

TITLE: “The Good Wife’s Guide” as a Simulation of Patriarchy

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Introduction: In the widely-circulated image of the 1955 *Housekeeping Monthly* feature—“The Good Wife’s Guide”—eighteen tips detail the familial obligations of a wife, such as “a good wife knows her place”. The article is used as a) valid evidence of the gender oppression 1950s-era women faced at home and b) proof that patriarchy has receded over time in response to critiques of cultural images like this. Despite its widespread use in sociology courses, little is known about the origins or authenticity of this article. This paper demonstrates that “The Good Wife’s Guide” is a fabrication, a form of postmodern simulation that paradoxically upholds both patriarchal and feminist ideas about gender in the 1950s.

Method: I examine the authenticity of this article using the postmodern method of deconstruction. I show that the image of the family in the article is from an unrelated magazine, *John Bull*, which was printed in 1957, not 1955. No record of the magazine (*Housekeeping Monthly*) exists and no one has ever verified the origins of the text. Without proof of authenticity, the article is a simulation, a concept that French theorist Jean Baudrillard used to define an image which bears no relationship to the reality it supposedly represents. The reality this image is trying to portray literally does not exist.

Significance: The goal of my analysis is to bring awareness to the questionable authenticity of “The Good Wife’s Guide”. Few critical assessments of this image exist, which leads me to conclude that viewers of this image are not critically examining the messages it conveys, especially when presented in sociology courses. More reckless is the continuous perpetuation of the simulation, especially by academics. The dissemination of “The Good Wife’s Guide as a valid representation of gender inequality results in erroneous assumptions about the progress that has been made and minimizes the future efforts needed to dismantle patriarchy. The academe should be sharpening students’ critical lens, not providing false images that obscure the truth.