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Goodbye Father? Girls, Patriarchy and Social Change: Father-Daughter Relationships in 1960s USA

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GOOD-BYE FATHER?

Girls, Patriarchy and Social Change: Father-Daughter Relationships in 1960s USA

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Introduction

In June 2007, the *Wall Street Journal* published an article about fathers. It revealed that a growing body of research had discovered that fathers play a vital role, distinct from that of mothers, in the development of their children.[1] This may seem a self-evident and consequently, irrelevant, 'revelation', but its publication highlights an important phenomenon. Fatherhood is a sorely neglected topic of discussion. And yet, the figure of the father is perhaps one of the most potent images in western culture. How then did we move from the totemic patriarch that dominated our society for at least two thousand years, to the bumbling, embarrassing dad of today's television?[2] In 1976, this situation was already being brought to attention by the likes of Maureen Green who lamented that 'father is being ignored by the experts'.[3] Judging by the evidence of the *Wall Street Journal* article, thirty years on, fatherhood is only just starting to come to the fore of both academia and cultural interest.[4] In the past decade, ideas about fathers and fatherhood have increasingly been considered,[5] particularly with the realisation that the modern, western mental health problem is directly linked to a breakdown in parent-child bonds.[6] Green's prescient comment was in part prompted by the rise of feminist writing which sought to explore all the dimensions of the female, and women's role as mothers in particular. As a result, many feminist authors examined the meaning of motherhood, and analysed mother-daughter relationships in order to understand their own femininity. The mother-child dyad is one that has dominated discussions of parent-child relationships since the 1960s and Green was already reacting against this. Previously, psychoanalysis

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[1] Life With Father: What Kids Get From Time With Dad , *Wall Street Journal,* June 14th 2007

[2] This dad can be found everywhere, in the minds of today's young people , to the frequent adverts which see father clumsily attempting to grapple with modern life.

[3] For further discussion see M. Green, *Good-bye Father* (London, 1976)

[4] Most strikingly in Britain with Fathers for Justice as well as in the United States with the National Fatherhood Initiative.

[5] For instance, J. Trowell, A. Etchegoyen (eds.), *The Importance of Fathers, a Psychoanalytic Re-Evaluation* (Hove, 2002); Hobson, B. (ed.), *Making Men into Fathers: Men, Masculinities and the Social Politics of Fatherhood* (Cambridge, 2002); E. Dermott, *Intimate Fatherhood, a Sociological Analysis* (London, 2008)

[6] J. Trowell, A. Etchegoyen (eds.), *Importance of Fathers,* p. 3

and child-development theory had focused on the Freudian primacy of father-child bonds, something which shifted at the end of the 1950s. John Bowlby, amongst others, argued that it was in fact mothers who played the key part in child development, and that fathers existed only to protect the mother-child relationship.[7] Simultaneously, functional anthropologists like Margaret Mead reminded the public that the male is biologically programmed to 'copulate and run', and asserted that 'human fatherhood is a social invention'.[8] This is at odds with how humans have come to understand fatherhood, and it is in part this discrepancy between biological and cultural imperatives that has left many fathers floundering in self-doubt. It might seem, then, that Green had a valid point: women, for all their justified grievances, at least have a defined identity in their potential as mothers that can be considered empowering.[9] Fathers and fatherhood, on the other hand, seem to lack definition- and self-worth- entirely. Ironically, it was also feminist writing that started to turn this tide of matri-centrism, as women sought to define not just themselves but that against which they were compared, the male. Fathers had not only suffered from these developments in psychoanalytic theory, but also from their status as men, actors of the status quo for so long that they became an invisible norm. Feminists redressed this situation, as a means of understanding their opponent. Female writers in the 1980s and '90s began to realise the important part their relationship with their fathers played in the development of their own identity and sexuality as women.[10] However, although discussions of masculinity as well as femininity now find a place in academia, father-daughter relationships are still very rarely discussed. In history, gender oriented studies have increasingly come to the fore, and the tangential 'cultural turn' has led to the writing of family history which illuminates human narratives previously hidden. Many historians have shown that families play an important part in history, their status and characteristics often a reflection of, or an influence on, greater social phenomena. Elaine

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[7] Trowell, Etchegoyen (eds.), *Importance of Fathers*, p.5
[8] Green, *Good-bye Father,* p.11
[9] It has to be said, though, that Green's book has distinct antifeminist undertones beyond her criticism of matri-centrism...
[10] See for example S. Sharpe, *Fathers and Daughters* (New York, 1994) and Secunda, V., *Women and their Fathers* (New York,1992)

Tyler May's analysis of the role of the family in Cold War America, for instance, shows how 'history from below' can truly serve to understand historical patterns on a broad scale,[11] as we shall later discuss. However, this example also bears testimony to the work still to be done on family historiography. May focuses mainly on adult examples. When her analysis addresses their offspring, it refers almost exclusively to 'children' in general, and predominantly to parents' relationship with boys.[12] The book, in other ways very thorough, shows that serious lacunae exist in the history of families. Although the history of childhood is another field that has recently developed,[13] children are often observed as individual entities, and studies tend to skim over the complex relationships that exist within the family unit itself. Parent-child relationships play a huge part in shaping human behaviour, and therefore must be explored when studying historical change. The history of the 1960s has perhaps addressed this issue more than other eras, as patterns of generational conflict emerged between baby-boomers and their parents in Europe and the United States. In the US in particular, the 1960s saw youth dissent occur on a large scale, both in the context of the fight for civil rights and against the war in Vietnam. Young middle class Americans, brought up in prosperous suburbs to believe in freedom and equality, were appalled when confronted with quite the opposite, and increasingly rejected the values of their parents' generation.[14] Inspired, but also galvanised by the paradoxical sexism that often still reigned in these protest movements, the women's movement, which had been quietly simmering for the past decade, also gathered steam once more.[15] This was an era when much social conflict was not only the result of racial problems, but also of clashing generations, and spurred on by gender issues. It is useful to explore these phenomena at a level beyond the interpretations already offered by most historians thus far. The fight against authority and patriarchy that animated many young middle-class American women during this period can perhaps find root in the changing

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[11] E.T. May, *Homeward Bound, American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York,1988)
[12] May, *Homeward Bound,* pp. 129-130
[13]Recently, H. Cunningham, *The Invention of Childhood* (London, 2006) which was also popularised for BBC radio.
[14] This was verbalized in the Port Huron Statement of the Students for a Democratic Society, 1962, <http://coursesa.matrix.msu.edu/~hst306/documents/huron.html>, March 2009
[15] May, *Homeward Bound* , introduction, p. x

nature of intergenerational male-female relations within families. This paper will therefore explore father-daughter relationships in 1960s USA as a means of understanding generational and gender conflict on a microcosmic scale.

As mentioned previously, Elaine Tyler May's *American Families in the Cold War* will provide a valuable backdrop to this study. Although it is limited in regards to its analysis of intra-family relationships, it is helpful in its exploration of the link between post-war American families and their socio-political context. May shows how the huge rise in marriage and birth rates, the decline in divorce rates and the creation of the baby-boom generation were not only the product of huge post-war prosperity. The demographic and marital boom, and the character and aspirations of American families, were inextricably linked to the ideological battles of the Cold War. Her evocation of the famous 'kitchen debate' between Nixon and Kruschev epitomises her argument: victory lay in the newly equipped homes of millions of American families.[16] May argues that the domestic ideal inherent to our vision of the 1940s and '50s did not in fact represent the last gasps of traditional American values, but rather was the unique product of two decades of hardship, combined with the pervasive sense of threat created by the Red scare and and the nuclear bomb.[17] Young couples who had grown up knowing only economic depression and war were often desperate for the stability and prosperity that had been denied them and their parents until then, and suburban domestic bliss guaranteed them access to that dream. The security of the nation resided in the security of the family. It was vital for the safety of America and Americans that families adhere to a certain set of values and aspirations, and that future generations be brought up free from any perversion or deviance that might undermine the fabric of society. These newlywed couples were more than happy to conform to this imperative when it meant a house, a fridge, and the promise of prosperity and self-fulfilment at last. The huge importance of family in the post-war years reflects the fears and aspirations of millions of Americans in this era. We shall use this premise to understand how the American family changed during the 1960s,

[16] May, *Homeward Bound,* p. 10
[17] Ibid. Throughout.

and why. This task is a difficult one. The recent *Major Problems in the History of American Families and Children* makes an intriguing leap from well-rehearsed discussions of 1950s domesticity, to the issue of immigrant families from 1965 onwards.[18] This apparently seamless transition highlights a historiographical void where families in 1960s America are concerned. Is this because, as *Time Magazine* deplored uneasily in 1970, American families had simply disintegrated and were now 'without function, no longer necessarily the basic unit in society.'?[19] An analysis of father-daughter relationships, as representative of both the gendered and generational components of families, can perhaps help start to fill an important hiatus in American history.

