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# Midwives and Madonnas: Motherhood and citizenship in the American counterculture

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Is approved by the final examining committee:

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MIDWIVES AND MADONNAS: MOTHERHOOD AND CITIZENSHIP IN THE  
AMERICAN COUNTERCULTURE

A Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty

of

Purdue University

by

Kristen A. Blankenbaker

In Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

of

Master of Arts

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West Lafayette, Indiana

To my very own Mother, who taught me to persevere and  
believe in the power of my voice

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## ABSTRACT

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This project examines how counterculture mothers reimagined female citizenship over three decades of protest and activism. Witnessing the restrictive social contract that bound their suburban mothers to Cold War policies, hippie women sought to dramatically redefine the obligations that structured motherhood. They utilized the experimental structure of communal societies to enact a variation of motherhood that encouraged the development of a highly individualized self, free from the oppressive social structures that shaped Cold War society. Hippie women viewed this elimination of oppressive social structures as a reclamation, rather than a departure from, American values. The collapse of communal societies and the broader crisis of American identity in the mid-1970s, however, prompted an evolution in counterculture motherhood and citizenship. Through the home birth movement, these women merged feminism, hippie values, and red power rhetoric to advocate for a variation of motherhood linked a mother's powerful reproductive ability became to a broader obligation to protect the sovereignty of the earth. Counterculture women produced a global citizenship rooted in an individual connection to the earth and environmentalism, not merely the state. Their incorporation of feminism and liberal citizenship, however, accompanied the embrace of the nuclear family as well as a return to a social contract that equated biological motherhood to female fulfillment. Hippie women's radical revisioning of motherhood cannot be placed on a liberal-conservative political spectrum; rather, it represents the complexity of identity and citizenship in the 1970s and early 1980s.

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## INTRODUCTION

First time mother Melinda Barbee's delivery did not go as she had anticipated. After being admitted to the hospital, Barbee's husband Bob was sent home, attendants administered drugs that rendered her unconscious during the entire delivery, and her newborn daughter Linda required oxygen support. Reflecting on her experience, Barbee stated, "I never did believe a baby could come out of *my* vagina, and I guess I still don't. I assumed no choices about my birth; perhaps that's how I wanted it. I thought doctors must know what they're doing. . . . All I wanted was the end product, a baby."<sup>1</sup> Her experience was not unique; rather, it was indicative of American obstetric practice in the mid-twentieth century. Attracted by the promise of a safe and painless childbirth, mothers like Barbee overwhelmingly turned to hospitals for their labor and delivery. In a Cold War society riddled with fear and anxiety, their acceptance of obstetric anesthesia and medical control reflected the efforts of a society attempting to eradicate both domestic and foreign menaces. As a result, American childbirth transformed from a moment of immense power for the mother to a standardized medical event fixated upon the "end product."

In contrast to Barbee's disappointment with her childbirth experience, thirty-five year old counterculture mother Alana Bernard recalled feeling "gutsy" when she

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<sup>1</sup> Suzanne Arms, *Immaculate Deception: A New Look at Women and Childbirth in America* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1975), 50.

naturally delivered her child at home in 1976. She remarked, “I was in awe of the whole birth experience. . . . This is amazing to me, that the human body can do this. I felt tremendous pride in being a woman—in that I could give birth. I felt like I was very fulfilled and complete after having had this experience.”<sup>2</sup> As a participant in the 1970s home birth movement, Bernard sought to restore the biological and spiritual power of motherhood to the female body. Unlike Barbee, Bernard elevated the physical process of labor and delivery to a spiritual experience in and of itself. Her fulfillment, enacted by the female body, reflected the broader contestation of the relationship between the body and power beginning in the 1950s.

The social, cultural, and political upheavals of the 1960s and 1970s precipitated a massive shift in the organization of American society that remains controversial today. Through a tenuous coalition, baby boomer activists fundamentally challenged the social contract that bound citizen and state. As they collectively argued, this contract was predicated upon the systems of racism, sexism, heteronormativity, and capitalism. American citizenship was thus inherently restrictive and dependent upon the oppression of the majority of the populace. Consequently, baby boomers banded together to reimagine American citizenship and identity. At the center of this debate was the American family, which they recognized as intimately connected to the civic sphere. Due to its long history of unique civic obligations to the state, motherhood in particular became the object of fierce political debate between conservatives and liberals. Both the

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<sup>2</sup>Pamela S. Eakins, ed. *The American Way of Birth* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986), 242.

rhetoric and lived experience of American motherhood from the 1950s to the 1980s serve as a barometer in which the social transformation of the nation can be measured.

As both Barbee's and Bernard's deliveries reveal, childbirth and motherhood cannot simply be deemed an immutable biological process. Rather, the mother's body is a nexus in which the private and public spheres, as well as corporal and cultural issues collide. Her body serves as a site for examining how hegemonic cultural institutions, social protest, civic obligations, and personal choice intersect to define motherhood at a particular moment in history. In a variety of forms, women from the dawn of the Cold War era to the Reagan Administration utilized motherhood both to challenge and defend their vision of American society. As a result, childbirth, child rearing, and the endless list of obligations associated with motherhood should be viewed as inherently political acts intended to effect revolutionary change.

In their journeys from suburbia to communal living, countercultural women alternatively wielded motherhood as an identity, a spiritual methodology, and a platform for social change. Growing up in predominantly white middle and upper class families, they perceived their suburban mothers as both the victims and agents of a repressive Cold War citizenship that valued yet pathologized motherhood. Consequently, hippie women sought to fundamentally transform the relationship between the state and mother. The counterculture's efforts to unravel the self from social systems such as industrial capitalism empowered women to create an experimental social and spatial structure.

Through their construction of communal environments, hippie women enacted a radically new form of motherhood that redefined the relationship between mothers and the state. Natural childbirth, multi-parenting, and communal living structures are just

three examples of how these women rewrote the rights and obligations that bound women, society, and the state. As the spatial refuge of communal living proved unsustainable in the mid-1970s, hippie women increasingly incorporated their countercultural values into the home birth movement. In the midst of the American identity crisis of the 1970s, these women mediated spirituality, medical knowledge, and female empowerment with the conservative call for a return to “family values” and a growing concern with the environment. Countercultural mothers adapted to these shifts in American society, producing a variation of motherhood and citizenship that married conservative and countercultural values.

Despite their contributions to 1960s and 1970s social protest, the counterculture has not received the same scholarly attention as contemporaneous social movements. In part, this lack of attention stems from a persistent stereotype that hippies were bereft of a guiding ideology like their counterparts in other social movements. Evident in both countercultural and mainstream publications is the contempt with which many mainstream Americans held (and still hold) hippies. As a result, much of counterculture scholarship has sought to mediate and complicate stereotypes regarding drug use, music taste, clothing styles, and communal structures.<sup>3</sup> Scholars such as Timothy Miller have sought to articulate counterculture ethics and ideology through a focus on cultural opposition. In his book *Hippies and American Values*, Miller argues that drugs, sex, rock music, and eastern religion were not simply hedonistic cultural expressions; rather, they

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<sup>3</sup> In part due to their success in challenging boundaries and structure, existing scholarship on the counterculture extends across a range of academic disciplines. Significant contributions include: Timothy Miller, *The 60's Communes: Hippies and Beyond* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1999); and Sherry Smith, *Hippies, Indians, and the Fight for Red Power* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2012).

represented the central tenets of hippie values. Despite the efforts of Miller and fellow scholars to understand the framework of the counterculture, the collective memory of hippies as youthful rebels obscures the ideology and effort placed into sustainable alternative living.

While historians have examined the role of motherhood and the American family in both the Cold War era and subsequent social upheavals of the 1960s and 1970s, the revolutionary content of countercultural motherhood remains neglected.<sup>4</sup> This oversight is a result of our collective perception of the counterculture as an adolescent rebellion intended to horrify parents across the nation. Because of their youth, “straight” society dismissed hippies’ challenges to the American way of life as “elaborate puberty rites” as opposed to a comprehensive movement.<sup>5</sup> Consequently, it is difficult to reconcile the images of youths who flipped off news cameras and flaunted their drug use as adult parents. Like their mainstream counterparts, hippies, too, became parents and adapted to the identity crisis that characterized 1970s American society. Although their utopian vision of a communal society proved to be fleeting, hippie mothers’ revolutionary efforts to reimagine motherhood outlasted the 1980s conservative backlash against the liberal expansion of citizenship.

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<sup>4</sup> Several historical examinations of the modern American family have significantly shaped my portrayal of both Cold War parents and baby boomer dissidents. These include: Stephanie Coontz, *The Way We Never Were: American Families and the Nostalgia Trap* (New York: Basic Books, 1993); Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1990),; and Rebecca Jo Plant, *Mom: The Transformation of Motherhood in Modern America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012); Robert O. Self, *All in the Family: The Realignment of American Democracy Since the 1960s* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2013); and Natasha Zaretsky, *No Direction Home: The American Family and the Fear of National Decline, 1968-1980* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007).

<sup>5</sup> John Rothchild and Susan Berns Wolf, *The Children of the Counter-Culture* (New York: Doubleday, 1976), 2.

The contributions that countercultural mothers made to the counterculture, second-wave feminism, and the home birth movement remain little studied. The most extensive examination of hippie women is historian Gretchen Lemke-Santangelo's book *Daughters of Aquarius: Women of the Sixties Counterculture*. She argues that counterculture women appeared to conform to conventional roles as "earth mothers," but in reality they commenced a subtle rebellion against gender norms. The embrace of essentialist gender roles promoted by the counterculture expanded hippie women's sense of self-importance and aided in the creation of a feminist framework that emphasized the dignity of feminine values and labor. Lemke-Santangelo asserts, however, that hippie women had little control over their image and thus became more concerned with self-improvement. She does not consider the impact that the home birth movement had on reimagining childbirth and motherhood well into the 1970s and 1980s. While historians of medicine have documented the shifts in medical knowledge and labor and delivery procedures that took place during the mid-twentieth century, the social, political, and medicinal elements of motherhood are seldom placed within the same narrative.<sup>6</sup>

By considering the ideological connections between the counterculture, feminism, and the home birth movements, it is possible to understand how hippie mothers shaped citizenship and motherhood throughout two decades of social and political turmoil.

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<sup>6</sup> The history of childbirth and women's health activism in America have been well documented. Just a sampling of notable historiographical contributions include: Wendy Kline, *Bodies of Knowledge: Sexuality, Reproduction, and Women's Health in the Second Wave* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010); Judith Walzer Leavitt, *Brought to Bed: Child-Bearing in America, 1750-1950*; Paula Michaels, *Lamaze: An International History* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1988); Sandra Morgen, *Into Our Own Hands: The Women's Health Movement in the United States, 1969-1990* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2002); Barbara Katz Rothman, Wendy Simonds, and Bari Meltzer Norman, *Laboring On: Birth in Transition in the United States* (London, UK: Routledge, 2006); and Jacqueline Wolf, *Deliver Me from Pain: Anesthesia and Birth in America* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University, 2012).

Drawing upon Lemke-Santangelo and Linda Kerber, I suggest that the lived reality of motherhood, including childbirth, changing diapers, and potty training, are inherently political acts that shape the relationship between mother and state. I characterize these women not as apolitical “drop outs,” but as revolutionary political and social actors. Through their construction of communal societies and the resurrection of midwifery, countercultural women actively contested how the state and society construed civic motherhood. Furthermore, I posit that their countercultural values were inherently tied to mainstream society. Countercultural mothers never sought fully to disengage from society; rather, they transformed it through their own lived experiences. Their values and family structures changed in accordance with mainstream society, thus positioning them as actors in the broader societal debate over citizenship and American identity.

Through their adoption of a complex set of ideologies, countercultural mothers simultaneously rejected and embraced publication efforts. They viewed the Cold War medical and psychological authorities, whose publications pathologized motherhood and actively encouraged patriarchal control over women, with disdain. Counterculture mothers instead adopted the broader countercultural skepticism of authoritarian texts as egotistical and hierarchical. As these women saw the need for midwifery and home birth activism, however, they increasingly published their own personal knowledge and experience through countercultural presses. Their efforts to establish experiential knowledge as authoritative reflect the influence of both feminist and hippie values. In the mid- to late 1970s, countercultural mothers actively utilized their publications to cultivate a sisterhood of mothers and midwives who worked together to effect change in American society.



To faithfully reconstruct the complexity of ideological influences among countercultural women, I have assembled an archive that reflects their growing contestation of authority and knowledge throughout the 1970s. Medical and psychological publications, academic observations, and women's memoirs reveal how Cold War motherhood was severely regulated by male authorities in the service of domestic containment ideals. As social movements grew in force and challenged hierarchical authority, the popularity of "expert" manuals decreased. In its place, hippies encouraged countercultural publications, which prominently featured personal stories, controversial prose, and intellectual "raps" intended to foster a sense of self-realization in the reader. The rebellious cultural aesthetics of the counterculture further attracted a group of journalists and scholars, who published their tours of communal groups for a curious mainstream audience. As communal societies began to dissolve in the mid-1970s, home birth publications filled the void left by male-dominated counterculture 'zines. By the late 1970s, women had displaced both the male medical establishment and counterculture leaders as authorities of countercultural ideology and bodily knowledge.

Each chapter examines countercultural motherhood in the broader context of American identity and the contestation of citizenship. In chapter 1, I argue that the post-war creation of the nuclear family ideal shaped the debate over motherhood citizenship in the coming decades. During this Cold War era, the social contract between mother and state assigned women great significance as conveyors of American values, yet warned against the corrupting influence of attachment mothering. The centrality of the nuclear family in state policy and oppressive social systems prompted a backlash, beginning with the civil rights movement in the 1950s. Inspired by their activism, the counterculture

sought to unravel human relationships from coercive systems including capitalism, inequality, and industrialism. The family became a central point of ideological debate, challenging the core of American citizenship itself. Through their protest of the nuclear family, hippie women fundamentally challenged how the state mediated motherhood and female identity.

Chapter 2 examines the formation of communal society beginning with the flight from the Haight-Ashbury district in 1968. Fusing feminist and counterculture theories into a unique philosophy, hippie women pursued the dismantling of Cold War motherhood through the dramatic restructuring of their physical and social surroundings. In its place, these women posited a model of motherhood that valued individualism and imbued everyday tasks with spiritual transformation. While hippies elevated the biological process of childbirth to a spiritual ritual that could promote family unity and thus stimulate self-realization, they simultaneously diminished the association between biological and social motherhood. As a result, all adult communal members could claim to be mothers as it suited their personal needs as well as the collective's wellbeing. To achieve this alteration, countercultural motherhood consciously sought to dismantle the social and economic systems they understood to structure motherhood. Capitalism, industrialism, the nuclear family, and unequal power dynamics all became the targets of communal societies. Despite explicitly attacking the way in which these expansive systems structured motherhood, hippies largely left the link between citizenship and motherhood intact.

Chapter 3 commences with the collapse of communal structures in the mid-1970s. The decline of collective living experiments mirrored the broader perception of national

decline in American society. Social critics cast the crisis of American identity as a generational failure due to the white middle class's rejection of its commitment to parenthood and family. The home birth movement, growing out of the counterculture, was able to flourish in this era due to its amalgamation of mainstream and hippie values. Like conservative calls for a return to the "traditional" nuclear family, home birth publications repeatedly depicted the white, heterosexual, monogamous married couple as their target audience. By excluding the complexity of communal family structures and the diversity of the American family, midwives thus participated in the national reproduction of Cold War values. Despite some similarities with conservative political and social thought, the home birth movement incorporated feminist, environmental, and countercultural ethics into a new variation of female citizenship that emphasized a sovereign connection between the female body and the earth.

## CHAPTER 1. THE ULTIMATE FULFILLMENT: COLD WAR MOTHERHOOD AND CONTESTED FEMALE IDENTITY, 1947-1968

### 1.1 Introduction

In 1952, a mother of three in Maryland recounted her recent experience giving birth naturally for the first time. Citing Freudian theory, she observed how natural childbirth changed the character of her own mother-child relationships. She wrote, “As it is, I just simply love him—not so desperately as I love the others, but naturally and better for him and myself I feel. I think that having a child naturally uses up enough mother instinct or whatever it is so that one does not dote upon the baby or be too possessive.”<sup>7</sup> This mother’s concern about her own desperation and doting reflects a pervasive anxiety many middle-class white American mothers experienced in the post-World War II era. Emphasizing the mother’s influence on personality formation in a child’s formative years, Freudian experts instilled motherhood with both individual and social significance. Scientific and psychological authorities blamed women’s misplaced sexuality as the root cause of subversive and abnormal behavior, especially in boys. They charged that overindulgent and codependent mothering of young children had long-lasting consequences that could result in criminals, communists, and “perverts” who threatened

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<sup>7</sup> “Correspondence 44,” in *Post-War Mothers: Childbirth Letters to Grantly Dick-Read, 1946-1956*, ed. Mary Thomas (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 1997), 180.

national security.<sup>8</sup> As a result, mothers faced intense scrutiny to conform to a prescribed set of social and moral codes.

In the post-war period, middle-class women like the anxious Maryland mother experienced a dramatic shift in ideas about motherhood. Stripped of the traditional privileges associated with republican motherhood, Cold War mothers were instructed that “they could desire no greater destiny than to glory in their femininity.”<sup>9</sup> This narrowly prescribed femininity excluded women from political participation in the public sphere and further emphasized the centrality of marriage and pronatalism to female civic identity. With GIs returned home from war, American society replaced wartime notions of feminine self-sacrifice and powerful civic duty with the privatized maintenance of the nuclear family and patriotic rearing of children. In addition, the newly constructed suburban environment played a crucial role in redefining motherhood by further separating the public and private spheres. By fortifying the divide between the personal home life and the political public life, suburbia restructured the way in which women interacted with their families, the state, and market capitalism.

As the early Civil Rights movement exposed the inequalities inherent in the American way of life, an increasing number of Americans voiced their discontent. By the mid-1960s, the black freedom, antiwar, feminist, and homophile movements mounted a comprehensive attack on citizenship and the nuclear family. As their members’ own experiences revealed, the exclusive and often unattainable nuclear family model too

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<sup>8</sup> Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books, 2008), 93.

<sup>9</sup> Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1963), 15.

narrowly defined citizenship. Consequently, hippies commenced a rebellion intended not to reject American citizenship, but to reimagine longstanding national values.

