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# **Mama Bear as Domestic Micromanager**

## ***The Evolution of Cultural Ideas of Motherhood in Berenstain Bears Book Series, 1960-2000***

As research expands on the history of social constructions of motherhood in modern North America, the scholarship points toward an overarching recurring theme: the tension in maternal ideals between “overinvolvement” and “underinvolvement” (read neglect). During the Second World War, for example, in his famous book, *Generation of Vipers*, Philip Wylie condemned mothers for indulging their “temptation to pour all your extra energy and affection into Peter and Polly. After all, you rationalize, I have to take the place of two parents now ... This is a dangerous assumption.” The dangerous assumption led to what Wylie termed “Momism,” an overinvolved pattern of mothering that invariably turned would-be men into sissies and generally disrupted family life (qtd. in May, 1988: 74-75). Just two years later, Federal Bureau of Investigation director J. Edgar Hoover, in an article entitled “Mothers ... Our Only Hope” insisted that children would fall into “perversion” and “crime” if mothers left the home, indulging “quite understandable desires to escape for a few months from a household routine or to get a little money of her own ... There must be no absenteeism among mothers. Her patriotic duty is not on the factory front. It is on the home front” (qtd. in May, 1988: 74). Mothers could not be underinvolved either.<sup>1</sup>

These conflicting messages stem from the nineteenth-century cultural definitions of motherhood that not only elevated mothers to the status of the only important parent, but also exalted women’s superior morality and ability to teach by example. Women’s superior morality was, in the popular view, defined by their self-sacrificing role as mothers (see Lewis). In the twentieth century the ideals were further developed through the rise of medical science—about which “good” modern mothers must always be up-to-date—and psychology (Apple, 1997). As popularized, modern psychology has contributed to

the dilemma of modern mothers. On the one hand, twentieth-century mothers have faced the injunction of constant surveillance. On the other hand, they have faced damning criticism for “momism.” Still, mothers had to be highly involved in their children’s lives in order to follow the dictates of modern consumerism, medical and psychological advice. A mother was offered so much potential through scientific information, especially after World War II, with the burgeoning availability of expert counsel in the form of pediatricians, psychologists, and the homey advice now available in the post-war “baby book” popularized by Dr. Benjamin Spock.<sup>2</sup> Now, as Brett Harvey noted, a mother wanted “perfect children—with unblemished bodies, high intelligence, and ‘normal personalities’” (1993: 105).

While scholars have examined the tensions in cultural ideals of motherhood largely from the perspective of advice literature to women, television, and widely influential cultural commentary, less attention has been paid to the role of maternal images in literature directed to young children. Children’s literature is replete with powerfully stereotypical gender images that are encoded at an early age, when children are forming gender identity and are especially receptive to images (Chatton, 2001). Gender bias in general has been the subject of many interesting studies of children’s literature, most of which confirm the persistence of gender stereotyping of girl and boy characters in spite of feminist calls for change (Louie, 2001; Maxwell, 1994). Moreover, as Barbara Chatton has observed, “Even when girls themselves are portrayed more positively, parents, teachers, and neighbors who might serve as role models are often more stereotyped with stay-at-home moms in dresses doing housework and errands, while fathers go off to work” (2001: 62).<sup>3</sup>

Part of the challenge of investigating mothers in children’s literature is finding the mothers. As Chatton says, “A long tradition in children’s books that plays to children’s egocentricity consigns parents to little or no role in some stories” (2001: 62). There is also a common theme of parental death and a subsequent lost orphan experience that pervades the history of children’s literature. A review of *Publisher’s Weekly* (1996) best-selling hardcover children’s books revealed that Mother Rabbit in the Beatrix Potter books (who after all was not around when Peter got into the most trouble) was the only significant mother character in the top 50 books. The underlying assumption seems to be that a child cannot have a good adventure with a mother around.

