giving in to Carol's argument that a woman can be just as good a doctor as a man.

4.3. Child's Play

The issue of gender equality is also discussed briefly among the children. In an episode in the second season a news reporter setting out to find out what young girls of the day think about the women's liberation movement and Marcia Brady gets interviewed with her saying that women "certainly should" do something about gender equality ("The Liberation Of Marcia Brady"). One of Marcia's classmates mentions that she thinks that Marcia is very brave to speak up like that, indicating that it is still a touchy subject. Mike feels that "some of the things [the women's liberation movement] want are pretty far out," indicating male reluctance of the time concerning gender equality ("The Liberation Of Marcia Brady"). Marcia goes on in the episode to try and prove that girls can do the same things that boys can by joining the Frontier Scouts, an all-boys club similar to the Cub Scouts, and one of the adult men leading the club says that "[he's] afraid that there's nothing in the regulations that says a Frontier Scout has to be a boy, [he's] afraid they've just always assumed it was for boys," making this a rather progressive statement, despite the use of 'afraid' ("The Liberation Of Marcia Brady"). Greg thinks up ways to increase the difficulty of the exercises and trials to prevent Marcia from joining the Frontier Scouts and to prove to Marcia that girls cannot do the things that boys can do, unfortunately for him she passes each and every test. With Marcia

proving that she can do the tests just as well as a boy, thereby proving that women are entitled to equal rights. Mike is one of the Scout leaders and he knows what Greg is working on and while he does not speak up for women's rights, he does not really denounce Greg's behavior all that much either. In the end, Marcia decides not to join the Frontier Scouts after all, admitting that she was only doing it to prove a point.

4.4. Discussion

The Brady Bunch does bring women's struggle for equal rights to the attention of the viewers at home but unfortunately the show never truly takes a stand. Although the women, with the exception of Alice, make a point for female equality, the men in the show do not accept this as a real issue. Instead, the men wave off the thoughts about women's liberation as a passing craze and this shows that the men were not ready to acknowledge the change which was bound to come. Next to the cases mentioned above, there is rarely a case in which gender roles and gender equality are challenged. In addition to this, *The Brady Bunch* generally avoids social and political changes happening in the 1970s with most of the series focusing on typical family troubles such as sibling rivalry, children's first dates, and growing up as a child in that time and day.

There were, however, characteristics of the 1970s which were not mentioned on the show but which did have an influence on the process of filming, one of these characteristics is recreational drug use. As the show was broadcast on prime time and it was a family show, recreational drug use is never mentioned in it but William Barry, the actor playing Greg Brady, was once called back for extra filming and showed up on the set high on marihuana, meaning that even though the Brady children did not know anything about narcotics, children in the 1970s certainly did. In the episode in question, Greg is inflating the tire of his bike in the driveway when Mike pulls up with a small sailing ship attached to the roof of his car,

upon seeing this Greg waves and lays down the pump, only to stumble over it subsequently and he makes a distracted impression altogether ("Law And Disorder"). The Bradys were a perfect family on-screen, seemingly unaffected by the changes brewing in the 1970s. However, there were things taking place behind the scenes that fit in with the decade. The children playing stepbrothers and stepsisters on the set actually got a lot more intimate with each other in real life. In interviews taken years after filming of *The Brady Bunch*, Barry Williams had an off-screen fling with Maureen McCormick of whom he says that she grow in to an amazingly attractive young woman and that it was not strange that a certain hormonal charge took place. Williams also admits to have had feelings for his onscreen mother, Florence Henderson. The middle children, Christopher Knight and Eve Plumb have also said that they hooked up during the filming and even the youngest pair felt some attraction to each other (Tapesalvage). Events like these were not known to the public until many years later, but they are indicative of the "structure of feeling" in the 1970s. Moreover, they show that *The Brady Bunch,* as a show, was not in touch with the social changes of the decade while its actors were.

However, despite the appeal which *The Brady Bunch* had to children growing up, the show was never a huge television hit in its original airing. The show never even made it into the top 15 shows of America. The show only became a hit when its production had ceased and the show was sold for syndication ("History of the Brady Bunch"). This meant that reruns were aired in the late afternoon, in which much more young viewers saw the show causing the show to get somewhat of a cult following. Movies were made about the family up until the last one in 2002 and as a franchise *The Brady Bunch* sold a lot of merchandise such as lunchboxes for example.

The Brady Bunch was depicted as a near perfect example of any family, blended or otherwise. Critics have said that the amount of discipline within the family is much too high