Counterculture mothers, in particular, crafted a new social contract between woman and state intended to minimize the role of capitalism, industrialism, and sexism in shaping their identity. Their critique of the nuclear family thus became a central point of ideological debate that propelled the broader transformation of American society over the next half century.

## 1.2 Feminine Fulfillment and Cold War Security

To ease fears of both domestic and Cold War conflict, suburbia increasingly represented the promise of post-war American society. While it served as more of an aspiration than a reality for most Americans, the suburban nuclear family became the standard by which American civilization could be measured.<sup>10</sup> Suburbia was the physical embodiment of American exceptionalism. As one social commentator noted, “Social groups within the country are ranked as ‘disadvantaged’ until they have achieved that level of consumption, and other nations are merely ‘developing’ until they have attained it.”<sup>11</sup> Although a postwar innovation, suburbia became a core component of American identity. The centrality of the civilized suburban home to American identity was perhaps best evidenced by the infamous 1959 Kitchen Debate between Richard Nixon and Nikita Khrushchev. In a tour of a model American home, Nixon emphasized how technological

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<sup>10</sup> Stephanie Coontz, *The Way We Never Were: American Families and the Nostalgia Trap* (New York: Basic Books, 1992), 25.

<sup>11</sup> Judson Jerome, *Families of Eden* (New York: Seabury, 1974), 64.

innovation, consumption, and capitalism coalesced “to make life easier for women.”<sup>12</sup>

His effort to connect capitalism to the social welfare of women reveals just how integral the suburban woman was to American identity and foreign policy.

The fabled nuclear family of the 1950s was not a traditional family form; rather, it was a conscious effort to create a contained home that could fulfill all of its members’ private needs.<sup>13</sup> A plethora of “experts” guided the social, political, and physical construction of the fundamentally new nuclear family to a place of primacy in American imagination. Regardless that the ideal nuclear family was never representative of how many Americans lived, it became an essential part of public policy and served as a safeguard against the threats of the Cold War.<sup>14</sup> Inherent in the construction of this family was the belief that the family was the central mediator between the individual and the state. Families thus shouldered the enormous responsibility of preparing children for their appropriate social roles and instilling the duties of democratic participation.

Within this framework, mothers served an important role as both the objects and administrators of domestic containment policies. Experts such as pediatrician Dr. Benjamin Spock prescribed a rigid set of gender roles infused with a sense of service to the nation. Most theorists posited that gender essentialism was a prerequisite for proper marital relations, child-parent relationships, and the framework of American society. They believed that ideally women married to strong, masculine men would assume their rightful position as submissive wives and channel their sexual energy into marriage and

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<sup>12</sup> “The Kitchen Debate-Transcript” Central Intelligence Agency, accessed February 10, 2015, [http://www.foia.cia.gov/sites/default/files/document\\_conversions/16/1959-07-24.pdf](http://www.foia.cia.gov/sites/default/files/document_conversions/16/1959-07-24.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> May, 98.

<sup>14</sup> May, 9.

the maintenance of the nuclear family.<sup>15</sup> In addition, psychological experts pressured women to conform to domestic ideals by rendering marriage and motherhood as an imperative indication of a woman's basic mental health.<sup>16</sup> To bolster the "new family type for the space age," politicians, social experts, and citizens colluded in the construction of a suburban infrastructure that would enforce post-war ideals.<sup>17</sup> Enabled by New Deal liberalism, suburbia further codified existing gender stratification, racial and class segregation, and the separation of public and private spheres. This physically constructed environment simultaneously enforced domestic containment policies and shaped the relationship between individuals and the state.

While civic virtue and mothering had long been intertwined, Cold War motherhood deviated from nineteenth-century republican motherhood and late Victorian motherhood in many important aspects. Traditionally, American motherhood symbolized more than a familial relationship; rather, it was an institution of social and political order that engaged in a host of public reform activities.<sup>18</sup> Many Americans could refer to motherhood as a collective entity because they perceived mothers as "charged with reproducing the populace and upholding the nation's guiding principles."<sup>19</sup> Motherhood was thus heavily invested with civic duty and came to represent the virtuous nation. Post-war American society, however, ceased to depict motherhood as a comprehensive identity entrenched with notions of self-sacrifice and explicit political meaning. Cold

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 93.

<sup>16</sup> Rebecca Jo Plant, *Mom: The Transformation of Motherhood in Modern America* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2010), 14.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 98.

<sup>18</sup> Linda Kerber, *No Constitutional Right to Be Ladies: Women and the Obligations of Citizenship* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1998), 305.

<sup>19</sup> Plant, 6.



War motherhood was instead imagined to be an emotionally rewarding and primarily private experience.<sup>20</sup> While still central to women's identity, motherhood increasingly became associated as the ultimate source of "feminine fulfillment" as opposed to a noble and encompassing civic identity. Post-war society thus retracted many of the privileges and rights associated with republican motherhood in favor of a personal identity and private familial experience.

Although Americans ceased to refer to motherhood in explicitly political terms, it remained deeply central to female citizenship and identity. Indeed, motherhood was a prerequisite for women to attain social acceptance and pursue full citizenship within the framework of the white middle-class nuclear family. Throughout the Cold War period, this family model headed by a patriotic, breadwinning male was central to political and social contest.<sup>21</sup> It thus became the primary target of multiple social movements that sought to expand and complicate American citizenship. Although female citizenship within the nuclear family model was not attainable for the vast majority of Americans, the idea of that family retained such power that it remained a central point of contention throughout the second half of the twentieth century. The mythology of the nuclear family thus shaped the rhetoric, strategies, and goals of civil rights, black power, antiwar, and feminist activists throughout the subsequent decades. Many of these activists charged that a society in which white, middle-class motherhood was a requirement to seek

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid, 3.

<sup>21</sup> Robert O. Self, *All in the Family: The Realignment of American Democracy Since the 1960s* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2012), 4.

citizenship or a position of power was not a society that regarded women as fully human.<sup>22</sup>

The insistence that marriage and motherhood were central to women's social contract with the state was not particular to Cold War ideology. Rather, it was the residue of a longstanding system of coverture that excused women from civic obligation in lieu of obligation to her husband.<sup>23</sup> Women were thus exempt from collecting what Linda Kerber terms the "wages of gender." While historians now emphasize the misogyny and paternalism inherent in 1950s society, contemporaneous observers deemed men to be dehumanized "organization men" and homemakers to be emancipated from an "impersonal white-collar world."<sup>24</sup> These commentators virtually all agreed that American mothers had attained a position of cultural and familial influence unequaled by women elsewhere in the world.<sup>25</sup> Many Americans considered women's exclusion from many public institutions as a privilege associated with gender and class, but the social contract that bound women to their husbands instead of the state denied women the right to participate in the public sphere.<sup>26</sup> It is this contract, which defined the rights and obligations tied to female citizenship, that second-wave feminists and counterculture women would later attack.

If the American way of life was embodied by the nuclear family, then mid-century capitalism was a central component in familial relationships and personal identity. The lingering effects of New Deal liberalism shaped a social contract in which

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid, 105.

<sup>23</sup> Kerber, 304.

<sup>24</sup> May, 24.

<sup>25</sup> Plant, 14.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 309.

the government mediated the relationship among individuals, social institutions, and the market.<sup>27</sup> The government subsidized effort to build suburban communities for white veterans is just one example of the role of capitalism and state in shaping the cultural and social public/private divide. While mothers' family work was designated as private and remained uncompensated, their domestic labor was central to the maintenance of industrial and corporate capitalism. This system not only embedded itself into women's gendered roles, it also shaped how women gave birth and were treated by the medical establishment.

In the wake of the Second World War, returning GIs and Cold War imperatives combined to generate a pronatalist strand that produced the Baby Boomer generation. As the nuclear family gained preeminence in culture and politics, giving birth to more babies and nurturing them to be patriotic citizens increasingly became a sign of nationalistic loyalty and social acceptance.<sup>28</sup> Like suburbia, the hospital environment served an important post-war role in defining and regulating female citizenship. As historian Judith Leavitt notes, births in hospitals became increasingly common at the turn of the twentieth century due to a number of related factors: the professionalization of medical knowledge, the surgical and bacteriological revolutions, the lure of anesthesia, and the decline of women's traditional networks to meet the requirements of childbirth.<sup>29</sup> During the 1940s, the percentage of American hospital births increased from fifty-five to eighty-eight

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>28</sup> Paula Michaels, *Lamaze: An International History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 6.

<sup>29</sup> Judith Walter Leavitt, *Brought to Bed: Childbearing in America, 1750-1950* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 174.

percent.<sup>30</sup> This general shift removed childbirth from women's control and instead made the process a medical event to be tamed by anesthesia and surgical intervention.<sup>31</sup>

While women had initially sought anesthesia to make the pain of childbirth less frightening and more bearable, experts increasingly purported that "women who were not well sedated might actually harm their babies with violent bearing down movements."<sup>32</sup> In addition, the anxiety prompted by the domestic and foreign threats of the Cold War further promoted a wide acceptance of obstetric anesthesia. Some physicians argued that modern obstetric practices had the ability to eradicate pervasive fears.<sup>33</sup> This expert advice effectively pathologized a natural biological event and made the woman a passive figure in her own childbirth experience. The majority of new mothers accepted this argument, thus revealing how culturally produced anxiety came to characterize Cold War motherhood.

Women's experiences in hospital settings mirrored the broader social transformation of motherhood in post-war society. Many American women viewed their hospital stays not as a loss of power; rather, it was a time when they gained protection for their health and life, features that had been uncertain in the past.<sup>34</sup> In exchange for this security, however, hospital routines stripped women of their individuality and made them mere parts on an assembly line. Routines that dictated the nature and length of labor and delivery usurped a woman's ability to make important decisions, thus taking away "an

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 170.

<sup>31</sup> Wolf, 104.

<sup>32</sup> Waldo Fielding and Lois Benjamin, *The Childbirth Challenge: Commonsense versus "Natural" Methods* (New York: The Viking Press, 1962), 44.

<sup>33</sup> Jacqueline Wolf, *Deliver Me from Pain: Anesthesia and Birth in America* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), 109.

<sup>34</sup> Leavitt, 181.

essential ingredient of a woman's identification as a woman and as a mother-to-be."<sup>35</sup>

Inherent in this power shift was the paternalistic assumption that pregnant women were poor decision makers and on the verge of emotional collapse. Even when women sought to have a natural childbirth, doctors often ignored their wishes in favor of standard medical interventions. As one Massachusetts mother reflected upon her delivery, "I woke and prayed that no one would put a needle into me when I wasn't looking."<sup>36</sup> New mothers thus became the object of an industrialized medical process that pathologized both the biological process of childbirth and the decision making power of women in favor of expert opinions and paternalistic authority.

At the dawn of the 1960s, the preeminent place of the nuclear family in the American imagination was firmly established. Despite fears of communist infiltration, mutually assured destruction, and racial integration, white middle-class Americans anxiously asserted normalcy in their everyday lives. This insistence, however, disguised a swiftly changing reality. Many middle-class mothers felt frustrated by a culture that incessantly subjected them to accusations of neurosis and hysteria. Regardless of their employment status, many women felt marginalized by a society that praised motherhood as ultimate source of "feminine fulfillment" and the sole component of their identity.<sup>37</sup> They recognized that the unique social contract between mother and state, although essential to national security, perpetuated the gap between ideal female citizenship and lived reality. The rights and obligations that defined female identity in the Cold War era thus became a target of female activists in the coming years.

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 194.

<sup>36</sup> "Correspondence 12" in Thomas, 71.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 148.

Betty Friedan's 1963 book *The Feminine Mystique* was one such attempt to depict the lived reality of female citizenship. While alienating some middle-class homemakers with her scathing expose of domestic life, Friedan aptly depicted the identity crisis that many middle-class mothers faced. Describing the "problem that has no name," she wrote, "If a woman had a problem in the 1950's and 1960's, she knew that something must be wrong with her marriage, or with herself. Other women were satisfied with their lives, she thought. . . . When a woman when to a psychiatrist for help, as many women did, she would say, 'I'm so ashamed,' or 'I must be hopelessly neurotic.'"<sup>38</sup> Although central to the construction of Cold war motherhood and citizenship, the illusion of the emotionally fulfilled housewife further added to the anxiety of countless women. These feelings of discontent were so acute because not only did the woman experience personal failure to live up to the near mythical role of a housewife, but she also failed to fulfill her role as a patriotic citizen. In accordance with the hegemonic scientific views of the 1950s, her own neurosis threatened both her family and the security of the nation. Friedan and a growing contingent of female activists identified neurosis as symptomatic of the social contract between mother and state.

As Friedan argued that full-time motherhood was not a sufficient foundation for a mature identity, other marginalized groups across America similarly challenged the constraints of Cold War ideology. By the mid-1960s, the antiwar, feminist, black freedom, and homophile movements fomented a comprehensive attack to redefine the rights and obligations of citizenship as well as the social contract between state and

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<sup>38</sup> Friedan, 19.

citizen.<sup>39</sup> In protesting the boundaries of citizenship, however, these groups continued to place primacy on the centrality of family in American society. Their efforts to reimagine American society often pivoted on the reformulation of family structure and by extension, the obligations between individual, family, and state. Many of these individuals protested against the nuclear family due to its highly exclusive nature, which had effectively defined anyone who was not a white, middle-class, and patriotic American as a second-class citizen. As these marginalized people increasingly voiced their disapproval with Cold War society, a growing number of privileged white, middle-class, college-educated youths joined in the fight for control over citizenship.

### 1.3 Dropping Out and Tuning In: The Formation of the Counterculture

At first glance, the mass rebellion of privileged baby boomers might not appear to fit into a framework of oppressed peoples challenging the hegemonic formulation of citizenship and society. Unlike their marginalized counterparts, white middle-class baby boomers had access to an exceptional level of consumption, college education, and youth culture that was predicated upon the oppression of other Americans. It is this access to economic security and education, however, which precipitated many baby boomers' discontent with mainstream society. While their parents valued security and consensus, baby boomers were more likely to take economic and social risks.<sup>40</sup> In addition, their parents' insistence on attending college often exposed baby boomers to radical thinkers such as Allen Ginsberg and New Left organizations such as the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS). It is thus ironic that Cold War parents' efforts to ensure a

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<sup>39</sup> Self, 8.

<sup>40</sup> May, 211.

secure socioeconomic position for their children within the existing racial and class hierarchy in effect enabled the large scale rebellion of the 1960s.

As the newly inaugurated President Kennedy proclaimed that “the torch has been passed to a new generation of Americans,” many of these college-educated baby boomers increasingly voiced their discontent with Cold War policies through involvement with the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and SDS.<sup>41</sup> Despite some success in lobbying for egalitarian measures, a number of white baby boomers experienced a mounting sense of frustration with society that could not be solved through legislation. They viewed their parents’ collective anxiety, the threat of nuclear warfare, racial and class inequality, and the mounting Vietnam War as symptoms of a fundamentally flawed society that could not be solved through the political sphere. By 1965, numbers of white, privileged baby boomers began to “drop out” of society and pursue individual rehabilitation. Their collective departure from mainstream society marked the emergence of the counterculture.

The type of young person attracted to the counterculture reveals much about the nature of the movement’s rebellion. The vast majority of hippies came from suburbia and enjoyed privileged middle- and upper-class childhoods and college educations. Perhaps it was unavoidable that their rejection of consumption and suburbia came from comfortable backgrounds; working classes and people of color had no lavish material luxuries to rebel against.<sup>42</sup> Through their rejection of consumerism and patriotism,

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<sup>41</sup> John F. Kennedy, Inaugural Address, January 20, 1961, <http://millercenter.org/president/kennedy/speeches/speech-3365>.

<sup>42</sup> Timothy Miller, *The Hippies and American Values* (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee, 2001), xxiv.



hippies directly attacked their parents and their own upbringings. As hippie participant Constance Trouble wrote about her father, “His disappointment was always palpable. We were supposed to do better than our parents—professionally and materially—and he just couldn’t fathom why I would ‘throw it all away.’”<sup>43</sup> By refusing the unprecedented level of wealth and privilege cultivated by their parents, hippies voiced their frustration with not only Cold War society, but also how their parents served as arbiters of domestic containment policies.

For young women in particular, the counterculture offered the opportunity to transcend the gender-specific constraints that defined female citizenship. While mainstream society characterized them as deviant, naïve, or victimized, hippie women recognized the revolutionary potential of the counterculture scene to transform the relationship between woman and state.<sup>44</sup> They consequently asserted their freedom to engage in free love and remain unmarried without the judgement of middle-class society. Although hippie men perpetuated patriarchy through their control of counterculture media, hippie women frequently asserted their agency in daily life. For example, many male hippie intellectuals asserted that the refusal to engage in free love with anyone who asked was “an act of hostility.”<sup>45</sup> Counterculture women, however, emphatically emphasized their freedom to control their sexuality. As Paula, a hippie living in New York, bluntly stated, “Some people think that this is a place where they can go and get any girl and have sex with them and anything. This is not true.”<sup>46</sup> Counterculture

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<sup>43</sup> Gretchen Lemke-Santangelo, *Daughters of Aquarius: Women of the Sixties Counterculture* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 2009), 33.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.

<sup>45</sup> Lewis Yablonsky, *The Hippie Trip* (New York: Pegasus, 1968), 135.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 109.

women thus embraced the autonomy to assert their agency and forge their own individualized path free of the obligations of female citizenship.

Many hippie women not only rejected the establishment, but deeply resented their parents' adherence to the culture surrounding domestic containment. This common resentment fostered a sense of cohesion among counterculture youths. In his interviews with hippies in the Pennsylvania Family of Oz commune, journalist Robert Houriet noted that members seemed "strongly linked by a common background and an enraged memory of having been 'fucked over' by indifferent parents, joyless schools and a neon environment. . . . Few would talk of their parents or past, and when they did, it was bitterly."<sup>47</sup> While government policies and societal norms contributed to the counterculture's nation-wide "drop out," hippie women's personal experiences in suburbia became the central point of contention throughout the movement. Their shared frustration with their own private family life reveals the ways in which domestic containment politics seeped into the very fabric of suburban life and the nuclear family. Counterculture participants explicitly linked the global politics of the Cold War to the anxiety and consensus experienced in their families' kitchens and bedrooms.

