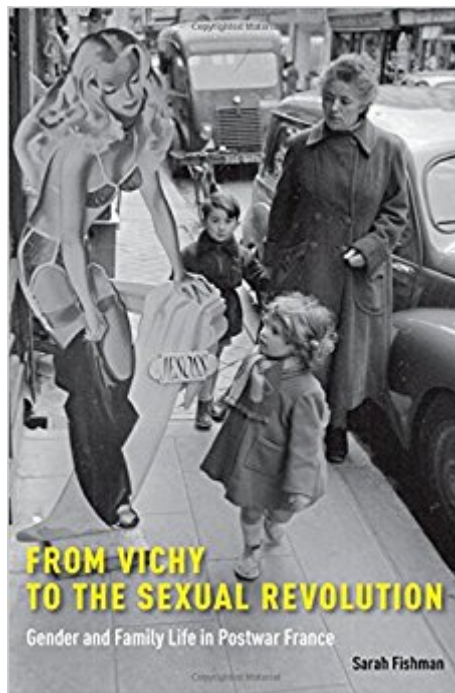


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# From Vichy To The Sexual Revolution: Gender And Family Life In Postwar France



## Synopsis

At the end of World War II, France discarded not only the Vichy regime but also the austere ideology behind it. Under the veneer of a conservative vision of family characterized by the traditional structure of a male breadwinner and female homemaker, the conception of love, marriage, and parenting began changing in the years immediately after the Liberation. In the 1950s, France experienced rapid economic development alongside a baby boom, changing from a rural country worn out by economic depression, war, and occupation into an urban, industrial, and affluent nation. Meanwhile, the works of Sigmund Freud, Simone de Beauvoir, and Alfred Kinsey began to influence popular culture and shape how people thought about their partners, their children, and themselves. Little more than twenty years after Vichy was abolished, France had already entered the early phases of a dramatic sexual revolution, laying the groundwork for the turmoil of May 1968. *From Vichy to the Sexual Revolution* explores the factors that led to such radical changes in French notions of gender roles, family structures, and sexuality. Sarah Fishman follows French women's path toward emancipation from winning suffrage in 1945 to the social movements of 1960s, painting a broad view of shifting habits and ideas about love, courtship, sex, marriage, parenting, childhood, and adolescence. She surveys a wide range of sources, including juvenile court cases, inexpensive guidebooks on marriage and childbirth, and popular magazines--Marie Claire and Elle most notably, where iconic columnists such as Marcelle Auclair and Marcelle SÃ©gal answered readers' letters and dispensed intimate and inspirational advice to millions of women. Fishman deftly links economic, political, and social transformations, showing how the vision of family shifted away from a rigid structure dominated by the authority of the father toward a more dynamic group characterized by engaged relationships between parents and children. A sweeping social history of postwar France, this book illuminates the extraordinary impact that national policies have on ordinary lives.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"[D]raw[s] a remarkably fresh picture of postwar gender and family life..."--Tony Barber, Financial Times Summer Books 2017 "[W]omen in postwar France were no Brigitte Bardots. Their stories are important, and Sarah Fishman evokes and analyzes them in her original, lucid, and important study of gender and the family in modern France."--John Merriman, Los Angeles Review of Books "Any cliché we have about French womanhood in the postwar era will be forever altered by Sarah Fishman's far-reaching social history, *From Vichy to the Sexual Revolution: Gender and Family Life in Postwar France*. An unsung hero emerges in her pages: Marcelle Ségol, who ran the advice column of *Elle* magazine for forty decades, and was arguably as important a force in the emancipation of French women as Simone de Beauvoir. Fishman asks new questions of original archival sources and allows us to look with fresh eyes at gender stereotypes constructed by New Wave films and popular fiction."--Alice Kaplan, John M Musser Professor of French, Yale University "Sarah Fishman's history of 'how and why ideas about gender and family life changed after the war' is a masterful history by a distinguished historian at the top of her game. By using novel sources such as magazine advice columns and juvenile court records, Fishman penetrates deep into French class structure to tell the story of how ordinary families fare in a time of great transition. At the same time, she brilliantly shows how Sigmund Freud, Simone de Beauvoir, and Alfred Kinsey served as cultural touchpoints of the 1950s. Together these three gave rise to a new focus on the self and its actualization which would come to full fruition in the late sixties. From Vichy to the Sexual Revolution is a fresh, pivotal look at an understudied period which deserves a wide audience among historians of Europe and gender. Brava!"--Mary Louise Roberts, Distinguished Lucie Aubrac Professor of History, University of Wisconsin, Madison "Sarah Fishman's book addresses a fascinating and important topic, namely, gender and family life in the still under-researched years stretching from the Liberation to the sexual revolution of the late 1960s. She correctly sees these years as a crucial period of transition, not only for young women but for the organization of relationships in French families more broadly. From Vichy to the Sexual Revolution makes excellent use of the abundant and ethnographically rich material that postwar social policy toward vulnerable families generated, such as juvenile court records and social workers' reports on

family visits. This is a sophisticated and engaging book on a subject whose importance leaps off the pages."--Laura Lee Downs, Professor of Gender History, European University Institute

Sarah Fishman is Professor of History at the University of Houston. Her books include *The Battle for Children: World War II, Youth Crime and Juvenile Justice in Twentieth-Century France* and *We Will Wait: Wives of French Prisoners of War, 1940-1945*.

Great history of post war france with new research from social work reports among other things as primary sources.

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