because all children are doing very well in school, are always very polite, and never get in even the slightest of trouble since they abide by the rules, apart from the occasional light mischief. One critic, Kevin Mercadante, even goes as far as to describe the perfection of *The Brady Bunch* as detrimental to parenting in the U.S. He believes that parents, in general, have changed to present their children as perfect, kind little angels, even at the young age of five. Mercadante recounts an anecdote from a friend of his saying how he "always hoped for a episode where the oldest sister, Marcia, would get pregnant – *by her stepbrother Greg!"* as a major scandal like that would be enough to level the playing field between the perfection of the Brady's and his own family (Mercadante). Even though this may be a slightly exaggerated viewpoint, *The Brady Bunch* kids are presented as near perfection but this is not because they have been corrected, punished, and disciplined by their parents. In one episode, Greg gets 'grounded ' for driving the family car irresponsibly. Mike takes away Greg's driving privileges for the family car and, thinking he has found a loophole, Greg uses a friend´s car to go out and buy tickets to a concert. When Mike and Carol find out about this they ground him completely for ten days, not permitting him to leave the house entirely. Greg now has the time to think things through thoroughly and comes up with yet another loophole: his parents never told him that he could not drive someone else's car, which would make the second grounding unfounded. Instead of saying 'boloney' and sending him back to his room, Mike agrees with Greg and cancels his second grounding, allowing him to go to the concert for which he was grounded in the first place ("Greg Gets Grounded"). His punishment for being irresponsible and for not listening to his parents is effectively brought back to no punishment at all. It seems highly unlikely parents, then and now, would accept this kind of reasoning from their children and laughingly let them off the hook completely ("Greg Gets Grounded"). Another point of criticism is that the Brady family, despite being an eight person household with a full-time, live-in housekeeper, never struggled with their finances, even though the economy in

the 1970s was rather poor. Overall, the Brady family was presented as a wholesome family without any wrongdoings, a healthy income, and an ever positive outlook on life, almost as if they were living in a different decade or in a microcosm of their own. The show hardly factors in important political changes of the decade, completely ignores the poor economy, and pays little attention to social developments. Accordingly, *The Brady Bunch* does not show a realistic "structure of feeling."

5. That '70s Show

That '70s Show is an American television show in the genre of the sitcom which had its first episode air on the 23rd of August, 1998 and the final episode on the 18th of May, 2006. *That '70s Show* was produced by Carsey-Werner Productions, distributed by Warner Bros. Television Distribution, and aired on Fox for its entire run of eight seasons. The show focusses mainly on the day to day life of a group of friends in the 1970s with the main focus being on one of the kids' families; the Formans. The Formans are Red, Kitty, Laurie, and Eric, portrayed by Kurtwood Smith, Debra Jo Rupp, Lisa Robin Kelly, and Topher Grace respectively. The group of friends that are the focal point of the show are Eric's friends namely Michael Kelso, Donna Pinciotti, Steven Hyde, Jackie Burkhart, and a foreign exchange student known only as Fez who are played by Ashton Kutcher, Laura Prepon, Danny Masterson, Mila Kunis, and Wilmer Valderrama respectively. The group of friends are on average seventeen years old at the start of the show and cross the border of legal drinking, eighteen years, as the show progresses. Where shows generally have their characters age one year for every season they shoot, *That '70s Show* has time going a bit slower as the show starts in the year 1976 and ends in 1979 meaning that the show uses eight seasons to progress roughly three years. Since the show was made 22 years after the period it depicts, it finds itself in a great position to take into perspective all events and changes of the 1970s and highlight these through parody. *The Brady Bunch* is mentioned in one episode of *That '70s Show* where Eric, Red, and Laurie reference episodes of *The Brady Bunch* to describe their own situation ("Red Sees Red"). *That '70's Show* displays a lot more instances which refer to social and political change in the 1970s which is not strange when considering that *That '70s Show* is removed from the time period it depicts, making it less likely to offend or upset viewers.

That '70s Show incorporates America's changing opinions during the 1970s, from political to economical, from general social changes to changes in youth culture. When watching *That '70s Show*, it is clear that there is a political charge attached to it. Red is shown to be anti-Nixon, even though he had already resigned before the show's timeline begins. Red says: "Eric, say that your job was sent to a plant in Guatela-who-the-hell cares. Now, are you gonna vote for the guy that let that happen?" to which Kitty responds by saying "Red, President Ford didn't take your job, he took Nixon's" which is an indictment of Gerald Ford's attempts to lower the unemployment rate ("Streaking"). Later in the episode, Red speaks at a campaign rally for Ford and he expresses his, and many Americans', dismay on how Ford pardoned Nixon so shortly after his resignation ("Streaking"). In the pilot episode, Red Forman's neighbor, Bob Pinciotti, comments on Red driving a Japanese car, a Toyota known for its excellent fuel economy, to which Kitty responds by commenting on the gas crisis. In the same episode, Red gives Eric his old car, a real gas guzzler, and he and his friends talk about how much they will have to pay for gas and Eric feels that "[the] oil shortage bites" ("That '70s Pilot"). The first oil shock is not mentioned very much after the initial episode, but America's poor economy is mentioned on multiple occasions, all through the series, the Forman household is shown to be struggling financially. When Red's mother comes to visit the family, she would like for Kitty to wear the necklace which she gave her, Kitty eventually tells Red that she pawned the necklace so that she could buy food for the family since they were not doing so well financially ("Jackie Moves On"). After Red had lost his job in one of the first episodes, he enters the kitchen in a later episode saying that he is going back to work fulltime at his old job. Kitty hugs Red and says: "[a]nd to think how close we came to losing the house" which means that money was very tight ("A New Hope"). In another episode, Red and Kitty visit Hyde at his mother's house, which has quite some overdue maintenance, and Kitty pleas Red to have Hyde move in with them to which Red argues that "[he'd] love to

help him, [they] don't have the money" but is persuaded by Kitty in the end ("Hyde Moves In").