No secondary literature exists on this precise subject for this period. The only historical work on father and daughters in the post-war era is a recent book by Rachel Devlin, who explores the cultural representations of father-daughter relationships in the 1940s and '50s. She argues that the development of self-help culture and the popularisation of Freudian psychoanalytic theory, coupled with the necessity to ensure the unity of American families in the Cold War context, led to the eroticisation of father-daughter representations in popular culture.[20] Analysing key psychoanalytic texts as well as film, literature and theatre, she links this phenomenon to resuscitated ideas about female sexuality and mental stability and women's place in the American domestic ideal. However, her argument, though convincing, does not draw on any sources other than those of a theoretical or cultural nature, and the patterns of representation are not linked by Devlin to any historical reality. Furthermore, the chronological framework of her theory only extends to the late 1950s. She concludes by claiming that increasing fears of incest, and about girls' growing lack of individuality, led to a sharp decline in oedipal imagery which all but disappeared by the end of the 1950s.[21] It will therefore be

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[18] A. Jabour, (ed.), *Major Problems in the History of American Families and Children* (Boston, 2005), pp. 404-7

[19] Richard Parson, The American Family: Future Uncertain, *Time Magazin*e, Monday December 28th 1970

[20] R. Devlin, *Relative Intimacy, Fathers, Adolescent Daughters and Post-war American Culture* (Chapel Hill, 2005)

[21] Devlin, *Relative Intimacy*, pp. 171-2

necessary to pick up where Devlin has left off. This dissertation shall attempt to establish to what extent this oedipal-fixation endured in the early 1960s, and what replaced this model of father-daughter relationships thereafter.

The relationship between post-war domestic ideals and the socio-political environment, and how these were reflected in father-daughter relationships, shall therefore be the starting point for this study. This dissertation shall attempt to move on from this paradigm, and assess what replaced it. As has been seen, the absence of secondary material specifically related to father-daughter -or indeed family- relationships in 1960s America will make it necessary to explore tangential topics, in order to get a sense of the framework in which father-daughter dynamics were operating. This dissertation shall examine the history of fatherhood in twentieth century America, as well as the evolution of psychoanalytic approaches to fathers and father-daughter relationships. Furthermore, it will be important to look at the history of women in American society throughout the decade, as a means of understanding the gendered world in which daughters existed, and how they related to it. The concept of generational history shall be discussed,[22] and its usefulness will be determined in addressing this subject, as well as in understanding historical narratives. It is also essential to understand the broader historical context, by including a discussion of the legacy of the 1950s as well as the key social and political themes of the 1960s. This will lead us to the historiographical heart of this work, beyond simply uncovering a 'hidden history'. Sixties America is an era that still resonates today, perhaps more than any other period, in terms of its political, social, and especially, cultural legacy. It has taken on a particular shape and meaning in popular imagination that is difficult to move beyond.[23] By analysing a relationship that the great majority of the female population experienced, and that psychologists now agree shape women in profound ways, an attempt shall be made to shed new light on an era already much

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[22] Using particularly Karl Mannheim's The Problem of Generation, in *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge* (London, 1954)

[23] For introductions to the history of sixties America, see D.T Miller, *On Our Own, Americans in the Sixties* (Lexington, 1996); A. Bloom, (ed.), *Long Time Gone, Sixties America Then and Now* (New York, 2001); and P. Maier, M.R. Smith, A. Keyssar, D.K. Kevles (eds.), *Inventing America, a History of the Unites States* (New York, 2006)

scrutinised. In doing so, the dissertation will assess the ultimate value of cultural and 'micro'-history when determining the causes of large scale historical change.

Such an intimate subject cannot be approached by statistics or official documents. Nor would it be sufficient only to explore the psychoanalytic texts that address fathers and daughters. Although these shall be explored in order to develop an idea of the psychoanalytic importance of father-daughter relationships both then and in the surrounding decades, our main sources will necessarily less abstract. It will be useful to move beyond the immediate topic of fathers and daughters. A survey of Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique,*[24] as well as of various sources on the experience of women in the 1950s and 1960s will address the importance of many middle class mothers, whose aspirations for their daughters would have influenced their husband's interaction with them. Central to this paper, though, will be a body of interviews conducted between January and March 2009. Fourteen respondents were established through personal networks, and interviews were held mainly via telephone. Unfortunately, it will not be possible to establish a complete representation of father-daughter relationships. When initial requests for respondents were communicated, an appeal for fathers was also expressed. Sadly, this did not come to anything. Of all the women spoken to, none of their fathers still remained alive. As a result, the following evidence is admittedly, and unfortunately, one-sided. It would of course have been useful to understand fathers' experiences of fatherhood, and compare that with their daughters' views. However, the aim of this paper being to establish links between girls' relationship with their fathers, and their later social involvement, the sole perspective of the daughters will suffice. The women interviewed were all white, middle class, Christian or Jewish, and were between the ages of twelve and twenty-three in 1969. Only one interview was conducted face to face, because all the other women were in America or France. This meant that it was not as easy to establish a connection with the interviewee as it would have been in person. This also made the asking of very personal questions more difficult, but whilst some did

[24] B. Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*, (London, 1971)

express surprise as to their probing nature, all were happy to answer. Issues of subjectivity and memory in the practice of oral history are often raised. [25] The questions asked, included in the appendix at the end of this paper, were therefore formulated in as broad a way as possible, and most details and extrapolations were spontaneous. The intimate nature of the topic meant that for the most part the influence of collective memory was minimal, although some did occasionally refer to popular similes when discussing their 't.v mom' or their experience of counter-culture. The problem of subjectivity was particularly kept in mind, especially as one woman coincidentally published an essay on her relationship with her father, and some of the women who are academics themselves can be caught out trying to second guess answers. Furthermore, many of the women had gone through years of psychoanalysis which meant their reflections were perhaps less unrehearsed than for others. The interview process was often a learning curve for a historian with little to no experience,[26] and some interviews revealed more than others. It was difficult for example not to let interviewees indulge in the 'haphazard reminiscence' that oral history critics warn against.[27] Despite such limitations, the material collected will be ideal as a 'reconstructive cross-analysis',[28] in an effort to construct an argument about large-scale patterns of behaviour from personal testimonies. The women's answers will play the central part in answering the questions that this dissertation poses.

Although this paper concerns the 1960s, it will be important to establish an image of father-daughter relationships in the previous decades. The first chapter will therefore establish the legacy of the post-war years on father-daughter relationships, and attempt to verify Devlin's theories. Evidence from literature on the history of fatherhood, as well as

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[25] R. Perks, A. Thomson (eds.), *The Oral History Reader* (Abingdon, 1998), p. 3. See also M. Dobson, B. Ziemann, (eds.), *Reading Primary Sources- The Interpretation of Texts from 19th and 20th Century History* (London, 2009); P. Thomson *The Voice of the Past- Oral History, third edition* (Oxford, 2000)

[26] The growing number of Oral History societies and schools in academic establishments offered a significant amount of practical guidance, see for example the Oral History Society at <http:// www.ohs.org.uk> (January 2009) and the Center for the Study of History and Memory at <http:// www.ohrc@indiana.edu> (January 2009)

[27] P. Thompson, *The Voice of the Past* in Perks, Thomson (eds.), *Oral History,* p.25

[28] Thompson, *Voice of the Past,* p. 271

from 1960s psychoanalytic and child development articles on fathers and daughters, will demonstrate to what extent these held sway in the early 1960s. Finally, the testimonies gathered from interviews shall finalise whether there was any continuation of over-involved fathering. Moving on from this, chapter two will explore the place of generations in history, as defined by Karl Mannheim, before determining its relevance for the 1960s. Further to this, an in-depth account of the responses gathered in the interviews shall question whether a model for fatherhood in the 1960s can be established. The chapter shall also determine whether a symbiotic relationship did exist between father-daughter relationships and the activism of young women in this period. The third and final chapter will explore the rise of feminism and the important role of mothers in influencing father-daughter relationships. It will determine the influence of popular post-war works such as Lundberg and Farnham's *Modern Woman: The Lost Sex*[29] on women's self-perception, before mapping the evolution of feminism and girls' relationship to it. A study of the respondents' memories of their mother's attitudes, and how this influenced their own opinions on feminism, will question the primacy of father-daughter relationships in regard to girl's social outlook in the 1960s. This dissertation will be an exercise in psychohistory, as it will show to what extent 'the experience of childhood has primacy in determining the shape of adult behaviour',[30] and therefore how much impact it had on the tumultuous nature of 1960s American society. Devin Pendas has stated that 'questions of macrostructure and long-term change are not well suited' to using oral sources.[31] However, this dissertation will demonstrate that the usefulness of a source truly does 'depend on the information one is looking for'.[32] The following chapters shall challenge Pendas' statement, and establish the merits of using personal psychologies and relationships when writing .

