

## VIEWPOINTS

## EDITORIAL

## Motherhood

*Unwed mothers deserve support, not criticism*



In 1850, Nathaniel Hawthorne published "The Scarlet Letter," which details the story of a Puritan woman scorned by society for having an illegitimate child. As a single mother,

Hester Prynne was mocked, harassed and mentally tormented for her "crime."

Three hundred years have passed since those Puritanical days, and yet the puritanical ideals dominate the American culture.

When former Vice President Dan Quayle criticized the fictional character Murphy Brown for deciding to become an unwed mother, Americans were split on the issue. Millions supported Quayle, while millions more derided him.

Religious leaders supported Quayle for upholding the puritanical banner of "family values," while feminists argued Quayle did not realize that a greater proportion of single women were having children.

Long after the election and the rhetoric of so-called "family values," the dust has settled, but the heart of the argument still exists. Is single motherhood a social aberration, or is it a social norm?

Census Bureau statistics released two weeks ago seem to suggest the latter. The percentage of single American mothers under 44 jumped from 15 percent to 25 percent over 10 years. Contrary to stereotype, these numbers cross all societal lines: racial, ethnic, religious, class, income, profession.

Two sets of numbers have some bearing on USC. One of the sharpest increases was among college-educated women, rising from 3.1 percent to 8.2 percent; South Carolina, with the exception of Mississippi, leads the nation in never-married mothers.

While neither set of numbers are directly related, they may point to a possible corollary. If a link exists between them, then it is likely there will be a rise in the number of female USC graduates rearing children alone successfully.

With a college degree, women are better able to battle discrimination in the workplace. It allows them to break through the glass ceiling, enter the board rooms and be able to provide a better life for themselves and their children.

This growing trend towards more single mothers may seem frightening to some, but consider that in most dysfunctional families, the child only bonds with one parent. So, even in a two-parent household, the dynamics of a one-parent household prevail.

While politicians and preachers debate single-motherhood's morality, single mother's must deal with the daily struggles of holding a steady job, rearing children and maintaining a stable household. Even the world's greatest jugglers must envy those single mothers who are able to balance home and career successfully.

## Magazines written for wrong people

As I grudgingly walked through the fitness center door yesterday, I knew a little motivation would be necessary in order for me to survive 30 minutes on the Stairmonster...I mean Stairmaster. Hoping to successfully kill the next half hour, I selected a popular women's magazine from a display rack.

After about five minutes of reading, I found myself more frustrated than before, and I hadn't even set a foot on the torture machine yet.

Maybe it's just me, but I'm not so sure what women these so-called women's magazines are written for. Now, I am not bashing all of these magazines; some of them do justice for women such as myself who enjoy a healthy balance of good fiction, fashion, fitness and, of course, food.

But I'm not finding many magazines that aim for conservative twentysomething females such as myself. Perhaps it is because I am stuck in one of these "in-between" stages of life, having passed through my teen-age years and looking forward to a career and marriage within a few years, that I can't find a good magazine.

Call me crazy, but I'm not interested in what I should wear with my bell bottoms. How much intelligence does it take to figure out that platform shoes are the obvious choice?

I have had enough of these sex surveys. If something that intimate can't remain personal, then we are all nothing more that



voyeurs. Whether it is an interview with Sharon Stone discussing her next movie, or reading some of that trashy romance "literature," these magazines are far too concerned with the same thing. Don't we have better things to do or discuss?

I don't consider myself a fanatical feminist, and I'm tired of these magazine writers thinking that I am. It's not that I can't appreciate their efforts to reach a certain audience, but I'm ready for someone to write for me, which is what I'm doing. I guess it's true that if you want something done right...

My greatest concern is the image these magazines are giving to teen-age girls such as my younger sister. She already has it drilled into her head that sex before marriage is OK, that superskinny is the only figure that guys are attracted to, in addition to a variety of other widespread assumptions.

What irks me are those models! Isn't it just a bit hypocritical to print articles on how it's OK to be yourself and that 110

pounds is not a realistic weight for a lot of us, and then have full-page layouts of some anemic-looking creature. I think she is there just to make me feel F-A-T!