5.1. Kitty Declawed: The Other Side to the Feminist Story

Concerning the topic of gender equality, *That '70s Show* is filled to the brim with references to the women's liberation movement as well as mentions of male reluctance to the movement. The strongest proponents of equal rights are Donna and her mother Midge, portrayed by Tanya Roberts, as they both take an active place in promoting gender equality. Throughout the series, Eric is defeated time and time again by Donna in physical events. In one episode, Donna beats Eric in basketball and later in a game of air hockey, as Donna overwhelmingly defeats Eric in air hockey, he is shown wearing a dress, earrings, and a hanger to show how Eric feels emasculated by Donna ("Battle Of The Sexists"). Also in the first season, Midge goes to a community college to attend a class on female empowerment, her husband Bob, played by Don Stark, strongly disapproves of this and feels it is dumb. Bob says: "I'm the man of the house and I say you're not going," to which Midge responds by saying: "you can't tell me what to do, you ass" ("Stolen Car"). By responding in this manner, Bob personifies male reluctance to women's liberation and Midge pushing through her plans shows female empowerment. When Midge discusses this with Kitty, she asks her "how did you talk Red into letting you work?" to which Kitty reveals that there was a financial necessity for her to get a job, indicating that the poor economy led to Kitty having a career instead of a sense of female empowerment ("Stolen Car"). Midge is clearly the strong and independent 'new woman' of the 1970s while Kitty, on the other hand, is rather disinclined to join the side of female liberation. Kitty struggles to see why Midge would want to get a job and cannot quite grasp why she is unable to enjoy her husband providing for her while she tends to the household. When Bob discusses Midge going to the class with Donna he says:

"married women don't abandon their families" to which Donna replies: "sure they do dad, it's the '70s" ("Stolen Car"). Having Donna say this to her dad is indicative of the progressive nature of the 1970s, especially because she is his daughter. Midge proceeds to try and break Bob's stern attitude concerning women's liberation as shown by the following back and forth:

> MIDGE: The unexamined self, is an unfulfilled self.
>
> BOB: How can you be unfulfilled? I put a roof over your head, I pay the bills, I take care of you.
>
> MIDGE: Yeah, but what do I do?
>
> BOB: You fill out that sweater real nice (referring to the size of Midge's breasts).
>
> [MIDGE storms out in dismay]
>
> BOB: What!? That's a compliment! ("That Wrestling Show")

This brief fragment displays the urge women had to find self-fulfillment, the ignorance of men regarding women's needs for self-actualization, and the element of men's sexism in the 1970s. In contrast to most of the women in the show, who have embraced second-wave feminism, Kitty finds it fulfilling to take care of Red, Eric, and Eric's friends, especially by baking and cooking for them. When Midge and Laurie talk about loosening things up, she talks about how "[they] could all do with a little tightening," and she shows that she would like to keep things as they are ("That Wrestling Show").

5.2. Red's Scare

Men were having a hard time understanding why women would want anything more than a man providing for them and believed that women were not supposed to want anything more than to look after the children and manage the house. Eric, initially, also has trouble

grasping the need for women's liberation but as the series progresses he adjusts his opinions and supports Donna in her pursuit for equal rights. In an episode, Donna wants to join a group of women protesting against women molestation and Eric joins her at the protest to show her his support which shows that younger generations of men were less rigid in their opinions concerning women and their rights.

The topic of divorce is not presented as the largest of issues in *That '70s Show*, even though multiple divorces take place in the sitcom. The divorce which happens closest to the Forman family is the divorce of Bob and Midge Pinciotti, Donna's parents, after they had already separated earlier. Without a direct mention, it is implied that Jackie's parents divorce after her father goes to jail for tax fraud. Jackie's mother, played by Brooke Shields, visits the town and for a short time dates Bob Pinciotti, giving the impression that there has indeed been a divorce ("Who Are You"). The main two fathers in the show, Red and Bob, struggle to understand why women feel unfulfilled and the need to achieve goals of their own instead of those set for the family. Bob on the one hand partly embraces the "structure of feeling" of the late 1960s, the part concerning sexual revolution, as he and Midge are avid fans of swinger parties. On the other hand, Bob does not feel that anything else should change in the household, save for his greatly ridiculed afro-haircut and his bell bottomed pants. Red is the more conservative father of the two. Being a former military man, Red has a high regard for discipline of all sorts. For his children, Red absolutely forbids drug use and quite often accuses Eric of it. Red also pushes his children not to have sex before marriage but both Laurie and Eric disobey his wishes, which he only finds out much later. The picture the viewer gets of Red is not one of a man who dislikes having sex with his wife, but as a man who likes to have sex almost the same way every time and anyone trying something different he labels deviants. Red sees Laurie as his sweet little angel even though she is often called a slut by Eric and his friends because of her large number of sexual encounters. The image Red

portrays is that of the tough and strict father, he fights to maintain his position as the provider and 'boss' of the household. Kitty forms no threat to this position but every time Eric makes a snarky remark about his father in front of him, Red threatens to put his foot up Eric's behind, reaffirming his position as the head of the household.