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[29] Lundberg, F., Farnham, M. F. *Modern Woman: The Lost Sex* (New York,1947)
[30] P. Hetherington, *Freud and Psychohistory* in A. Green, K. Troup, *The Houses of History,a Critical Reader in Twentieth-Century History and Theory* (Manchester, 1999), p. 60
[31] D.O. Pendas, *Testimony,* in Dobson, Ziemann, (eds.), *Reading Primary Sources*, p. 225
[32] R.J. Greele, *Movement Without Aim* in Perks and Thomson (eds.) *Oral History*, p. 41

Chapter 1: 'Daddy, kiss me the way you kiss mother': The Legacy of the 1950s?

Although it was published in 1998, Philip Roth's *American Pastoral* offers a portrait of sixties America intriguingly close to that proposed by Rachel Devlin for the previous decade. The novel describes the unravelling of an all-American family headed by 'the Swede', a golden boy whose aura of perfection still tantalises his peers in adulthood. Central to the story is his relationship with his only daughter, Merry, a girl who promises to be as successful as her father, but who, caught up in the tide of youth revolt, ends up a belligerent murderer. Whilst her destructive trajectory is ascribed to everything from her debilitating stutter to her hypersensitivity when faced with injustice, a particular episode of Merry's childhood haunts the Swede as he tries to grapple with the tragedy. One sultry summer, an 11 year old Merry had demanded of him 'half innocently, half audaciously'[33]: 'k-k-kiss me the way you kiss umumumother'.[34] And he had. This impulse, the Swede thought, had taken their intimate but harmless companionship over the brink, and had perhaps precipitated her subsequent and violent rejection of everything he stood for. Elements of this story could well be representative of many father-daughter relationships according to psychoanalytic theory. The place of fathers in their daughter's psycho-sexual development through the successful resolution of the Oedipus complex is crucial.[35] Although the incident described in *American Pastoral* would only occur in relatively few instances, the childhood idolisation of their fathers as heroes is a feeling that many women will freely admit to, without worrying that they are hinting at any sinister experiences. Fathers in discussion groups have been known to admit their confusion when asked by their daughters for a 'Hollywood kiss'.[36] Similarly, seeing one's daughter as 'daddy's little girl' is an acceptable and popularised component of

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[33] Philip Roth, *American Pastoral* (London, 1998), p. 89
[34] Ibid.
[35] A. Storr, *Freud: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford, 2001), pp. 29-36
[36] R. Griswold, *Fatherhood in America, a History* (New York, 1993), p. 206

fatherhood. The motif from Roth's story that is particularly relevant to the present analysis, though, is the explicit link between the enactment of oedipal behaviour, and a daughter's subsequent militant involvement in sixties youth protest. Whilst *American Pastoral* is only fictional, it is an interesting lead when considering the question at hand. By taking Devlin's theory as a premise, and applying it to a range of sources, we will attempt to show to what extent the eroticisation of father-daughter relations endured into the '60s. Whilst she showed that cultural representations ended abruptly in the early '60s, many young women activists would have still grown up under the aegis of previous representations and ideals of father-daughter relations. It is important to emphasise here the distinction between the cultural importance placed on fathers and daughters, and the reality of these relationships. Bearing this in mind, the discussion will verify the hypothesis of continued fatherly over-involvement, and the subsequent rejection of father and patriarchy by their daughters, leading to an increased activity of many young women in youth activism and feminism.

Devlin's research found that growing fears about the mental health of young women and the increase in female juvenile delinquency led to a number of anxieties surrounding the psycho-sexual development of girls. This was carried into mainstream thought by the 'vulgarisation' of psychoanalytic theory, and 'an astonishing popular belief in the analyst's knowledge and power'.[37] This was instigated by bohemians and members of the upper classes keen to self-liberate during the 1920s, and was exacerbated by the tide of prominent European psychoanalysts that descended on the United States during and after the Second World War. The 'shrink' became a popular, if somewhat derided, figure.[38] Tangentially, the 'creation' of the teenager encouraged psychoanalysts to focus on adolescents rather than children, and many a youngster was dragged to a professional's office to be cured of their neuroses. The political and social environment at the time also shifted the focus from male 'perversions' such as homosexuality,[39] to the development of

[37] Devlin, p. 22
[38] Ibid., p.21
[39] Although any sign of 'deviance' was regarded with deep suspicion and homosexuals were frequent victims of Red Scare blacklisting.

girls. The 1944 publication of Helene Deutsch's *The Psychology of Women,* until the 1960s considered a seminal text, was to reinforce the role of fathers in their daughters' lives, and in society. Deutsch established the 'feminine erotic woman' as the pinnacle of female development. This ideal woman was passive, masochistic and inwards-thinking, and her sexuality was based on idealisation and fantasy. Family life and home-keeping were seen by Deutsch as the 'exclusive source of women's well-being'.[40] The oedipal relationship between a girl and her father during adolescence as well as in childhood were considered necessary for her to move away from object-ties with her mother, in order to embrace them afresh as a mature woman after her affections had been quashed. This theory was based not only on classic Freudian ideas, but also resulted from phenomenon of 'momism'[41] that saw many young girls unable to evolve into stable adult women as a result of overbearing mothers. The father, already vital to his daughter's future normality, was seen as being even more so amidst the perceived trend of motherly excess. Furthermore, it is easy to see how important the 'feminine erotic woman' was in the Cold War context: if girls were to grow up to be women who established secure homes and families, they would need to be brought up encouraged to accept this particular sex-role. Whilst international tensions had dissipated somewhat, threats to national security, both internal and external, were never far from American consciousness. It would make sense to suppose that the importance placed upon father-daughter relationships, even in muted form, also endured into the 1960s. The following discussion shall attempt to corroborate this assumption by briefly exploring the history of fatherhood in the first half of the twentieth century and further psychoanalytic theory on father-daughter relationships published this time in the 1960s. Finally, it will test the hypothesis of a residual emphasis on overly-close father-daughter bonds by examining evidence gathered from interviews.

As stated previously, there are significant gaps in the history of American families in the 1960s, and even more so for the history of fatherhood. Those secondary works which

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[40] H. Deutsch, *The Psychology of Women*, see Devlin p. 25

[41] J. Nash, The Father in Contemporary Culture and Current Psychoanalytic Literature, *Child Development*, Vol. 3, No.1 (March 1965), p. 275

sound promising tend to fall short by providing evidence from surrounding decades, but never from the sixties itself. Robert Griswold, for example, claims the 1960s marked a turning point for American fathers, by politicising their role and challenging the assumption that they should serve only as breadwinners, but does not show how this occurred in practice during the decade.[42] A broader examination of the history of fatherhood can, however, provide some interesting information. The father's function as provider and family authority has been the defining feature of fatherhood throughout Western history. The change that occurred in the 1960s was the result of a progressive shift in the nature of fatherhood. At the turn of the twentieth century ideals of a 'new fatherhood' emerged, [43] encouraging fathers to become more involved with child-rearing. The therapeutic culture increasingly adopted by many middle-class Americans also encouraged introspection, men often becoming more aware of their own childhood, thinking more about their role as fathers.[44] By 1957, self-proclaimed experts were already rejoicing that 'father doesn't see himself, by and large, as the figure of authority he once was. He prefers to be a participator'.[45] Unfortunately, at the same time that fathers were told to celebrate this new role, many were starting to regret their erstwhile status. The insidious conformity of middle class life did not just affect desperate suburban mothers. The father in Richard Yates' novel, *Revolutionary Road*,[46] was clearly a victim representative of a larger trend. Whilst his generation had adhered to the 'reproductive consensus'[47] that saw marriage and children as the peak of achievement, Frank Wheeler bemoaned the 'television crap where every joke is built on the premise that Daddy's an idiot and Mother's always on him'.[48] Furthermore, liberal commentators feared the effects of conformity on men, claiming that 'once a man has a wife and two young children he will do what you tell him to. He will obey you.'[49] There is very little firsthand

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[42] Griswold, *Fatherhood,* p. 2
[43] Ibid., p. 6
[44] Ibid., p. 204
[45] Gunnar Dwybad and Helen Duner in Ibid., p. 203
[46] Incidentally recently made into a film by Sam Mendes, whose Oscar winning *American Beauty* was the first of his forays into stifling suburbia, and which popularised a now familiar genre.
[47] Griswold, *Fatherhood* p. 190
[48] R. Yates, *Revolutionary Road* (London, 2001) p. 129
[49] Gore Vidal in Griswold, *Fatherhood,* p. 199

evidence of the views of the fathers themselves. However, a report by R.J. Tasch in 1952 revealed that they did not always fit the model presented by Yates and others. Most did not consider themselves to be inadequate, or a simple provider of financial support, and many regretted not being able to spend more time with their children.[50] It seems that the 'new fatherhood' was an ideal, if not a reality, for many middle-class men, and we can infer from this that their relationships with their daughters would have been more involved and fulfilling than in previous decades. This evidence goes some way to understanding the nature of fatherhood in the sixties, and whilst it was gathered in the fifties, many of the fathers would have been bringing up the young women at the focus of this dissertation. Clearly though, evidence on the nature of fatherhood in the 1960s is still hard to pin down. This will be remedied through an account of father-daughter relationships gathered from the oral testimonies. Most importantly however, there is no evidence here of any special link made between fathers and daughters. By analysing contemporaneous psychological discussions of fatherhood we can hope to draw more satisfying conclusions, deducing the implications for father-daughter relationships, and female activism.

