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Not in this family :: gays and the family of origin in North America, 1945-1990s/

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NOT IN THIS FAMILY: GAYS AND THE FAMILY OF ORIGIN IN NORTH AMERICA, 1945-1990s

A Dissertation Presented

by

HEATHER MURRAY

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
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History

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ABSTRACT

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MAY 2006

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This dissertation explores the relationship between gays and the family of origin in North America from 1945 to the early 1990s. Using personal correspondences, diaries, published and visual sources, I argue that the family has been a central preoccupation and animating force of gay culture, gay politics, and gay consciousness, and that gays in turn have shaped their parents' sensibilities and ideas of family intimacy. Beginning in the immediate postwar period, as companionate family styles became entrenched, gays and their parents revealed a mutual curiosity and intrigue between family members inherent in postwar family life. As the gay liberation and lesbian feminist movements developed, gays embraced a broad repeal of discretion about the personal and the sexual in their family lives, as well as in their own political and cultural articulations. During the AIDS crisis, however, gays began to esteem a closeness with their families based less on their recognition of sexuality and more on their material acts of care. Throughout, I also trace parents'early activist, advice, and memoir literature of the 1950s and 60s, and the turn to more formal organizations of the 1970s and 80s, most prominently, PFLAG (Parents,

Friends, and Families of Lesbians and Gays). The writings of both parents and children chart a unique history of family communication, as it moved from metaphor, code and discretion in the immediate postwar years, to direct revelations and even obligatory "coming outs" by the end of the century. In the process, I show how gay personal lives went from being intensely private, to political, and finally to public. Examining the relationship of family members who considered one another quite consciously over this time period, and who often straddled an uneasy balance between longings and estrangement, I reveal some of the most urgent concerns and tensions within postwar companionate families, including shifting meanings of family care and nurturance, and concepts of intergenerational obligation.

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INTRODUCTION

Throughout the 1970s and 80s, poet Elsa Gidlow, then an elderly woman, met a number of younger lesbians who considered her a lesbian icon. Gidlow had grown up in Quebec, but had settled in San Francisco in the 1920s, and she extolled the gay community she came upon there throughout the early part of the century. "Before every half-informed person had learned to mouth the jargon of the sexologists and psychiatrists to homosexuals," she insisted, "[individuals] respected one another's privacies" in day to day life no less so in their own families.[1] Gidlow's mother in fact had lived with her and her partner, something her lesbian visitors found intriguing, as many felt that their parents had rejected them to varying degrees. But Gidlow insisted that they see a paradox in seeking their parents' understanding. "Do we not," she would ask, "in challenging our parents' values, reject them?" She did not find it "fair to expect [a] continuance of unquestioning approval."[2]

Mocking a contemporary coming out scene, she insisted that she never would have considered taking her mother aside and saying, "Have you understood that my love and friendship for the women I lived with included *sex*?" In her view, telling parents would only bring about heartache and confusion and even prurience. "We are not responsible for the fantasies of others," she wrote. "All we can do is not contribute to them."[3] Gidlow went further in decrying a sexual voyeurism in the society at large, a corollary of a repeal of discretion that she discerned surrounding sexual matters. "Who has ordained, and on what authority, that we must supply the world with script and justification of our intimate interactions?", she asked.[4]

Elsa Gidlow's reflections offer an arresting assessment of both the revelation of the personal and the significance of sexuality within the family. Her call to privacy seems particularly out of sync with the relationships between gays and their parents in contemporary North America, when the coming out moment seems taken for granted as a significant and necessary ritual. The polite reticence that she described seems to have long since shattered.[5]

How can this shift be explained, between the mid-twentieth century, when Gidlow saw a fundamental rupture, and our own times? How did gays and their heterosexual parents observe, write about, and imagine one another in the postwar period? From the perspective of many cultural observers, gays have been largely orphans, adrift from relationships with parents and kinship ties as heterosexual families have known them. And yet, between the immediate postwar period and the 1990s, the family of origin, both as a lived relationship and a symbol, has been a central animating force and preoccupation of both gay culture and politics, and has shaped gay thought more broadly. Gays also have shaped the sensibilities of their families, provoking an analysis of the meanings of family intimacy and family activist politics. This is a study of the relationship between gays and their parents in North America between the 1950s and the 1990s. I acknowledge the depth and the subtlety of the family's influence on the intimate expressions of these individuals, but also on culture and politics, the realms in which gays and their families encountered each other, and even co-created one another.

Despite cultural ideas and images of gays 'coming out' to their families, or being excommunicated, the family of origin surprisingly has not been widely acknowledged by historians as a shaping force of either gay or family consciousness. In her historical

ethnography, anthropologist Kath Weston has explored the biological family as a contested concept for gays, arguing that gay kinship challenges the notion that procreation and biology constitute kinship; in her view, gay people have pioneered new meanings and the practice of kinship. Here "chosen" families--of friends, partners, activist communities and their own children--are considered to be the crucial, and even the sole, source of emotional and political sustenance for gays.[6] Other gay historians have assumed an existence of a chosen family as well, insofar as the gay historiography of the American postwar period has emphasized the formation of gay communities, gay activism, and the development of gay identities.

World War Two accelerated a broad recognition of gays as a distinct social group.[7] The War brought young men and women into same-sexed environments in the military and in defense production, and transplanted them in their formative years from rural to urban worlds. At the same time, as historians Estelle Freedman and John D'Emilio have shown, expanding job markets and the growth of consumer capitalism gave gay men and women the chance to live as single adults and form their own relationships outside their parents' homes. Psychology, so important to the war effort, had offered a re-evaluation of gays during this period, in its suggestion that homosexuality was a mental state, rather than a biological condition, as late nineteenth century and early twentieth century sexology would have deemed it. Ironically, these pathologizing portraits of gays projected homosexuality further into the realm of the human imagination. Examples of homosexual life stories abound in the psychological works of this period, as well as gay pulp fiction, and even Joseph McCarthy's accusations of gays, and suggested the existence of a community of gays, albeit a shadowy and

unsavoury one. This recognition set the stage for gay secrecy and discretion. But it also enkindled gay organizing during these years. The most prominent strain of the homophile rights movement during the 1950s and early 1960s argued that gays were mentally sound, respectable, normal, and in fact quite close to heterosexuals.[8]

The tenor of gay activism and gay cultural formations was less integrationist, and more unrepentant during the later 1960s and early 1970s. Shaped by the deepening rights consciousness of North American society, gays increasingly saw themselves as a minority deserving of these rights. Gay liberation developed a critique of heterosexuality, broadly conceived to include the nuclear family structure and hegemonic heterosexuality. In turn, a countercultural ethos suggested that traditional families curtailed self fulfillment, and this was especially so for gays who saw themselves as differing quite dramatically from "straight" society. The ritual of "coming out" to fellow gays and to heterosexual society during this period suggested that gays could unleash the inhibitions generated in having to keep their sexuality a secret. At the same time, during the 1970s, many lesbians were challenging the sexism within the gay liberation movement, finding the very category 'gay' to be wanting, denying their unique experience. Adapting the political framework of feminism, these lesbians offered their own critique of the limitations of love and personal relationships in a society dominated by heterosexuality and fashioned a perspective of lesbian feminism.[9]

The trauma and dislocations of AIDS in the 1980s prompted a significant re-evaluation of obligations between gays and within gay communities, as gays organized in caring networks, pursued better health care, and sought possible cures for their dying friends and partners. In the midst of the AIDS crisis, the New Right political movements

of the 1970s and 80s and their attention to the nuclear family, sexual morality, and traditionalism had put gays on the defensive. In the discourse of the New Right, gays were antithetical to the family-- rejected by their parents and society at large. In the face of the New Right, gay activism returned to a strategy of respectability and an increased attention to reformist rather than radical activism.

This story of postwar gay community, identity formation, and gay activism, however, neglects that families were always integral to these developments. Parents had in fact taken the cue from their children's own attempt to gain civil rights, and the initial parents' movement of the early 1970s built on those efforts, organizing for the rights of their gay children. By the 1980s, as the formalized, national movement of PFLAG (Parents, Friends, and Families of Lesbians and Gays) took hold, parents' organizing was as much for the parents themselves as it was for their children, as a perception developed that parents too had suffered within a homophobic society intolerant of their children's difference.

But even outside of this specific organization, parents of gays had long animated their children's political causes, their cultural formations, and their self conceptions. Fantasies of family permanence on the part of both gays and their parents spanned the postwar period. The family remained a symbol of care, cross-generational ties, and lasting relationships that shaped the revelations of gay selves, amidst anxieties or ideas about family excommunications. Gays incited their parents to ponder and re-evaluate ideas about sexuality and family love with particular intensity.

The postwar period honoured and dramatized the nuclear family. Families became more inward looking, and relationships between parents and children more direct, less

mediated by extended family relationships. This was particularly the case for white, middle class families. On the surface, children and parents also had more privacy from each other in this family setting, as home ownership increased and suburbs grew. But these family formations increasingly expected mutual intimate revelations, as well as affectionate companionship.[10] Companionate family styles, of course, have a history that long pre-dates the postwar period. The ethos of families that are economically useless and emotionally priceless, as Arlene Skolnick put it, developed amongst the middle classes in the early twentieth century.[11] The term "companionate marriage" was coined by Ben Linsey in the book by the same title during the 1920s. Yet, the profound social dislocations of the Depression years and World War Two had put this notion of family life on hold until the social changes of the postwar years allowed for higher incomes, younger marriages, and more children, and in turn a greater sense of parental investment and hope in those children.[12] Families during the postwar years were celebrated for their relationships based on affection and mutual interests, and yet these families often seem perched uncertainly between the expectations of newer, affectionate families and the pragmatic style of family life that had helped see them through times of crisis.[13] This ambiguity about the purpose of family life endured throughout the postwar period. Family relationships in general were fraught with the expectation--and failure--of parents and their children to know one another intimately. This sense is captured uniquely by gay children and their parents who pondered each other as family members more consciously and thus provide a lens through which to explore the tensions and strains within these postwar affectionate families. The deepening recognition of the private, affective lives of children, as well as more vast representations of gay selfhood throughout this period

would set the stage for family clashes and an ongoing negotiation about generational obligations and the meanings of family love.

A sense of the unknown in fact seemed to reside at the heart of these companionate families. The question "who are you?"-- implicitly posed between family members-- was illuminated most poignantly by parents with gay children. Gay writings and ideas of the family of origin allow for a charting of a unique history of family communication, as it moved from metaphor and code in the immediate postwar years, to direct revelations and knowledge of one another by the end of the century. This dynamic of communication ironically placed gays and their families at the heart of the growing conflicts--and paradoxes--surrounding twentieth century ideas about privacy and discretion, including the attempt to guard privacy fiercely and the intense curiosity surrounding private realms. Gays and their parents often found themselves straddling these impetuses.

This is not just a story of chasms between generations and the ways they interacted however, but chasms and the relationship between the cultures of heterosexuality and homosexuality. Historian George Chauncey has suggested that gays are parallel to an ethnic group, given the distinctive language, folklore, values, and sense of style that developed in gay subcultures.[14] My study suggests that many gays saw themselves as having an ethnic affiliation that their parents did not share; thus, gay children represent not only a generational separation, but a cultural one. However, it is not only gays who are culture-bearers: heterosexuality also has a distinct lore, one which was depicted and symbolized by gays in their political, writing, and artistic culture

throughout this time period, just as homosexuality was by parents. External cultural observers likewise portrayed both gays and their parents, and families both reacted to and shaped this set of observations.

The period from 1945 to the 1990s was a time in which a visible gay writing culture, publications and politics emerged, and a parents' movement and literature appeared. I recognize that historical periodizations can be somewhat arbitrary. Sensibilities can flow into each time period, or be revived; individuals can become vessels for the past and have a sensibility that seems oddly out of place for their time and generation. I try to take these strains into account, but nonetheless I have developed a periodization based on broad articulations of both gay politics and culture, including homophile activism, gay liberation and lesbian feminism, the PFLAG movement, as well as AIDS activism. While this study examines both American and Canadian sources, it is not a sustained comparison between the two nations. I do take an often different Canadian gay historical narrative into account, however, and I draw on some Canadian sources.

Historical, literary and visual sources for this study reveal my central themes of privacy, the negotiations of gay selfhood, conceptions of family emotion and intimacy, and generational chasms. I explore private, introspective writings, particularly personal correspondences and diaries, as well as published memoirs, fiction, poetry, song lyrics, movies, visual and print media, and artistic representations. I also examine the explicitly political dimensions of gay culture, particularly the literature and advertising of gay social movements and PFLAG. The period I explore documents an explosion of gay publications, especially with respect to gay periodicals and the gay press. These years

also saw a proliferation in genre writing such as self help literature. In all of these sources, my sample is necessarily a group of thoughtful, sentient observers of their lives, their families, and their societies. Many were writers, artists, and political activists, who perhaps were more experimental in their lifestyle and philosophical in their personality type. Moreover, many parents who have left written records of their reactions to their children's gayness, or who participated in activism on behalf of their gay children may have been unusually observant and prepared to express their thoughts and feelings. What is put forth in these written and artistic media is not necessarily a reflection of how people lived. Moreover, these subjects are disproportionately white and middle class. Given this slant of the sources, I do not claim to look at the typical experience or ideas of gays and lesbians and their parents, but rather an intriguing sample of thinkers who allow me to examine subjects often left unspoken, censored, or unpreserved.

One way of thinking about these sources is to bear in mind that these were the reflections of those who maintained some sort of family relationship, in their consciousness if not in their daily lives. This study makes no attempt to establish that gays were or were not banished from their families in the postwar period. Nonetheless, my research has been dependent upon archives that have been both revelatory and limiting, in the sense that those who wrote, and those who saved, might have been more likely to have maintained some level of family integration. Thus, the very source base might push my analysis in a direction that assumes an overlap between the lives of parents and their gay children. I have tried to take this tendency into account, by focusing on the feelings and symbolization that surrounded and animated the family relationship,

as they were articulated in not only intimate writings, but in the broader culture and politics.

What drives this study, and perhaps where this study departs from other cultural and intellectual histories, is a question of what brings individuals—in this case, gays and their parents—to write, represent, or have fantasies about their family lives. The individuals I have written about often expressed themselves at moments of profound transformation, for instance after an unexpected conversation or harrowing encounter with a family member. I have tried to approach my sources with the view that these representations could be responses to family longings, and that imagination, symbols and reality do not necessarily trump each other, but are always commingled. Abstract as these questions are, they are central to this cultural and intellectual history, and integral to the history of gays and their families. Not only figures who were necessarily estranged from each other, or who unconditionally accepted one another, gays and their parents have left behind a complex, contradictory and rich history.

[1] Elsa Gidlow, Elsa: I Come With My Songs, The Autobiography of Elsa Gidlow (San Francisco: Druid Heights, 1986), 301 and 302.

[2] Ibid., 303.

[3] Ibid., 305.

[4] Ibid., 301.

[5] In her analysis of Gidlow and Liz Boyer Reinstein, Elizabeth Kennedy suggested that for segments of the upper class during the 1920s and 30s, and for the artistic circle in which Gidlow traveled, all sexuality was deemed a strictly personal matter. Thus in this context a lesbian relationship might be viewed as parallel to a heterosexual affair, and "graciously ignored." See Kennedy, "But We Would Never Talk About It: The Structures of Lesbian Discretion in South Dakota, 1928-1933," p. 15-39 in Ellen Lewin, ed., Inventing Lesbian Cultures in America (Boston: Beacon, 1996), 38.

[6] See Kath Weston, Families We Choose: Lesbians, Gays and Kinship (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 35. See also Ellen Lewin, Lesbian Mothers: Accounts of Gender in American Culture (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993) and Katherine Arnup, Lesbian Parenting: Living with Pride and Prejudice (Charlottetown, P.E.I.: Gynergy Books, 1995). See also Ellen Herman, "All in the Family: Lesbian Motherhood Meets Unpopular Psychology in a Dysfunctional Era," in Lewin,ed., Inventing Lesbian Cultures in America, 83-104.

[7] I should note here that George Chauncey has shown a viable gay culture well before World War Two in his work Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940 (New York: Basic Books, 1994). Elizabeth Kennedy and Madeline Davis have done the same for the working-class lesbian community living in Buffalo, New York. See Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold: The History of a Lesbian Community (New York: Penguin, 1993), which looks at the 1930s-60s. These works show how gay communities formed by claiming public spaces for socializing and performing. The bifurcation between public and private is not rigid in these works; Kennedy's interview correspondents, for example, talked about how they negotiated their family relationships (see p. 57).

[8] Much of this gay historiography has been social history or history with an ethnography approach. On the public presence of gays within commercial establishments and political activist circles, see for example John D'Emilio's work of the postwar period, Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of a Homosexual Minority in the United States, 1940-1970 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983 and 1998), as well as Gary Kinsman's The Regulation of Desire: Sexuality in Canada (Montreal: Black Rose, 1987), which looks to gays as civil rights activists, in a study of sexual regulation and resistance in Canada from the colonial period through the postwar era. David Johnston has looked to the cold war persecution of gays in The Lavender Scare: The Cold War Persecution of Gays and Lesbians in the Federal Government (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), while Allan Berube and Paul Jackson have both explored the gay social presence in the World War Two military in the United States and Canada respectively. See Berube's Coming Out Under Fire: The History of Gay Men and Women in World War Two (New York: Penguin, 1991) and Jackson's One of the Boys: Homosexuality in the Military During World War Two (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2004). For gay community studies, see Brett Beemyn, ed. Creating a Place for Ourselves: Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Community Histories (New York: Routledge, 1997). One full-length study to have emerged from this work is Marc Stein's City of Sisterly and Brotherly Loves: Lesbian and Gay Philadelphia, 1945-1972 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000). Finally, see John D'Emilio and Estelle Freedman, Intimate Matters: A History of Sexuality in America (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997; 1988), especially 288-295.

[9] See, for example, Margaret Cruikshank, The Gay and Lesbian Liberation Movement (New

York: Routledge, 1992) and Deborah Goleman Wolf, The Lesbian Community (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979).

[10] While it has been suggested by some historians that the post-Freudian age valued a natural expression of the sexual interests of the child, and regarded suppression as something to cause individual and social problems such as insanity, this interest in expressive communication about sexuality did not necessarily apply to gays. See Sterling Fishman, "A History of Childhood Sexuality." *Journal of Contemporary History* 17 (1982): 269-283.

[11] Arlene Skolnick, Embattled Paradise: The American Family in an Age of Uncertainty (New York: Basic Books, 1991), xviii. See also Tamara Hareven, "Family Time and Historical Time." *Daedalus* (Spring 1977): 57-70.

[12] See Steven Mintz and Susan Kellogg, Domestic Revolutions: A Social History of American Family Life (New York: Free Press, 1988), as well as Steven Mintz, Huck's Raft: A History of American Childhood (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004). On parental investment, see Antoine Prost and Gerard Vincent, Riddles of Identity in Modern Times, 5, ed. Phillipe Aries and Georges Duby, History of Private Life (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 490 ff. See also John N. Edwards "The Future of the Family Revisited" in Joann S. and Jack R. DeLora, eds., Intimate Life Styles: Marriage and its Alternatives (Pacific Pallisades, CA: Goodyear Publishing, 1972), p. 348-357 and Sharon Hays, Cultural Contradictions of Motherhood (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996), 45 and 46.

[13] This was the case even with the validation of introspection and family analysis provoked by psychology's ascent in the immediate postwar years, and by self help movements in the later postwar years. Lynn Jamieson, Intimacy: Personal Relationships in Modern Societies (Malden, MA: Blackwell's, 1998), 41.

[14] See again Chauncey's Gay New York.

CHAPTER 1

DAUGHTERS AND SONS FOR THE REST OF THEIR LIVES

In the fall of 1945, after finishing his tour of duty in Hawaii, a 21 year old William Billings wrote a long and momentous letter to his parents, in Arkansas City, Kansas, where he had grown up. Billings was contemplating coming home and going to college with funds from the G.I. Rights Bill. But he needed to tell his parents something first. He began by saying that since he had been away from Kansas's "provinciality and small town-ness", he felt he now understood, whether his family "recognized it or not, [that] the world is emerging from the Victorian Era and beliefs."[1] Though he pointed out that his enlightenment about "the facts of life" did not come from his parents, he reassured them that "no, darlings, I don't blame you." Nonetheless, he asked them: "Didn't it ever occur to you that certain tendencies I possess pointed in only one direction long, long before I was aware of it?" If they *had* seen "what I was heading for, you didn't face it. You were afraid to face the truth!.....Well, dearest ones, think again. The inevitable is there. If you haven't faced the truth, please do it now. Let's quit playing 'Blind Man's Bluff.'"[2] Billings trusted that his parents knew to equate his "certain tendencies" with being gay.

On the surface, this revelation was more practical than it was emotional. His central purpose was not to invite his parents to know him better, nor was it to share an intimate aspect of his life, but to discuss the matter-of-fact consequences. "[I]n facing facts, truths as they are, it has of course been necessary to arrive at certain decisions," he announced.[3] These words of finality-- "facts" or "truths"-- conveyed what he considered

the fixed and unchangeable character of his tendencies. In his view, it would be pointless to try to "erase inborn (maybe hereditary) traits" or to "blot out environment (and mine was feminine from beginning to end)."[4] He assured his parents that he did not "intend to let it wreck my life nor warp the pleasing attributes of my personality" and reminded them that "the ancient Greek civilization" was "practically based on it and its civilization flourished."[5] Still, he told his parents that they should feel "perfectly free and at ease with this opportunity to change [my homecoming plans] for me. I mean that. No person loves his home and family more than I, but I am cognizant--too--that it is your home to say who shall enter. After all, you are much older and your opinions on life are set in concrete. You may not feel it within the realm of your principles, ethics, and standards to accept this that I have declared."[6] Though he did not call himself a gay man per se, by page ten of his thirteen page letter, he left no doubt: "[t]o state it inviolably so there can be no question in your mind, the sum and substance of the whole thing is briefly this: I am strongly attracted to members of my own sex!"[7]

Billings seemed prepared to forfeit his family relationships and assume an utterly independent adulthood. He would have preferred to have his family in his life, of course, but he did not harbour specific ideas about what this "much older" generation owed the younger one, particularly when their children were gay. He equated his parents with the "principles, ethics and standards" of their generation that presumably could not countenance the possibility of a gay child.

A sample of gay writers who, like Billings, would become teachers, or figures in the arts or literary world, suggests that for these individuals, the immediate postwar period was a time of self awareness about same sex attractions, including what those

attractions revealed about the nature of their true selves. In turn, these gays had to negotiate how, or whether or not, they would give expression to this gay self in the family context. The picture that emerges here is one of ambivalence about the family as a theatre of self revelation, as well as a certain uneasiness about the very meaning of being a family member in a postwar companionate family. In a society keenly attuned to rumour and false appearances, the question of who family members really were was a pressing one.[8] The very fact of being gay during this era seemed to mark these writers as nonconformists not just within the family but within a culture that increasingly suggested polarities between conformity and nonconformity.

Throughout World War Two, the American military observed potential gay recruits, instituting mandatory screening and discharge policies regarding homosexuals. Nonetheless, for Billings, the War had spurred on self-understanding, by demonstrating that being gay was a recognizable social condition. Even if gay men and women existed at the borders of military culture, the recognition of a gay potential within this homosocial context gave gay men and women a presence in social life.[9] In fact, one perceived consequence of a society at war was sexual expression and relationships outside of the structures of marriage and family life which could potentially recast sexuality and gender roles. Thus, heterosexual desire, expressed between married couples, emerged more firmly as an ideal.[10] The idea of the middle class companionate or affectionate family, a family valued for the emotional rather than economic presence of its members, was a long-term historical development, having its roots at the turn of the century and throughout the early twentieth century, only to be disrupted, as an ideology and a reality, during the Depression and both world wars.[11] After World War Two,

however, kinship strategies, especially in white, middle-class families, were shifting definitively as the relationship with older parents, the extended family, and local community ties became more distant, and the relationship with this chosen, companionate family, reinforced by culture, became more intense.[12]

Billings wanted to have both a family of his own and an ongoing relationship with his parents. He thought he could ease his parents' disquiet by exonerating them from causing his sexuality. He emphasised that his "feminine" environment while growing up had merely reinforced his "nature." He told his parents that they might be interested to know that "almost invariably a person of my type is irrevocably attached to his mother....from his earliest years. In the case of a girl, she is usually attached as strongly to her father. Why this is, I don't know. Just Nature's way, I guess. So you see, when I used to play with girls even then the future was being formulated."[13] Still, he did not want his parents to rue their son's fate. "Please don't go to pieces over this," he said, "It's not as bad as all that." Then, he gave his parents even more reason for hope: "I may....marry out of duty, convention, and my love of children. If I cannot love my mate romantically, I will at least have a deep and abiding admiration for her."[14] He even perceived being gay as something of an advantage in finding a woman to marry: "You know, it's almost a joke: girls, you're as safe with me as with your own mother-- ha. That's why they like fellas like me, we aren't trying to feel them up and rape them all the time. Maybe that's a consolation-- ha."[15] His predictions about his chances with women were not wrong. Billings was to marry, and have three children.

The irreverent, somewhat cavalier, and humourous depiction of his own sexuality was at times belied by Billings' reassurances in this letter. On the one hand, his language

seems inflected with a campy sense of fun, in referring to his parents as "darlings" and "dearest ones" and punctuating his somewhat raunchy descriptions of "feeling up" and "rape" with a *ha*. Although the parodies and exaggerations of camp as gay culture and sensibility had seen their heyday in the 1920s and 30s, traces of this theatrical gay past lingered in the social milieu of World War Two that Billings had just experienced, and perhaps this way of communicating defused his revelation to his parents.[16] Nonetheless, he recognized that his parents could go "to pieces" over his revelation, demonstrating an understanding of just how weighty, from their perspective, his disclosure must have been.

Other gay adults were considerably more reticent with their parents during the immediate postwar years. Throughout the same period, Robert Leach, a professor, Quaker, and peace activist never told his mother about his attractions to men, despite acknowledging these desires to himself. Unlike Billings, however, Leach believed that he could manipulate these desires and alter his self. He felt that he could make a go of heterosexuality, and not simply in a platonic way. He would do so by seeking psychiatric treatment for what he considered an inner predicament, not his unalterable being.

Leach's faith in self-alteration and rehabilitation not only mirrored more widely held postwar beliefs in the possibility of adjusting or radically altering personal presentation, but also Freudian notions of homosexuality as a life stage.[17] According to Freud, everyone's sexuality was homosexual in part, and it was predominantly so during the early life phases.[18] Freud's famous letter to an American mother, written in 1935 but published widely to American readers in 1951, pronounced homosexuality neither an illness nor a crime, but quite simply a neutral variation.[19] But this observation was not representative of the psychiatric ideas on homosexuality that would take hold in North

America, especially during World War Two and the postwar period. As psychiatry gained respect and prestige as a wartime military function, North American followers of Freud refashioned his ideas.[20] Perhaps most relevant to gays was a rejection of a notion of universal bisexuality, and an emphasis that a heterosexual drive, present in all individuals, could be summoned to the surface through analysis.[21] Upon the creation of the American Psychiatric Association's first Diagnostic and Statistical Manual in 1952 (the DSM-1), homosexuality was considered a sociopathic personality disturbance, rather than an innate condition.[22]

While Freud only gestured to the family types most likely to produce homosexuals, including the notorious family figures of the distant, weak father and the dominant mother, American psychiatrists were more likely to insist on them.[23] This family model even seemed to become part of a gay slang during this period. Billings' reference to his intense attachment to his mother and his feminine environment as a child indicates at least some cognizance of psychiatric types in this era. The idea of family environments as agents of homosexuality in fact spurred on Robert Leach's own analysis of his personal past and his mother's hand in shaping his sexuality. Though Leach had been a Conscientious Objector during World War Two and therefore was not screened as a prospective soldier, he was intrigued by the opportunity for intellectual introspection that analysis seemed to provide, and appreciated psychiatry as a means to analyse his family critically. His psychiatric sessions would become a central subject of his letters to his mother.

In 1950, when he was in his early 30s, Leach found a psychiatrist who was "about my age." He considered his first session to be "a happy time."[24] Leach was a professor in

North Carolina then, and during the summer of his first treatments, wrote to his mother, Mary, to explain why he would not be returning to his hometown of South Ashburnham, Massachusetts for a long visit that year. He told her he was having some "psychiatric work done" because "I have a mental problem of many years standing, which is now ready for solution. I have been seeing the doctor twice weekly."[25] Such was his first reticent explanation of his psychiatric treatments. This news might have brought his mother face to face with the idea that her son's private life was more complex than she had imagined, if indeed she even had imagined it. But let him have a private life she did. In her letter back to him, she wrote that she was disappointed she would not get to see him as soon as she hoped but "[y]ou are very wise to have treatments for whatever troubles you. I am very glad that you are finding the solution. Perhaps you will feel like telling me about it while you are here. But if you don't feel like it, I will understand."[26]

Even if homosexuality had been in her mind, her son did not give her much reason to suspect it, and instead cast his therapy as treatments for a misbegotten childhood. Because Leach's mother admitted that she knew little about psychology, and the gap between them-in education, wealth, and experience--was so large, Leach became an authority with her on the subject. He was not shy about relaying what he felt were her parenting problems. One of the central handicaps in their family, as he and his psychiatrist perceived it, was Mrs. Leach's cloying gestures of love including the "many pictures of me (and [sister] Mary) in the house [which were] of course evidence of such fixation." Then he told her that the consequence of this smothering love was "dependency--which for excellent but mistaken motive you have helped build in me."[27] Consciously or not, Leach had suggested an idea of momism, a characterization of a

stifling mother with nothing in her life to preoccupy her but children, popularized by such authors as Philip Wylie in his 1942 work *A Generation of Vipers*.[28] Raising children in the 1910s and 1920s, mothers of Mrs. Leach's generation were parents before these widespread cultural critiques of mothers. In an earlier letter in 1945, she had even admitted, on her son's 29th birthday, that she "wished that I had known about some of the modern ways of bringing up children" when her son was younger.[29] Without knowing the shibboleths or critiques of "modern" parenting, Mrs. Leach might not have drawn any connection between her son's suggestion of maternal dependency or certain mothering types and homosexuality.

Without making the topic of homosexuality explicit, however, Leach did veer into the sexual realm when discussing his psychiatrist's observations about his Oedipus Complex. "I suppose the hardest thing to realize is the incestuous overtones in our relationship which neither of us have recognized, and which need to be redeemed (not ignored) if I am to really mature," he said.[30] Never directly confronting her son's charge, Mrs. Leach began her response tentatively, saying that she was glad his doctor "helped you and that you can now go forward to a more satisfying and normal way of life."[31] She then pointed out that "[y]ou have a great deal to be thankful for--health, strength and a reasonable amount of brains..... Do think on these things and be happy. And if you can find the right girl, get married. Don't worry about supporting me, I can get old age assistance."[32] Not only did she urge her son to take stock of the promising parts of his life, but she also relieved him of an obligation to get married, and to look after her, recognizing a shift away from an economic reciprocity between parents and children, more characteristic of an earlier family form. By implication, she also might have been

relieving him of the obligation to be heterosexual. He was not beholden to her or her expectations in any respect.

But her son seemed to hold her accountable to a reciprocity that was introspective or emotional rather than fiscal. She owned that she realized she had made "many mistakes" in parenting, "but I did what I thought was right. I am sorry for whatever I did wrong....But I didn't know that I made either of you feel dependent on me."[33] The mother's tone of pain and reticence and also a slight defensiveness perhaps speaks to the somewhat impossible situation she had been placed in, that of apologising for ideas that simply were not in her bailiwick. What *had* been in her sphere of reference was another dimension found in religion, not psychoanalysis. She wrote that when she was growing up "life seemed so much more simple. We never thought about what we inherited from our folks. We just went ahead and did the best we could. Maybe it would have helped to understand more--but I found that faith in God.....carried me through. Instead of too much introspection, I found peace [in religion]."[34] This comment suggests a chasm between generations in their interpretations of feelings and self expression, as well as a chasm in the expectations about what one generation owes to the next. More pragmatic than her son, Mrs. Leach also might have cherished more intense feelings of privacy; she simply might not have considered such deeply personal matters suitable for family conversation.[35] A woman of her Victorian generation, particularly one who lived in a small town and did not have the opportunity for formal education, might have lacked a language to describe subconscious or unconscious motivations, and she might have felt directly accused of something unfathomable. The entire conversation might have seemed confusing to her, precisely because Leach stated the source of his problems, his

homosexual attractions, only obliquely, couched in the vague language of dependency, the past, and the family. Still, perhaps it was gratifying for Leach when his mother promised in her next letter, "I shall get a good Psychology text and read up on all these things."[36]

Leach saw his gay attractions as a barrier to his happiness and a family life. He was not completely amiss in imagining this to be the case. During the early 1950s when Leach was writing to his mother, gays were emerging as symbols of scandal and subversion in the public imagination, or at best, nonconformity. Ironically, at the very moment when the conformity of the "masses" was causing some disquiet among intellectuals who wished to set themselves apart from the thoughtless herd, Leach was a gay intellectual for whom feelings of nonconformity and freakishness were most troubling.[37]

Even the popular sociology of the 1950s held up gays as symbols of nonconformity in American life.[38] In Must You Conform?, (1956) Robert Lindner singled out homosexuals as embodiments of unorthodoxy, suggesting that society did not despise homosexuality because of its sinful nature but because of its uncommonness. However, Lindner had found something admirable about homosexuality if only for its flouting of the conventions of the Mass Man.[39] In widely read and powerful social critiques that used psychoanalytic concepts, such as David Riesman's *The Lonely Crowd* (1950), the "other-directed" or peer-oriented persona of his age constantly sought the affirmation of others, rather than looking inward to develop a deeper, more individual sense of character. Postwar existential philosophers such as Jean-Paul Sartre also emphasised trusting deep, genuine feelings and convictions to attain a sense of

authenticity.[40] However, for gays, this "inner direction" might have been too painful to apprehend, if they dared let themselves ponder it. Leach had indeed recognized his inner character but took refuge and solace in the idea of developing an appearance of heterosexuality. Like Billings, Leach would go on to marry and have children. Reflecting on his younger years, he declared that he had been "determined to try to marry" because "the psychological pressure on me from my parents and background was enormous."[41] By 1959, married and with two children, he noted with satisfaction that he was "well situated in the middle, a solid conventional member of society."[42]

Leach might have felt that marrying and having a heterosexual relationship reflected a degree of conscientiousness and maturity: to stay homosexual would be to renege on the commitments of adult life.[43] His impetus to keep up an appropriate position in the life cycle was thus also a part of his desire to assume a conventional life. A celebration of the nuclear family model in the 1950s, a spirit that saw a physical expression in household zoning regulations in major North American cities to prevent "unrelated persons" from living together, fostered an idea that those living outside this family model, such as the unmarried and the childless, were selfish and potentially deviant figures.[44] As a married man with children, Leach could protect himself from these charges.

In fact, Leach's stance reflects a wider strain of gay thought and debates about the embrace of conformity versus a celebration of nonconformity. Those who began publishing *ONE*, an early gay rights magazine, in 1953, felt that a sense of gay difference and open rebellion from the rest of society was necessary and beneficial.[45] Others regarded the impetus towards nonconformity as something quite hollow and

disingenuous, not to mention unattainable. Writing an essay on the benefits of gay integration with the broader society in a lesbian periodical in 1957, Barbara Stephens portrayed alienation as somewhat fashionable and shallow, and urged gays to see why they should commingle with heterosexual families and neighbourhoods, even in the face of "the reported....evil of conformity-worship among the masses."[46] Like Leach, Stephens called attention to an unacknowledged privilege in having the luxury to afford being different, or choosing the subject position of uniqueness. Such viewpoints were not simply examples of the so called "silent generation" of the young during the 1950s, seemingly out of touch with larger political issues and concerned solely with popularity, appearance, and getting ahead financially, as some historians have suggested of this cohort.[47] Leach was hardly a thoughtless robot, passively absorbing the gloomy messages about gays and grasping at the trappings of heterosexual conventionality, yet he remained unwavering in his desire for integration by seeking to acknowledge his gay feelings only inwardly, and creating a respectable, public self, as a professor and family man. In so doing, Leach felt that he could lead more of a multifaceted life.

Even those gays, like William Billings, who were perhaps more keenly in touch with their sexuality and more enthusiastic about being gay, were not about to embrace their gay selves exclusively or wholeheartedly. At times, the stigma of being gay was not simply imagined or observed in the culture at large, but became a tragic reality, as it did for Billings. While living in Denver, Billings was arrested in 1955 for having consensual sex with another man. Devastated by this charge against her son, Mrs. Billings wrote to the *Denver Post* from Kansas in 1955, as her son had been charged under the Sex Law of Colorado, part of a series of postwar "sexual psychopath" laws enacted by more than half

of the United States during the postwar period. These allowed for gays to be legitimately arrested for having consensual sex in both public and private places and recommended time in mental institutions for the transgressor.[48] Mrs. Billings noted that her son's teaching career--a particularly precarious profession for gay men during this period-- was over and his "whole future....absolutely ruined" owing to a sentence worse than what "criminals who kill, steal, mutilate, molest women and children" received.[49] As Estelle Freedman has pointed out, rapists who did not murder their victims could be taken as more natural than men who committed consensual and nonviolent sodomy in the postwar period.[50] In fact, postwar North American society had constructed the homosexual stranger as the figure most likely to be a pedophile, seducing youth into becoming gay, an account of molestation that was in keeping with notions of homosexuality as a symbol for a range of perversions during this era.[51] In Mrs. Billings' estimation, adult/child sexual contact of any kind was the crime most worthy of punishment, and these cases, as she rightly pointed out, were often not homosexual. She had read in the Colorado paper of a man "molesting an 11 year old girl" who had been given a minor sentence and paroled. "Wasn't that a far worse crime than our son committed?", she asked. "Oh, it can't be justice!" Though the act her son had committed, sex with another man, was "as repulsive to me as you," she felt that her son merited "treatment" just as "any other afflicted person" did, instead of time in a penitentiary. She concluded by saying that she and her husband were "heartsick and heart broken," and "disgraced, hurt, and grieved." Already suffering from "severe heart trouble", her son's one fateful violation of this "unreasonable law" was going to "send us to our graves."[52]

As with Billings, many gays in this period were subject to random police arrests and crackdowns even in specific gay venues such as bars or cruising areas in this period, and their names subsequently could be released to newspapers.[53] Moreover, private venues such as parked cars were fair game for a police arrest, as NAACP activist Bayard Rustin experienced in 1953.[54] Entrapment for solicitation or even loitering was so widely acknowledged that homosexual civil rights activists printed pamphlets entitled "What to do if You're Arrested."[55] Sometimes families were perceived as a part of this state and police surveillance. In "A Minneapolis Father Discovers His Son's Homosexuality" in the *Minneapolis Star* in 1955, readers were told of a father who followed his son and contacted the police in order to catch him in a homosexual act and attempt to reform him.[56]

Internal family exposure was in fact as prominent a fear as exposure before the broader community. Writer Marge McDonald feared the friends and acquaintances within her own orbit more than law enforcers. Her most central burden was protecting her family from the unthinkable disappointment she perceived they would feel over her sexuality. After her father died when she was five years old, McDonald was raised by her mother, and her deeply religious aunt, Dora. In fact, McDonald believed that her mother and Aunt Dora already felt ashamed of her because she was a divorcee. By 1953, when she was in her early 20s, McDonald embarked on a life as a single working woman and in 1955 became employed in an insurance company in Columbus, Ohio. She left behind a series of intense and heart rending diaries about coming to terms with her sexuality during these years. She confided in one diary entry that "it would hurt [my mother and Aunt Dora] deeply.....to know that their 'baby' was a homosexual."[57] Tellingly, she used

the word 'hurt' rather than 'embarrass' or 'shame'; she did not separate parental hurt and shame, and nor did she challenge these responses as illegitimate perceptions. Imagining her family's heartache contributed to her fears that they might find her out. She feared, for example, that a spurned lover might reveal her sexuality: one ex-girlfriend had even threatened to expose their relationship by mailing all of their letters to her mother and Aunt Dora. Naturally, McDonald wrote in her diary, this threat "weighed heavily on my mind."[58]

Yet even these threats did not push McDonald to reveal her sexuality to her family. She imagined that her family, if told, would be appalled enough to orchestrate forceful and invasive psychiatric treatment. Unlike Leach who had the financial and educational resources to choose or reject psychiatric sessions, McDonald felt more vulnerable as a divorced, working-class woman. In turn, she did not perceive psychiatry as an intellectual boon, but more a terrifying experience that included lobotomies. McDonald wrote passionately in her diary in 1959 that "[n]o one ever has the right to tamper with the human brain--to use the 'ice pick', to slash it beyond repair--destroying emotion....it is monstrous and inhuman."[59] Throughout her adult life, she had suffered from bouts of depression, at least some of which were incurred by the problems she faced in coming to grips with her sexuality and relationships. She was convinced that if she were ever committed to an asylum, "my family....would give their permission [for a lobotomy] if they told them it would help me.....[because] they do not know of such things."[60] McDonald also felt that her girlfriend's mother would get her daughter a lobotomy if she ever found out about their relationship, and averred that she could "see myself killing her mother for giving permission for such a monstrous thing."[61] Before the

advent of pharmacological treatments for depression, there was indeed no shortage of desperate family members willing to pursue lobotomies for their children; lobotomies still were performed--though to a lesser extent than in the 1930s and 40s-- throughout the 1950s in the United States for melancholia, and they were more frequently performed on women.[62] This reality, as well as widespread images of catatonia and invasiveness in 1950s North American popular culture, might have informed McDonald's imagination.[63] Her fear of becoming an emotionless automaton speaks to a desire to maintain individuality and a refusal to compromise her inner character, even if it had to be hidden.

These preoccupations and anxieties about getting caught and displaying homosexuality outwardly resonated with broader emphases of gay activism during the 1950s and early 1960s, the heyday of homophile-era publications. 'Homophile', a name not readily identifiable to the general public or censors, denoted advocacy for homosexuals.[64] The earliest homophile activist societies, the Mattachine Society, for gay men, and the Daughters of Bilitis, for gay women, were founded in California in 1950 and 1955, respectively. Each produced their own periodicals primarily emphasising advocacy and public education, while providing a forum for religious and psychiatric opinion pieces regarding homosexuality. The earliest of these were Mattachine's bi-monthly *ONE* (1953-68, 1972), the monthly *Mattachine Review* (1955-66), and the DOB's monthly magazine, *The Ladder* (1956-72).[65]

For the activists writing in these journals, the reaction of the family of origin to homosexuality was one of the central difficulties in gay life. Although homophiles in this period typically focussed on public activities, including picketing and demonstrations, they also fostered "inner-directed" activities, aimed at private life, in which gays were

urged to be open about their sexuality and "drop the mask."[66] In this vein, homophiles recognized that identifying gays as family members was a potent political statement. In a common advertisement in the homophile periodicals of this era, a drawing of a man wrenching his face in his hands, with the title "How Can I Ever Face the World?" declared that "This man....is cut off from his family, his country, and his God". Yet, "there may be as many as 15 million other men and women like him in the U.S.....You undoubtedly know some of them. They could even be your own son or daughter."[67]

A central preoccupation of these homophile writers was a fantasy of gay banishment from the family, and from the polity, embodied in "How Can I Ever Face the World?", where the homosexual man was depicted as being cut off not just from his family but from his religion and his country.[68] Tellingly, a major documentary on homosexuality in this period was entitled quite simply, "The Rejected."[69] Homophiles placed this plight as a fundamental homosexual oppression in need of redress. As activist Ken Burns noted in his address at the Third Annual Convention of the Mattachine Society in 1956, "if the homosexual cannot receive love and compassion from those who have given him his existence..... then where must he turn?" He called this problem "tragic!"[70]

The homophile notion of gay banishment in fact resonated with a more far-reaching cultural script of the family lives of gays during this period that essentially deemed gays orphans. Edmund Bergler was one psychoanalyst who contributed to this script. He had previously criticized sexologist Alfred Kinsey for exaggerating the numbers of homosexuals in American society, in Kinsey's studies of sexuality in men and women.[71] In Bergler's 1959 work, *1000 Homosexuals: Conspiracy of Silence, or*

Curing and Deglamorizing Homosexuals?, he wrote that a first response of parents was to throw their gay children out of the house or to disinherit them.[72] Gay fiction, particularly gay pulp fiction that marketed stories of gays as a taste of deviant life, frequently presented the theme of family leavetaking, with homosexual characters fleeing their families in rural towns or farming communities for the privacy and independence of large cities.[73] In departing for the city, some gay characters were depicted as lost to a shadowy, underground world of homosexual communities, such as Ben Travis' character, Ray, in *The Strange Ones* (1959), who becomes almost inadvertently gay after going to New York.[74] Other characters in gay pulp fiction were portrayed as more deliberately grasping at a gay life. In Gore Vidal's *The City and the Pillar* (1948) a teenager also abruptly leaves his tyrannical father, the "bitter old man he was forced to live with," to start a new gay life in New York.[75]

The potential need to embrace this kind of independent adulthood was another central subject of homophile periodicals, and it was even advanced by parents of adult gay sons and daughters who dispensed advice to families in a similar situation. These mothers--and they were, for the most part, mothers-- often advocated a certain sense of emotional pragmatism about banishment. In 1958, Leah Gailey, the mother of a gay son, offered, in the pages of the *Mattachine Review*, a practical approach to telling parents about homosexuality. For her insights, the *MR* had nominated her as its choice for "Mother of 1958." Having little forbearance for parental trauma and drama, she wrote that if "you're rejected and forced from the family bosom, then just tell them that you are accepting your problem and that they may well assume theirs. If mother has a heart attack, don't be alarmed. She will recover!" These displays of hysteria most likely only

amounted to "a play on your sympathies." Further, "if father rants and raves and disowns you--let him! .....These fireworks will probably upset you, but try not to show it. As calmly as possible, tell them that you intend to live your own life."[76] Such a practical approach divorced of the underlying emotions of these 'fireworks' and 'psychosomatic' heart attacks --the very words indicate that she had dismissed the notion of great upset over sexual orientation-- suggested that gays may have to affably assume a separate existence from their families. Another mother, this time of a gay daughter, Anne Fredericks, advised in 1961 that parents "should try to keep in mind that [the gay child] has probably been going through a most confused and confusing period" and "that an attempt to understand or at least to withhold judgment will do more good than any amount of breast beating or hair-pulling."[77] Again, the emotional trauma potentially experienced by parents of gays was identified as something superfluous and ridiculous, as "breast beating" or "hair pulling."

Mothers writing in these periodicals also acknowledged the primacy of their children's feelings over their own worries about homosexuality, suggesting that a postwar notion of homosexuality as a difficult, painful fate for children could propel family sympathy. Another mother of a gay son, L. R. Maxwell, wrote in 1957 that mothers needed to overcome their "shocked senses" and try to understand their gay children. Otherwise "you strike out in anger and cruelty.....You wring your hands and weep [because] your love for yourself is greater than that for your son."[78] Mrs. Maxwell even embraced explanations of homosexuality in children that implicated parents as the cause of homosexuality. But here again it was suggested that parental failures needed to be borne with good, practical sense. She argued that many of the indictments that

psychiatrists made about the family of homosexuals were "probably true" and suggested that mothers may have protected their sons too much in their "expression of mother love." She even advised mothers to "read Philip Wylie on 'Momism.'"[79] Such emotional pragmatism seems curiously out of sync with an era in which emotional fulfillment was, at least ideally, found within the family. Yet, these were mothers of adult children. Raising their children in the 1930s and 40s, amidst the calamities of the Depression and World War Two, these mothers might have felt steeled by the shame they already had faced during these years. During the Depression, many middle class North American families lost any sense of propriety and privacy as they faced the public humiliations of being evicted from their homes, taking on jobs or boarders, doubling up with relatives, depriving children of material needs, and having to go on the dole. From these experiences, mothers of this generation also learned a certain toughness, and therefore a strength in the face of a range of family and life adversities.[80]

Yet the mothers writing in this genre might have enhanced their practicality. Perhaps they saw themselves as activists in the same vein as their children, and sought to distinguish themselves from the domestic histrionics that were offered up in more conventional women's housewife magazines of this period.[81] By 1960, membership in homophile organizations was only 230 for the Mattachine Society and 110 for the Daughters of Bilitis, and so the mothers of members were a small sample indeed.[82] Not all gays had a "Mother of the Year" in their family homes.