Appropriating the language of expert psychologists, hippies characterized suburbia and by extension the American Dream in pathological terms. Unlike their counterparts in other social movements, hippies preferred personal rehabilitation to efforts for mass societal change. They believed that only through a change in mental consciousness could healing occur. As a result, they often described their search for

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<sup>47</sup> Robert Houriet, *Getting Back Together* (New York: Coward, McCann & Geoghegan, Inc., 1971), xxv.

psychological transcendence in the same terms their parents used to define good citizenship within suburbia. For example, a lawyer named Jerome Judson quit his corporate job, sold his suburban house, and moved his family to the Downhill Farm commune in rural Maryland. Expressing discontent with his family's lifestyle in the "sick" suburban environment, he wrote, "my wife and I had a sense that it was just in time, that we were getting ourselves and our children out just ahead of a tidal wave of infection."<sup>48</sup> Just as Judson's mother might have scrutinized her own relationship to her home environment for signs of neurosis and emotional dependency, he justified his drop out from society. Counterculture women in particular understood pathological terms to carry an immense social and civic weight. Consequently, their use of these terms signified a strong condemnation of mainstream society.

While youths flocked to the San Francisco Haight-Ashbury district in the formative years of the counterculture, the 1967 Summer of Love was a turning point in the movement's ethos and cultural aesthetics. Prior to the legendary Summer of Love, hippie youths largely lived in urban environments where they could protest society through the use of drugs, sex, and rock and roll without making a lasting commitment to countercultural ethics. As these urban enclaves increasingly attracted drug addicts and sexual predators and the revolutionary optimism of the early 1960s diminished, many hippies sought to establish permanent settlements outside of mainstream society. These settlements, alternatively called communes, collectives, nests, intentional communities, tribes, or families, sought to construct a reimagined society based on a romanticization of

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<sup>48</sup> Jerome, x.

a pre-industrial agrarian lifestyle. The physical and social construction of this new environment was in itself ideological. It sought to engineer a society in which new models of families, or “cultural tribes,” could exist in opposition to the legendary nuclear family.<sup>49</sup>

While hippies did not formally communicate rules and models for constructing an alternative society, their collective childhood experiences in the Cold War era shaped the nature of their utopian vision. Their romantic attraction to agrarian living reflected “an intense reaction against a fragmented, commercialized society whose institutions—from the family on up to the community—had, they were convinced, lost vital, unifying vision.”<sup>50</sup> By returning to the land, they sought to break the control that capitalism and social hierarchies had in defining their own childhood familial structure. By extension, they challenged the social contract between individuals and the state as well as the rights and obligations of a citizen to a society. As a result, the way in which hippies constructed the physical and social structure of communes offers insight into how they understood identity, citizenship, and the spatial environment to be intertwined.

#### 1.4 Psychic Frontiersmen and American Values

Initially considered by most Americans to be a motley collection of disenchanted youths, a 1967 *Time* magazine cover story gave hippies an unprecedented level of external recognition as a social movement. This recognition, however, was at best mildly amused and at worst, scathing criticism. Many mainstream Americans perceived hippies’ rejection of consumption, the nuclear family, and the Vietnam War as indications of a

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<sup>49</sup> Miller, 78.

<sup>50</sup> Houriet, xiii.

larger renunciation of American citizenship. *Time* noted observers' reactions, writing, "One sociologist calls them 'the Freudian proletariat.' Another observer sees them as 'expatriates living on our shores but beyond our society.' Historian Arnold Toynbee describes them as 'a red warning light for the American way of life.'"<sup>51</sup> These depictions—the proletariat, the expat, and the warning light—divulge the language that many Americans utilized in their condemnation of hippies. Not only were hippies a threat to mainstream life, but they were expats who had effectively renounced the social contract central to American citizenship. Many mainstream observers viewed hippies' rejection of the wartime draft and marriage as just two indications that hippies had failed to fulfill their obligations to the state, thus forfeiting their American citizenship. Indeed, this popular stereotype of the unpatriotic and selfishly hedonistic hippie remains central to contemporary Americans' understanding of the counterculture.

This generational gap was in part due to differing understandings of the freedoms and responsibilities inherent in the social contract. As counterculture member Roberta Price noted, "My mother can't ask why I'm throwing my life away. I can't tell her why, or talk about Vietnam, Nixon's depravity, the rich getting richer and the poor getting poorer, the government's hypocrisy, the dull sterility of suburban life, the ruination of the earth."<sup>52</sup> Inherent in the ideology of Price's mother was the belief that citizens owed loyalty to the state by adhering to the prevailing social, political, and economic systems. As noted above, capitalism, policy objectives, and the family were intertwined, thus compelling citizens to uphold their obligations to their state through a range of personal

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<sup>51</sup> Otto Fuerbringer, "The Hippies: Philosophy of a Subculture," *Time*, July 7, 1967, 34.

<sup>52</sup> Roberta Price, *Huerfano: A Memoir of Life in the Counterculture* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2013), 137.

and private activities in return for security and social acceptance. Hippies like Roberta Price thus attacked seemingly personal features of everyday life such as the “dull sterility of suburban life” because they viewed the private and public spheres as a false dichotomy.

Like other social movements of the 1960s and 1970s, hippie women’s understanding of citizenship pivoted on the collapse of the personal and political. Seeing the privilege of their childhoods as contingent upon anxiety and inauthenticity, these women sought to transform the family as a means of reimagining the obligations and freedoms associated with citizenship. They thus attacked seemingly personal elements of their parents’ lives to address broader cultural tensions. For example, counterculturalist Lenore Kandel noted that, “The culture is crumbling faster and faster. The hypocrisies are more and more apparent. [Young people] look at their parents—they’re lying to each other. They’re married for thirty years, they go out and fuck other people and lie about it to each other. They know it doesn’t work, but there’s a lot of exterior pressure. There’s war. There’s the fear of death.”<sup>53</sup> By connecting marital discord to the Vietnam War, Kandel depicts how American politics and the viability of the nuclear family were inherently intertwined. Consequently, when hippie women disengaged with mainstream American society, they were not necessarily apolitical “expats.” Rather, their protest against the nuclear family represented an attempt to untangle the economic and political structures that informed their personal identities.

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<sup>53</sup> Leonard Wolf, *Voices of the Love Generation* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1968), 28.

Despite their protests against suburbia and the consumption that permeated mainstream America, hippies did not necessarily view these institutions as indicative of American society. Rather, they understood that the nuclear family was a new family form that represented a particular set of cultural and political values. While on an acid trip, hippie Stan Russell sought to convey the temporality of contemporary society. He stated,

American culture with all its values, mechanisms, and industrialism is just something that came along in the last hundred years, and it is essentially unsatisfying even to those who are extremely successful. There are millions of people who are not now and never were caught up in this particular plastic society . . . What is going to endure is the Universal society of nature that underlies all of this crap we see on the surface. This is one of the most important realizations you have under acid.<sup>54</sup>

Both the content and transcendent nature of Russell's statement indicate that hippies recognized that the specific values associated with American identity in the Cold War era were fleeting.

As a result, hippies did not necessarily consider themselves to be un-American. Rather, they incorporated select traditional American values into their new formulation of communal citizenship. Despite their protests, draft card dodging, and "dropping out," communal members sought to transform American society by serving as a "city upon a hill." As religious studies scholar Timothy Miller has noted, hippies' counter ethics often placed new cultural aesthetics onto longstanding American values.<sup>55</sup> For example, the iconoclastic nature of hippies' rebellion, while unique in its appearance, was part of a

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<sup>54</sup> Yablonsky, 24.

<sup>55</sup> Miller, 97.

long history of American attacking firmly established institutions.<sup>56</sup> The assault on the nuclear family could be thus be seen in the same way as confrontations concerning monarchy, slavery, and the hotly contested definition of citizenship central to the American way of life.

In her memoir *Huerfano*, former counterculture participant Roberta Price offers several parallels to generations of American settlers in her own cross-country migration to a New Mexico commune. Echoing the romantic attachment of nature and “native” cultures, this “New Age Lewis and Clark” reveals how hippies imagined themselves as connected to generations of American citizens.<sup>57</sup> Driving with her husband in their 1947 Chrysler Windsor coupe, Roberta mused, “It’s our *Mayflower*, our Conestoga wagon, and we’re the new pioneers. We’re privileged, exiled, orphaned, as hopeful and as unprepared as most immigrants. We’re leaving a decadent, evil society like the Pilgrims did. We’re psychic frontiersman. Kerouac is our Columbus. We’re the second wave, with domestic intentions.”<sup>58</sup> Roberta, like many hippie women, acknowledged that the parallels between her own experience and countless other American apostates were central to the American narrative. They thus recognized that their iconoclasm was simply a new cultural permutation of a longstanding American tradition.

Central to their iconoclasm was the reformulation of the American family. In both a continuation of and departure from Cold War family politics, communal hippie women sought to achieve an ideal society through the restructuring of familial relationships. Like their parents, these women understood the family unit to be a central

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 102.

<sup>57</sup> Price, 51.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 52.



component of forming and enforcing a particular ideology. In addition, they recognized that a family model depended upon its physical surroundings. The mass counterculture migration from urban centers to rural communal societies after 1967 indicates that hippies increasingly believed that an alternative family structure was unachievable in the confines of “straight” society. Counterculture journalist Leonard Wolf documented this spreading belief, remarking that “American life, at almost every level, has become unlivable for anyone but that mass of people who have become biddable androids in the industrial complex called the United States. Our culture is not for free men because it exacts conformity from us on every hand—conformity in dress, in manners, in thought, in action.”<sup>59</sup>

To protest the conformity of mainstream American life, counterculture women actively created a variety of communal societies. A communal living arrangement ranged on a spectrum from apartments crammed with political revolutionaries, crash pads for teenagers who wanted to experiment with LSD and sex, and rural agrarian societies. While the enthusiasm of the early counterculture was enough to generate a large number of communal societies, the 1967 Summer of Love was a pivotal point in the movement. Jerome Judson illustrated the shift in counterculture ethics, noting that “It has chiefly been since 1968 that the new culture turned the corner from withdrawal and rebellion and aching disillusion to creating more deeply rooted enclaves and network of communication and cooperation sufficient to sustain its life. The mood has been one of peacefully ignoring the system in order to work on concrete building of alternatives—

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<sup>59</sup> Wolf, xxv.

decentralized, relatively closer to the land, non-authoritarian, non-profit-oriented, based on ‘soft’ technology.”<sup>60</sup>

The reorientation of communes from “crash pad” to “enclave” indicates that hippies increasingly moved from a mindset of presentism to plan for an alternative future. Hippie women actively participated in formation of communal societies, often scouting potential properties, contributing their lifetime savings, and participating in the ideological and physical construction of the commune.<sup>61</sup> For example, the founding female members of the Virginia Twin Oaks commune emphatically asserted a leadership role in all aspects of communal formation. Countercultural mother and founding member Kathleen Kinkade recalled that “Putting up the building was our first clear and obvious demonstration of our stand on equality for women.”<sup>62</sup> Like the women of Twin Oaks, hippie women’s leadership fundamentally shaped the countercultural vision for an alternative future.

But as hippies physically disengaged from mainstream society, mainstream Americans also questioned the success of the nuclear family. The numerous crises of the late 1960s and early 1970s—the failures of the Vietnam War, inflation, unemployment, the oil embargo, and the Watergate scandal to name a few—challenged the exceptionalism at the core of American identity.<sup>63</sup> In addition, second-wave feminists’

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<sup>60</sup> Judson, 119.

<sup>61</sup> Sandra Lee Eugster, *Notes From Nethers: Growing Up in a Sixties Commune* (Chicago: Academy Chicago Publishers, 42; Micah Perks, *Pagan Time: An American Childhood* (Washington, D.C.: Counterpoint, 2001), 10; Kathleen Kinkade, *A Walden Two Experiment: The First Five Years of Twin Oaks Community* (New York: William Morrow & Company, 1973), 21.

<sup>62</sup> Kinkade, *A Walden Two Experiment*, 95.

<sup>63</sup> Natasha Zaretsky, *No Direction Home: The American Family and the Fear of National Decline, 1968-1980* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 2.

attacks on the family as a site of patriarchy and the gay liberation movement's increasingly visible assaults on the rigid sex roles of the heteronormative nuclear family combined to prompt a national debate on the American family. The perceived decline of the nuclear family in the "American Century" stimulated a series of disputes that simultaneously blamed the nuclear family as the perpetrator of this crisis as well as regarding it as the victim of the nation's upheavals.<sup>64</sup> The family thus became a symbol of national decline and prompted debates about America's future which continue to resonate to this day.

The counterculture's efforts to cultivate a distinctly new form of family should be viewed in a larger context of anxiety and self-doubt concerning the family. Just as the counterculture sought to redefine the relationship between family and citizenship, other social movements similarly attacked the exclusivity of the nuclear family. The anxieties and tensions that underwrote the nuclear family of the 1950s became increasingly apparent in the late 1960s, thus resulting in a crisis of the family. Rather than being viewed as apolitical "drop outs," hippies' efforts to restructure the family should be viewed in this broader context. The popularity of communal societies in the early 1970s indicate how connected the counterculture was to a broader discussion of family structures and gender roles. Regardless of hippies' claims to reject society in favor of an agrarian past, communes were shaped by the present and thus inherently political.

Counterculture leaders such as Timothy Leary and Allen Ginsberg recognized the New Age family as critical to the survival of counterculture ideals in the coming years.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>65</sup> Interview with Timothy Leary, *Yarrow Stalks*, no. 1 (1967); Allen Ginsberg, untitled interview, *Fifth Estate*, Apr. 1-15, 1968.

Through the transformation of the family it is possible to see how hippie women reimagined the social contract that governed the relationships between themselves, their peers, and the state. In particular, crucial aspects of how they sought to effect change in society included the rejection of Western modes of rationality, a dramatic restructuring of power dynamics, and the collapse of the private and personal spheres in the late 1960s and early 1970s.<sup>66</sup> An examination of how hippie women proposed to change the family offers insight into not only how hippies sought to dismantle Cold War family politics, but also how they understood familial roles to be inherently intertwined with systems of capitalism, patriarchy, and social hierarchies.

### 1.5 Conclusion

The nuclear family of the Cold War era served as the nexus for a broad range of individual, social, and political anxieties. As a result, familial roles became burdened with a sense of both private and public responsibility that were consistent with the contemporary conceptualization of citizenship. While the mother of this era has become enshrined as the ideal feminine housewife who exists in a vacuum from the public sphere, this façade hides a much more complex understanding of how the state and society inform individual experiences and differentiate public from private. Suburban mothers were never simply the victim of a misogynist era, nor were they empowered agents in the public sphere. Rather, they were caught somewhere in the middle as both the object and actor of domestic containment policies.

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<sup>66</sup> Miller, xiv.

The nuclear family thus became a central point of contention for the social movements of the 1960s and 1970s. These disparate, yet connected groups understood the complexity of citizenship and the power of suburbia to both enforce and undermine the separation of private and public spheres. As a result, the counterculture sought to dismantle the complex set of economic, social, and political forces that converged on a single individual. Their “dropping out” of society was not apolitical; instead it was an attempt to recognize and untangle the complexity of citizenship as it plays out in familial relationships. While many hippie women initially utilized cultural paraphernalia to achieve this end, those who survived the Summer of Love increasingly turned to alternative societies in which they could escape the infrastructure that reinforced a specific temporal and spatial conceptualization of citizenship and identity.

By 1970, the American values of consumption, technology, and gender essentialism touted by Richard Nixon in his 1959 Kitchen Debate had become a site of public interrogation and collective anxiety. While commodities had once signaled the exceptionalism of American society in the twentieth century, they now represented the exclusivity and anxiety inherent in the American way of life. Hippie women critiqued the inauthenticity of such living, hoping that their communal societies would save them “from the death of the body and soul amid the glitter of better ketchup bottles and new Buicks.”<sup>67</sup> While leaving urban areas for isolated communes, their search for authenticity was not sequestered. Rather, it was a unique cultural permutation of a broader search for

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<sup>67</sup> Raymond Mungo, *Famous Long Ago: My Life and Hard Times with Liberation News Service* (Boston: Beacon, 1970), 117-118.

identity in an age of crisis and fracture. It is thus not the search for identity, but their method of conducting this search that makes hippie women unique.

## CHAPTER 2. MOTHERHOOD AS A METHODOLOGY: THE SEARCH FOR IDENTITY IN COMMUNAL SOCIETIES, 1968-1975

### 2.1 Introduction

In a memoir of her countercultural childhood, Lisa Michaels chronicles the transformation of her mother from a New York political radical to a North Californian hippie. Identifying the prominence of women's liberation rhetoric in 1968 New York City radical politics, she writes, "My mother, who was tending to a newborn and keeping the house polished, was becoming disillusioned with the division of labor in the new society. My father wrote the speeches and she typed them; he was to speak at a meeting and she was to give him a ride. This had as much to do with the times as it did with the depth of my father's needs, but it seemed to my mother that even amid the radical movement some aspects of the old order remained the same."<sup>68</sup> By 1969, Lisa's mother had divorced her Weatherman husband, bought an old mail truck, and migrated west to help form a Californian commune. Her frustration with the limited gains of radical politics was commonplace among hippie mothers, who increasingly grew disenchanted with the limited roles available to revolutionary women.

Communes like the one that Michaels and her mother joined became the laboratory in which women sought to radically redefine motherhood. Fusing feminist

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<sup>68</sup> Lisa Michaels, *Split: A Counterculture Childhood* (Seattle: Mariner Books, 1999), 10.

and counterculture theories into a unique philosophy, these women understood that their identity was constructed by impersonal economic, political, and social forces. They thus pursued the dismantling of Cold War motherhood through the dramatic restructuring of their physical and social surroundings. In its place, they posited a model of motherhood that valued individualism and imbued everyday tasks with spiritual transformation. As a result, it is possible to understand how hippie women reimagined motherhood, and by extension their citizenship, through their experimentation within communes.