5.3. Groovy Teens

Unlike the television shows of the 1970s, *That '70s Show* features the use of illegal substances by teens abundantly. In nearly every episode of *That '70s Show* Eric and his friends are portrayed smoking marihuana in the Formans' basement, where they hang out regularly, without explicitly showing it. Instead of showing teens using narcotics, the producers have the camera going around the circle they sit in with the camera posing as the marihuana joint. The teens on the show are regularly seen hiding their 'stash' of marihuana from their parents, especially from Red and Kitty Forman. When, occasionally, Red or Kitty does find a bag of marihuana, the teens pretend it is just a big bag of oregano. The teens actually get the idea from Kitty; when the gang, with the exception of Kelso, go on a trip to Jackie's ski lodge, Kitty asks Eric: "I put some sandwiches in your duffle bag, now why do you need such a big bag of oregano?" to which Eric responds by saying: "Donna's Italian" which convinces Kitty to let it slide ("Ski Trip"). In one of the later episodes off the first season, the gang trespass onto the top of their town's water tower, which they do from time to time, to paint a large leaf of marihuana on the tower ("Water Tower"). In the same episode, Kitty is shown reading a pamphlet titled "Is Johnny High?" as she discusses the possibility of Eric being on drugs with Red, which shows that recreational drug use was very prevalent in 1970s youth culture ("Water Tower"). Red suspects that the teens are doing drugs throughout the series but it is not until the final episode of the seventh season until Red and Kitty catch the gang smoking marihuana in the basement ("Till The Next Goodbye"). Another, partly, illegal substance shown in *That '70s Show* is alcohol. Even though alcohol is not strictly an

illegal substance, it is illegal for minors. The legal age for Americans to drink alcohol today is 21 years old, but in the 1970s the drinking age was still 18 years old. Before they all turn 18, the teens all regularly drink beer which they get by sometimes stealing beer from Red's stock. Once, the boys make a trip to Canada to go and buy beer because the beer is supposedly stronger in Canada but get arrested and are forced to leave the beer behind ("Canadian Road Trip").

That '70s Show also has the teens talking a lot about sex or 'doing it', with the girls generally having less need for it than the boys with the exception of Laurie, who is made fun of a lot by the boys for having a myriad of sexual relations. The boys spend a lot of time fantasizing about having sex and keep trying to persuade girls to have sex with them. Fez, the foreign exchange student is portrayed as a teen who engages in masturbation a lot while Michael Kelso is a more successful ladies' man. At one point, Kelso is dating both Jackie and Laurie, displaying the drive teens, teenage boys in particular, had for sexual activity ("Red's New Job"). The show even depicts the sexual needs felt by adults. Bob and Midge are the most outspoken about their sexuality as they even mention going to a swinger's party to their own daughter ("Eric Gets Suspended"). Kitty exhibits her sexual needs to Red on multiple occasions, in one of the later episodes Kitty gives Red a book, *The Joy of Sex*, with all sorts of different sexual positions in it, which she wants Red to read and choose a sexual position from and until he chooses one of them she refuses to make the family any meals ("Mother's Little Helper"). Kitty is also less reluctant to talk about sex with Red, Eric, or both of them at the same time, she even gives Eric condoms as well as sexual health pamphlets so that he can have sex safely ("Jackie Says Cheese"). In later seasons, Kelso has a one night stand with a young librarian, Brooke, played by Shannon Elizabeth, and gets her pregnant which introduces the topic of teen pregnancy to the foreground ("The Acid Queen"). Kelso is the show's prime example of the free love culture of the 1970s as he detaches sex almost

completely from romance and love. When Kelso tries to persuade Brooke that he and she should be together to take care of their child and does so by coming clean about his past with women:

> BROOKE: So how do you all know each other?
> JACKIE: Well, Michael and I dated for, like, three years.
> HYDE: Then I stole her from him.
> BROOKE: Wait — what?
> KELSO: Nah, nah, you never could have stole her if I didn't cheat on her first.
> BROOKE: Okay. Wait a minute.
> KELSO: It, uh... that sounds a lot worse than what it is. I only cheated on her with Eric's sister, and the rest of the girls were when we were on a break because I annoyed her. But none of those were sisters except the two that were sisters.
> HYDE: He brought up the sisters. Awesome.
> BROOKE: Okay, this was a mistake. I think I'm going to go.
> KELSO: No, Brooke, wait... I've been with a lot of chicks, a lot... a lot... a lot. (“I’m A Boy”)

Needless to say, this attempt does not come across very successfully, but Kelso’s history with women is an example of how sexually engaged teens in the 1970s could be.

5.4. Discussion

That ‘70s Show shows that the political and economic changes and reforms had their reverberations within the family, be it in discussions at the dinner table or in the form of mom

getting a job. The show makes a point of referencing the political and economic climate, especially in its first season. Red Forman nearly cries when he thinks of all the things that are taken from him because of the lousy economy, as a result of bad governing. The kids even mention the U.S. government as a "corrupt electoral system," showing that teens were getting involved with national politics ("Streaking").