Even exceptionally sensitive, perceptive observers, like novelist Laura Hobson, wrote of a trauma upon finding out a child was gay, and the emotionality she evoked contrasts dramatically with the emotional reticence of homophile mothers. Hobson wrote

a fictional account of her son's disclosure of his sexuality in 1975, though the story was set when he was a teenager, in 1960.[83] *Consenting Adult* starts with the mother reading her son's revelatory letter. The shock that she described the mother character feeling was unbearable: she was "tranced", "motionless", and then emitted a "roaring sobbing, of an animal gored." A central emotion for her was "horror at *it*," and a recurrent vision of her son, Jeff, "physically close to another boy."[84] Much as her novel advances a stance of protecting the sanctity of private life, the portrait also reveals a sense of voyeurism about gay sexuality. A prurient innuendo about gay sexuality was not uncommon during this era: as James Baldwin's central character, David, expressed it in the 1956 novel *Giovanni's Room*, the very idea of homosexuality was a "cavern" in his mind, "full of rumor, suggestion, of half-heard, half-forgotten, half-understood stories, full of dirty words."[85] Within mainstream culture, the Hollywood Code only allowed for broad hints about homosexuality, also contributing to these vague and shameful conceptions during this era.[86] Indeed for Hobson, the thought of sex between men, though perhaps too fraught and shameful for her to write about explicitly, even from the vantage point of 1975, became a preoccupation for her mother character. It even tainted a formerly active sex life with her husband. During one scene, after her husband had made some overtures for sex, he gave up, owning, "'[i]f I so much as think of sex.....I think of two men and that kills it for good.'" She had to admit that she felt the same way.[87] In this portrait, these parents did not communicate about sex outside the realm of furtive overtures late at night. But knowing they had a gay son forced these parents to contemplate their own sexuality all too self consciously and vividly. The idea to emerge was that a gay child's

revelation could become an uneasy meeting point between homo and heterosexuality within family consciousness.

The dilemmas of gays with respect to revelation cannot be depicted within a clear-cut spectrum of parents who were dumbfounded and rejecting and those who were tolerant and accepting. Some gays avoided these perceived extremes by embracing a more ambiguous strategy of discretion as a way of maintaining both their gay and family relationships. This ambivalence about disclosure and the possibility of discretion itself illuminates the nature of revelations about the sexual lives of family members during the 1950s, a moment when there was not a widespread cultural expectation that sexual matters be divulged to parents.[88] Revelation might not have been seen as a confident proclamation of identity or persona, but instead an almost excruciating personal burden.

Such was the case for painter Mary Meigs. With wealth and a sophisticated world experience, Meigs' upper class Philadelphia family was discomfited by any discussion or acknowledgement of sexuality. In her memoir, she noted that her mother had found the McCarthy trials during the 1950s "abominable," not solely because she saw him as a "demagogue," but "because it was rumoured that there was a homosexual relationship between him and Roy Cohn."[89] This rumour was ironic of course as McCarthy's anti-communist crusade had coincided with the persecution of gays as civil service employees, who were seen as susceptible to communist blackmail or to communism.[90] McCarthy himself had a boorish, rough manner, and no doubt appeared unsavoury to the refined, yet for this mother the aversion expanded into an offensive sexuality as well. In turn, her daughter found it unthinkable to tell her mother that she too shared this sexuality. As an adult, Meigs seemed protected from her mother's speculations about her

sexuality perhaps *because* her mother did not conceive of sexual matters as elements of polite discussion. Still, Meigs could feel her "heart....thump with the old fear and sickness that came over me at the very thought of talking," suggesting that in her family talking intimately itself was fraught and anxiety-laced, let alone a discussion of an aberrant sexuality. [91] For Meigs, discretion held a liberating potential. She did not feel forcefully repressed or burdened in not telling her mother. In fact, what afflicted her more was imagining her mother's reactions. She "continue[d] to doubt" that she ever could have broached this topic with her mother, and was "thankful that I lived those last years of her life in a dishonest shadowland", convinced that "its air was the only air she could breathe."[92]

Written in 1981, her retrospective portrait allows for a less neutral interpretation of discretion than the word suggests, as she would come to feel that her discretion approached dishonesty. Perhaps this perception took shape as she adopted a gay liberation and feminist consciousness in the 1960s and 70s, which, as we will see, valourised the personal experiences of gays and women as minority groups. The impact of memory filtered through a more contemporary consciousness about the right of gays to make a more public claim to their sexuality is also prominent within Robert Leach's reflections on his journals, written well after he had become an openly gay man. In these, Leach identified his past discretions as deceptions. In 1950, for instance, Leach wrote to his mother that a friend, Daniel had "in typical Italian style kissed me twice in saying goodbye. I never had that happen before!"[93] What he left out was that Daniel had kissed him slightly more romantically than that, on the lips. More than thirty years later, after he

had acknowledged his sexuality, he said "I did mention he kissed me twice 'in typical Italian style'--OK just a shade, only the important, shade off from the truth."[94]

In fact, the dilemmas of discretion as equivocation were recognized as part of the lot of a gay family member in this era as well, and were becoming central themes in the more sympathetic gay psychology emerging in the 1950s. Donald Webster Cory feared that many gays harboured a sense of doubleness, and wrote in his 1951 work *The Homosexual in America* that many "have constantly striven to perfect their technique of concealment" in their work and family lives.[95] The necessity of these concealments, and the gap between who the individual really was and what he presented to the world, was thought to have a gruelling psychological impact, a perception that was in keeping with an emphasis on the health benefits of confiding. In "Emotions That Destroy Your Health and Personality," Alice LaVere warned other homophiles that the extra effort that goes into camouflage can cause tension, peptic ulcers, heart failures and strokes.[96] This faith in confiding propped up a homophile movement that would increasingly premise itself on revealing one's sexuality to others.

Perfecting a "technique of concealment," however, could bring about rewards for the gays who mastered a more common heterosexual life. After his marriage, Leach enjoyed a much less burdened relationship with his mother. She sounded especially alive and perky when her son started seeing a beautiful and distinctive looking woman in Geneva, where he was pursuing his doctorate. In a 1952 letter, Mrs. Leach asked her son: "Who was the pretty girl on your right? She looks like Elizabeth Taylor, the movie actress. Is she the newest girlfriend?"[97] She became increasingly interested in this girlfriend and asked about her often in the ensuing months: "What is your Elizabeth

Taylor girlfriend's name? Where does she live and what does she do? I am interested in her!"[98] She started to refer to her affectionately as "ET."[99] Having an ET in the family, a figure both familiar and exotic, seemed to heighten her own sense of heterosexuality, including a sense of desirability and glamour, and perhaps alleviated some banality from her life. She was thrilled when Leach announced his engagement: "I'm very happy about the thought of your marrying a good girl. Do let me know how you get along. My natural curiosity!"[100] Her love and affirmation was not just doled out to her son now, but to the couple, as she began addressing letters "Dear Robert and Jean," and signing off "love to you both."[101] Leach himself played into this fascination and affirmation by relaying ET's positive qualities, and especially her appearance: "...she has dark curly hair. She has grey eyes, classic features....is slender, trim--an excellent horsewoman."[102] This example of a newfound congenial and more relaxed relationship between mother and son suggests that there were more elements at stake in striving for heterosexuality than shirking off a stigma or attaining normalcy: heterosexuality could be a crucial way to secure a parent's interest and empathy.

At times however, the heterosexual public self presented to families became an outright fabrication. A song lyric that captures the contradictory dimensions of maintaining discretion and family contacts through a sham heterosexuality appeared in Ann Aldrich's 1958 pulp sociology study of lesbians, *We, Too, Must Love*:

> Raise your voice an octave,
> Wear a skirt around,
> Mother doesn't get the bit
> And she'll be in town.
>
> Call some faggots, darling
> Ask them by for drinks,

Mother's on her way, my love,
And I'm straight, she thinks.

Push our beds apart, pet,
Put our things away,
Mother doesn't understand,
She arrives today.[103]

Not only does this lyric demonstrate a tremendous attention to obscuring the material, recognizable expressions of a child's private life, but the ways in which appearances, surfaces, and objects such as voices and clothing were interpreted as remnants of a particular sexual sensibility. Here, these contrivances were playful, as if to suggest an element of drama or daring in simply being gay.

But heterosexual contrivances could be fraught with tensions and anxieties, as well. Like this song, McDonald and her girlfriend Barb tried to be discreet through a feigned heterosexuality, only here the counterfeit complicated and created jealousies in their relationship. Barb in fact confided to McDonald that the reason she had to play tennis and "date fellows" was to "hide this from my mother."[104] McDonald eventually broke up with this girlfriend to give her more "peace of mind" and to allow her to stop "contriving herself."[105] Yet, because leading a life of discretion was preferable to leading a life of solitude and celibacy, McDonald had to negotiate the dilemmas of discretion, and not solely these boundaries between keeping secrets and outright lying.

McDonald was in a quandary because to make her sexuality seem real--even to herself-- she needed to express her sexuality outwardly. One way to do so was by assuming a butch role persona. Though butch-femme roles have been important to how lesbians have structured their sexual relationships, for McDonald becoming a butch--and she was ambivalent about whether or not she truly was one---was equally important

simply for self understanding.[106] She favoured her yellow corduroy jacket on dates with women because it made her look "very butch" and seemed to make her more comfortable in assuming a gay relationship.[107] She wore the corduroy jacket on a particularly passionate date with her girlfriend Vera, where the two had kissed in the rest room of a diner until "limp," and then "smooched up a storm"[108] in a drive-in. The day after, McDonald's Aunt Dora had prepared supper for the couple. However Aunt Dora then made it clear that "Mom didn't want Vera at her house. I asked Mom about it and she said Aunt Dora was going to write me a letter about it, too." Though neither her mother nor Aunt Dora gave forthright reasons for their discomfort, their responses spoke to something vaguely awry in their midst.

These unexplained reactions of disapproval seemed to prompt a feeling of desperation in McDonald, a feeling rooted in the permanence of both her sexual feelings and her family as simply facts of her life. She wrote in her diary that "sometimes I almost hate them, but not quite. They are my family."[109] This sense of the family as an unalterable entity in fact resonated with gay culture, within such stories as Vin Packer's pulps, *Whisper His Sin* (1954) and *The Evil Friendship* (1958). Here, the only way gay characters feel they can be together is to murder their parents.[110] This gay fantasy of patricide might not have been solely the consequence of a homophobic culture that depicted gays as murderous, but rather a proclamation of a collective gay longing to maintain gay relationships unfettered by families.

Not only was the family permanent, but in some ways ever present. The intensity of gay relationships had the potential to breed an internal familial surveillance. McDonald's relationships with women did not go unnoticed by her girlfriends' families,

either. One mother, for example, felt uncomfortable about what she considered an extravagant Christmas gift that McDonald had purchased for her daughter, Barb. McDonald confided in her diary that Barb had told her mother about the robe McDonald was buying her for Christmas. Her mother was "displeased. Said it was too much money to spend on a girl and that she shouldn't take it."[111] That a gift of a robe could become ascribed with so much significance about intent and affect indicates the degree to which self expressive items such as clothing could be read as a romantic rather than a friendly, platonic exchange. The gay adoption of these elements of a consumer culture of heterosexual treating, while potentially liberating in allowing gays to structure their erotic relations, also had the potential to reveal, even if only obliquely, a potential sexual nature of relationships.

In fact, Barb's mother had begun to "suspect" her daughter's relationship with McDonald, because, as this mother had told her daughter, there was "something about" McDonald.[112] The comment is markedly similar to a memo that a secretary-clerk at the State Department wrote in 1953 regarding her vague suspicions about her boss, Miss McCoy. As historian David Johnson recounts, this secretary typed an anonymous memorandum to the head of the State Department of Security saying that there was "something about" her boss that gave her an "uncomfortable feeling" and this charge, in an atmosphere of anti-communist persecutions, was enough to call into question her boss' sexuality.[113] Even military examiners during World War Two relied on their own vaguely defined hunches as to who was homosexual and who was not.[114] Postwar culture offered no precisely defined concept of a gay person within an everyday context from which these observers and parents could draw. In turn, Barb's mother did not elaborate on her

hunch about Marge McDonald. When Barb pressed for more details, her mother withheld specifics and instead pressed *Barb* for the reason that McDonald had phoned one evening at 2am.

This mother's wordless suspicion also poses some questions about the boundaries of friendships between young women during this period. Mothers often wished to help their daughters define these boundaries, and because they were entrusted with the task of instructing their children through the proper life stages, they might have viewed an intense attachment to a young woman friend as a developmental stage to outgrow, particularly if these friends appeared relatively late in life, during the daughter's twenties.[115] In a period when women were marrying young, and patterns of dating had been adapted early, intense friendships between adult women might have seemed deviant.[116]

Motherly anxiety about their daughters' unconventional affective lives and practices at times afforded their gay children little privacy in terms of any intimate or romantic gestures, including the act of letter writing itself. Writing to each other throughout the 1950s and early 60s, poet Dorothee Gore and a friend and love interest, Smitty, discussed their military experiences as members of the Women's Army Corps during World War Two, a segment of the military in which there was initially less hostility and suspicion surrounding gays, in part because Selective Services did not have a precise conception of lesbian sexuality.[117] Gore and Smitty had maintained their friendship started in WAC, and although they were both middle aged by 1960, the nature of their relationship was still vulnerable to parental imaginings, particularly since Smitty lived at home with her aging mother, and took care of her. Still, Gore had made her

feelings plain for Smitty in her letters. When Smitty wrote to tell Gore that she simply had feelings for another woman, she also admitted that her mother had "been sort of bitchy with me since your last visit. She expects me to read every line of your letters."[118] Smitty admitted that she had to "tear up" each of Gore's letters because "I know she'll be going through every 'looking' place there is in the room the minute I'm gone."[119] Smitty's mother even made oblique, yet disparaging, comments about her daughter's relationships with women, such as "the nasty crack.... 'I wonder what you do to these women that they're so crazy about you.'" To keep her mother at bay, Smitty painted the letters as perfunctory and boring: "I just tell her 'it's the same old crap.'"[120]

As in this case, when parent and child lived in such close quarters, attempts at discretion were not always returned. Both McDonald and Smitty may have found a greater sense of privacy, both spatial and psychic, to pursue a gay relationship in public spaces, like the drive-in or diner, rather than in the home, where a parent might rummage through the premises for evidence of something untoward. Privacy was, and is, a value shaped by class and material circumstances. Single, working-class women who maintained close ties to their parents in this period faced significant encumbrances when expressing their affective lives and had to tread haltingly within the family home.

If conducting gay relationships and maintaining family was complicated for these adult gays, it was infinitely more so for adolescents and children during this period. The focus on nuclear families stepped up attention to the ways that children were socialized during this period. They were even more vulnerable to familial surveillance, even if ironically, it was domestic contexts that proved crucial for exploring an incipient gay sexuality. While opportunities for public gay meeting places flourished during the 1950s

and 60s, with the development of bars, bathhouses, and bookshops, an equally important realm of gay socializing and relationships unfolded within household spaces, and this was particularly the case for the young in their bedrooms.[121] After the War, middle-class and working-class families alike sought to gain a sense of privacy, by buying single, detached houses, reflecting a broad postwar dream of spacious dwellings after wartime conditions in cramped quarters. In these houses, children more commonly than ever before had bedrooms of their own.[122]

The motif of the bedroom and parental mystique about what went on in there was particularly strong in depictions by gays, particularly gay men, recalling their childhoods during the 1950s and 60s. Parents seemed unsure of how to recognize this realm: should they honour its privacy or intervene to protect children from their own fantasies? Writer Paul Monette was particularly mortified when his mother caught him and his boy friend in the midst of sexual experimentation in his bedroom at his family's home in Andover, Massachusetts. She later confronted him, wanting to know just what was going on between the boys. Monette was evasive, telling her it was "nothing". When she asked her son again forthrightly, he responded angrily, "I told you--nothing" and then "skitter[ed] away....toss[ing] it again, with bitter emphasis. Nothing."[123] As a 12 year old, Arnie Kantrowitz's mother also caught him experimenting sexually in his bedroom with a boy friend, only he could not deflect his mother so easily. As he recalled the incident in his memoir, Kantrowitz lied that he and his friend had just been wrestling, yet his mother asked the boy to leave, and not to visit her son any longer. Then she commenced what he described as an "inquisition," especially wanting to know if they had touched each

other's "private parts," indicating just what unseemly and covert connotations the word 'private' could take on in reference to a child's body.[124]

Galvanized by fears of how children were being raised, as well as more widely circulated notions of aberrant families, parents raising their children during the 1950s and 60s might have been more aware of psychiatry's potential helping hand in family life and more likely to consider psychiatry as an option. Mrs. Kantrowitz quickly found her son a psychiatrist in Newark, New Jersey. Arnie told him "everything, determined to make a clean breast of it and be cured, contrite before my confessor," suggesting that a session with a psychiatrist had the potential to be a cherished, if frightening, chance to confide things children dared not say to parents. To the astonishment of both mother and son, however, the psychiatrist pronounced that Kantrowitz had "just been experimenting in the ways boys his age all do." He even asked Mrs. Kantrowitz a more foreboding question: "Do you want him to be a street-corner hooligan?" He declared her son "sensitive and intelligent. All boys aren't ruffians."[125] In this way, psychiatry's mandate about diagnosing and rehabilitating juvenile delinquents and homosexuals in the postwar period had intersected, with the surprising result that cues of homosexuality in the young also could be seen as cues of a gentle, law abiding disposition.[126] In this sketch, the doctor's pronouncements were not brutal directives, but in fact offered the gay child protection from heterosexual parents and *their* imaginings and voyeurism. As Kantrowitz noted, "who was [his mother] to question medical science?"[127]

This recollection seems a testament both to the importance of the domestic for gay subjectivity and expressions of gay sexuality, and to the perception of parents, especially mothers, as guardians of children's corporal experiences in these interior

realms.[128] Mrs. Kantrowitz, for example, examined her son's play life assiduously, because she was concerned about his "sissy" behaviour. She even had her son try boxing lessons and hormone shots to become more manly.[129] Monitoring a child's behaviour included a more subtle range of tensions than sexuality, just as the scrutiny took other forms than confrontation.

Parents were more likely to feel that they had a chance to intervene in the development of their adolescent children's sexuality, especially as postwar North American society became increasingly attuned, in the later 1950s and throughout the 1960s, to a link between unconventional gender behaviours and homosexuality.[130]

These links had been long embedded in gay culture, and found an articulation in camp culture, which was rooted in hyperbolized gender expressions, including the embellishment and theatricalization of womanly figures.[131] Cartoons within the gay press during this period had great fun with the prospect of parents confronting their children's gender aberrations. A campy and somewhat apolitical Toronto gay periodical, *Two*, for example, featured a cartoon in 1964 showing a boy in a Cubs uniform shaving off his sister's hair to her delight.[132] A perplexed and bemused mother in an apron and high heels looked on. The little boy's caption read: "Sara wants a sex change so she can join the Wolf Cubs!"[133] [Figure 1] This cartoon reflects an emerging understanding of the biological components of gender, including the more widespread knowledge of sex change operations; gay writers and artists appeared to see some continuities between their experiences and those of transsexuals. A more vehement parental disquiet was echoed in the cartoons of two other gay cultural periodicals of the same time period, Los Angeles's *Tangents*, and Philadelphia's *Drum: Sex in Perspective*, which brought fathers and their

gay sons to the forefront.[134] In the first, a mother in her armchair, with a dreamy, naive look, said to her husband: "Wilber's 16 already. Shouldn't he go out and maybe hit some baseballs?" Her husband's sarcastic response was: "With what, his eyebrow pencil!"[135] [Figure 2] In the second, a father, in the armchair again, sat before what appeared to be a daughter, wearing a dress and stylized hair. He said, "It's time you and I had a long, long talk--son."[136] [Figure 3] The portrait of parents here suggests an implicit, underlying connection of gender difference to a divergent sexuality.

Even if only an underlying tension, the observation of children's gender expressions could lead not only to efforts to change their tastes and habits, but also to explicit gestures of friendship between the generations. In his memoir essay, "My Mother's Clothes," writer Richard McCann recalled hearing his father say of him one night to his mother in their bedroom, " '[h]e makes me nervous'", though his father did not say precisely what it was about his son that caused him to feel this way. McCann presumed it to be in reference to his gender style--as the title suggests, he liked to sample his mother's clothing.[137] His mother felt it would be wise to start encouraging father and son to spend more time with each other, characteristic of broader family trends and social critiques of families in the postwar period. These encouraged fathers, largely displaced from their children's lives during the 1930s and 40s, to be an active part of their children's lives.[138] Fathers were to become playmates to their children by assuming a masculine domestic role such as outdoor play and adventure.[139] When McCann was 11 years old in 1960, his father took him on a trip to Fort Benjamin Harrison in Indiana, where he did his annual tour of duty as a colonel in the U.S. Army Reserves. But father and son were often at a loss for conversation during the time they were supposed to have

become closer. When they would watch TV--a favourite was "Perry Mason"--his father would throw out comments such as, "that Della Street...is almost as pretty as your mother", and, turning to sports, would suggest that his son loved sports like football that McCann Junior plainly did not love. McCann believed that "[i]t was my job....to reassure him that I was the son he imagined me to be."[140] Perhaps however, in talking up Della Street and football his father might not have been making an explicit boost for masculinity--or heterosexuality. Perhaps these were merely forced fragments of conversations illustrative of the pain of family contact, the ways parents and children truly might not have known each other--even in a companionate family context--outside of these gendered and heterosexual commonalities.

Tensions over gender expression, then, only might have complicated a relationship between parents and children that was already in many respects ambiguous during this period. Gays seemed to become a symbol of the unknown surfacing within the intimate sphere of the family, just as they were a broader symbol for latency in North American society. That gays could pass by unnoticed had made them an ideal minority symbol for communism. Elaine Tyler May has argued that there was a domestic expression of the foreign policy of containment of communism, in the containment of familial subversion, which included women's and gay sexuality.[141] Yet, this uneasiness about the potential for deviance lurking within all individuals also had a more intensely private dimension, as the anxiety flourished in self-contained family structures of the 1950s and 60s, and reflected a more intense consideration of family members as feeling

beings rather than economic actors or practical contributors.[142] Children could appear to be knowable through a presumed heterosexuality, and then turn out to be foreign or mysterious.

This internal familial curiosity resonated with psychiatric and cultural attention to the kinds of families that were likely to produce these alien figures. The early 1960s in particular would see a renewed animation of the idea of the overbearing mother and weak father as family types of homosexuals. In his 1962 work, *Homosexuality: A Psychoanalytic Study*, Irving Bieber emphasised the figures of the detached father and overbearing, seductive mother as central contributing factors to homosexuality.[143] The image of the overbearing mother in particular took hold during these years, and it became a relationship that was depicted, pathologized, and parodied, in a way that gay daughters' relationship to their fathers was not, in part because major studies such as Bieber's considered male homosexuals exclusively. [144] Thus, the more central worry was a mother's hand in shaping her son. In 1961, Marvin Drellich, a psychiatrist at the New York Medical College, tried to typify the family lives of homosexual men. He observed that the mother in such families often "encouraged feminine pursuits in her sons, eg. knitting" and sometimes even "burdened her son with unwanted feminine confidences....even going so far as to embarrass her son with secrets of the boudoir."[145] In these fraught modern families where gender differences became blurred, mothers in particular were cautioned not to emasculate their sons.

The socialization of children in these psychiatric sources suggested that the consequences of an overbearing mother, including excessive female domesticity and an omnipresent housewife, could be a gay son. The theme of the pus under a respectable

domestic skin had a broad expression in postwar culture, evoked and parodied in literary sources such as the stories of suburbanites in the works of John Cheever.[146] That a gay son could be lurking in a common household was an intriguing and fantastic theme for mainstream cultural sources to explore, including a 1966 *Good Housekeeping* article, "Our Son Was Different'....When a Mother Discovers the Agonizing Truth", an account of the Alberton family, and the discovery that their 17 year old son was possibly a homosexual. [147] Mrs. Alberton, we are told, came upon her son's possible sexuality on a "dismal winter morning", when going through his bedroom closet to select clothes for ironing.[148] There she found a note from a male friend of his, commenting that the school dance they were attending together was "cruddy" and suggesting that they cut loose from it, followed by "a suggestive sentence."[149] Presenting the evidence to a psychologist, Mrs. Alberton "winced as though struck a physical blow" upon his opinion that her son might "already" be a homosexual.[150]

Yet, this was not just a story of domestic ruin and disgrace, but triumph, because the author assured that like any form of latency, homosexuality could be changed. If being gay was something an individual could be encouraged to become rather than something one simply was, parents could take it upon themselves to mold their children into heterosexuals. This author observed that though "the disclosure....that a son or daughter has become a sexual deviate is a family calamity... [that] brings to most households the same desolate feeling of loss as a child's death," this did not carry the finality of a real death because homosexuality was an "illness" having its origins in "*faulty parent-child relationships in the very early, very crucial years of a boy's life.*"[151] Mrs. Alberton, then, bore responsibility for engulfing her son in the home, never allowing

him "roller skates ('Oh Lord, he'll split his head!') or a tricycle ('I'd be petrified every second')." In fact, mother and son spent all their time together engaged in homemaker tasks, and the boy even absorbed his mother's "interests in antique bric-a-brac and develop[ed] a fascination for fabrics and fabric design."[152] Mrs. Alberton was also said to have found fault with all the girls her son ever brought home as a teenager: "one had 'absolutely dreadful' taste in clothes, another was 'too stupid for words.'" More menacingly, the affection between this mother and son could be seen as seductive: Mrs. Alberton ran "her fingers through his hair, addressed him endearingly, [and asked] his opinion on her clothes, even talk[ing] over some of her personal problems with him."[153]

Not only did this portrait give life to Irving Bieber's typology of the parents of homosexuals in depicting a seductive, "excessively possessive, overprotective mother" and a browbeaten, "detached, indifferent father," but it also accentuated a broader cultural response of male resentment towards female dominated domestic zones and an anti-maternal strain embedded within postwar North American society and culture that coexisted with this era's celebration of motherhood.[154] John Updike's 1960 novel *Rabbit, Run* in which the father leaves his nagging, careworn wife and their brood is a case in point. Barbara Ehrenreich has argued that Hugh Hefner's *Playboy* magazine also reflected an anger at the monotony of the domestic realm, one that would later inspire a generation of feminists.[155] In these sources, women seemed to embody a dreary dailiness and were held accountable for feelings of ennui and routine in their families.

Of course *Good Housekeeping* was not about to support this sort of male disgruntlement or advocate that men feel free to run off and have affairs, but instead tried to illuminate what might happen when men were not given a chance to provide antidotes

to day-to-day malaise. For example, when Mr. Alberton tried to provide his son with a refuge from his mother's world by asking him to "come down to his place of business on a Saturday," Mrs. Alberton "vetoed the idea--'it's too dirty there and he wouldn't be interested.'"[156] Ultimately however, Mr. Alberton was praised for showing composure in light of his son's sexuality, including finding a sedative for his wife and finding a doctor to treat his son. He then began to spend more time with him, having man to man talks, and taking him for driving lessons.[157] This article ends with the Albertons crying "happy tears" over their son's revelation, in a letter home from college, that he was now "going with" a girl.[158] In the eyes of *Good Housekeeping*, fathers played a pivotal familial role in child transformation, piloting their children away from the static, overly feminine dominions of their mothers, into the exterior world, and heterosexuality.

The fear of being swallowed up by these motherly realms left an imprint not just on popular, heterosexual cultural sources, but gay ones, as well. Representations of mothers and sons in gay cartoons of the early 1960s, for example, portrayed mothers with bouffant hair, jewelry, a petticoat under a full skirt, often harbouring some sign of housework or item of leisure, a particular stereotype of a white, middle class, almost sitcom-like, postwar mother that had become part of the popular symbolism of this era.[159] In this vein, a 1965 cartoon in *Gay* depicted an object of housewife culture. A decorative poster on the wall of a nineteenth century milk maiden mother figure, with mouth wide open, cheeks red, and bulging eyeballs shouted: "My son and your son were doing WHAT together?"[160] [Figure 4] The idea of a household object coming to life as an outraged parent suggests one way in which gays might have conflated their mothers,

ideas of home, and notions of the everyday with an ever-observant culture of heterosexuality during this era.[161]

The intensity of the feeling of household scrutiny and alarm surrounding sexual experimentation and gender nonconformity, however, varied according to other foreseeable vulnerabilities and oppressions children might face. African American ballet dancer Bill T. Jones noted in his memoir, *Last Night on Earth*, that as a child he was always known as a "sissy boy" in his family lore, but even still, as a young teenager, a more central preoccupation on the part of his parents was how he would be perceived sexually on account of his race, not his gender expression. As a 14 year old in 1962, after his family had moved from Florida to Western New York, Jones was asked to a sleepover at a white friend's house. When asking for permission, his mother expressed worries about the presence of this white boy's sister. She advised her son not to go walking around at night in his friend's house and to lock his bedroom door because "'there's a white girl there and before you know it that girl will be screamin' that you done messed with her.'"[162] A traumatic legacy of lynching African American men for alleged sexual assaults here seemed to overshadow attempts to change unconventional gender traits.[163]

Nor were gender nonconformity and sexual experimentation as noteworthy for parents of girls as they were for boys during this time period. Parents and cultural observers alike appeared to fear lesbian sex the least; indeed, most often it was not even perceived as such. Intense relationships between girls and even crushes or fixations, as we have seen, veered toward the abnormal only when they lasted beyond adolescence.[164] In this vein, Ann Aldrich's work of lesbian pulp sociology *We Two Won't Last* (1963) relayed a story of one mother of a lesbian finding her daughter and her "roommate" in the

"same bed, nude, and in an embrace" and responding with, "For heaven's sake!....You two girls are much too old for this sort of nonsense! Now you both better grow up!"[165]

Just as fathers were to take charge of their sons' gender expression, so too did mothers assume this role for their daughters. A dearth of femininity in girls seemed to cause parents, particularly mothers, some pause, but not solely because it could be linked to homosexuality. A sense of investment in personal appearances might have been felt more keenly between mothers and daughters in general, but women who grew up to be gay might have felt especially intensely this disparity between mothers' expectations of femininity and who they felt themselves to be.

A youth-oriented postwar consumer culture offered ways both to reinforce and redefine femininity and it could become a symbolic locus of mother/daughter conflict or separation.[166] During the early 1970s, when Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon were on the cusp of writing their advice book *Lesbian/Woman*, they received an outpouring of letters from lesbians who wished to contact them with retrospective stories about their initial feelings of sexual difference during their childhoods in the 1950s. One striking way that young proto-lesbians articulated an early feeling of difference was through these fragments of consumer culture. One woman wrote that she had been a "tomboy wearing boys' clothes until I was 12, playing army with the boys, and being the man of the house while other girls dressed up in frilly things.....I had my cowboy outfit too, but I think I was better at handling a gun. I never learned how to dance, or set my hair or put make-up on or anything like that."[167] In her reminiscence, girls' activities appeared as skills that require a certain adeptness whereas boys' were simply fun. All of these games, objects,

and clothes stimulated a fantasy life that often suggested differences in taste and sensibility between mother and daughter.

Though not invited to share in their children's play lives, mothers sought to shape a daughter's character through objects and appearances, as well. These attempts might have been heightened for parents who had experienced the material deprivations of the Depression when they were children, and now took part in a postwar culture of abundance.[168] In her piece "First Love," writer Karla Jay recalled her perception of her 1950s childhood in Flatbrush, Brooklyn, that her mother "wanted a clean, pink, passive child, one who adored her sterilized apartment and pretty clothes." Yet even with her mother's campaign to "keep the world pale velour and crinoline for me.... I was always brown as ice cream and dirt and red as cut knees and elbows."[169] While other little girls might have worn the "pink lace crinoline dresses and white patent leather shoes" that her mother favoured, she preferred a cowboy uniform with its hat, boots, and "holster complete with shiny metal gun," a style more akin to little boys in this period, mimicking the heroic men in popular 1950s mythic Western fantasies. [170] Because her mother failed to impart her tastes in clothing to her daughter, she instead "created a totally pink room for me, with pink French Provincial furniture, hand-made pink beds with posters and canopies, and a pink high-gloss toy cabinet."[171] Jay seemed to find her mother's passive character reflected in this emotionless, cloying room, and to feel a sense of pride at renouncing her mother's heritage, owing to a retrospective, contemporary feminist reflection of having been a tomboy.[172] Perhaps, too, her tone speaks to an easier familial acceptance of fantasies of gender inversion in girls during this era, for these were more readily tied to quirkiness of character, even charming pluckiness, than sexuality.

Writer Terri de la Pena also recalled her mother's disquiet over her tomboyish ways, only here this worry was complicated by the mother's idea that her daughter, in assuming an unconventional gender expression, was also taking on a less respectable racial identity. Her mother placed much stock in the skill of being feminine, as she worked as a cosmetologist. As a 12 year old in 1959, de la Pena received a rather severe haircut from the little girl down the street, who was practicing to be a beautician. When de la Pena arrived home with her "Italian boy look," her mother was shocked at the "scalping." Her daughter speculated that her mother viewed the androgynous haircut as a "harbinger" of an aberrant sexuality.[173] However, her mother's foreboding was compounded by her daughter's rejection of the "sausagelike Shirley Temple curls" that this mother favoured for her daughters. As a Chicana living in California, her mother would not hear of " 'natural' hairstyles, those which highlighted our mestiza realities: black, straight tresses....She did not want me to look like 'una india'."[174] After the legal end of segregation of Mexican school children in American schools, and the Mexican contribution to World War Two, many Chicanos living in California in the 1950s sought an integration with mainstream American society, including middle-class job opportunities.[175] Understandably, her mother might have been troubled by the prospect of her daughter projecting a resemblance to a devalued racial group. In this instance, becoming a tomboy might have seemed to add another layer of outward difference to a family that already felt exposed by ethnic discrimination.

Young tomboys and sissies alike, then, were vulnerable to parental scrutiny, intrigue, and punishment. Yet there was a certain privilege of individuality in being young and part of the baby boomer generation. A broader North American cultural ethos

suggested these children were special or significant, a separate species from their parents. In the prescriptive literature of Dr. Spock, democratic and permissive parenting styles emphasized that the children of this generation had unlimited potential, as well as unique personalities.[176] These changes in family life seemed to give postwar youth a more profound sense of entitlement to a private life within the family home, which included solitary, reverie-filled leisure. Surveillance was certainly a factor in the lives of these young people, but it was never all-encompassing. Growing up in rural Indiana in the 1950s and 60s, writer Alan Helms noted in his memoir that it was in fact relatively easy to maintain his privacy in the face of his parents. He simply manipulated a cultural expectation, suggested by popular youth cultures of this period, that parents and youth were worlds apart in sensibility. Thus, when his mother caught him poring over male physique, or "beefcake" magazines, and asked him why he found these so interesting, Helms responded, "just because," with "the airy vagueness allowed the American teenager."[177]

Gay adults of the same period did not have this recourse of a culturally sanctioned sense of generational distinction, and just by virtue of being older, they were less protected by the idea that their sexuality was simply a life phase or a moment. As we have seen, they also fretted more intensely over banishments from their families than their younger counterparts. This fear remained an unresolved conflict running through gay culture throughout the postwar period. Yet this anxiety is only part of the story. Fantasies of gay familial banishment often existed in a delicate balance with depictions of family longing. As figures who lived outside the structures of marriage and conventional trappings of adulthood, gay adults also seemed, paradoxically, to be considered, and to

consider themselves, permanent and rooted family members if for no other reason than they lacked a firm footing in the adult social rituals of the late 1950s and early 1960s. Ironically, gays were inscribed in their families for a lifetime on account of being gay.

Adult gays could even feel suspended in a perpetual stage of youthfulness. In parental perceptions, an idea of child-like sexlessness seemed to follow lesbians in particular into adult life. As adults, lesbian daughters could be equated with spinsters--celibate, asexual creatures. Much as single women increasingly had opportunities to escape the restrictions that traditionally had been imposed on daughters in the family economy, the idea of family obligation might have weighed heavily on lesbian women, whether or not they were partnered.[178] Dorothy Lyle wrote about this sense in *The Ladder* in 1966, a moment that had seen the advent of a greater availability of social assistance programs for the elderly. In "The Family and Money Injustice", Lyle said that because she was seen as single in the eyes of the law, she was expected to "carry the load traditionally dumped on the unmarried offspring," in her case, contributing to her mother's limited income, even though she herself had a partner who needed economic support and there was another married daughter who could have helped. In her view, growing up to be a heterosexual "doesn't relieve [a child] of responsibility toward parents."[179] She speculated that gays put up with this injustice owing to an "exaggerated debt felt by the homosexual offspring towards parents" to compensate for the perceived betrayal of growing up to be gay. Lyle considered this set of attitudes a "ridiculous injustice" internalized by many of her lesbian friends.[180] In her case, gayness heightened an already existing generational gap in familial expectations surrounding responsibility to the family of origin.

Gay sons also were perceived as figures who would remain within the family of origin into their parents' senescence. In fact sometimes families and cultural observers of this era interpreted the relationship between gay sons and their parents as more congenial than most owing to the son's different sexuality. In these accounts, a caricature of an artistically talented, polite, and cheerful gay son figure, reminiscent of an idealized daughter, became its own kind of family ideal. For example, in a 1962 edition of the *Mattachine Review*, parents of a young gay man said that they had often unintentionally referred to their gay son as "her" because "he seemed a girl, gentle and artistic."[181] For these parents a positive sense of uniqueness seemed to mitigate the fretful aspects of being gay. Even in the often disparaging psychiatric literature about homosexuality, a gay son could be a figure who gave his mother in particular some comfort in maintaining family ties and even providing for the family in later years. Jess Stern, whose 1961 book *The Sixth Man* spent three months on the New York bestseller list, found in many cases that a mother acquired "a solicitous, considerate companion for her declining years--her homosexual son."[182] He even recorded a set of parents who felt grateful for the new son they had gained in the form of their son's boyfriend. Here again the gay man was inscribed with a domestic affability, as these parents were particularly "mad about [the boyfriend's] cooking."[183] If sons were only sons until they took wives, gay men could be considered daughters for the rest of their lives.

These ideas of gay sons also had some imprint on and were shaped by gay culture. Affectionate gay son/mother relationships were archetypes of gay humour during this period. In the cartoons from the collection *My Son, the Daughter* (1964), a play on the expression of parental pride "my son, the doctor," the mother proclaimed enthusiastically

that her son Freddie was an entertainer with "so many friends....All of them....young and handsome!"[184] These unperceptive captions, always accompanied by exclamation points to heighten the innocence of her responses, as well as pictures portraying Freddie as slim and delicate with immaculate clothing, formed the narrative structure of these cartoons. One picture showed her son holding his umbrella over a handsome stranger, neglecting sexy women getting drenched in the rain; another even showed Freddie holding up a telescope to ogle a naked man in a nearby apartment window, with the mother declaring, "Freddie's new hobby is astronomy!"[185] [Figure 5] Though this depiction mocks the out-of-it mother figure, this portrait also suggests a gay mythologizing of family closeness.

The feeling of being enduring family members contrasted dramatically with a gay preoccupation with being orphaned during the immediate postwar period. This preoccupation did not vanish in the later postwar period, but instead was defused in a realm of humour or fantasy. But this uneasy strain between banishment and permanence could be taken as an essential animating tension in gay culture, including more serious gay reflections. Writer Philip Bockman wrote one such recollection. In 1961, home for the weekend from college to his family home in Grand Rapids, Michigan, he contemplated telling his parents that he was gay. He vividly remembered eating at the kitchen table with his parents "under the plastic sunflower-head chandelier. I'd always hated the tacky kitchen with its green and orange flower motif, but now I kept following the patterns of leaves and daisies on the shiny tablecloth, miserable with the thought that I might be banished forever from the warmth of that awful chandelier and all the love this stifling room suddenly seemed to represent."[186] As his ambivalence suggests, gays could

represent families with as much longing as humourous derision, and feel haunted by a yearning for an unconditional, enduring family love.

These longings were also accompanied by a deepening impetus within gay activism to view both heterosexuality and homosexuality as broader sexual cultures with a distinct set of sensibilities. By the mid 1960s, the tenor of gay activism was beginning to shift. Homophiles had challenged heterosexual perceptions of gay sexuality and gender demeanour alike throughout the 1950s, but they were becoming more emboldened in this effort throughout the early 1960s. No longer was the *Mattachine Review* presenting a forum for Albert Ellis's "On the Cure of Homosexuality," a hopeful article that gays could be cured.[187] Strengthened by the civil rights movement, gaining more ground through a wider participation in organizations such as the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) and the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), gay activists of this period increasingly identified with racial or religious minorities, seeing their own oppression in continuum with theirs. Broader changes in the political temperament of activism in the early 1960s, including growing anti-war protests after 1965, also might have made the homophile activist movement more unrepentant. By 1964, Canada's homophile movement had gained some ground as well, with the formation of the Association of Social Knowledge (ASK).[188] Gay activism of the early 1960s was marked by a heightened desire to see gays as a minority with a complex emotional and psychological difference, in addition to the sexual, and this claim was one that could be made quite powerfully at the familial level.

The story of the deepening recognition of the private lives of family members during the postwar period, then, was mutual, between the generations, and between

heterosexuality and homosexuality as cultures. Both gay baby boomers and their older counterparts paid marked attention to the family's imprint on their individual characters, as well as the ways that they themselves shaped their families through their difference. Gay adults trod uncertainly between the obligations characteristic of the economic reciprocity in older families, and a newer family ethos that was concerned with emotionality, self-fulfillment, and, in this case, gay desires. As families became a collection of individuals with no formal economic functions, an interest in children's psychic lives intensified. Thus, young gays developed privacy strategies that almost paralleled the older generation's articulations of personal privacy and the upkeep of an interior gay self. In spite of these dilemmas, however, the claim to sexual selfhood and the idea of being family members were not entirely incompatible. Fundamentally, these were gay selves bound by families.

[1] William Billings Collection, "Gay Scrapbook", Letter, 12 October 1945, Harvey Milk Archives--Scott Smith Collection (GLC 35), The James C. Hormel Gay and Lesbian Center, San Francisco Public Library, San Francisco, CA, p. 2 (of 13).

[2] Ibid., 4.

[3] Ibid., 5.

[4] Ibid., 6.

[5] Ibid., 5 and 7.

[6] Ibid., 8.

[7] Ibid., 10-11. I should note that Billings also would go on to become one of the founding members of San Francisco's Council on Religion and the Homosexual in 1965.

[8] On World War Two and the legacy of its rumours, see Ralph Rosnow and Gary Alan Fine, Rumor and Gossip: The Social Psychology of Hearsay (New York: Elsevier, 1976).

[9] See Allan Berube, Coming Out Under Fire: The History of Gay Men and Women in World War Two (New York: Penguin, 1991), 15, 37-38, 57. On a fearless sexual experimental dynamic to emerge in the face of World War Two, see Steven Mintz and Susan Kellogg, Domestic Revolutions: A Social History of American Family Life (New York: Free Press, 1988), 154 ff.

[10] See Elaine Tyler May, Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era (New York: Basic Books, 1988), 70-71. See also Ruth Roach Pierson, 'They're Still Women After All': the Second World War and Canadian Womanhood (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1986).

[11] The term "companionate marriage" was coined by Ben Lindsey in his book with the same title. See Companionate Marriage (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1927). For a definition of the companionate family, see again Arlene Skolnick, Embattled Paradise: The American Family in an Age of Uncertainty (New York: Basic Books, 1991), xviii. See again Tamara Hareven, "Family Time and Historical Time," *Daedalus* (Spring 1977): 57-70. Finally, see Viviana A. Zelizer, Pricing the Priceless Child: The Changing Social Value of Children (New York: Basic Books, 1985) and see May, Homeward Bound, 38 ff.

[12] On these trends, see Mintz and Kellogg, Domestic Revolutions, 114, 178 ff.

[13] William Billings, 12 Oct. 1945, 11.

[14] Ibid., 12.

[15] Ibid., 13.

[16] On camp as an aspect of military culture, see Berube, Coming Out Under Fire, 67-71. See also Leila Rupp, A Desired Past: A Short History of Same Sex Love in America (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 138. For a more thorough discussion of camp, see Susan Sontag's noted 1964 essay, "Notes on Camp," in Against Interpretation and Other Essays (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1966), 275-293.

[17] See James Strachey, ed., Sigmund Freud, Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality (New York: Basic Books, 1962 ; 1905), 11, 12, 73. On the theme of rehabilitation and self alteration in the postwar period, see

David Serlin, Replaceable You: Engineering the Body in Postwar America (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

[18] On this, see Freud, Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality, 6-11. On homosexuality as a life phase and universal bisexuality, see Ronald Bayer, Homosexuality and American Psychiatry: The Politics of Diagnosis (New York: Basic Books, 1981), 22-25. Finally, see an early American disciple of Freud's, A.B. Brill, Psychoanalysis: Its Theories and Practical Applications (New York: Arno Press, 1972 ; 1912).

[19] See Sigmund Freud, "A Letter from Freud," *American Journal of Psychiatry* (April 1951): 786.

[20] On the observation of homosexuality in the military, see Berube, Coming Out Under Fire, 15-16, 20-21. See again D'Emilio, Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities, 45. On gays in the Canadian military, see again Kinsman, The Regulation of Desire, 150-153 and Jackson, One of the Boys.

[21] On American interpretations of Freud, see Henry Abelove, "Freud, Male Homosexuality, and the Americans," in Abelove et al, eds. The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader (New York: Routledge, 1993), 381-393. Some of these American analysts to depart from Freud included Sandor Rado, who highlighted unhealthy parenting in the creation of homosexuals in his "An Adaptational View of Sexual Behavior," in Paul Hoch and Joseph Zubin, eds., Psychosexual Development in Health and Diseases, The Proceedings of the 38th Annual Meeting of the American Psychopathological Association Held in New York City, June 1948 (New York: Grune and Stratton, 1949).

[22] For details on homosexuality's appearance on the initial DSM and its revisions, see Bayer, Homosexuality and American Psychiatry, 39-40.

[23] For parenting types in Freud, see Freud, Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality, 12. Freudian writings on sons and mothers emphasised the oedipal struggle more than the type of the overbearing mother. On this, see Alan P. Bell et al., Sexual Preference: Its Development in Men and Women (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1981). For American psychiatry's response of domineering mothers and distant mothers, see Bayer, Homosexuality and American Psychiatry, 29-31. According to Bayer, these American analysts would gain more prominence in the 1960s, following the work of those who split from Freud in the 1950s at Columbia University's Psychoanalytic Clinic for Training and Research. Examples of those American analysts to reject a hereditary view of homosexuality include: Gordon Westwood, Society and the Homosexual (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1953); Daniel Cappon, Toward an Understanding of Homosexuality, (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1965); Frank Merriman, The Making of a Homosexual (Los Lunas, New Mexico: Edea Books, 1966); and Irving Bieber, Homosexuality: A Psychoanalytic Study of Male Homosexuals (New York: Basic Books, 1962).

[24] Cornell University, Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Collection 7609, Robert Leach, Box 1, Robert Leach Journals Vol. XXIV, 4th day, 26th, 1950, p. 189.

[25] Robert Leach, Box 6, File 3, Letter to Mother, 8-3-1950, p. 1 and 2.

[26] Robert Leach, Box 5, File 37, Letter to Son, 8-20-1950, p. 1.

[27] Robert Leach, Box 6, File 3, Letter to Mother, 9-6-1950, p. 2 and 3.

[28] See Philip Wylie, "Common Women," Chapter 11 in Generation of Vipers (New York: Rinehart and Co., 1942), 184-204. See also Mauree Applegate, Everybody's Business: Our Children (Evanston, Illinois: Row, Peterson, and Company, 1952) on the problems bred by the "smother-mother".

[29] Robert Leach, Box 5, Folder 11, Letter to Son, March 18, 1945. On earlier twentieth century parenting styles, see Don Humachek, Encounters With the Self (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1992), p. 208 and Tommie J. Hamner and Pauline H. Turner, Parenting in Contemporary Society (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1985), 18.

[30] Robert Leach, Box 6, File 3, Letter to Mother, 9-6-1950, p. 3.

[31] Robert Leach, Box 5, File 37, Letter to Son, 9-19-1950, p. 1.

[32] Ibid., 2.

[33] Ibid., 2 and 3.

[34] Ibid., 3.

[35] On the value of privacy in Victorian families, see Mintz and Kellogg, Domestic Revolutions, 90.

[36] Robert Leach, Box 5, File 37, 10-1-1950, p. 2.

[37] On the intellectual response to conformity and the popularity culture of this period see Stephen J. Whitfield, The Culture of the Cold War (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1991). The theme of the oppression of uniformity also surfaced in American art of this period, such as George Tooker's haunting image, "Subway" (1950).

[38] On this, see Jeffrey Escoffier "Homosexuality and the Sociological Imagination: the 1950s and 1960s" in Martin Duberman, ed. A Queer World: The Center for Gay and Lesbian Studies Reader (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 248-261.

[39] Robert Lindner, Must You Conform? (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1956), 32 and 11.