An article on child development published in 1965 demonstrates how fathers were in fact suffering from neglect in academic discussion of the 1960s. It shows that many professionals believed that 'the father is of no direct importance to the young child, but is of indirect value as an economic and emotional support to the mother.'[51] As the author notes, fathers appeared to be considered a 'statistical appendage to the family'.[52] When it did concern fathers, academic interest focused more on their relationship with sons, believing that absent fathers, and subsequent over-mothering, could lead to psychological and sexual problems in adulthood that might have a wide reaching effect on the fabric of society. An overly strong father-daughter bond on the other hand, was considered to be

[50] Nash, *The Father,* p. 268
[51] Ibid., p. 264
[52] Ibid., p. 267

significantly 'less inimical to the girls' normal development'.[53] It was also still stressed that girls' sex-role identification was dependant on a good relationship with her father, a view that echoes those expressed in previous decades. Whilst this does show a continuing belief in the healthy nature of oedipal attachment, the emphasis placed on daughters is by no means as great a preoccupation as it was previously. A further article, published a year later in 1966, notes how little thought was devoted to the father-daughter relationship, commenting that even the most comprehensive discussion of parent-child relations did not cover fathers and daughters. The author does reiterate that the presence and participation of fathers in their daughters' upbringing is indeed important to a girl's 'proper' psycho-sexual development.[54] This however, simply reflects to continuing respect accorded to a significant psychoanalytic theory. Significantly though, she also stresses that a father that is *too* possessive will cause his daughter to rebel against him, an aggressive reaction as a defence against her own incestuous feelings.[55] If this occurs, she will reject a 'normal' feminine identity and will become either asexual or promiscuous, but certainly not the 'feminine erotic woman' that Deutsch envisaged. Furthermore, the behaviour of the father was dependant on the successful resolution of his own infantile oedipal complex. This would necessitate a balanced relationship with his mother that would not be possible if her own psycho-sexual maturity was in any way hindered by her father's behaviour. Crucial to normal generations of future mothers and fathers, then, was a sensible approach to the oedipal attachment that was definitely not considered necessary in the post-war years that Devlin explored. The theory of an unconscious 'mass-rebellion' provoked by the continued eroticisation of father-daughter relationships does not, therefore, seem to be relevant. It remains to be seen whether this can be corroborated by oral evidence.

Throughout the interviews conducted from January to March 2009, it rapidly became clear that what served as an intriguing hypothesis to explain the activism of young

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[53] Nash, *The Father,* p. 278
[54] M. R. Leonard, Fathers and Daughters: The Significance of Fathering in the Psycho-Sexual Development of the Girl, *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 47 (1966), p. 328
[55] Ibid., p. 331

women, would in fact not stand up to the pressure of being compared with contemporaneous testimonies. Answers to questions about their relationships not just with their fathers but with their families as a whole, showed that women did not recall a culture of glorification of father-daughter relations, let alone recollect any foundation of this in reality. It is important to note, however, that three of the fourteen women interviewed did admit to having had fathers who had incestuous behaviour. Sharon described her father as 'quasi-seductive', saying that he felt it was 'his right to touch [her] and be weirdly interested' in her development in puberty. [56] Another woman talked about how she felt 'triangulated' between her invasive parents, and stressed repeatedly that her father particularly displayed signs of being attracted to her well into her adult life: 'We went out for a drink and he was physical with me, and I remember saying dad, stop it, you know, and he would say, "there's a couple over there!'"[57] These testimonies are evidence of the unfortunate frequency of inappropriate or incestuous behaviour experienced by many girls. However, they are the exception, and the experiences of the majority of interviewees confirm that the eroticisation, cultural or otherwise, of father-daughter relationships did not endure into the 1960s. Furthermore, there is no correlation between their semi-incestuous experiences and later involvement in social protest or the women's movement. This realisation also casts new light on the conclusions of Devlin's research, which, whilst confined to the post-war years, would also have impinged on the eldest of interviewees. It is a good example of the discrepancies that can occur between more traditional sources and those collected from personal experience. Finally, it shows that whilst it is tempting to imagine a model of behaviour based on convincing written sources, oral history can bring the meandering of history writing into sharp relief by confronting hypotheses with reality. The true nature of father-daughter relations in the 1960s still needs to be assessed, and it remains to be seen whether correlations between this and female activism can be found. The second chapter shall therefore examine further evidence from oral sources, and discuss the usefulness of generation theory in the study of history.

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[56] Interview with Nancy C., Tuesday 11th March, 5 p.m.
[57] Interview with Gloria D., Sunday March 22d, 6 p.m..

Chapter Two: 'Your daughters are beyond your command'[58]: Fathers, Daughters and Social Protest

On June 11th 1963, Thich Quang D'uc, a Vietnamese Buddhist monk, set himself on fire in the middle of a busy intersection in Saigon. His act of protest against the American backed Diem regime inspired a spate of self-immolations that were broadcast throughout the United States.[59] Whilst historians have highlighted the difficulties in chronologically defining the 1960s, it is undeniable that these events, and the images they engraved in the minds of those who witnessed them, constitute one of the key moments in defining the beginning of the 1960s as we understand them.[60] Harsh realities of persecution and despair were thrust into American living rooms, and onto the consciousness of their occupants. Events such as these have been seen as the rallying point for a generation, a moment when thousands of baby-boomers were confronted with a state of human affairs in direct contradiction with the lifestyle and values their country had encouraged them to believe in. This chapter shall readdress this phenomenon, firstly by discussing the place of generation theory in history as established by Karl Mannheim. It shall then consider the relevance of generation theory in relation to '60s America. Finally, rather than understanding the place of generations in history as the opposition of two coherent bodies of people, this chapter shall assess the relevance of individual experience and exchange between fathers and daughters in defining the causes of social upheaval and generational conflict. To do so, the evidence gathered from interviews will be presented as a case study for father-daughter relationships in white middle-class American families, establishing whether links can be found between these relations and young women's social involvement, but also whether a model of fatherhood for 60s America can be ascertained.

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[58] B. Dylan, *The Times They Are A-Changing* (Columbia Records, January 1964)
[59] P. Maier et al. (eds.), *Inventing America,* p. 856
[60] D.T. Miller, *On Our Own,* p. 155

Mannheim, writing in 1951, discussed the existence of generations as a key factor in the advance of human societies. This argument was offered as an alternative to the Marxist view of history, and saw age groups, rather than classes, as the main agents of social change. Generation theory was initially based on beliefs in biological patterns of human existence, arguing that the rate of human life expectancy determined the rate of social progress. Essentially, if people died younger, society would tend to evolve at a greater pace than one where its inhabitants lived longer, because the 'restrictive, go-slow influence of the older generation would operate for a shorter time'.[61] Understanding where generations stop and start can prove difficult, but within this framework, one generation would supersede another after thirty years, which was considered to be the moment when maturity was reached and ones full impact on society could be felt. After another thirty years, this once dynamic generation would become a member of the 'go-slow' cohort, and confronted by a fresh group of young and progressive citizens.[62] This chronological theory of generations finds its roots in the Positivist belief in linear progress, and was challenged by the German Romantic approach which rejected this linear view of historical and social development, as well as the use of numeric data to delineate different generations. Instead, this alternative saw contemporaneity, or belonging to the same generation, as the state of being subjected to similar influences and experiences, a qualitative rather than quantitative approach.[63] This explanation is more useful than the previous one. Firstly, it confronts the idea that the older generation is necessarily 'go-slow' and more conservative in nature, which whilst true in many cases, is not always so. In certain ways, for example, the present generation of young people has proven to be less progressive and more politically apathetic than their parents' generation. At the same time, it is also true that in general, younger generations tend to be more socially active because of the fresh nature of their contact with the world around them.[64] The qualitative perspective sees generational groups as 'a number of individuals united