Although the counterculture sought to detach from the political sphere, hippie women's restructuring of motherhood is best understood in the broader American identity crises of the 1970s. Liberal and radical feminists, neoconservatives, gay liberation advocates, and civil rights and black power activists contested the relationship between a woman's body, society, and the state in ways that transcended the conservative-liberal spectrum. Comprehending that women's bodies and women's citizenship were inextricably linked, each social group sought to define and control this relationship.<sup>69</sup> Furthermore, they understood the importance of power structures—especially patriarchy, white supremacy, heteronormativity, classism, and capitalism—in mediating motherhood. Each group thus contested the relationship between the female body and motherhood in order to achieve their vision of an ideal society. Counterculture women comprehended how these impersonal forces converged on their bodies and regulated motherhood. Consequently, they sought to dismantle the social structures that governed their bodies and their familial relationships in order to enact their vision of motherhood.

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<sup>69</sup> Robert O. Self, *All in the Family: The Realignment of American Democracy Since the 1960s* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2012), 135.



## 2.2 Shaping the Communal Structure

In the early years of the collective living movement, hippies sought to return to an authentic state of being through a rejection of Western traditions and rationality. This attack on Western epistemology resulted in hippies placing primacy on the mental and spiritual transformation of the consciousness. As a result, they adopted “Eastern” mysticism and cultural aesthetics as a means to further reject American society.<sup>70</sup> Multiple communes, such as the Lama Foundation in Taos, New Mexico, designated themselves as spiritual centers and dedicated themselves to the worship of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Krishna consciousness.<sup>71</sup> Most hippies, however, adopted a more general form of spirituality that recognized a type of “Holy Spirit” or “life force” that offered a state of transcendence.<sup>72</sup> By differentiating between religion and spirituality, hippies rejected the rationality of Judeo-Christian beliefs manifested in American laws and society while still recognizing a spiritual guiding force in their lives.

The importance of spirituality in the counterculture was in part the result of a shift away from the Freudian psychoanalytic language so common among their parents. Hippies sought to replace the Cold War fixation on expert psychological analyses and scientific rationalism with a personalized spiritual ideology. Hippies explicitly connected the popularity of Freudian psychoanalytic diagnoses with an effort to enforce conformity in suburban society. As New York teenager Elia Katz noted,

When people of my age settle down to earnest discussion, which is not that often, we don’t talk about our childhood, the developments of various neuroses, our

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<sup>70</sup> Timothy Miller, *The Hippies and American Values* (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee, 2001), 110.

<sup>71</sup> John Rothchild and Susan Berns Wolf, *The Children of the Counter-Culture* (New York: Doubleday, 1976), 127.

<sup>72</sup> Stephen Gaskin, *Monday Night Class* (Santa Rosa, CA: Book Farm, 1970), unpaginated.

psychoanalytic history, or the story of personal crises. A few years ago this is what people talked about. Now you do not hear life stories at all, you hear the exposition of *beliefs*—religious, political, dietary—and what is foremost in people’s minds is not themselves, as narcissistic gazers in deep evolving self, not one’s mind, but what they believe.”<sup>73</sup>

Personal beliefs, as opposed to scientific theories and expert advice, became the organizing principle of countercultural ideology. For counterculture women in particular, this shift removed the social regulation of motherhood that prohibited the pursuit of a unique personal identity.

In the place of centralized expert advice, hippies invested authority in individualized experiences. They believed that through the use of certain experimental methodologies, they could transcend the usual limitations of individuals and develop a heightened awareness of their own unique natures. Hippies often utilized LSD, rock music, sex, and experimental social structures as tools to achieve a transcendent plane of existence. Each of these “cultural tenets” contained ethical dimensions because they were primarily experiential in character and could thus not be rationally explained.<sup>74</sup>

Used as a methodology, acts like sex were revolutionary because they restored a holistic approach to a world that hippies viewed as superficial and plastic. *Berkeley Barb* writer Leah Fritz explained that “As for sex—like eating, like walking in fresh air, like all human activity—it should recreate us, help us to find one another, make us real, and tangible as the earth. It should put us together again, body and soul.”<sup>75</sup> Similarly, hippie Ron Jarvis believed rock music was “complete synesthesia, combining all of the arts and

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<sup>73</sup> Elia Katz, *Armed Love* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1970), 188.

<sup>74</sup> Miller, 42.

<sup>75</sup> Leah Fritz, “Female Sexuality and the Liberated Orgasm,” *Berkeley Tribe*, Oct. 16-23, 1970, 16.

appealing to several levels of appreciation at once—emotional, intellectual, physical and metaphysical.”<sup>76</sup> These activities, often a central point of contention to outsiders, became the means by which hippies sought to enact self-realization.

In reminiscing about her countercultural childhood, Lisa Michaels offers insight into the intertwined character of hippie cultural aesthetics and spiritual methodology. Before embarking on their journey to Northern California, Michaels and her mother joined a commune located on the Chesapeake Bay. Remarking on her childhood, Michaels observed that “suddenly, I was living the Sgt. Pepper life by the seashore.”<sup>77</sup> This Sgt. Pepper lifestyle revolved around camping on a beach, adopting voluntary poverty and self-sustainable living, and achieving new levels of consciousness. Michael’s invocation of the 1967 Beatles’ album *Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band* is telling. This album was considered revolutionary; as California hippie Peter Mackanass mused, “We listen to the Beatles and Ravi Shankar, because we know they’ve been God-fingered too, because their consciousness have expanded along with ours. We followed them, and they’ve led us and we’ve led them. . . . Music is the language these days.”<sup>78</sup> As the leading icons of the counterculture, the Beatles developed *Sgt. Pepper* as a revolutionary album to defy conventional music standards and personify psychedelic hippie values. Michael’s incorporation of an acid rock album with a specific communal social structure indicates how cultural tools became endowed with methodological qualities.

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<sup>76</sup> Ron Jarvis, “When the Mode of the Music Changes,” *Space City!*, January 1970, 24.

<sup>77</sup> Michaels, 13.

<sup>78</sup> Leonard Wolf, *Voices of the Love Generation* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1968), 11-12.

While group-oriented in nature, communes were paradoxically intended to provide a safe space for self-exploration and spiritual transcendence. In this sense, communes were as much of a methodological approach to achieving individualized heightened awareness as they were a physical and social structure. The social roles within communes, then, can be understood more as a fluid methodology than a fixed identity. Because hippies employed a wide range of methodological tools in their search for transcendence, communal living was widely considered to be temporary due to their reliance on individual personalities and group cohesion. Indeed, communal transients such as Mickey Peyote considered a permanent commune to be one that lasted more than two years. As he noted, “The odds against any of them lasting longer than that, against overcoming all the squabbles and personality conflicts that come from living in close quarters with other people, are very high.”<sup>79</sup> While communal living offered a flexible space in which to overcome the “hang-ups” of mainstream society through self-transformation, their adaptability to personal beliefs and group relationships ensured their ephemerality.

The paradoxical embrace of individualism within a group structure guaranteed that each commune was unique. Individuality was a form of protest for hippies, who loathed the conformity and consensus valued in the suburban family. Although Americans have long valued individualism as both a guaranteed personal right and a guiding economic principle, hippies believed that Cold War values had severely restricted their exercise of individuality. They understood the commune to be “a unique attempt to

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<sup>79</sup> Rothchild and Wolf, 128.

blend economics, art, agriculture and the spiritual into the natural round of daily life. . . . In America, the hippies had refused to be submerged in the great melting pot of sameness. Every commune wanted to be—and had to be—unique.”<sup>80</sup> Hippies’ belief in both personal and communal exceptionalism resulted in an effort to restructure communal societies to emphasize their complete sovereignty over themselves and ensure their practice of personal liberties. Hippies’ efforts to protect individualism can thus be viewed as a continuation of longstanding American values; individualism has long been central to the belief of American exceptionalism.

Looking back upon their childhoods, many hippie women blamed the American family as the arbiter of restrictive social, cultural, and political norms, thus explicitly identifying the family as a both a personal and political entity. Asked in an interview about her motivations for leaving her family in Ohio to join the counterculture, twenty-four year old Mary perfectly captured this sentiment. “The personal family and capital F Family are both entwined,” She stated. “I mean, like my family is middle class and they’re of the big society. It’s not exactly a status problem. They aren’t the country-club type, but yet they have to keep up their social face. I saw that this was hindering the development of my individuality.”<sup>81</sup> More so than any government action, hippie women viewed their parents’ striving for social respectability as inherently restrictive. They thus shaped communes to emphasize individuality while attacking any notion of external social norms that encouraged conformity.

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<sup>80</sup> Robert Houriet, *Getting Back Together* (New York: Coward, McCann & Geoghegan, Inc., 1971), 27.

<sup>81</sup> Lewis Yablonsky, *The Hippie Trip* (New York: Pegasus, 1968), 142.

The collective group was a methodological tool to foster individual development, not a social group that regulated behavior. This distinction between tool and group is best illustrated by the Taos, New Mexico collective known simply as “The Family.” By 1970, this group consisted of approximately one hundred highly educated adults and their children, who lived together in a two-bedroom house. The avowed goal of the collective was to raise consciousness through a closely maintained group marriage. They defined marriage not in the traditional sense, but as a cultivation of communion with another person that produced ideological enlightenment.<sup>82</sup> In addition, their unconventional marriage was considered temporary, as “members agreed that the form of group marriage might one day be abandoned when they ‘got beyond that point.’ The belief in the *experimental* use of methodologies was central to the group identity.”<sup>83</sup> Social relationships within The Family were thus understood to be a tool for personal growth, not a permanent bond between individuals. While exceptional both for its long duration and for the size of the group marriage, The Family exemplifies the pervasive use of unconventional relationships and group dynamics in the quest for higher consciousness.

Within this context hippies fundamentally reshaped motherhood as a fluid methodology as opposed to a fixed identity. Communal families sought to reimagine the status, labor, and social bonds traditionally linked with suburban motherhood. While they elevated the biological process of childbirth to a spiritual ritual that could promote family unity and thus stimulate self-realization, they simultaneously diminished the association between biological and social motherhood. All adult communal members

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<sup>82</sup> John Hostetler, *Communitarian Societies* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1974), 9.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

could claim to be mothers as it suited their personal needs as well as the collective's wellbeing. To achieve this alteration, hippies consciously sought to dismantle the social and economic systems they understood to structure motherhood. Capitalism, industrialism, the nuclear family, and unequal power dynamics all became the targets of communal societies. Despite explicitly attacking the way in which these expansive systems structured motherhood, hippies largely left the link between citizenship and motherhood intact. Consequently, they continued to shape one another throughout the 1970s.

### 2.3 Communal Motherhood and the Quest for Transcendence

Because they understood the nuclear family to be the primary mediator between the state and the individual, hippie women placed the suburban family at the center of their revolutionary efforts. They believed that impersonal, abstract forces had structured the families of their own childhoods to the point that personal relationships were devoid of meaning. Mothers thus became tools of the state, serving as administrators of policies as opposed to forming intimate bonds with their children. As multiple counterculture observers noted, "The American institution of the monogamous family is viewed by the hippies as arid and sterile. There is, according to them, no real love, no real communication, and no meaningful, satisfying sexual relations. Also, in the family, they believe children are in bondage. Most hippies base their viewpoint on their own personal experiences in their own families."<sup>84</sup> To amend the very nature of parent-child

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<sup>84</sup> Yablonsky, 323.

relationships, hippies stripped themselves of the authority traditionally reserved for parents and instead treated adults and children as equals within communal society.

Furthermore, the social construction of communes sought to eliminate nuclear families as the foundational unit of living. Seeking to recreate extended families prominent in agrarian societies, hippies tended to limit the power and even explicitly discourage the perpetuation of small, insular families. Instead, they proposed group policy and different partnership structures as an alternative. The strongest challenge to the Cold War era nuclear family came in the form of protest against monogamy. According to a member of the COPS commune in Oakland, California, “Monogamy is a bourgeois, propertied relationship where one person tries to possess another because of all sorts of inadequacies.”<sup>85</sup> Once again employing Marxist language, many hippies believed that marriages promoted insecurity, possessiveness, and jealousy as well as economic domination. To develop a utopian society, many hippies pursued the eradication of the legal marriages promoted by their parents. Commonly citing unhealthy emotional dependence, oppression, and isolation as factors against monogamy, many communalists simultaneously sought to defy stereotypes of sexually unbounded “free love.”

While hippies did encourage sexuality as a natural aspect of human relations, many communes encouraged partnerships, group marriage, or casual monogamy as a permanent societal structure. In an article describing the polyerotic relationships of a Santa Clara commune, member Wayne Gourley wrote, “Group marriage avoids the

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<sup>85</sup> Berkeley Tribe, “COPS Commune” in *Utopia, U.S.A.*, ed. Richard Fairfield (San Francisco: Alternatives Foundation, 1972), 175.



pitfalls of exclusive monogamy and impersonalistic promiscuity.”<sup>86</sup> Based on childhood experiences, hippies such as a Reba Place commune member believed that “the nuclear family cannot in many cases bear the brunt of the emotional demands of its members.”<sup>87</sup> These quotes illustrate the balance communalists sought between detached debauchery and exclusive monogamy.

To deconstruct the political and social importance of the nuclear family, communes consciously transferred power from the individual to the communal group. Hippies believed familialism and communalism to be mutually exclusive, because the nuclear family represented not only a competing loyalty but also a likely source of demands, obligations, distractions, and a reminder of the prerevolutionary existence.<sup>88</sup> To rehabilitate the commune’s social structure, members deliberately minimized differentiation of nuclear families within the community through a performance of family. One commonly employed tactic was the performance of family through rituals, celebrations, and naming. To disassociate from their “straight” nuclear families, commune members frequently adopted a symbolic name upon entry into the counterculture. In naming their children, hippies spurned the popularity of Western Christian names and instead chose names such as “Morning Star, Psyche Joy, Covelov Vishnu God, Rainbow Canyon King, and Raspberry Sundown Hummingbird Wheeler.”<sup>89</sup> These names were emblematic of a romantic attachment to nature, adoption of Eastern

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<sup>86</sup> Wayne Gourley, “Untitled,” *The Modern Utopian 2* (1967), 10.

<sup>87</sup> Ron Roberts, *The New Communes: Coming Together in America* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1971), 68.

<sup>88</sup> Rosabeth Moss Kanter, “Family Organization and Sex Roles in American Communes,” in *Communes: Creating and Managing the Collective Life*, ed. Rosabeth Moss Kanter (New York: Joanna Cotler Books, 1973), 281.

<sup>89</sup> Sara Davidson, “Hippie Families on Open Land,” in Kanter, 340.

religion, and a penchant for the bizarre. Nicknames and terms of endearment became prevalent among members of the community because special names stemmed from communal ties, not from family attachments.<sup>90</sup>

To further perform family, hippies attached great symbolic meaning and ritual to the birthing process. Births were monumental occasions for communes because they signaled the renewing of life through nature and the physical unification of the communal family. In contrast to “straight” hospital births which promoted technology, isolation, and a dissociation with nature and the body, hippie births encouraged a direct relationship with nature and an ethereal, consciousness-raising experience. Rena Morning Star, a member of the infamous Morning Star commune, “rapped” her experience of childbirth. “Having Vishnu at Morning Star—and it’s important that it’s open land, because I believe the policy is ‘open land, open cervix’—made childbirth much easier. . . . Afterwards I ate the placenta. I ate one bite raw, and the rest of it steamed. A few other people shared the sacrament.”<sup>91</sup> Comparing her afterbirth to a religious sacrament, Rena and fellow Morning Star members ritualized the addition to their commune through a literal communion. Through their ingestion of her placenta, members symbolized their shared kinship. In another birth experience, commune participant Lucy Horton tagged along with twenty members of the Furry Freak Brothers community in New Mexico to witness the birth of a child. She wrote, “With no premonition of the extraordinary experience I was to have, I went. It was as if he [a Furry Freak Brother] had offered me a little white pill of LSD and said, ‘Here, take this’—and with no forethought I had.”<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Kanter, “Family Organization,” 288-289.

<sup>91</sup> Richard Fairfield, *Communes U.S.A.: A Personal Tour* (Baltimore: Penguin, 1972), 254-255.

<sup>92</sup> Lucy Horton, *Country Commune Cooking* (New York: Coward, McCann & Geoghegan, 1972), 46-47.

Horton's description of childbirth as a transcendent, spiritual experience served to constitute participants as an extended family and reify human birth as a natural, personal, and ethereal experience.

While commune childbirth served to ritualize hippie ideology through a natural experience, it also symbolized the generational destruction of Cold War era culture. Wolf noted the rise of the counterculture as a physical process. He wrote, "Something was indeed being born. No wonder that squeamish reporters found themselves taken aback by dirt and pain. Human babies are born into mire and blood. Why should it surprise us that a new consciousness struggling into life should emerge amid stink and dismay?"<sup>93</sup> Thus the birth of hippie children represented not only a widespread hippie movement to revive human society, but also a personal, spiritual rejuvenation. Using birth as a metaphor for spiritual awakening and self-realization, both physical and figurative birth signaled the coming of a New Age in which the nuclear family and shallow consumption and conformity no longer governed. For example Sahagiya, a community in Ontario, derived its name from an Indian language of the region, meaning 'born together.'<sup>94</sup> Although not physically related, communalists viewed their spiritual rebirth as representative of a new form of family united through kindred ideology.

Childbirth served as a ritualistic experience intended in part to stimulate feelings of family, but also to rebel against the unnatural, isolated experiences of "square" childbirths. In partial contrast, however, to the solidarity-affirming nature of birth ceremonies, communal children tended to be viewed as independent, self-contained

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<sup>93</sup> Leonard Wolf, xviii.

<sup>94</sup> Horton, 176.

persons.<sup>95</sup> Conscious of their own childhoods, hippies believed that parents were extremely influential in the formation of a child's ideology, personality, and behavior. As a result, they sought to interfere as little as possible in a child's development, thus creating a vacuum for nature to shape children. As one communalist wrote, "You affect it by everything you do, by the way you move, by the way you react on each other, by the tones of your voice, by everything."<sup>96</sup> By refusing to lay their "ego trips" on their children, hippies believed that their children would be free of the bitterness and guilt perpetuated by their own parents.