[40] See David Riesman, The Lonely Crowd: A Study of the Changing American Character (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1950). On the popularization of existential philosophers in this period, see Julius E. Heuscher, Psychology, Folklore, Creativity, and the Human Dilemma (Springfield, Illinois: Charles C. Thomas, 2003), 344 ff. ; on Sartre and authenticity see Jean-Paul Sartre in Wade Baskin, ed. The Philosophy of Existentialism (New York: Philosophical Library, 1965).

[41] Robert Leach, Box 3, File 28, "Reflections on my Journal," (1952), p. 53.

[42] Robert Leach, Box 4, File 7, "Reflections on my Journal," (1959), p. 2.

[43] On homosexuality as a retreat from the requirements of the masculine role in this period, see Barbara Ehrenreich, The Hearts of Men: American Dreams and the Flight from Commitment (New York: Anchor/Doubleday Press, 1983), 25.

[44] On the deviance of childlessness, see Elaine Tyler May, "Pushing the Limits, 1940-1961," in Nancy Cott, No Small Courage: A History of Women in the United States (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 519-20 (473-528). For household zoning regulations in Canada, see Kinsman, The Regulation of Desire, 226. In the United States, see Gwendolyn Wright, Building the Dream: A Social History of Housing in America (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981) on "neighbourhood character," 247-248.

[45] See Lyn Pedersen (Jim Kepner), "The Importance of Being Different" re-print from *ONE* Magazine, 1954, in Mark Blasius and Shane Phelan, We Are Everywhere: A Historical Source Book of Gay and Lesbian Politics (New York: Routledge, 1997), 320-323 and also Hollister Barnes (Dorr Legg), "I Am Glad I Am a Homosexual" from *ONE*, 1958, in Blasius and Phelan, We Are Everywhere, 323-326.

[46] See Barbara Stephens, "A Plea for Integration," *The Ladder* 1, no. 8 (May 1957): 17 (17-18).

[47] On the "silent generation," see Lewis Perry, Intellectual Life in America (New York: Franklin Watts, 1984), 420.

[48] On these laws see Estelle Freedman, "Uncontrolled Desires: The Response to the Sexual Psychopath, 1920-1960," *Journal of American History* 74 (June 1987): 84 (83-106). In Canada, throughout the 1950s, male homosexual acts were also against the law; gross indecency, which extended to female homosexuality and oral sex, were both punishable by five years' imprisonment. For details see Neil Miller, Out of the Past: Gay and Lesbian History from 1869 to the Present (New York: Vintage, 1995), 295.

[49] On gay teachers in the twentieth century see Jackie Blount, Fit to Teach: Same Sex Desire, Gender and School Work in the Twentieth Century (Albany: SUNY Press, 2005).

[50] Freedman, "Uncontrolled Desires: The Response to the Sexual Psychopath, 1920-1960," 102.

[51] On the figure of the homosexual child molestor, see Kinsman, The Regulation of Desire, 152 and John D'Emilio and Estelle Freedman, Intimate Matters, 2nd. Ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997 ; 1988), 215. On the conflation of the category of homosexual with pervert and psychopath, see again Freedman, "Uncontrolled Desires: The Response to the Sexual Psychopath," 103-104. Finally, on the notion of homosexual recruitment, see David Johnson, The Lavender Scare: The Cold War Persecution of Gays and Lesbians in the Federal Government (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 57.

[52] William Billings Collection, "Gay Scrapbook," Mrs. Billings' letter to the *Denver Post*, May 23, 1955, Harvey Milk Archives--Scott Smith Collection (GLC 35), The James C. Hormel Gay and Lesbian Center, San Francisco Public Library, San Francisco, CA, p. 2.

[53] On harassment in gay bars, see D'Emilio and Freedman, Intimate Matters, 294 and D'Emilio, Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities, 14-15. On police crackdowns and harassment in lesbian bars, see Elizabeth Kennedy and Madeline Davis' oral history of lesbians in Buffalo during the pre and postwar periods, Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold: The History of a Lesbian Community (New York: Penguin, 1993). See also Lynn Fernie's film, Forbidden Love, 84 min., National Film Board of Canada, Montreal, 1992.

[54] On Rustin's arrest, see John D'Emilio's biography, Lost Prophet: The Life and Times of Bayard Rustin (New York: Free Press, 2003), 191-192.

[55] See "I am a Homosexual", the reprint of a letter of a young gay man, forced to come out to his parents because of police entrapment, in the *Mattachine Review* 6, no. 6 (June 1960): 20-23. *MR* often re-published this informational pamphlet "What To Do If You're Arrested," during its run in the 1950s and 60s.

[56] See "A Minneapolis Father Discovers Homosexuality" in *MR* (May June 1955): 24-30, reprinted from the *Minneapolis Star*.

[57] Lesbian Herstory Archives, Serial # 87-7, Marge McDonald, Diary Entry 7-1-1955, p. 22b.

[58] Marge McDonald, Diary Entry 4-22-56, p. 86.

[59] Marge McDonald, Diary Entry 11-7-59, p. 684.

[60] Ibid., p. 685 b.

[61] Ibid., p. 687.

[62] See Elliot Valenstein, Great and Desperate Cures: The Rise and Decline of Psychosurgery and Other Radical Treatments for Mental Illness (New York: Basic Books, 1986), 253 and 291, and also The Psychosurgery Debate: Scientific, Legal, and Ethical Perspectives (San Francisco: W.H. Freeman, 1980). On the greater administration of lobotomies and electroconvulsive shock treatments to women, see Nancy Tomes, "Female Histories of Psychiatry," 348-383, in Mark S. Micale and Roy Porter, eds. Discovering the History of Psychiatry (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 375.

[63] Marshall McLuhan, an early media theorist, for example, emphasized the notion of numbness or automation that might result before electronic media. See Understanding the Media: The Extensions of Man (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964), 47 and 346. The motif of catatonia was likewise prevalent in 1950s alien invasion films. For a discussion, see Patrick Lucanio, Them Or Us: Archetypal Interpretations of 50s Alien Invasion Films (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987).

[64] On the censure of gay publications and FBI surveillance, see Rodger Streitmatter, Unspeakable: The Rise of the Gay and Lesbian Press in America (Boston: Faber and Faber, 1995), 3 and 32-33, and D'Emilio, Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities, 115. See also D'Emilio and Freedman, Intimate Matters, 282-287.

[65] Alhough there are no specific statistics on the class and race of the readership and membership of these homophile organizations, both periodicals appear to have had a predominantly white and middle class composition. One clue is *The Ladder's* readership survey in 1958, wherein it was found that their women readers earned more than triple the average salary for women: $4200 as opposed to $1310, suggesting a strong middle class base. See Streitmatter, Unspeakable, 42.

[66] See re-print of the Institute of Social Ethics, "An Introduction to the Homophile Movement," Part 3: "Activities of the Organizations," p. 15, in Lesbian Herstory Archives, Serial # 79-7, Julie Lee Papers.

[67] See, for example, "Will I Ever Be Able to Face the World Again?" in the *Mattachine Review* 4, no. 4 (April 1958): 36. This ad was run several times in different variations. See also Toronto's *Gay* 1, no. 6, (June 1964): 9.

[68] Historians have only a limited portrait of just how many gays really were rejected by their parents during this era (or any other for that matter). Elizabeth Kennedy, in her oral history of Buffalo lesbians between the 1930s and 50s, asked her interview subjects about their family's reactions, and found that these varied from beatings to begrudging acceptances, although none were expressly excommunicated. See Kennedy and Davis, Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold, 57 ff. for example.

[69] See advertisement in the *Mattachine Review* 7, no. 9 (Sept. 1961): 15. "The Rejected" was written by John W. Reavis, Jr. and produced by him and Irving Saraf as a National Educational Television Presentation for KQED Channel 9, San Francisco. See Transcript, Sept. 11, 1961, KQED, 525 9th St., San Francisco 3, CA.

[70] See Ken Burns, "'The Homosexual Faces a Challenge': A Speech to the Third Annual Convention of the Mattachine Society," reprinted in Blasius and Phelan, eds., We Are Everywhere 287 (285-289) ; also in *MR* 2, no. 4 (Aug. 1956): 20 and 25-27.

[71] These studies were published in 1948 and 1953, respectively. On Kinsey's findings for men, see D'Emilio and Freedman, Intimate Matters, 291-292; for women, see 295. Also on women, see Margaret Cruikshank, The Gay and Lesbian Liberation Movement (New York: Routledge, 1992), 34.

[72] See Edmund Bergler, 1000 Homosexuals: Conspiracy of Silence, or Curing and Deglamorizing Homosexuals? (Paterson, N.J.: Pageant Books, 1959), 213. Edmund Bergler and William S. Kroger also rejected a Kinseyian idea of a continuum of sexuality. See their Kinsey's Myth of Female Sexuality: The Medical Facts (New York: Grune and Stratton, 1954).

[73] On pulps, see Joye Zimet, The Art of Lesbian Pulp Fiction, 1949-1969 (New York: Viking, 1999) and Michael Bronski, Pulp Friction: Uncovering the Golden Age of Gay Male Pulps (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2003). See also Fernie's *Forbidden Love*. Finally, see Suzanna Danuta Walters, "'As Her Hand Crept Slowly Up her Thigh: Ann Bannon and the Politics of Pulp," *Social Text* 23 (Fall/Winter 1989): 83-101.

[74] Ben Travis, The Strange Ones (Boston: Beacon, 1959).

[75] See Gore Vidal, The City and the Pillar, (New York: Ballantine, 1948 and 1965) 15.

[76] Mrs. Leah Gailey, "A Mother Gives an Answer: What Can I Do?" *Mattachine Review* 4, no. 5 (May 1958): 7 (5-8).

[77] Anne Fredericks, "One Parent's Reaction," *The Ladder* 5, no. 11, (Aug. 1961): 6 (4-7).

[78] Mrs. L. R. Maxwell, "Just Between Us Mothers," *MR* 3, no. 6 (June 1957): 20 (20-22).

[79] Ibid., 21.

[80] Warren Susman has argued that middle-class families felt ashamed at the degree to which their accustomed way of life shattered and changed. See Warren Susman, ed. Culture and Commitment, 1929-1945 (New York: George Braziller, 1973), 11-15. See also Lawrence Levine, Unpredictable Past: Explorations in American Cultural History (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 209. On the loss of family privacy that the Depression had entailed, see Perry R. Duis, "No Time for Privacy: World War Two and Chicago's Families" in Lewis Erenberg and Susan Hirsch, The War in American Culture: Society and Consciousness During World War Two (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 17-46. On women learning toughness, see Laura Hapke, Daughters of the Great Depression: Women, Work, and Fiction in the American 1930s (Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 1995).

[81] For her analysis of twentieth century women's magazines such as *Good Housekeeping* and the *Ladies Home Journal*, see Nancy Walker, Shaping Our Mothers' World: American Women's Magazines (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2000).

[82] D'Emilio, Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities, 115.

[83] For background on Laura Hobson's novel and her own family situation, see Nan Robertson, "For the Parents of Homosexuals," the *San Francisco Examiner Chronicle* Sunday September 25, 1975, in the William Billings Collection, the James C. Hormel Gay and Lesbian Center, San Francisco Public Library, San Francisco, CA. Hobson was a successful novelist who had written about the torment of antisemitism in her work Gentleman's Agreement (1950).

[84] Laura Z. Hobson, Consenting Adult (New York: Doubleday, 1975), 4 and 5.

[85] James Baldwin, Giovanni's Room (New York: Laurel, 1956), 15.

[86] Established in 1930 as the Motion Picture Production Code, the Hollywood Code referred to the code of untreatable topics, such as sexual perversion, by which the motion picture industry regulated itself. The Code was not abolished until 1968. For gay depictions in movies, see Vito Russo, The Celluloid Closet: Homosexuality in the Movies (New York: Harper and Row, 1981).

[87] Hobson, Consenting Adult, 104.

[88] For context on a more pervasive sense of discretion in the earlier half of the twentieth century, see Rochelle Gurstein, The Repeal of Reticence: A History of America's Cultural and Legal Struggles Over Free Speech, Obscenity, Sexual Liberation, and Modern Art (New York: Hill and Wang, 1996).

[89] Mary Meigs, Lily Briscoe: A Self Portrait, An Autobiography of Mary Meigs (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1981), 67.

[90] On McCarthy and gays, see D'Emilio, Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities, 40 ff and 52 ff and Johnson, The Lavender Scare, 73. On anticommunism in Canada, see Kinsman, The Regulation of Desire, 115 ff,

and 179-181. See also Gary Kinsman et al., eds., Whose National Security?: Canadian State Surveillance and the Creation of Enemies, (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2000).

[91] Mary Meigs, Lily Briscoe, 67.

[92] Ibid., 69.

[93] Robert Leach, Box 6, File 3, Diary Entry 9-6-1950, p. 2.

[94] Robert Leach, Box 3, File 26, "Reflections on my Journal for 1950," p. 28.

[95] From Chapter 21 of Donald Webster Cory, The Homosexual in America (New York: Greenberg Publications, 1951), 230. Cory would later go on to defend cures of homosexuality in his 1965 introduction to Albert Ellis's Homosexuality: Its Causes and Cure (New York: Lyle and Stuart, 1965). Nonetheless, he was at the forefront of a psychological movement which suggested that society was responsible for the neuroses that seemed to be a part of gayness. See, for example, Alfred A. Gross, Strangers in Our Midst (Washington: Public Affairs Press, 1961), especially Chapter 3, "Society Is the Patient," p. 53-67, and prior to that, Evelyn Hooker's groundbreaking 1954 work summarized in Bayer, Homosexuality and American Psychiatry, 50-53; Charlotte Patterson and Anthony D'Augelli, Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Identities Over the Lifespan: Psychological Perspectives (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 2; and finally "A Preliminary Analysis of Group Behavior of Homosexuals," *One Institute Quarterly* (Winter 1959): 26-32.

[96] See Alice LaVere, "Emotions That Destroy Your Health and Personality," in Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgendered Historical Society of Northern California, Don Lucas (1997-25), Box 8, File 6, "Homophile Organizations: Mattachine Society."

[97] Robert Leach, Box 5, File 39, Letter to Son, May 12, 1952, 1.

[98] Robert Leach, Box 5, File 39, Letter to Son, August 29, 1952, 1.

[99] Robert Leach, Box 5, File 39, Letter to Son, October 20, 1952, 1.

[100] Robert Leach, Box 5, File 39, Letter to Son October 25, 1952, 1.

[101] Robert Leach, Box 5, File 39, Letter to Son, November 7, 1952, 1.

[102] Robert Leach, Box 5, File 39, Letter to Son, November 7, 1952, 1, and Box 5 File 7, Letter to Mother, 11-11-1952, 1.

[103] Ann Aldrich, We, Too, Must Love (Greenwich, CT: Gold Medal Books, 1958), 54.

[104] Marge McDonald, Diary Entry, 3-17-56, p. 80b.

[105] Marge McDonald, Diary Entry, 7-21-59, p. 647b.

[106] On lesbian butch-femme roles in this period see Kennedy and Davis, Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold.

[107] Marge McDonald, Diary Entry 8-12-55, p. 41b.

[108] Ibid., p. 41b and p. 42.

[109] Ibid., p. 42.

[110] See Vin Packer (who also wrote as Ann Aldrich), Whisper His Sin (Greenwich, CT: Fawcett Gold Medal, 1954) and The Evil Friendship (Greenwich, Conn.: Fawcett Gold Medal, 1958).

[111]Marge McDonald, Diary Entry, 11-18-59, p. 689b.

[112] Marge McDonald, Diary Entry, 6-13-59, p. 590b.

[113] This story is in Johnson, The Lavender Scare, 119.

[114] On military hunches, see Berube, Coming Out Under Fire, 21.

[115] See Valerie Korinek, "'Don't Let Your Girlfriends Ruin Your Marriage': Lesbian Imagery in *Chatelaine* Magazine 1950-69," in Veronica Strong-Boag et al. eds. Rethinking Canada: The Promise of Women's History (Oxford University Press, 2002), 334-352.

[116] On the plummeting marriage age in the 1950s, see D'Emilio and Freedman, Intimate Matters, 261; and Joseph Kett, Rites of Passage: Adolescence in America, 1790-Present (New York: Basic Books, 1977), 265.

[117] D'Emilio and Freedman, Intimate Matters, 288-289, and D'Emilio, Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities, 27-29. See also May, Homeward Bound, 71-72. May points out that although enlisted women could have been dismissed over being lesbian, few were. Berube shows that it was not until near the end of the war that directives were issued aimed at excluding lesbians from the armed forces. See Berube, Coming Out Under Fire, 28-29.

[118] Dorothee Gore Papers, New York Public Library, Mss. and Archives Section, Series 1, Box 1, Folder 13, "Correspondence 1960s" letter from Smitty to Dotty, "Dear Dotty", Oct. 5, 1960, p. 3

[119] Ibid., 3-4.

[120] Ibid., 4.

[121] See John D'Emilio's essay, "Capitalism and Gay Identity" in The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader, 467-476. In turn, Elizabeth Kennedy has shown that, particularly in lesbian contexts, the house party and meetings in the home were integral to the formation of gay identities. See again Kennedy and Davis, Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold.

[122] On the desire for domestic space, see Lizabeth Cohen, A Consumers' Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003), 73; Paul Lineberger and Bruce Tucker, The New Individualists: The Generation After the Organization Man (New York: Harper Collins, 1991), 127; and see again Duis, "No Time for Privacy," 17-46. On bedrooms, see Wright, Building the Dream, 254. See also Donald G. Wetherell and Irene R.A. Kmet, Homes in Alberta: Building, Trends, and Design, 1870--1967 (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1991), 246 and 261.

[123] Paul Monette, Becoming a Man: Half a Life Story (San Francisco: Harper, 1992), 29.

[124] Arnie Kantrowitz, Under the Rainbow: Growing Up Gay (New York: William and Morrow, 1977), 34.

[125] Ibid., 35.

[126] The emergence of the juvenile delinquent as a cultural and legal concept during this period had instilled some fear in North American society over troublesome youths and adolescent crimes wherein hypermasculine, manly boys were the most suspect. On the connections between mesomorphy/muscularity and delinquency, see Seymour Halleck, Psychiatry and the Dilemmas of Crime: A Study of Causes, Punishment, and Treatment (New York: Harper and Row, 1967), 117. A worry over rough play and its degenerating to delinquency also might have set apart gentle play. See Harry Manuel Shulman, Juvenile Delinquency in American Society (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1960), 262. Also, see Ronald D.

Cohen, "The Delinquents: Censorship and Youth Culture in Recent U.S. History," *History of Education Quarterly* 37, no. 3 (Fall 1997): 251-70, and Herbert J. Gans, Levittowners: Ways of Life and Politics in a New Suburban Community (New York: Pantheon, 1967), for details on the "juvenile problem."

[127] Kantrowitz, Under the Rainbow, 35.

[128] Alice T. Friedman has suggested a notion of women as the caretakers of family privacy in her work, Women and the Making of the Modern House (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1998), 150.

[129] Kantrowitz, Under the Rainbow, 23 and 29.

[130] It was not until the 1960s, for instance, that doctors in both the United States and Canada instituted gender identity programs to teach proper gender roles to children and parents or the establishment of gender identity clinics. See Kinsman, The Regulation of Desire, 200. Joanne Meyerowitz links this development to the widespread reportage of transsexuals in the North American news media, including the renowned former soldier Christine Jorgensen in her work, How Sex Changed: A History of Transsexuals in the United States (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002). Finally, for her interpretation of flexibility within gender roles of the 1950s, see Jessica Weiss, To Have and to Hold: Marriage, the Baby Boom, and Social Change (University of Chicago Press, 2000), p. 86-90.

[131] On camp's origins within the family context see Mark Booth, Camp (New York: Quartet Books, 1983), "Mummy is the Root of All Evil," 85--116. Camp reflected broader systems of gay codes and cues of sissy figures within popular, mainstream movie culture of the 1930s, for example, that would become a code for "gay." On gay codes, cues, style, language, and folklore in the pre-War period, see George Chauncey, Gay New York (New York: Harper Collins, 1994). While many of the gay publications of the 1950s and early 1960s reflect a homophile sensibility rather than a camp one, the more culture-oriented gay periodicals during these years embraced elements of camp.

[132] *Two* was a bimonthly magazine starting in 1964 (lasting for 11 issues, until 1966) that included humour, interest pieces, and physique pictures. For details, see Kinsman, The Regulation of Desire, 248. In fact, the two major Canadian homophile-era periodicals, *Two* and *Gay*, both came under criticism for not being serious enough. Canadian periodicals were not as affiliated with large homophile organizations to support their agendas, and relied entirely on ads, subscriptions, and newsstand sales to keep alive.

[133] *Two* 11 (July/August 1966): 33. "Wolf Cubs" was the Canadian/British term for the Baden-Powell children's organization that precedes Scouts.

[134] *Drum* ran between the years 1964 and 69. It was cheerful in tone and tended to celebrate gay culture. For details, see Rupp, A Desired Past , 166 and, Stein, City of Sisterly and Brotherly Loves, 232 ff. Similar in scope and content, LA's *Tangents* ran between 1965 and 1970.

[135] Cartoon by Michael Waltrip in *Tangents* 1, no. 11 (August 1966): 29.

[136] Cartoon by Herb Green in *Drum: Sex in Perspective* 4, no. 8 (October 1964): 12.

[137] Richard McCann, "My Mother's Clothes: The School of Beauty and Shame," 141-160, in Dean Kostos and Eugene Grygo, eds., Mama's Boy: Gay Men Write About Their Mothers (New York City: Painted Leaf Press, 2000), 151. (This story has been re-printed many times and was first published in 1986).

[138] On the displacement of fathers during the Depression, see Ralph La Rossa, The Modernization of Fatherhood: A Social and Political History (University of Chicago Press, 1997), 19.

[139] On masculine domesticity, see Robert Rutherdale, "Fatherhood and Masculine Domesticity During the Baby Boom: Consumption and Leisure in Advertising and Life Stories," in Lori Chambers and Edgar-Andre Montigny, Family Matters: Papers in Post-Confederate Canadian Family History (Toronto:

Canadian Scholars' Press, 1998), 309-333. See also Jessica Weiss, To Have and to Hold, 42 and 85-86. On television fathers, see Nina C. Leibman, Living Room Lectures: the 50s Family in Film and Television (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995), 256-259.

[140] McCann, "My Mother's Clothes," 152.

[141] See May, Homeward Bound, 14, on the idea of containment. On women's sexuality specifically see 61 ff. and on gay sexuality see 95 ff.

[142] On this individualistic post World War Two family climate, See Donald K. Freedheim et al., eds., History of Psychotherapy: A Century of Change (Washington: American Psychiatric Association, 1992), 50-51. And on the newness and unfamiliar terrain of these middle-class family structures to flourish in the postwar period, see again Weiss, To Have and To Hold.

[143] See Bieber, Homosexuality: A Psychoanalytic Study, 90 and 45 respectively. In its January 1966 edition, *Time* also embraced this family configuration in an article entitled, "The Homosexual in America"; for a discussion, see Eric Marcus, Making History: the Struggle for Gay and Lesbian Equal Rights 1945-90: An Oral History (New York: Harper Collins, 1992), 90. On the emasculation of fathers in the modern family, see Cappon, Toward an Understanding of Homosexuality, 10.

[144] In some postwar studies, such as Frank S. Caprio's and Judd Marmor's, the authors suggested that women became lesbians when their fathers encouraged masculine pursuits and tomboy natures. See Frank S. Caprio, Female Homosexuality: A Psychodynamic Study of Lesbianism (New York: Citadel, 1954), 121, and 132-139; and see May E. Romm, "Sexuality and Homosexuality in Women" in Judd Marmor, Sexual Inversion: The Multiple Roots of Homosexuality (New York: Basic Books, 1965).

[145] See Marvin Drellich, "New Findings from Psychoanalytic Research on Homosexuality," *New York Mattachine Newsletter* (March 1961): 4.

[146] I am thinking here, for example, of stories appearing in Cheever's 1958 collection The Housebreaker of Shady Hill and Other Stories (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1958), particularly the story of the desire to see a downside to the seemingly too perfect, happy family, the Crutchmans, "The Worm in the Apple". See The Stories of John Cheever (New York: Ballantine Books, 1980), 338-342.

[147] For details on *Good Housekeeping* see again, Walker, Shaping Our Mothers' World, 27. This magazine advised women on the practicalities of homemaking, food, clothing, physical appearance, and the emotional sanctity of the family.

[148] Lester David, " 'Our Son Was Different': When a Mother Discovers the Agonizing Truth," *Good Housekeeping* (January 1966) : 51 (51--125).

[149] Ibid., 114.

[150] Ibid., 51.

[151] Ibid., 113 and 114.

[152] Ibid., 120.

[153] Ibid., 121.

[154] Ibid., 120.

[155] On this reaction, see Susan Bordo, The Male Body: A New Look at Men in Public and Private (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1999), 121. See also Ehrenreich, The Hearts of Men, 44-50.

[156] Lester David, "'Our Son Was Different,'" 122.

[157] Ibid., 123.

[158] Ibid., 125.

[159] See for example, *Gay* (January 1965): 14. For details on *Gay*, see Donald McLeod, A Brief History of *Gay*: Canada's First Gay Tabloid 1964-66 (Toronto: Homewood, 2003).

[160] See *Gay* (January 1965): 12.

[161] Images of gay domesticity during this period included the early 1960s paintings of British painter David Hockney (who resided for a period in Los Angeles) such as "Domestic Scene, Los Angeles" (1963). For more on representations of gay domesticity, see Kenneth E. Silver, "Master Bedrooms, Master Narratives: Home, Homosexuality, and Post War Art," p. 206-221 in Christopher Reed, ed. Not at Home: The Suppression of Domesticity in Modern Art and Architecture (London: Thames and Hudson, 1996), 217. See also Robert Rauschenberg's combines of the 1950s, which re-examined the objects of daily life.

[162] Bill T. Jones with Peggy Gillespie, Last Night on Earth (New York: Pantheon Books, 1995), 38.

[163] Ibid., 43. For a discussion of lynchings of African American men who had been accused of raping white women, see William F. Pinar, Gender of Racial Politics and Violence in America: Lynching, Prison, Rape, and the Crisis of Masculinity (New York: Peter Lang, 2001). As well, see D'Emilio and Freedman, Intimate Matters, 217-221.

[164] See Caprio, Female Homosexuality , particularly his chapter, "Autobiographical Confessions," 244-269.

[165] Ann Aldrich, We Two Won't Last (Greenwich, CT: Gold Medal Books, 1963), 103.

[166] On child specific fantasy lives encouraged by children's toys and children's own TV shows in the postwar period, see Gary Cross, Kids' Stuff: Toys and the Changing World of American Childhood (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997). On the exclusivity of youth culture in the post war period, see Ken Plummer, "Intimate Citizenship and the Culture of Sexual Story Telling," in Jeffrey Weeks and Janet Holland, P. 34-52, Sexual Cultures: Community, Values and Intimacy (New York: St Martin's, 1996), 40.

[167] Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgendered Historical Society of Northern California, Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon (93-13), Box 22, File 22, "Correspondence, Autobiography re. *Lesbian/Woman*, 1972-79," Letter "Dear Del and Phyl", Oct. 29, 1973, p. 3 (of 4).

[168] Glen H. Elder suggested that women who hailed from deprived families during the Depression were more likely, as adults, to pour the intensity of their emotions and creativity into their families, including providing for their children. See his Children of the Great Depresssion: Social Change in Life Experience (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974). On the 1950s domestic consumer economy, see Dale Carter, "Evasive Action: War, Peace, and Security in the 50s," in Dale Carter, ed. Cracking the Ike Age: Aspects of 50s America (Aarhus University Press, 1992), 39-40 (35-56) and see again Cohen, A Consumers' Republic; on credit and borrowing specifically, see 123. Civilian consumption was particularly strong in the United States by the early 1960s, and an expansion of consumer credit helped this trend. See Robert Guttmann, How Credit Shapes the Economy: The U.S. in a Global System (Armonk, NY: ME Sharpe, 1994), 140, and David E. Shi, The Simple Life: Plain Living and High Thinking in American Culture (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 249-250.

[169] Karla Jay, "First Love", in Joan Larkin, ed. A Woman Like That: Lesbian and Bisexual Writers Tell Their Coming Out Stories (New York: Perennial, 1999), 29 (28-41). With Allen Young, Karla Jay edited

Out of the Closets: Voices of Gay Liberation (New York: Douglas, 1972), After You're Out: Personal Experiences of Gay Men and Lesbian Women (New York: Quick Fox, 1975) and Lavender Culture (New York: Jove, 1979). An English professor at Pace University in New York, she also has written several other books.

[170] Ibid., 28.

[171] Ibid., 29.

[172] On the stock theme of the tomboy in lesbian memoirs from this period and more recently, see Lynne Yamaguchi and Karen Barber, eds. Tomboys: Tales of Dyke Derring-Do (Los Angeles: Alyson Publications, 1992). See also Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgendered Historical Society of Northern California, Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon (93-13), Box 22, File 22, "Correspondence, Autobiography re. *Lesbian/Woman*, 1972-79" and Box 24, File 5, "Correspondence, Young Women, 1972-79."

[173] See Terri de la Pena, "Blunt Cuts and Permanent Conditions," p. 111-132, in Nisa Donnelly, ed. Mom: Candid Memoirs by Lesbians About the First Woman in Their Life (Los Angeles: Alyson Books, 1998), 126. De la Pena would go on to write the novels Margins (Seattle: Seal Press, 1992) and Latin Satins (Seattle: Seal Press, 1994) both focusing on gay and Chicana experiences.

[174] Ibid., 115.

[175] See Albert Camarillo, Chicanos in California: A History of Mexican Americans in California (San Francisco: Boyd and Fraser, 1984).

[176] On the domestic ideals of the postwar period, see Betty G. Farrell, Family: The Making of an Idea, an Institution and a Controversy in American Culture (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1999), 108 ff. I use 'baby boom' to refer to the sustained baby births in the postwar period until about 1964, in the United States and Canada. Baby boom parents--a relatively small cohort-- were born in the 1930s, rearing their children, the products of youthful postwar marriages, in the 50s and early 60s. For details and statistics on the American baby boom, see Landon Y. Jones, Great Expectations: America and the Baby Boom Generation (New York: Coward, McCann, and Geoghegan, 1980) ; for similar information on the Canadian baby boom, see Doug Owram, Born at the Right Time: A History of the Baby Boom Generation (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996). On "democratic" child rearing, see Edward K. Spann, Democracy's Children: The Young Rebels of the 1960s and the Power of Ideals (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 2003), on the "New Domesticity" of the postwar period, 77 ff. See also Erik Erikson, Youth: Change and Challenge (New York: Basic Books, 1961) and Erich Fromm, Escape From Freedom (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1941 and 1965). Finally, see Benjamin Spock's The Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care (New York: Duell, Sloan, and Pearce, 1946; 1957). On Dr. Spock parenting styles, see Philip Slater, The Pursuit of Loneliness: American Culture at the Breaking Point (Boston: Beacon Press, 1976), 59 ff. See also Christina Hardyment, Dream Babies: Child Care from Locke to Spock (London: Jonathan Cape, 1983) and Katherine Arnup, Education for Motherhood: Advice for Mothers in Twentieth Century Canada (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), 55.

[177] Alan Helms, Young Man from the Provinces: A Gay Life Before Stonewall (New York: Avon, 1995), 52. For details on physique magazines, often gay male magazines masquerading as fitness magazines, see Kinsman, The Regulation of Desire, 248.

[178] See Joanne Meyerowitz, Women Adrift: Independent Wage Earners in Chicago, 1880-1930 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988). On the expansion of credit and social assistance programmes in the Canadian context see Alison Prentice et al., eds. Canadian Women: A History (Toronto: Harcourt and Brace, 1996), 380. In the United States, see Robert Ball, Social Security Today and Tomorrow (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978), 94-101.

[179] Dorothy Lyle, "The Family and Money Injustice," *The Ladder* 10, no. 6 (March 1966): 21 (21-22).

[180] Ibid., 22.

[181] See "Parents' Reaction," in the *Mattachine Review* 8, no. 10 (Oct. 1962): 21-23.

[182] See Jess Stern, The Sixth Man: A Startling Investigation Revealing That One Man in Six is a Homosexual (New York: Doubleday, 1961), 240. For details on the popular reception of this work, see D'Emilio, Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities, 139.

[183] Stern, The Sixth Man, 246.

[184] On the expression, "My Son, the Doctor," see Mariam K. Slater, "My Son the Doctor: Aspects of Mobility Among American Jews," *American Sociological Review* 34, no. 3 (June 1969): 359-374.

[185] See p. 5 and 6 of the Toronto periodical, *Gay*, May 29, 1964, (in reference to the collection "My Son, the Daughter", Washington: Guild Book Service, PO Box 7410, Franklin Station, Washington, 1964).

[186] See Philip Bockman, "Fishing Practice," 73-81, in Patrick Merla, ed., Boys Like Us: Gay Writers Tell Their Coming Out Stories (New York: Avon Books, 1996), 77.

[187] *Mattachine Review* (Nov. -Dec. 1955): 6-9.

[188] For details, see Kinsman, The Regulation of Desire, 236-246.

Figure 1. Cartoon in *Two*, 1966

Sara wants a sex change so she can join the Wolf Cubs !

Figure 2. Cartoon in *Tangents*, 1966

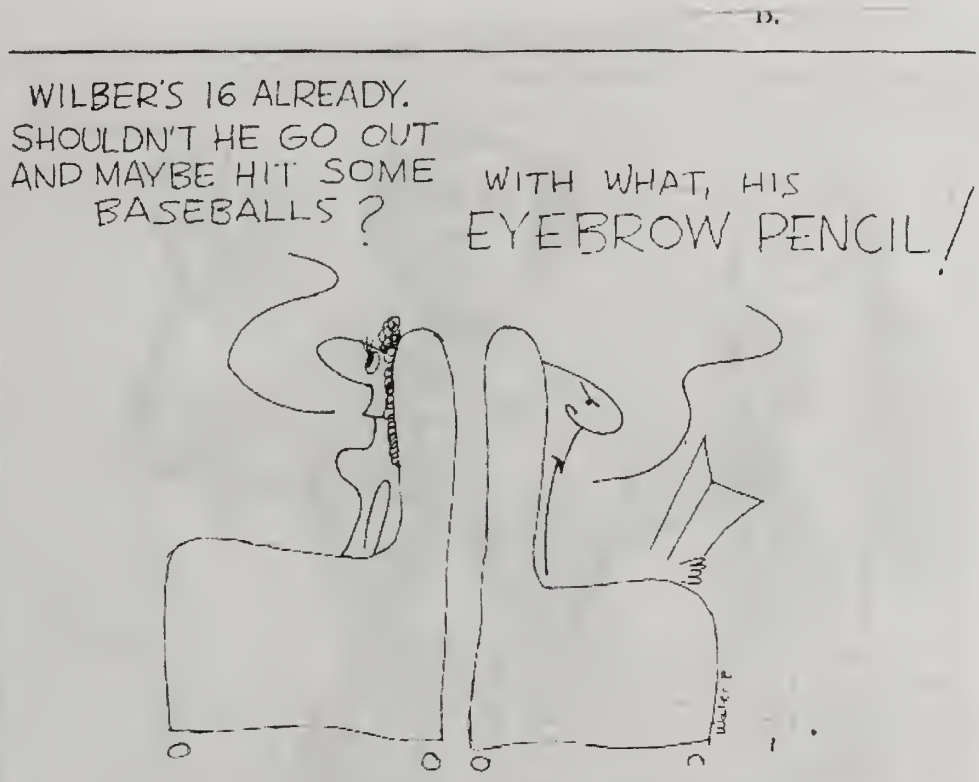
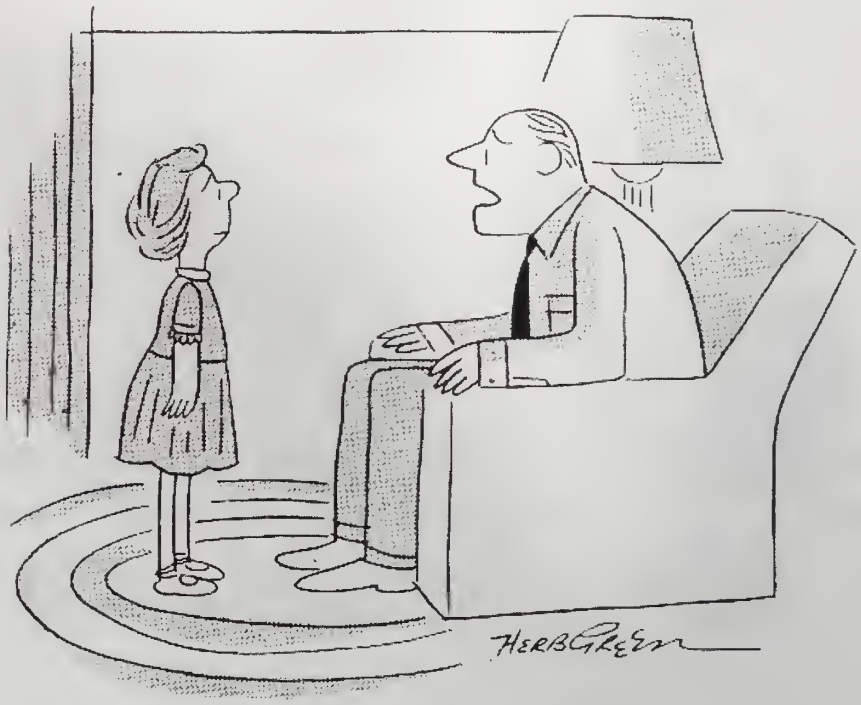


Figure 3. Cartoon in *Drum*, 1964

ARGOSY MAGAZINE



"It's time you and I had a long, long talk—son."

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Figure 4. Cartoon in *Gay*, 1965

Figure 5. Cartoon in *Gay*, 1964

MY SON,

The Daughter

"It's been a marvelous year for My Son Freddie"

My Freddie is always polite, even to strangers

Freddie's new hobby is astronomy

Mama is so proud of her son Freddie. He's doing so well at the office where only he is the one chosen to entertain the "special" out of town buyers — and he has so many friends, her Freddie. All of them are young and handsome! And every day he meets more! And Freddie is so lucky in having a roommate like Charlie. They get along so well together!

Freddy's riotous year of fun and games is told in twenty-eight very sly clever drawings together with Mama's humorously unperceptive captions. They make MY SON THE DAUGHTER a subtly gay book with a hero who turns out to be surprisingly warm and appealing.

This is why this tasteful, colorful book is a perfect gay gift for a gay friend. In fact, if you slip a copy of MY SON, THE DAUGHTER in your friend's stocking this Christmas we guarantee he'll be friendlier than ever.

There is no doubt that Freddy definitely is in a class with the best picture-story books on the market today. Order a copy now and you'll see for yourself what a charming, funny, very gay book MY SON, THE DAUGHTER is. MY SON, THE DAUGHTER is hardbound and is naturally, lavender!

CHAPTER 2

BETTER BLATANT THAN LATENT

Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, writer and peace activist Barbara Deming never explicitly told her mother, Katherine Deming, that she was gay. For a period of over twenty years, they wrote each other loving and supportive letters, Katherine Deming from the family home in New York City, and her daughter from various places while living abroad, as well as her own homes in Massachusetts and Maine. For both mother and daughter, a subtle, quiet knowledge of Deming's sexuality seemed quite a livable strategy. Mrs. Deming clearly knew about and accepted her daughter's relationships with women, signing her letters with "love to all your household," or, when her daughter was partners with Mary Meigs, "love to you and Mary." [1] In turn, her daughter acknowledged the primacy of her relationships with women, which seemed an extension of the closeness and intensity of emotion between them as mother and daughter.

This dynamic shifted as Deming developed a more political conception of gay selfhood. In 1969, while informing her mother that she and Meigs would be parting and splitting up their household, a 52 year old Barbara Deming sent her mother a letter that somewhat haltingly declared her identity as a lesbian. "Dearest Mother, I have news of myself that I should give you," she began, and went on to explain the particulars of her living situation. Describing her new partner, Deming wrote "she too is of a radical turn of mind politically. I love her children and they seem to love me."[2] "A radical turn of mind politically" might encompass a breadth of causes and sensibilities, and her mother was left to discern what these were. A more unambiguous revelation of her sexuality was to

come in 1974, upon the publication of Deming's new book, *We Cannot Live Without Our Lives*, which she had dedicated to "my lesbian sisters." A confrontation with her mother about this dedication ensued over the telephone, and they wrote about the phone call later, to try to resolve the dispute. In this letter, Deming said to her mother: "You find [the dedication] disturbing because [it is] 'so personal'. Yet if [a married woman author] wrote a book and dedicated it to wives everywhere, this wouldn't be too personal, would it? I know that society....smiles on wives but not on lesbians and wishes us not to be so personal as to exist. But, as you know, we do exist." Perhaps Deming's sexuality needed to be declared publicly if it was to exist at all. In this same letter, she suggested that her previous discretion about her sexuality had been untruthful. She wrote that each time she fell in love with a woman and took on a new living partner, her life "had changed profoundly" and yet "I didn't even tell you, my mother, in honest words, and I didn't tell friends who were close, close to me.....I was sure [they] would rather not be told.....Or I wasn't always sure that they'd rather, but I didn't want to risk embarrassing or estranging them." According to her, role playing--even lying--had come to suffuse collective gay consciousness. She explained: "As I tried to say on the phone, pretending not to be ourselves has made us all feel a little bit insane./Yes, we <u>are</u> a movement now--the Gay Liberation Movement."[3]

Not all gay daughters and sons adopted Deming's gay political consciousness, one that she herself only came to define during the late 1960s and early 1970s, a moment when gay politics was aligning with other emerging liberation movements of the period--the counterculture, women's liberation, the New Left, black nationalism, the student and peace movements--giving sexuality a prominent place in a wide-reaching critique of both

American politics and American social life.[4] The year in which Barbara Deming had made her first tenuous statement of a gay identity to her mother, 1969, had witnessed some specific moments that gave coherence to gay activism, including the Stonewall Riots in New York City and the Criminal Code Reform to legalize homosexuality in Canada.[5] The riot in particular became a mythologized event in North American gay culture, history, and ritual: annual gay pride marches started in 1970 continue to commemorate this event.[6] Adapting its name from Vietnam's National Liberation Front, the Gay Liberation Front had also formed during this year, first in New York City, and then in other large North American cities. Representing both gay men and women, this movement attempted to build a gay counterculture while rewriting the norms surrounding personal behaviour and sexuality.[7]

Gay liberation forthrightly claimed a social and political identity for gay individuals as a minority group. Gays would come to seek an understanding of their private experiences that their forebears likely would not have felt entitled to seek, within the family or in broader society. In turn, the subtleties of the metaphors, codes, and hints once taken up in the communication of intimate matters were becoming displaced by unequivocal revelations. This repudiation of discretion mirrored and even stimulated a broader demise of reticence surrounding the personal in many areas of North American life during this period. By "coming out" of what was increasingly considered the secrecy and isolation of the earlier postwar period, gays declared themselves not just to their peers, but to the heterosexual world--and their parents.[8] In turn, gay liberation writers of this generation imbued these parents with a symbolic significance as the ambassadors of a repressive society and banal sexuality. The irony of this portrait is that it highlights, in

its very vehemence, the enduring hold of the family and longing for family life that it seems to diminish or uproot.

Of course parents of gays did not solely embody these images of a quaint, inhibited, clueless early Cold War generation. In fact, they could be said to have exhibited a deepening awareness of their children's private, affective lives that paralleled their children's avowed embrace of their authentic selves during this period. With gays brought more prominently into the public and parental imagination, most especially through the student and social movements of the late 1960s and early 1970s, parents were more likely to perceive being gay as part of being a "hippy" and thus a political or even fashionable possibility for their children. Hippies were in reality a loosely formed collection of people, not always affiliated in ideology or in style, and might include student protestors, mystics, and Vietnam War veterans, among others. The image that many parents seemed to retain, however, was a more general impression of youthful exhibitionism, reflecting a broader public curiosity during these years about youth cultures.[9] Bus loads of tourists gawked at hippy enclaves in the Haight-Ashbury neighbourhood in San Francisco and on Yorkville Avenue in Toronto. North American media in particular took an interest in what appeared to be a foreign culture of the young, in personal demeanour and attire no less so than in their music, language, and art.[10] The valourisation of the personal that youth culture promoted during this period helped incite a parental recognition of the meanings of their children's sexuality.

The relationship between parents and children was also a more far-reaching theme of observers of North American culture and family life during the later 1960s and throughout the 1970s, particularly poignant when generational fragmentation seemed to

be such a vivid part of the public and intellectual imagination.[11] As the baby boomer generation came of age and appeared, at least on the surface, to be developing a uniform ethos of restlessness and social protest, their parents came under scrutiny for spawning what many considered a cohort of rabble-rousers. In this context, Republican Vice President Spiro Agnew and Reverend Norman Vincent Peale had even levelled public, often overstated, critiques against Dr. Spock for his hand in encouraging "permissive" parenting and abetting these generational trends. Many families, of course, did not adopt Spock parenting: working class parents were much more likely to insist on obedience and corporal punishment.[12] Moreover, the student revolt was not strictly an American phenomenon but an international one. Nonetheless, Richard Nixon's 1968 presidential campaign played on the idea of generational rift, contrasting a generation of baby boomers with their elders, who had been raised with common sense, and in turn, differentiating a "silent majority" of non-dissenting, "forgotten" Americans from the hedonistic and nihilistic young rebels.[13] In intellectual circles, social critics such as Theodor Adorno who had previously criticised the parents of the baby boomers as an apathetic and conformist generation came to criticise the young social protestors even more vehemently. He noted that their attempt to live outside of social forms, such as a widespread rejection of consumerism or government structures, was a rebellion that could become profoundly narcissistic.[14]

These perceived generational fissures also coincided with a greater consciousness about the meanings of family life itself during this period, both by those seeking to bolster traditional family forms and by those encouraging their dissolution. In his 1969 work The Future of the Family, Richard Farson acknowledged that this was a particularly

fraught period for families. Many did not exhibit, in his view, "the kind of intimacy that will be demanded most--the intimacy of shared feelings, of 'This is what it is like to be me. What is it like to be you right now?'"[15] He felt that most families simply did not know each other enough to live up to this kind of interaction. Increasingly however, spurred on by liberationist ideas, gays were in fact posing--and answering--these questions within their family lives, placing them and their parents among the forerunners of a more widespread impetus for a mutually enhancing family intimacy.

Barbara Deming and her mother were so intimate in their letters to each other that they seem emblematic of the kinds of intensely loving relationships invoked by historians describing nineteenth century women.[16] Katherine Deming herself was not a baby boomer parent, but her daughter was adopting the activist causes associated with a younger cohort. Accepting of her daughter's partners and proud of her daughter as a published writer, Katherine Deming nonetheless did not relent on her position regarding the lesbian dedication in her daughter's book. In fact, she seemed to long for an earlier dynamic, when she and her daughter did not speak of such deeply personal matters, as exemplified in a comment she made in 1957. "[B]ecause I refrain from asking you many personal questions does not imply a lack of interest," she wrote to her daughter then, "[but] merely a profound respect for your personal privacy."[17] Born in 1891 and coming of age at the turn of the century, Mrs. Deming was an upper class woman married to a successful lawyer. In keeping with this class and generational sensibility, she regarded personal privacy simply as a right.[18] The safeguarding of the right to privacy and an emerging impulse to protect individuals from excessive publicity had been prominent themes at the century's turn; Mrs. Deming seems very much shaped by this sensibility

about the sacredness of the private realm. Thus, it was perhaps unthinkable to her that her daughter now was discarding her own right to privacy.[19] Knowing about her daughter's sexuality was not the same as talking about it, and Mrs. Deming registered this change, fretting about the vulnerable aspects of her daughter's private life now exposed to public attention and discussion.