But when one looks at the paperback book market, a notable exception to the rule of maternal absence can be found: Mama Bear, in the Berenstain Bear book series by Stan and Jan Berenstain, directed primarily at children aged four to eight. This is the longest-running children’s book series in history, beginning in 1962 with *The Big Honey Hunt*, and continuing to the present with more than 90 books, as well as coloring books, film strips, videos, and audio cassettes. The series and the authors have won numerous awards for the books, including a Ludington Award in 1989 for “contributions to children’s literature” (*Major Authors and Illustrators for Children and Young Adults*, 1993). Fifteen of the best-

selling children's paperback books of all time are Berenstain Bears Books (*Publisher's Weekly*). Parents, myself included, who have used the books to help explain to children basic concepts of responsibility and self-restraint, or to dispel worries about visits to the doctor have often appreciated aspects of these books. Yet the character of Mama Bear has not yet been examined in terms of her contribution to the social construction of motherhood.

Mama Bear is a character that may seem predictable and changeless to parent readers who possess a passing familiarity with the book series. She seems to solve every household problem imaginable, using good the techniques of modern psychology. It is Mama Bear who calls family meetings, organizes action plans, elicits cooperation, and teaches the little bears, and more belatedly the rather slow-witted and ineffectual Papa Bear, a lesson that the whole family needed to learn. How could they ever have managed without her?

My research into the history of this series, based on examination of more than 60 of the Berenstain Bears books, reveals that in the 1960s and 1970s, the Bear family more or less did manage without her. In contrast to what we might assume about the continuity of the "involved mother" since the postwar Dr. Spock era, Mama Bear's story between 1962 and the present is a tale of transformation, from obscurity to center stage, from passive presence to household micromanager. Mama Bear expands her role in the domestic realm, beginning in the 1980s. Yet in spite of the dramatic changes in the lives of real mothers, Mama Bear's confinement to the domestic sphere presents a striking continuity. Even in books published since 2000 we find her in relentlessly unthreatening and anachronistic presentation, in ankle-length dresses and in scenes outside the household in which her subservience to Papa Bear is reinforced. These themes are portrayed in storylines, dialogue, and in memorable and highly stereotypical images.

In the 1960s and 1970s, Mama Bear's version of maternal involvement is to simply be available at home. The theme of the 1960s Bears books is that Papa Bear tries, but usually fails, to teach Little (boy) Bear lessons. (Sister Bear does not arrive until the 1970s.) Papa Bear always messes things up in a humorous way. Mama Bear is generally merely pictured at home at the beginning and end of the book. She is outside the adventure, and she never interferes. In *The Bike Lesson* (1964), she appears on the first page, witnessing the new bike. She is then waiting to see the final result, achieved after many misadventures: "Look, Ma! Now I can ride it! See! Dad had some very good lessons for me."

Mother Bear rarely even speaks in the 1960s books, though one rare image of her initiating action establishes her role as the smarter of the two parents. "Go get some honey. Got get some more. Go get some honey From the honey store," she says (1962). Papa tries the shortcut to her suggestion (chasing bees), only to wind up in the end taking her advice. More typical of Mama Bear is a passive role. She is long-suffering in *The Bears' Picnic*, (1966) as the bumbling Papa Bear takes Mama and Little Bear through a wide range of unpleasant locations, until they all wind up back at home. Papa is clearly in charge here, but