Women in the 1970s became more empowered and independent which is shown by Midge in *That '70s Show*. Kitty, on the other hand, shows that even though many women were expressing their lack of fulfillment, not all women were very inclined to do so. Kitty represents the more reticent mother who simply wants to take care of her husband and children and puts her own wishes on a backburner. The fathers in *That '70s Show* mainly object to the concept of women's liberation. They are mystified by women's wishes to want more fulfilling lives because they reason that taking care of the family should be plenty fulfilling. The children in *That '70s Show* are free-spirited and less concerned about the negative consequences of narcotics or unprotected sex. Teens were given more space by their parents and they were using this space to explore themselves and each other.

That '70s Show does a good job in portraying the decade as it was experienced by teens and adults alike. Of course most of the situations encountered in the show are dramatizations and exaggerations for comic effect but a very large portion of the humor in the show is based on events and the "structure of feeling" of the 1970s. The parents are seen struggling financially but also often unsure about what to do with their children. The children are given more freedom so they can think about what they want to do, showing the inclination of parents in the 1970s not to push children to their 'grown-up' jobs straight out of high school. Eric, for example, when thinking about what he wants to do after high school, decides to go to Africa for a year ("2000 Light Years From Home").

The show's humor overpowers the political turbulence, economic ache, and social changes affecting American citizens, but in between the laughs there is a definite element of the real 1970s. The "structure of feeling" is also included in the show as it shows how families dealt with issues such as drugs, divorce, and downsizing.

6. Conclusion

In answering the question: *How did American family life change in the 1970s, and how is this represented in both contemporary and modern popular culture?,* the 1970s were a real turn around decade for the United States. In terms of political, economic, and social situations, the 1970s were rife with change. The sphere of American politics was entirely submerged in discussing their engagement in Vietnam at the start of the 1970s and even before Nixon recalled the American troops from Vietnam, the American populace was profoundly shaken up when Richard Nixon was accused of, and later admitting to, having engaged in a large scale corruption scheme to ensure his reelection as the president of the United States. The U.S. economy suffered direct blows during the decade, starting most prominently with the first oil shock in 1973, which was caused by the OAPEC's oil embargo on the United States. With gas prices soaring, prices of other goods also went through the roof causing an alarming stagflation to take place, corrupting the American economy and severely decreasing the purchasing power of American families, making it the largest recession to hit the U.S. since the 1929 stock market crash. Political and financial troubles were accompanied by changes in the family domain. The most influential change in the 1970s was the phenomenal increase of divorces, with nearly half of all marriages in the 1970s ending in a divorce. The high divorce rate was in a large part due to the impact which second-wave feminism had on women as well as the labor market. Women felt more empowered and decided more and more to get a job themselves instead of depending on their husbands to financially take care of them. As women were making their move into the labor market, they also became more independent, both financially and in their approach to social situations. Being able to make enough money to sustain themselves gave women more faith in getting out of a bad marriage as they no longer had to rely on their husband's income to get by. As parents felt that more time should be spent on their children and their education in order to

properly prepare them for the 'real world,' children had an effective elongation of their childhood. The extension of their childhood gave them the opportunity to travel, take extra courses, and experiment to find out who they were and what they wanted. Narcotics and sex were experimented with most avidly among teens, with marihuana being the most utilized narcotic.

The Brady Bunch deals with general and rather lighthearted family troubles that come with the challenge of raising six children as well as coming of age in the 1970s. The show presents the family as a pious unit in which everyone looks out for one another and familism is the most important value. However, as mentioned earlier, the level of familism in American families was in decline, even in families in which parents remained married to each other. The show did incorporate the influences of the women's liberation movement but at the end of the episode the decision was made not to take a stand and more or less leave things as they were. The large family which the Brady family are fare well financially considering they are a single income family and in spite of the size of their family. *The Brady Bunch* more closely resembled self-help books on 'how to raise six kids' and 'on becoming a good person' than it did the 1970s as a time of change.

That '70s Show, revolving around an American family and a group of teenaged friends in the 1970s, incorporates a lot of references to the 1970s. The show presents viewers with the problems that families in the 1970s experienced, such as financial difficulties, the growing possibility of a divorce, and the recreational drug use of their children. The show is pervaded with references of second-wave feminism through the mention of marriages ending in divorce, married women getting jobs, and women fighting for gender equality. Where *The Brady Bunch* lacks to bring across that sex and sexuality were very much on the minds of teenagers in the 1970s, *That '70s Show* more than adequately references teenagers' sexuality and them giving in to these thoughts as well in the 1970s.

That '70s Show, as opposed to *The Brady Bunch*, does a decent job in depicting the 1970s as a decade. The main reason as to why it does a better job is because it is more detached from the 1970s and, more importantly, the viewers of the 1970s. The producers, network executives, and directors of *The Brady Bunch* had to make sure that the show would not upset any viewers, which would most likely have happened had they included precarious subjects such as the Watergate scandal, the recession, or teenage narcotic experimentation. *The Brady Bunch* rarely incorporates changes within the United States, social or otherwise, beyond the premise of a blended family and the occasional nod to second-wave feminism. *That '70s Show*, on the other hand, was created long enough after the 1970s that it could parody the decade by highlighting the topics which *The Brady Bunch* tried actively to avoid. Because it is a parody though, *That '70s Show* should not be viewed as the most reliable depiction of the 1970s, which is always the case with fiction, but more as a collection of political, economic, and social changes in the 1970s presented to the viewer with a healthy dose of nostalgia for older viewers and comedy for audiences of all ages.