Accordingly, Katherine Deming did not engage very much with her daughter's suggestion of the toll her discretion had taken, but instead undertook a debate about the meaning and rewards of privacy. As she wrote to her daughter, "I did not realize that you had felt so much distress. That is sad. As to the dedication--I still feel it is a very private thing --I was not worrying about insults--why should there be? I thought these things were accepted as part of life these days--except when they are flaunted--as I'm afraid some of the 'gay' boys enjoy doing." She went on to list a number of gay couples she knew who were "respected and liked in the community", and claimed that "as long as people live decent lives and go on about their own business, it seems to me their private lives are their own."[20]

As Mrs. Deming implied when she denounced 'flaunting', without a sense of privacy, life could become superficial and overly self aware. Much as the language of discretion of an earlier period could veer into code or, at worst, something shadowy and unseemly, it also conveyed something deeply personal or interior that could get lost through revelations. In this vein, when Mrs. Deming wrote that she did not understand "the need for announcement or 'confession' or whatever" because her daughter had quite simply "lived a wonderful life" and her "private life is [no one's] business," she also seemed to be reacting against the very impulse of talking, and writing, about the inner

self.[21] "I've never understood how writers could write of their own intimate lives. I don't mean in fiction--but in intimate description," she wrote.[22] In fact, the distinction between art and intimate life was collapsing even within fiction during this period, in an emerging, prominent confessional genre that overlapped with journalism and autobiography in the seeming artlessness of self disclosure. Some of these works offered an unprecedented sexual frankness, among them, Philip Roth's somewhat raunchy teenaged narrator in *Portnoy's Complaint* (1969) or the poetry of Anne Sexton, including her 1969 poems "The Ballad of the Lonely Masturbator" and "In Celebration of my Uterus."[23] These blunt, almost shocking fictional testimonies seem motivated by a desire to uncover creative newness during this period, and a move away from symbolic allusions to sexual matters within writerly culture. Perhaps the boundary between revelation within fiction and the plain facts of book dedications was not as rigid as it seemed, or as Mrs. Deming felt that it should stay. Nonetheless, if gay liberation had encouraged this shamelessness, Mrs. Deming said, "I regret that this has become a movement. I don't see how it can do any good to anyone. But that seems to be the way things are these days."[24]

Though Mrs. Deming did not decry the younger generation--her own daughter was middle aged by this point--a language of wariness of time and fads was salient in her descriptions of such movements "these days." The honesty that Barbara Deming craved with her mother instead seemed to inscribe her, from her mother's point of view, in a largely abstract generation of activists whom she found alien and exhibitionistic. Her reservations about gay liberation as a movement in fact anticipated what would become a larger body of criticism of the politicization of private life and public performance of selfhood, including Christopher Lasch's *The Culture of Narcissism* (1979) and Betty

Friedan's critiques of a strain of feminist "naval gazers."[25] Lasch would suggest that the radicalism of the late 1960s and early 70s served as a form of therapy for those who embraced it for personal rather than political reasons, degrading politics to the level of self discovery rather than social change. Betty Friedan too feared that the public goals of feminism--integrating women in the workplace or helping women achieve political power, for example--were becoming displaced by those who wanted to talk about their relationships, appearances and their personal experiences of oppression. To see her daughter bound up with these trends appeared both disorienting and unsettling for Katherine Deming.

On the surface, then, Barbara Deming alienated her mother at the very moment that she had invited her mother to know her and understand her more fully. There was something quite abstract about the way that Deming told her mother she was a lesbian, because it was embedded in a language of politics, and seemed to breed a debate about the nature of the personal and the private in contemporary society rather than a discussion about Deming's affective life. And yet, coming out and gay politics did offer a way to bring about intensely personal conversations that might otherwise, without this framework, simply have remained submerged.

The very idea of coming out of the closet was marked by peeling off the layers imposed by the family and society, to attain an original or authentic self, a quest that itself could become a source of family friction. Coming of age during the early 1970s, and adapting a gay liberation perspective then, writer and performer Michael Callen felt frustrated by his parents' refusal to acknowledge what he took to be his true self, including his sexuality. Throughout the 1970s, Callen was living in New York City,

trying to make a career as a singer, writer, and performer. He would go on to write gay liberation songs, becoming a member of the gay male a cappella group, *The Flirtations*, and subsequently, during the 1980s, an important AIDS activist and writer.[26] As a twenty-five year old in 1979, not long after revealing his sexuality to his parents, he wrote to them in Hamilton, Ohio, where he had been raised (he was born in Rising Sun, Indiana). He recognized here that he had become more urban in his sensibilities than his family. He even let his parents know that there "is a New York City saying that roughly goes, 'Therapy hasn't been successful until you can tell your parents to go f--themselves.'"[27] Though he assured them that he did not subscribe to such a cavalier attitude, he noted that his primary purpose in this letter was to "communicate.....I feel, even post 'revelation', that we aren't really talking.....I have been realizing over a period of time that it's not the frequency of calling that disturbs me, but the content of our conversations--or should I say lack of content. It seems to me that we've exhausted the weather and general health considerations."

He then called for more open emotional expression in his family. The problem with all of the Callens as he perceived it was that they were not "straightforward. We hint for love. We wait around hoping someone will sense we are deep in the need....Then we withdraw because no one ever seems to be able to break the code." He noted that his father had trouble with the "physical expression of affection, i.e. hugging," though he was praised, too, for "mellowing out at 66."[28] Finally, Callen admitted to his parents that he wished he could "say I love you just plain out, without any qualifiers. However, we have both let this relationship coast on pilot for so long, that I just can't and mean it....I

want to mean it unequivocally"; his letter had represented "the first step on my part....towards a real, meaningful vital up-to-date relationship."[29]

Just as gays might have felt a forced sense of reticence within their families, in being asked to keep their sexuality to themselves, so might parents have felt that the intimacy their children called for was forced and self conscious. Singled out the most in this letter, Callen's father chose to respond to his son, delineating what he felt was a more reasonable way of communicating feeling. Underlining to make his point, Mr. Callen firmly declared that "all relationships must have reasonably defined parameters within the basic tenets of each other's philosophy."[30] In this case, 'parameters' perhaps referred to the very idea of revelations, or the necessity to talk "meaningfully." In his view, his son's sexuality need not be discussed at all. Instead, they could talk about "many areas such as entertainment, travel, family, past shared experiences, future expectations, and...others," an itemization of family small talk rooted in both current events and the family's shared experiences. And, because they did not spend very much time together, "I don't feel I'm asking for the moon for you to 'play it straight' when we are together."[31] In effect, his father asked him to create different selves according to the audience that his son might find himself before, a compromise--or strategy-- that gays of the earlier postwar period seemed prepared to accept.

Both Mr. Callen and Mrs. Deming extolled a more subtle means of communication with respect to sexuality, one that was implied or hinted at, rather than expressed directly. Mr. Callen was much more blunt in his suggestion that his son simply "play it straight," but both reflected, from their children's perspective, a failure to

understand how pervasive gay sexuality was to self-expression, intimacy and day to day life.[32]

In keeping with a central tenet of the gay liberation movements that located a fundamental oppression in the maintenance of silence around gayness, Callen, too, suggested that his father's exhortations about discretion implied merely shame. His criticism seems shaped by a particular historical moment when polite reticence about taboo matters seemed increasingly to be a repressed, disingenuous position. Abetted by an atmosphere of openness about feelings in this period, Vietnam War veterans were returning home and talking about their experiences in warfare, including their post-traumatic stress and what they had seen during wartime in a way that World War Two veterans had not.[33] Disruptions within personal relationships were becoming more open to discussion as the start of no-fault divorce laws took some of the shame and stigma away from divorce.[34] In light of these ruptures, open avowal and discussions of gay sexuality seemed not only less shocking, but desperately needed to keep apace with the times. Openness was equated with a recognition of full personhood. As liberation activist Martha Shelley, in the first in the series of *Gay Flames* Pamphlets in 1970 put it: "the worst part of being a homosexual is having to keep it secret. Not the occasional murders by police or teenage queer-beaters, not the loss of jobs or expulsion from schools or dishonorable discharges--but the daily knowledge that what you are is something so awful that it cannot be revealed." She likened this enforced silence to an "internal violence," something that could be felt most acutely in the family context.[35] Like this writer and Deming before him, Callen used the example of heterosexual marriage as a counterpoint to gay expressiveness when he wrote back to his father: "You touch

mother. You discuss your marriage. You mention that you live together. That you have children.....No one accuses you of slapping your sexuality in everyone's face just because [mother] wears a wedding band."[36] Privacy was seen as a hypocritical standard applied only to gays.[37]

Self presentation came to the forefront as another locus of family conflict in these meditations on privacy. Even parents who felt more comfortable with homosexuality could nonetheless feel circumspect about their children's expressions of it. When she found out her son was gay, for example, Mrs. Brass seemed to identify with his pain in being an outsider. Throughout the 1970s, her son Perry was a student at NYU, as well as a poet and gay liberation activist.[38] At the same time, Mrs. Brass, by then a divorcee, had started living in a retirement building in Savannah, Georgia, the city where Perry had grown up. He wrote of his mother in retrospect that "[m]y homosexuality was a problem to her in that it revealed her own--she wanted throughout her life to be acceptable, and she was a big, mannish woman with a gay, not terribly manly son."[39] Brass's mother appeared to be struggling against her sexuality: she wanted to have sex with women, but also maintain a sense of respectability and perhaps even Southern gentility. In fact, Mrs. Brass was having an affair with a married yet "gay as they come" woman in her retirement complex, whom she criticised for being "geared to the system" and living in "dread that she may be fired because of being gay." Nonetheless, Mrs. Brass asked her son a favour upon his visits to her home. "The only thing is I ask," she said, "is please leave off the make up and jewelry while you visit me. I live in a very conventional building. It would be a favor to me and I would appreciate it. You see after you leave, I've got to keep on living here and in this town. If I had my own home things would be

different."[40] Her own affair was quiet and discreet, taking place in the seemingly asexual context of a retirement home. Outward signs of an unmistakable gayness were not only embarrassing and gratuitous, but for her, potentially endangering. This mother might have felt all the more urgent about the protection of her son's identity, owing to her desire to protect her own ambiguous sexuality.

Parents of course fretted over both their children's welfare, and their own, when they considered public displays of gay sexuality. But their children's perceptions of the stunted candor of this older, heterosexual generation reverberated with gay liberation ideas and critiques of broader social restraints of sensuality and feeling, spurred on by the sexual revolution's emphasis on the pursuit of pleasure and new sexual arrangements during the late 1960s and 1970s.[41] Though the 'sexual revolution' was largely heterosexual in scope, it had an impact on gay consciousness too.

The public performance of the sexual, including its commodification, dramatized sex for its own sake. Frankness about sexual explicitness might have suggested a corresponding frankness about sexual identity. Moreover, as historians John D'Emilio and Estelle Freedman have noted, greater opportunities for birth control tended to soften the association between sexuality and reproduction.[42] In turn, looser censorship laws abetted representations of gays. By 1968, the Motion Picture Code was abolished, giving way to more frank portraits of homosexuality in mainstream Hollywood films including the 1970 film "Boys in the Band", based on Mart Crowley's 1968 play of the same title. In turn, a landmark Supreme Court case in 1967, *Redrup v. New York*, had a profound impact on freedom of expression, including the obscenity judgments on gay pulp fiction.[43] Though gay pulps remained marketed as exposes of a lurid world, their titles

and plots had become more sexual and salacious throughout the later 1960s, including books such as Meredith Gorman's *Homo Playboy* (1969), Gene Evans' *Homo Hunt* (1969), and Thomas Aaron's *Gay Orgy* (1968). Pulp sociology such as Norm Winski's *The Homosexual Revolt* (1967), discussed today's "New Homosexual," or "Crusading Homo," who "sneered at relations between man and woman while glorifying their own."[44]

This increasing sexualization of the representations of gays to some extent replaced-- though never fully displaced--gender nonconformity as a central code for gay sexuality. Two 1969 cartoons in *The Los Angeles Advocate*, a more consumerist gay magazine that surfaced during this period, portrayed gay sexual expression, not gender nonconformity, as the site of the chasm between gays and their parents.[45] Fusing a campy sensibility with a gay sexual liberation, these featured ridiculous and larger than life family disclosures, such as the appalled mother and angry father who opened their son's closet to find his naked lover standing before them, declaring, "Mercy, I can't tell you how much I've looked forward to meeting Harold's parents!"[46] [Figure 6] Another showed a well coiffed and dressed mother, accompanied by a brutish looking husband, fists clenched at his naked son and his boyfriend whom he caught making out on his couch. Blase, the mother says to her husband: "Oh cool it, Harry. At least Sonny won't get pregnant like his sister."[47] [Figure 7] Unlike earlier campy portrayals, where the hint of sexuality was so exaggerated it was almost rendered asexual, in these cartoons, gay sex was depicted in a realistic way, with nakedness, bedroom scenes, and images of buff men making out. Although these cartoon narratives, like those of an earlier postwar period,

remained structured around getting caught, the image of direct confrontation suggests a building impetus for revelation, within the family and more broadly.

An ethos of revelation informed by gay politics was, of course, a more salient theme within the more politically oriented publications of the gay liberation movement throughout the early 1970s. In these, writers and observers celebrated gay sexual expression and denounced what they saw as the repressed, rigid, and legalistic behaviour of heterosexual parents.[48] Gone were the portraits of somewhat charming, oblivious parents that gays of an earlier generation produced. Instead, liberationist images of parents seemed bound up with a bland, suppressive, and forbidding idea of early cold war family life.

Generational cleavage merged with the new postures and re-orientations of social and political life during this period, and enkindled gay evaluations and representations of family life. The student and peace movements, the New Left, and the women's liberation movement all offered a critique of modes of intimate life that was especially pertinent to the project of gay liberation. Many of those who identified as gay liberationists were students themselves during this period. Lacking the encumbrances of jobs or families, they felt freer to participate in emergent gay liberation and discussion groups surfacing on American campuses.[49] There they also could absorb a culture of student protest, not only against university bureaucracies that seemed aligned with an imperial American government, but against the banality of their studies.[50] Increasingly, students asked that they be taught something "relevant." Social critic Paul Goodman attested that chaotic student riots would not have erupted in the late 1960s and early 1970s if only university administrators could "speak like human beings."[51] This desire for interest, fulfillment,

and spontaneity in day to day life and relationships was pervasive in other social protest movements as well, and this longing perhaps most directly informed critiques of the family. In this vein, even the peace movement did not solely question the necessity or morality of the Vietnam War and other American foreign policy interventions, but American cold war values in the broadest sense, as they manifested themselves both in those larger political undertakings and in the everyday.[52] Moreover, widespread images of carnage from warfare had challenged ideas of obscenity and sexual taboos; violence now defined obscenity, not pornography or homosexuality.

New Left leaders and thinkers interpreted the social trends of the early Cold War-- suburbanization, bureaucratization, the growing military-industrial complex, and the containment of communism-- as the consequences of the excessive uniformity and apathy of the period in which their parents had come of age. They, in contrast, could not live with the contradiction between their own comfortable lives and the rest of the world's turmoil. Thus, Students for a Democratic Society called on youth to abandon their parents' social worlds, and embrace creative, self-directed work, repudiating the older generation's "superfluous abundance."[53]

This scrutiny of the family's questionable legacy was also a prominent theme of countercultural commentary and lifestyle experiments, as well as the observations of women's liberation. In a manifesto of the Yippies, or the Youth International Party, formed in the aftermath of 1967's March on the Pentagon, *We Are Everywhere* (1971), Jerry Rubin condemned parents who pushed their religions, prejudices, and lifestyles on their children.[54] Some counterculturalists tried to amend this inevitable passing down of values by developing alternatives to nuclear family structures, such as the establishments

of communes.[55] The analysis of the nuclear family as constraining the potential of women specifically was a central perspective of women's liberation. The feminist movement had sprawling interests and imperatives, including an analysis of male supremacy, wage labour, and women's exploitation in the media, among others. Yet women's liberation also resonated perhaps most compellingly with gay liberation, in its insistence that personal matters had political relevance, and in its critique of the gender conceptions and roles that had confined women—and men—to narrowly defined social and intimate expectations.[56]

Gay liberationists, then, both adopted and refashioned these priorities of the other liberation and social movements in their midst. And yet with gays perhaps there was something even more trenchant about these social criticisms, particularly with respect to the family. The lingering sentiment or cultural ethos of banishment gave gay critiques of their family lives and social worlds an urgency and a sharpness that seems unique to gays during this period. In "The Family and Gay Oppression", a writer for *Come Out Fighting*, a gay socialist newspaper of the Lavender and Red Union, denounced the family for stunting gays in their sexual quests, and for sending them "away to be 'cured', beaten, or cast aside."[57] Accordingly, a central animating force of gay liberation as a culture and social critique could be articulated as a need to seek reprisals or justice for a sense of alienation and rejection that gays felt acutely. A well circulated photo of a group of lesbians at a demonstration holding up a sign that said, "Here I am MOM: SURPRISE" typified the emerging sense that gays could reject the lifestyle and choices of their heterosexual parents as much as these parents could their gay children.[58]

One form that this rejection took was simply a disavowal of an array of internalized social norms that parents had placed upon their children, especially gender roles. In 1969, Red Butterfly, a Marxist cell of the Gay Liberation Front, singled out five "institutions of repression": the educational system, organized religion, government, business, and the family, that acted together to repress gays. The "American family," they wrote, was perhaps the most insidious of these as it was the "starting point for anti-gay attitudes" and suppressed gay selfhood by "stifl[ing] and crippl[ing] people's abilities to develop" while fostering "confining sex-typing of personality traits."[59] A cartoon in Canada's most well known gay liberation periodical, Toronto's *The Body Politic*, reprinted in several American sources, substantiated this critique.[60] In this 1975 reprint, parents appear as disembodied voices, their strictness conveyed by the knife-like quality of their cartoon bubbles. A little boy and little girl appear in stages, in coffins growing up around them as they grow older. In Panel Two, they sit in coffin frames while the voices shout, "Only Sissies Play With Dolls," and "Girls Don't Climb Trees." By the time the parents declare "Your Hair's Too Long-- You Look Like a Girl" and "Why Don't You Wear a Skirt?", the coffins are almost fully built up around the children, burying them alive. In the final caption, the parental voices proclaim, "An Ideal Couple. They Were Made for Each Other."[61] [Figure 8] Seldom did gays of a previous generation express their alienation in such an embittered way, even within homophile circles; this earlier generation of activists appeared to expect that their parents would fail to understand their gender interests and sexuality. This newer generation of gay activists, by contrast, was developing an expectation of a family intimacy that included an understanding of children's uniqueness even in their gender deviations.

Joan Larkin took up a similar theme of intergenerational tyranny in her 1975 poem, "Rhyme of My Inheritance." Here she repudiated the notion of parental inheritance both at the level of material comforts and character.[62] She wrote of parents who "took me to school where I learned to be cute:/I wore clean jumpers and washed my hands" and "did what girls were supposed to do./I wore a white dress; I was photographed." Despite her parents' attention to her well-being, she was "giving the gifts back, one by one./I'm tearing the pages of my past./I'm turning my back. I'm turning them down."[63] This disavowal of both instilled gender behaviours and of those material aspects of her childhood--her jumpers and dresses--suggests an additional rift between the generations in the interpretation of what constitutes affection. For her parents, the attention they took to the upkeep of her girlhood and the very abundance in which she came of age might have suggested a deep love for their child. For their daughter, these were cloying and burdensome, and ultimately barriers to her finding out who she really was. Still, hers is a poem with more of a sense of empowerment than the coffin cartoon; the final verse reads: "May I let go of these bitter rhymes; and may this burial be my last....Let this coffin of verses inherit my pain."[64] Here the daughter is the one doing the burying.

The image of the coffin is poignant because the families of gays were often depicted as being dead in an emotional sense, a deadness that threatened to swallow up the children in their midst. Notably, these critiques were not advanced solely by American gay liberationists, but by Canadian ones as well. But there were some important differences in the context of these critiques. Canadian activists, both within and outside of gay liberation, did not contend with the same imperial government that their American counterparts did, and nor had they witnessed the level of violence and venom

unleashed against American protestors and demonstrators during the student riots and the Democratic National Convention of 1968, to name just two examples. In fact, the Canadian government was somewhat congenial to student activism, even funding a dissident youth group, the Company of Young Canadians (CYC).[65] Moreover, many observers saw Canada as a victim of American imperialism and considered Canadian nationalism, in the face of this, as itself a subversive political stance.[66] Thus, in Canadian gay liberation periodicals such as *The Body Politic*, writers did not indict the Canadian family as emblematic of a repressive state in the same way that American gay liberationists attacked the American family. And yet, there were many continuities at an intimate level, suggesting a more intensely private and diffuse dimension to gay liberation, not precisely connected to specific political activism.

Parallel to their American equivalents, Canadian gay liberationists also denounced their families for instilling stifling gender roles, and for a banality that went beyond a personal plight to become a social condition. In a 1973 article in *The Body Politic* entitled "Hetero-Burbia," Amerigo Marras, a prominent activist in the Canadian gay movement, denounced "average, middle-class, Christian, suburbs" that led to an "enforced lack of socio-sexual contacts and individuality." The domination of the nuclear family within single family homes evoked for this writer "the pattern of prison cells sharing the same conformity and TV set."[67] [Figure 9] White, middle class family homes became impersonal factories in this portrait, engendering unthinking, automaton-like consumers. Suburban affluence and status were seen as intertwined with a cold asceticism and the inability to feel vividly. The image of suburban neighbourhoods would become another salient motif of these liberationist sources, calling into question a

perceived heterosexual aesthetic or "straight"-ness that saw its expression within these sterile confines. Betty Friedan's oft circulated, chilling image of suburban "comfortable concentration camps" where 1950s housewives had let their talents and potentials lie fallow were given a gay life here.[68]

The portrait to emerge in both Canadian and American sources suggests that parents had led insipid, unremarkable lives in the benighted 1950s, while their children were living in a more socially significant and tumultuous time period. This re-reading of the past fits into a broader countercultural atmosphere of a renunciation of the family image of innocence popularized in the television and other pop culture families of the 1950s. Satires of this kind of family were embodied in the comic strips of Robert Crumb such as 1969's "Joe Blow." Allen Ginsberg's poem "Howl," which proposed that the 1950s generation's god was the barren and engulfing "Moloch" was written--and censored--in 1956, but enjoyed enormous popularity by the later 1960s.[69]

In gay male liberationist portrayals in particular, these criticisms of the older generation and the family life they conducted often were focussed on mothers, who appear as anachronisms. This emphasis suggests some ideational linkages between disaffected male intellectuals of the 1950s and 1970s: a continuity of notions of momism, only here with a gay twist.[70] In a 1974 cartoon in the series "Closetary Comix" that appeared in the Rochester gay liberation periodical, *The Empty Closet*, B.I. Groach parodied a housewife's afternoon social, calling it "Mothers-In-Agony Is Now in Session." In the cartoon, several mothers, drawn more like grandmothers, congregate around a woman who tearfully admitted, after other testimonials, that her son was "queer." The mother confided that she did not know where she went wrong with her son--

her husband played ball with him, she had spanked him every time she "caught him playing with my lipstick" but he still "turned out queer. Boo-hoo! And he refuses to get help. How could he be so cruel to his only mother?" Another member rushed over to give her some comfort, declaring "You poor dear!" The mother then revealed that her sister had told her son he would have "a gay time" at college, which indicated that "she knows! Sob! I know she knows! And tonight she's probably telling everyone at her bridge party!" The cartoon strips ends with the women assuring her that her secret was safe with them. The epilogue reads: "Don't feel too sorry for these Mothers-In-Agony. With hubbie off winning the bread, they've nothing else to do but watch their own soap operas./Besides, at least M.I.A. gets them out of the house one afternoon a week!/On second thought, pity them the problems they don't know they have."[71] [Figure 10] The problems they "don't know they have" could entail, from this cartoonist's perspective, the boredom of their lives, their preoccupation with propriety or potential shame, and their misapprehensions of the younger generation and gays specifically.

This apparent misogyny and negative mother image could have been informed by a cartooning tradition in which women often appeared as nags, sex objects, or opportunists, typical in male cartooning both predating and during the postwar period.[72] Such matrophobia oddly clashed with the valourisation of women's experiences brought about through women's liberation. Yet, these liberationists perceived their mothers as unenlightened about liberation in the broadest sense, and complicit in some older regime of heterosexuality. Perhaps there were even deeper, more personal reasons to these indictments as well: a sense of hurt that these mothers would turn on their gay sons for the very gender expressions that might have made them potentially close to their mothers

in terms of interests or sensibility. In this way, negative images of mothers became another means of gay redress for a feeling of family rejection.

However, this cartoonist, like the author of the "Heteroburbia" piece, also criticized mothers simply for their stifling domesticity. This criticism might have been propelled by an intellectual context in which coming out and revelation had taken on radical political connotations, a more public act to be shared in broader political circles, one that stood in sharp contrast to housebound mothers inhibited about sharing experiences even in the narrow worlds of their families and friends. Coming out as an essential aspect of personal and political integrity was prominent in many gay liberation interpretations of family relationships-- and their disavowal--during this time period. In 1971, the Boston Daughters of Bilitis' lesbian periodical *Focus* asked its readers, "Is it important to have 'good' family relationships while denying a part of yourself?"[73]

In some portraits, gays satirized both their parents and psychiatry, deeming them complicit in an oppressive surveillance of gays that had crippled gay selfhood. This was a period in which gay liberationists, in keeping with an anti-authoritarian countercultural spirit, had in fact made some important challenges to psychiatric tenets about homosexuality, including the notion that families had a hand in causing homosexuality.[74] In 1970, the Chicago Gay Liberation Front had urged fellow gays to get "OFF THE COUCHES AND INTO THE STREETS!" in their leaflet against the American Medical Association.[75] It took radical activism and more mainstream lobbying by progressive psychiatrists to win the 1973 decision removing homosexuality from the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, in response to the second revision to the DSM in 1968, where homosexuality had been

labeled a "nonpsychotic mental disorder."[76] Consequently, sodomy laws in states that depended on the medical opinion that homosexuality was a perversion no longer could refer to the DSM; during the course of the 1970s, half the states eliminated sodomy from the penal code.[77] The APA's decision also had some important consequences for gay daily and family life, as there could no longer be a justification for the psychiatric cure of gays.[78] In spite of these changes, the idea of homosexuality as a mental illness remained a touchstone for gay activists and writers. In a 1975 satirical piece, "The Heterosexual World: An Anthropological Study", Satya Klein turned this idea of sickness to heterosexuality, noting that it was "surprising that so many healthy gays have managed to come from sick het parents."[79] While heterosexual fathers were satirized as brutal and autocratic, the mothers of the "het" world were "forced to become a retarded form of adult....Their main cultural outlets are cooking, talking on the telephone, and spraying Sani-flush into toilet bowls."[80]

In mocking the pathology of heterosexuality, this sketch evoked a broader gay impetus to displace external observers from their lives. The irony of this desire is that the intense scrutiny of gay lives was in fact a central aspect of gay liberation culture, and perhaps a refashioning of this kind of observation. The questions that gay liberationists asked themselves about their past and family lives even could be said to parallel psychoanalysis, including broader themes in the psychiatry of the 1970s, such as those offered in the works of Heinz Kohut, who placed the self and its genesis and development at the centre of his studies.[81] Liberationists perhaps even created a more formidable and pervasive influence of their parents than even psychoanalysis conjured up through the very symbolization they gave them in gay culture.[82]

While just as attentive to their family lives as their gay forebears were, liberationists nonetheless appeared to reject the concept of parental obligation. If family duties could be cast as mere societal constructions, then the deep burden of causing parents pain by virtue of being gay could be assuaged or at least muted. In 1967, Dick Michaels, the founder and editor of the *Los Angeles Advocate*, wrote that even "the most 'enlightened' parents are determined to inflict their own hangups on their children. Twenty years later they will sob on the shoulder of a cop or social worker, 'Where did we go wrong? We gave him everything.' Sure. Everything.....including your own warped outlook."[83] It is not that gay critics like him *wanted* to see their parents sob, but they came to believe, through a gay liberation and pride analysis, that this sobbing had an illegitimate basis. According to psychologist Howard Brown, who observed a sample of gay men during the 1970s, the central reason that an earlier generation of gays did not tell their parents of their sexuality was to "spar[e] them the agony of having to think of us as sexual beings."[84] But this ethos of sparing the parents--which included the necessity of maintaining a secret self--had begun to fade. It was the family who now needed to change to accommodate their gay children, and not the reverse.

Still, parents did not necessarily see their children's homosexuality as immutable and deeply engrained during this period. Parents whose children came of age in the late 1960s and 1970s might have seen their children's sexual orientations as temporary sexual preferences subject to change, and not necessarily because they saw their children's homosexuality as a psychological stage. Rather, they came to see these sexual preferences as a part of the fashions, demeanours, tastes, politics and lifestyles of the youth cultures in their midst. In his reflective prose poem of 1972, "Words on Mother,"

published in *Faggotry*, John Knoebel noted that his mother believed it was the appearance of female "hippies" that had made her son gay. He recalled his mother telling him that "'[y]ou sell us girls short. You just met the wrong kind, all those/Long-haired, hippy types in college. You should come home and/Meet a nice girl who'd cook your meals and keep house for you.'"[85] Mrs. Knoebel apparently considered the natural look of young women during this period, including long, straight hair and a rejection of make-up and other feminine accoutrements, to be stark and unappealing, perhaps even unkempt and bedraggled.[86] Ironically she echoed the criticisms of appearance that some mothers would make towards their lesbian daughters. In Lisa Fenton's "The Radical Home Haircut," the mother might have been relieved if her daughter had favoured a hippy look, for at least then she would have had long hair. Fenton described her teenaged arguments with her mother over her appearance throughout the late 1960s, as being "locked in violent opposition....We bickered daily over my usual garb of T-shirts, blue jeans, and size 4 boys' sneakers. The latest aggravation had been my acquisition of a faded *Lee Rider* denim jacket and my flat refusal to wear a bra." If this garb was not enough, Fenton then appeared before her mother with an extremely short hair cut, scrapping her shoulder-lengthed "curly mass." She recalled her mother "let[ting] out something like a shriek, 'What have you done to yourself?! You look like a dyke!'"[87] Not only was the appearance of "hippy" women or "dyke" looking daughters an affront to the femininity of these heterosexual mothers, but it seemed to carry a more precise indicator of an unnatural sexuality than it had in years gone by.

Gay sons too felt scrutinized for their hair and clothes, which signified both a social and a sexual deviance. Many gay male writers of this period had insisted that they,

like women, had been the victims of confining and brutish articulations of masculinity, including manly appearances. While homophiles in the early 1960s had taken up the gay cause through a strategy of respectability that included gender appropriate clothing and dress up clothes, increasingly gay liberation celebrated those more androgynous styles that were becoming more mainstream amongst the young.[88] But these revisions of masculinity were not limited to gay men. For some, long hair and the feminization of clothing styles, including flowered shirts and beads, among other items, were not only gay codes but a conscious rejection of a masculinity that they associated with a militarized culture.[89] Mike Hippler, a gay writer who kept a diary during the early 1970s when he was a college student at Duke, observed that traditional masculine appearances were still very much in vogue on his college campus, and thus his long hair made him feel a bit freakish. As a sophomore, he returned to his family home for a social function, where he was praised lavishly for a newly short hair cut. "I have never been so sick of hearing how good .... I look now--I look terrible!", he complained, "I am embarrassed to be seen in public! Long hair is beautiful; these jerks have got to understand, styles change. Mrs. Winderwheedle said the favorite-- 'You look so good and wholesome and All American. Good for you--you're on OUR side.'"[90] 'Our' side might have meant the "silent majority" of Americans, though it could just as easily have referred, implicitly, to the "side" of heterosexuals.

These appearance divisions reflected broader divisions in politics, class, sensibility, and sexuality in American culture during this period. Political debates took on this cultural dimension in the tremendous attention they paid to the demeanours and appearances amongst different "sides." A prominent example is the tumult after the Kent

State and Jackson State student murders in 1970. As a response to these killings and to Nixon's policies in Cambodia, student protestors from several New York City colleges gathered in the financial district, only to be attacked by construction workers chanting "All the way, U.S.A." Though on the surface this conflict concerned the support of the American government, it took on a class and cultural dimension as well, vividly demonstrating an antipathy between "longhairs" and "hardhats."[91] While some white, middle class students did go to fight in Vietnam, it was more often working class young men who saw the front lines of battle.[92] This knowledge fueled resentment against student protestors who might have appeared cavalier about social obligations and duties, both figuratively and literally, in their appearance. As historian James T. Patterson noted, it was not so much that working-class observers were in favour of the War, but they tended to be "anti-anti-war."[93] Even ostensibly political critiques of student protestors, such as diplomat George Kennan's 1968 speech at Swarthmore College, "Rebels Without a Program", faulted them more for their untidiness and poor personal manners, than their lack of political decorum.[94] That Hippler could be viewed as a political radical on the basis of long hair, when in fact he was expressing a gay masculinity, shows just how much gay appearance codes had now become entangled in a range of ideas about students, hippies, and "flower people" during this period. Unlike the young rebels of the 1950s, who were more likely to be viewed as aggressively heterosexual, as "angry young men," now they were viewed as potentially homosexual.[95]

Seeing gay sexuality as simply a facet of a larger political sensibility, then, allowed some parents to consider their children's sexuality to be malleable. In her 1972 poem for *Come Out!*, "Wow, I'll be really uptight if my family sees this," Emily Rubin

Winer wrote that her mother felt she was "only/doing what was fashionable at the time," both in having a severe, short hair cut *and* in being gay.[96] Condescending and infuriating though this stance appeared to Winer, if gay sexuality could be coded as simply a political phase, children could be protected to some degree from parental disappointment, acrimony, and rejection.

Gay liberation thus left gays in a somewhat paradoxical position in their families: on the one hand, gay sexuality and individuals were more visible than they had ever been before and perhaps more real to their parents.[97] But on the other hand, gay sexuality remained confined in a personal politics that likely seemed quite strange, even alien, to parents. Even with the framework of politics to convey their sexuality and the presence of gay political organizations to ensure that gays had some place to turn, gay liberationists exhibited an enduring, often underlying worry about family banishments.[98] Their disquiet was perhaps starker in this era than earlier, because the impetus to reveal brought about concrete dilemmas about how parents would react.

Accordingly, gay liberationists offered advice to other gays about how familial revelations should be considered. In her 1975 piece, "How To Come Out Without Being Thrown Out", Jeanne Cordova, a former nun who went on to found and publish Los Angeles' *Lesbian Tide*, delineated five possible coming out methods and discussed the merits and drawbacks of each one. The "Help Me, Help Me" method usually resulted in mutual tears, and a "visit to a psychiatrist, priest, doctor, or mental institution of your choice." The "So There Approach" was marked by "extreme anger/hatred/bitterness toward parents....always justified but sometimes careless," and the one most likely to result in being "thrown out" or "incarcerat[ed] in a mental institution."[99] Next was the

"Oops Approach" wherein a gay child left a telling item, such as a letter from a lover lying around the house that did not leave much to the imagination, in order to provoke a conversation.[100] This was deemed too apologetic, leaving the child vulnerable to the charge that a wayward influence had seduced him or her into being gay. Finally, the "Dear Mom/Dad Approach, a favorite of the 'They're in New York and I'm in California so it's safe' live-away gay," was deemed too wishy-washy, prompting mother to "fall apart and run to 'Your Father' when she reads the words." In Cordova's view, it was far better to educate parents, by adopting the "Gradual or Naturalization Approach" which allowed for a build up to the revelation through gay politics, so that a gay child could "come across honestly and proud," with the hope that "your parents will think so too one day."[101]

While Cordova emphasized bringing about mutual understanding, she was not so utopian as to believe that gays would be welcome within every family. In fact, she recommended a kind of pragmatism about parental intolerance and a theme of independent adulthood that curiously recalls the practicality of the activist mothers of gay children in the 1950s. When parents "refuse to speak to us for three years or say, 'You're no daughter/son of mine!', it's not really us they're talking to! They are dealing with their own sexual identity conflicts. A certain objectivity is necessary. When they say these terrible things it is not....the 'end of the world'. For most parents, this is merely a phase."[102] This statement, suggesting that a potentially nightmarish moment of family rejection be taken as an instance of false consciousness, and be borne calmly, shows that the story of gay liberation and pride, at once so in touch with emotional expression and revelations, could still lead to a kind of emotional detachment. Perhaps this

disengagement was the only way of not feeling the devastation of being "thrown out." Just as their gay forebears placed images of excommunication within the realm of fantasy or humour, these gay liberationists reinvented that distancing strategy, within a seemingly unwavering and staunch political rhetoric.[103]

But this sense of objectivity was not always within the grasp of even those gays who subscribed consciously to a liberation perspective. In a personal piece in San Francisco's *Vector* in 1973, Robert Burke avowed that he was not coming out to his family members because "I simply don't know at this point whether or not I would be able to handle their rejection which is, I feel, a very real possibility."[104] Another column in the *Lesbian Tide* asked its readers in 1971, "have you ever.....Cried because you saw your parents cry--when they discovered you were a 'Queer', and told you that you would be better off dead?"[105] Even those portraits that appeared to be unrepentant denunciations of parents suggest an underlying pain at the prospect of being disowned. In another "Closetary Comix" in 1974, B.I. Groach turned his attentions to the husbands of the Mothers-In-Agony characters, with his creation of John Q. Het, a Willy Lomanish character who decided to take out some insurance on his son, because he was worried his son "might turn out queer." Should this be the case, John Q. Het commented to his insurance agent that he would need extra money because the homosexual son would never get a job and he and his wife would need to "pay for shrinks and electro-shock therapy." The insurance agent agreed that this was a "reasonable request." The epilogue reads: "Don't <u>You</u> Wish Your Parents Had Had Foresight?"[106] [Figure 11] This cartoon plays on the notion of disowning in a literal way, casting children as parental possessions

subject to ruin and disappointments, like a house or car. It also denounces a notion of parental hope and investment in their children, by portraying it in these crass, literal terms.[107]

Gay liberation culture, then, existed within a delicate balance between wrath and sadness over the idea of family banishment. The burden of fantasies of familial estrangement perhaps had not actually waned as drastically as even the most venomous of gay liberation portraits might have suggested. And the potent hold of the family's expectations certainly had not waned, even at a rhetorical level, for perhaps the majority of gay people living in this era, for whom gay liberation and culture were more remote forces. A sense of family obligation continued to be true for those who did not have the distance of living away from their parents. Throughout the 1970s, lesbians in the vulnerable position of living in the family home wrote often wistful letters telling of their loves and families to the self-appointed lesbian counsellor of the New Jersey Daughters of Bilitis, Julie Lee. She directed these women to lesbian meetings and reading resources, sharing both her own life story and commenting upon theirs.[108] While these letters are fragmentary and suggestive rather than definitive, a sample illuminates some feelings of gays who did not adopt an explicit gay politics during this era, as well as some of the underlying fears and family yearnings of gay liberationists themselves.

One book that Julie Lee advised her correspondents read was the 1972 book of advice literature and personal lesbian stories, *Lesbian/Woman* by Daughters of Bilitis pioneers, Phyllis Lyon and Del Martin. Martin and Lyon bridged the homophile and gay liberation movements and sensibilities, in light of their sympathies towards discretion and their desire to live openly as lesbians. They acknowledged that "today, with so many in

the gay liberation movement advocating total openness, it is even more difficult to make the decision [about telling one's parents]. If you are a teenager and keep hearing older (and presumably wiser) homosexuals shouting, 'Tell your parents, tell your boss, tell the world--don't be ashamed!' the pressure can be fierce."[109] The young people who wrote to Julie Lee seemed to straddle, in their own dilemmas, this perceived shift in presentations of the personal between two generations of gays.

In fact gays living in the family home might have welcomed the very reticence about sexuality that gay liberation had come to disfavour. One of Lee's correspondents, a 23 year old woman living in rural Utah, had purchased *Lesbian/Woman* in 1972 upon Lee's advising. She found that she could create a buffer against parental inquisitiveness about her sexuality only by treating homosexuality as an intellectual question, and this was how she justified owning the book to her mother. However, she noted that her mother had griped, " 'Why do you feel like you have to own it, why don't you just get it at the library?'"[110] Another 16 year old lesbian complained to Lee in a 1973 letter that she enjoyed virtually no private life. What precipitated this thought was her mother's alarm upon noticing that her daughter had received a magazine about "our kind" in the mail. Her mother regularly "takes my mail and reads it or else she demands to know what I got in some box, etc! My God, I'll be seventeen this Thursday and if she doesn't think I deserve my privacy now then she's really mistaken. It's bad enough she goes through [my and my sister's] room when we're not home. I have to hide everything I don't want to her see."[111] That the central area of parental invasion was mail suggests a distrust of extrafamilial relationships on her mother's part; she wanted to know who was writing to

her daughter, and what was being said. But this daughter did not feel she could broach the kinds of personal topics that she could with Lee.

As an advisor, Lee herself might have reinforced this incompatibility of young women's family identities and their gay identities. As Lee told her 23 year old correspondent whom she considered too isolated in rural Utah: "you are...no baby; you have two choices[:] either stay in Hicksville, and continue your present lifestyle, or leave Hicksville and live. I'm afraid it's as plain as that. Gay life--much like all life, only more so--requires commitments, and you cannot have your cake (living at home with your folks in their 'nest') and eat it too (living a gay life with gay relationships)."[112] Lee's theme of self fulfillment over family obligation reverberated with liberationist advice to gays who lived in rural areas with their parents. An advice column in the New York City's *GAY*, a periodical that many considered to be the equivalent of an East Coast *Advocate*, for example, advised a struggling 24 year old who feared shaming his family in his small town: "The first loyalty you owe is to yourself, not your family or your town."[113]

Nonetheless, those gays who tried to proclaim their family loyalties and their sexuality could face the almost unthinkable circumstance of having to choose between their families and their loves. One young woman wrote to tell of her terrible dilemma of attempting to maintain a lesbian relationship her parents did not condone, while still living with them. This woman had met her girlfriend in nursing school in the New York City area, but she had been asked to leave this school on account of this relationship. Her parents subsequently tried to keep her apart from her girlfriend. She was still working out the logistics of going back to school to complete her degree, and commuting with her

girlfriend, when she wrote to Lee in the winter of 1971 that "it'll work out 'cause we love each other so much and nothing's gonna stop it.....It's horrible to be so much in love and have to hide it."[114] This woman tried to become somewhat hard-nosed in her family dealings: "I just have to forget I have a family...I have someone who I love and I'm not giving her up.../If I don't take this stand now, I'll be forever doomed to a life I would just be existing in."[115] However, in the summer of that same year, she wrote a more desperate sounding letter. By this point, she had moved back home, on the condition that she never see her girlfriend again. Yet, she had been seeing her girlfriend on the sly, and this girlfriend's mother had phoned her family to tell them of the situation. She weighed her predicament by pointing out, "If I leave, they said I wouldn't have any family at all (and you know the family guilt bit)." But the tone in the letter suggests that she did not find the "family guilt bit" a bit at all, but a genuine quandary. She was not worried about having to support herself, "but I can't leave with the guilt feeling on my mind, that I caused so much heartache and pain. So what do I do?....there's no way out and I'm helpless in trying to decide. I love [my girlfriend] very much, yet I have a love for my family."[116]

Gays of this era, then, could be just as likely to ascribe themselves with tremendous power with respect to parental feelings: this woman perceived that her sexuality had caused her family heartache and pain, not their own distorted perspective, abetted by an unjust and intolerant society, on homosexuality. Her personal predicament might have been felt as more intensely personal-- and painful-- without the extra dimension that liberation politics provided to sexuality.

Lacking a political underpinning also left some gays more vulnerable to the ideologies and discourses that informed parental ideas of homosexuality, including, perhaps most powerfully, religion. Though the idea of homosexuality as a sin was being removed from the beliefs of certain denominations during the early 1970s, including some liberal protestant churches such as Unitarianism, this was not the case with all denominations, including the Baptist Church.[117] In a series of fictional works, Larry Duplechan created a black, gay character who came of age in the Baptist Church in Lancaster, California during this period, named Johnnie Ray Rousseau.[118] The critique of the bourgeois nuclear family certainly did extend into the analysis of non-white individuals who had adopted a gay liberation political perspective, balancing a view held by some black power activists that homosexuality was a white man's weakness or illness. Yet the teenager that Duplechan created seemed too young to be attuned to these activist perspectives and debates.[119] His parents, in turn, did not see him as adapting a white sensibility or disease in being gay. Instead, his incipient gay sexuality clashed with his parents owing most centrally to their strong faith.

In his novel *Blackbird*, Duplechan portrayed the parents of his protagonist as having a grim, though somewhat histrionic reaction to their son's homosexuality. Johnnie Ray makes the mistake of confiding his gay feelings to the youth minister at his church who only reveals them to Johnnie's parents. Johnnie came home one night to find his mother "wearing a look of complete and utter disgust; a look just a scream away from infanticide," and his father "weeping audibly, his massive shoulders shaking with sobs."[120] His mother confronted him first: "You probably think you're real cute....with this 'I think I'm a homosexual' crap." She then screamed out, "Lord, ha' mercy today! I

don't know what I coulda done to give birth to a per*vert*."[121] The conversation continued relentlessly in this vein; despite his repeated protests that being gay was something he simply was rather than something he had chosen, his mother insisted that he could not love his family, given what he had done to them. These parents enjoined their son to fight his sexual predicament through religion; his mother pronounced with some certainty, "'Jesus will help you,'" and wondered, "'Have you asked him? Have you asked the Savior to help you?'"[122] His father added to the conversation, " 'you just have to give girls a chance, son.'"[123] Johnnie was left bemused by his parents' solutions, likening his father's advice to the Beatles song, "Give Peace a Chance": "All we are say-ing, is give girls a chance."[124] Duplechan's portrait is softened by these kinds of ironic comments, and even the inherent humour, from a gay perspective, about whether or not he was a "per*vert*". Yet, this humour underscores a harrowing family scene, wherein a son had become more than simply alien to his family, but in fact a product of the devil. For gays who came of age in religious contexts, repudiating parental expectations could be a more profound quandary than those who came out within the secular, more self conscious ethos of gay liberation.

But the polarities of gay experiences during this period need to be balanced by taking into account that gay liberation, as a culture and politics, was sedimented. Voices of the gay past, like Martin and Lyon, as well as gays who were not expressly involved in the gay political movement, also formed a part of the liberationist sensibility. Though subtle and often only implicit, gay liberation, too, encompassed some of this sense of reverence for the family as an institution, or at least the potential closeness and intimacy that it represented. While neglecting the idea of primal family bonds, liberationists'

insistence that their parents strive to understand them suggests its own veneration for family, and a desire for family permanence. Dick Leitsch suggested this idea in his 1970 article, "Turning on to Daddy," in New York City's *GAY* where he called for gay liberationists to see "the old guy as a human being." He noted that "youth culture" tended to look to figures such as Paul Goodman, Eldridge Cleaver, Dr. Spock and Eugene McCarthy as father figures, but the real thing, in one's own family, deserved a chance. While observing that many "sons are basically strangers to their fathers," he still felt that "many of them are probably very groovy, even if they are over 30."[125] Dick Leitsch was by then the militant president of the New York Mattachine Society, sensitive to both a gay liberation perspective and the homophile one that preceded it.[126] Moreover, *GAY* supported the more moderate offshoot of the Gay Liberation Front, the Gay Activists' Alliance, or GAA, which advocated civil disobedience and 'zap' actions, as opposed to revolution.[127] In his role at *GAY*, Leitsch had criticized the younger generation of gay liberation activists for their lack of historical perspective in gay activism; here this criticism took the form of their shortsighted inhibitions regarding the entire older generation.

While the testimonies and portraits at the expense of mothers and fathers was at times scathing in these liberation era sources, the tremendous outpouring of support and respect for parents who *were* understanding and "groovy" about gayness in many of these same sources also indicates a yearning for parental love and understanding even during some of the most radical moments in gay political history. As we will see, gay liberationist periodicals heaped praise upon parents who fought for their gay children's

rights, and gave extensive coverage to the early formations of what was to become the Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) movement.[128]

To be sure, understanding from one's own peers was prized more highly within gay liberation culture than the understanding of outsiders, even these generous and tolerant members of PFLAG. If one desire seems to characterize gay liberation communities during these years, it is a desire to have the affirmation of an individual who has faced similar experiences: a sense of identification, perhaps more than a sense of empathy. This longing in fact illuminates some of the cleavages within gay liberation itself. For example, many lesbians observed the sexism of gay males who seemed to lack an understanding of what it meant to be a lesbian, and called for a more specific lesbian feminist perspective.[129] In turn, many nonwhite gays noticed the insensitivities of a predominantly white gay liberation movement to race specific issues, including the perhaps even greater burdens that they faced in coming out to their parents.[130] Separatism within gay liberation as an organizing strategy might have been pursued in order to feel a greater sense of mutual identification. Yet, this identification and compassion were craved not just from political or chosen peer 'families', but from parents and original families, as well.

Within the family and outside of it, liberationists felt that the means to gay political consciousness, not to mention individual happiness, was by being public about inner lives. Collisions with parents on the basis of political ideas and trends might have provided gays in this period and in succeeding years with a means of opening up the family forum to sexual politics, and then talking to parents about intimate matters outside of the explicit realm of politics. They increasingly felt that what gays owed their parents

was revelation, not decorum-- for the sake of family intimacy, the expression of an authentic self, and even the rectification of the inhibitions of daily life. In turn, parents owed their children an intimacy in the form of truly knowing them. As historian, writer, and gay liberation activist Martin Duberman expressed so elegiacally in *Midlife Queer: Biography of a Decade, 1971-81*, upon his mother's death in 1977, "...our entangled relationship had never gotten worked through; the emotional bond remained powerful but subterranean, felt but avoided." During his teen years, he had "stopped telling her anything important about myself. I didn't want to risk getting near the subject of my homosexuality and, more encompassingly, had grown to resent her intrusive, engulfing ways; to her onslaught of questions, I had returned monosyllabic replies." When Duberman realized his mother was dying, he "kept thinking we would, we must, have that final talk that would erase the long-standing tension and leave the love, uncontaminated, intact. But as is so often the way, that final talk never took place."[131]

Perhaps many gay liberationists, too, were motivated by a need for that final talk, hoping for it even within their daily family lives. The phrase 'yet I have a love for my family,' was not limited to the young lesbian, struggling at once to maintain her family and lesbian relationship, who expressed it so sorrowfully. There was an implicit 'yet' at the heart of gay liberation culture.