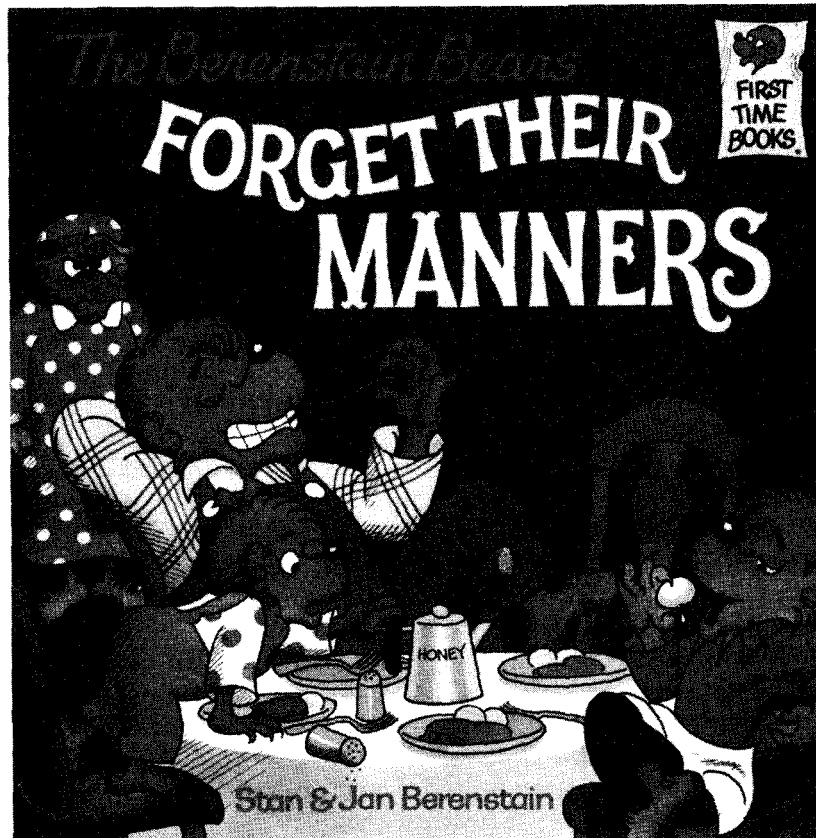
generally has a bad idea. His character seems to be modeled on the working-class buffoon of television sitcoms from the 1950s, as exemplified in Ralph Kramden of *The Honeymooners*, whose wife Alice was regularly depicted as more intelligent and wise than her husband, especially in matters of common sense.

The image of Mama Bear by the 1980s and up to the present is a striking contrast to the Mama Bear character of the 1960s, though we also see some marked continuity of her domestic role. Two books with the same theme clearly illustrate both the differences and the continuity: *The Bears' Vacation* (1968) and *Berenstain Bears By The Sea* (1998). Mama Bear's dependence and her secondary role outside the household are evident in both books: She sits in the back of the car in her long dress, with Papa Bear and Brother Bear in front in 1968 and 1998. But here the similarities between the two vacations end. In the 1968 book, Mama bear quickly finds her place in the seaside cottage, uttering only one warning, "Small Bear! Small Bear! Don't you go too far. I want to see you wherever you are" (1968). Not to worry, Papa Bear assures her, though Mama looks a little worried. She probably knows that all Papa's safety tips will be comically dangerous, and indeed, this comedy makes up the story. Mama Bear appears again only at the end of the book, when it seems that Papa Bear and Little Bear have just barely arrived safely back from their adventures.

In the 1998 version of the vacation, *By the Sea*, the little bears are continuously hampered by Mama's interference with their plans to leave the vacation cottage and go to the beach. First they must clean up, then unpack, make beds, clean closets, rake walks, have a snack, wait until their food digests, and put on suntan lotion. Mama Bear's moralizing insistence on duty, responsibility, and safety *is* the story. The cubs do not have the opportunity to swim until the final page of the book. And in this story, it is Papa Bear who appears in the background.

By 1998, the theme I knew from the Berenstain Bears books in my house was well established: Mama Bear expressed her love for her children not just by being available and stable, but by serving as the manager of all household affairs and nearly all the emotional and functional problems of the family. In and of herself, she provides most of the socialization her children seem to need to take their place in the world. For example, in *The Berenstain Bears Forget Their Manners*, published in 1985, Mama is shown presiding over an unruly, backwards family epitomized by the recalcitrant behavior of her husband. Mama tries numerous strategies, including "going to Papa for help (though it sometimes seemed to Mama that he was part of the problem)." Eventually, Mama devises a bad manners consequence chart. Specific types of unmannerly behavior earn a bear a chore. As is typical in these stories, it is Papa Bear for whom the lesson is the hardest. In a sense, Mama Bear must mother him as well as the cubs.