As a result, hippie children held an astounding amount of power in the family unit. Within communes, children had the ability to critique their parents, vote in group decisions, and partake in a wide range of communal activities such as sex and drug use.<sup>97</sup> In part, hippies enabled this transformation by reimagining childhood as not simply a developmental human phase, but a mentality and lifestyle. Communal societies believed that children represented both the generational and ideological embodiment of hippie utopia. The counterculture thus regarded children as spiritual and mental leaders. Shirley Wise, an especially nonconformist hippie, stated that "Little children are considered to have absolute knowledge of God. It's as if [hippies] treat children as if they were not only sacred in the sense of being human beings, but as if they were human beings born a

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<sup>95</sup> Bennett Berger, Bruce Hackett, and R. Mervyn Millar, "Child-Rearing Practices of the Communal Family," in Kanter, 357.

<sup>96</sup> Leonard Wolf, 30.

<sup>97</sup> Kathleen Kinkade, *A Walden Two Experiment: The First Five Years of Twin Oaks Community* (New York: William Morrow & Company, 1973), 102; Yablonsky, 189; Elizabeth Sh  , "Free Love Ain't," in *Wild Child: Girlhoods in the Counterculture*, ed. Chelsea Cain (Seattle: Seal Press, 1999), 56.

priori with all the knowledge of the universe and anything that came out of their mouths was absolute truth.”<sup>98</sup>

By investing children with spiritual authority, the obligations and rewards associated with motherhood dramatically changed. Mothers lost their authority over child development and domestic affairs that Cold War mothers had maintained. Indeed, the very term *mother* became a loaded term that was discouraged in many communes. In their opinion, the term symbolized dependency and served as a barrier to self-realization for both the mother and the child. This view, which posited that a mother’s doting could inhibit a child’s proper development, reflected a continuation of Cold War mothering in a radically different guise. Depending on their ideological roots, communes sought to eradicate the Cold War child-mother relationship through group parenting, designated child managers, or a total lack of parent/child designation. The Synanon collective in California, for example, designated child “demonstrators” to acclimate children to communal society. In one telling exchange, seven-year-old Diane sought to “indict” her mother for cancelling plans to spend time together. At this point in their group conversation, the demonstrator intervened, saying, “Why not try dealing with her as a person who has a lot of work to do, and who has to figure out a better way to manage her time instead of trying to solve things by using loaded words like *mother*.”<sup>99</sup> While only a minority of communes actively discouraged the use of *mother*, the demonstrator at Synanon illustrates the multiple social and political meanings attached to the very word *mother*. By dissociating motherhood from the social and civic obligations of the

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<sup>98</sup> Leonard Wolf, 241.

<sup>99</sup> Rothchild and Wolf, 157.

suburban family, hippie women dramatically redefined the relationship not only between parent and child, but also between the mother-citizen and the state.

To some extent, hippies viewed mothering itself as problematic because it promoted an unhealthy attachment to another person, placing them in a state of bondage. Many hippies thus sought to eradicate both the parent-child and the monogamous husband-wife relationships because they represented the “petty bourgeois possessiveness that plagued our parents.”<sup>100</sup> The mere existence of the personal relationships cultivated in the nuclear family became a threat to individualism within the communal structure. While hippies viewed the entire nuclear family as problematic, they especially targeted mothers as both the victims and perpetrators of possessive relationships. A counterculture pamphlet entitled “Building Expanded Families” suggested that “Most mothers are not prepared to live a life of their own outside of their family. Consequently they cling to their children and in the process smother them. Just as they are oppressed, women in turn oppress their children by limiting their identity.”<sup>101</sup>

To enable the uninhibited development of hippie children, then, mothers had to adapt to an entirely new method of parenting that would minimize the transmission of inadequacies from one generation to the next. As one observer suggested, “The single most important belief governing the relation between children and adults is that *the experiences had by children not be fateful or self-implicating for adults*; that adults cannot be legitimately characterized in terms of what they do with or to their children—in

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<sup>100</sup> Roberta Price, *Huerfano: A Memoir of Life in the Counterculture* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2013), 231.

<sup>101</sup> Barbara & Michael McKain, “Building Expanded Families” in Richard Fairfield, *Utopia U.S.A.* (San Francisco: Alternatives Foundation, 1972), 188.

rather clear contrast to both preindustrial and middle-class views in which the behavior of children ‘reflects upon’ their parents, who are in some sense ‘responsible’ for it.”<sup>102</sup>

Detached from the obligation to raise patriotic citizens, mothers instead became responsible for minimizing the perpetuation of her own ideological hang ups. The counterculture thus continued to believe that mothers greatly influenced their child’s ideology and could permanently impair their ability to function as good citizens. Yet unlike mainstream society, hippies sought to redefine how mothers’ identity was shaped through her child’s behavior.

As hippies severed the connection between motherhood and the relationships codified in the nuclear family, mothers gained a new measure of autonomy within the communal structure. Not only did these women no longer face scrutiny over their parenting decisions, but they also ceased to be defined in relation to their husbands and partners. Indeed, hippie mothers increased their power and status within a community through their independent economic contributions. As Gretchen Lemke-Santangelo has convincingly argued, many communes were not self-sufficient and thus required the welfare checks received by mothers to supplement other forms of income.<sup>103</sup> Through the dissolution of traditional marriages and families, hippie women gained a new sense of social authority within the commune. Sociologist Rosabeth Moss Kanter noted this shift, remarking that “Unlike middle-class women, for example, a hippie female’s social status does not depend on her old man’s occupation; she doesn’t need him for that. The state is a much better provider than most men who are available to her.”<sup>104</sup> In an interesting and

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<sup>102</sup> Berger et al., “Child-Rearing Practices,” 359.

<sup>103</sup> Leonard Wolf, 89.

<sup>104</sup> Berger et al., “Child-Rearing,” 363.

ironic twist, the state replaced the breadwinning husband role so essential to suburban families. The state thus enabled women to gain a new measure of autonomy and financially support her new communal family. While other social movements attacked the welfare system as the embodiment of “the Man,” counterculture mothers did not hesitate to collect state welfare. As a result, their autonomy was inextricably linked to both governmental aid and the dissolution of the nuclear family in favor of a multi-parent communal society.

The increased independence of hippie mothers was in part predicated upon the radical reconceptualization of labor within the commune. Through the spatial construction of communes, hippies deconstructed the rigid, hierarchical structure of suburbia and collapsed the artificial boundary between the private and public spheres so important to the structure of domestic containment. Communal housing replaced privately owned homes, while large gardens at least partially supplanted the grocery store. In their reformulation of labor, hippies explicitly attacked the relationship between capitalistic labor and social identity so celebrated in the Cold War era. Utilizing industrialist terminology, hippies overwhelmingly criticized the definition of success in terms of competition and career as opposed to personal growth. They were “finding out more fully who they are and realizing as many aspects as possible of their potential. They are tired of specialization, which creates dehumanized intellectual machines. Life is not getting a college degree, a good job, settling down, and raising a family. It’s more, much more, than that. It’s developing as a fully functioning, sensitive human being.”<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Fairfield, *Communes U.S.A.*, 367.



Hippies thus sought to redefine citizenship as a personal exploration of human potential rather than the fulfillment of a series of socially prescribed steps. For mothers, this dramatic reorientation resulted in an expanded sense of fulfillment and identity. While Cold War social norms had emphasized that “ultimate fulfillment” for women could only result in marriage and motherhood, the dissolution of the breadwinner/housewife ideal offered multiple pathways for mothers to explore themselves in a socially acceptable manner.

The disillusionment with any socially mediated ideal, moreover, allowed women the opportunity to cultivate a distinct identity separate from motherhood. Reflecting upon her experience in the late 1960s, Lisa Michael’s mother viewed her options as a young mother with increasing horror. She noted that “peril to me was the closing down of the world like a coffin. Living according to a script.”<sup>106</sup> To many young women, communes were so alluring because they encouraged women to form radically new relationships with their bodies, children, partners, work, and the environment. Whether they cleared forests, prepared food, or watched children, all commune members performed work that was necessary to survival and thus equally valued. This collapse of the stratification of spheres minimized a strict gendered division and created flexible labor. A scholar studying communes noted that “‘Family’ work is not distinguished from other forms, which gives it greater status. And all are rewarded equally.”<sup>107</sup> In theory, this division of labor allowed communal members to practice equality while simultaneously rejecting their “bourgeois” upbringings.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> Michaels, 48-49.

<sup>107</sup> Kanter, “Family Organization,” 298.

<sup>108</sup> Houriet, 51.

The implementation of egalitarian labor, however, was much more difficult for hippies to achieve. One way in which any communes attempted to share the labor associated with motherhood was through the use of child care managers. Whether a formal role or a shared task between adults, these managers were the sole authorities over children's behavior. Centralized child care and schooling promoted the dissolution of the nuclear family while simultaneously encouraging children's relative autonomy. The most famous child care system was implemented at the Virginia Twin Oaks commune. Embracing feminist theory, Twin Oaks members rejected the gender essentialism central to childcare and thus sought to eliminate gendered labor. As Kathleen Kinkade noted, "So much of our thinking is colored by assumptions about masculinity and femininity that it is hard to get free of them. What we are aiming for is to relate to each other simply as people, appreciating each other as human beings without regard to gender."<sup>109</sup> Through centralized child care, Twin Oaks members aimed "to produce a whole generation of kids free of hangups and neuroses, able to enjoy both work and play, to be rational and (in the best sense) religious, to preserve themselves and still watch out for the rest of mankind."<sup>110</sup> At Twin Oaks, Kinkade and her fellow communards explicitly linked gendered labor to the "hangups" they personally experienced. Eliminating gender essentialism and placing women into leadership positions became an organizing tenet of their labor system.

Shared parenting and child care managers enabled the dissociation of mothering from biological motherhood. Consequently, communal motherhood became more

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<sup>109</sup> Kinkade, *A Walden Two Experiment*, 171.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, 146.

closely associated with a set of labors as well as a methodology for achieving spiritual transcendence. Their emphasis on egalitarianism and individualism, furthermore, allowed men to “mother” children without questioning their masculinity. As Reverend Peter Monkres explained in an issue of *Mothering* magazine, “Mothering, in the best sense of the term, is not a sexual function, but an emotional function. Mothering is whether or not we can risk responding to need. Mothering is whether we can take the time to learn how infants communicate . . . to create conditions of security so that the infant can learn how to trust in the new world in which he lives.”<sup>111</sup> But while he advocated for mothering to transcend gender roles, he simultaneously emphasized the differences between men and women: “To be sure there are distinctive male and female qualities. Each sex has its sensitivity and genius. Male and female combined in a relationship of meaning and depth can have the deepest of all experiences: love.”<sup>112</sup> Motherhood, as practiced by both men and women, could produce a depth of love not experienced in mainstream society. Despite advocating for genderless motherhood, however, Monkres still asserted the inherently different natures of men and women.

A central element in the counterculture’s definition of countercultural gender norms and labor was the romantic embrace of nature. Hippies were enamored with nature because of its rehabilitative effects; it offered a departure from the industrialization of society so repulsive to hippies, and it also encouraged an organic embrace of one’s own inner nature. As Leonard Wolf observed, this attachment to nature pervaded every aspect of communal living: “One is instead, encouraged to lend oneself to a life or

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<sup>111</sup>Rev. Peter Monkres, “Mothering for Men as Well as Women,” in *Mothering*, Winter 1976, 16.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

organic ebb and flow; to be responsive to the natural world; to be aware of one's inner nature, to address one's self to experiences which enrich the quest for ecstatic consciousness: the simplicity of leaves and flowers, the innocence of children, poetry, bead-stringing, music, magic, stars, and clear water."<sup>113</sup> Nature, or at least what hippies understood nature to be, became a guiding methodology in building an authentic communal structure. Through their interactions with nature, hippies searched for genuine experiences that would further elevate their consciousness. Childbirth, gender roles, and dietary restrictions are only a few examples of how hippies sought to incorporate the inherently methodological qualities of nature into their social systems.

The hippies' embrace of nature extended beyond the environment to the adoption of what they considered more "authentic" cultures, including Native Americans and "Eastern" peoples. As Roberta Price explained, "We want to create our new, exotic American culture and traditions in the belly of the beast, taking cues from Native Americans . . . We want peace, freedom, space to live in a new order. We want to be able to see at least fifty miles in every direction, to live in harmony on the earth."<sup>114</sup> The Farm founder and spiritual guru Stephen Gaskin similarly called his community a "'third world nation surrounded by the United States."<sup>115</sup> Both comments signify a rejection of existing American norms and the adoption of a personal sovereignty wielded in an effort to better society. This sovereignty was neither political nor territorial; rather, it was practical and exercised in daily life. At the Farm, personal sovereignty was practiced by

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<sup>113</sup> Leonard Wolf, xxv.

<sup>114</sup> Price, 53.

<sup>115</sup> Cris and Oliver Popenoe, *Seeds of Tomorrow: New Age Communities that Work* (New York: Harper Collins, 1984), 92.

“the members’ reclaiming of responsibility for their own selves in ways that most people in modern society have lost: growing and processing their own food, caring for their own health, building their own homes, conducting their own marriages, birthing their babies, educating their children, and burying their dead.”<sup>116</sup> While more “authentic” cultures served as the inspiration for the reclamation of individual sovereignty, the continued existence of communes was essential to the exercise of free will and an alternative American identity.<sup>117</sup> Hippies’ admiration of Native American and Eastern cultures served as a blueprint for their alternative formulation of both the physical and social structure of their communes.

#### 2.4 Sisterhood and Single Motherhood: The Lived Reality of Hippie Mother Citizenship

Although communes created a space for women to depart from middle-class motherhood and form radically new relationships with themselves and their surroundings, the counterculture’s embrace of nature and pre-industrial societies perpetuated gender essentialism. Hippie motherhood was endowed with a sense of individualism and spiritual importance not found in the suburban nuclear family. This radical shift, however, was undermined by the counterculture’s embrace of essentialized feminine difference.<sup>118</sup> Utilizing both Eastern spirituality and naturalism, many hippies embraced masculinity and femininity as symbolic of the yin-yang balance. Due to their perception

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<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Sherry L. Smith, *Hippies, Indians, and the Fight for Red Power* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 7.

<sup>118</sup> Gretchen Lemke-Santangelo, *Daughters of Aquarius: Women of the Sixties Counterculture* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 2009), 57.

of gender as a biological and environmental category, hippies embraced the stratification of the sexes. Commune convert Jerome noted that “Especially on rural communes, one finds a profound womanliness and manliness emerging—Mother Earth and Father Sun, peasantlike clothing without peasant oppression and rigid patterning, women who swing axes and men who bake bread and tend babies, but with deep mutual respect for sexual distinction.”<sup>119</sup> As described by Jerome, many hippies did not strictly enforce a rigid gender stratification, but they nonetheless viewed sex roles as natural and beneficial for society.

Despite the increased power of women as financial supporters of communal experiments, the counterculture did little to increase the acceptable range of gender roles for both women and men. Like the sex norms promoted in suburbia, gender essentialism was crucial for defining and maintaining social boundaries within a commune. Regardless of the collapse of gendered spheres, counterculture women continued to perform the same domestic duties their mothers had. As one counterculture author observed, “Often hip communes, with their prophecies of freedom for the individual, have fallen into the same division of labor as that of the larger society. The women cook, wash, or do other ‘womanly’ things, while the men plant, work in the fields or gardens, and generally, do ‘manly things.’”<sup>120</sup> While rejecting so many aspects of their childhoods, gender remained imbued with political, social, and spiritual significance.

For hippie women, motherhood was especially prized as the ultimate expression of “Mother Earth.” Seeing themselves as a conduit of “life force,” many women

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<sup>119</sup> Judson Jerome, *Families of Eden* (New York: Seabury, 1974), 137.

<sup>120</sup> Roberts, 89.

embraced their increased societal status and the capacity to join a sisterhood of mothers within the commune.<sup>121</sup> Some communalists purposely facilitated joint births, as evidenced by the simultaneous pregnancies of sixty percent of a Santa Clara commune's female population.<sup>122</sup> While some hippie women cherished their roles as earth mothers, other women inspired by the burgeoning feminist movement mocked the status of the counterculture. Unmasking the paradox of an anarchic, revolutionary society with constraining, exploitative sex roles, these women attacked the "square" mentality celebrated by their peers. Vocal feminist and communalist Vivian Estellachild criticized the hypocrisy of the counterculture, noting that

The fact is that the roles women can play are so very limited. There are two possibilities: sexual plaything and then madonna and child chewing at the breast. If you object then you are not natural, not groovin with nature, not doing things as they are supposed to be. The only thing the communal woman can create is a child. After the novelty wears off, and the tiredness of the mother makes her less sexual her old man goes looking and she gets left with the kid.<sup>123</sup>

Women who deviated from the open, sexualized trope represented by Grace Slick or the spiritual earth Madonna were ridiculed by fellow hippies for not "grooving with nature."

While a majority of hippies seemed content to relegate women to traditional sex roles, many counterculture women instilled their work with political significance in service of counterculture ideals. Lady Jane, a member of "The Family," discussed the widespread satisfaction among counterculture women. "We get help from the men sometimes in the kitchen and with the children. It's just that I don't want to chop the wood or do the heavy work and the other women don't either. We could if we wanted to.

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<sup>121</sup> Lemke-Santangelo, 81-82.

<sup>122</sup> Roberts, 8.

<sup>123</sup> Vivian Estellachild, "2 Hip Communes: A Personal Experience," in *Utopia, U.S.A.*, 189.

We feel liberated, and that's what counts, isn't it?"<sup>124</sup> Although women like Lady Jane certainly expressed a sense of liberation from the freeing of domestic containment roles, hippie gender essentialism laid the groundwork for a feminist ideology which emphasized an expanded sense of self-importance in addition to essentialist "feminine" traits such as non-aggression, cooperation, and the formation of "sisterhood."<sup>125</sup> The discontent expressed by some feminist hippie women revealed the complicated and contradictory relationship between parenting practices and rebellion in the counterculture.

While hippies touted their ability to "drop out" of society and form an alternative utopia, their tactics and beliefs nonetheless reflected the establishment they so detested. Despite their contestation of nearly every aspect of American culture, the widespread acceptance of traditional gender roles enabled men leisurely to form counterculture ideology while women were relegated to domestic duties.<sup>126</sup> The freedom to follow one's path to self-realization wherever and whenever it led them was accessible only to men. This ideology, which enabled men to "split" whenever it pleased without ramification, emphasized that women were ultimately the caretakers of children.