[1] Schlesinger Library Archives, Series II, MC 408, Barbara Deming, Box 12, Folder 215, Letter "Darling," No Date 1950, p. 1.

[2] Barbara Deming, Box 12, Folder 215, Letter "Dearest Mother," April 30, 1969, p. 1.

[3] Barbara Deming, Box 12, Folder 215, Letter "Very Dear Mother," July 17, 1974, p.1.

[4] The term "Counterculture" was popularized by Theodore Roszak in his The Making of a Counter Culture: Reflections on the Technocratic Society and Its Youthful Opposition (New York: Doubleday, 1968); I am using it to encompass a broad range of political, social, and cultural dissent and oppositional stances. See also Doug Rossinow, "The Revolution is About Our Lives: The New Left's Counterculture," p. 99-124, in Peter Braunstein and Michael William Doyle, eds., Imagine Nation: The American Counterculture of the 1960s and '70s (New York: Routledge, 2002), 110. On gay liberation and the Anti-War movement, see, Charles Thorpe, "Anti-War Protests" in the Harvey Milk Archives--Scott Smith Collection, The James C. Hormel Gay and Lesbian Center, San Francisco Public Library, Box 1, Folder 8. Finally, on the Black Power movement and its relation to gays specifically, see Devin W. Carbado et al., Black Like Us: A Century of Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual African American Fiction (San Francisco: Cleis Press, 2002), 113.

[5] For an interpretation of the Stonewall Riots, see the introduction to Martin Duberman et al., eds., Hidden from History: Reclaiming the Gay and Lesbian Past (New York: New American Library, 1989), 4 ff. For Canadian legal reforms, which actually just legalized sexual acts between consenting adults in privacy but were broadly interpreted as the legalization of homosexuality, see Kinsman, The Regulation of Desire, p. 142, 164. For Pierre Trudeau's impact on gay liberation in Canada and the United States, see Donald McLeod, Lesbian and Gay Liberation in Canada: A Selected Annotated Chronology, 1964-75 (Toronto: ECW/Homewood Press, 1996).

[6] On the mythologizing of Stonewall as a momentous marker for gay history, see Elizabeth Kennedy, "Telling Tales: Oral History and the Construction of Pre-Stonewall Lesbian History," *Radical History Review* (Spring 1995): 58-80.

[7] For details see Toby Marotta, The Politics of Homosexuality: How Lesbians and Gay Men Have Made Themselves a Political and Social Force in Modern America (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1981), 88 ff.

[8] As a gay code, "coming out" had formerly meant, in the earlier part of the twentieth century, coming out to one's own gay peers. As George Chauncey has written of the 1930s, gays were coming out *into* a gay world rather than coming out of the closet. See Gay New York, 7-8.

[9] On the street theatre-like quality of protests and demonstrations that might have encouraged this idea of performance, see David Steigerwald, The Sixties and the End of Modern America (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), particularly his analysis of the Living Theatre and Guerilla Theatre, 160 ff.

[10] On the public curiosity about hippies in both the United States and Canada, see Owram, Born at the Right Time, 186. See also Susan Douglas, Where the Girls Are: Growing Up Female with the Mass Media (New York: Random House, 1994), 109.

[11] See, for example, James DiGiacomo and Edward Wakin, We Were Never Their Age (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1972), an advice manual to parents on their children's rebellion. See also Lewis Feuer, The Conflict of Generations: The Character and Significance of Student Movements (New York: Basic Books, 1969).

[12] See again Steigerwald, The Sixties and the End of Modern America, 257. Here he cites sociologist Mirra Komarovsky, who studied working-class families during the 1960s.

[13] Ibid., 33. On Agnew and permissive parenting, see Benjamin Spock, A Better World for Our Children: Rebuilding American Family Values (Bethesda, MD: National Press Books, 1994), 32. Dr. Spock wrote a defence of his parenting theory of "permissiveness" in "Don't Blame Me!" *Look Magazine*, 1971, p. 36-38. Notably, the attacks on Dr. Spock also might have been politically motivated; in 1972, he became a candidate of the National People's Party, a coalition of 10 small independent state political parties dedicated to cooperation, feminism, and world peace. On Spock, student activists, and the reactions of Agnew, see also Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre English, For Her Own Good: 150 Years of the Experts' Advice to Women (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1978), 236. For more on fears of postwar maternal overindulgences, see Sharon Hays, Cultural Contradictions of Motherhood (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996), 47-49.

[14] On this, see Eugene T. Grendlin, "A Philosophical Critique of Narcissism: The Significance of the Awareness Movement," in David Michael Levin, Pathologies of the Modern Self: Postmodern Studies on Narcissism, Schizophrenia, and Depression (New York University Press, 1987), P. 253 (251-304).

[15] Richard Farson, The Future of the Family (New York: Family Service Association of America, 1969), 57.

[16] See, most famously, Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, "The Female World of Love and Ritual: Relations Between Women in Nineteenth-Century America," *Signs* 1 (Autumn 1975): 27-55.

[17] Barbara Deming, Box 12, Folder 213, Letter "Dearest Bobbie," Nov. 10, 1957, p. 2 and 3.

[18] For a discussion on turn of the century and modern notions of privacy see, again, Gurstein The Repeal of Reticence, in particular her discussion of prying, muckraking journalism of the Gilded Age as a violation of privacy: 36 ff. and 149.

[19] In the face of the intrusions into private life owing to the development of rapid means of communication, lawyers Louis Brandeis and Samuel Warren most famously defended privacy as a right in the 1890s, conceiving privacy as the right to be let alone and the protection of an inviolate personality. On this, see Jed Rubenfeld, "The Right to Privacy," *Harvard Law Review* 102 (February 1989): 737-807.

[20] Barbara Deming, Box 12, Folder 215, Letter "Dearest Bobbie," July 20, 1974, p. 1.

[21] Ibid., 3 and 4.

[22] Ibid., 3.

[23] For these poems, see Anne Sexton, Love Poems (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969), 33 and 12. See also her 1972 work, The Book of Folly (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1972).

[24] Barbara Deming, Box 12, Folder 215, Letter "Dearest Bobbie," July 20, 1974, p. 3.

[25] See Lasch, The Culture of Narcissism: American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations (New York: Norton, 1979). In a similar critique, Richard Sennett argued in The Fall of Public Man (Toronto: Vintage, 1974) that the public world stage had been overtaken by a private psychic scene that ultimately harmed both that individual and society. On Friedan, see Debra Michaels, "From Consciousness Expansion to Consciousness Raising: Feminism and the Countercultural Politics of the Self," 41-68 in David Farber, ed. The 60s From Memory to History, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 51. See also Janann Sherman, ed. Interviews with Betty Friedan (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2002), on Friedan's naming her more radical sisters "bra-burning, anti-man, politics of the orgasm school" types, p. xiii; on navel gazing and the "lavender menace" see p. 61.

[26] Callen was to write How To Have Sex in an Epidemic (1983) and Surviving AIDS (New York: Harper Collins, 1990).

[27] Lesbian and Gay Community Services Center, National Archive of Lesbian and Gay History, Michael Callen, (#010), "Dear Mom & Dad," November 7, 1979, p. 1 (of 4).

[28] Ibid., 2.

[29] Ibid., 4.

[30] Michael Callen, (#010), "Dear Mike", Nov. 13, 1979, p. 1 (of 4).

[31] Ibid., p. 2.

[32] For another example of a family letter in this vein, see Merv Walker, "The Family-'Don't Shut Us Out of Your Life,'" *The Body Politic* 20 (October 1975): 12-13.

[33] There is an extant literature on Vietnam and the psychological disorders it bred, including Jacob P. Lindy, Vietnam: A Casebook (New York: Brunner/Mazel Publishers, 1988); Herbert Hendin and Ann Pollinger Haas, Wounds of War: The Psychological Aftermath of Combat in Vietnam (New York: Basic Books, 1984); and Richard K. Kulka et al., eds., Trauma and the Vietnam War Generation: Report of Findings from the National Vietnam Veterans Readjustment Study (New York: Brunner/Mazel, 1990). On Vietnam and World War Two, see John P. Wilson et al., Human Adaptation to Extreme Stress: From the Holocaust to Vietnam (New York: Plenum, 1988).

[34] On divorce in this period, see James T. Patterson, Grand Expectations (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 671-672.

[35] See Martha Shelley, "Gay is Good," in *Gay Flames Pamphlet* 1 (New York, 1970) p. 2 (of 4). For details on these New York City produced pamphlets, see Rodger Streitmatter, Unspeakable, 127-128.

[36] Michael Callen, (#010), "Dear Dad", 12/17/79, p. 3 (of 6).

[37] On this question, see Christopher Hobson's critique of his mother's notions of privacy advanced in her novel, Consenting Adult. See "What It Is Like to be the Mother of a Homosexual" P. 13 (of 16) in Cornell University, Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Harry Langhorne Collection, 7304, Box 2, File 9.

[38] Brass would go on to become a playwright, writing the plays *All Men* (performed in 1987 and 1988 in NYC, Chicago, and Los Angeles) and *Men Living with Each Other*, as well as his earlier articles for *COME OUT!* magazine.

[39] Cornell University, Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Collection # 7329, Perry Brass, Box 1, File 58, "Notes on Correspondence with Family."

[40] Perry Brass, Box 4, File 8, "Mother: Helen Brass," Letter to Perry, 2/22/73, p. 1, 2 and 3.

[41] See Hilary Radner and Moya Luckett, eds. Swinging Single: Representing Sexuality in the 1960s (University of Minnesota Press, 1999), especially Leerom Medovi's portrait of the yippies, "A Yippie-Panther Dream," p. 153-154 (137-178).

[42] See, again, D'Emilio and Freedman, Intimate Matters, 338-339.

[43] See D'Emilio's discussion of *Redrup v. New York* (1967) in Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities, 133.

[44] See Norm Winski, The Homosexual Revolt (Canoga Park, CA: Viceroy Books, 1967).

[45] Started in 1967, *The Advocate* catered to a gay sensibility rooted in consumerism, including reports on movies, fashion, furniture, and the bar scene. By 1969,*The Los Angeles Advocate* had a circulation of 23 000 during its second year, doubling the circulation of any publication before it. It was to become *The Advocate* in 1970. See, again, Streitmatter, Unspeakable, 83.

[46] Cartoon by J. Lawrence in *The Los Angeles Advocate* 3, no. 3 (March 1969): 5.

[47] Cartoon by "Shawn" in *The Los Angeles Advocate* 3, no. 8 (Sept. 1969): 25.

[48] Some examples were *Come Out!* Magazine, a periodical to evolve from the leaflets that the Gay Liberation Front handed out after the Stonewall riots, *Gay Liberator*, and 1970's series of "Gay Flames" Pamphlets. For details, see Streitmatter, Unspeakable, 127 ff.

[49] On student participation in gay liberation, see again, Marcus, Making History, 228. John D'Emilio and Estelle Freedman note that "with the range of penalties that exposure promised to homosexuals, it was radical youth, contemptuous of the rewards that American society offered for conformity, who were more likely to rally to the banner of gay liberation." See Intimate Matters, 322.

[50] On student protests of the late 1960s and early 1970s, see Steigerwald, The Sixties and the End of Modern America, 146 ff and Christopher Lasch, "The Agony of the American Left," in Leonard Freedman, Issues of the Seventies (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Co., 1970), 520-523. For specific accounts of the student protests and riots at Harvard, see William E. Leuchtenburg, A Troubled Feast: American Society Since 1945 (Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1983), 177 and for Columbia's student revolt of 1968, see Diana Trilling's essay "On The Steps of Low Library," in We Must March, My Darlings (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1977), 77-153; finally, on Columbia and Berkeley, see Paul Sann, American Panorama, (New York: Crown, 1979), 252 ff.

[51] See Paul Goodman, The Moral Ambiguity of America (Toronto: CBC Publications, 1966), 25.

[52] On the generational differences in interpretations of the Vietnam War, see the letters between Allen Ginsberg and his father Louis in Michael Schumacher, ed. Family Business: Selected Letters Between a Father and Son (New York: Bloomsbury, 2001).

[53] For the Port Huron statement, see Robert Marcus, ed. How Many Roads? Recent America in Perspective (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1972), 170-176. For details on the GLF and the New Left, see, again, Mark Blasius' and Shane Phelan's commentary in We Are Everywhere, 377 ff. On the New Left's attempt to allay a sense of banality, see Rossinow, "The Revolution is About Our lives," P. 99-124 in Peter Braunstein and Michael William Doyle, eds. Imagine Nation, 113. Finally, see Doug Rossinow's book, The Politics of Authenticity: Liberalism, Christianity and the New Left in America (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998).

[54] See Jerry Rubin, We Are Everywhere (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), 159, and on this theme see also Tom Warner, Never Going Back: A History of Queer Activism in Canada (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002).

[55] See Laurence Veysey, The Communal Experience: Anarchist and Mystical Counter Cultures in America (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), 185-187.

[56] On gay liberation and women's liberation, see Alice Echols, "Nothing Distant About It: Women's Liberation and 60s Radicalism," in David Farber, ed. The 60s: From Memory to History, 149-174. See also Dennis Altman's discussion in Coming Out in the Seventies (Boston: Alyson Publications, 1979), 51. On women's liberation and stifling gender roles within the nuclear family, see Peggy Morton, "A Woman's Work is Never Done," *Leviathan* 2, no. 1 (May 1970): 32-37. On women's liberation more broadly see the essays in the anthology of women's liberation writings, Robin Morgan, ed. Sisterhood is Powerful (New

York: Random House, 1970). See also Notes from the Second Year: Women's Liberation: Major Writings of the Radical Feminists (New York: Radical Feminism, 1970).

[57] See "The Family and Gay Oppression," *Come Out Fighting: the Newspaper of the Lavender and Red Union* (April 1977), no. 20: 5 (4 and 5).

[58] For the "Here I Am, MOM" photo, see, for example, the cover of *The Lesbian Tide* 1, no. 11 (June 1972).

[59] On Red Butterfly, see again, Marotta, The Politics of Homosexuality, 124. Red Butterfly, "The Institutions of Repression," Gay Oppression: A Radical Analysis (Red Butterfly Publication, 1969), 5.

[60] For other gay critiques of gender roles, see A.N. Diaman, "On Sex Roles," in *Gay Flames Pamphlet* No. 11, "Revolutionary Love: An Introduction to Liberation," by Guy Nassberg (1970): p. 4. See also Carl Wittman's "Gay Manifesto" (1970) in *Gay Flames Pamphlet* No. 9, (1970): p. 4.

[61] This cartoon was run, for example, in the *Mattachine New Times* 1, no. 3 (October 1975): 11. While *The Body Politic* was produced in Toronto, much of its circulation was in the United States. See Streitmatter, Unspeakable, 212.

[62] On the countercultural rejection of cultures of abundance during this period, see David E. Shi, The Simple Life: Plain Living and High Thinking in American Culture (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).

[63] Joan Larkin, "Rhyme of My Inheritance," from Housework (1975), reprinted in Carl Morse and Joan Larkin, eds., Gay and Lesbian Poetry In Our Time: An Anthology (New York: St Martin's Press, 1988), 219.

[64] Ibid., 220.

[65] For broader details on Canadian student activism during these years, see Myrna Kostash, Long Way From Home: the Story of the 60s Generation in Canada (Toronto: James and Lorimer, 1980). See also Cyril Levitt, Children of Privilege: Student Revolt in the Sixties: A Study of Student Movements in Canada, the U.S., and Germany (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984).

[66] On the Canadian critique of American cultural imperialism in Canada, see J. L. Granatstein, "War, Cold War, and Canadian Dependency" in Joseph Tulchin, ed. Hemispheric Perspectives of the U.S.: Papers from the New World Conference (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1975), 241-257. For a view within a lesbian periodical, see "USA & Canada," *The Other Woman* 1, no. 4 (March 1973): 13 and 16.

[67] See Amerigo Marras, "Hetero-Burbia" in *The Body Politic* 7 (Winter 1973) : 5.

[68] Betty Friedan, The Feminine Mystique (New York: W.W. Norton, 1963). Chapter 12 is entitled, "Progressive Dehumanization: the Comfortable Concentration Camp," 282-309.

[69] This poem was censored after its first publication. See the commentary of Richard Ellmann and Robert O'Clair, editors of The Norton Anthology of Modern Poetry (New York: W. W. Norton, 1988), 1209.

[70] See, again, Wylie, Generation of Vipers, and Hans Sebald, Momism: The Silent Disease of America (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1976) which evoked a generation of bored, career-frustrated housewives who placed all of their life-sucking energy into the baby-boom generation.

[71] B.I. Groach, *Closetary Comix*, "Mothers in Agony," *The Empty Closet* (Rochester) 45 (December 1974): 7. For a similar example, see "Media Injection," *The Empty Closet*, 61 (May 1976): 8.

[72] On the misogyny within the American cartooning tradition, see Mary F. Corey, The World Through a Monocle: *The New Yorker* at Midcentury (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), and Stephen Becker, Comic Art in America: A Social History of the Funnies, Political Cartoons, Magazine Humor, Sporting Cartoons, and Animated Cartoons (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1959).

[73] See *Focus* 2, no. 3 (Feb. 1971): 2.

[74] The countercultural rejection of traditional psychiatry involved the embrace of psychiatrists who took an anti-authoritarian approach to mental illness and curing. R.D. Laing was one such psychiatrist. He was instrumental in establishing residences where psychosis could be lived through rather than immediately treated. See R.D. Laing, The Politics of Experience (London: Penguin, 1967).

[75] At the 1971 annual meeting of the American Psychiatric Association in Washington, Frank Kameny and other gay liberationists grabbed the microphone and declared war against psychiatry. For an account, see Vern L. Bullough, ed., Before Stonewall: Activists for Gay and Lesbian Rights in Historical Context (Binghamton, NY: Harrington Park Press, 2002), 214.

[76] Many works continued to uphold the ideas of Irving Bieber and other American psychoanalysts that gay liberation tried to revoke. See, for example, Marcel T. Saghir and Eli Robins, Male and Female Homosexuality: A Comprehensive Investigation (Baltimore: Williams and Wilkins, 1973). On harbingers of child homosexuality, see Peter and Barbara Wyden, Growing Up Straight: What Every Thoughtful Parent Should Know About Homosexuality (New York: Signet, 1968).

[77] On the shift in sodomy laws, see D'Emilio and Freedman, Intimate Matters, 324.

[78] On this, see Charles Silverstein, "The Origin of the Gay Psychotherapy Movement" in Duberman, ed., A Queer World, 358-380.

[79] Satya Klein, "The Heterosexual World: An Anthropological Study" in San Francisco's *Vector: The Gay Experience* 11, no. 10 (October 1975): 55.

[80] Ibid., 56. Such pieces were becoming a widespread source of humour in gay periodicals during these years. For example, *Sisters*, the magazine of the San Francisco Daughters of Bilitis, ran a similar piece entitled "The Heterosexual" that parodied their warped family environments. See *Sisters* (July 1973): 3-4.

[81] Kohut was particularly concerned with a capacity for empathy and introspection, also prominent foci of gay liberationists and lesbian feminists during this period. See his 1977 work, The Restoration of the Self (New York: International Universities Press, 1977); for a broader selection, see The Search for the Self (New York: International Universities Press, 1978). For a discussion, see again, Freedheim, A History of Psychotherapy, 51.

[82] On the probing of gay personal experience and its parallels to psychoanalysis, see Jennifer Terry, An American Obsession: Science, Medicine and Homosexuality in Modern Society (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 376.

[83] Dick Michaels, "The World is My Ashtray," *The Los Angeles Advocate* 1, no. 4 (Dec. 1967): 7 (of 8).

[84] See Howard Brown, Familiar Faces, Hidden Lives: The Story of Homosexual Men in America Today (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1976), 68.

[85] John Knoebel, "Words on Mother," from New York City's "effeminist" gay periodical, for self described effeminate gay male radicals, *Faggotry* (1972): 24 (22-24).

[86] I will expand on the shifting standards of women's appearance in my next chapter, but for now see Lois W. Banner, American Beauty (New York: Knopf, 1983), 285 ff.

[87] Lisa Fenton, "The Radical Home Haircut." *Lesbian Voices* 4, no. 1 (1979): 13 (of 14).

[88] On the hair and dress of Vietnam war protestors, see interview with homophile activist Barbara Gittings in Eric Marcus, Making History: The Struggle for Gay and Lesbian Equal Rights, 1945-90: An Oral History (New York: Harper Collins, 1992), 124.

[89] See, again, Leerom Medovi, "A Yippie-Panther Dream," in Hilary Radner and Moya Luckett, eds, Swinging Single, 154. On the importance of long hair as a gay code, see John Murphy, Homosexual Liberation: A Personal View (New York: Praeger, 1971), 14. And for a historical look at gay men's fashions in Britain and the United States, see Shaun Cole, Don We Now Our Gay Apparel: Gay Men's Dress in the Twentieth Century (Oxford: Berg, 2000).

[90] Gay and Lesbian Historical Society of Northern California, Mike Hippler, 90-12, Box 3 Diaries, Sat. Night, June 5, 1971. Hippler would go on to write a biography of Air Force Sergeant and gay rights leader, Leonard Matlovich.

[91] For details, see Joshua Freeman, "Hardhats: Construction Workers, Manliness, and the 1970 Pro War Demonstration," *Journal of Social History* (Summer 1993): 725-737. See also William E. Leuchtenberg's account in A Troubled Feast: American Society Since 1945 (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1983), 247.

[92] See the entry on the "New Left" in Mari-Jo Buhle et al., eds., Encyclopedia of the American Left (New York: Garland, 1990), 519 (517-523).

[93] Patterson, Grand Expectations, 699.

[94] See the reprint of Kennan's speech in Democracy and the Student Left (New York: Bantam, 1968), 3-18. See also Martin Duberman's response essay of this period, "On Misunderstanding Student Rebels," in Harold Jaffe and John Tytell, eds., The American Experience: A Radical Reader (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), P.164 (162-176).

[95] On this theme, see Richard Dyer, The Culture of Queers (New York: Routledge, 2002). On the inherent "queerness" of the student and counterculture revolt during this period, see Ian Lekus, "Losing Our Kids: Queer Perspectives on the Chicago Conspiracy Trial" in John McMillian and Paul Buhle, ed.s, The New Left Revisited (Philadelphia: Temple, 2003), 199-213. Finally, see Ronald D. Cohen, "The Delinquents: Censorship and Youth Culture in Recent American History," *History of Education Quarterly* 37, no. 3 (Fall 1997): 251-270.

[96] Emily Rubin Weiner, "Wow I'll really be uptight if my family sees this" *Come Out!* 2, no. 8 (Winter 1972). No page number.

[97] In Karen Duder's work on lesbians and their parents in Ontario between the 1920s and 1960s, she suggests that many families might have believed homosexuality existed only as an abstraction, but not within their own families. She argues that this sense was to change as more visible lesbian communities emerged. See Karen Duder, "'That Repulsive Abnormal Creature I Heard of in that Book': Lesbians and Families in Ontario, 1920-1965," in Lori Chambers and Edgar-Andre Montigny, eds., Ontario Since Confederation: a Reader. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 260-283.

[98] John D'Emilio notes that before 1969, about fifty gay organizations existed; after 1973, there were over 800 gay groups in America. See "Gay Politics and Community in San Francisco Since World War II," p. 456-473 in Martin Duberman et al., eds., Hidden from History: Reclaiming the Gay and Lesbian Past (New York: Penguin, 1989), 466.

[99] Jeanne Cordova, "How to Come Out Without Being Thrown Out" in Karla Jay and Allen Young, After You're Out: Personal Experiences of Gay Men and Lesbian Women (New York: Quick Fox, 1975), 90 (P. 89-95).

[100] Ibid., 91.

[101] Ibid., 92.

[102] Ibid., 94.

[103] See, for example, Lilly Hansen, "Should Your Parents Know?" *GAY* 9 (March 29, 1970): 15. See also the unrepentant coming out letters published in *Spectre* 3 (July/August 1971): 4-6 and *Lesbian Voices* 1, Issue 4 (September, 1975): 16-17. For gay men see *The Body Politic* 19 (July/August 1975): 18.

[104] Robert Burke, "Coming Out!" *Vector* (May 1973): 28 (27-30).

[105] *Lesbian Tide* (September 1971): 7. For a blunt statement of family excommunication, see also "On Being a Lesbian," *Lesbian Connection* 2, no. 7 (December, 1976): 11.

[106] B.I. Groach, *Closetary Comix*, *The Empty Closet* 43 (October 1974): 6.

[107] On the literal and symbolic sense of investment in children of this generation, see Antoine Prost and Gerard Vincent, eds. *Riddles of Identity in Modern Times*, vol. 5 of the History of Private Life, ed. Philippe Aries and Georges Duby (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), 490.

[108] On Lee's self identification as a non-political lesbian, see GLBT Historical Society of Northern California, 93-13 Del Martin/Phyllis Lyon, Box 22, F. 24, "Correspondence re. Lesbian/Woman," May 17, 1971, Letter from Julie Lee to Martin and Lyon, "Dear Del and Phyl," p. 1 and 2. Many lesbians were critical of her, viewing any form of counselling as inherently elitist and coercive, merely enhancing the power of the counsellor. In an issue of the lesbian periodical *Albatross* in October, 1975 (21-27), Julie Lee was satirized and given the name "Jewel Elitist." For a more positive assessment of Julie Lee's advice, see George Weinberg, "Julie Lee Rhymes with DOB," *GAY* (April 12, 1971): 5.

[109] Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon, Lesbian/Woman (San Francisco: Glide Publications, 1972), 174.

[110] Lesbian Herstory Archives, #79-7, Julie Lee, Letter from Anonymous to Julie Lee, August 27, 1972, p. 2.

[111] Ibid., Julie Lee, Letter from "Sal" to Julie Lee, February, 1973, p. 1 (of 2).

[112] Ibid., Julie Lee, ibid, Letter to Anonymous from Julie Lee, August 10, 1972.

[113] See "The Well of Possibility," *GAY* 24 (July 20, 1970): 15. For details on *GAY*, see Rodger Streitmatter, Unspeakable, 126-128.

[114] Julie Lee, Letter to Julie Lee from "Liza," February 16, 1971, p. 3.

[115] Ibid., Letter to Julie Lee from "Liza," April 29, 1971.

[116] Ibid., letter to Julie Lee from "Liza," 8/15/71, p. 1 (of 2).

[117] See D'Emilio and Freedman, Intimate Matters, p. 324.

[118] The novels that Duplechan wrote with Rousseau as a protagonist include Eight Days a Week (Boston: Alyson, 1985), Blackbird (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986), and Captain Swing (Boston: Alyson,

1992). Duplechan spent his high school years in Lancaster, California, the same "rednecky town" which Duplechan portrays in Blackbird. Duplechan has recorded that his real life coming out was very similar to the one he depicted in this novel. See Stuart Timmons, "Larry Duplechan: Coming Out, Friendship, and Romance," *The Advocate* 533 (Sept. 12 1989): 62-63.

[119] The Third World Gay Revolution platform and programme drafted in 1970 criticised heterosexual masculinity within white, Afro-American, and Latino communities, and patriarchy within the family. For the Third World Gay Revolution platform and program drafted in September 1970, see the reprint in the *Detroit Gay Liberator* (February 1971): 6. In a 1970 essay, Black Panther founder Huey Newton recognized gays as an oppressed group facing a comparable struggle to African Americans to counteract the idea of homosexuality as a white man's sickness, offered by Eldridge Cleaver, for example. See Neil Miller's discussion of Leroi Jones and Eldridge Cleaver in Out of the Past, 373. See also Marotta, The Politics of Homosexuality, 128. Finally, see Cleaver's work itself, Soul on Ice (New York: Dell, 1968), 103.

[120] Larry Duplechan, Blackbird (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986), 83.

[121] Ibid., 151.

[122] Ibid., 152.

[123] Ibid., 154.

[124] Ibid., 155.

[125] Dick Leitsch, "Turning On To Daddy" in *GAY* (March 15, 1970): 8.

[126] On Leitsch, see Dudley Clendinen and Adam Nagourney, Out for Good: The Struggle to Build a Gay Rights Movement in America (New York: Touchstone, 1999), 24 ff.

[127] On *GAY* and the GAA, see Rodger Streitmatter, Unspeakable, 128.

[128] See, for example, *The Empty Closet's* features on Jeanne Manford, the first PFLAG mother in "Gays in the Family," Issue 61, (May 1976): 6 and 7; and also Regina Kahney, "Sarah Montgomery: Everybody's Favorite Mother," (January 1977): 6-9. New York's *GAY* featured on its front cover in 1972, "Parent Defends Gay Son's Right to Teach", in no. 84 (Sept. 4, 1972), as well as a cover feature of its vol. 4, no. 100 (April 23. 1973) issue: "Parents of Gays Organizing." See also Randy Wicker's interview with early activist Sarah Montgomery, "'A Conversation with Sarah Montgomery, Grandma Lib", in *GAY* 5, no. 112 (March 1974) edition, 6, 7, 15. I will discuss these figures and their portrayal more in my chapter on PFLAG and its origins.

[129] See Del Martin's 1970 piece (first published in *The Advocate* during October of that year), "If That's All There Is." For a reprint, see Blasius and Phelan, We Are Everywhere, 352-355. See also Marotta, The Politics of Homosexuality, p. 53 ff. and 237 ff. ; and D'Emilio, "Gay Politics and Community in San Francisco Since World War Two," 467.

[130] In Anita Cornwell's, *A Soul Sister's Notebook* (1972), for example, she discussed seeing race as a primary identity, in her analysis of violence against African Americans during 1972."The bullets don't give a damn whether I sleep with a woman or man," she declared. See Anita Cornwell, "From a Soul Sister's Notebook," (1972) reprint in Blasius and Phelan, We Are Everywhere, 364-366. For details on Cornwell, see again, Marc Stein, City of Sisterly and Brotherly Loves, 344-345.

[131] Martin Duberman, Midlife Queer: Biography of a Decade, 1971-1981 (New York: Scribner, 1996), 94-95.

Figure 6. Cartoon in *The Los Angeles Advocate*, 1969

MERCY, I CAN'T TELL YOU HOW MUCH I'VE LOOKED FORWARD TO MEETING HAROLD'S PARENTS."

Figure 7. Cartoon in *The Los Angeles Advocate*, 1969

Figure 8. Cartoon in *Mattachine New Times*, 1975

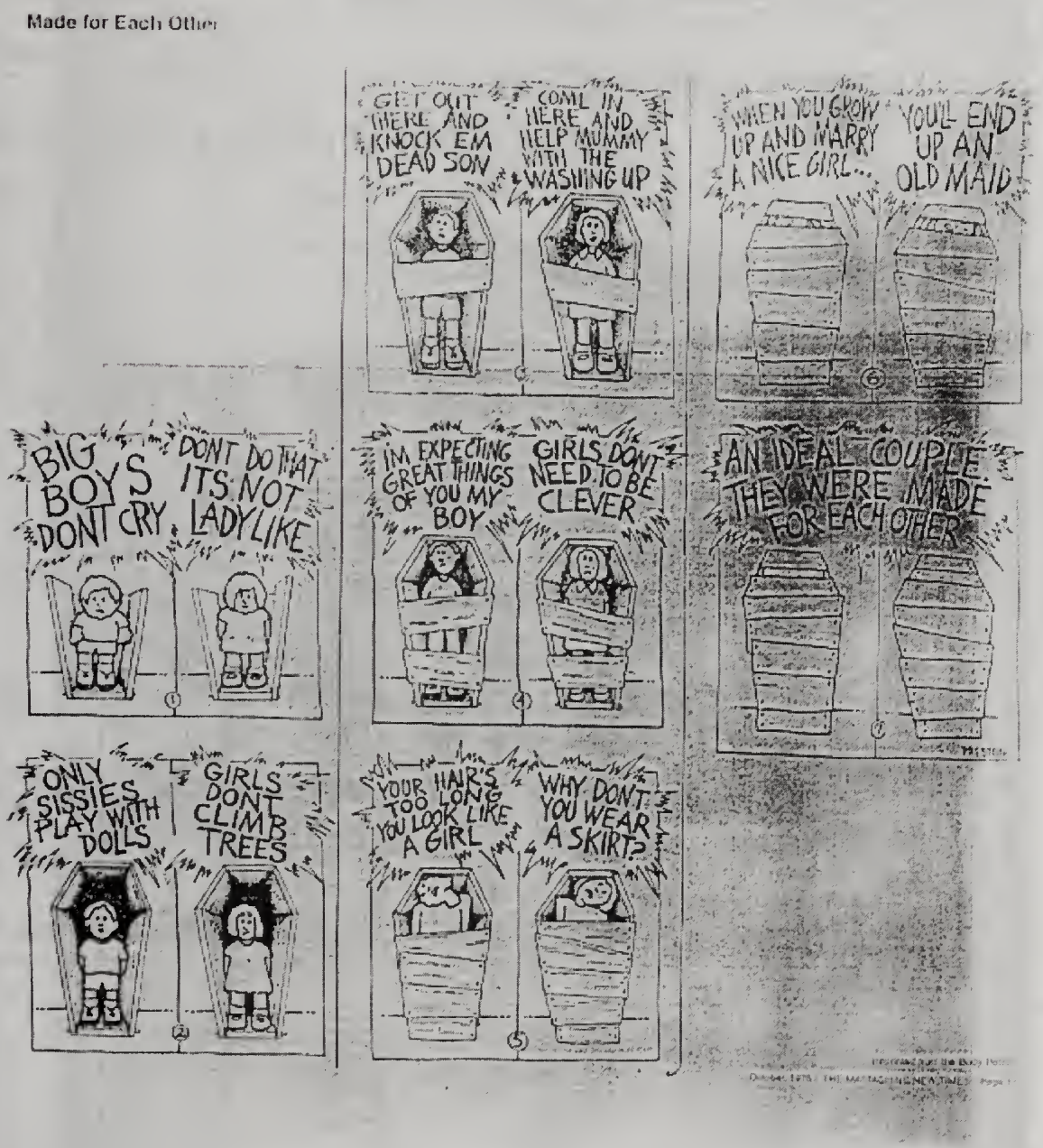


Figure 9. Cartoon in *The Body Politic*, 1973

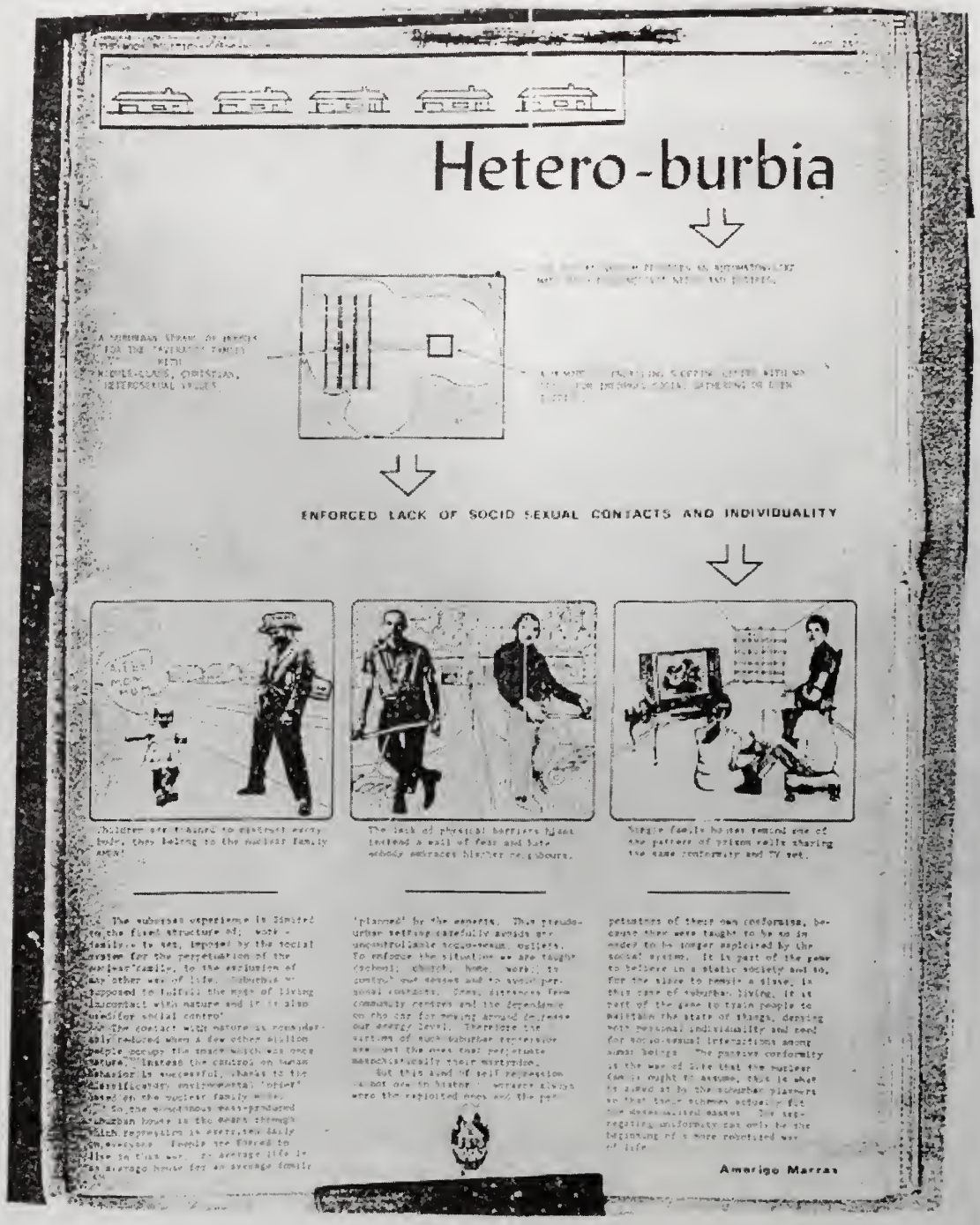


Figure 10. Cartoon in *The Empty Closet*, December, 1974

Figure 11. Cartoon in *The Empty Closet*, October, 1974

CHAPTER 3

WHAT'S WRONG WITH THE BOYS NOWADAYS?

The gay liberation movement marked a moment of hope that gay individuals would no longer just be faintly imagined figures in North American life. Insisting upon the recognition of a knowable gay self, liberation thinkers and writers sought to demystify gay sexuality, and in turn urge a rethinking of ideas of personal and familial intimacy. By the 1970s, these alternative imaginings were transforming into a distinctive gay culture of intimacy, with coming-out rituals, writings, art, and street theatre.

Lesbian writers and activists had embraced this emerging culture within the auspices of the gay liberation movement which, as we have seen, attempted to represent both gay men and women. But many lesbians would come to feel that the gay liberation movement was dominated by the interests and needs of gay men, just as the feminist movement seemed dominated by the interests and needs of heterosexual women. One response of politically engaged lesbians was to set themselves apart by fashioning a lesbian feminist movement, arguing that lesbians needed to organize and work separately from both gay men and heterosexual women.[1] Thinkers and writers within this movement suggested that lesbianism was a logical, or at least a possible, outcome of feminism and that the two were basically intertwined. An outpouring of lesbian feminist writing and publications emerged during the early 1970s, and continued into the early 1980s. Like gay liberation, the movement existed in tandem with other lesbian voices that highlight the braided character of lesbian experiences during this period.

As lesbian feminists problematized the borders between friendship, love, and sexuality, they also developed distinctive generational ideas of selfhood and the relation of the self to others. The debates between lesbian daughters and their heterosexual parents could even be said to exhibit some of the tensions and uncertainties within heterosexuality during these years. When lesbian daughters sought a revision of the very notions of women's life course and 'nature' that presumed heterosexuality, they disrupted the potential for commonality between them and the older generation, particularly their mothers. These family standoffs and exchanges illuminate a generational cleavage about the very purpose of relationships in women's lives, and what it meant to love.

Lesbian feminists in fact articulated heterosexuality as an ideology, an institution, and a culture, rather than an intimate imperative or conscious choice. Outside of the family context, this critique provoked a split with the mainstream feminist movement and heterosexual women activists who did not necessarily see a lesbian feminist challenge as central to their aims. In the American context, the feminist movement did not accommodate lesbians at first. In 1970, Betty Friedan, president of NOW, the National Organization of Women, referred to the lesbian platform as the "lavender menace," suggesting that lesbians would hamper the movement and taint its publicity. This stance prompted the New York City collective, Radicalesbians, to issue a manifesto of lesbian feminist politics, entitled *The Woman Identified Woman*, which suggested that lesbians were crucial to feminism, rather than peripheral, because it was lesbians who were uprooting patriarchy in not having relationships with men. This tract affirmed the idea of lesbianism as a subversive act: "our energies must flow toward our sisters, not backward to our oppressors."[2] In this understanding, lesbians needed to reject the butch-fem

culture, which was, during the late 1960s and early 1970s, the predominant lesbian public culture then in existence. These articulations of lesbianism seemed too much a copy of heterosexuality, reinforcing power saturated patriarchal relationships.[3]

As a political movement and culture, however, lesbian feminism had many different ideological strains and imperatives.[4] Some of these did align with the goals of Women's Liberation.[5] Themes of legal, political, and workplace rights resonated with lesbian women no less so than heterosexual women. Lesbian theorist Charlotte Bunch has suggested that the issue that best symbolized the intersection between the interests of the women's movement and lesbian feminists was the individual's right to control her own body, and thus her sexuality.[6] Women's Liberation sought an increased public presence for women in the labour force and politics, but it was also attentive to politicizing personal issues such as child care, birth control, and domestic labour. The expansion of women's choices in public and domestic arenas alike might have suggested some choice in the arena of sexuality, as well. Not only could women choose whether or not to get married, to have a baby, or take a paid job: they could choose whether or not they even wanted to be heterosexual.[7] Women's Liberation was also attuned to the psychological features of being a woman, in its pursuit of more equitable personal relationships as well as less rigid gender roles, and these were vital concerns of lesbians.[8] As Verta Taylor and Leila Rupp have noted, many women came out as lesbians within the radical branch of the women's movement, which located women's oppression in a complex system of male domination.[9] But lesbianism also mingled with cultural feminism and its emphasis that women's culture and values were different from those of men and potentially more

loving and pacifist.[10] In this vein, lesbian separatists conceived of a Lesbian Nation, with a distinctive women's economy, institutions, values, and music and writing culture.[11]

Perhaps the most provocative suggestion that lesbian feminists would make during the 1970s, however, was that if women felt drawn to their women friends they could be willing to have sexual intimacy with them as well, an idea that seemed reminiscent of nineteenth century women's romantic friendships.[12] As Adrienne Rich would write in a pathbreaking essay in 1980, heterosexuality was a cultural presumption, and women were conditioned into it without ever realizing that they might be able to choose to have loving, and sexual, relationships with women.[13] This way of thinking marked a fundamental break from any notion of innateness or inner compulsion in being lesbian.

Thus, lesbian feminists had recast the idea of sexual *orientation* as an idea of sexual *preference*. This idea was reinforced by widely published testimonies from women about their sexuality, and new research into women's sexuality during the early years of the 1970s that primarily sought to provide feminist alternatives to psychoanalysis. Rejected here were not only concepts of feminine roles, but the attribution of narcissism and penis envy to women, and perhaps most centrally the idea of the vaginal orgasm.[14] By the late 1960s, sexologists William Masters and Virginia Johnson had revised Freudian ideas about this kind of orgasm as the mark of women's maturity by claiming that, for the majority of women, orgasm appeared to reside in the clitoris.[15] At a more political level, this research was taken up to suggest that women could have sexual satisfaction without men. In her influential 1970 essay, "The Myth of the Vaginal Orgasm," Anne Koedt argued that women were better acquainted with each other's

bodies and could potentially have more fulfilling relationships with each other than they could with men, an idea also suggested in what would become a bestselling feminist self-help book on women's health issues, *Our Bodies, Ourselves*, in 1971.[16]

This emerging impetus towards the disclosure of women's experiences--in both their sensuous and emotional aspects--would also provide a context for lesbian revelations at the family level. Ironically, the idea of choice about sexuality provided a way for parents to contemplate--and often reject--the idea of their daughters as lesbians. If lesbianism was the practice to the theory of feminism, parents could urge their daughters to just stop practicing it.[17]

Such clashes between lesbians and their mothers in particular had themselves become popular items represented in North American lesbian feminist culture by the early 1970s.[18] Lesbian creative writing had been spurred on by the success of Rita Mae Brown's semi-autobiographical lesbian coming out story, *Rubyfruit Jungle*, first published in 1973. As of 1974, lesbian presses such as Naiad in Florida had started publishing lesbian literature at an unprecedented rate. In addition, lesbian periodicals became a central venue for personal writing. By 1975, there were roughly 50 lesbian periodicals with a circulation of about 50 000, many of which were published by lesbian collectives.[19] Most sought to valourise lesbian women's personal experiences, their creative sides, as well as their analytical prowess: they solicited journal entries, personal essays, poetry, letters, book reviews.[20] Rejecting a conception of creativity that emphasized literary skill and technique, the editors sought a more authentic, raw, and unfiltered account of women's lives and stories, perhaps believing there to be inherent creativity in relating a coming out story.[21]

Lesbian anthropologist Ellen Lewin has noted that women's coming out stories are more often concerned with aspects of intimacy and the choice of being lesbian, while men's seem more concerned with formative sexual experiences.[22] The coming out letter during this period is a vital source for understanding these themes of intimacy, and particularly when they appeared in lesbian feminist periodicals, the political implications of being a lesbian.[23] In an issue of New York City's *Dyke* in 1976, one correspondent praised the periodical for the forum it had given to these letters: "It's so important for Lezzies to share the games played on us--and our mothers are a biggie--their hold can be so strong and subtle on the Dyke Daughter."[24]

"Linda" was one woman to donate a correspondence between her and her mother for publication. In 1974, she was a young, recently divorced lesbian from Niagara Falls, New York, living in Toronto and trying to make a career of being a painter. She gave the Toronto periodical *The Other Woman* a copy of a letter her mother had sent her, in response to Linda's coming out.[25] Her mother did not waste much time in giving her opinion on her daughter's "present situation," as she called it. "I think it stinks," she said, "I think you are making a big mistake--one which could affect your entire future. Look at this thing honestly, Linda. Is this really what you want of life?" Her mother claimed that she had "taken into account your disappointment and loneliness since the failure of your marriage--I suffer for you--believe me, but lesbianism is not the answer." If lesbianism was something Linda pursued on account of disappointment with men, her mother tried to talk up heterosexuality: "men really aren't all that bad. I've known a few good ones in my time. They will be as bad or as good as you let them....They are lovable and desirable with all their faults and very necessary in the scheme of things." She went on to declare

that the "women in my family have always been liberated. This they gained through various methods--the most likely and obvious were probably in this order: good cooks, sense of humor, good housekeeping, and willing bed partners." While perhaps it might have been heartening for Linda to hear her mother enumerate "willing bed partner" as last on the list, her mother did not endear herself to her feminist daughter when she closed with: "the girls of today are their own worst enemy [who] let this sex freedom idea take over where their good sense used to be..... Please, Linda, come to your good senses and start thinking of a more normal life for yourself. Love, Mom."

Linda's mother was not done after signing off, however. In a postscript, she added: "A person has to be a person, true--but one has to fit into the accepted pattern or social structure to be really accepted into society as a whole and that's what it's all about, isn't it? How can you be happy existing in the fringes of society--being laughed at, mocked at, and insulted--that's how it is where you're looking for happiness." And finally, in a post-postscript, Linda's mother spoke on behalf of her husband: "I just have not had the heart to let your father read the letter you sent me. You will have to tell him yourself if you want him to know. Heart attack? No--but how about Heart break?"[26]

Not only did Linda's mother speak for him, but for her husband and generations of women in her family, and for the patterns of empowerment within heterosexual marriages that, in her view, had served them all well. Her rendition of power within her family and over her man is reminiscent of the subtle technique of emotional manipulation that sociologists of the 1950s such as Talcott Parsons had uncovered for women in families.[27] She seemed to suggest an enjoyable challenge in reforming or civilizing a husband, as though lesbians were simply making too many demands for psychological

compatibility on their male partners. The very fact that she felt she could sway her daughter with the positive aspects of a heterosexual relationship indicates that Linda's mother did not perceive her daughter's sexuality to be final or unwavering. Linda came out to her mother through a specific lesbian politics, and her mother, accordingly, argued with her daughter on the basis of ideas--the nature of men and marriage, sexual liberation, and nonconformity. It is not *being* lesbian that became the source of rupture, but choosing it as "the answer" to a failed marriage, or pursuing it as an aspect of feminism.