Mama Bear's role as emotional manager emerges rather suddenly in the 1980s. In *The Berenstain Bears's New Baby*, published in 1974, Mama is still a



passive character even in what psychologists have long recognized as a major transition in the life of a first child expecting a new sibling. The story focuses on the fact that Little Bear had outgrown his bed, and Papa Bear, taking up his ax, will have to go make him a new one. All Mama Bear has to say in the whole book is that Little Bear has outgrown his bed just in time. As late as 1978, in *The Berenstain Bears Go to School*, Mama Bear says and does very little to ease Sister Bear's obvious anxiety about starting school. Though Mama visits kindergarden with Sister, when Sister Bear later asks, "Mama! What if I don't like school? What if I just don't like it?" there is no response from Mama. "Just then" the bus pulls up; Brother Bear pulls Sister toward the bus, saying, "Stop worrying. School is fun. You'll like it."

In sharp contrast, in the 1986 book, *The Trouble With Friends*, Mama Bear takes a proactive role, noticing problems and involving herself closely in the emotional lives of her children. She talks patiently with Sister Bear about her problems with "braggy and bossy" friends: "It seems to me, said Mama, 'taking Sister on her lap,' that Lizzy isn't the only cub that's braggy and bossy sometimes...." And in *The Birds, the Bees, and the Berenstain Bears*, published

in 2000, Mama Bear carefully talks Sister Bear through the transition to big sisterhood in a way she never did when she was expecting “Sister” in 1974. The Mama Bear of the 1980s and 1990s has dramatically increased her role within the family.

But Mama Bear’s continued confinement to the home also raises questions. Was there no accommodation to Second Wave feminist critiques of domesticity in this popular book series? How does Mama Bear survive the 1970s and 1980s “intact” in her confinement to the home and the back seat of the car, and intact in her overall image except for some obvious weight gain that only softens her domestic image? In fact, there were a few challenges to the hyper-domestic image of Mama Bear during the 1970s and the 1980s. Those challenges simply appeared, made a point, and were not integrated into subsequent plotlines. For example, in the award-winning 1974 book, *He Bear She Bear*, the two genders of bear are portrayed in non-stereotypical roles. Non-traditional female roles, however, seemed to be primarily confined to female bears not occupied with child care. The book begins with the children’s gender identification with father and mother. Mother is carrying firewood, but is in closer physical proximity and a more compromised pose than Papa Bear when she asserts, “I’m a mother. I’m a she. A *mother’s* something *you* could be.” The bear cubs learn that they could build bridges, climb poles, race cars, or dig holes, regardless of gender. Similarly, in the 1987 book *The Berenstain Bears On the Job*, female bears (again not visibly mothers, and much more gender neutral in their appearance than Mama Bear) are shown doing non-traditional work such as mechanics and plumbing.

Perhaps the most interesting and quite temporary departure from Bear gender roles occurs in 1984 with the publication of *The Berenstain Bears and Mama’s New Job*. “The Bear family,” we learn on the first page:

... was a very happy family. One of the reasons was that they were all very *busy*. Each member of the family had work to do. Papa Bear cut and split logs and made the wood into handsome furniture which he was proud to sell. Mama Bear not only took care of her family, but she managed the whole tree house and tended the vegetable patch as well.

The story continues, “Yes, the members of the Bear family had happy, busy full lives. Especially Mama.” Why would she want a job, we might wonder. In the same page, she appears to be a bit too busy. Mama has visions of “a little more time for her quilts. She had some lovely design ideas she wanted to try.” This most feminine and old-fashioned of pastimes could perhaps be parlayed into a business, though Papa objects at first. “Mama in business?” said Papa, “I don’t think so. One business-bear in the family is enough.” Mama does not look convinced. Sister Bear objects too: “But you don’t want to be a business-bear,” said Sister. “You’re our mama!” Mama replies,

“That’s no reason why I shouldn’t open my own quilt shop. A lot of mama bears have jobs: Mrs. Grizzle is a sitter; Mrs. Honeybear teaches school; [and in a brief nod to non-traditional and well-paid occupations] Dr. Gert Grizzly is your pediatrician....” “Yeah,” said Brother, “but they’re not our mama!”