[61] Mannheim, *Essays*, p. 277
[62] Ibid., p.278
[63] Ibid., p. 281
[64] Ibid., p. 300

through naturally developed or consciously willed ties.'[65] This union is dependent on biological and social rhythms such as births, marriages, divorce, deaths, which is of particular relevance in the case of 1960s America, as we shall later see. Importantly, the most influential generations are self-created as a collective response to a significant event that unites them into a conscious age-stratum. Within this grouping there can be 'antagonistic generation units',[66] people living side by side in identical contexts but who experience their world in significantly different ways. However, they essentially still form part of the same generation because their self-definition is a reaction to an identical context or event. Recent historiography has also added to these initial definitions. There is talk, for example, of a phenomenon of 'global generational consciousness',[67] which was born as a result of the globalisation of media, information, culture and language. The image of a burning monk, and the coverage of the Vietnam war more generally, was one of the first occurrences of global generational consciousness, and, it is argued, is mirrored by the destruction of the Twin Towers in terms of its impact on the present generation. The rise in histories of childhood since the 1970s has also contributed to the understanding of the impact of generation relations on historical change. Lloyd de Mause, for instance, discusses a 'psychogenic' model of history, wherein the central force behind historical change is both psychological and generational. This view sees societies and their inhabitants as experiencing changes in personality that occur because of successive generations of parent-child interactions.[68] These different generations and types of relationships have been periodised, and, crucially for this paper, show how the baby-boom generation was the first cohort to experience the 'helping mode' of parental behaviour. This parenting ideal placed children in a much more powerful position than any time previously, as it encouraged the assumption that the child knew better what it wanted than the parent. The parents' role was to 'work with [the child], to empathise and fulfil its expanding needs'.[69] The psychogenic model has provided an important impetus

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[65] Mannheim, *Essays,* p. 289
[66] Ibid., p. 306
[67] J. Edmunds, B.S. Turner, (eds.), *Generations, Culture and Society* (2002), p. viii
[68] de Mause, *The History of Childhood,* p. 3
[69] Ibid., p. 52

for the study of children, and for many areas of cultural history, placing emphasis on the relationship between the individual and the collective. It is also useful grounding for this dissertation, which aims to correlate large scale generational relationships with subjective experiences. The following paragraph shall therefore analyse the evolution of the 1960s youth movement in light of the importance of generational experience on historical change, before examining more closely the evidence from interviews.

In *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*, Tom Woolfe recalls the moment Ken Kesey, the figurehead of '60s counter-culture, and Jack Kerouac, the impersonation of the Beat movement, came face to face at a party. According to Woolfe, and to the dismay of the assembled revellers, they didn't say much to one another. Kerouac was well aware that him, Ginsburg and their acolytes had long been overtaken by Kesey and his acid-fuelled followers as the voice of the new generation. This anecdote serves to remind us that counter-culture, and the disaffection and revolt of many young people, were not spontaneous phenomena of the 1960s, but found their roots in the 1950s. Whilst they now bring to mind placid barbecues and trimmed lawns, the fifties was also the time when 'the seeds of social activism that flowered in the 1960s were sown'.[70] Understanding the legacy of the previous decades is necessary to understand the generational polarities that pitted many young people against the status quo in the 1960s. In particular, as was discussed previously, the generation of parents in the '40s and '50s were often still scarred in various ways by their own precarious upbringings. Memories of the Great Depression, the Second World War, and the novel spectre of the hydrogen bomb led most post-war parents to mire themselves in oblivious materialism. As many of the oral testimonies corroborated, even those parents who did take an interest in current affairs also 'felt they had done their bit.'[71] Whilst Vietnam and the civil rights movement did serve to galvanise mobilisation in the 1960s, the process of youth activism is one that evolved slowly from the late '50s onwards: As the young became further and further removed from the memories of their parents' generation, they were able to open

[70] Miller, *On Our Own*, p. 6
[71] Interview with Bea L., Thursday January 8th, 10 a.m

themselves to the stark contrast between racial, social and political injustice and their own leisurely upbringing.

Beyond this, the primary aspect of youth protest that can be viewed within the framework of generation history, is the sheer strength of numbers. From 1946 to 1964, roughly seventy-six million babies were born, many of them to the sixty million suburbanites that constituted the American middle-class.[72] Whatever their political stance was to turn out to be, they were sure to have an impact. As it turned out, their comfortable upbringing was to create a backlash that the well-meaning readers of Dr. Spock could not have anticipated. By 1965, five million baby-boomers were in college, and these unprecedented levels of university attendance created a cohort educated for longer than ever before.[73] As Keniston pointed out in 1975, these young people formed an entirely new age-group, 'youth', neither adolescents nor adults.[74] Having shed off the insecurities of their teenage years, but still cosseted in an environment both protected and liberating, their subsequent unique psychology allowed them to assume a collective identity that facilitated an intense critique of their surroundings. Their middle-class upbringing should have prepared them for a life and aspirations similar to those of their parents. However, the values they had been brought up to believe in, and the indulgence they had been the recipients of as a result of liberalised parenting methods, made for an explosive combination. Confronted in university by a growing number of repressive measures from the authorities, as well as by the awareness of racial and international injustices that went counter to the American values they had been inculcated with, they rebelled. But it was also their own relative prosperity, their stable backgrounds and their life opportunities that enabled them to have the confidence to do so. This can effectively be seen as the collective identity described by generation theory, a cohort united by ties both natural and conscious. The group identity of many young people throughout the sixties was of course

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[72] Miller, *On Our Own*,p. 21

[73] W. Breines, *'Of this Generation': The New Left and the Student Movement*, in Bloom (ed.), *Long Time Gone,* p. 24

[74] K. Keniston, Youth as a Stage of Life, in P.H. Dreyer and R.J. Havinghurst (eds.), *Youth:the 74th Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education* (Chicago, 1975) p.9

reinforced by counter-culture, and particularly the liberal consumption of drugs.[75] This bolstered their sense of 'Us versus Them', a feeling which is clearly perceptible in the discourses of student organisations like the S.D.S.. They saw themselves as opposed to their parents and the surrounding social, political and educational authorities, whom, they believed, 'feared change itself, since change might smash what invisible framework seems to hold back chaos'.[76] The previous discussion fits within a psychogenic view of history, as it demonstrates how a combination of social, demographic, economic and psychological experiences of parent-child relations made a generation who they were.

Other historians have indeed drawn out these parallels in more detail, and it is tempting to settle for these explanations. Further factors can of course be discussed at length, but it is not the task here to simply re-write histories of the 1960s. The generational factor, though, is a crucial one for the period, and indeed, for most 'dynamics of historical development'.[77] However, it is important to acknowledge that the place of generations in history cannot be assessed 'without a careful analysis of all its component elements'.[78] Whilst talking about 'youth', 'students', and 'their parents' generation' can serve to paint a broad picture which has proven valuable in representing the unfolding of young people's activism, it dispenses with all subjectivity. The 'component elements' need to be better examined in order to move beyond wholesale categorisations that risk misrepresenting more individual realities. The following and final section of this chapter shall therefore focus on these individuals, and underline the necessity to resist stalling at abstract large-scale interpretations of history. An effort shall also be made to establish the nature of fatherhood in the 1960s that was earlier tentatively explored.

Firstly, no noticeable differences in Jewish and non-Jewish family experiences were discernible. Nor was their any detectable evolution in the nature of father-daughter

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[75] Miller, *On Our Own*, p. 201
[76] Port Huron Statement, <http://coursesa.matrix.msu.edu/~hst306/documents/huron.html> March 2009
[77] Mannheim, *Essays,* p. 320
[78] Ibid., p. 320

relationships over the decade, although the youngest of respondents did also happen to have had the most positive family background. All the women interviewed bar one had a 'traditional' family set-up, that is to say, lived with their father and mother, and any siblings. The only exception lived with both parents until her mother passed away during her early adolescence, and her relationship with her father was obviously more central in the following years than it might have been.[79] Half of the women had relationships with their fathers that dominated their upbringing and development. As we have seen, at least two of these include women who at times experienced inappropriate behaviour from their fathers. Another two, incidentally cousins of different ages, had very close and positive relationships with their fathers. The remaining women had either downright bad relationships with their fathers, or simply felt this relationship, whatever its nature, had been more formative than that with their mothers. Of the other seven women, five felt their mothers had been more influential, and two did not think either of their parents had been especially influential. Although it is a small majority, the number of women whose relationships with their father was dominant does surpass the number of those who were more affected by mother-daughter relations or affected equally by both of their parents. A much larger sample would be needed to establish any sociological pattern, but this still suggests a significant place for father-daughter relationships that might not have been expected. Furthermore, all the fathers worked, whilst all the mothers except one were housewives, many of whom had been previously employed, but stopped after the birth of their children. This corroborates the image of fatherhood presented in the first chapter, that of the father as provider for the family. Of fourteen women who were teenagers between 1959 and 1972, thirteen of them had fathers who fitted this role, and many of the testimonies recalled that their own parents and those of their friends 'did all seem to fall into that pattern, you know, the man is there to earn the money and the woman is there to spend it!'[80] Clearly, even with the growing emancipation of women and the increase of working mothers, the reality of fatherhood throughout the 1960s remained traditional. Beyond this, there is not a typical model of fatherhood that can be established. Many of