Family life in the 1970s changed because of women's liberation, a poor economy, and children living at home for longer periods of time. The contemporary popular culture, in the form of *The Brady Bunch*, did not represent the decade very realistically as the show evades many of the precarious subjects to continue making a pleasant, American family sitcom. Modern popular culture, in the form of *That '70s Show,* does a better job in representing the changes in family life in the 1970s as it recreates the decade by highlighting the troubles which American families faced and by parodying the ways in which families dealt with these troubles. *That '70s Show* more closely follows the "structure of feeling" of the 1970s than *The Brady Bunch* does, as it includes social movements such as the women's liberation movement and it discusses the politics and economy of the 1970s which *The Brady Bunch* does not. It would be much harder for a show such as *The Brady Bunch* to do so seeing as it was a part of

the decade, and the structure of feeling of the decade would not generally have networks broadcasting shows with a political nature, with mentions of the state of the economy, or with the incorporation of social changes. The "structure of feeling" of the 1970s in America, particularly in relation to the family, is represented quite well in *That '70s Show* and poorly in *The Brady Bunch.*

An interesting research to do in light of this one might be to look at how American family life changed in the 1950s, in the post-war era, and to see how this is reflected by sitcom from the 1950s, for example *Father Knows Best* (1954), and then compare it to a later sitcom about the same time period, for example *Happy Days* (1974). Another possible research might be to see how stereotypes in American television have changed over the course of half a century, for example by studying stereotypes in the action show *Hawaii Five-O* (1968) and comparing these to those in *Hawaii Five-0* (2010).

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Appendix A

Television Studies Idioms

- Binary Opposition: two contrasting terms, ideas or concepts, such as inside/outside, masculine/feminine or culture/nature.

- Code: in Semiotics, a system or set of rules that shapes how signs can be used, and therefore how meanings can be made and understood.

- Connotations: the term used in semiotic analysis for the meanings that are associated with a particular sign or combination of signs.

- Denotation: in semiotics, the function of signs to portray or refer to something in the real world.

- Familism: the belief in a strong sense of family members, a concern for the perpetuation of the family unit, and the subordination of the interests and personality of individual family members to the interests and welfare of the family group.

- Pilot: A pilot or pilot episode of a TV show is the very first complete episode that a creator or producer will show to network executives trying to sell an entire series to that network. Sometimes networks buy a handful of episodes. Sometimes a network buys a full season of a TV show.

- Private sphere: the domestic world of the home, family, and personal life.

- Public sphere: the world of politics, economic affairs and national and international events, as opposed to the ‘private sphere’ of domestic life.

- Semiotics: the study of signs and their meanings, initially developed for the study of spoken language, and now used also to study the visual and aural ‘languages’ of other media such as television.

- Signs: in semiotics, something which communicates meaning, such as a word, an image or a sound.

- Structure of feeling: the assumptions, attitudes and ideas prevalent in a society, arising from the ideologies underpinning that society.

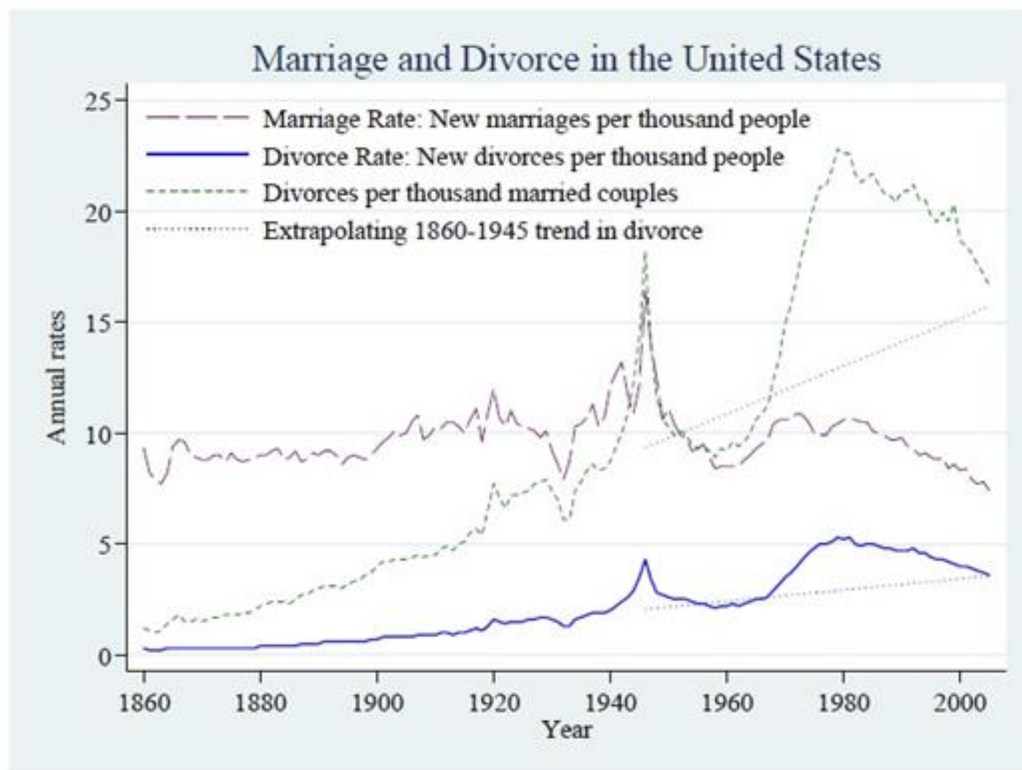
- Syndication: to sell a television series, for example, directly to independent stations for the broadcast of reruns.