Mama assures them that “things aren’t going to be all that different.” In the long run of the book series, this was certainly an understatement. For a couple more pages we see Mama Bear’s success, and the extra help provided by the other three family members. The final page shows the remarkable results: Mama Bear is paying for a celebratory dinner out with *her* money.

As I have already suggested in discussion of Berenstain Bears books of the 1980s and beyond, this episode is not of lasting consequence to the life of the family. Mama Bear does not appear again as a working mother attempting to balance her work with her family responsibilities, and this pattern is another example of what numerous scholars have demonstrated: Working mothers are significantly under-represented in children’s literature in light of their actual growing presence in the labor force, though children’s literature for young adults has portrayed the actual changes in mothers’ labour force participation with much more accuracy that is typically seen in literature for young children (see, for example, Miller, 1996; Maxwell, 1994; Vardell, 2001).

Based on my close analysis of this book series, I suggest that the brevity of Mama Bear’s adventure in paid labour can be explained by looking at the evolution of her character. To continue the plotline of working mother would have fundamentally compromised her role in observing problems in her children not noticed by her spouse, providing nurturing but deliberate assistance to the cubs’ needs, moralizing, and maintaining family harmony. Her constant availability at home seems to depend on her lack of interest in anything outside the home, and such interest would threaten the family. In fact, the book about Mama’s job opens with the all-important question, “When Mama gets home too late for a meal, how will the cubs and Papa Bear feel?” (Berenstain and Berenstain, 1984). It seems that they will feel fine—the first week. Clearly the story of Mama Bear over time is the enlargement of her personal power only *within* the household—an ironic progression when one considers the scarcely acknowledged dramatic expansion of women’s role outside the household in these same years. As summarized by Lynn Weiner, “In 1950, fewer than 12 percent of mothers with children under the age of six worked outside the home; by 1960, this had climbed to 19 percent, and by 1970, to 30 percent. By 1980, nearly 50 percent of mothers with children under six were in the labor force” (1997: 377). The Berenstain Bears, along with much of the rest of literature for young children, poorly reflected this important dimension of the lives of a growing number of real mothers.

While Mama Bear’s role within the household clearly expands, a few exceptional stories raise questions about whether her pattern might smack of

“Momism,” whether her rationality might occasionally be compromised in such a way that masculine paternal authority is needed. In general, Mama Bear manages to contain the potential for Papa Bear to become a family manager like herself. On the rare occasions when he has a plan for a family problem, it usually fails; more often he reacts emotionally, in the moment rather than deliberately. However, there are a few interesting exceptions that suggest the possibility for rationality and managerial abilities in the Papa Bear character. In *The Berenstain Bears’ Messy Room*, published in 1983, Mama does not quite have a grip on a problem, and sulks through much of the story. It is Papa who “got Mama’s and the cubs’ attention,” in a gender-stereotypical and very typical of Papa Bear way, by shouting and worrying the cubs. But Papa calls a meeting, borrowing a technique from Mama, and he briefly becomes the family disciplinarian, though again in a way that elicits fearful looks rather than understanding from the cubs. In an unusual plot twist, a managerial change is instituted by Papa. Mama is happy again, and the cubs benefit too, from the enjoyment of living in a “clean, well-organized room.”

In the 1990 book, *The Berenstain Bears’ Slumber Party* and in the 1997 book, *The Blame Game*, Papa Bear actually shows some potential to usurp both Mama’s authority in managerial matters and her generally calm problem-solving approach. In the *Slumber Party* book, Papa Bear gently reprimands Mama Bear for instituting too harsh a punishment for Sister Bear’s misadventure at a slumber party unsupervised by parents. As the parents, he suggests, he and Mama Bear should have taken responsibility for ensuring parent supervision at the party. Mama Bear relents and, still in charge of discipline, comes up with an alternate solution.