[79] Interview with Sara L., Tuesday 24th February 2009, 11 a.m
[80] Interview with Donna T., Friday 16th January, 2.30 p.m

the interviewees did have very fond memories of their fathers, to varying degrees. Gloria, as seen previously, expressed vehement feelings towards her invasive father. Later in the conversation, though, her tone became more affectionate as she reminisced about his generosity.[81] Importantly, these paradoxical feelings seem to have emerged retrospectively, from the time when she was visiting him in hospital near the end of his life. Had she been discussing him during her young-adulthood, this more positive feedback would probably not have been present. Whilst contradictory comments such as these might be confusing, it was possible to gage the women's feelings from their first reactions, even if they later tempered their pronouncements. Many women echoed the sentiment of Joan Z., who firmly said: 'I just really loved my dad'.[82] One even remembers writing an excessive ten pages when answering a survey on fathers in college.[83] These positive feelings are hardly surprising from a contemporary perspective where fathers are expected to have strong and loving bonds with their children. It would be interesting however to compare this evidence with testimonies from previous decades, or from working class or black families of the same period. On the other hand, it has to be said that the general impression of father-daughter relationships was either negative, as observed above, or ambivalent: 'My father was a nice man, kind, but really didn't have very much to say for himself... he was very quiet, very unassuming'.[84] Whilst there were women who had exceptionally good relationships with their fathers, the overall impression is one of tempered closeness. The attitude towards fatherhood does seem more relaxed, and whilst they all worked full time to support their families, most did by this point also foster emotional involvement with their daughters of some sort. However, the New Fatherhood of the 1920s had not quite had the electrifying impact many had hoped for, even after forty years.

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[81] Interview with Gloria D.
[82] Interview with Joan Z., Sunday 18th January, 3 p.m
[83] Interview with Grace J., Saturday 14th March, 2 p.m
[84] Interview with Donna T.

As the first chapter showed, constructing hypotheses on secondary sources can be misleading. In a similar way, the interviews were started with a clear, but naive, vision in mind as to their outcome. In particular, it was hoped that a pattern would emerge showing daughters increasingly rejecting retrograde, patriarchal values and behaviour as a result of the still old-fashioned parenting methods of their fathers. The first interview that was conducted excitingly seemed to match this supposition. Bea L. grew up in the epitome of suburbia, Levittown, and turned eighteen in 1969. Her parents were very much the product of the depression and war years, college educated on the G.I Bill, before having settled down to bring up a family. Whilst her parents were relatively liberal and easy-going, her father was domineering and competitive, and she has no memory of him ever being affectionate with her, or joining her mother in taking care of her and her brother. Her mother was 'just like a T.V mom', and according to Bea, completely subservient to her father. As a result of this, Bea rebelled, and her friendships with college age youths led her to be caught up in activism from high school onwards. She flaunted the rules at school by wearing trousers, and petitioned the school to allow girls to do so. At college she was kicked out for demonstrating against the Vietnam war. She explicitly linked her father's aggressive attitude and her mother's passivity to her involvement in different forms of social protest.[85] This obviously seemed like a promising first interview. However, this was very quickly thrown into doubt by the following interviews. Not only, as demonstrated in the previous section, was there no pattern of severe fathers and subdued mothers, but there was in fact little correlation between the father's behaviour and the daughter's involvement in social protest. Only one other women associated the pleasure of 'toppling institutions' with her father's invasiveness, but this did not really galvanise her to become particularly involved.[86] What is also interesting is that from a sample of middle-class women who were mostly of college age in the late 1960s, few were as socially active as one might presume on the basis of secondary literature and popular imagination. The youngest of the respondents, who was thirteen in 1970, felt that

[85] Interview with Bea L.
[86] Interview with Gloria D.

'by the point the sixties hit [her] it was only a fashion statement'.[87] For the rest of the women, their father's impact on their upbringing did not actually seem to have had much influence on their involvement in social protest. Of the three women other than Bea who had particularly authoritarian fathers, one did rebel by participating in anti-Vietnam rallies and joining the S.D.S., but she did also end up marrying extremely young and in a way enacting, at least temporarily, her father's aspirations for her.[88] The other two were in a sense too emotionally damaged, and felt that 'flight was the only option'.[89] Sharon, who had just left Ohio at the time of the Kent State shootings, was depressed rather than galvanised by the event, and later escaped to South America.[90] Alice S. also fled her family and her rigid father, by travelling to Japan, where her mother was from.[91] Other women who were active did so seemingly regardless of their families, or even with their support. Cathleen, who lived in a town in North Carolina that included an army base, helped to organise a Be-In that her parents drove her too. Although her mother did not really like the way she dressed, and she did not talk about politics too much at home, neither of her parents offered much resistance to her activism.[92] In a similar way, Grace recounted that,

> The summer I was nineteen, I had become friends with a couple of much more radical women, and when I came home at the end of that summer, I thought, "I am a hippy now!" And purposefully wore this outfit that would show my parents that now, you know, I was a hippy, and I got off the bus and my mum said, "Oh! You look so cute!"[93]

On the whole, and whilst most did occasionally confront their parents' apathy, not only were women less activist than might be imagined, but their relationship with their fathers cannot be said to have had any correlation with the involvement of those that were. Furthermore, it seems that a more broad-scale vision of youth involvement is after all

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[87] Interview with Ann S., Sunday February 11th, 6 p.m
[88] Interview with Rita P., Wednesday January 14th, 7 p.m. She also felt this was a way of rebelling against her mother's feminism.
[89] Interview with Nancy. C.
[90] Ibid.
[91] Interview with Alice S., Friday January 9th, 2 p.m
[92] She even wondered if they were in fact present at the the Be-In, but could not quite remember. Interview with Kathleen D., Friday March 10th 7 p.m
[93] Interview with Grace J.

more useful. Grace's comment really summed up the origin of most women's participation: 'I know we talked about [politics], we were encouraged to talk about things, and think about things, but I wasn't keenly aware of political activism until I went to college.'[94] Most of the women were only moderately socially active during the time they were still under the influence of their families, but their backgrounds did, by the time they reached university, enable them to join in the 'spirit' of youth protest many of them remember from their college years. This demonstrates the limits of individual histories when explaining large-scale movements, and whilst the testimonies do provide many insights into father-daughter relationships, specific links between fathers, daughters, and activism cannot really be found. The correlation between family experiences and social attitudes should not be abandoned altogether however. As the following section will explore, the influence of mothers on previously father-dominated family life is vital in order to understand the outlook and activities of young women in the 1960s. The final chapter shall therefore consider the evolution of women's roles and self-perception over the course of the '60s, arguing that the gradual emancipation of women over the previous decades led to more liberalised family structures that enabled daughters to move beyond traditional aspirations and embrace feminist principles.

Chapter 3: 'Give me other mothers and I will give you another world'[95]: Women, Feminism and Daughters.

In January 1962, the *Ladies Home Journal* published an article discussing the findings of a Gallup poll on the aspirations of young women. The article commented on the surprising levels of materialism present in the responses. It seemed that the girls had spent a lot of time considering their future, dreaming in great detail about the colonial-style porch attached to their house, or the kitchen that would be bigger and better than their mothers'.[96] The predominance of domestic-centred ambitions in their answers

[94] Interview with Grace J.
[95] St. Augustine in de Mause, *History of Childhood,* p. 2
[96] Shaping the '60s, Foreshadowing the '70s, *Ladies Home Journal*, 79 (January, 1962)

demonstrates how the post-war feminine ideal was in some ways alive and well at this time, and adhered to by many teenage girls. The great majority of the women interviewed for this dissertation also remembered that even the most liberal of parents essentially expected them to marry and settle down. Discourses such as those espoused in Lundberg and Farnham's *Modern Woman: The Lost Sex*, a 1947 best-seller, evidently had a lasting impact. According to this book, 'modern woman' was a sick and perverse creature, 'a frightful, vain and foolish fantasy', and constituted a social problem on a par with crime and mental illness. [97] The authors believed that the introduction of women into public life after first wave feminism and during the war had inflicted pressures on them that they were unable to adapt to, causing them to become mentally ill.[98] As a result, families and children were also damaged, and a deadly spiral commenced. The 'psycho-pathology of feminism' that essentially led women to try and become men was seen as being responsible for this. The familial experiences of each woman, particularly her own mother's attitude to motherhood and matrimony, was seen as crucial if she was to remain stable and guarantee the well-being of future generations.[99] This view of women as mothers and home-keepers mimicked Victorian separate spheres discourses, and whilst women were increasingly attending university, their education was seen by many as necessary only to ensure that they became suitable wives and mothers. Adlai Stevenson, addressing the graduating class of women at Smith College in 1955, told his audience that they could be proud that 'what [they] have learned will fit [them] for the primary task of making homes, and whole human beings in whom rational values can take root.'[100] As Lundberg and Farnham intoned ominously, 'submit women must to their own nature, or suffer'.[101]

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[97] F. Lundberg, M. F Farnham. *Modern Woman: The Lost Sex* (New York,1947), p. 1. N.B at the same time, bachelors were also considered to be in some way deviant or pathological, creating a family and settling down was seen as the pinnacle of achievement for both sexes.