- Text: an object such as a television program, film or poem, considered as a network of meaningful signs that can be analyzed and interpreted.

Appendix B

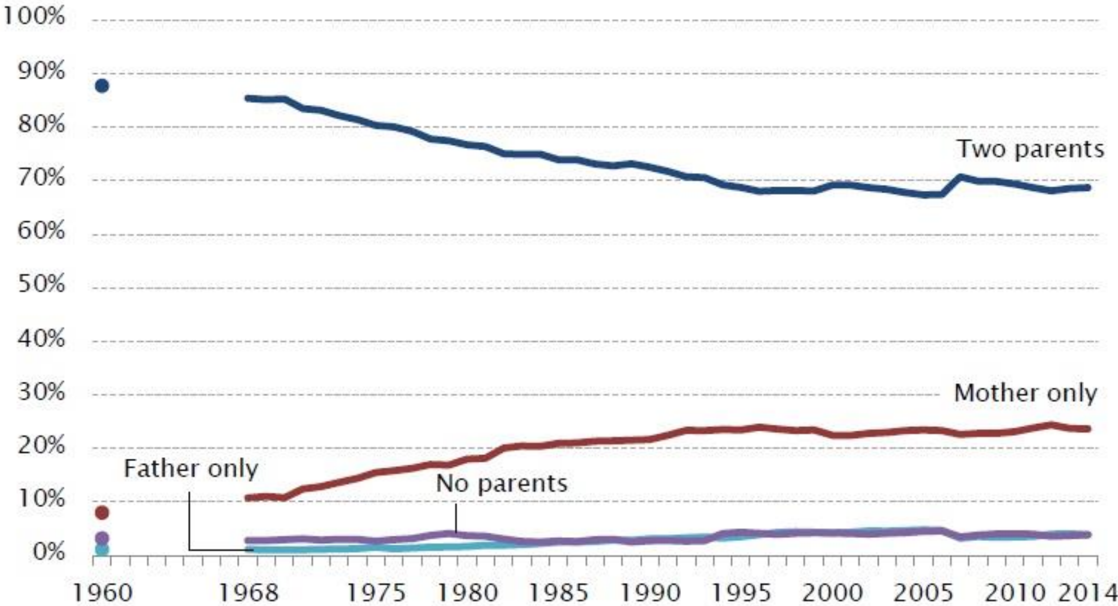
Appendix C

Marriage and Divorces per Thousand People 1860-2005



Sources: For the United States, data for 1860-1919 are from Jacobson (1959); 1920-1998 from Carter et. al. (2006), *Historical Statistics of the United States, Millenium Edition*; 1999-2005 from *Statistical Abstract of the United States*.

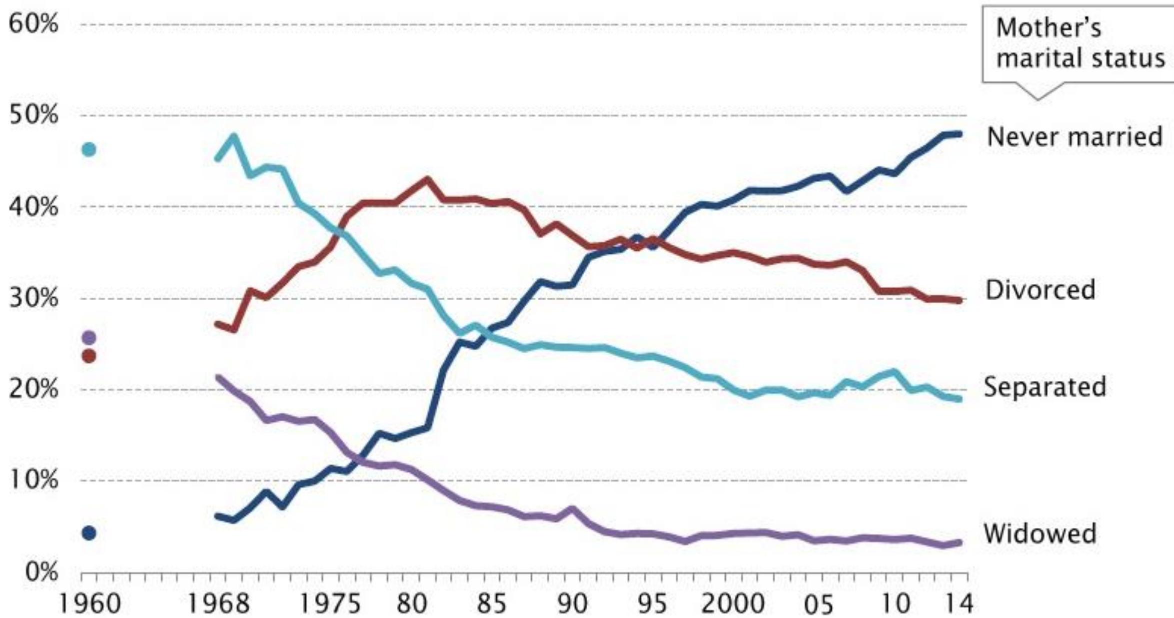
Appendix D



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census, 1960, and Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplements, 1968 to 2014.

