Abstract

Substantial research has concluded that contemporary representations of mothers in American women’s magazines promote traditional gender norms rooted in the 1950s. Most notably, researchers have argued that backlash against feminism was prevalent in media from the 1980s, which frequently called for working women to return to the domestic sphere. Previous research has not, however, drawn direct comparisons between media from the 1950s with more recent media to substantiate these claims. The purpose of this content analysis is to strengthen existing scholarship by examining representations of motherhood in women’s magazines from the 1950s, the 1980s, and the 2000s so as to determine how gender norms have or have not evolved since the decade of the nuclear family. The results indicate that representations of mothers from the 2000s promote the same values as representations from the 1950s and use similar backlash strategies as representations from the 1980s.