Linda's response, perhaps tailored for its appearance in this feminist publication, was indignant about her mother's blunt suggestion that being a lesbian "stinks," and she was equally blunt in her response. "I don't think Lesbianism 'stinks' at all," she said, "I think men stink." She averred that she had never been "better....since I stopped thinking I had to impress men." Being with women had "doubled [her] self-confidence" because relationships with women did not "compromise" her the way her relationships with men had. She would not "waste any more time, energy, or love on people who won't believe I am an equal human being./My faith is with my sisters." In her sign off she reiterated, "No, I don't think this 'stinks' at all. I think it shows that love is not dead in this world. It lives on in *women loving each other*. Love, Linda."[28] [Italics hers]

Ironically, Linda's mother's suggestion that sexual liberation had some contradictory effects and had actually hurt women was perhaps an implicit point of her daughter's own, in the sense she conveyed of feeling "compromised" in her relationships with men. As affronted as Linda was by her mother's response, she did not appear to find her mother's presumption that Linda sought out lesbianism as an antidote to negative experiences with men offensive. It was more that she wanted to clarify why she could not

be with men and still be an artist. In her claim of greater independence through lesbian sexuality, Linda exemplifies broader feelings of women's dissatisfactions and yearnings during these years, even in the wake of egalitarian social movements. Some women who had participated in New Left political organizing, for example, had noticed a profound contradiction between the egalitarian rhetoric that men within the movement had espoused and their actions. For many women, a more liberated sexual environment meant that they had lost the right to say no. A protest against this sexual exploitation was widely articulated in feminist arenas, both lesbian and heterosexual, for example in such works as Marge Piercey's popular novel, *Small Changes*.[29] In fact, some otherwise heterosexual women became willing to consider lesbianism as an alternative to the 'liberated' articulations of heterosexuality.[30]

Of course Linda's mother probably also meant the "sex freedom idea" to refer to the very idea of becoming a lesbian. On this point, mother and daughter appeared to reflect differing judgments of happiness in women's lives. Her daughter's assessment of utopian possibilities for relationships between women contrasted starkly with her mother's acceptance of given realities, including some degree of hierarchy between men and women. The camaraderie that Linda suggested with her "sisters" might not have been easy for her mother to understand, given a greater sense of reticence on the part of women about their dissatisfactions--if indeed they had perceived them as such--throughout the earlier postwar period. As lesbian feminist writer Audre Lorde noted in her memoir *Zami*, it seemed to her that "gay girls were the....only women who were even talking to each other [during] the 1950s."[31] Thus an extra burden to the barriers in communication and understanding between mothers and daughters during this period also

might have been, in addition to ideas about the purpose of relationships, simply the ways these relationships got expressed. During this period, a new language of intimacy was being spoken, one which borrowed from Consciousness Raising methods that valued the sharing and analyzing of personal experiences between women as a vital part of political awareness.[32] The deliberate, self-conscious language surrounding "sisterhood" might have seemed quite simply affected or overly ideological to their mothers.

However, if lesbian writers placed sexuality within the realm of choice and reason, rather than nature, parents could feel that they could reason their daughters out of it. Such was the tactic taken up by the parents of poet Jacqueline Lapidus. Like Linda's mother, her parents could see little point in choosing to become a lesbian unless a woman, through a hapless soul and biology, had to be one. Having grown up in New York City, Lapidus was living abroad in Paris throughout her 30s, during the 1970s. Her parents, both professors at the City University of New York's Law School at Queen's College, wrote letters to her there, discussing her writing career, their hope that she would attend grad school eventually, her sister and nephew, as well as Lapidus's ideas about lesbian feminism. Lapidus was insistent that her parents try to understand her and her poetry, which contained her ideas about loving women and its feminist implications.

Jacqueline Lapidus was quite forthright with her parents about her choice to become a lesbian. Writing to her in 1975, Lapidus' father conceded that his daughter had made "a strong case for [her] point of view" on this choice, yet his "unalterated conviction [was] that the path you are on leads to a dead end. I do not suggest that, for a woman, heterosexual marriage is the only goal...." ; however, he *was* suggesting that "....heterosexual, monogamous marriage...despite aberrations, exceptions, failures,

heartaches and bumps in the road...still leads to the greatest good."[33] This evocation of marriage failures did not offer a ringing endorsement of heterosexuality, and was reminiscent of Linda's mother's comment that men were not "all that bad." Nonetheless he portrayed heterosexuality as a necessary, natural life course whose good could not be simply disregarded.

Her mother's letters on the matter of choice, however, were more ambivalent, suggesting an awareness of lesbianism as a possibility for women even on the part of an unambiguously heterosexual woman who had raised her children during the War and immediate postwar period. Edith Lapidus watched as her daughter wrote poetry for lesbian magazines and became more involved with the lesbian movement in Paris during the 1970s. In a letter of 1975, Mrs. Lapidus wrote to say that she was "concerned" with her "daughter's new interests." In her view, "if some women prefer sexual relations with women they are entitled to do what they please. That is their misfortune in a world where the norm of mature people is heterosexual." She seemed to ascribe to a Freudian view of mature heterosexuality; homosexuality might be a life stage, but exclusively for the young. Perhaps this conception refers directly to sexual acts themselves, as though mature sex involved penetration, while all else was simply cuddling.[34] Edith Lapidus admitted that she herself "[a]t the age of 11....was in love with a girl of 13. But most of us grow up and discover that this is not the way the world goes round."[35] Thus, she did not call her daughter's sexuality into question so much as her adulthood. That Mrs. Lapidus lacked some notion of an idealized love that transcended gender perhaps indicates the degree to which these popularized Freudian ideas, which documented and legitimized a

youthful lesbian stage, had taken firm hold, pervading the thinking of women's own life histories about same sex attractions.[36]

According to Edith Lapidus, "if people are gaited that way, OK--that is their business. But I can't see why anyone would want to cultivate it. It is one thing to like, be friends with, and work with women. It is quite another to spend wild, wet nights with them." This mother's prurient, voyeuristic depiction of lesbians suggests that for her the sexual was not an extension of the closeness of the intense friendships that she herself had enjoyed. The sexual was more a matter of "being gaited that way," a matter of biology, that almost seemed to corrupt that intimacy, by taking it down to the "wild, wet" level. As far as her daughter making this choice in her life, "I would want to talk about it," her mother affirmed.[37]

Part of the lesbian feminist challenge to dominant heterosexuality, however, was to provide an awareness of love relationships that were on the borders of heterosexuality: to see the importance of the relationships with mothers, and to see the vitality of friendship as a form of love, for example. Somewhat contradictorily, Edith Lapidus also understood this point from her daughter, and she too was aware of the possibility of love between women. In another letter in 1975, her mother conceded that "[t]heoretically" her daughter "may be quite right" about lesbianism being a more satisfying option than heterosexuality for women to pursue. She discussed watching a programme on George Sand on public television where Sand was portrayed as having had a mutually enhancing relationship with actress Marie Dorval. Mrs. Lapidus was even willing to admit that "love is love regardless of sex."

Yet Edith Lapidus' objections to lesbianism reveal a conception of life choice that was more realistic and less sentimental, as well as more static and less experimental, than her daughter's. Despite appreciating this relationship between women, and perhaps the social ease between women, she could "see no point and much harm in your cultivating [lesbianism]. Life is hard enough without complicating it." Like Linda's mother, she identified her primary worry as her daughter's welfare. As a law professor, Edith Lapidus' mind had a common-sense and practical bent. She herself had not pursued a conventional path: she received a law degree during the 1920s and eventually her Ph.D. in law, becoming the author of the book *Eavesdropping on Trial* in 1973. Nonetheless she seemed shaped by a pragmatic sensibility characteristic of the Depression era. The prudential values she might have assumed then, including the sense of self discipline, self sacrifice, and delayed gratification, might have been sensibilities that she applied to all areas of life, including feelings.[38] The pursuit of choice in the sexual arena might have seemed fanciful to her, or self-indulgent. When her daughter suggested that her mother might be "personally somewhat frightened by the idea of lesbianism for yourself", Edith Lapidus wanted to clarify that this was not the case, even subconsciously.[39] "I am not at all frightened about lesbianism for myself," she said, "I never considered it and never will."[40]

Jacqueline Lapidus even cast herself as potentially more self-examined than her mother in her lesbianism. She felt that her own "feminist evolution" had led her to "re-evaluate [her] past life," realizing "things I had been refusing to see before about my previous relationships."[41] Lapidus' feminism allowed for a huge continuum of women's relationships, including "little old maiden ladies living together in previous centuries in

tranquil spinsterhood." She then pronounced that, "any woman can love other women," echoing a broader impetus among lesbian feminists to reclaim examples of lesbianism throughout history and assert a universal quality to lesbian love.[42] Lapidus expressed her choice as an emotional preference, not primarily a sexual one, perhaps owing to a lesbian feminist effort to remove lesbianism from the realm of voyeurism.[43] She even considered the relationship between mother and daughter to be inherently lesbian: "the only difference between lesbian lovers and a close mother/daughter is the part of the body they touch."[44]

Given these stances, Edith Lapidus might have found her daughter proposing a confusing new order to the classification of relationships, feelings, and sexuality: how could one now distinguish between a sexual and a non-sexual relationship? Was it all simply a matter of intention, like an artist who declares an object art?[45] Did one simply choose things now that used to be--or at least seemed to be--a matter of objective nature? Philosopher Martha Nussbaum has argued for a concept of emotions that have intelligence and intentionality and are not just "of the body."[46] Perhaps Mrs. Lapidus even felt a degree of uneasiness about having the leisure or the luxury of even thinking about such obligatory or self-evident areas of life *as* choices.

That lesbianism was an appealing theoretical idea that should remain in the realm of theory was a stance that seemed particularly illogical in mothers who had affective relationships with women but sexual ones with men. In 1973, a high school lesbian told Julie Lee, the lesbian counselor of the New Jersey Daughters of Bilitis, that, upon her revelation of lesbianism, her mother said that she was "rushing things," and had plenty of time when it came to dating and sex.[47] While not advocating a lesbian relationship, her

mother did not think that "lesbians are child molestors or crazy or anything like that at all." This mother would have preferred her daughter to "be straight". Yet, "as people, she thinks more of women than of men. She has told me many times she thinks they are better than men."[48] Even if this mother could understand emotional love and intimacy with other women, she most emphatically was not "attracted to women sexually. She says it's fine for women to love other women, but not in that way."[49] This mother appeared to separate sexual and emotional needs, proposing that women could get emotional but not sexual satisfaction from women friends, a prescription that lesbian feminism had attempted to complicate.

Sympathetic to lesbianism in the abstract, yet hostile to it when it played out in their daughters' lives, mothers during this period seemed concerned not simply with social censure, but a desire to maintain the boundaries surrounding platonic and sexual relationships as they had known them. Nancy Garden, a children and teen writer whose books often dealt with gay relationships and homophobia, gave a portrait of this kind of mother/daughter conflict in her 1982 young adult book, *Annie on My Mind*. Her protagonist Liza and her friend Annie were involved in a scandal of making out at the household of one of their teachers, where they were supposed to be looking after the cat. Annie's mother brought the matter to the table by telling her a story of her own close friend when she was younger. She told her daughter that she and her friend had "loved each other very much" and then "blush[ed]" to reveal that one night when she slept in her friend's bed "we kissed each other. And then for a while we pretended one of us was a boy," perhaps as a coded way to say that she had sex with her friend.[50] She assured her daughter that lots of girls did this kind of thing, and "it's normal to experiment." She then

asked her daughter, in a more foreboding way, if there had been any more than the "usual experimenting" between her and Annie. [51] She is relieved when her daughter, lying, tells her that there had not been. But this mother character never does say what exactly "the usual experimenting" entails. Sex with her friend had been acceptable because they were--or they told themselves that they were--preparing for boyfriends. In this portrait, only experimental sex between women could be tolerated because it was seen, to a large degree, as adolescent play.

These vague parental depictions of lesbian sexuality speak to perhaps a larger vagueness about what a lesbian even was. Although lesbian feminism had insisted upon its validity as a movement alongside gay liberation, perhaps neither of these movements were so widely known to the public. Even at the level of innuendo, it was gay men who were more a part of the public imagination than gay women, even throughout the liberation period. A 1967 documentary film produced for CBS television, "The Homosexuals," for example, dealt solely with gay men, especially their 'promiscuity' and cruising habits. There was scarcely a mention of a gay woman.[52] In a feature on the family in *Look* magazine in 1971, a gay male couple was included, but they were there as a counterpoint to images of gay men who had "one-night stands in bathhouses, public toilets, or gay bars."[53] For some parents too the gay male experience--or what they imagined it to be--became a template for lesbian experiences, especially in the sexual realm. This might have been particularly the case for those lesbians who came out to their parents without the additional perspective of feminism. In 1973, one teenager had intimated to her parents that she was gay and then wrote to Julie Lee distraught because her father called gay people "queers. He also says they are sick, and that they 'stake out

their victims', such as me, or young girls like me, to convert them." This myth of recruitment was, as we have seen, engrained in early postwar culture, though it usually referred to the sexuality of gay men. And this father was indeed talking about gay men, while warning his daughter away from older women. "My dad just loves to mimic gay people," this young woman noted, "the swish, the wrist-flapping, high-pitched voice, and all."[54] Another teenager claimed that her mother had asked her if "a few minutes of sexual gratification [were] worth being rejected by society?"[55] This image of gay sexuality as quick gratification was quite different from what lesbian feminists had evoked in their emotional emphasis on love, but the image that many parents clung to seemed to be one of gay promiscuity and chance encounters. Parental homophobia about gay men could thus play out in their daughters' lives. Some parents appeared to lose sight of their daughters as individuals and, when faced with a gay revelation, simply viewed them as part of a generic gay story.

What might have been clearer than lesbian sexuality to parents was simply the idea that lesbianism tarnished their daughter's womanhood. Indeed, for some parents, heterosexuality was an accomplishment. Thus, even heterosexuality's downside--such as unwanted pregnancy--could be considered a relief in the face of lesbianism. Writer Judith Katz's mother felt this way. In 1972, Katz made the trip to her hometown of Worcester, Massachusetts to tell her parents that an article about her appearing in her college newspaper at the University of Massachusetts would reveal that she was a lesbian. Because the revelatory article was about Katz as well as a prominent Massachusetts abortionist of this period who had been invited to speak at the university, Katz introduced the topic gingerly, first telling her parents that the article was about her and the

abortionist. To this, her mother said, "The abortionist? You didn't have an abortion?" Katz detected some "hopeful" excitement in her mother's voice in asking this question. When Katz denied this firmly, her mother asked, "Are you pregnant?" with "[a]gain....a glimmer of hope in her voice."[56] After her disclosure, and her father's lament that he wanted nothing more than to give his daughter a wedding, Katz protested that she had never, in all her life, had a boyfriend, and so being a lesbian should not have come as a real surprise. Her mother pointed out however that her daughter "never tried very hard either," indicating that for her heterosexuality was a matter of effort, ability, and competence, something she had achieved and her daughter had not. Finally Mrs. Katz pronounced, "I want you to know...this is not my fault."[57] If heterosexuality was not precisely a virtue to this mother, it was at least a skill; having a lesbian daughter was perhaps a comment on this mother's failure to pass down a vital skill.

Mothers also fretted about a perceived lesbian assault on femininity. Penny House, editor of the lesbian separatist periodical *Dyke*, suggested that her mother's opposition to lesbianism stemmed most centrally from anxieties about her daughter's appearance. Challenging women's sexual objectification and rigid ideas of attractiveness, some lesbian feminists had in fact embraced a more unisexual look, rejecting not only the artifices of women in heterosexual culture, but also the perceived artifices of gay culture, such as butch/fem appearances.[58] Penny House and the *Dyke* periodical, produced by a New York City collective, were no exceptions; this periodical explicitly eschewed makeup, long hair, feminine accoutrements and clothing.[59]

In 1976, House donated her correspondence with her mother to *Dyke*. She included a letter in which her mother said that being a lesbian made her daughter "only

partially a woman, and not a whole one." Mrs. House firmly believed that her daughter needed to look after the aesthetic aspects of her womanhood. She clarified that it was not her daughter's shapeless, sloppy clothes that distressed her, but "what seemed to me as your contempt for your own body: not what society calls feminine, but what nature, God....genes, hormones, etc. has determined for you, a woman's body." Her mother pointed out that her daughter's body was "born as a woman, to be lived as a woman (short of going to Dr. Money at Johns Hopkins)."[60] This reference to a doctor who performed sex reassignment surgery during these years suggests that she aligned her daughter's femininity with a sense of biology. Her daughter was therefore simply "hurting your own self, your birthright" by defiling the beauty of nature. She was not sure what offended her most about her daughter's "ambience": "[p]erhaps it's your weight, perhaps it's the cropping of your beautiful hair, or pushing down your breasts....the muscles unsupported [by a brassiere] will make them sag more and more." Whatever it was, this mother insisted her objection had nothing to do with "fashion magazines" or "social habits" but instead "deep *self-respect*.....If Lesbianism is a celebration of womanhood, celebrate it!"[61]

Mrs. House's objections perhaps reflect the prominence and importance that physical beauty held for the mothers of the baby boom generation, as though not to cultivate beauty would be to curtail one's life opportunities. In the midst of feminist and lesbian feminist revisions to women's appearances during this period, social and literary critic Diana Trilling claimed that women of her generation, who came of age in the 1930s, had been made to think that "you had to conform to some impossible standard of advertising beauty in order to be in the running at all" for a sexual relationship. She noted

that it was "wonderful…for us to be living in a period in which Dostoevski's statement that there was no such thing as an ugly woman was at last coming true."[62]

Penny House, however, might have been attempting to explore new possibilities for personhood and femininity by assuming a style and a body type that were in fact specifically intended to avert the male gaze, a strategy within white, middle class lesbian feminist communities during this time period in particular.[63] At the very moment that this daughter thought she was being particularly honest, and uncovering a truer self, or at least a truer embodied experience, than what her "birthright" allowed, her mother in some sense accused her of affectation.[64] The emphasis Mrs. House placed on her daughter's appearance and womanhood also suggests that lesbianism would not have been such a problem to her if it *had* involved a celebration of a more conventional femininity, including an emphasis on hair, body image, undergarments and beauty. In a powerful way, the daughters of this generation seemed to represent a fantasy self, or a more beautiful self, than their mothers. By discarding a maternal fantasy of femininity lesbian daughters appeared to be dashing parental hope.

For other mothers, this disavowal of femininity was a part of what they considered an affected rhetoric and public performance of the feminist movement more broadly. Like other intellectual women of her generation, Edith Lapidus often felt sympathetic with the intentions and some of the ideas of the feminist movement, but not so much its rhetoric and symbols.[65] In fact, Edith Lapidus was wary of any ideology or dogma, perhaps a generational sensibility that took shape for her during the disillusionment with ideology that many intellectuals experienced during the 1930s and 40s, in the wake of totalitarianism.[66] Independent minded and individualistic, she told her

daughter that it was "highly unlikely" that she would "get into any 'movement,'" feminist or otherwise.[67] In 1975, she wrote to her daughter to discuss a *New York Times* article that fretted that the "strident voices" within the women's movement were undermining efforts to pass the Equal Rights Amendment. Edith Lapidus affirmed that "[t]he reason I can't get myself to work with the women's movement is because of those 'strident voices'. Going without a bra when you need one, and letting the hair grow on your chin when it looks ugly, and speaking rudely/sharply when you want to make a statement, turn people like me off from active participation in a movement that I really believe can be important."[68]

This concern over appearance and comportment shaped how she viewed prominent figures within the feminist movement, as well. Upon attending a guest lecture at her university in 1975 by lesbian writer and anti-pornography activist Andrea Dworkin, Edith Lapidus confided that, had her daughter not insisted that her mother pay close attention to her ideas, she would have dismissed Dworkin as a "fat, outlandishly dressed young woman. She wore denim overalls--the kind you might look charming in with a size 7 or so--and a fluffy pink....blouse. Her hair was [a] long and careless 'Afro', as though she didn't give a hoot about appearance."[69] For this mother, appearance was certainly not a simple matter of vanity or an instance of the oppression of women; rather, it was an obligation, a kind of housekeeping. [70] This interpretation was at odds with her daughter's view of beautifying as social brainwashing. Jacqueline Lapidus even chastised her mother for succumbing to "self-devalutory notions" by wearing make-up to cover up her wrinkles for her university lectures. As she somewhat condescendingly told her, "You earned those wrinkles, honey."[71] To this suggestion her mother was indignant because

she saw "no reason why everyone should not try to look as well as they can. Who likes to be around shlumps?" She felt she had accepted herself as she was "but who needs wrinkles. If I can hide them, I do, and from myself as much as from the public."[72] Her justification mirrored Betty Friedan's exhortations to feminists within the movement, undoubtedly shaped by media representations that declared all feminists unattractive, to try to look as pretty as they can.[73] Friedan's reasons for this stance were both the public and private ones that Mrs. Lapidus had suggested: prettiness was not only good for women's public role but for self image.[74]

Even if their feminist daughters maintained a conventionally feminine or pretty appearance, anecdotal or cultural images of lesbian appearances could be troubling for mothers of this generation. In "My Daughter is Different", by a Long Island mother of a lesbian daughter confessed her assumptions about lesbians and their appearance in *Family Circle* in 1974. After Judith Ramsey realized her daughter was a lesbian, she reflected, "*Lesbian.* It was a frightening word to me.....I had a very stereotyped image of a lesbian; she was not only tough-looking, wearing mannish clothes and a 'butch' hairdo, but she was rough-acting and coarse." Yet, her daughter, Kim, was "none of those things."[75] Her daughter's first girlfriend, no less, was "slim, pretty, well-mannered, and extremely intelligent."[76] This impression of a lesbian, emphasising coarseness, seems to have been informed by class, in its evocation of a stereotypical tough, working-class bar dyke, quite different from the lesbian feminists who had self consciously cultivated a disregard for conventional standards of feminine beauty.[77] Mrs. Ramsey's eyeopeners about the diversity in lesbian appearances were related for their somewhat shocking human interest value, and perhaps also as a way of reaffirming her own femininity. While

"there are lesbians who are 'butch' types, there are also many, like Kim, who are highly feminine," she declared.[78]

Tensions about conventional beauty standards and femininity also surfaced between lesbian daughters and their fathers as well. Writer and dancer Donna Allegra was a young black teenager living in Brooklyn, when in 1968 the New York public school system started allowing girls to wear pants to school. She was only too pleased that now she could start wearing "dungarees, man-tailored shirts, loafers, [and] round-toed sneakers", a preppy style more likely to have been embraced by black lesbians than white lesbian feminists.[79] However, her father took her aside to exhort her to "adopt a more feminine appearance." She recalled her father saying "I fear you're taking on behaviors and attitudes that will stand in the way of having a healthy relationship with men." Allegra took this opportunity to confide that she was a lesbian. The talk did not go as well as she had hoped. Though he was not one to lose his temper, and she described him as wise and generally "liberal," he "showed no emotional presence that I can recall." However, she did remember that he argued for heterosexuality along the lines of "....a man has a penis, his hands and a mouth, so there can be no contest about who can satisfy a woman."[80] His evocation of heterosexual desire contrasted sharply to mothers' reasons for being heterosexual, which instead embraced aspects of womanhood often not directly related to the sexual realm, such as femininity and married life. This emphasis spoke to the relative insignificance of, or perhaps simply reticence about, the sexual in mother/daughter assessments of relationships.

Still, the lesbian rejection of male sexuality was an implicit rejection of men that seemed a personal slight to some fathers. Like Donna Allegra's father, Mr. Lapidus came

to feel that his daughter only expected and wanted intimacy from women, and that he was being shunned from the family. Given his daughter's "current orientation," he wrote, the "rapport that I thought existed between us" had gotten lost in her "absorption with the 'sisters', which includes mother by definition, [and] leaves no room for your old dad." Continuing in this third person vein, he regretted that "the best that you can say for him, apparently, [is] that he is not hostile to feminist ideas and can be classified as 'supportive' so he isn't as bad as most male chauvinists." Like his wife, Mr. Lapidus resented being categorized as part of a broad stream of feminist ideas which characterized men as oppressive and women as submissive. He hoped that the feeling of being in a "family unit" would eclipse these dogmatic ideas.[81] In her defence, Jacqueline Lapidus said that her newfound, somewhat exclusive relationship with her mother, in some ways "redress[ed]" an "old wrong" wherein her mother had felt "excluded from the special rapport you had with me for many years."[82] Lapidus did seek a greater affinity with her mother during these years, though she never lost her affection for her father. She was not separatist in her daily life, just as many lesbian feminists were not separatist in this sphere.[83]

Nonetheless, it was mothers who became more prevalent subjects and symbols within lesbian feminist writings. Lesbian writers and activists seemed to feel a deeper sense of ambivalence and even regret about the belittlement of their mothers and their domestic worlds so often evoked in gay liberation, and at times, their own depictions, perhaps because they appreciated the contradiction in embracing a love of women from which their own mothers were excluded. These contradictions and tensions about motherhood were lurking in the women's movement more broadly. Some critics have

suggested that matrophobia was a preoccupation of second wave feminists, particularly expressed in the fear of becoming one's mother.[84] Feminist critics such as Shulamith Firestone in *The Dialectic of Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution* (1970) disavowed biological motherhood altogether. On the other hand, Adrienne Rich extolled and celebrated motherhood, outside of patriarchy's constraints, in her work *Of Woman Born* (1976).

Lesbian feminists tended to embody these debates and contradictions about mothers and at times stood astride these two distinct sensibilities in their portraits. Lesbian feminist writers evoked an image of the 1950s as a benighted moment that paralleled broader feminist conceptions of the era. One arresting example is the feminist art installation project "Womanhouse." In 1972, under the direction of Judy Chicago, artists refurbished an abandoned mansion into a model of a 1950s suburban home, featuring a "Bridal Staircase" that led into a kitchen of never ending meals to be served, and a woman performance artist chanting in a monotone voice the words, "I am waiting....". She was waiting for many, ultimately unfulfilling, stages in a woman's life cycle, such as her body breaking down, and visits from distant, thankless children and grandchildren.[85] Lesbian feminists appeared to share this view of the relentlessness of nurturing tasks and life cycle stages of women's lives during the 1950s, perhaps shaped by Betty Friedan's positioning of women's selfhood in the labour market. As one of Betty Friedan's interview correspondents in *The Feminine Mystique* avowed, "I can take the real problems; it's the endless boring days that make me desperate."[86] This idea of the domestic sphere as a zone of isolation, compliance, boredom, and the careworn, was true for lesbians no less so than heterosexual women. In an article on lesbian culture in the

1950s appearing in the 1973 Boston lesbian periodical *Focus*, Kay Silk described the time period that her older lesbian sisters had to endure as a "bland and prissy time. The clothes and the social customs and interior decoration (beige on beige) were bad enough. Far worse was the public attitude: the repression of anything suspected of being 'different.'"[87] Strikingly, this era was depicted as a time most oppressive on account of the home, decoration tastes, and colours, as though these spilled into a general attitude.[88]

But many lesbian observers did not simply position themselves against an imagined heterosexual housewife and mother, as this perspective neglected any ambivalent or contradictory feelings on the part of these mothers.[89] Lesbian writers seemed marked by a desire to uncover the submerged longings and insights that they believed, or hoped, their mothers had cherished even amidst these perceived repressive and confining circumstances.

If mothers were limited in their understanding and their experiences, lesbian writers tended to view this as the fault of cultural pressures of the time period in which these mothers came of age, rather than their own incapacities or even complicity. In the poem "My Mother," that appeared in *Coming Out Rage* in 1973, Joy Scorpio suggests her mother's desire was to "gain their acceptance/by fitting into their definition of normal behavior." 'They' is an ambiguous though harmful entity: "They told her to be an innocent virgin/men worshipped her purity and competed/to be the first to possess her. Then they told her to be a sensuous woman/She had a thousand orgasms and faked the rest....". The assumption is that this mother never enjoyed her sexuality and simply played out a series of suffocating roles. The author encapsulates her mother's life by saying, "They told her to be a loving mother; nurture the man/be unselfishly concerned with his welfare."

Accelerating her life to old age, as if to show how empty all the years of her life were, Scorpio writes that "[w]hen she became old, she lifted up her sagging smile/and went out to sit in the sun/wondering about her strange daughter,/how they do it to each other without a man."[90] There is perhaps an irony in the mother figure in this poem not being able to understand her daughter's sexuality, when the lesbian daughter finds her mother's own sexuality somewhat incomprehensible as well, or at least fake and lackluster. Heterosexual sexuality seemed conflated here with the banalities of family nurturing.[91] In this idealized comparison to lesbian sex or even a lesbian way of being, lesbian writers saw a malaise and overriding disappointment when they imagined their mothers' sexuality, and perhaps a fracture between a duty-bound heterosexual love and an experimental lesbian love.

This somewhat disparaging portrait needs to be placed in a feminist, and in turn, a lesbian feminist context of anger during this period. Feminist and lesbian presses alike seemed to provide a theatre in which women's collective anger, against parents, men, and sexist society, could be expressed unfettered. In *Our Bodies, Ourselves*, the Boston Women's Health Collective perceived that the venting of this rage was perhaps essential to a woman's health and mental balance.[92] Even in the angriest lesbian feminist sources, a lesbian impetus to educate their mothers and uncover their brainwashing at the hands of misogynistic society surfaced. A coming out letter in this vein was published in a 1971 edition of Ann Arbor's *Spectre*, in the hope that it would "give some strength to revolutionary lesbians who read this."[93] Addressing her mother by her first name, and accusing her of treating her daughter "like a mindless rag-doll," this lesbian admitted to having tried to kill herself as a young teenager, and later entertaining some matricidal

fantasies. She acknowledged that all of "this might hurt for you to hear" but it was necessary because "then maybe you'll try to change just a little."[94] Published in the political forum of a revolutionary lesbian separatist magazine, this letter might not have been precisely the one sent to her mother, or a letter that was sent at all, and its anger might have been enhanced. With an air of condescending sympathy, she invited her mother to disavow her present life: "I really feel for....[what] you have to go through as a working woman, wife, mother.....obliterated by all the roles you have to fulfill."[95]

Another portrait appearing in a 1974 edition of Chicago's *Lavender Woman* did not simply sympathize with a mother's lot, but tried to demonstrate some feminist potentials and possibilities for her life. This cartoon showed "Agnes Molasses: a Mama" as a colour and paste doll with bouffant hair, a girdle, and high heel shoes. Beside her are several colour and cut outfits and accessories: one displaying a hippy style "peace" sign jacket, a shirt that said "55 & Proud Woman" and some accessories such as a 'Do It Yourself Kit' and wrench. These outfits seem to be juxtaposed against the more traditional outfits that a woman of this generation might have worn, such as a conventional dress, as well as a bouquet of flowers and a baking rolling pin for accessories.[96] [Figure 12] Just as lesbian daughters could modify or recast femininity and womanhood by altering their own clothes and tastes, mothers were conceived as having the potential to do the same.

There was, then, a feeling among lesbians that lesbians and their mothers could come to understand each other or at least have some common ground. Lesbian activists in New York City for example started sponsoring panels entitled "Mothers of Lesbians" in 1973, an event that was written up in New York's *Gay Activist* as "Blessed Be The

Mothers of Lesbian Nation."[97] A woman writing in the *Lesbian Connection* in 1978 wrote of her desire to share with her mother her newfound lesbian feminist realizations, thinking her mother could appreciate them, too. In "How Do You Judge Me", "Ava" donated to this periodical a copy of a letter she had written to her mother who had been "very freaked out" when her daughter confided she was a lesbian. In the letter, she emphasised to her mother that she was having "trouble understanding why you're so repulsed," as lesbian relationships, according to this woman, had "no power struggles." Further, "there is so much of my life I'd like to share with you--healing circles, festivals, music, magic, political work." Finally, she expressed her desire to "share our dreams and respect each other's differences."[98]

In fact, this lesbian fantasy of motherly empathy was a fundamental aspect of lesbian feminist culture. Lesbian daughters commonly did not give up on their mothers, but longed for mutual revelations. Indeed, lesbian feminism as a political and cultural movement could be taken as a movement of the revolutionary potential of personal honesty and soul bearing.

Under scrutiny here was the quotidian quality of familial relationships: many lesbian feminist writers pushed for something more emotionally satisfying. In her poem "family dinner" in a 1977 issue of *Focus*, Jo-Ellen Yale conveyed a bland family conversation, with her momentous personal revelation trying to break through the banality. She described the conversation through a stream of consciousness technique in her poem: "isn't this weather just/awful/you look well tonight, dear/i'm gay.....pass the butter, dear/i'm gay/mary and john are having/problems/are you seeing, anyone, dear/i'm gay/we're glad you're so happy."[99] The weather as a symbol for the utter poverty of

emotional communication in families was a more far-reaching theme in these evocations of family life. In a similar piece, "Coming Out: Sooner or Later," appearing in New York City's *Lesbian Feminist* in 1976, Susan MacDonald wrote of a colossally boring family dinner in which her mother talked about the weather and her father mentioned that he was worried about being laid off from work. She did not choose that moment to come out to them, but fretted later that perhaps she used his impending lay-off as "yet another excuse." On the bus back to her home, she had the sinking feeling that nothing was said, "nothing shared."[100]

Self-expression and revelations were not just perceived as crucial elements of family talk, but also were a most central element within lesbian personal and fictional writings. In fact, many canonized North American women fiction writers in this period were, in a parallel way, evoking women's coming of age experiences in day to day settings, perhaps to illuminate the experiential, biological, and psychological differences between men and women.[101] Adrienne Rich, too, has spoken of the profound shift that occurred for her when she started, in her poetry, to use the pronoun "I" rather than the pronoun "she," as her writing then became less dependent upon allusion.[102] In coming out through writing for a public audience, lesbian feminists also sought to make a radical statement with this "I".

But lesbians who did so in public contexts faced an extra set of tensions with their parents. Some writers, like Jacqueline Lapidus, used a fictional form and metaphor to convey deeply personal "true" experiences. Her fiction seemed an extension of the kinds of conversations she was having--or wished that she could have--with her mother. Edith Lapidus had her own, and very distinct, set of ideas about what constituted fictional

writing, however. At the moment that Mrs. Lapidus mentioned she was re-reading *Buddenbrooks* by Thomas Mann, a novel of social realism that captured nineteenth century German bourgeois society, her daughter was urging her mother to read Kate Millett's *Flying*. This was an autobiographical work that Millett had published in the wake of the public controversy surrounding her coming out as a lesbian during the promotion of her most renowned work, *Sexual Politics*, in 1970; Millett herself had received censure for her open lesbianism, and her own mother had been upset with her.[103] *Flying* provided a forum through which Lapidus and her mother first broached the issues of privacy within the arena of writing and, more implicitly, the presentation of the self.

After reading *Flying*, Mrs. Lapidus declared that "the real reason it is so popular is not that it is so good, but that it relates such personal experiences so openly. And so many 4 letter words! People just don't seem to be able to resist that." She then pronounced Kate Millett "one of those who wants instant gratification."[104] She even included a short, point form, book report, entitled, *K. Millett: Flying*. "Revelation?" Mrs. Lapidus asked, "More like indecent exposure." She noted: "Forever smoking pot, even on the bookjacket. And forever f---ing." If these graphic aspects of the book were not enough, she also objected to the writing style of this self-proclaimed "notebook," which she found to be more a "helter-skelter diary." She noted that the author herself asked, "who will ever want to read this book, this collection of the clutter in my mind." On this point, Mrs. Lapidus agreed with Millett: "That's what it is....clutter in her mind." She also noted that the author called her book a 'record'. "So everything that happens to her has to go in.....even stuff about her friends, even if she thinks she may lose them by putting

them in a book. WHY DOES EVERYTHING THAT HAPPENS TO HER have to be written. Who cares? She just wants to be a writer."[105]

In the wake of the discussion about this book, Edith Lapidus told a story which she hoped would illustrate generational differences regarding privacy to her daughter. She then revealed that a relative had asked "Grandma when she married Henry whether they had 'sex' [beforehand].....Grandma told her promptly to mind her own business. That's how that generation....settled the matter, and the daughters appreciated it." But "the trouble with this present generation," she said, "is that they think sex is everyone's business.....theirs and yours."[106] Her mother appeared to find this curiosity and openness to be simply brazen. Perhaps her indignation was fueled by a different conception of hierarchy between the generations: she evoked a time when there was more formality between young people and older adults and when personal matters were more appropriately the province of peer interactions. Yet there also seems to be a firm stance here that her daughter, in breaking down the boundaries surrounding the personal, had failed to distinguish between secrets that gnawed away at their keepers--as keeping sexuality a secret might have--and secrets that individuals chose to keep. Mrs. Lapidus located this need to uncover and reveal in the general feminist writing culture, but also would see it in the way that she communicated with her daughter, and in her daughter's own writing.

In 1975, Edith Lapidus received a copy of a lesbian literary periodical, *Amazon Quarterly*, featuring her daughter's poem, "Coming Out":

Coming Out
the first person I loved
was a woman my passion
for her lasted thirty years
and was not returned
she never let me suck her nipples
she kept secrets between her legs
she told me men would love me
for myself she couldn't tell me
ways to love myself
she didn't know

I would like to help you
Mother, swim back against the foaming river
to the source of our incestuous fears
but you're so tired
out beyond the breakers
and I am upstream among my sisters
spawning[107]

Writing her daughter a response to this poem, Mrs. Lapidus praised her for writing a "very good poem" that was placed first in the magazine's order, "before Adrienne Rich who seems to be making off with all the prizes."[108] However, she objected to the line that referred to the "secrets between her legs." "Hasn't it been overdone?" she asked her daughter, "I know that it is common nowadays to call a spade a spade, but in a poem one can be descriptive metaphorically, whimsically, or some other pleasanter way than plain English." Thus one of her concerns was simply the poem's blunt expression of the personal, reflective of a more precisely defined aesthetic assessment of writing. Subtlety and intrigue were essential to her ideas of even semi-autobiographical fiction. Letting it all hang loose in this way simply seemed to be dispensing with art or beauty altogether. Edith Lapidus in part chalked up this disparity in their feelings about personal writing to the different kinds of people she and her daughter were: "I am a private person with no

great need for confidences and revelations about myself."[109] Finally, she perceived a disparity between the old and the young in talking about sexual and bodily matters: "There has been a sexual revolution, and it hasn't been easy on parents brought up in another day."[110]

But this poem also illuminates different judgments about the elements that make up familial love. Edith Lapidus noted this too and objected to the depiction of her own reticence. She could not countenance the idea that "I withheld love in any way. True you weren't breast fed, but....bottles were the big thing anyway." She realized that her daughter "didn't mean it in a literal sense but it really doesn't fit me or the mother I was. I can't imagine anyone loving their first child more."[111] This mother's conception of love included other forms of intimacy, such as practical and physical care, and a recognition of a mother's time and bodily sacrifice.

But Jacqueline Lapidus felt that her mother's response to the poem suggested a fear of closeness between them. Lapidus clarified to her mother that the "Coming Out" poem was about love, shaped by all lesbians'--and everyone else's--first love of their mothers, a notion perhaps inspired by a broader lesbian feminist cultural reclamation of primal images of mothers as well as feminist re-readings of familial relationships.[112] During this period, psychologists such as Nancy Chodorow had re-evaluated the pre-Oedipal period, arguing that children are not, as Freud thought, originally bisexual, but instead gynesexual or matrisexual.[113] The childhood experience of being cared for by only one sex had far-reaching implications for human psychology, and as adults, women in particular sought ways to recreate this mother-daughter bond.[114] This primal bond of intimacy and oneness between mother and daughter, and the notion of a delicate ego

boundary between mother and daughter, were themes that dovetailed nicely with these lesbian feminist ideas. Jacqueline Lapidus could not help but feel that her mother had been holding back love to her daughter, "because of some secret fear." She was sorry that when she was growing up her mother "couldn't share my delight in the discovery of sex, nor talk about your own sex life by way of helping me learn to live mine. I always regretted that." She then asserted what seemed to be a guiding belief regarding the ways that she conducted her personal relationships: "Women need to talk to other women, and a daughter needs to learn from her mother's experience."[115]

Yet, there was sometimes a contradiction displayed in the desire for intimacy that mothers themselves likewise requested of their lesbian daughters. This contradiction was wittily captured in a 1974 cartoon appearing in the *Gay Community News* entitled "Mommy." Here a hippy looking daughter with mammoth bell bottoms, says, "Hi, Mom, Guess what? I'm gay!" The mother says, "You are? How come you never said anything before? That's the trouble with you! You're so secretive, you keep everything in. There's no communication between us!" The mother pauses and says, "Don't tell your father!"[116] [Figure 13] Despite her own exhortations to keep the personal private, Edith Lapidus ultimately praised her daughter for the intensity they shared. In contrast, Edith Lapidus felt somewhat cut off from her other daughter. As Mrs. Lapidus described Jacqueline's sister: "she always brushed me aside--she was writing 'things', taking courses in 'things', doing 'things'. She was never very communicative."[117] However, she praised Jacqueline for her efforts in thoughtfully describing her life choices: "what an essayist you are! [Your sister] would never take the trouble to explain herself to us the way you did."[118] In turn, her daughter always appeared affectionate towards her mother even amidst their

disagreements over the "Coming Out" poem. She loved the very fact that her mother was "willing to go at the issue of *Amazon Quarterly* with an open mind and a reasonable degree of interest."[119]

One way of thinking about these sources, then, is to explore the inherent closeness between parent and daughter, in simply being able to write about and debate personal matters. Mothers and daughters themselves took note of this idea. In a collection of lesbian personal stories, one mother wrote that she struggled to come to terms with her lesbian daughter but felt that she knew her better after the revelation. At first it was difficult for "Mrs. O'Keefe" because she "didn't know what to say" to her daughter: "I wanted to say something, but I wanted it to be the right thing."[120] However, she took heart in the thought that "neither one of my kids is perfect [and] they've never had to go around the corner and hide things from me." In this respect, "it pleases me immensely they feel enough confidence in my love that they can tell me." This stood in contrast to "a lot of parents" she knew "who know nothing about what their kids do."[121] Susan MacDonald's mother--the mother of the lesbian whose family talked about weather and her father's imperiled job at the supper table--also gave a positive, almost envious response to her daughter, urging her to tell her more about being a lesbian.[122] "Please Susan, feel free to talk to me," her mother wrote, "I've read a lot about it and I think you're better off than most couples that are bickering all the time like Daddy and me. When we see each other again we'll have a long talk."[123] Perhaps this sentiment reveals most centrally this mother's idealization of the way that women relate to each other, unlike women and men, and her disappointment with her own marriage. Yet she did appear delighted and somewhat intrigued by the more intimate relationship she and her

daughter seemed to be developing, and more able to say what she felt was wanting with her own life. It was as if, once the taboo of lesbianism had been broken, then a host of other intimate topics could be broached, too.

Similarly, Mrs. Ramsey, the woman who wrote about her pretty lesbian daughter in *Family Circle*, came to appreciate a sense of intimacy with her daughter that she felt she had not known with her husband. Her daughter had only revealed her sexuality after her mother had found some suspicious literature while dusting her bedroom one day. Yet Mrs. Ramsey relished the close conversations that this discovery had brought about. [124] While she had married a "responsible husband", she owned that living with him was "a little like having a taciturn houseguest around. Even after 27 years of marriage, I still don't know what he is really thinking."[125] But she shared at least some of his reticence, for up to this point she had never really talked much about intimate matters with her daughter, Kim. She called Kim's sex life a "delicate matter" and had been worried primarily that her daughter would have sex too early with a young man. She owned that she "bowed out by not discussing sexual matters very much with her"; in turn, her daughter "certainly didn't confide in me."[126] After her daughter had come out to her, Mrs. Ramsey could no longer abide this reticence. She went to a counselor to talk about Kim's childhood and her lesbianism, but in so doing reviewed her marriage and her "entire past." The counsellor finally advised her that she seemed to have "no sense of my own identity as a woman separate from my relationships with my husband and children." As he told her firmly: "Stop brooding about your daughter....and face up to the facts of your own life." Mrs. Ramsey then joined a "consciousness raising group", mostly with other housewives, who met once per week to discuss their common problems and exchange

experiences. Feeling more confident, she got a job for the first time, as a secretary in a large company. Her relationship with her daughter was much improved because "we know each other better, respect each other more."[127]

Though the *Family Circle* article reads as a mother/daughter success story, perhaps fitting the magazine's tone of both family voyeurism and celebration, this response to shattered family perceptions that could potentially shift to an exuberant new family closeness suggests an emerging need for parents to know their children, even in their aberrations. Lesbianism was, no doubt, contested terrain between daughters and their parents, especially between mother and daughter. The revelations were often anxious and uneasy. But as a movement, lesbian feminism was perhaps more pertinent to the family relationship than gay liberation, in that it was more explicitly about intimacy between women. Thus, the mother/daughter relationship was inherently a part of it. The lesbian feminist call for closeness between parent and child was perhaps premature and fraught, even for those parents who were willing to discuss sexual preference at all. Yet it also seemed to enkindle a desire for greater intimacy with gay children, perhaps a broader desire than many lesbian feminists ever appreciated, one that would be responded to in a movement of the parents' own.

[1] On sexism in the gay male movement, see again Marotta, The Politics of Homosexuality, 234, 239. Marotta mentions the somewhat transient attempts to form specific women-only groups within Gay Liberation such as the Gay Women's Liberation Front, a group of 12 women led by Deni Corello in 1971-72. See page 275. See also Clendinen and Nagourney, Out for Good, 85 ff. In the Canadian context, where the rancor between lesbians and gay men was often less severe, see Gillean Chase, "Gay Pride? Week" in the Montreal lesbian periodical, *Long Time Coming* 2, no. 2 (December 1974). For a more vehement portrait in the American context see Nancy Tucker, "F--- You, 'Brothers'! or Yet Another Woman Leaves the Gay Liberation Movement," *The Ladder* 15, no. 11 and 12 (August/September, 1971): 52 and 53. See endnote 3 for conflicts with the heterosexual women's liberation movement.

[2] See Charlotte Bunch, "What Every Lesbian Should Know," in *The Furies*, a Washington lesbian collective, (January, 1972): 40. See Radicalesbians in "The Woman-Identified Woman" in Karla Jay and Allen Young, Out of the Closets: Voices of Gay and Lesbian Liberation (New York: Quick Fox, 1972), 156. For another critique in this vein see Rita Mae Brown, "The Shape of Things to Come" in Nancy Myron and Charlotte Bunch, eds. Lesbianism and the Women's Movement (Baltimore: Diana Press, 1975), 70-73.

[3] On the lesbian feminist rejection of butch-fem relationships, see Lillian Faderman, Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers: A History of Lesbian Life in Twentieth Century America (New York: Penguin, 1991), 210.

[4] Katherine Arnup, "Lesbian Feminist Theory," *Resources for Feminist Research* 12, no. 1 (March, 1983): 53 and 54.

[5] By the beginning of the 1970s, hundreds of women's groups existed within American and Canadian major cities. On the altercations between heterosexual and lesbian women within American women's liberation groups, see Dana Heller, Cross Purposes: Lesbians, Feminists, and the Limits of Alliance (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997) and Nancy Myron and Charlotte Bunch, Lesbianism and the Women's Movement (Baltimore: Diana Press, 1975). See also D'Emilio and Freedman, Intimate Matters, 316. Finally, see Charlotte Bunch's essay, originally published in 1975, "Not For Lesbians Only," 174-181 in Passionate Politics: Feminist Theory in Action, 1968-1986 (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987). For the Canadian context, see Nancy Adamson et al., Feminists Organizing for Change: The Contemporary Women's Movement in Canada (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1988), 116 and Naomi Black, "The Second Wave" in Sandra Burt et al., eds., Changing Patterns: Women in Canada (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1993), 151-175. Again, these debates were not as acrimonious as they were in the United States.

[6] See Charlotte Bunch, "Going Public With Our Vision," in Passionate Politics: Feminist Theory in Action, 1968-1986 (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987), 65 (61-78).

[7] On the institution of heterosexuality, see Margaret Cruikshank, The Gay and Lesbian Liberation Movement (New York: Routledge, 1992), 146-152.

[8] For a collection covering a range of these concerns, see the Women's Liberation anthology, The New Woman: A Motive Anthology on Women's Liberation (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1970).