Note: Direct identification of both parents began in 2007, resulting in the ability to identify children living with two unmarried parents.

Appendix E



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census, 1960, and Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplements, 1968 to 2014.

Note: Separated includes married spouse absent. Direct identification of both parents began in 2007, resulting in the ability to identify children living with 2 unmarried parents.

Appendix F

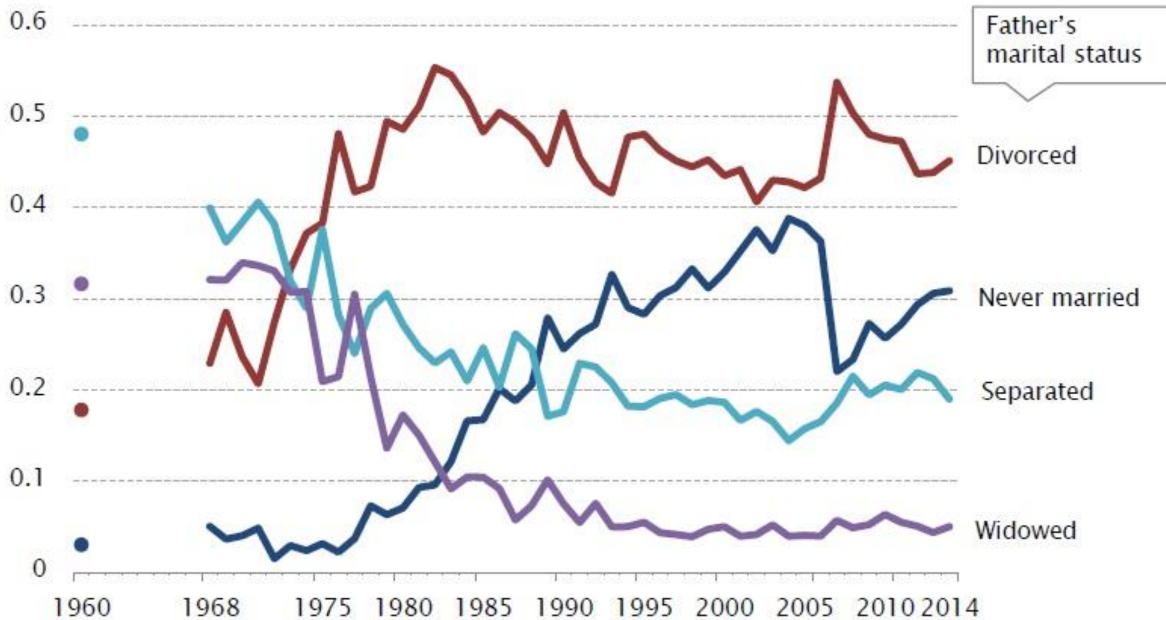
(Numbers in thousands)

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census
Internet release date: September 15, 2004

Year	All households	One person	Two persons	Three persons	Four persons	Five persons	Six persons	Seven or more persons	Persons per household
1983	83,918	19,250	26,439	14,793	13,303	6,105	2,460	1,568	2.73
1982	83,527	19,354	26,486	14,617	12,868	6,103	2,480	1,619	2.72
1981	82,368	18,936	25,787	14,569	12,768	6,117	2,549	1,643	2.73
1980	80,776	18,296	25,327	14,130	12,666	6,059	2,519	1,778	2.76
1979	77,330	17,201	23,928	13,392	12,274	6,187	2,573	1,774	2.78
1978	76,030	16,715	23,334	13,040	11,955	6,356	2,723	1,906	2.81
1977	74,142	15,532	22,775	12,794	11,630	6,285	2,864	2,263	2.86
1976	72,867	14,983	22,321	12,520	11,407	6,268	3,001	2,367	2.89
1975	71,120	13,939	21,753	12,384	11,103	6,399	3,059	2,484	2.94
1974	69,859	13,368	21,495	11,913	10,900	6,469	3,063	2,651	2.97
1973	68,251	12,635	20,632	11,804	10,739	6,426	3,245	2,769	3.01
1972	66,676	12,189	19,482	11,542	10,679	6,431	3,374	2,979	3.06
1971	64,778	11,446	18,892	11,071	10,059	6,640	3,435	3,234	3.11
1970	63,401	10,851	18,333	10,949	9,991	6,548	3,534	3,195	3.14
1969	62,214	10,401	18,034	10,769	9,778	6,387	3,557	3,288	3.21
1968	60,813	9,802	17,377	10,577	9,623	6,319	3,627	3,488	3.00

Appendix G

Children under 18 living with their father only



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census, 1960, and Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplements, 1968 to 2014.

Note: Separated includes married spouse absent. Direct identification of both parents began in 2007, resulting in the ability to identify children living with 2 unmarried parents.

Appendix H

Suggested Further Reading

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