[98] Lundberg and Farnham, *Modern Woman*, p.8

[99] Ibid., pp. 20-3 and pp. 143-160

[100] Adlai Stevenson, addressing the women of Smith College, 1955 <http://coursesa.matrix.msu.edu/~hst203/documents/stevenson.html> March 2009

[101] Lundberg and Farnham, *Modern Woman*, p. 171

However, by 1960, the feelings of suffocation experienced by many American housewives were a familiar topic in most American publications.[102] By the time Betty Friedan wrote *The Feminine Mystique*, many housewives had therefore already been voicing their dissatisfaction. In *Young, White and Miserable,* Wini Breines shows how the repressive domestic values imposed upon young women were not internalised by all of them, despite what the *Ladies Home Journal* article may suggest. Rather, many made a conscious effort to reject or distance themselves from the trajectories that had been set out for them, and this later contributed to the rise of feminism.[103] The popular image of innocent girls in bobby socks must give way to the fact that teenagers in the late '50s and early '60s did not always conform to what was expected of them. As an interviewee remembered with a laugh, the hysteria surrounding The Beatles, for example, really cast aside any ideals of conformity and propriety.[104] Considered by many adults to be suffering from an epidemic, girls would congregate wherever the band ventured, often having travelled far from home, and wait, screaming 'I'm gonna die, I'm gonna die!', or the name of their favourite, 'until the onset of either unconsciousness or laryngitis'.[105] Their behaviour was not yet a political rebellion, but a personal one that many found shocking. Indeed, sex was the subtext for this frenzy, and whilst The Beatles did none of the gyrating that Mick Jagger would later adopt, the basis of the girl's obsession was undoubtedly of a sexual nature.[106] Whilst American culture was, like today, highly sexualised,[107] girls were still expected to remain innocent in adolescence, and swoop gracefully into matrimony when the time came. As we have seen, even those who managed to go to university were often only allowed to do so in order to 'train up' for motherhood and to find a husband. Moreover, for both boys and girls, universities until the mid 1960s were still extremely regulated, the administration acting *in loco parentis* and strict rules enforced to prevent any inappropriate behaviour. The 1963 University of

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[102] S. Coontz, *The Way We Never Were-American Families and the Nostalgia Trap* (New York, 1992) p. 37
[103] W. Breines, *Young, White and Miserable, Growing Up Female in the Fifties* (Chicago, 1992), preface.
[104] Interview with Kathleen D.
[105] L.A. Lewis (ed.), *The Adoring Audience: Fan Culture and Popular Media* (London, 1992), pp. 86-87
[106] Ibid., p. 90
[107] Ibid., p. 85

Connecticut handbook, typical of many other institutions, laid out a dress code which sternly admonished girls: 'bermudas or slacks: NEVER!'.[108] However, there was a very rapid change in this state of affairs. As the oldest of interviewees remembered, the atmosphere on campus in 1963, and that in 1964, was amazingly different.[109] Whilst repressive ideals of female behaviour did endure for a few years into the 1960s, they were quickly dispersed. The rise of the New Left and the increased awareness and involvement in civil rights led students to push for more independence. As was already discussed in chapter two, the generational factor is significant in this turn of events, and it is also important when understanding the gradual emancipation of women and girls. Not only were young women inspired by the black 'mamas' who rallied their communities against segregation,[110] but girls who had been brought up in a culture of individualism turned this background to their advantage. The now familiar slogan 'the personal is political' that was first formulated during those years took on real meaning in the hands of girls who had grown up in a culture that put 'personal, individual and sexual fulfilment high on the agenda'.[111] The focus on bodies, personal relationships and sexuality that was at the forefront of feminist discussions was ironically born from the more repressive atmosphere of their younger years. Furthermore, as many historians and feminists have shown, the growing awareness of misogyny within activist groups pushed many women to react. Telling women that their oppression was nothing compared to that of the blacks, many young men seemed to believe that 'women's liberation is something for their girlfriend to do while they're busy decision-making.'[112]

It could be argued, therefore, that girls' involvement in feminism was born from this generational set of circumstances. Conversely, other historians have postulated that for

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[108] University of Connecticut handbook dress code for women, 1963, in R.B. Moynihan, C. Russett, L. Crumpacker, *Second to None: a Documentary History of American Women, Vol. II From 1865 to the Present* (Lincoln, 1993), p. 312

[109] Interview with Christina B., Saturday February 21st, 2 p.m

[110] Miller, *On Our Own,* p. 99

[111] Breines, *Young, White and Miserable,* p. 197

[112] M. Piercy, *The Grand Coolie Damn,* in R. Morgan (ed.), *Sisterhood is Powerful* (New York, 1970), p. 490

college age girls 'the dilemmas of either housewives or working mothers were miles away'.[113] Indeed, the impact of Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* is mentioned in any discussion of early feminism, and it is incontestable that the generation of mothers that she belonged to were primarily responsible for fighting the first battles of the second wave. Friedan criticised the repressive female ideals laid out above, based in part on research into the lives of women she had attended university with. She found that

> sixteen out of the twenty-eight were in analysis or analytical psychotherapy. Eighteen were taking tranquilizers; several had tried suicide; and some had been hospitalized for varying periods, for depression or vaguely diagnosed psychotic states. Twelve were engaged in extramarital affairs in fact or in fantasy.[114]

As mentioned previously, this exposé of middle-class female misery was not as novel a revelation as it might appear. The cultural focus on the 'happy housewife' hid the real nature of women's involvement in society. Whilst women were dissuaded from joining the work force in theory, by 1960 forty percent of workers were female.[115] Most had been relegated to more basic roles to the benefit of male employees, but work they did. Furthermore, despite what is remembered in popular imagination, a slow but steady peace movement was supported by a majority of women throughout the 1950s.[116] Professional women also lobbied for changes in legislation, and it was their mobilisation that pushed Kennedy to re-examine women's place in society. When *The Feminine Mystique* was published in 1963, it was in the wake of two policy changes that had successfully been achieved by the Commission on the Status of Women.[117] Only two years later, when quizzed about their future ambitions, a majority of young women hoped to be 'married career women with children'.[118] Admittedly, a significant proportion still saw themselves as destined to be only wives and mothers, but a growing majority were freeing themselves from traditional gender roles. This particular study was based on a sample of

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[113] Coontz, *The Way We Never Were,* p. 165
[114] Friedan, *Feminine Mystique*, p. 235
[115] Miller, *On Our Own,* p. 45
[116] S.M. Evans, *Sources of the Second Wave: The Rebirth of Feminism,* in Bloom (ed.), *Long Time Gone*, p. 192
[117] Ibid., p. 193
[118] G.F. Epstein and A.L. Bronzaft, Female Freshmen View Their Roles as Women, *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, Vol. 34, No. 4 (November 1972), p. 671

lower middle-class and working-class backgrounds, and therefore might not be representative of the group of young women explored for this dissertation. It has been suggested for instance that young middle-class women at the end of the 1960s actually still aspired to the same sort of lifestyles as their housebound mothers, but were pushed into feminism in the 1970s by economic necessity.[119] The testimonies provided by the women interviewed for this paper shall therefore help establish a more complete analysis as to the attitudes of young middle-class women towards female roles and feminism, and the role their mothers played in this.

While researching this dissertation, it was frustrating not to be able to establish many coherent patterns of fatherhood and father-daughter relationships. However, as questions were asked about other members of the family, it became clear that there was something important to be highlighted. Indeed, a recurring feature of the women's testimonies was their recollection of the liberated attitudes of their mothers. Four mothers were in employment during at least one point in the women's upbringing, in jobs as varied as a butcher's assistant or a school counsellor.[120] A further three had worked before their children were born. The remaining seven women had always just been wives and mothers. Whilst the proportion of women who worked or had worked, and those who were housewives, is equal, three of the women who were housewives were also emancipated in other ways. Ann's mother, for example, was a housewife but who always encouraged her daughter to do what she wanted with her life, and furthermore freely discussed aspects of women's sexual liberation with her: 'I remember my mother started taking birth control pills and she would tell me "there's this miracle, it's called birth control!"'.[121] Three mothers were, on the other hand, self-defined 'kept women', and liked it that way. This did not mean they were all submissive to their husband's however. Whilst some did suffer under the authority of aggressive husbands, others definitely ruled the roost: 'she was very critical and domineering, I hated the way she treated my father!