A more disturbing image of Mama Bear is seen seven years later in *The Blame Game* (1997), in which Mama Bear’s emotionality is contained by Papa Bear’s reason, a striking role reversal. Though Mama Bear might brood in previous stories, she rarely speaks until she had a plan to solve the problem at hand. But in *The Blame Game*, we are introduced immediately to the two sides of Mama Bear. Here is Mama Bear “warm, friendly Mama Bear, from whom seldom is heard a discouraging word.” And here is her alter ego. “Her smile was gone and she was feeling very discouraged. Why? Because life in the big tree house had turned into one long, miserable, never-ending blame game.” This time, when finger-pointing occurs in the wake of a broken vase, Mama shouts “Enough!” Papa Bear hearing the commotion, arrives to calmly solve the problem. “Instead of playing the blame game, why don’t we just go to work and solve the problem?” In a pose Mama generally reserves for her forays outside the treehouse, she is shown following Papa’s instructions. Papa has solved the problem, leaving us to wonder and raise questions about whether the authors sense a need on the part of their audiences to view an effective paternal figure who can, at least occasionally, offset the intense control exerted by a mother.

Nevertheless, the continuity of contemporaneous books that reassert Mama Bear’s wisdom and Papa Bear’s ineffectiveness suggest that Mama Bear



is likely to remain the primary authority of the home for the foreseeable future. For example, in *The Berenstain Bears Lend a Helping Hand*, published in 1998, Mama Bear is shown losing sleep over a family problem, the selfishness of her cubs, while Papa Bear snores on. "I've got to find a way, thought Mama, to teach them that it's just as important to help others as it is to help themselves. But how? Lecturing hasn't worked. Nagging hasn't worked. And having Papa 'talk' to them seems to do more harm than good." This suggestion about Papa Bear's inability to communicate with his children echoes nearly two decades of storylines in the series. In a reiteration of the formula introduced in the 1980s, Mama Bear solves the problem by having her cubs learn to help other by helping an elderly woman in the neighborhood. Papa Bear might occasionally step into family problems, but his typical postures persist into books published in the new millennium: Papa Bear yells, engages in the same problematic behavior as his cubs, or simply does not notice problems, in part because he is often absent, or if present engaged in reading a newspaper or other activity that prevents him from close observation of his children.

This study raises interesting questions for scholars of the social construction of motherhood. First of all, we must ask, why was Mama Bear so passive in the 1960s and 1970s and so active in the 1980s and 1990s? It is true that children's literature has been characterized by increasing sophistication and awareness of child development. As one scholar of children's literature, Zena Sutherland, points out,

Many of today's books are about serious subjects, deal with contemporary problems, and are designed for children whose sophistication has grown with their exposure to a media-dominated world—a world in which the developmental stages and needs of children are better understood and better reflected in their books than in the past. (1977: 58)

Yet psychologists were well aware of, and were widely publicizing, issues related to "ages and stages" by the 1950s (Grant, 1998). And it is clear that in the 1950s, and into the 1960s, motherhood was idealized woman's true calling. As Julia Grant described the psychological theories of the 1940s and 1950s in her study of the history of advice literature to mothers, "Motherhood was seen as a defining aspect of female identity; those who did not embrace it could permanently damage their children's psychic well-being" (1998: 211). The historian Stephanie Coontz has also observed that by the 1950s, "child care absorbed more than twice as much time as it had in the 1920s" for women in the United States. Moreover, "for the first time, men as well as women were encouraged to root their identity and self-image in familial and parental roles" (1992: 27).

Thus the culture did not need to invent a devoted, confined to the home mother between the 1980s and the 1990s. This model was well established. In

fact, Mama Bear would seem to have many archetypal ancestors in the late nineteenth century when, as Rhoda Maxwell has observed, “The mother was the central figure in the family” in children’s literature, and,

...the fathers in the stories exerted little or no moral force. They were dead, dulled by alcohol, or never referred to at all. The family was the social microcosm with the mother being the dispenser of knowledge. All of the stories published in the nineteenth century centered around the children discovering for themselves the truth of the mothers’ definition of the world as fundamentally ordered by benign law. (Maxwell, 1994: 19)

Thus when Brother and Sister Bear try to subvert Mama Bear’s new “politiness plan” in *The Berenstain Bears Forget Their Manners*, their story is only reinscribing old cultural themes of “Mama knows best,” the 1950s drama which highlighted Father suggestive of only a blip on the screen.

