A structural analysis of the parental role in a developmental framework pinpoints why the transition to parenthood is more difficult than marital or occupational transitions. The essay suggests that the maternal role focuses on instrumental activities and the paternal role on expressive activities; hence neither men nor women are adequately prepared for parenthood in American society. The Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI) indicates that this paper has been cited in over 140 publications, making it the most-cited article in this journal.

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I wrote this essay in 1967 at an important turning point in my own intellectual biography and in the specialty of family sociology. Sociology was then dominated theoretically by a paradigm concerning gender roles that was extraordinarily simplistic and traditional. Applied to the family, the leading conception was that men were instrumental leaders of the family and women the expressive hub of the family, implementing delegated authority from the husband-father.

My essay turned this theory on its head, pointing out that, in fact, men fill their family roles during evening and weekend leisure hours, when expressive "play" is the keynote, while women fill the instrumental duties of parenting during the far longer daytime hours. The implication was that sex role socialization did not adequately prepare either men or women for competent performance of their parental roles. This thesis was provocative and controversial in the 1960s, but speaks with continuing relevance to readers in the 1980s, which is why, I believe, it continues to appear in anthologies and science citations. The essay was my first sustained effort to apply a feminist perspective to traditional topics in my specialty in family sociology.

The personal roots of this radical new look at parenthood included three elements: the first was the impact of a painful first encounter with sex discrimina-

2. LaRossa R & LaRossa R M. Transition to parenthood: how infants change families.
3. Eastwise D R & Doering S G. The first birth, a family turning point.