[9] Verta Taylor and Leila Rupp, "Women's Culture and Lesbian Feminist Activism: A Reconsideration of Cultural Feminism," *Signs* 19, no. 1 (Autumn 1993): 37. (32-61). See also Shane Phelan, Identity Politics: Lesbian Feminism and the Limits of Community (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989), 43.

[10] On lesbians and cultural feminism, see again Faderman, Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers, 248-249.

[11]Alice Echols, in Daring to be Bad: Radical Feminism in America, 1967-75 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989) placed lesbian feminists within the traditions of both radical and cultural feminism. On lesbian separatism, see, for example, Charlotte Bunch, "Learning from Lesbian Separatism" in Karla Jay and Allen Young, eds. Lavender Culture (New York: A Jove/HBJ Book, 1978) 435; for a thorough analysis of the notion of separatism, see Jill Johnston's Lesbian Nation (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1973). See also Lisa Ransdell, "Lesbian Feminism and the Feminist Movement," 641-53 in Jo Freeman, ed. Women: A Feminist Perspective (Mountain View, CA: Mayfield Publishing, 1995), 648. And finally see Bonnie Zimmerman, The Safe Sea of Women: Lesbian Fiction, 1969-1989 (Boston: Beacon Press, 1990), 119 ff. Tom Warner has noted that the concept of lesbian feminist separatism did not really take root in Canada. See Never Going Back: A History of Queer Activism in Canada (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 178.

[12] See Arlene Stein, Sex and Sensibility: Stories of a Lesbian Generation (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997). See also Janice Raymond, A Passion for Friends (Boston: Beacon Press, 1986). On romantic friendships, see Faderman, Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers, 11 ff. I should note that the extent to which these friendships actually engaged in sexual relations is disputed. See for example Martha Vicinus, "They Wonder to Which Sex I Belong: The Historical Roots of the Modern Lesbian Identity," *Feminist Studies* 18, no. 3 (Fall 1992): 467-498.

[13] See Adrienne Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence," in Blood, Bread, and Poetry: Selected Prose 1979-1985 (New York: W.W. Norton, 1986), 23-75. This essay was first published in 1980.

[14] On this, see Robert Castel, Francoise Castel, and Anne Lovell, The Psychiatric Society, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 234; and Jane Gerhard, Desiring Revolution: Second Wave Feminism and the Rewriting of American Sexual Thought, 1920 to 1982 (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 15, 30, 51, and 69. Also, on the attribution of narcissism to lesbians, see Barbara Creed, "Lesbian Bodies: Tribades, Tomboys, and Tarts," 86-103 in Liz Grosz and Elspeth Probyn, eds. Sexy Bodies: The Strange Carnalities of Feminism (New York: Routledge, 1995), 98-101. For broader feminist revisions of male dominated psychiatry during this period, see Phyllis Chesler, "Patient and Patriarch: Women in the Psychotherapeutic Relationship," 251-276 in Vivian Gornick and Barbara Moran, eds., Woman in Sexist Society (New York: Basic Books, 1971).

[15] Freud felt that puberty was the time that women began the growing up task of transforming their sexuality from clitoral to vaginal sexuality. See again Freud, Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality, 73-87. For a Freudian revision, see Juliet Mitchell, Psychoanalysis and Feminism (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin, 1975), 108. For more commentary on the maturity culture and clitoral sexuality, see again, Ehrenreich, The Hearts of Men, 23.

[16] On Masters and Johnson, see Roger Lewis, Outlaws of America: The Underground Press and its Context: Notes on a Cultural Revolution (Harmondsworth, England: Cox and Wyman, 1972), 39; their 1966 work, Human Sexual Response (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1966); and Koedt's "Myth of the Vaginal Orgasm," in Ellen Levine and Anita Rapone, eds., Radical Feminism (New York: Quadrangle Books, 1973), 198-207. See also Boston Women's Health Collective, Our Bodies, Ourselves: A Book by and for Women (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1971), 45. On this collection's popularity, see Kathleen C. Berkeley, The Women's Liberation Movement in America (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1999), 63.

[17] On this oft-repeated slogan "Feminism is the theory, lesbianism is the practice," attributed to singer Ti-Grace Atkinson, see again, Taylor and Rupp, "Women's Culture and Lesbian Feminist Activism: A Reconsideration of Cultural Feminism."

[18] This was of course not the sole genre to convey coming out stories. Alan Sinfield notes that lesbian theatre during the 1970s was galvanized by the drama of the coming out story, including theatre groups such as The Lavender Cellar in Minneapolis. See Out on Stage: Lesbian and Gay Theatre in the Twentieth Century (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999), 308.

[19] See Lee Badgett, Money, Myths, and Change: the Economic Lives of Lesbians and Gay Men (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 108.

[20] For rich details on lesbian feminist periodicals, including their production and circulation outputs, see again Streitmatter, Unspeakable, 160 ff., and see also Lynne D. Shapiro, Write On, Woman! A Writer's Guide to U.S. Women's/Feminist/Lesbian/Alternate Press Periodicals (New York: Lynne D. Shapiro, 1978), 14-16. Small autonomous feminist newspapers in Quebec in particular were to spawn some of the most famous lesbian writers of the contemporary period, such as Nicole Brossard. On this, see Alison Prentice et al., Canadian Women: A History (Toronto: Harcourt and Brace, 1996), 389.

[21] For a discussion on the outpouring of women's creativity in the seventies, see Gayle Kimball, ed. Women's Culture: The Women's Renaissance of the Seventies (Metuchen, NJ: The Scarecrow Press, 1981). Self writing had gained some broader credence during the 1970s. As Marlene Schiwy points out, this decade saw the publication of Anais Nin's *Diary*, as well as the introduction of Journal Workshops at universities offered by psychologist Ira Progoff, among others. See Marlene A. Schiwy, A Voice of Her Own: Women and the Journal Writing Journey (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1994), 20.

[22] See Ellen Lewin, Inventing Lesbian Cultures in America (Boston: Beacon, 1996), 6.

[23] See, for example, East Lansing's *Lesbian Connection* (May 1976): 9; Ann Arbor's *Leaping Lesbian* 2, no. 2 (February, 1978): "Dear Mother", 7 and 8; *Leaping Lesbian* 2, no. 3 (March/April 1978): 27 and 28; California's *Lesbian Voices* 1, no. 4 (September, 1975): 16-17; Chicago's *Lavender Woman* 1, no. 3 (May 1972): 4.

[24] *Dyke* 3 (1976) gave responses to the coming out letters of the previous issue; this response is on page 7, "Mother Letters."

[25] This periodical was produced by five lesbian women, and contained much lesbian content, although it was more broadly defined as a feminist periodical. See Nancy Adamson et al., Feminists Organizing for Change: The Contemporary Women's Movement in Canada (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1988), 116. *The Other Woman*'s run was between 1972 and 1977.

[26] *The Other Woman* 3, no. 1 (Aug. 1974): 8.

[27] On Parsons, see Lynn Jamieson, Intimacy: Personal Relationships in Modern Societies (Malden, MA: Blackwell's, 1998), 3--47 ff.

[28] *The Other Woman*, 3, no. 1, p. 8.

[29] On sexual exploitation within the New Left, see the Montreal lesbian periodical, *Long Time Coming* 2, no. 3 (January, 1975): 35, article with no name by "marychild." Piercey's Small Changes (New York: Doubleday, 1973), depicts several male characters who fit this contradictory image. See also Vivian Estellachild, "Hippie Communes" in Joann S. DeLora and Jack R. DeLora, Intimate Lifestyles: Marriage and its Alternatives (Pacific Pallisades, CA: Goodyear Publishing, 1972), 333 (p. 332-337), an article that characterizes two kinds of men favouring the hippy alternative: "Bill C. Ph.D." who was "too good to work with his hands" but not too good to "f-- everything that moves" and "Jim C. Variety," a "macho alcoholic" who sired lots of children but "will never be a father." Similar examples are described in Alice Echols' Daring to be Bad: Radical Feminism in America 1967-75. See for example, p. 31. For a more detailed treatment of how women were treated in American New Left Movements such as the SNCC and SDS, see Sara Evans, Personal Politics: The Roots of Women's Liberation in the Civil Rights Movement and the New Left (New York: Vintage Books, 1979) and her more recent Tidal Wave: How Women Changed America at Century's End (New York: Free Press, 2003). See also Rebecca Klatch's interviews in A Generation Divided: the New Left, the New Right and the 1960s (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999), 167 ff. Finally, see D'Emilio and Freedman, Intimate Matters, 311.

[30] Jane Alpert, a former SDSer and Weatherman member, was one such woman who tried out lesbianism after she became more feminist in orientation, and had reflected upon the male exploitation in the movements. See Jane Alpert, Growing Up Underground (New York: Morrow, 1981).

[31] Audre Lorde, Zami: A New Spelling of my Name (Freedom, CA: The Crossing Press, 1982), 225.

[32] "Consciousness Raising" allowed women to reinterpret some of the institutions of womanhood. On lesbians and consciousness raising, see "Lesbians and the Health Care System" by the Radicalesbians Health Collective, 1971 and "A Guide to Consciousness Raising," *Lesbian Feminist* (August, 1976): 3. For a more general look at women's consciousness raising, see *Ms.* (July 1972): p. 18, 22, 23; and see Margaret Elias, "Sisterhood Therapy" in *Human Behavior* (April 1975): 31-36. Finally, see Charlotte Bunch, "A Broom of One's Own" , P. 27-46 in Passionate Politics: Feminist Theory in Action: 1968-1986, P. 30 (this essay was originally published in 1970).

[33] Lesbian Herstory Archives, Jacqueline Lapidus, 81-04, December 17, 1975, Letter, "Dearest Jax," p. 1.

[34] On the idea of lesbian sex being gentle and unexploitive, see Bonnie Zimmerman, The Safe Sea of Women: Lesbian Fiction, 1969-89 (Boston: Beacon, 1990), 97. On the idea of lesbianism as an immature life stage experiment, see Christina Simmons, "Companionate Marriage and the Lesbian Threat," 183-194 in Kathryn Kish Sklar and Thomas Dublin, eds. Women and Power in American History: A Reader Vol. 2 (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1991), 188.

[35] Jacqueline Lapidus, 81-04, Letter "Dearest Jax", April 11, 1975, p. 1.

[36] For Freudian thought on homosexuality as a life stage, see again, Freud, Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality, 140.

[37] Jacqueline Lapidus, 81-04, Letter, "Dear Jackie", Nov. 1, 1975, p. 1.

[38] On the lack of affluence before the post war period and the attitudes it engrained, see Dominick Cavallo, A Fiction of the Past: The Sixties in American History (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), 5.

[39] Jacqueline Lapidus, 81-04, Letter "Dearest Mom" November 12, 1975, p. 1.

[40] Jacqueline Lapidus, 81-04, Letter "Dearest Jax", Dec. 1, 1975, p. 1 (of 3).

[41] Jacqueline Lapidus, 81-04, Letter "Dear Mom & Dad", February 26, 1976, p. 1.

[42] On this, see Amy Gottlieb, "Mothers, Sisters, Lovers, Listen" in Maureen Fitzgerald et al, ed.s, Still Ain't Satisfied: Canadian Feminism Today (Toronto: Women's Press, 1982), 235 (234-243) and Barbara Greir and Coletta Ried, eds. Lesbian Lives: Biographies of Women from *The Ladder* (Baltimore: Diana Press, 1976), which portrays the lesbian lives of famous couples, novelists, artists, poets, and other prominent figures, who were not widely known to be lesbian.

[43] I am not only thinking of Rich's writing on the lesbian continuum here, which emphasises the emotional experience of lesbianism first and foremost, but lesbian historiography such as, again, Rosenberg, "The Female World of Love and Ritual."

[44] Jacqueline Lapidus, 81-04, Letter "Dearest Mom," November 12, 1975, p. 3.

[45] On the blurring distinction between art and life in the art movements of the 1960s, see Daniel Bell, The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism (New York: Basic Books, 1976), 125.

[46] Martha Nussbaum, Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 25.

[47] Lesbian Herstory Archives, Serial # 79-7, Julie Lee, Letter from "Candy," October 8, 1973, p. 2.

[48] Ibid., 4.

[49] Ibid., 5.

[50] Nancy Garden, Annie on My Mind (New York: Farrar Straus and Giroux, 1982), 187.

[51] Ibid., 188.

[52] See "The Homosexuals," 1967, produced for CBS News, narrated by Mike Wallace.

[53] See the description of this article (published in January 26, 1971) in Clendinen and Nagourney, Out for Good, 70.

[54] Lesbian Herstory Archives, 79-7, Julie Lee, Letter from "Jan," February 10, 1973.

[55] Lesbian Herstory Archives, 79-7, Julie Lee, Letter from "Jane," January 5, 1974, p. 3.

[56] Judith Katz, "Born Queer," 117-135 in Joan Larkin, ed., A Woman Like That: Lesbian and Bisexual Writers Tell Their Coming Out Stories (New York: Perennial, 2000), 129.

[57] Ibid., 131.

[58] On this, see Deborah Goleman Wolf, The Lesbian Community (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), 85. On butch/fem articulations and rejections during this period, see Joan Nestle, "The Femme Question," in The Persistent Desire: A Butch-Fem Reader (Boston: Allyson, 1992), 64 ff. It should be noted that at times this unisexual look seemed to overlap with a butch look, including shorter hair, jeans, work boots, plaid shirts.

[59] For details on *Dyke*, see again, Streitmatter, Unspeakable, 162.

[60] Penny House, "Letters from My Mother," *Dyke* (Spring 1976): 23 (21-23). John Money had gained some notoriety throughout the later 1960s and 1970s for publishing accounts of his successful sex realignment surgeries, most notoriously in the *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, in the "Joan/John case" of 1966 where he felt he had successfully changed a young boy from Winnipeg, Manitoba, Bruce Reimer, into "Brenda." On this case, see John Colapinto, As Nature Made Him: The Boy Who Was Raised as a Girl (Toronto: Harper Collins, 2000).

[61] Penny House, Ibid., 23.

[62] Diana Trilling's interview with a Student at Harvard, in We Must March, My Darlings, p. 251-271. This interview was first published in 1971-72.

[63] On this, see Susan Brownmiller, Femininity (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984), and on 1970s lesbians more specifically see Becki Ross, The House That Jill Built: a Lesbian Nation in Formation (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995). See also Deborah Goleman Wolf, The Lesbian Community (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), 85. On the popularization of the notion of "the male gaze" during this period, and feminist art that rejected it, see Erika Doss, Twentieth Century American Art (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 184 ff.

[64] On feminist interpretations of biology during the 1970s, see Nelly Oudshoorn, "On Bodies, Technologies, and Feminisms," in Angela Creager et al. eds. Feminism in Twentieth Century Science, Technology and Medicine (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 199-213.

[65] See Thomas Edwards' discussion of Diana Trilling, a woman who exemplified this viewpoint in Over Here: Criticizing America, 1968-89 (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1991), 92. And see Diana Trilling, "The Prisoner of Sex," 199-210, in We Must March, My Darlings. This essay was published in 1971. On the appearance revisions of women's liberation, see the entry on Women's Liberation in Mari-Jo Buhle, et al., ed. The Encyclopedia of the American Left, for a description of the 1968 protest against Miss America in Atlantic City and the feminist "freedom trashcan," 838 (836-838).

[66] On this generational perception, see Neil Jumonville, Critical Crossings: The New York Intellectuals in Postwar America (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991). See also Nina Roth, "The Neoconservative Backlash vs. Feminism in the 1970s and 1980s: The Case of *Commentary*," p. 83-99 in David E. Nye and Carl Pedersen, Consumption and American Culture (Amsterdam: VU University Press, 1991). Finally, see George H. Nash, The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America Since 1945 (Wilmington, DE: Intercollegiate Studies Institute, 1998).

[67] Jacqueline Lapidus, 81-04, Letter "Dearest Jax," December 1, 1975, p. 3.

[68] Jacqueline Lapidus, 81-04, Letter "Dearest Jackie," November 10, 1975.

[69] Jacqueline Lapidus, 81-04, Letter "Dearest Jax," April 1975, p. 3.

[70] On feminists accusing fellow women of vanity, see, for example, Nancy Friday, My Mother/My Self (New York: Delacorte Press, 1977), 19.

[71] Jacqueline Lapidus, 81-04, Letter "Dear Mom and Dad," December 2, 1974, p. 2.

[72] Jacqueline Lapidus, 81-04, Letter, "Dearest Jax," December 11, 1974, p. 2.

[73] On this, see again, Patterson, Grand Expectations, 311.

[74] On this, see Peter N. Carroll, It Seemed Like Nothing Happened: The Tragedy and Promise of America in the 1970s (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1982), 36 and 273.

[75] Judith Ramsey, "My Daughter is Different," *Family Circle* 11 (1974): 82 (p. 14, 16, 82, 89, 90).

[76] Ibid., 16.

[77] For a discussion of working-class alienation from lesbian feminism, see Esther Newton's collection of essays and personal reflections, Margaret Mead Made Me Gay: Personal Essays, Public Ideas (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2000), 205 ff.; Newton, who considered herself a butch "bar dyke," felt that most middle-class put downs of butches and femmes amounted to class stereotypes and prejudice. On this, see also Kate Brandt's interview with Dorothy Allison, "Telling Tales, Telling Truths," in Happy Endings: Lesbian Writers Talk About Their Lives and Work (Florida: Naiad, 1993), 9-18.

[78] Ramsey, "My Daughter is Different," 89.

[79] On this, see Vivienne Louise, "Crossing that Bridge," in Penelope and Wolfe, eds., The Original Coming Out Stories (Freedom, CA: Crossing Press, 1980), 250-267. Louise was an African American lesbian who moved from Washington, DC to Oakland, California during the mid 1970s to participate in the lesbian movement there. She emphasised that the black lesbians she had known were more likely to wear a range in attire from pants and sweaters, to dresses, high heels, and make up; for them, "dress-up was the creed, with an accent on either 'standard prep' or 'in vogue'" in sharp contrast to the white lesbians she had met who were more likely to wear "jeans, flannel shirts, and soft-soled shoes." See p. 265.

[80] From Donna Allegra, "Lavender Sheep in the Fold," p. 149-161, in Lisa C. Moore, ed., Does Your Mama Know? : An Anthology of Black Lesbian Coming Out Stories (Decatur, Georgia: RedBone Press, 1997), P. 153.

[81] Jacqueline Lapidus, 81-04, Letter "Dearest Jax," December 17, 1975, p. 1.

[82] Jacqueline Lapidus, 81-04, Letter with no date, "Dearest Daddy," (1975 or 1976), p. 2.

[83] On this, see again Arnup, "Lesbian Feminist Theory." Non-white lesbian feminists in particular often did not embrace separatism, recognizing at times a need to organize with men, as well as the importance of maintaining kinship ties in the face of racism. For a discussion of the relative scarcity of non-white lesbian feminists, see Faderman, Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers, 242 ff. and also her "The Return of Butch and Fem: A Phenomenon of Lesbian Sexuality in the 1980s and 90s," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 9, no. 2 (Jan./April 2000): 207-280. Nonetheless, a periodical by and for lesbians of colour was published in 1977. See Streitmatter, Unspeakable, 175, for details on *Azalea: A Magazine by Third World Lesbians*. In 1974, a group of black and latina lesbian New Yorkers founded the Salsa Soul Sisters as an alternative to bars which had historically been racist; not only did this group problematize heterosexuality and homosexuality as orientations as their white counterparts did, but focussed on racism, employment, housing, and single lesbian parenting. See Molly McGarry and Fred Wasserman, Becoming Visible: An Illustrated History of Lesbian and Gay Life in Twentieth Century America (New York Public Library: Penguin Studio, 1998), 187.

[84] On this matrophobia, see Adrienne Rich, Of Woman Born, (New York: Norton, 1976), 235. On women's liberation critiques, see Caroline Lund, *The Family: Revolutionary or Oppressive Force?* (New York: A Merit Pamphlet, 1971). For a poem that encapsulates this matrophobia, see Pauline B. Hart's acrostic, "Mother's Day Poem": "M is for her menopausal problems; O is for her masochistic needs; T is for her terror as she ages; H is for the help for which she pleads; E is for the emptiness her life is; R is for the roles that she has lost. Put them all together: they spell MOTHER. The ones the culture's double crossed" in Gloria Kaufman and Mary Kay Blakely, eds., Pulling Our Own Strings: Feminist Humor and Satire (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980), 147. For a historiographical view, see Marianne Hirsch, The Mother/Daughter Plot: Narrative, Psychoanalysis, Feminism (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989).

[85] For a vivid description and recollection of "Womanhouse," see Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard, The Power of Feminist Art: The American Movement of the 1970s, History and Impact (New York: H.N. Abrams, 1994), 48-60.

[86] Betty Friedan, The Feminine Mystique (New York: W.W. Norton, 1963), 313.

[87] Kay Silk, "Lesbian Novels in the Fifties," *Focus*, (August 1973): 4 (of 5).

[88] I want to mention here that this attention to domesticity during this period might have been informed by a broader 1960s and 1970s enthusiasm for "found" materials in art and the recreation of domestic environments. On this, see Hugh Adams, Art of the 60s (New York: Phaidon Press, 1978), 21 ; and Edward Lucie-Smith, Art in the 70s (Oxford: Phaidon, 1980), 9.

[89] On this idea, see again Weiss, To Have and To Hold . Weiss argues that historical work on these generations tends to overplay the sexual revolution of the young, and underplay the innovations of the older generations who enjoyed a particularly high divorce rate in the 1970s and who often went back to work as older women, having married so young. See 169 ff.

[90] Joy Scorpio, "My Mother," *Coming Out Rage* (May 1973): 12.

[91] Another poem in this vein comes in Canadian lesbian poet Gwen Hauser's collection, Mad About the Crazy Lady, entitled, "Poem for My Mother," (Vancouver: Air Press, 1977), 48-49.

[92] See, for example, "Rediscovering Anger" in Boston Women's Health Collective, Our Bodies, Ourselves: A Book By and For Women.

[93] "The Last Letter Home," *Spectre* 3, (July/August, 1971): 4 (of 6). For examples of a more general, disturbing anger voiced by lesbian feminists, see the Women's Gun Pamphlet trumpeted in a 1972 issue of *Lesbian Voices* 75, or the poem "I'm Tired of F--'ers F--'in Over Me" by Bev Grant in *The Other Woman* 1, no. 1 (May-June 1972). See also the article on the ravages of "The Heterosexual" in San Francisco's *Sisters* (July 1973): p. 3-4.

[94] "The Last Letter Home" in *Spectre*, p. 4.

[95] Ibid., 5.

[96] See *Lavender Woman* 3, no. 1 (January 1974): 15.

[97] Article by Deborah Glick in *Gay Activist* (April 1973), no page number.

[98] See *Lesbian Connection* 4, no. 4 (Oct. 1978): 6.

[99] Jo-Ellen Yale, "family dinner," *Focus* (June 1977): 1.

[100] Susan MacDonald, "Coming Out: Sooner or Later," *Lesbian Feminist* (August, 1976): 3.

[101] Here I am thinking of Canadian women writers whose works had received some international recognition during these years, particularly of Margaret Atwood's The Edible Woman (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1969), and Alice Munro's short story collections such as Dance of the Happy Shades (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1968) and Lives of Girls and Women (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1971). In the American context, I think of the poetry of Adrienne Rich such as her 1967 collection Snapshots of a Daughter in Law (New York: W.W. Norton, 1967) and Anne Sexton such as "Housewife" in the Complete Poems (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1981), p. 77. All of these portray a subtly different consciousness from men based on an introspective domestic culture, including its physical objects, its sense of time, its occasional stultification, and its possibilities.

[102] Adrienne Rich, " 'When We Dead Awaken': Writing as Re-Vision," in Arts of the Possible: Essays and Conversations (New York: W.W. Norton, 2001), 23 (10-30). Literary theorist Patricia Meyer Spacks has suggested in her work on autobiographies that autobiographies affirm identity. See Imagining Self: Autobiographies and Novels in 19th Century England (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1976).

[103] See Sharon Malinowski and Christa Belin, eds. The Gay and Lesbian Literary Companion (Detroit: Visible Ink Press, 1995), 351. Also, on the public media portrayals of Millett as crazy and unattractive, see Susan Douglas, Where the Girls Are: Growing Up with the Mass Media (New York: Random House, 1994), 109. Douglas recorded that the mainstream media portrayed feminists as "hairy legged, karate-chopping commando[s]....[with] really bad clothes, and a complete inability to smile--let alone laugh." (p. 165)

[104] Jacqueline Lapidus, 81-04, Letter from mother, "Dearest Jax," April 11, 1975, p. 1

[105] Jacqueline Lapidus, 81-04, Edith Lapidus, "K. Millett Flying," document with no date.

[106] Jacqueline Lapidus, 81-04., Letter from mother, "Dearest Jax," April 11, 1975, p. 1.

[107] This poem was first published in 1975, and reprinted in several different lesbian periodicals and poetry anthologies. See for example Elly Bulkin and Joan Larkin, eds. Lesbian Poetry: An Anthology

(Watertown, MA: Persephone Press, 1981), 99. For details on the Amazon Quarterly, the most literary of lesbian periodicals during this period, see Streitmatter, Unspeakable, 175.

[108] Jacqueline Lapidus, 81-04, Letter from mother, "Dearest Jax," April 1975 (no exact date), p. 1.

[109] Ibid., 2.

[110] Ibid., 3.

[111] Ibid., 2.

[112] See for example the poem "I am all things female: they call me/ Mother/I am she who brings life," in Dykes and Gorgons 1, no. 1 (1973): 24-25. See also the story "The Parable of Mothers and Daughters" by Florence Rush, 4-11 in A Lesbian Feminist Anthology: Amazon Expedition ed. by Phyllis Birkby, et al. (Albion, CA: Times Change Press, 1973). This story conveys the sense of the womanly bond between mothers and daughters that pre-existed and was destroyed by patriarchy.

[113] See Nancy Chodorow, The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 95. See also Marcia Westkott, "Mothers and Daughters in the World of the Father," *Frontiers* 3, no. 2 (1978): 16-21. Finally, see Sherry Zitter, "Coming Out to Mom: Theoretical Aspects of the Mother Daughter Process," 177-194 in Boston Lesbian Psychologies Collective, Lesbian Psychologies: Explorations and Challenges (Urbana-Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 178.

[114] Chodorow, 200.

[115] Jacqueline Lapidus, 81-04, Letter to mother, "Dearest Mom," March 17 1975, p. 1. This style of communication again seemed to mirror Lasch's observation of "conversations as confession." See, again, Lasch, The Culture of Narcissism, 27. And on family relationships modeled after therapy, see Robert Bellah, Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 121.

[116] See *Gay Community News* 2, no. 16 (October 12, 1974): 7. The strip is called "After Mell" by "Mike R." A national gay paper, the *GCN* started in 1973 and ended in 1990.

[117] Jacqueline Lapidus, 81-04, Letter from mother, "Dearest Jax", December 1, 1975, p. 2.

[118] Jacqueline Lapidus, 81-04, Letter from mother, "Dearest Jax", August 1, 1976, p. 1.

[119] Jacqueline Lapidus, 81-04, Letter to mother, "Dearest Mom", March 27, 1975, p. 1.

[120] Mrs. O'Keefe, "Mrs. O'Keefe," p. 135-139 in Ruth Baetz, ed. Lesbian Crossroads: Personal Stories of Lesbian Struggles and Triumphs (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1980), 135.

[121] Ibid., 136.

[122] On this theme of envy between mothers and daughters—that could verge into jealousy for their daughters displacing them with female partners as the primary women in their daughters' lives, see Sherry Zitter, "Coming Out to Mom: Theoretical Aspects of the Mother-Daughter Process," 177-194 in Boston Lesbian Psychologies Collective, Lesbian Psychologies: Explorations and Challenges (University of Illinois Press, 1987).

[123] Susan MacDonald, "On the Homefront," in *Lesbian Feminist* (September/October 1976): 12.

[124] Judith Ramsey, "My Daughter is Different," 16 and 82.

[125] Ibid., 14.

[126] Ibid., 16.

[127] Ibid., 90.

Figure 12. Cartoon in *Lavender Woman*, 1974

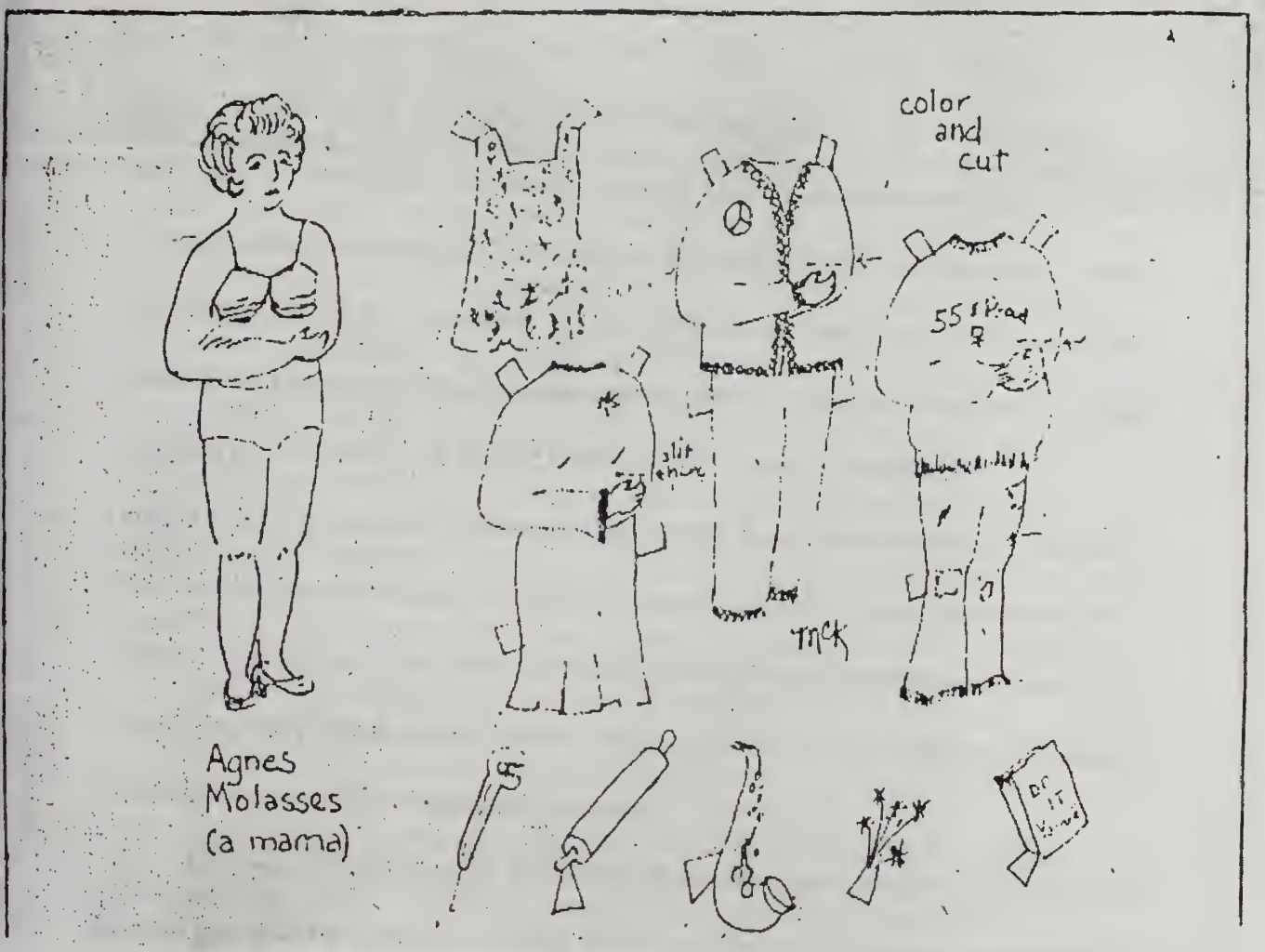
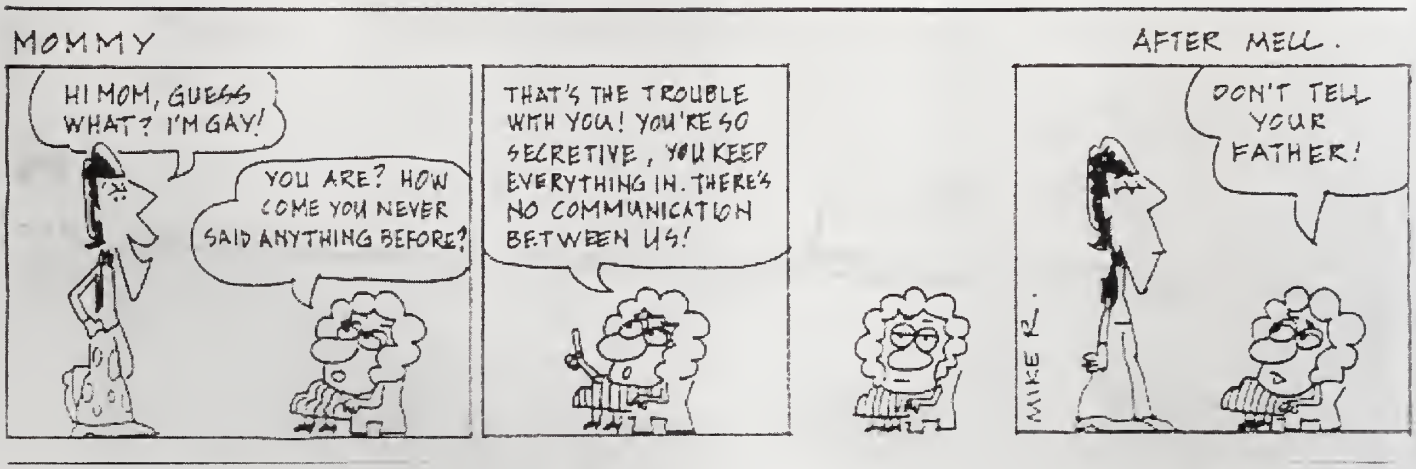


Figure 13. Cartoon in *Gay Community News*, 1974



CHAPTER 4

OUT OF THE CLOSETS, OUT OF THE KITCHENS

Lesbian counselor Julie Lee was quite confident that most parents would not reject their gay children. To a teenager fretting about her parents' response to her lesbianism in 1974, Lee wrote: "if your family rejects you because of something like that, all I can say is that THEY need psychotherapy, not you!" And, she noted, this therapy was now available for parents: "there is a lovely Jewish couple in New York who have started an organization for families of people like us—so the parents....come together and discuss their problems."[1] This lovely Jewish couple was Jeanne and Jules Manford, who started discussion groups among parents of gays at a Greenwich Village Church in New York City in 1973. "JOIN THIS DYNAMIC GROUP OF PARENTS/Learn from their experiences/Share with them your experiences," an early poster for the group announced. A "newly formed Discussion Group for mothers and fathers of Lesbians and Gay males" promised to address such questions as "How do I relate to my child? What should I say to friends and family? Did I make any mistakes? What can we do to help our daughters and sons?"[2] [Figure 14]

The New York City group held several such meetings throughout the 1970s. By the later part of the decade and the early 1980s, local groups had sprung up in California, Arizona, Colorado, Illinois, Washington, Massachusetts and other states and provinces. These groups presaged the national organization of what is now known as PFLAG (Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays).[3] At first, parents' groups in different locations knew of each other only through informal networks. A national

organization was planned to coincide with the National Gay and Lesbian March in Washington in 1979. Incorporated in 1982, there were about 20 North American chapters within the organization then.

Throughout the 1970s and the early years of the 1980s, organized parents of gays existed alongside other parents who were beginning to write about their gay children in advice literature and memoirs. Both these activist and literary responses suggested a more defined and perhaps even ritualized possibility of parental empathy with their gay children. If such children seemed unknowable or remote through their sexuality, parents' writings and gatherings could help reacquaint parent and child, and reassure fretting parents about the family life they had conducted. Did I make any mistakes? If the broader culture answered yes, and reinforced the feeling of family deficiency, the testimonies and meetings of fellow parents could provide a powerful counter-dialogue.[4]

In sharp contrast to the lesbian feminists and gay liberationists of the 1970s who insisted that gender roles and sexual orientations were social constructions and personal choices, organized parents of gays attempted to reinscribe homosexuality in nature: their children had no choice in the matter, nor had their parents any hand in it. From this standpoint, it would also be against nature to reject their children. The script of gay family rejection was an idea that sounded deeply within parental organizations and loomed as a backdrop to parents' testimonies and activist rhetoric. But this script also provided parents with some moral leverage: the virtuous thing to do was not to reject gay children, but to embrace them.

The sympathetic testimonies of fellow parents even offered a forum for the repentance of parental failures in regard to their children, particularly the failure to know

and understand their children's intimate lives. This was no doubt a shortcoming of many parents, but one that was highlighted most poignantly when children were gay. Organized parents of gays would come to suggest expanded meanings for family nurturance during this period, particularly ones that attempted to acknowledge the reality of their children's affective lives and sexuality.

As the movement was initially conceived, however, during the early and middle 1970s, these parental gatherings were not primarily therapeutic in purpose, but activist. Parents who organized on behalf of their gay children during this period faced a specific dilemma: how were they to defend their gay children when homosexuality still symbolized sexual immorality and deviancy? The initial PFLAG and parent help movement was inspired by a gay activist son, Morty Manford, who had urged his mother, Jeanne, to start a support group for parents of gays. Morty Manford participated in gay liberation politics of a more reformist than revolutionary nature: he was a prominent student leader for gay rights at Columbia University and was an active member of the Gay Activists' Alliance or GAA, formed in 1969, alongside the Gay Liberation Front. Unlike the GLF, which had allied itself with the Black Panthers and the anti-war movement, the GAA eschewed violence and the rhetoric of insurrection. While the GLF never had a formal structure, and consisted instead of a series of "cells", the GAA was a formal organization with a constitution and a system of committees, focused on attaining antidiscrimination legislation while pursuing activist tactics known as zaps.[5] Jeanne Manford was moved to become an activist for gay rights after she witnessed her son receive a particularly brutal beating during one such GAA protest at the Hilton Hotel in New York City, as the city's police looked on quietly. Having already participated in the

civil rights movement, Manford had a political framework for her outrage. She started taking on an activist role herself, by writing a letter of support for her son in the *New York Post* and hoisting a sign that read "Parents of Gays Unite in Support for our Children" in the gay pride parade in New York City in 1972. The outpouring of emotion and praise she received for these simple acts of love for her gay child--and perhaps by extrapolation the declaration of the very existence of gay children within families--seemed to open the possibility for parents to have a potent role within the gay liberation movements of that period. As another early organized parent, Leonore Acanfora, said, once her son came out of the closet, it was time for her to "come out of the kitchen" to face his sexuality and agitate for his rights.[6]

For these early organized parents, gay oppression was located in a larger social context of oppression and injustice. Sarah Montgomery, another major early organizer, had, like Jeanne Manford, a social activist past in the black civil rights movement. She had even been a suffragette as a very young woman. Lovingly dubbed "Grandma Lib" and "Everybody's Favorite Mother" in the gay press, Montgomery was 75 years old at the height of her activism on behalf of gays in 1974, just two years after her gay son and his partner had jointly committed suicide, which she attributed to the exhausting, cumulative effects of a life of homophobic discrimination. She already had marched in the first New York Christopher Street Liberation Day parade in 1970, the only parent to have done so. Her son's suicide fortifying her sense of purpose, Montgomery felt it a parental duty to be open about gay family members and take up the cause of gay rights. She could not abide parents who wallowed in their own guilt for breeding a gay child because "[i]t annoys me to see this guilt....When a child has the courage to tell them

about his homosexuality, then parents should feel pride and not sit around moaning, feeling sorry for themselves."[7] She was also wary of those parents who seemed to have an "I love my child....But" attitude.[8] To get rid of the "but", parents had to embrace homosexuality, as well as their child.

The tenor of the parental activism during the initial years of the movement tended to be set by activists of Montgomery's ilk, and they had little patience with parents who exhibited any kind of self-pity. Her attitude was shared by other early organized parents. In an interview in *The Advocate* in 1978, Bernice Becker, an "enlightened and proud" mother of two gay daughters, out of the closet since the mid 1960s, suggested that some of the parents she had met at Parents of Gays meetings "often don't seem concerned enough about their children." She felt that some were "looking for a shoulder to cry on. They want somebody to tell them they're really nice people."[9] In a message to Parents of Gay People of the Greater Bay Area in San Francisco in 1978, Becker insisted, "Don't cry about society's persecution of your child. Get out there and help change it."[10] Edith Perry, the mother of Troy Perry, a gay activist who founded the Metropolitan Community Church in 1976, which had a specific outreach to gay Christians, concurred with this statement. She wrote in the foreward to her son's book, *The Lord Is My Shepherd and He Knows I'm Gay* (1972), that she felt proud of her son for standing up "to be counted with his gay brothers and sisters," and affirmed the gay activist mission that "no one should live in a miserable world of shadows and be threatened with ruin and exposure." She chalked up parental shame to being "afraid of what others may say or think" and admonished parents for succumbing to such shallow thinking: "that's just plain silly, when it comes down to it."[11]

Parents also were advised not to dwell on their own sense of investment in children. In "What Parents of Gay Children Fear Most is Their Children", Florida activist Jean Smith labelled parental laments about sons failing to carry on the family name or daughters failing to provide a grandchild "selfish."[12] Betty Fairchild, who authored one of the first PFLAG official pieces of literature in 1975, called *Parents of Gays*, sympathized with them, insofar as families of gays also "suffer in virtual silence."[13] Yet, she came down hard on parents who were preoccupied with shame and their own feelings. Some parents, she observed, "seem more concerned with their own feelings, and the opinions of others, than with what their child is feeling--or really is, for that matter."[14]

For these activist parents, figuring out who the child really was offered the promise of an exciting family intimacy, even if what preceded this new terrain was family upheaval. As the poem included in the *Parents of Gays* pamphlet said: "Telling Mom and Dad you're gay/Is not an easy thing to say./And, where the folks are coming from,/It's harder news to hear than some./But if your family is caring/You'll gather closer, through this sharing."[15] It was not enough simply to be supportive and selfless, seeking a sense of intimacy within the family. In a way, the promise of intimacy was fused with civil rights: parental activism laid the groundwork for that intimacy. Sarah Montgomery insisted that "if parents go into the closet it's in itself a condemnation....a parent must be prepared, just as any brave, valiant, young gay is prepared, to face an ignorant and bigoted world."[16] In this vein, an early PFLAG pamphlet of 1977, "Parents of Gays and Lesbians Speak Out," featured Sarah Montgomery's quotation, "I refuse to

be a closet mother!", as well as the declarations "The Problem is Silence" and "The Solution is Speaking Out."[17]

As was the case for activist gay children, activist parents could hardly be discreet if they were to participate in the kinds of political endeavours for gay civil rights that they did. Jeanne Manford wrote President Gerald Ford in 1974, drawing upon her moral authority as a mother when talking about political injustices to gays. The immediate purpose of her letter was to advocate for a bill in New York City to give civil rights to gay people in housing and employment, a bill repeatedly rejected by the city council. She then wished to press him to issue an executive order prohibiting discrimination on account of sexual orientation in the civil service, an order that would result in the Civil Service Commission lifting its ban on the employment of gays in 1975.[18] While applauding him for saying in a recent speech that he supported all people, "regardless of political leanings, race, or religion," Manford pointed out that "if you really meant that you will be the president of all the people.....God will bless you if you extend a hand to over twenty million homosexuals in this country."[19] She explained that "as a mother and as a citizen I feel a vested interest in seeing the quality of life improved for twenty million Gay women and men."[20]

Casting gay activism as the concern of parents and citizens was both strategic and heartfelt. In some sense, it seemed important for parents to distinguish themselves from gay radicalism or any expressions of radicalism that had so beguiled American ideas of law and order throughout the late 1960s and early 1970s. Jeanne Manford found it odd that she was in fact considered a radical in any sense of the term. For much of her married life, Manford had been an assistant to her husband in his dental practice, though

by the 1970s she was training to become a primary school teacher. She considered herself an unremarkable, middle class woman, living in Queens, New York, then known for its political and social conservatism.[21] Mainstream media presented her as a "prim, bespectacled woman" who lived in a "comfortable, three-story home,"[22] suggesting that the Manford family could be featured in a "Disney movie, rated 'G,'"[23] as though something perverse or radical was to be expected of parents of gay children. Remarking on her emergence as a gay activist, Manford wrote in 1973: "I, who have always been a quiet, retiring sort of person, have appeared on television, spoken on radio, and been interviewed by the *New York Times*.....Recently, my son discovered my picture....in a revolutionary calendar [after Mao Tse Tung and Martin Luther King]. I who never cross the street against a traffic light, have been called a revolutionist!"[24]

Not only did these activists affirm that they were simply loving parents, but that they were in fact socially conservative: their heterosexuality, marriages and families were intact, and they were not particularly left-leaning or sympathetic to radicalism. It was no wonder that when Larry Starr, a founder of Parents of Gays in Los Angeles (1976), wrote to Jack Kilpatrick in 1977, criticizing the commentator's ignorant and sensationalized portrait of gays in the CBS program "Sixty Minutes," his letter did not start with a declaration of love for his gay son, but with this statement: "I have been happily married for over thirty five years and have five happy and healthy children, one of whom happens to be gay." He then discussed his education and professional activities: "I have a Master's degree and a C.P.A. certificate; my annual income is well above the average. I am by no stretch of the imagination a crusader for leftist causes."[25] Starr highlighted his education, class, and politics more than his role as a father.

This stance of respectability was becoming increasingly important as the decade progressed and a new conservative movement emerged. While the 'old' right had a socially conservative bent, as a political movement it was primarily concerned with secular issues such as the maintenance of laissez-faire capitalism and the containment of communism. By contrast, the New Right paid focused attention to social issues and religious values, in addition to economic and defense issues.[26] The New Right perspective gained ground as conservatives reflected upon the legacy of the 1960s, especially the divisive impact of the Vietnam War, feminism, and the civil rights movement, including rights consciousness.[27] As Susan Sontag has noted, the New Right waged a Kulturkampf on vague ideas and images of the 1960s not unlike the counterculture's own assault on ideas of the 1950s; both movements were animated by images of the past.[28] Uncertainty and disquiet about the tenor of social and private life was compounded by the instability of the economy, as both the American and Canadian economies, so intertwined, saw their worst decades since the 1930s, characterized by a diminished oil supply, excessive inflation, and high unemployment rates.[29] All of these promoted a socioeconomic desire for stability.[30]

For some conservative thinkers, the increasing visibility of gays was a signpost for all of the frightening and undesirable social changes of this period. While earlier conservatives of a laissez-faire or libertarian bent, as characterized by Barry Goldwater, tended to think of homosexuality as a strictly private matter, the New Right saw gays as an affront to traditional morals and families.[31] Gays were regarded as another anti-family force besieging American society, in the wake of feminism, abortion rights, and no-fault divorces.[32] The anti-gay campaign was characterized by emerging leaders such as popular

television evangelist Jerry Falwell, who, borrowing from Nixon's "Silent Majority," coined the term the 'Moral Majority' for his organization.[33] He was explicitly hostile to gays, even denouncing effeminate portraits of Jesus that showed him with long hair and flowing robes.[34] This conservative discourse added another layer to the deeply embedded hostility to gays in mainstream culture and politics.

By definition, gays also posed a challenge to the maintenance of heterosexuality and biological reproduction. The debates surrounding the Equal Rights Amendment in particular demonstrate how fears of gender equality spilled over into fears of a broad social acceptance of gays, and even the idea of gay sexuality as a viable alternative to heterosexuality. Phyllis Schlafly, author of *The Power of the Positive Woman* (1977) , founded an association called STOP ERA, appealing to housewives who felt denigrated by feminism. At anti-ERA rallies, she passed out homemade loaves of bread "from the breadmaker to the breadwinner."[35] In her speeches and in her reports, she suggested that the ERA would lead to a host of undesirable social changes, such as unisex washrooms, women in the military, cavalier abortions, as well as an easier social acceptance of gays, including gay marriages. She had been known to refer to ERA supporters as "pro-lesbian."[36] In this portrait, once the boundaries between the genders had broken down, and once there was too much choice in the sexual arena, even heterosexuals could become gay.