Although communes often perpetuated the gendered division of labor, they also provided a space for women to commence a rebellion through the cultivation of sisterhood. In a revealing episode, Roberta Price recounts a consciousness raising session held in her commune:

"'You see,' Mary says, 'we're the proletariat, and the wealth is our bodies, which we don't control in our society. *We must seize control of our bodies from the male ruling class.*' Compared to what I hear about Steve and our old friend Henry, David

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<sup>124</sup> Fairfield, *Communes U.S.A.*, 327.

<sup>125</sup> Lemke-Santangelo, 2.

<sup>126</sup> Fairfield, *Communes U.S.A.*, 310.



doesn't seem that bad. Vicki tells how Henry pulled her IUD out because he wanted to have a baby and she couldn't make up her mind. She's going to have the baby in September. WE sit on our sleeping bags as she talks, exclaiming, 'That fucker!'"<sup>127</sup>

Some counterculture women blended feminist and counterculture ideologies to address their own specific concerns within a communal setting. While both counterculture men and outsiders often typecasted them as either "madonnas" or "sexual playthings," some hippie women actively fought for their individuality.

Unlike second-wave feminists, who attacked the restrictive social roles designated by men for women, some hippie women viewed prescribed social roles themselves as problematic. As described by one observer, "Commune women did not particularly identify with city women who are fighting to trade one role for another role; it was all seen as part of the same ego trip. . . . Everything was too personalized for people to feel superior or inferior about the roles they played."<sup>128</sup> And yet as communes persisted into the mid-1970s, the once romantic embrace of the "Mother Earth" trope and the promised individuality attached to free love increasingly wore thin for many counterculture women. Like many women, former flower child Chelsea Cain recalled her mother's frustrations with counterculture ideology: "In the end, sixties-style free love seemed to be more about men getting their penises tickled than achieving any kind of gender equity through rejecting sexual hang-ups and repression. The 1970s saw more than one woman look up from the bread she was baking to realize that she was, despite her progressive politics and lack of makeup, still in the fucking kitchen. Many of these women went on,

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<sup>127</sup> Price, 192.

<sup>128</sup> Rothchild and Wolf, 198.

like my mother, to cut their Joan Baez tresses and join the feminist movement.”<sup>129</sup> While the individualism and freedom of communal societies initially appealed to many women, the limited revolution of gender roles resulted in the mass flight of hippie women from their communal homes.

Some fathers’ unwillingness to earn an income or emotionally support their children, moreover, made mothers responsible for childrearing in a way discouraged by counterculture ideology. Young hippie mother Nancy Nina remarked on this unequal division of parenting, writing, “It was hard sometimes being a mom to those kids when nobody else was, and so nitty gritty. And I was the one who was going to wash them, whereas everyone else would kind of walk away . . . I remembered when I had two pennies in my pocket and five kids, and a husband that wasn’t around, and it was like, ‘this is hard, this is scary.’”<sup>130</sup> The promise of spiritual transcendence embedded in unattached relationships often resulted in single motherhood for many counterculture women. While free love was initially a revolutionary method for women to form dramatically different relationships with their own bodies and their partners, it ultimately saddled women with the responsibility of raising children on their own.

## 2.5 Conclusion

Although the counterculture initially based many behaviors on a direct divergence to mainstream society, a number of communal members viewed this form of opposition as problematic. A pamphlet produced by the Red Sunshine Gang Collective perfectly

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<sup>129</sup> Cain, 117.

<sup>130</sup> Nancy Nina, interviewed by Deborah Altus, 60s Communes Project, March 26, 1997 in Lemke-Santangelo, 73-74.

captured this sentiment, stating that the commune's "function is often to break out of the mass—specifically from the isolation of daily life and the mass structure of the movement. The problem is that frequently the group cannot create an independent existence and an identity of its own because it continues to define itself negatively, in opposition. So long as its point of reference lies outside of it, the group's politics tend to be superimposed on it by events and crises."<sup>131</sup> The Red Sunshine Gang realized the difficulties inherent in reimagining a belief system that was dependent upon the continued existence of mainstream society. As a result, they viewed revolution as an ongoing process for independence, rather than a finished product.

Yet even as the Red Sunshine Gang cautioned against the internalization of mainstream ethics in hippie consciousness, many of the movement's ethics also subverted the dominant paradigm. Eastern spirituality and naturalism replaced Western rationalism and industrialization, while communal living supplanted the nuclear family structure. As a result, the methodological nature of hippie tenets and the ways in which they were played out in the communal structure continued to reflect upon suburban society. Although women's "natural" traits were endowed with political significance, their own frustration with their limited roles paralleled broader developments in 1970s America. And even as all communal adults were responsible for child care, women were disproportionately saddled with the economic, social, and emotional duties of motherhood.

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<sup>131</sup> Fairfield, *Utopia U.S.A.*, 164.

The exodus of many counterculture women to the feminist movement reflected deeper issues in the sustainability of communes. Dwindling numbers of counterculture enthusiasts, the national identity crises of the 1970s, and economic instability accounted for the decreasing number of communes after 1974. Although all of these factors directly threatened the continuation of communal living, the most prominent issue was a shaky ideological foundation. As the Red Sunshine Gang pointed out, the counterculture was dependent upon the continued existence of mainstream social structures. The economic, political, and cultural upheavals of the 1970s not only reshaped the civic identity of ordinary Americans, but it also profoundly changed countercultural ideals.

## CHAPTER 3. SOVEREIGN MOTHERHOOD: POWER, CITIZENSHIP, AND THE HOME BIRTH MOVEMENT, 1975-1980

### 3.1 Introduction

As a Midwestern college student, radical antiwar activist, and commune participant, Patricia Harman's life mirrored the rise and decline of protest activism in the 1960s-1970s. Like many other antiwar activists, her disillusionment with government-sanctioned violence inspired her to aide draft resisters, march across campuses, and organize teach-ins for peace. Despite her involvement in both the New Left and counterculture, Harman's life did not truly transform until she delivered her friend's baby on a snowy Minnesota evening. Recalling that moment, she wrote, "When I looked behind me, the whole commune was standing in the doorway, in the golden candlelight, like angels. That birth changed my life. I'd found my calling."<sup>132</sup> In the next four decades, midwifery remained the only constant in Harman's turbulent life. She left her partner and their Minnesota homestead, moved from commune to commune with her infant son, and eventually landed at the West Virginia "No Name" Farm. It is there that she cultivated the knowledge needed to become a certified midwife. Although No Name Farm eventually collapsed, Harman incorporated her midwifery skills and countercultural values into the fabric of her mainstream life.

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<sup>132</sup> Patricia Harman, *Arms Wide Open: A Midwife's Journey* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2012), 195.

By the mid-1970s, communes throughout the country like No Name Farm found it increasing difficult to remain apart from society. Harman believed that “Since the war in Vietnam ended, one by one, our friends, no longer needing the strength of solidarity, have drifted away to get real jobs, organize poverty programs, or go back to school.”<sup>133</sup> The mass dissolution of communes, however, was due to much more complex reasons than simply the ending of the Vietnam War. While the initial purchase of communal land had been simple, long term group economic decisions as well as little supplementary income proved to be a divisive factor. In addition, the personality conflicts and partner swaps exacerbated by the close quarters in communal living strained the solidarity necessary for their ideological lifestyle. Finally, the protest movements that provided the ideological foundation for the “rural arm of the revolution” disintegrated into the national anxiety and disillusionment of the early 1970s.<sup>134</sup> As the majority of communes proved to be unsustainable, the physical space needed to spark self-discovery and enact experimental social structures was no longer available. Many flower children such as Harman thus merged their countercultural ideology with that of mainstream society.

The decline of collective living experiments mirrored the broader perception of national decline in the 1970s. Social critics cast the crisis of American identity as a generational failure due to the white middle class’s rejection of its commitment to parenthood and family. The American family thus remained a potent symbol of national security in an increasingly globalized world. To pundits and policy makers alike, the public’s growing acceptance of feminism, gay activism, and the youth revolt served as

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<sup>133</sup> Ibid., 101.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid., 70.

proof of national decline and thus became linked to both domestic and foreign policy. Consequently, conservatives increasingly called for a return to Cold War “family values.” These calls situated the family as the site in which Americans fought for control over national policy, identity, and legitimacy. The problem of national decline in the 1970s was thus experienced as a “crisis of reproduction,” one in which Americans sought to reproduce the world dominance, economic affluence, and patriotic sentiment of the Cold War era.<sup>135</sup> Subsequently, the contested battle for control over citizenship and identity became even further invested in the American family.

Despite the collapse of the communal network, hippie ethics lived on into the late 1970s and 1980s through the grassroots home birth movement. Seeing a need for a compassionate and holistic childbirth experience, midwives like Patricia Harman and Ina May Gaskin popularized a countercultural approach to childbirth. Midwives thus became powerful disseminators of hippie values. Through their publications and practices, midwives displaced the experts popular with their mothers and invested motherhood with authority, power, and transcendence. Childbirth transformed from a medical event to be endured by a lone and often unconscious woman to an experience in which the mother and father could achieve spiritual realization and unity as a family. Consequently, midwives reshaped the relationship between countercultural motherhood and citizenship through a fusion of hippie, feminist, and environmental ideologies.

Despite their continuation of hippie ethics, however, midwives’ publications reveal just how powerful the concurrent national debate over family values had become.

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<sup>135</sup> Natasha Zaretsky, *No Direction Home: The American Family and the Fear of National Decline, 1968-1980* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 145.

As one home birth advocate noted, “Bringing birth back to the family may be the battleground on which this generation stands in the continual struggle to work out a just and humane society.”<sup>136</sup> Books including Gaskin’s *Spiritual Midwifery* and Lang’s *Birth Book* prominently featured white, married, heterosexual couples as testimony to the merits of natural childbirth. By excluding the complexity of communal family structures and the diversity of the American family, midwives thus ironically participated in the national reproduction of Cold War values.

### 3.2 Reclaiming the Power of the Female Body

Similar to other protest movements, the counterculture identified the body as a contested site of power and citizenship. Its members thus believed that their ability to free themselves from oppressive social systems rested on their ability to radically reimagine the body itself. As a result, hippies not only challenged the hierarchical approach to medical care and the reliance on expert authority, but they also sought to radically alter the way in which people understood and experienced their own bodies. In his prose memoir, *Childbirth is Ecstasy*, Stephen Walzer poetically summarized the relationship between power and the body: “Throbbing within the pride of man in his machines and systems of political and economic control, sitting in the heart of our sorrow, causing much of the confusion, violence and inhumanity of modern life is a fundamental hatred, distrust and fear of the human body and the self or soul that inhabits that body.”<sup>137</sup> Through their challenge of biological knowledge, hippies could thus

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<sup>136</sup> “You Mean We Still Have Midwives?” in *Mothering*, Winter 1976, 61.

<sup>137</sup> Allen Cohen and Stephen Walzer, *Childbirth is Ecstasy* (Albion, CA: Aquarius Publishing, 1972), 70.



transform the relationship between body and soul as well as between the body and society.

Like the women's health movement, hippie women valued individual experience over scientific analysis, thus encouraging an egalitarian approach to bodily knowledge.<sup>138</sup> Their emphasis on personal stories, however, should not be viewed as a resistance to science or technology. Rather, hippies and midwives alike sought to merge science with spiritualism, experience, and in some cases, feminism.<sup>139</sup> Midwife Rahima Baldwin, who intended her book *Special Delivery* for a mainstream audience, noted that "Homebirth couples have been accused of 'the mindless rejection of technology.'" With few exceptions, this statement is simply not true. What homebirth couples have observed in most hospitals and most medically trained professionals is an apparent mindless acceptance of technology."<sup>140</sup> To disseminate this knowledge, midwives turned to countercultural presses that could cheaply produce books with innovative countercultural art and design. Authors were conscious not to overstate their authority, as one journalist noted, "Why write a book? Isn't it another ego trip? Aren't I using people like material?"<sup>141</sup> Their efforts to publish a wide variety of content displaced the popularity of expert manuals, and by extension, the hierarchical, authoritative "ego trips" that inhibited self-realization.

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<sup>138</sup> Wendy Kline, *Bodies of Knowledge* (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 2010), 11.

<sup>139</sup> Kline, "Communicating a New Consciousness: Countercultural Print and the Home Birth Movement in the 1970s," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* (forthcoming).

<sup>140</sup> Ibid.; Rahima Baldwin, *Special Delivery: The Complete Guide to Informed Birth* (Berkeley: Celestial Arts, 1979), vii.

<sup>141</sup> Robert Houriet, *Getting Back Together* (New York: Coward, McCann & Geoghegan, Inc., 1971), 60.

The transformation of bodily knowledge thus became a central component of countercultural motherhood and the home birth movement. By altering their relationship to their own bodies, women could by extension redefine their relationship to society. The rise of midwifery in the 1970s, then, was an effort not simply to create a more compassionate childbirth experience, but to reimagine motherhood itself. Furthermore, mothers who had birthed their babies in hospitals understood their treatment as “pariahs and numbers on an infinite sick bed” to be linked to broader social inequalities.<sup>142</sup> In her 1976 groundbreaking bestseller *Spiritual Midwifery*, Ina May Gaskin explicitly identified her efforts as revolutionary, writing that “the sacrament of birth belongs to the people and that it should not be usurped by a profit-oriented hospital system.”<sup>143</sup> Only through democratizing childbirth and rejecting the conceptualization of pregnancy as a disease could countercultural mothers change their status within society.

Because of restrictions that prohibited midwifery in many states, mothers and midwives alike understood that their efforts to have fulfilling home births were linked to their status within the political and medical establishment. Raven Lang, author of *Birth Book*, expressed the frustrations many of these women experienced: “But birth has not only reached the absurdity of having to be relearned, it has also reached the absurdity of becoming a criminal offense if we are to go ahead with our ideals and do things the way we desire.”<sup>144</sup> Midwives recognized that their efforts to legalize midwifery and achieve acceptance within the medical establishment could only be achieved through the redistribution of power and knowledge in society. By empowering soon-to-be mothers

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<sup>142</sup> Cohen and Walzer, 15.

<sup>143</sup> Ina May Gaskin, *Spiritual Midwifery* (Summertown, TN: Book Publishing Company, 1975), 11.

<sup>144</sup> Raven Lang, *Birth Book* (Felton: Genesis Press, 1972), Forward.

and fledgling midwives with detailed and accessible instructions, midwives challenged the broader American system of authority and power.

Their efforts can thus be linked to other social movements, both domestic and global, that sought to dismantle a system of restrictive citizenship. Connecting women's citizenship to home birth, Lang wrote, "Women have been placed in a strange position. They have for thousands of years been second class citizens and are still today struggling for equal recognition. The cries and demands of women as well as all third world people are still being ignored. A lot of the dehumanization surrounding birth exists because women are thought of as brainless children. The position that women and her child occupy in any culture is a reflection of its spiritual growth."<sup>145</sup> Lang's commentary reveals the complex amalgamation of social movements that characterized the home birth movement. Midwives such as Lang clearly linked home births to women's empowerment within American society, thus reflecting feminist efforts for expanded rights and obligations specific to female citizenship. Not only did they question the overwhelmingly male medical establishment, but they also fought to restore women's right to control her own body. Similar to the efforts of the women's health movement, midwives instilled medical knowledge with empowerment, individualism, and politics.<sup>146</sup>

Unlike many strands of feminist thought, however, the home birth movement infused women's equality with a spiritual dimension. In their view, women's equality could not be fully realized until society transcended its current level of consciousness. Consequently, many midwives viewed their work as connected to the broader challenge

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<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

<sup>146</sup> Kline, *Bodies of Knowledge*, 15.

of a restrictive system. As Ina May Gaskin stated, “Like the civil rights movement, the anti-war movement, and the anti-nuclear movement, the midwifery movement is a *consciousness-raising* effort. People need to be reminded that an alternative exists.”<sup>147</sup> The home birth movement thus fused countercultural and feminist theory together into a distinct strand of spiritual feminist thought. By removing pregnancy and parenthood from the hospital setting, women could instill the entire process with their own personalized methodology. In this sense, home birth and the communal setting served similar purposes. They each sought to escape a standardized physical environment and instead emphasize individuality and self-discovery. Although the support system provided by communal families and later midwives were essential to the continuation of both home births and communes, both were methodological processes centered upon the individual.

To ensure the personalized nature of childbirth, however, midwives challenged the state’s involvement in the family and support system so essential to successful home births. Midwives explicitly linked hospital births and restrictive anti-midwifery laws to the state’s regulation of the family. This interference interrupted the spirituality of childbirth and the unity of the family, thus disrupting the family unit itself. At the first International Conference of Practicing Midwives in 1977, Ina May Gaskin voiced these concerns, remarking:

It’s a human right, part of our birth right, that the family is the principal in the sacrament of birth and death. These rights shall not be usurped by a profit-oriented system, which really belongs to the state. If the family is divided at the time of birth (as in common hospital practice), the state is being the one that imprints our

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<sup>147</sup> Ina May Gaskin in *Practicing Midwife*, “Midwifery Belongs to the People,” 1.9 (Winter-Spring 1980), 8.

children at their very most delicate and impressionable time. People are coming out of childbirth feeling neurotic, rather than fulfilled and sane. Natural birth, uninterfered with, is one of the great sources of sanity that we have in our society. We need to do everything we can to ensure that it is protected at home—and when you have a birth in the hospital, to see that the family's rights are respected.<sup>148</sup>

In this view, neurosis was not a symptom of feminine weakness and parental failure; rather, it was the state's interference in the family's private lives. This line of logic, although advancing a countercultural position, grounded its critique in a longstanding American political debate of individual versus government authority.

The home birth movement's critique of hospitals was thus not un-American; rather, midwives imagined their dissent in a long line of American grassroots protest politics. Utilizing democratic rhetoric, some midwives argued that a mother's individualism restored by home birth was a return to constitutional principles. As one anonymous midwife wrote, "Certainly it has not been uncommon in our turbulent history for a grassroots dedication to constitutional principles to swell up against current fashion and practice, and shame the nation back to its origins. . . . We Americans are a stubborn bunch, somehow each generation seems to keep coming right back to the same principles based on the profound [sic] respect for each individual human being to abide by his conscience as God gives him to see the right, and for an idea of government and community which derives its powers from the governed."<sup>149</sup> Through democratic rhetoric, midwives actively participated in contemporary political debate concerning the distinction between the personal and political. As the above quote illustrates, midwives acknowledged the overlap between childbirth and politics, yet they argued for mothers'

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<sup>148</sup> Ina May Gaskin, "The First International Conference of Practicing Midwives" in *Practicing Midwife 1* (1977), 3.