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[119] Coontz, *The Way We Never Were,* p. 168
[120] Interview with Eleanor M., Saturday February 10th, 5.30 p.m, and Joan. Z.
[121] Interview with Ann. S

But that's never prevented me from behaving the same way!'[122] Most of the women did not immediately make any connection between their mothers and feminism. Furthermore, few of the interviewees were actively involved in the feminist movement, and if they were they associated their interest with consciousness raising at university. However, the great majority defined themselves as feminists at the time of the interviews. None of them remembered their mothers discussing Betty Friedan, or feminism explicitly, and yet most of the mothers were undeniably feminist. Writing in 1972, William Chafe remarked that previous to second wave feminism, 'women examined their futures privately and with an unmilitant air', and that it was not until Friedan et al. that they developed 'a sense of collective grievance'.[123] Whilst it seems from secondary literature, and from the popularity of rallying books like *The Feminine Mystique,* that the sixties was indeed the moment when a sense of 'collective grievance' developed for most women, the evidence provided by the interviews shows a different picture. The women's memories of their mothers provided an interesting manifestation of the reality of feminism in middle-class family life in 1960s USA. Sara, for example, said that she never heard her mother talk about feminism explicitly, but remembers that: 'she wanted to continue to be a professional, I think she felt stymied...she always felt a little different from the other neighbourhood moms.'[124] Another woman, Eleanor, recalled that her mother was aware of feminism, but that 'in a way she was already liberated, she was never just a housewife...as far as having her consciousness raised, in terms of being a strong, independent vocal woman, she already was.'[125] A lot of the other interviews also reiterate similar ideas, and whilst some mothers were happy to define themselves as housewives as long as they be given ample amounts of spending money, most were in fact latently feminist. Not only did this rub off on their daughters, but this influenced the dynamics in the entire family. One woman was resolutely feminist from a young age because she hated her mother's submissiveness. However, this was not the reason why most of the

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[122] Interview with Donna T.
[123] W.H. Chafe, *The American Woman, Her Changing Social, Economic and Political Roles, 1920-1970,* (New York, 1972), p. 226
[124] Interview with Sara L.
[125] Interview with Eleanor M.

women grew up to be feminists. Betty Friedan recalled how, already, her generation, and their own mothers, wanted to make something of their lives beyond marriage.[126] And yet Friedan herself was guilty of falling prey to the *mystique*, along with most of her cohort. What really made a difference was the successive generations of women who had quietly been questioning their own identities and roles as women. This argument is not meant to belittle the significance of organised feminism. However, as shown through the interviews, most women and girls did not participate in the movement per se. Rather, the women's movement served to legitimise on a public level the importance of women who had for many years been privately gaining faith in their own strength. The link with father-daughter relationships might seem tenuous. However, what accompanied the generalised emancipation of mothers was also the relaxation of gender roles within the family as a whole. Whilst most parents expected their daughters to marry and have children, they were all expected to go to university, and the majority were also encouraged to do what they wanted with their lives. Furthermore, the growing availability of birth control took girl's sexuality out of their father's control. As illustrated by Roth's 1964 *Goodbye, Columbus,* 'daddy's little girl' was increasingly an illusion.[127] More women, when asked, claimed their fathers had had a greater impact on their lives than their mothers. In terms of feminism however, the private and gradual emancipation of women led to a dissolution of any patriarchal family dynamics. As Eleanor concluded, '[my mother] was a great model for me, and it has taken me a long time to realise how many of my own qualities of strength, and independence, and self-reliance, actually came from her.'[128]

Chapter 4: Conclusions.

The impact that a father can have on his daughter's life is perfectly vocalised in Sylvia Plath's *Daddy,* perhaps the most famous evocation of father-daughter relations. The poem is famous not just because of its aesthetic value, but because of its intense

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[126] Friedan, *Feminine Mystique*, p. 72
[127] P. Roth, *Goodbye, Columbus* (London, 1974)
[128] Interview with Eleanor M.

vitriol towards the patriarchal figures in Plath's life.[129] This dissertation was started with a similar theme in mind, that of the power of the Father over the daughter. However, as was shown throughout, the relaxation of authoritarian approaches to fatherhood over the Twentieth-Century meant that by the 1960s, the father-daughter relationship had little interconnection with the rejection of the status quo by young women. Only one testimony corroborated the initial theory of this paper. In this sense, oral history was not useful here in constructing an argument for large-scale historical change. What was found instead was a substantiation of the existing literature on 1960s America which showed how a combination of broad factors including demographic importance, and generational privilege and confidence, led to the involvement of many young people in activism. This dissertation, however, did go some way in filling the gaps in the history of fatherhood in the 1960s. Evidence from contemporaneous academic sources as well as oral testimony showed how fatherhood remained to a large extent within the confines of traditional models. Fathers worked and provided for their families, and whilst many were emotionally connected with their daughters, theirs remained a secondary influence in girls' every day lives. At the same time, the interviews showed how important women felt their relationships with their fathers were, whether they were particularly present or not. It would be interesting to compare these findings with research into father-daughter relationships in other sectors of American society, or during different decades. The 1965 Moynihan report, for example, offers some insights into the (perceived) state of fatherhood in African-American families, and would be a good starting point for further research.[130] Moreover, although the interviews did not show any significant differences in the experiences of Jewish and non-Jewish women, existing work on the changing nature of Jewish families in the USA might invite comparative research that could go beyond the scope of this dissertation.[131] Moving beyond father-daughter relationships to an exploration of the importance of mothers in girls' upbringing, and the subsequent impact

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[129] S. Plath, *Daddy,* <http://www.internal.org/view_poem.phtml?poemID=356>, April 2009
[130] D.P. Moynihan, *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action*, <http://www.blackpast.org/?q=primary/moynihan-report-1965> April 2009
[131] For example, Goldscheider,G. and S. Goldstein, Generational Changes in Jewish Family Structure, *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, Vol. 29, No. 2 (May, 1967), pp. 267-276

on father-daughter relations, was a worthwhile decision. An overview of women's history in the 1950s and 1960s, and a comparison of this with women's discussions of their mothers, showed how the gradual and silent emancipation of women over successive generations reinforced more vocal feminist agendas. In this regard, oral research has proven successful in understanding large-scale change, a useful addition to historiography which will hopefully encourage a continued and adventurous use of oral and life histories. Finally, the conversations with the interviewees also reiterated one of the most important, but intangible, factors behind the social changes that occurred in 1960s America. Even for women who did not consider themselves to have been 'political', the spirit of the era, and the joy to have been part of such a generation, was a recurring thread in many interviews. As Gloria recounted, the essence of the 1960s still lives on for her:

> I was at the gym the other day, you know one of those circuits where you change every minute, and me and this other woman, well, it was just coming to the end of this Crosby Stills and Nash song, you know, *Suite Judy Blue Eyes*, and we were singing it so loud we couldn't even hear the bell, we couldn't stop! We couldn't do the circuit, nothing made sense but getting to the end of that song. It's just really funny, it took us out of reality... People were looking at us, but we couldn't move we were so paralysed by reaching that ending![132]

After their interviews, the majority of the women were keen to communicate the pleasure they had felt in reminiscing about this time of their lives. This research has above all reinforced the belief that 'not only are people good for history, but history is good for people.' [133]

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[132] Interview with Gloria D.
[133] Thompson, *Voice of the Past,* p. 184

Appendix

Interview questions to be covered:

- When and where were you born?
- Who did you live with when you were growing up?
- What was the financial background of your family and the employment of your parents?
- What were the religious beliefs of yourself and your family?
- What were the political views of your family?
- What was your relationship with your family as a whole?
- What do you think your parents had in mind for your future?
- What were your interests during adolescence?
- What were your political views at the time?
- How did you experience sexuality? (contraception, boyfriends, freedom?)
- Would you say you had a typical childhood?
- How was your relationship with any siblings?
- Did their experience of family life differ from your own?
- Do you think your parents were happy, both as a couple and individually?
- Describe your relationship with your mother.
- What was her family background?
- Was your mother influenced by the growing feminist movement? Were you?
- Describe your father's temperament.
- And his political views?
- And his attitude to dating/sex?
- And his attitude to the social context? (Vietnam, Cold War, activism, counter culture etc.)
- What was his family background?
- Describe your relationship with your father.
- How do you think your relationship with your father shaped :

- a) your views / behavior at the time?
- b)the person that you are now?
- How did your relationship with your father differ from the relationship of your friends and their fathers, as far as you know?

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Ann S., Sunday 11th February, 7 p.m

Bea L., Thursday 8th January, 10 a.m

Christina B., Saturday 21st February 2 p.m

Donna T., Friday 16th January, 2.30 p.m

Eleanor M., Saturday 10th February, 5.30 p.m

Gloria D., Sunday 22d March, 6 p.m

Grace J., Saturday 14th March, 6 p.m

Joan Z., Sunday 18th January, 3 p.m

Judy L., Wednesday 21st January, 7 p.m

Kathleen D., Friday 6th March, 7 p.m

Nancy C., Tuesday 10th March, 5 p.m

Rita P., Wednesday 14th January, 7 p.m

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