Swimsuit season is the worst. One recent article featured a layout of suits for less than perfect bodies but had the same tiny anemic model wearing each suit.

I was jealous! I had to face the reality that my body will never, ever look like that image. I'm not sure what factory they built her at, but for the sake of women everywhere, could someone please find at least one woman that a swimsuit actually makes a difference on?

The time has come for real models and real writers. A trend has been developing toward more athletically-built women in some magazines, and this is a welcome fashion trend.

I'm ready for a return to beauty that starts from the inside and is less concerned with my bustline. Let's focus on the best career opportunities for future graduates, a realistic weight loss plan and great fiction from new writers. I'm sure that somewhere between Cosmopolitan and Good Housekeeping there is a happy medium.

I'm ready for a magazine with my generation in mind. I need some refreshing reading while I'm struggling to get my body ready for beach appearance.

*Tanya Stroman is a columnist for The Gamecock*

## Women's magazines provide hours of laughter

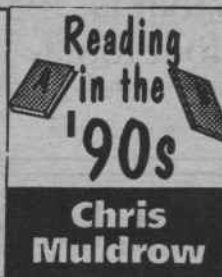
I'm the type of person who likes to read. I'll read just about anything that's lying around. I read the cereal box at breakfast, the Lance Choc-o-lunch package at lunch and all of the McDonald's wrappers at dinner. I read pamphlets when I'm waiting for the doctor, and I read CD liner notes while I'm listening to the music.

Most of the stuff I read is pretty boring, especially the liner notes that just list the band members' names and the fan club's address. Occasionally, however, I'll strike the motherlode of reading material, the epitome of fine literature, the cream of the printed crop. Yes, every now and then, I read one of my mother's women's magazines.

You know the breed: Family Circle, Woman's Day, Good Housekeeping. These magazines are a conglomeration of gossip, advice, household tips and women's fiction. They've always fascinated me; predictability in anything intrigues me.

Most women's magazines seem to have a rather set pattern. Every magazine must have at least 20 columns offering advice on everything from manners to childcare to medical problems to sex. Each column takes readers' questions and uses experts in the field to solve the problem.

I've always wondered where the editors get experts in fields such as sink and bathroom care or foot odor, but they always seem to dig up someone with impressive sounding credentials. Also, where do the sex columnists go to get trained, and why



didn't my adviser tell me about those courses?

Most women's magazines have a special fiction excerpt from a famous romance novel. All of the stories are required to have a dashing, handsome lawn worker who happens to be embroiled in a sweaty, steamy affair with the glamorous businesswoman who is married to an obese, inattentive, chauvinistic landowning redneck.

Usually, the stories have at least one murder, two hostile takeovers and one daring, deep kiss behind a curtain. Unfortunately, the stories are only excerpts. Do you think that by cutting these selections down to fill a magazine that the editors have removed an essential element from the author's meaning?

Every magazine must include at least one passionate article insisting women's doctors are only out to rip their patients' insides into tiny shreds so the doctors can make a couple of bucks.

These articles usually detail a particular procedure that is usually unnecessary but

is performed anyway. The articles then imply the doctors are in cahoots with pharmaceutical companies, medical insurance companies, malpractice lawyers, auto mechanics, refrigerator repairmen and the men who killed John Kennedy.

Finally, every woman's magazine must have at least one special issue devoted to the British royal family, particularly Princess Di. This special issue must come out at least once a year and must detail every outfit Di has worn since marrying Sir Chuck of the Elephant Ear Clan.

In times of marital difficulty, the magazines suspend regular reporting activities in order to leave room for special flash Di and Chuck reports, including every juicy bit of gossip from the ever-vigilant British press and every emergency wardrobe change Di undergoes.

Now that the two have fallen on hard times, the magazines all saw it necessary to remind us of Di's stunning life and wardrobe before she married into that inbred mush of genetic soup we call Your Majesties.

It's probably not normal for a guy to be reading women's magazines all the time, but the entertainment level they provide is unbeatable. Anyway, how do you expect me to know what's next for all the little princes if I don't keep up with Blondie and the Earmeister?

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