<sup>149</sup> "You Mean We Still Have Midwives?" in *Mothering 2* (Winter 1976), 61.

personal sovereignty over their own bodies. By framing the home birth movement as a return to American principles, activists cloaked the individualism cherished by hippies in concurrent political debate concerning the role of the government and the reversal of liberal social policies.

While midwives did embrace American values in their efforts, the home birth movement can be viewed understood as a broader assault against the core American value of efficiency and standardization. Once efficiency and standardized industrialization became key organizing principles of American society, birth became un-American.<sup>150</sup> The medical establishment attempted to standardize birth, a process that defies planning, through induction, anesthetics, and incisions. The resulting product was a “convenient” birth, one in which the mother was stripped of individualism and treated as an object. Consequently, midwives and countercultural mothers alike sought to reimagine labor and delivery as a positive and individualistic spiritual process. Their effort to make alternative viewpoints available for expecting parents was thus a direct assault against American values that stripped mothers of their individuality.

As a result of their negative encounters with hospital births, mothers sought to reimagine birth as a holistic experience. They believed that pregnancy and childbirth had profound implications for a mother’s identity and should thus be treated as a spiritual, physical, and mental journey. In an issue of *The Practicing Midwife*, childbirth educator Sheila Kitzinger clearly connected these components, stating, “Birth is part of a woman’s very wide psychosexual experience and it is intimately connected with her feelings about

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<sup>150</sup> Jacqueline Wolf, *Deliver Me from Pain: Anesthesia and Birth in America* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), 118.

and her sense of her own body, her relations with others, her role as a woman, her worth as a human being, and the meaning to her of her personal identity.”<sup>151</sup> In contrast to strands of equality feminism popular in the 1970s, the home birth movement embraced the impact of birth on a woman’s identity. Birth was not a biological barrier to be overcome; rather, it was a process to embrace. Mothers’ efforts to redefine childbirth thus incorporated elements of the counterculture into their personal identity.

To reimagine motherhood, the home birth movement sought to fundamentally redefine childbirth as a natural event. In accord with the counterculture’s emphatic embrace of naturalism, midwives cast labor and delivery as a natural experience that would further elevate both the mother’s and father’s consciousness. Floral motifs in publications and anatomical metaphors were just two ways in which the home birth movement conveyed the naturalness of birth. This sentiment is perfectly captured by one anonymous woman in her poem “Ripening”:

As the baby, from seed to worldly entrance ripens, /So does the mother’s consciousness mature through revelations /of life’s beginnings- /During this, their growing season. /Out of man and woman’s union springs the fruit- /A child swelling ‘neath a woman’s belly, /And the madonna – ripening fruit of womanhood. /Joining forces, father and mother weed out their fears, /To clear the ground and prepare the way for the day of harvesting. /On that day, they reap as they sow, the fruits of their labor.<sup>152</sup>

Through her use of environmental metaphors, this author explicitly connects three concepts that both the counterculture and home birth movement viewed as interlinked: nature, the body, and mental self-realization.

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<sup>151</sup> Sheila Kitzinger, “Safe Alternatives in Childbirth Day,” in *Practicing Midwifery* 5, (Sept. 1978), 5.

<sup>152</sup> “Ripening,” in *Mothering* 1 (Summer 1976), 17.

As the author of “Ripening” points out, pregnancy and motherhood included intensive psychological preparation. In keeping with countercultural ideology, home birth publications posited that natural childbirth could result in physical and spiritual ecstasy. Furthermore, they minimized the distinction between the physical and spiritual aspects of childbirth. The home birth movement thus continued the countercultural belief that pregnancy was not only a physical state, but it was also a methodology to reach a higher state of existence. In doing so, they eliminated the anxiety and dread that many mainstream mothers had experienced and redefined pregnancy as a powerful and positive experience. Like the methodological qualities invested in the free love of the counterculture, midwives stressed the connection between biological and emotional love during childbirth. Rahima Baldwin stressed that “Birth is fundamentally a creative act, as is the act of sexual union. The quality and intensity of the energy present and the ultimate surrender during both events are closely related.” She continued, “Making love, orgasm, and giving birth are all interconnected. All relate to your attitude towards spirit and body and your willingness to feel sensation. Oxytocin is released into your system during sexual stimulation and orgasms, during birth, and during breastfeeding, which is like making love with your baby”<sup>153</sup> While downplaying the polyamorous sexual relationships frequently practiced in the counterculture, midwives still preached the connection between sexuality and spirituality. This link not only diminished the anxiety that many expectant mothers experienced, but it also promised personal transcendence.

An essential component of ecstatic childbirth was the reimagining of the physical

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<sup>153</sup> Baldwin, 135.



process of labor and delivery. Most midwifery publications featured personal stories from women who had delivered naturally and enthusiastically embraced the tenets of spiritual childbirth. Barbara, a member of the Farm, testified to the transformation of the biological process that the home birth movement offered. She explained, “Contractions don’t have to hurt. . . . If you have the attitude that they hurt, then you’ll tense up and not be able to completely relax and it will take the baby longer to come through and you won’t have any fun either. It is a miracle to be able to create more life force and there is no room for complaining.”<sup>154</sup> As Barbara’s experience revealed, midwives and counterculture mothers not only endowed childbirth with a spiritual component, but they reimagined the entire biological process to enhance the connection between body, mind, and soul.

The promise of spiritual enlightenment connected to natural childbirth was not only for mothers. Both hippies and midwives posited that pregnancy induced a state of transcendence that had the power to elevate the entire family unit’s consciousness. To achieve this state, however, both mother and father had to accept their place within the larger universal order.<sup>155</sup> As two counterculture parents noted, “We had to realize these things about ourselves and take all of it to a higher understanding of what freedom and responsibility meant before we could accept that this child was in tune with itself, with us, and with this time and space, and before we could develop that trust in that higher

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<sup>154</sup> Ina May Gaskin, *Spiritual Midwifery*, 87.

<sup>155</sup> Kline, “Communicating a New Consciousness.”

power that is guiding and directing all of us.”<sup>156</sup> In order to achieve harmony with the universe, parents had to accept their proper role within the family.

Like the counterculture, the home birth movement emphasized the centrality of family to pregnancy and childbirth. Preparation for their new addition, as the couple above noted, compelled them to interrogate their own relationship to one another and to higher powers. Even without the extended communal family, pregnancy and childbirth retained its power to link familial roles to spiritual uplift. Indeed, family and spirituality became so intertwined that midwives promoted the childbirth experience a rite of familial unity. As in the communal setting, midwifery guides linked these family relationships to self-realization. Thomas, an experienced father at the Farm, understood this connection. He explained that “The first thing I think of when she/we are pregnant is how much more I am aware that we are really One; that we have our agreement together with God to create a new life.”<sup>157</sup>

Childbirth and children thus became a central component of how New Age adults found their purpose in the world. Parenthood offered spiritual elevation and a path to enlightenment difficult to find elsewhere. This belief, transferred from the counterculture to home birth literature, preached that “every child’s birth is exactly like the birth of Jesus. The Christ child is born every time a child is born, and every child born is a living Buddha.”<sup>158</sup> Even more mainstream publications such as Baldwin’s *Special Delivery* posited that “birth is an integral part of the flow of living.”<sup>159</sup> As with communal

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<sup>156</sup> Stephen Clarke and Kathryn Bennett, “Communicating with the Soul in the Womb” in *Mothering* 2 (Winter 1976), 92-93.

<sup>157</sup> Ina May Gaskin, *Spiritual Midwifery*, 237.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>159</sup> Baldwin, viii.

families, children held special power to serve as guides and to spiritually transform their respective communities. Children, and the transcendence they provided, were thus central to a parent's identity within the home birth movement.

This identity, however, was often linked to the celebration of biological difference and gender essentialism. Like the counterculture, the home birth movement continued to imagine gender roles as a spiritual yin-yang balance. Especially at the Farm, the Gaskins preached the "tantric complementarity of knightly yang and sacred yin."<sup>160</sup> This "natural" structure imbued traditionally gendered tasks with a spiritual element intended to achieve harmony with the universe. As Stephen Gaskin explained, "What tantric yoga is about is that males and females have different signs on their electricity, like positive and negative. They both have energy, but the signs are different."<sup>161</sup> Consequently, they codified femininity and masculinity as inherently different, yet equal in their power and importance. The home birth movement perpetuated this gender essentialism, endowing women with a sacred and powerful feminine nature. The process of childbirth thus became imbued with biological, social, and spiritual femininity.

While emphasizing differentiated gender roles, the home birth movement also empowered mothers through their emphasis on the sacred power of femininity. Biological childbirth thus became an essential part of fulfilled femininity. Through pregnancy, delivery, and breastfeeding, mothers' bodies and minds became a conduit of the sacred life force. Midwives encouraged this role, noting that "A nursing mother is

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<sup>160</sup> Tim Hodgdon, *Manhood in the Age of Aquarius: Masculinity in Two Countercultural Communities, 1965–83* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 5.

<sup>161</sup> Stephen Gaskin, *Hey Beatnik! This is the Farm Book* (Summertown, TN: The Book Publishing Co., 1974), unpaginated.

really a Holy and sacred thing. If she'll really give her kid some and really let it go, she can become a tremendous generator of psychic energy. That energy is for the baby. . . . Those sexual love vibrations are a manifestation of Holy Spirit."<sup>162</sup> By facilitating the flow of the sacred spirit in natural childbirth, midwives became powerful figures who in turn empowered women. As mother and childbirth educator Suzanne Arms wrote, "Midwives have meant a lot to me in the past six years because they have given me a chance to look at myself as a woman in a different way. I see that not only can I be responsible for my own body and my own care and the health of my family, but I am actually powerful enough and healthy enough to do it."<sup>163</sup> By emphasizing biological difference, midwives rooted women's empowerment in the female body. Mothers like Patricia Harmon remembered that during her own birth experience, "I felt I could do anything, move a two-ton truck with my bare hands, lift a mountain, part the waters of Lake Superior."<sup>164</sup> Natural home births thus encouraged women to embrace the physical, spiritual, and mental power endowed by motherhood.

This understanding of female power stood in stark contrast to the equality feminism advocated by many second-wave feminists. At a time when gender roles and motherhood itself became a hotly contested issue, the home birth movement continued to advocate fulfillment through motherhood. Consequently, many midwives distanced themselves from second-wave feminism. Ina May Gaskin reminisced, "It is interesting then that second-wave feminism, as expressed in the US during the sixties and seventies, was largely scornful of the status of women of indigenous cultures and assumed not only

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<sup>162</sup> Ina May Gaskin, *Spiritual Midwifery*, 259.

<sup>163</sup> Suzanne Arms, "The First International Conference of Practicing Midwives" in *Practicing Midwife 1*, 4.

<sup>164</sup> Harman, 15.

that all women in such cultures were victims of patriarchal systems but also that there was no expression of female power within them.”<sup>165</sup> Considered by some feminists to be a “traitor to her gender,” Gaskin offered a version of motherhood grounded in biological difference.<sup>166</sup> In her memoir/manifesta, she continued, “The status of motherhood is progressively lowered when women themselves have little understanding of the needs of women who give birth and of the abilities of their own bodies.”<sup>167</sup> Like the majority of midwives, Gaskin viewed the female body as central to motherhood. In her view, understanding the power of the female body was central to female equality and minimizing difference was symptomatic of a patriarchal culture that devalued the status of motherhood.

Many countercultural mothers thus emphasized the fulfillment that motherhood provided. Unlike the counterculture, however, many home birth advocates increasingly grounded their identity in biological motherhood. Farm mother Tana emphasized the link between motherhood and fulfillment:

I can’t understand the ladies who think fulfillment lies only in a career or a position of wealth or power. Maybe a career can round out your total life, but I feel that a career alone can in no way measure up to the real fulfillment I experience in being privileged to feel that birthing energy, which I never felt anything like before, and to see that beautiful creation, so perfect, which we have a small part in, but which is mostly done without us. I just feel so wonderful when I’m nursing my baby or taking care of him that I knew that this is heavier than being a corporation president.”<sup>168</sup>

For women like Tana, biological motherhood became a central component of their identity. While birth remained a methodological process valued for its transformative

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<sup>165</sup> Ina May Gaskin, *Birth Matters: A Midwife’s Manifesta* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2011), 17.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid., 41.

<sup>168</sup> Ina May Gaskin, *Spiritual Midwifery*, 145.

powers, it increasingly became rooted in biology. Mothers like Tana thus rejected second-wave feminist efforts that contested the centrality of motherhood to the female identity while simultaneously rejecting Cold War motherhood that minimized the spirituality of the birthing experience. Rather, they created a unique strand of motherhood that emphasized the power of women grounded in natural childbirth.

As Ina May Gaskin's reference to "indigenous cultures" above indicates, the home birth movement largely perpetuated the counterculture's embrace of native, more "authentic" societies. Their romantic attachment to nature as a rehabilitative state strengthened and increasingly related to natural childbirth and motherhood. As incidents like the 1979 Three Mile Island nuclear meltdown heightened public concern, however, midwives and countercultural mothers linked motherhood to environmentalism and nuclear power activism.<sup>169</sup> Because the home birth movement viewed nature as central to their identity as mothers, these two issues shifted how midwives and countercultural conceived of motherhood and citizenship. Fusing the red power movement and nuclear power protests together, home birth activists expounded a new variation of civic motherhood centered upon their relationship to the Earth.

Home birth activists linked their sacred reproductive powers to environmental efforts and the exploitation of the earth's resources and indigenous peoples. In a speech published in *The Practicing Midwife*, Mohawk Nation member Katsi Cook connected several systems important to countercultural protest. She stated that "human beings on this earth can live a standard of life that's based on extractive technology. . . . WE are

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<sup>169</sup> Winona LaDuke, "Uranium Mining in the Black Hills," in *The Practicing Midwife* 1.7 (Summer 1979), 14.

beneficiaries of that, as much as we might try to deny it. We have been taught, or rather our minds have been colonized, to fit into a system which bases itself on extractive technology.”<sup>170</sup> Cook’s critique of the colonized mind offered a new language, based in red power and environmental activism, for the home birth movement to protest the social structures they sought to escape. Although many hippies a decade before had “dropped out from a ‘plastic,’ ‘machine-like,’ ‘unloving’ society and [tried] to tune back into a more natural, loving, American Indian tribal way of life,” the home birth’s co-option of Native American protest differed in several aspects.<sup>171</sup>

In part, this difference stemmed from the rising feminist consciousness among home birth activists during the 1970s. While nature had symbolized the return to authenticity for hippies, mothers and midwives increasingly characterized the earth as sacred and feminine. Consequently, they viewed women’s status as inherently connected to environmental efforts. In just one example of this trend, Suzanne Arms stated that “Today we speak of ‘Mother Earth’ or ‘Mother Nature,’ for it is not simply fertilization but the development of life itself that resides in all things female—earth, nature, and woman.”<sup>172</sup> The “raping” of the earth’s natural resources as well as the potential hazards posed by nuclear power thus became intimately connected to women’s reproductive autonomy and the welfare of all future generations.<sup>173</sup> Because they invested female power in the body and the ability to reproduce, home birth activists linked together the status of the environment, “native” cultures, and women’s self-determination.

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<sup>170</sup>Katsi Cook, “The Circle of Life” in *The Practicing Midwife* 1.8 (Fall 1979), 11.

<sup>171</sup> Lewis Yablonsky, *The Hippie Trip* (New York: Pegasus, 1968), 127.

<sup>172</sup> Suzanne Arms, *Immaculate Deception: A New Look at Women and Childbirth in America* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1975), 9.

<sup>173</sup> Cook, “Circle of Life,” 11.

Environmentalism thus became a new platform for countercultural women to advocate for female power.

Drawing upon their belief that gender essentialism was both natural and empowering, many natural childbirth advocates reimaged their relationship to society through the embrace of “native” rhetoric. As Katsi Cook stated, in the Mohawk nation, “Woman is the base of the culture. She carries the language, the home, the children, and she provides the political, spiritual, and social direction for her people.”<sup>174</sup> Women could enact their countercultural vision for society through natural childbirth and motherhood. Home births and breastfeeding became increasingly political because they not only challenged mainstream medical practices, but they also literally embodied female power and led efforts for a safe, natural environment.

Beginning in 1979, multiple issues of *The Practicing Midwife* published articles including “Midwives of the Nuclear Age” and “Nuclear Madness” directly next to articles containing the prophecies, myths, and speeches of select red power activists. In doing so, they cemented the link between countercultural motherhood, the environment, and the rhetoric of the red power movement. Natural childbirth activists connected the obligations of female citizenship to both environmental and social issues that transcended the nation-state. The “suffering of our Mother Earth and the suffering of women” thus became a central part of their redefined citizenship. These mothers and midwives reimagined their civic obligation not to the state but to the earth, extending and reshaping hippies’ claims to personal sovereignty. Like the hippies, many home birth activists drew

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<sup>174</sup> Ibid, 12.



their inspiration from Native Americans. A 1979 issue of *The Practicing Midwife* featured an 1854 speech from Chief Seattle, leader of the Suquamish tribe, who is quoted as stating that “The earth does not belong to the people, people belong to the earth. This we know. All things are connected like the blood which unites one family. All things are connected.”<sup>175</sup> While many of these women now lived within a nuclear family structure, they preserved communal family ideals through their embrace of global citizenship, personal sovereignty, and environmentalism. Drawing upon the power of biological motherhood and natural childbirth, these women appropriated Native American ideas of sovereignty to fit into the age of nuclear power and global free trade. Through their embrace of difference feminism and motherhood as an identity, these women articulated a form of female citizenship invested in the preservation of the body and the earth--free from colonialism, capitalism, patriarchy, and chemical pollution.