Yet just as historians have demonstrated that the 1950s model family was as much new invention as Victorian throwback, so Mama Bear also represents something new and something almost deliberately anachronistic (see May, 1988). It seems to me that three major historical developments may be implicated in the keeping of Mama Bear “in her place” barefoot and frock clad (if not often pregnant), and yet enlarged in her sphere of influence within the household. One development is clearly the expanded participation of women in the labor force. In the wake of the 1960s, cultural tensions about working mothers and feminist demands in general probably heightened the cultural interest in “involved mothering” and created an anachronistic space for mothers in ankle-length dresses within literature for young children, as the twentieth-century raced by.<sup>4</sup> Homey images of mothers seem to cushion the change. In this sense, perhaps Mama Bear was a conservative re-invention.

Yet her adherence to popular psychology made her an icon of the latter half of the twentieth-century, for Victorian mothers knew little until very late in the nineteenth century of psychological theories of child development (Grant, 1998: 39-69). The second historical development that helps explain Mama Bear is the popularization and even marketing of psychology towards the anxious consumer. In popular magazines directed at the relatively recent crop of upwardly mobile mothers who begin mothering in their 30s or 40s, mothers are clearly reminded on a regular basis that they need to be up to date on consumer products and expert psychological advice to manage the daunting task of parenting. A recent cover of just one *Parents* (1999) magazine makes the point with the following anxiety-producing headlines: “Stress is Contagious: Don’t Let the Baby Catch It”; “Fussy Eater: Is It Your Child’s Problem—Or Yours?”; “The Potty Debate: What’s the Right Way to Toilet Teach?” and in case a mother wanted to try her hand at medicine or relying on her own judgment as a consumer, a couple of warnings: “3 Alternative

Remedies That Make Kids Sick” and “Must-Read Report: Is Your Child Safe in Her Car Seat?”

Paralleling all these changes has been a decline in community life, recently summarized in the noted book *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, by Robert Putnam (2001). This decline renders the role of parents, but especially ever-available mothers, on high alert for signs of emotional trouble, stranger danger, or junk food all the more important. The Berenstain Bears book series shows mothers as able to solve these problems with minimal support from community members, or, as we have seen, from spouses.

But could a mother be left to rule the roost alone when the stakes were so high, especially with rising cultural anxiety about single motherhood and the overall well being of children? The larger culture has continued to blame mothers (rather than for example, public policy on such issues as gun control or family-friendly workplaces), invoking charges of both underinvolvement or overinvolvement. Might fears be re-emerging about the latter problem, especially in light of trends since the 1950s of involving “Dad” in critical family decisions? Examining Papa Bear’s recent movement towards a new level of familial involvement, we might wonder how Mama Bear’s level or type of involvement will shift in the future. As today’s parents of young children struggle to negotiate the incredible high stakes of “perfect mothering” alongside “involved fathering,” it will be interesting to observe how Mama and Papa Bear evolve as they continue to provide compelling representations of the nuclear family into the new millennium.

<sup>1</sup>For additional examples, see Ladd-Taylor and Umansky (1998).

<sup>2</sup>On the popularizing of psychology in the form of advice to mothers, see Grant (1998).

<sup>3</sup>Similarly, Rhoda Maxwell reported in her study of 46 novels of realistic fiction for ages 12-20 published between 1975 and 1992, “The adolescent literature published during the early 1970s did begin to reflect some of the changes that were occurring in society, but only through the characterization of young women, not adult women” (1994: 23).

<sup>4</sup>It is interesting to note that Rhoda Maxwell found that it was in the 1960s that for the first time mothers also become problematic characters in literature for youth ages 12-20. Mama Bear, aimed towards young children, escaped this fate, but only by remaining extremely domesticated (1994: 20).

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