### 3.3 Strange Bedfellows: Countercultural Women and the Return to Family Values

In many ways, the home birth movement perpetuated countercultural ideology after the decline of communal living. The movement instilled hippie values including naturalism, autonomy, authenticity, and power into the female body. Furthermore, activists incorporated select feminist, environmental, and red power theory into a complex ideology that defies categorization. Despite their continuation of protest politics into the late 1970s, the home birth movement departed from countercultural ideals in many significant ways. In part, the collapse of most communes in the mid-1970s precipitated the return of former flower children and anti-war protesters to mainstream

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<sup>175</sup> Excerpted prophetic speech from Chief Seattle in *Practicing Midwife* 1.7 (Summer 1979), 14.

society. Even the most successful communes struggled to adapt to the changing political and social norms of the early 1980s.

In 1983, the Farm, which had long been a bastion of the countercultural and home birth movements, voted to de-collectivize their land holdings and possessions. While this decision was primarily based on financial troubles, members also began to question the countercultural principles that defined Farm living. As former Farm member Mary Louise Perkins remarked, “We were trying to save the world and take care of everybody. And you can’t do it that way. The one thing I’ve really learned is that you have to start with your family and be strong there and healthy and then you can expand and help other people.”<sup>176</sup> Fellow Farm member and former midwife Leslie Reynolds agreed, further stating, “When I hit my 30s, I started thinking, ‘Do I wanna live in a situation where I’m poor all the time?’”<sup>177</sup> The appeal of communal living no longer seemed plausible in the backlash of the late 1970s and early 1980s. Consequently, home birth and hippie activists increasingly integrated their countercultural ideals into mainstream society.

Midwife authors, who often wrote their books with a broad audience in mind, exemplify the melding of counterculture ethics to mainstream society. The families depicted in their publications reflected the ongoing public debate over motherhood, the family, and citizenship in the late 1970s. Most prominently, the majority of home birth publications featured two-parent, white, heterosexual couples. While countercultural media of the early 1970s recognized the complexity and variety of the communal family,

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<sup>176</sup>Sara Lamm and Mary Wigmore, *Birth Story: Ina May Gaskin and the Farm Midwives* (2012), Chapter 14.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid.

by 1975 the depiction of the family itself resembled the idealized nuclear family of suburbia. In part, this shift reflected broader efforts to include fathers in the childbirth experience and changing notions of American masculinity. The widespread backlash against heavily medicated births in the 1960s and 1970s transformed both hospital and home births into a more family-centered event.<sup>178</sup>

In addition, the women's movement and countercultural conceptions of masculinity both promoted a more expressive and emphatic masculinity, prompting fathers like Don Richmond openly to express that "The most powerful experience in my life, and probably in most other peoples' lives, has been the beautiful sequence of events that has led to becoming a father."<sup>179</sup> Midwifery publications stressed the importance of the father's involvement during labor and delivery. As Wahaab Baldwin, the husband of Rahima Baldwin explained, "Most fathers I know are entering into much closer relationship with their infants than fathers traditionally have done. My only suggestion about fathering is to examine our cultural dictum that the mother is primarily responsible for the children. Since 'helping out' only strengthens this division, we need to keep exploring if we are going to discover a new, more meaningful definition of what it means to be a father."<sup>180</sup> Baldwin's assertion that the father played an important role in both the physical and spiritual aspects of labor and deliver was indicative of not only the home birth movement, but the broader reconceptualization of masculinity in the identity crisis of the 1970s. While encouraging the involvement of men throughout childbirth and

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<sup>178</sup> Judith Leavitt, *Make Room for Daddy: The Journey From Waiting Room to Birthing Room* (Durham: The University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 122.

<sup>179</sup> Paula Michaels, *Lamaze: An International History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 137; Don and Barbara Richmond, "These Powerful Times" in *Mothering* 1, 38.

<sup>180</sup> Baldwin, 135.

parenting, both the home birth movement and the medical establishment prominently featured the significance of the nuclear family unit to the detriment of other family configurations.

Home birth books also emphasized the importance of biological parenting for the well-being of the child. In particular, they posited that the biological mother had a telepathic connection with her baby that could not be replicated. As Stephen Gaskin noted in *Spiritual Midwifery*,

We don't agree with the idea of the destruction of the family, that kids should be all desocialized by being raised by a whole bunch of folks. My real opinion about it is that it makes crazy kids. It's really good for kids to be raised by their biological mother who has certain interior psychedelics that her body manufactures to keep her stoned enough to match speaks with her kid, so she can be as stoned as her kid and relate with her kid. She's equipped to do that, but a lady who hasn't just had a baby isn't equipped the same way to do that.<sup>181</sup>

Gaskin's view of the biological family in part stemmed from the primacy placed on marriage at the Farm, but it also reflected a sensitivity to the cultural anxiety of the perceived decline of the family in the 1970s. In politics, President Carter's 1979 "Crisis of Confidence" speech firmly linked the stability of the American family to confidence in American progress, while Ronald Reagan's campaign announcement expressed the threat that the economic recession and working wives posed to the structure of family life.<sup>182</sup> In addition, social commentators diagnosed Generation Xers with psychological and cultural narcissism, which they linked to feminism and anti-natalism.<sup>183</sup> As these examples

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<sup>181</sup> Ina May Gaskin, *Spiritual Midwifery*, 272.

<sup>182</sup> Jimmy Carter, "Crisis of Confidence" Speech, July 15, 1979, <http://millercenter.org/president/carter/speeches/speech-3402>; Ronald Reagan, Announcement for Presidential Candidacy, November 18, 1979, <http://millercenter.org/president/reagan/speeches/speech-5852>.

<sup>183</sup> Zaretsky, 186.

suggest, the status of the American family became the central object of a larger debate of citizenship, labor, and foreign policy. The perceived attack on the nuclear family by the social protest movements of the decade before resulted in a doubled effort to reproduce the nuclear family of the Cold War era. Through their depiction of white, heterosexual couples, home birth publications participated in this return to the nuclear family.

In addition, the home birth movement's emphasis on the sanctity of parenthood promoted the Cold War belief that both men and women were incomplete unless they married and had children. For mothers in particular, the home birth movement re-established motherhood as both a methodology and an identity. Because they invested birth with a spiritual importance, motherhood became a source of spiritual fulfillment, and by extension, a moment of self-realization. Describing her birthing experience, Maria Mondragon Valdez recalled, "I have never been as close to the spirit as I was at that time. I felt a bright whiteness descending upon me from the ceiling. I realized the meaning of the presence of God."<sup>184</sup> Through their natural childbirth experience, women like Valdez gained a sense of fulfillment that could only be acquired through motherhood. Although the home birth movement's infusion of spirituality into childbirth was indeed countercultural, it effectively re-associated motherhood to feminine fulfillment.

This return to "ultimate feminine fulfillment" was further bolstered by difference feminism. Because the home birth movement grounded female power in the body, biological motherhood became the principal source of a woman's power and civic

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<sup>184</sup> Maria Mondragon Valdez, "My Unborn Baby Yet at Play" in *Mothering I*, 53.

obligations. In this way, motherhood once again became the hallmark of female citizenship. Women derived their authority through sacred feminine reproductive powers, and they in turn defined their civic duties in terms of the environment and the welfare of the earth. This shift reflected a larger American anxiety; one in which the welfare of the middle-class family was tied to global politics. Like the Cold War mother who was the object of the infamous Kitchen Debates, the family of the 1970s was the central theme of political debates, foreign affairs, the state of the economy, and the progress of American civilization itself. Motherhood, in both the home birth movement and in mainstream society, was thus increasingly defined as a global citizenship that transcended national borders.

By examining midwifery trends throughout the world and defining motherhood as a service to the environment, the home birth movement participated in the making of global citizenship. Midwifery publications such as *Birth and the Family Journal* and *The Practicing Midwife* consistently featured international reports and studies on both recent and traditional childbirth knowledge. For example, a 1977 article in *Birth and the Family Journal* compared American standards of newborn care to those in Sweden, Bolivia, and Japan, observing that “Western culture has formed a barrier between infants and parents through a superstitious belief in the good of strict physical hygiene and schedule feeding.”<sup>185</sup> Through their critical evaluation of American childbirth practices, home and natural childbirth advocates by extension critiqued the American values embedded into the medical establishment. They also challenged the belief in American medical and

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<sup>185</sup> Kamala Ditrella and John Lind, “Baby Carriers in Bolivia and Sweden” in *Birth and the Family Journal* 4.3 (Fall 1977), 123.

scientific exceptionalism, thus mirroring the broader crisis in national progress and identity. By looking to extra-national midwifery practices and emphasizing a civic obligation to the environment, the home birth movement thus contributed to the making of a transnational, humanistic citizenship that further contested American identity.

### 3.4 Conclusion

Similar to the fate of related social protest movements, the decline of countercultural communal living in the 1970s reflected a national debate concerning American citizenship and core values. Although hardly unified, these movements successfully lobbied for an expanded citizenship and transformed the social contract between state and citizen. Through their efforts, they revealed the political and social ideal of the nuclear family to be contingent upon racism, sexism, heteronormativity, and classism. If equal rights was the definitive cry of the 1960s, however, family values became the central political issue beginning in the 1970s.<sup>186</sup> A conservative-led backlash successfully sought to reproduce the connection between American exceptionalism and the nuclear family unit. By Reagan's effective 1984 "Morning Again in America" re-election campaign, the white middle-class nuclear family was once again firmly associated with American strength and progress.

The home birth movement, growing out of the counterculture, was able to flourish in this era due to its amalgamation of mainstream and hippie values. Like the "Morning Again in America" campaign, home birth publications repeatedly depicted the white, heterosexual, monogamous married couple as their target audience. In addition, they

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<sup>186</sup> Robert O. Self, *All in the Family: The Realignment of American Democracy Since the 1960s* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2012), 3.

questioned the goals of equality feminism and its effects on the female body, thus paralleling the efforts of conservative groups like Phyllis Schlafly's Eagle Forum to sustain gender essentialism in law and society. The home birth movement, however, cannot be placed on a liberal-conservative political spectrum; rather, it represents of the complexity of identity and citizenship in the 1970s and early 1980s.

Despite some similarities with conservative political and social thought, the home birth movement incorporated feminist, environmental, and countercultural ethics into a new variation of female citizenship. Activists emphasized a natural and authentic connection between the female body, the earth, and society. Furthermore, they connected the self-determination and power of American mothers to a global citizenship rather than the well-being of American society. In doing so, they transformed the social contract between mother and state. While the home birth movement reinvested a woman's identity in motherhood, it also emphasized her obligation to the well-being of planet. As a result, the home birth movement connected itself to anti-nuclear protests and others who criticized the American government's pursuit of a missile defense system and nuclear energy at the cost of the environment and global peace. Home and natural birth activists thus participated in the creation of a global, millennial citizenship that transcended the nation-state



## EPILOGUE: MOMMY WARS AND THE MODERN DEBATE OVER THE AMERICAN FAMILY

In 2012, *Time* magazine caused public outrage when it featured Jamie Lynne Grumet breastfeeding her three year old son on its cover. What triggered such a public outcry was not only the mother's exposed breast, but her confrontational pose paired with the caption "Are You Mom Enough?" The accompanying article discussed the controversy surrounding attachment parenting, a style of parenting intended to foster a strong emotional bond between child and caretaker with lasting mental and social consequences. Promoted by pediatrician and author William Sears, "the man who remade motherhood," this philosophy posits that emotionally unavailable parenting can negatively affect the child through the promotion of poor mental health and social skills.<sup>187</sup>

To portray this lifestyle for readers, *Time* chronicled the experiences of Joanne Beauregard, a mother who faithfully practiced attachment parenting with her child. The article noted, "Joanne Beauregard is nothing so much as she is a mother. When she and her husband had trouble conceiving, Joanne quit her job as an accountant to focus full time on getting pregnant. When she did, she chose to give birth at home, without pain medication. Then, for months, Beauregard sat on the couch in her Denver-area living

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<sup>187</sup> Kate Pickert, "The Man Who Remade Motherhood," *Time*, May 21, 2012, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,2114427,00.html>.

room, nursing her infant from sunup to sundown.”<sup>188</sup> Online commenters sneered at her approach to motherhood, questioning how such a commitment would affect (and had already affected) Beauregard’s own mental and social health. Others found toddler breastfeeding to be repulsive, even claiming it to be “child molestation.”<sup>189</sup> The heated dialogue between commenters revealed just how socially mediated our concept of “natural” or “good” motherhood is in today’s society. While supporters of attachment parenting posit that extended breastfeeding is biologically natural and the best start for a child’s life, Beauregard’s story reveals just how unattainable “good” motherhood is for many American mothers.

In many ways, this heated debate over modern motherhood reflects the transformation of motherhood and women’s status in society over the past half century. Attachment parenting is a stark contrast from Cold War motherhood, which worried that a mother’s attachment would transmit neurotic behavior to her children and threaten the security of the nation. The importance placed on the modern mother’s role in socializing her child, however, harkens back to a “culture of total motherhood” in which the mother was defined by her obligation to her child, and by proxy the state.<sup>190</sup> Critics contend that attachment parenting imposes a double duty upon mothers, isolates them from society, and facilitates mental anxiety. This debate echoes the criticism that counterculture and feminist women levelled against Cold War society nearly fifty years ago. The rhetoric surrounding natural childbirth and breastfeeding, however, suggests that the influence of

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<sup>188</sup> Ibid.

<sup>189</sup> Pickert, “Q&A with Breast-Feeding Mom Jamie Lynne Grumet,” *Time*, May 10, 2012, <http://healthland.time.com/2012/05/10/q-a-with-jamie-lynn-grumet/>.

<sup>190</sup> Judith Warner, *Perfect Madness Motherhood in the Age of Anxiety* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2006), 51.

the home birth movement has had lasting effects on millennial mothers. A growing contingent of mothers seek to redefine breastfeeding as a natural and fulfilling biological function. Feminists have joined this effort, pointing to patriarchy as the primary culprit in the continued cultural perception that breastfeeding is erotic and unnatural. As this debate suggests, the cultural and political battle over the mother's body continues well into the twenty-first century.

Like the fierce debate over motherhood, the American family remains at the center of the contestation of American citizenship. Just recently, Indiana Governor Mike Pence's defended the controversial Religious Freedom Restoration Act, highlighting the need to protect "families of faith."<sup>191</sup> Opponents of the law charge that this law is retaliation for the state's legalization of same-sex marriage last year, thus legalizing discrimination of families who do not conform to the "traditional" heterosexual family model.<sup>192</sup> These contrasting definitions of family illustrate how intimately connected citizenship and family remain. The growing acceptance of same sex marriage and parenting challenges how we associate the duties and obligations of motherhood with the female body. While proponents of attachment mothering elevate the significance of the mother's body, gay couples challenge the necessity of biological motherhood in parenting. The multitude of parenting ideologies and family structures today do not

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<sup>191</sup> Governor Mike Pence interview with George Stephanopoulos, "Indiana Gov. Mike Pence Says Religious Freedom Law 'Absolutely Not' a Mistake," March 29, 2015, <http://abcnews.go.com/ThisWeek/video/gov-mike-pence-religious-freedom-law-29987447>.

<sup>192</sup> Michael Barbaro and Erik Eckholm, "Indiana Law Denounced as Invitation to Discriminate Against Gays," *The New York Times*, March 27, 2015, [http://www.nytimes.com/2015/03/28/us/politics/indiana-law-denounced-as-invitation-to-discriminate-against-gays.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/03/28/us/politics/indiana-law-denounced-as-invitation-to-discriminate-against-gays.html?_r=0).

necessarily fall into a political spectrum, but they do each propose their own vision of American citizenship.

Counterculture mothers understood this visionary component of motherhood. Through their home birth activism and construction of communal families, these women proposed a revolutionary social contract that eliminated oppressive social structures and empowered women. This utopian model was heavily based upon their perception of Cold War motherhood. Watching their mothers reconcile the image of the ideal suburban housewife with reality, counterculture women perceived the gleam of household appliances and lure of modern hospital births as the trappings of oppression. Their rebellion thus centered upon a rejection of the oppressive systems that had precipitated their mothers' simultaneous subjugation and allegiance to Cold War citizenship. These women recognized that the everyday tasks associated with motherhood fulfilled a much deeper obligation to the state.

Consequently, hippie mothers constructed an entirely new spatial environment in which to reimagine the relationship between mother and state. This uniquely fluid environment encouraged the development of a highly individualized self, free from the institutional systems that restricted their mothers. Even as they attacked the bourgeois qualities they so abhorred in mainstream society, mothers continued to imagine themselves as American citizens. Hippie women viewed their elimination of oppressive social structures as a reclamation, rather than a departure from, American values. Their radically redefined citizenship replaced the sterility and standardization of Cold War suburbia with the personal exploration of identity and human potential. Through their use of a range of spiritual methodologies and extended family structures, counterculture

women sought authentic human relationships free of social hierarchies, state interference, and industrial capitalism. The importance of personal exploration, however, dissociated the roles traditionally associated with motherhood from biological mothers. While mothers intended to create a truly free environment for their children, the result sometimes resembled parental neglect rather than freedom.

This model of communal motherhood proved to be short lived. Because of the necessity of the communal spatial structure, the social roles and tasks associated with hippie motherhood collapsed with the demise of communes in the mid-1970s. Out of the counterculture, however, came the home birth movement. Through an array of publications, conferences, and informal communication, countercultural women created a sisterhood that sought to restore knowledge and power to the female body. They supplanted the authority of male-dominated hospital births with the intuitive and spiritual wisdom of midwives and mothers. Merging difference feminism, hippie values, and red power rhetoric, home birth activists grounded women's power in their biological connection to the environment. As a result, a mother's powerful reproductive ability became linked to a broader obligation to protect the sovereignty of the earth. In emphasizing difference feminism, home birth activists connected countercultural values to the late 1970s conservative political and social platform.

The shift from communal motherhood to the home birth movement's emphasis on biological motherhood within the nuclear family paralleled a decade of social anxiety over the status of the American family. Social critics connected foreign policy failures, political disillusionment, and the liberal expansion of citizenship to the rapidly changing family structure. Consequently, the family became the center of efforts to bolster

American exceptionalism. Four decades later, a combination of domestic and foreign crises has brought about the same debate over the status of the American family.

Conservatives once again call for a return to traditional family values, while liberals emphasize the importance of an expanded definition of citizenship. This debate over citizenship and the social contract between citizen and state is not new; rather, it is a legacy of the political and social battles commenced half a century ago. Consequently, our own understanding of citizenship and motherhood is not necessarily modern. How we define our own social contract with the state and interact with society simply represents the circulation of old ideas in a new, progressive guise.

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