This notion of gay recruitment of those who were otherwise heterosexual, particularly children, was an especially pressing concern of the New Right. The individual who best embodies this idea of child saving in this period was former beauty queen Anita Bryant. Under the auspices of the Save Our Children campaign, Bryant

sought to create a dichotomy between heterosexuals who procreate and homosexuals who recruit the young and innocent.[37] In 1977, this group lobbied successfully for the repeal of a gay rights ordinance in Dade County, Florida. [38] Bryant drew on Christian imagery, reasoning that if homosexuality were normal, God would have made "Adam and Bruce", and tried to suggest that treating gays as a minority group worthy of rights was simply a case of rights ideology gone too far.[39] In her view, if gays were a legitimate minority group, then so too were "nail biters, dieters, fat people, short people, and murderers."[40] The Pro Family Rally at the International Women's Year Conference held in Houston in 1977 also evoked these concerns. In one of their advertisements, a doll-like little girl in an innocent looking dress asks: "Mommy, when I grow up, can I be a lesbian?" The caption reads: "If you think this idea is shocking…read what the IWY is proposing for your children."[41] [Figure 15] In fact, many anti-gay activists did not want gays in the presence of children, period. The Briggs Initiative of 1978, the proposal of state senator John Briggs of Orange County, California, to bar gays from teaching in California public schools was defeated but suggests a mounting fear of gays in everyday, intergenerational contexts.[42] Defence lawyers for Dan White, the San Francisco supervisor who murdered his fellow supervisor, the renowned gay politician Harvey Milk in 1978, argued that White came from a fundamentally different social background than Milk, that he was a man of "family values", and therefore in a world apart.[43] These highly publicized campaigns animated conceptions of gays as a menace to the family.

Nonetheless, the New Right campaign could be said to have galvanized gay self-representations as family members during this decade. The irony of seeing gays at the heart of largely heterosexual conflicts such as abortion and divorce was not lost on gay

commentators. In New York City's *Gayswcek* in 1978, David Rothenberg stated most emphatically that as "a gay male, I do not feel responsible for divorce, the abuse of children, runaways, teenage addiction or prostitution--yet I constantly see homosexuality cited as a problem concerning the American family."[44] In turn, gay activists and writers appeared now to be claiming a much less ambivalent place in their families than their liberationist forerunners had sought or perhaps consciously acknowledged. This move for family restoration coincided with changing currents within gay activism. The gay radicalism of the late 1960s and early 1970s was giving way, by the later 1970s, to activism that was more liberal, institutional, and integrationist. In part, the reason for this was that students and young people who had formed the bulk of the liberation movement were getting older and pursuing other goals.[45] Morty Manford felt that this period marked a definitive shift in gay organizing and demonstrating: he noted that the response at gay demonstrations had declined markedly in numbers by the mid 1970s.[46] In turn, more gay reformist organizations were coming on the scene during the 1970s and early 1980s, most notably, the re-constituted GAA, which in 1973 had become the National Gay Task Force (NGTF). This new organization emphasized political lobbying, legal changes, and community education through formal structures and constitutions, a salaried staff, and a board of directors who already had professional jobs outside of the organization.[47] The NGTF's 1977 "We ARE your children!" campaign typified the strategy of refuting the claims of the New Right and the 'Moral Majority' through the same family rhetoric that the conservative movement took up.[48] In 1979, the NGTF proclaimed a "Week of Dialogue" between gays and American parents and families, featuring well-known individuals from both the gay and heterosexual communities.[49]

New Right portraits roused and shaped the parents' movement, as well, particularly by the end of the 1970s and the early 1980s. Organized parents now faced a formidable opponent in the New Right, and it influenced the parents' movement away from the civil rights rhetoric and tactics of those organizers of the early 1970s, towards an inward emphasis on the potentials of family love. Gradually, parents began to see themselves as victims of homophobia, too, simply by having gay children. They emphasized the need to talk to each other, and to make their way through layers of homophobia that had perhaps even pervaded their own family lives. Between roughly 1977 and 1983, the rhetoric of the parents' movement began to shift.

One tactic that activist parents pursued was to attack a broad set of myths about homosexuality mobilized by the New Right, among them, the idea that homosexuality was a conscious choice on their children's part. Organized parents conceived of homosexuality as a condition that simply existed. How could the Right, then, organize protests against or even disagree with something that just *was*?

This notion of lack of choice reflects a more unwavering parental belief in the rigidity of sexual categories, including heterosexuality. In a chapter in her book *Positively Gay* (1979), Betty Fairchild addressed parents, in a section entitled, "IT IS NOT YOUR FAULT! IT IS NOT A CHOICE!", by telling them to "ask yourself if you could change your sexual preference on request."[50] If choice was simply not a question, gay children could not be asked to change, and parents, in turn, would not have to engage in self blame, as gayness could not have been prevented nor attributed to them.

If children did not choose their sexuality, then they hardly merited punishment for it, an assumption that acknowledged a notion, whether by the New Right or

subconsciously by the parents themselves, that being gay was worthy of some kind of punishment. In an official PFLAG audio tape of 1990, "Accepting *Your* Gay or Lesbian Child: Parents Share Their Stories", a father recalled that his gay daughter and his gay son came out in the late 1970s, and reflected that if parents believe their children chose it "then the best to be done is tolerate their presence, but if they didn't choose it, then you can befriend them and love them."[51] The New York City parents' group likewise said that gays should never be seen as "heterosexuals who have perversely chosen to behave as homosexuals. They are attracted to those of their own sex because their very nature inclines them that way."[52] The word 'perverse' suggests that choice in the realm of sexuality was indeed a perverse proposition, a stance that affirmed a parental rejection of the notion of sexual preference in favour of sexual orientation.

Organized parents, then, both tried to absolve themselves of having caused their children's sexuality and engender sympathy for gay sexuality by casting it as a predetermined proclivity. Jean Smith of Parents of Gays in Pensacola, in the particularly besieged position of defending gays in the deeply divided state of Florida during this period, was one mother to take up this tactic. In 1978, she wrote an indignant letter to Ann Landers, upon reading Ann's column to a mother of a gay son who wanted to know what caused his homosexuality. The mother in the column had told Landers that she had a "beautiful marriage" and stressed that she could not accept homosexuality, or her son. Though Ann Landers underscored, as her headline said, "Parents Shouldn't Reject Homosexual Son," and pointed out that homosexuals do not precisely choose it, she did entertain speculation that homosexuality was the result of a psychological disorder caused by a number of problems, including a "smothering mother and a tyrannical, weak,

or absent father." Despite Landers' exhortations not to disinherit gay children, this response was hardly satisfactory to Smith, who wrote to say that "homosexuals and parents carry enough guilt without you stating that it is a 'psychological disorder'." She had to agree, however, that "homosexuality is not a choice," and went on to give Ann Landers some information about parents' discussion groups, so she could have some more appropriate information to give out for the next time.[53] She might have been heartened by a "Dear Abby" response a few years later in 1981, which told a mother seeking the cause of her daughter's lesbianism not to blame herself because "sexual preference is not a matter of choice; it is determined at a very early age."[54]

Jean Smith attacked Anita Bryant's Save Our Children campaign on similar grounds. Here Smith attempted to provoke a reader's shame and empathy in her portrait of gay suffering at the hands of the New Right.[55] In her statement against Bryant, Smith blamed tragedies such as gay murders and suicides on Bryant's "vicious, unchristian-like campaign." This reaction was not unique to Smith or even organized parents of gays. A horrific stabbing murder of a gay man in the summer of 1977 in San Francisco prompted his mother to say that Anita Bryant had blood on her hands, an opinion shared by many gay activists who felt that Bryant had only stirred up a long-standing, seething hatred.[56] Even if Bryant's 1977 book, *The Survival of Our Nation's Families and the Threat of Militant Homosexuality* did not sell well, and she had become something of a parody of herself in popular culture, gays and their families still saw her as a figure who could seriously harm their lives and cause.[57] Jean Smith affirmed, "I cannot believe homosexuality is simply a choice, when so many destroy themselves as the only means of ridding themselves of homosexuality."[58]

In this same statement, Smith countered Bryant's child saving campaign by suggesting that organized parents of gays were engaged in their own kind of child saving.[59] Reminiscent of the child saving campaigns of the nineteenth century, her poem, "The Key to the Closet," depicted piteous gay children crying, locked up in a closet. Among them, she heard her own child's voice. She felt an "unbearable anguish," amidst harsh, "Bible-toting" townspeople, who insisted that her child was deviant. However, while the townspeople cried out in ignorance, Smith set herself apart from this uproar, through assuming a god-like image herself: "I knew I was the one, to search for the key." One townsperson in particular, presumably based on Bryant and her testimonials for Florida oranges in those years, "shook the orange trees, and raised all sorts of Holocaust." But amongst these misled religious zealots, whom Smith considered to be participating in a kind of genocide, she spoke of seeing the goodness of gays as a religious moment of truth: "Mine eyes have truly seen the glory."[60] Her poem hints at a feeling of gratification, even holiness, in being parents who loved their gay children.

Central to shedding myths about homosexuality was likening it to some accepted, innate biological variation. While the recruitment myth suggested that unwitting heterosexuals could be talked into homosexuality, the New York City parents' group emphasised that a child could not take a turn towards homosexuality, because this orientation was his path all along, and simply a variation, akin, they wrote, to "black skin and left-handedness."[61] Although this statement called attention to skin colour and handedness, a more common analogy to homosexuality during the late 1970s and early 1980s was one of health or mental condition. Seeking more publicity from the editors of *Newsweek* regarding the parents of gays movement, Smith emphasised that "no other

generation of parents have done what we are trying to do." Moreover, while there were "brochures for other families regarding drugs, alcoholism, mental illness, handicapped children, etc." there were "none for our families regarding homosexuality."[62] If gayness could be seen as parallel to a deficiency or illness, then surely these parents of diseased children merited some support. These metaphors even imply a kind of superiority in homosexual children, because these children's "addictions" were not as serious or socially harmful as drugs or alcohol.

The drug and alcohol metaphor also applied to parents, however, and not coincidentally did some parents suggest parallels between the formation of a parents of gays movement and Alcoholics Anonymous and other Twelve Steps programmes of the postwar period.[63] Smith felt that it was just as difficult for an alcoholic to admit his problem, as it was for her to say, "My name is Jean and I am the parent of a homosexual son."[64] This rhetoric of addiction presaged an enormous cultural emphasis on drug addiction amongst youth during the 1980s, including Nancy Reagan's Just Say No Campaign of 1985. Addiction was becoming viewed as just another in a series of problems, like homosexuality, that could befall contemporary youth. The somewhat sensationalistic self help book, *Mother, I Have Something to Tell You* (1987), was said to give advice on: "What to do when your child becomes an alcoholic, a drug addict, a homosexual, a criminal, joins a cult, gets pregnant. Required reading for parents."[65] This kind of portrait inscribed gayness within the dreaded fantasies of parents in an era when a renewed concern about juvenile delinquency or simply youth gone awry was gaining force.

In another attempt to solicit compassion, gay children were portrayed as special-needs children. A New York City parental activist, Richard Ashworth, noted in 1979 that "even if you think homosexuality is something undesirable, [persecuting them] would be like being critical of someone for being mentally retarded."[66] Despite its connotations of impairment, invoking a 'retarded' child perhaps had a greater and more uncomplicated emotional resonance than the image of drug addiction.

These analogies of difference seemed to merge homosexuality with a condition or most benevolently, specialness. In turn, they illustrate that within the parental imagination, gay children appeared to be shifting from political radicals, as they were often perceived by parents during the liberation period, to problem children, an image that was propagated, rather than denied, by those parents organizing on their behalf.

But thinking of gayness in this way seemed to give gay sexuality a more precise reality or existence. Another set of metaphors developed by organized parents simply suggested that gays were a fundamental part of modern life. A pamphlet developed by Smith and others for the Pensacola Parents of Gays Society in the late 1970s featured three quotations: "If man were meant to fly, he would have been born with wings"; "the automobile will never replace the horse"; "homosexuals are sick, perverted persons who are a danger to the future of our society."[67] The juxtaposition of the third myth about homosexuality with the first two ridiculous and provincial statements suggested that parents of gays who had accepted their gay children were more sophisticated than those who did not. It also suggested that parents get more in step with their times: "like the airplane, the automobile, and the railroad train, homosexuality is a part of our contemporary lifestyle."[68] Gays, then, could be safely related metaphorically to daily,

accepted technological changes, but not, of course, to such fraught, more specifically gendered changes such as contraception, the legalization of abortion, and sex-change operations.[69]

However, the sympathy sought by drawing on these images could not arise if gays were seen as sexual predators or pariahs, as Anita Bryant's supporters made them out to be with such signs as: "Don't Destroy America for your Lust." Activist parents, of course, only dealt with gay children who were in fact adults or at least late adolescents. During the late 1970s and early 1980s, activist parents of gays made a conscious effort to purify these children by suggesting that their sex lives were as familiar and staid as any heterosexual life-style arrangement. Ironically, these desexualizing efforts illuminate a heterosexual interest in and voyeurism about homosexuality at the same time that they attempted to deflect that prurience.

The earliest parental activists such as Sarah Montgomery stressed that it *was* heterosexual voyeurism that sexualized gay people, challenging the notion that gays had ever 'flaunted' anything. In Montgomery's view it was the "homophobic, straight world" that forced gays to demand their rights and justify their sexual existence.[70] When an alarmed father called to tell her that he had discovered his son and another young man giving each other a bath in the family bathroom, she responded, "well, what's the matter with that?"[71] After he hung up on her, she realised her views were more progressive than most. As she told the periodical *The Empty Closet*, "love is love and sex is sex, no matter how you slice it."[72] Other activist parents of the early 1970s took a more resolute stance on the issue of parental voyeurism. In her personal testimony, one mother declared the injustice of gay persecution in light of the tolerance afforded to promiscuous

heterosexuals. According to Mary Milam, "the girl next door may be a tramp, promiscuously sleeping around, [not able to] identify the father of a child she may conceive.....but she is just 'wild'. The boy next door may be on the make for every girl he sees.....yet he is 'just sowing his wild oats.'" However, in pursuing any sexual relationship at all, a gay person would be followed by "cruel and dirty epithets."[73]

Activist parents were put in the ironic position of having to see the shortcomings or sordid side of their own sexual culture to defend their children, a theme that was highlighted when parents in the latter part of the decade responded more explicitly to the New Right. A mother attempting to start a parents of gays group in Calgary, Alberta, a province known then and now for its social conservatism, wrote a letter to the Manfords in 1977 recording her sense that Albertans on the whole were "heavy on a Bible under the arm publicly" but secretly "kinky heterosexuals behind the scene."[74] The implication was that homosexuality surely was not as scandalous as heterosexuality could be.

Other parents admitted their discomfort with any display of sexuality on the part of their children. This avowal was especially the case in those more introspective sources, such as memoirs of parents with gay children, and advice written to fellow parents. In a 1983 "two way survival guide" for both gay children and their heterosexual parents, Mary Borhek, a religious mother of a gay son from Eden Prairie, Minnesota, attested that homosexuality was troubling to parents because it exposed an already sensitive area, sexuality, only with an unthinkable twist. A member of the New Testament Church, an independent charismatic congregation, she found her son's revelation in 1975 quite appalling. She cautioned gay children that parents simply did not "*want to probe into the matter of sexuality--ours or our children's.* We were raised in a simpler age, when we

knew which kind of sexual behavior was accepted and which was taboo. Now our children are asking us to make major revisions in our thinking, feeling, perceiving--our understanding of being."[75] While discussions about reproduction and the mechanics of sex had become expected matters for family discussions during the 1950s and 60s, sexuality in its variations and emotional consequences were not necessarily on the agenda, even if some parenting literature by the 1970s had started to address the need for sexual expressiveness in general and questions of homosexuality at least in passing.[76] A discussion of the bare bones of sexuality might have been uncharted ground enough for many postwar parents, without this added dimension.[77]

But Borhek also revealed a sense of curiosity about the sexuality of gay children, emblematic of a larger heterosexual fascination with a homosexual culture often conflated with unbridled sexuality. Especially by 1980, images of gays in visual media and film were perhaps even less flattering and more sensationalized than they had been when gays were more indirectly referred to as unmentionable, largely symbolic figures. William Friedkin's 1980 movie, *Cruising*, for example, portrayed a gay serial killer with a disapproving father. The film featured a lurid gay night life and pornography clips of gay men's sex spliced into the scenes. Al Pacino, who played the cop trying to find the killer, seems to become gay himself and possibly a murderer near the movie's end, simply by association with all of these undesirables.[78] In the same vein, CBS made another documentary in 1980 about homosexuals, this time called, "Gay Power, Gay Politics," that showed blackened clips of men cruising in San Francisco city parks.[79] These were just some of the images and scripts for gay lives that parents might have drawn from when they conjured up gay sexuality during this period. Ironically, while gay

children might have seen their parents as the representatives of an overriding heterosexual banality during these years, their parents might have seen their children as the ambassadors of a sexually exotic, uninhibited, and at times frightful world. Borhek admitted that "parents often find that what really bothers them is the idea of their child having sex with a person of the same gender. There may be a horrified curiosity (many times unacknowledged) about how they do it."[80]

Gloria Guss Back also noted a subconscious fascination with gay sex on the part of heterosexual parents, in her coping guide, *Are You Still My Mother? Are You Still My Family?* (1985). "Don't dwell too much on the sexual aspects of homosexuality," she advised parents, "Don't peer too closely into the bedroom of a Gay son or daughter--you wouldn't with a straight child, would you?"[81] These parents stressed the necessity of desexualizing their children to hold prurience at bay. Similarly, Betty Fairchild recalled her bolt of recognition when she saw that her son, heartbroken after having lost a boyfriend, must have been "really" in love, and not just having "fleeting sexual encounters" with this young man and several others.[82] Only through disavowing the idea of their children as sexual beings could these parents restore some sense of feeling, beyond the purely lustful or misguided, to their gay children.

Perhaps the most devastating of heterosexual myths about homosexuality that activist parents attacked, however, was that gays were pedophiles. Borhek noted to gay children that "demeaning as it may seem, you may have to reassure your parents emphatically that you are not a child molester, nor are you going to recruit people to a same-sex orientation....."[83] In organized parents' literature of this period, it was

emphasised that gay people respect children, clarifying that the majority of sexual child abuse was committed by heterosexual men.[84] This effort to clear their children's sexual record would continue for PFLAG, with even more vehemence, over time.[85]

While the image of homosexual pedophilia could be countered bluntly with the aid of statistics, parents of gays also assumed a task that was in many ways more abstract, that of portraying gays as recognizable figures in society. In this respect another PFLAG pamphlet "About Our Children" (1978) stressed that "gay persons establish stable longlasting relationships, work for a living, shop, watch TV, vote, and pay taxes", as if to show that their lives were in fact as bogged down by the quotidian as any heterosexual's was.[86] Borhek advised gays that one way they could assuage parental fears was to convey, as her son did, the "ordinariness" of his life with a gay partner: "They went to work in the morning and came home to the apartment at night to cook meals, wash clothes, shop, clean. They began to redecorate the apartment, doing the work themselves. They went to church on Sunday and to movies, plays, and concerts."[87] In this way, gay children could not be regarded solely as sexual beings, or even alien ones to the domestic scene.

In challenging myths about their children, however, parents also had to shed myths about themselves, including cultural stories and images of the parent figures of gays. Most centrally, psychology needed to be disputed, if parents were to feel that they had not made significant mistakes. This effort was particularly true for mothers, often pathologised as overbearing. Marlene Fanta Shyer, for example, raised her gay son during the 1960s and 70s, in suburban Larchmont, New York, which she considered "an untouched freeze-frame" in an era of "sit-ins, peace marches, militant demonstrations,

flag burning and riots."[88] Reflecting on her son's early years, Shyer owned that at one point she firmly believed his 'sissy' qualities had developed because he had spent so much time "in the house with the feminine trio of mother, sister and housekeeper." As if to show how ridiculous she now found this idea, she noted in her memoir, *Not Like Other Boys*, that this "was the way we were thinking then, when we were also frying chicken in butter and sunbathing all summer because we thought suntans were glamorous and healthy."[89] The wisdom of these homophobic ideas had now gone the way of other petty, conventional wisdoms, strikingly those about domestic matters and health, as though homophobia was something of an old wives' tale in the household, too.

Mary Borhek also ultimately came to discredit those psychoanalysts that she respected before she learned her son was gay. In her earlier 1979 memoir, *My Son Eric*, she appeared to be in a dialogue with the ideas of family life deeply engrained in her from having read psychoanalysis. She assured herself that she had neither "bathed Eric when he was eleven years old [as] Eric had banished me from the bathroom when he was four or five." Nor had she "allowed him to crawl into bed with me." Thus she concluded that she had not castrated Eric. She also had not seduced him by "undress[ing] in front of him. Tom's and my lovemaking had not been flaunted before the children: it had taken place behind closed doors."[90] Because Borhek had not committed any of these notorious mistakes of the overbearing, she rejected the very tenets of psychology when it came to homosexuality. Similarly, Gloria Guss Back began to feel resentful of ever having paid heed to these inherited wisdoms about homosexuality, from psychology or even religion. Parents of gays were "forced to take another look at old shibboleths. Why should ancient, musty writings turn us against our own children?"[91]

Yet, these efforts to cast off ideas that might have hampered a relationship between gay children and their parents did not detract from significant awkwardness in approaching gay children and talking intimately. Another function of the parents' movement, then, was simply to provide advice on how to handle emotions and intimate interactions. The 1983 pamphlet "Can We Understand?" revealed a central tenet of the early PFLAG movement: "if you did not know [about your child's gayness], you would never really know your child. A large part of his or her life would be kept secret from you, and you would never really know the whole human being."[92] This emphasis on family intimacy curiously recalls the gay liberation and lesbian feminist insistence that parents and children could not truly know each other without knowing about their children's sexuality. Parents would come to accentuate the same stance to other parents within the context of their own movement.

And yet, there were fundamental differences in the tenor of the intimacy that PFLAG proposed and the one that their children had requested in the preceding decade. Parents of gay liberationists and in particular lesbian feminists seemed at times intrigued by the very prospect of talking intimately with gay children who had broken some barriers simply in coming out. In turn, gay children seemed to alter parents' ideas about sexuality and even heterosexual sensibility. Having a gay child come out seemed to make it easier for some parents to give voice to certain private, intimate matters such as their own relationship dissatisfactions. Of course this was not true of all parents, and remained a kernel of an impetus for many, even among fairly tolerant and progressive parents such as Edith Lapidus. Nonetheless, gay children seemed to awaken some interest in parents not just about gays but about sexual diversity and problems within heterosexual relations.

This was not a curiosity that PFLAG sought to reinforce. In part, the reason for this was simply that PFLAG was an organized movement offering a model of family interactions, one that was often in the position of responding to the New Right. Thus, the group could hardly trumpet the idea of making parents more tolerant about sexual nonconformity, as these ideas would simply verify the New Right association between homosexuality and family dissolution.

By the late 1970s and early 1980s, the incipient PFLAG movement was also buttressed by an increasing popular impetus to discuss personal family matters that hitherto had not been given much public circulation. These were not limited to sexuality, but included depression, mental illness, wife abuse, and incest, within published personal accounts, films, scholarly studies, and in increasing media attention.[93] The diminished discretion surrounding these issues owed something not just to the sexual liberation movements preceding this decade, but to the popularity of self help movements of the late 1970s and early 1980s. Rejecting a medical model, self help recommended peer care for individuals suffering from mental, addiction, or family problems, among others.[94] However, as the need for anonymous hot lines shows, inhibitions and social stigma remained quite entrenched.[95]Accordingly, another PFLAG flyer of the late 70s, "How to Come Out to Family and Friends" gave even more specific instructions on exactly what to say upon coming out or "some things you might tell them as you begin the meeting." Gays were told to dole out significant parental assurances: "You brought me up in the best way--you're terrific parents. I love you."[96] Not only was this advice about the revelation of gayness, but simply about how to say I love you: the coming out "meeting" was becoming much more scripted with parents at the heart of it.

But it was important for organized parents of gays to reassure themselves that they *were* terrific, and one way they could do so was to position themselves against an imagined excommunicating family, a theme that gained prominence as PFLAG developed into a national organization. The notion of excommunication lurked in the literature and rhetoric of incipient PFLAG groups to such a degree that it suggests a parental need for repentance about any impulse they might have had to reject gay children. Through PFLAG, this impulse was to be replaced with a script of unconditional love and acceptance. When Mary Borhek found out her son Eric was gay via a third party, she called him to say that she knew. The conversation was strained and awkward, but among the first things she recalled saying to her son was, "you are still my son. I won't disown you."[97] Parents could feel noble when they did not reject their children. This was the case in a letter of a desperate sounding mother to Mrs. Manford in 1973. She explained that when she found out her son was gay just a few years before, "I didn't take it too gracefully. I didn't understand so I went thru the whole bit, frustration, anger, refused to accept as being an irreversible thing, tears, defeat....."; however, she clarified "but at no time was he an outcast. We assured him he was loved....and he has been free to live at home."[98]

Registering this sentiment, PFLAG groups of the late 1970s and early 1980s praised as virtuous those parents who had not rejected their children. A tribute song by Leroy Dysart, "You Did It Out of Love" (1982), acknowledged the idea of excommunication in noting, "It would have been convenient just to turn your head/Pretend that we were dead, not even there." It then extolled parents for standing in the face of prejudice, particularly when "the forces that oppose us soon will have your

name/And try to bring you shame, because you care." The chorus, however, emphasized love, and the sacrifice that parents took on when they too became the victims of homophobia: "You didn't have to share our load, you didn't have to walk our road/But you did it out of love/You didn't have to hold our hand, you didn't have to un-der-stand/But you did it out of love."[99]

Organized parents in fact publicized the theme of child disowning to convey the urgency of their project. In a letter seeking to reconcile gays and religious institutions and leaders, Adele Starr, who with her husband Larry had started a Los Angeles parents' group in 1976 and was central in the formation of the national organization, wrote a letter to clergy members in 1985, urging them to realize that "misguided parents" were resulting in the "tragedies [of]....families torn apart and teenagers forced out of their homes."[100] In this vein, PFLAG groups portrayed disowning parents as parochial, intolerant, and cruel. The Pensacola PFLAG pamphlet, for example, used as its cover the quotation: "I would like to share a very personal part of my life with you, Mom and Dad.....You see, Mom and Dad, I want to tell you that I am a homosexual. And now I have a question: do you still love me?"[101] A poem in the pamphlet tried to capture a mother's feelings upon learning her son was gay: "Twenty years/of loving him/of being proud.....My God! Is it possible/that I let the trauma of a few/minutes wipe away/all of this?"[102]

But parents often did not reach this state of acceptance without soul searching or struggle. In fact, literature during the late 1970s and early 80s tended to highlight parents' transformations by conveying just how stunned and emotional they had been upon learning about their gay children, in narratives that seem almost histrionic or operatic

when they are compared to the more pragmatic and political parents' movement forerunners, such as Manford and Montgomery in the early 1970s, and their predecessors in the Mothers of the Year during the 1950s. Yet, these moments of domestic drama served as an effective narrative strategy to impel other parents to understanding. Were these stories, then, strategic or were they genuine recollections of these parents' emotions at the time? In *Now That You Know* (1979), Betty Fairchild recalled upon hearing her son utter the words, "I'm homosexual", that "everything in me shrieked NO! and my mind raced idiotically.... no grandchildren....awful!....can't be.....what did I do wrong....NO!"[103] She even wished her son had gotten a girl pregnant. Confiding these initial reactions perhaps served the purpose of heartening their readers that they too might yet have a transformation and love their gay children.

These parental memoirs are primarily written by mothers, and seem shaped by traces of a long standing tradition of women's sentimental advice and confessional literature.[104] Mary Borhek's memoir about her gay son, for example, was subtitled, "A mother struggles to accept her gay son and discovers herself." Borhek has recorded that after her son came out to her in 1975, she kept taped recordings of her feelings about the predicament, envisioning then that she would go on to write a book about how she had successfully prayed her son straight.[105] This was not of course the book that she would go on to write, but this profound shift in her initial purpose of writing might have spurred on her tone of broader transformations. The inset of her memoir reads: "How Does a Woman Grow? Sometimes painfully, even violently.....First came the divorce from her minister husband./Then came the revelation that her son was gay./Mary Borhek cried out, faltered, fought back, and then agonizingly began to grow."[106]

Borhek's unforeseen life turmoil was all bound up with having a gay son, but having a gay son did not ease her mind about the personal problems she faced. In her guidebook on coming out, she urged gay children to take account of how their revelations might coincide with other potentially grim realities of the life cycle. Parents in mid life "may be increasingly aware of their unfulfilled dreams, their mistaken decisions and choices in the past, the things they have not done that now may never be accomplished. They begin to realize that while they used to be able to keep going strong until 1 am, now they begin to wilt at 10 or 11 pm. They find their eyes at half-mast over the evening paper. They fall asleep watching television. The french fried onion rings they used to be able to eat...now cause indigestion, and feet that never hurt before start aching. The signs are there: *I am getting old*."[107] Through this somewhat suffocating domestic scene of tiredness, grumpiness, and infirmity, Borhek suggested that gay children could become emblematic of just another dream gone wrong.

In fact, as PFLAG emerged as a national movement after 1982, the idea of gay children disrupting family equilibrium was coming to the forefront. It is as though a parent's disquiet in learning that a child was gay equaled the child's own pain and struggle in coming to terms with gay sexuality. While organized parents in the early 1970s upbraided other parents for being more concerned with their own feelings or what the neighbours thought than with their own children, later literature would identify this fear as a genuine and understandable concern on the part of parents. In the PFLAG pamphlet, "Can We Understand?" (1983), a section called "Parents' Concerns for Themselves" included the two sub-sections "Should we Tell the Family?" and "What will the neighbors say?", both suggesting that parents would need to come to some level

of comfort with their children's sexuality before they could garner the strength to challenge the ignorance and prejudices of others.[108] Even some of the founders of PFLAG as a national organization, Larry and Adele Starr, were quoted in *The Advocate* in 1983 as saying "you can't really say which is the more difficult: for a parent to learn that a child is gay or for a son or daughter to come out to parents."[109] Dr. Mary Calderone, in paying tribute to the New York City parents' organization in 1982, concurred: "Like their children's own feelings on discovering their homosexuality, most parents on first learning of it feel utterly alone and without support."[110]

The tension and uneasiness between the idea of what children appeared to be--heterosexual--and what they really were--gay--deepened during these years. One manifestation was the anxious metaphor of the child's gayness as a child's death. In this understanding, a gay child would feel like a death to parents, at least until the moment that parents came to terms with it. David and Shirley Switzer's book, *Parents of the Homosexual* (1980), geared towards Christians, suggested in a chapter entitled, "We've Lost Our Child", that it was common "for parents initially to experience the fact of their daughter's/son's homosexuality as if that person had died....parents experience the revelation as a death: the loss of the valued person whom they thought and felt they had [as a daughter or son]."[111] This book is empathetic to parental grief, even while its central purpose is to convince parents to love their children in spite of their sexuality.

But PFLAG adopted this rhetoric as well. In fact, PFLAG literature emphasised Elizabeth Kubler Ross's stages of grief as ones that parents would go through when they found out their children were gay. The 1984 PFLAG publication, *Read This Before Coming Out to Your Parents*, affirmed that many parents would see their children's

orientations as a temporary loss, "almost a death, of the son or daughter they have known and loved" and suggested they would go through the phases of denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance that Kubler-Ross had proposed of the dying.[112] This death metaphor is especially poignant when compared to how the death metaphor for gay children came up in earlier periods. Twenty years prior to this, in *Good Housekeeping*, a gay child was conceived of as a reversible death. But now that organized parents were registering a greater sense of finality about sexuality, gay children were taking on connotations of a more unalterable death that parents would have to get used to in spite of their misgivings.

Mainstream media sources by the 1980s, too, would conceive of gay children in the family as analogous to a child's death, and an alarming social trend. *USA Today* for example recorded in 1983 that "Each year more gay young people than ever before 'come out'--and at a younger age. A growing number of parents--stunned by this trend--are getting support and reassurance from other parents in a national activist group," PFLAG, which acted as a "rap group for the distraught." In this same article, a gay activist was quoted as saying that the parents were usually "in such a state of shock and disarray....It's like this is the worst thing that can ever happen in a family. It's like a death.....a death of the aspirations they've had for their child."[113]

Because PFLAG offered the promise that parents might get to know their gay children, and even come to a greater parent/child intimacy, the story of PFLAG, at least ideally, ends in transformation and re-birth. Even disowning a gay child could be a reversible act. "Sally", a mother raising a son during the 1970s and 80s, who would become the subject of a 1993 PFLAG promotional video entitled "With Arms That

Encircle", reflected that she wished she could have provided more support of her son's effeminate interests when he was a boy, such as his dance lessons. She would have done so, she felt, if she had received education about homosexuality and not been so scared about it. The video goes on to tell the story of her son's eventual estrangement from his family and his church as a young man. The commentator said that though this period of not talking caused "great disappointment and anxiety, it was also a time for transformation." And for Sally-- and here the commentator smiled widely and knowingly--this time was "the beginning of acceptance." Sally then returned to tell of her first anxious PFLAG meeting and the subsequent Mother's Day, when, sitting alone, still incommunicado with her son, he turned up at her door with a bouquet of flowers. He had not known that she had started going to PFLAG nor that she had made progress. Clearly broken up and emotional over this memory, she did manage to say, "And that was the beginning of a totally new relationship between us. And I have to say that I look at my perfect family in an entirely different way now."[114] The commentator emphasised that this could be the reality in anyone's family, if they simply reached out, "with arms that encircle."

These often confessional stories about parents' feelings placed parents at the centre of the parents-of-gays movement. It had always been a movement by and for parents, of course. But gradually, as PFLAG emerged as a national organization during the early 1980s, a sense of the primacy of children's needs and rights that the forerunners to PFLAG had accentuated had given way, in the movement's literature and advertising, to those of their parents. In contrast to the early organized parents who found parental self-pity to be self indulgent, a distraction from the political project, later PFLAGers

would come to expect and validate a need for parent-centered grief and healing through therapeutic nurturance.[115] As gay children gradually came to be seen as a potential crisis for family life, parental responses to them became more strictly focussed internally and psychologically on the parental image of and investment in their children, and the integrity of the family, rather than a broad range of social justice and activism.

How did this ethos of parent grief come to be, when parents of gays had in fact eased the burden of having gay children, through the movement's rhetoric of innate biological reality or sexual condition? A rhetoric developed to defend gay children also seemed to leave parents feeling more cognizant of and resigned to the permanence of their gay children's sexuality. Permanence was likewise a theme suggested in reformist gay activism during this period and the parents' movement had some overlap with these activists. John D'Emilio and Estelle Freedman have noted that gay movements of the mid and later 1970s were more likely themselves to have discussed a fixed sexual orientation rather than polymorphous desires characteristic of earlier gay activists.[116] Given this context, parents were less likely to have an alternative psychological or political framework through which to view or imagine their children's gayness. Instead of seeing their children's gayness from the perspective of civil rights and attempting to change their children's political reality, by the end of the 1970s, the thrust of the parents' movement became more about urging its members, and hostile outsiders, to see that these children were really and definitively gay. The activist vision and focus on children was replaced by a therapeutic movement that had collapsed in upon itself.

Critics of this period have charged the politicization of the personal during the 1970s with the potential for overwhelming self absorption, an "apolitical interiority" as

Donald Freedheim called it.[117] North American society in the 1970s was quite conscious of the self, and as Irene Taviss Thomson notes, a society with a growing ethos that one must "work" at intimacy.[118] Was the desire for social change becoming replaced by a desire for self-realization, as Christopher Lasch charged, even among the parents-of-gays movement? Or were these parents actually having a far more intimate realization about their children's inner worlds that earlier parents had failed to register? The later group of parents might have been the first to look upon their children as unequivocally gay, especially as PFLAG emerged as a national organization after 1982. The baldness of their children's gayness, coupled with a sense of siege that parents might have felt in the wake of the New Right's ideas about gays and family life, combined to leave the parents-of-gays movement in a profoundly paradoxical spot.[119] As parents increasingly acknowledged the reality of their children's sexuality, they sounded more dramatic and less practical about their feelings, and perhaps more saddened and less reassured. As parents called for more intimacy between parents and children, they increasingly offered a rigid coming out script that foreclosed the spontaneous mutual exploration of those feelings. As parents disavowed any traces of family influence on their children's sexuality, they repudiated the influence of the family within the context of a movement whose very purpose was to affirm the position of parents in the family lives of gays. And yet, the parents' movement and the literature that it spawned were also intended to give voice to and channel an array of confusing and contradictory feelings about these gay children. Whatever else they were in the parents' rhetoric, gay children were now undeniably real.

[1] Lesbian Herstory Archives, Serial #79-7, Julie Lee, Letter to "Jane," January 15, 1974, 1.

[2] IGIC Ephemera, Organizations, Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays, MSS. and Archives Section, New York Public Library, Announcement, Parents of Gays, April 3, 1973.

[3] For the sake of clarity, I will be calling these parents primarily "organized parents of gays" or "activist parents" or "sympathetic parents." As the movement gathers steam between the late 1970s and early 1980s I will sometimes refer to them as "early PFLAG parents".

[4] Some psychiatrists continued to oppose homosexuality as a healthy identity. In spite of the removal of homosexuality from the DSM IV list in 1973, and a range of sympathetic psychology published in the early and mid 1970s, such as George Weinberg's Society and the Healthy Homosexual (New York: St Martin's Press, 1972), there remained many ambivalent treatments of homosexuality. See, for example, Martin Hoffman's The Gay World (New York: Bantam, 1969 and 1973), which backed up Irving Bieber's observations about the families of homosexuals. Less ambivalently, the American Psychological Association had been deeply divided by the decision to remove homosexuality from the DSM. Psychologists such as Paul Cameron used his research as a way to campaign against gay civil rights. Now chair of the Family Research Institute, he and others like him still practice conversion therapy enthusiastically.

[5] On the structurelessness of the GLF vs. the structure of the GAA see Toby Marotta's chapter on the GAA in The Politics of Homosexuality, 145 ff. See also his descriptions of GAA zaps, 178 ff. And see Clendinen and Nagourney, Out for Good, 189 ff.

[6] Jim Gallagher, "How She Accepted Her Homosexual Son," *San Francisco Examiner* (Tues. July 10, 1973). Leonore Acanfora in fact became an early mother activist who defended her gay son's right to teach in Pennsylvania during the early 1970s.

[7] Randy Wicker, "A Conversation With Sarah Montgomery, Grandma Lib: How To Tell Mom You're Gay," *GAY* 5, no. 112 (March 1974): 6 (6,7,15).

[8] Regina Kahney, "Sarah Montgomery: Everybody's Favorite Mother," *The Empty Closet* (January 1977): 7 (p. 6, 7,and 9).

[9] Maureen Oddone, "Moving Out of Another Closet," *The Advocate* 241 (May 17, 1978): 19 (p. 18-19).

[10] IGIC Jeanne Manford, MSS. and Archives Section, New York Public Library, Box 1, File 6: Correspondence 1978, "Parents of Gay People of the Greater Bay Area," 1978.

[11] Troy Perry, The Lord Is My Shepherd and He Knows I'm Gay: The Autobiography of the Rev. Troy D. Perry (Los Angeles: Nash Publishing, 1972); Foreword by Mrs. Edith Allen Perry, p. 2 (of 3).

[12] Jean Smith, "What Parents of Gay Children Fear Most is Their Children," *Insight: A Quarterly of Gay Catholic Opinion* (Winter 1977): 15 (of 16).

[13] Betty Fairchild, Parents of Gays (Washington, DC: Parents of Gays, 1975), 2.

[14] Ibid., 6.

[15] Ibid., 2 of "The 'No-Magic-Answer' List."

[16] Wicker, "A Conversation With Sara Montgomery: Grandma Lib," p. 6. Montgomery even took part in the National Gay Task Force's campaigns to encourage gays to support their own people. In an advertisement appearing in the NGTF journal, *It's Time*, throughout the mid and later 1970s, entitled, "To All Closet Gays," she urged gays to give money to their cause. "I certainly do not wish to intrude on anyone's life," she said, "but I see a great need....and [appeal] to all gays who are well off to help your beautiful and valiant young gays to carry on their fight against ignorance and bigotry." See *It's Time* 1, no. 4, (June-July 1975): 2.

[17] Cornell University, Rare and Manuscripts Collection, PFLAG 7616, "Parents of Gays and Lesbians Speak Out," 1977.

[18] On this, see D'Emilio and Freedman, Intimate Matters, 323-324. See also "How Gay is Gay?" *Time Magazine* (April 23, 1979): 72-77.

[19] IGIC Jeanne Manford, MSS. and Archives Section, New York Public Library, Box 1, File 1, Letter "Dear President Ford," August 18, 1974, p. 1 (of 2).

[20] Ibid., 2.

[21] On Queens as the "Middle America" of New York, see John Paul Hudson, "My Son is Gay," *The Advocate* 112 (May 23, 1973): 2.

[22] See Judy Klemesrud, "For Homosexuals, It's Getting Less Difficult To Tell Parents," *The New York Times* (Friday, September 1, 1972): 32.

[23] See Douglas Sarff, " 'Parents of Gays' Help Others Understand," *Newswest*, August 7, 1975, no page number.

[24] This 1973 letter to "Mrs. Jones" has been reproduced in several places; see, for example, *Homosexual Counseling Journal* 2, no. 1 (January 1975): 28 (26-33). For originals, see IGIC Jeanne Manford, MSS. and Archives Section, New York Public Library, Box 1, File 1: Correspondence, 1972-74, Feb. 14, 1973.

[25] IGIC Jeanne Manford, Box 1, File 4: Correspondence 1977, "Dear Mr. Kilpatrick," (June 6, 1977): 1.

[26] See Rebecca Klatch, "The Two Worlds of Women of the New Right," 529-552 in Louise A. Tilly and Patricia Gurin, eds., Women, Politics, and Change (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1990), 529- 530. See also Alan Crawford, Thunder on the Right: The New Right and the Politics of Resentment (New York: Pantheon, 1980), 166.

[27] See both Bruce Schulman, The Seventies: The Great Shift in American Culture, Society, and Politics (New York: The Free Press, 2001), and Dan Carter, The Politics of Rage: George Wallace, The Origins of the New Conservatism, and the Transformation of American Politics (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995). And see David Steigerwald, The Sixties and the End of Modern America, 243.

[28] See Susan Sontag, AIDS and Its Metaphors, (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1988), 63.

[29] On this, see Tom Kemp, The Climax of Capitalism: The U.S. Economy in the Twentieth Century (London and New York: Longman, 1990) and Leonard Silk, ed. The U.S. and the World Economy: The Postwar Years (New York Times: Arno Press, 1976). On Canada's economy during these years, see Kenneth Norrie and Doug Owram, A History of the Canadian Economy (Toronto: Harcourt and Brace, 1991).

[30] Nancy Walker has an intriguing argument about 1950s nostalgia in her book, Shaping Our Mothers' World. She argues that the 1950s nostalgia was in fact a product of the 1950s, not the 1970s, during a time

when many families realized a disparity between what their socioeconomic reality actually was and desires that the pop culture promoted. See 18. For more standard interpretations of 1950s nostalgia, see Stephanie Koontz, The Way We Never Were: American Families and the Nostalgia Trap (New York: Basic Books, 1992). On 1950s nostalgia in popular culture, see Elsebeth Harup, "Bridge Over Troubled Water: Nostalgia for the 50s in Movies of the Seventies and Eighties" in Dale Carter, ed. Cracking the Ike Age: Aspects of 50s America (Aarhus University Press, 1992), 56-76.

[31] On laissez-faire conservatives vs. social conservatives, see again Klatch, "The Two Worlds of Women of the New Right," 540 and her book, Women of the New Right (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987).

[32] On the establishment of no-fault divorces and the legalization of abortion and their impacts, see Steven Mintz, "Regulating the American Family", P. 9-31 in Joseph M. Hawes and Elizabeth I. Nybakken, Family and Society in American History (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2001) and Carolyn Johnston, Sexual Power: Feminism and the Family in America (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2002), 273-276. Between 1960 and 1980, the divorce rate was up by over 200%, there was a rising incidence of premarital sex, a rise of cohabitation between men and women, and a more widespread embrace of birth control. (D'Emilio and Freedman, Intimate Matters, p. 334-335). During these years, violent incidents and bombings at abortion clinics climbed, especially during the early and mid 1980s. See also Carroll, It Seemed Like Nothing Happened, 268-269. While no fault divorce had swept Canada and the U.S. in the early 1970s, abortions were hotly contested in both countries, despite legal changes in Canada, in 1969, when contraception was legalized, allowing abortions under some restricted conditions, and despite *Roe vs. Wade* in 1973 in the U.S. Abortions remained difficult for women in rural areas and poor women who lacked access to these medical facilities.

[33] On American Protestant conservatism, see Sharon Linzey Georgianna, The Moral Majority and Fundamentalism: Plausibility and Dissonance (Queenston, Ontario: Edwin Mellen Press, 1989). On the New Right's emphasis on issues related to sexuality and the family, see Barbara Ehrenreich, "Family Feud on the Left," *The Nation* (March 13, 1982) cover and p. 303-306. See also Kenneth Heineman, God is a Conservative: Religion, Politics, and Morality in Contemporary America (New York University Press, 1998).

[34] See Klatch, "The Two Worlds of Women of the New Right," p. 534, and her book Women of the New Right, 47.

[35] On the bread dough that Phyllis Schlafly made, see Kathleen C. Berkeley, The Women's Liberation in America (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1999), 85.

[36] See Johnston, Sexual Power, 277. See also Schulman, The Seventies, 170 and 187. On issues of family values and their relatively minor presence within Canadian political rhetoric, see, for example, Paul Mazar, "Gay and Lesbian Rights in Canada: A Comparative Study," *International Journal of Public Administration* 25, 1 (2002): 45-63. On the Canadian anti-gay and "pro-family" movement of the 1980s, please see "It's All in the Family," *The Body Politic* (December 1986): 11. On Canadian REAL Women, (Realistic, Equal, Active for Life) Women (1983), which, like their American New Right counterparts, had a Christian base, and opposed the social changes of the 1970s that had some bearing on family life such as abortion, no-fault divorce, publicly funded daycare, and legal rights to gays, see Alison Prentice et al., Canadian Women: A History (Toronto: Harcourt and Brace, 1996), 452.

[37] IGIC, Jeanne Manford, Box 2: File 4 "Newsletters from Outside NYC,": "Anita Bryant's Letter to her Supporters".

[38] Schulman, The Seventies, 232; see also B. Drummond Ayres, Jr. "Miami Debate Over Rights of Homosexuals Directs Wide Attention to a National Issue," *The New York Times* (May 10, 1977): 18. And see Clendinen and Nagourney, Out for Good, 299 ff.

[39] See Carroll, It Seemed Like Nothing Happened, 291.

[40] See "Anita Bryant Defeats Miami Gay Rights Ordinance," 1978, in Walter Williams and Yolanda Retter, eds. Gay and Lesbian Rights in the U.S.: A Documentary History (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2003), P. 143. This was taken from an interview Anita Bryant had done with *Playboy* in 1978.

[41] This image was in an article appearing in *It's Time: Newsletter of the National Gay Task Force* 5, no. 8 (October 1978), by Bill Doubleday and J.E. Myers, "First 'Week of Dialogue' Set for October 22-28," p. 1-3.

[42] On the Briggs Initiative, see D'Emilio, "Gay Politics and Community in San Francisco Since World War Two," 456-473, in Hidden From History: Reclaiming the Gay and Lesbian Past (New York: Meridian, 1989), 468-469. And see Clendinen and Nagourney, Out for Good, 376 ff.

[43] For a portrait of Dan White's defence, see Emily Mann, "Execution of Justice," 162 in Don Shewey, ed. Out Front: Contemporary Gay & Lesbian Plays (New York: Grove Press, 1988), 149-220. And see John D'Emilio, "Gay Politics and Community in San Francisco Since World War Two," 470-471.

[44] See David Rothenberg, "Another Voice," *Gaysweek* 83, (September 25, 1978): 19.

[45] For a discussion on waning gay radicalism in favour of reformist strategies, see Miller, Out of the Past, 422 ff., as well as Molly McGarry and Fred Wasserman, ed. Becoming Visible: An Illustrated History of Lesbian and Gay Life in the Twentieth Century (New York Public Library: Penguin Studio, 1998), 167 ff. See also Daniel Harris's lament of increasing commercialization in the gay world, an inadvertent consequence he perceived of gay liberation, in his The Rise and Fall of Gay Culture (New York: Ballantine Books, 1997). The dispersal of the gay liberation movement mirrored the dispersal of the New Left into academics, labour organizations, etc. On this see Steigerwald, The Sixties and the End of Modern America, 147.

[46] See the interview with Morty Manford in Marcus, Making Gay History, 211, and see also p. 257 for a discussion of the dispersal of gay liberation's youth contingent.

[47] For details on the shift from the GAA to the NGTF in 1973, see again Marotta, The Politics of Homosexuality, 320 ff. The NGTF was joined by other groups such as the National Coalition for Black Lesbians and Gays (1978), and the Human Rights Campaign Fund (1980). See Marcus, Making Gay History, 172.

[48] For a dicussion of the "We ARE Your Children" campaign, see the organization's Press Release of June 13, 1977. For some gay responses, see David Rothenberg, "Family Defense: The Contradictions" in *Long Island Connection* (April 25-May 9, 1984), Section 1: 37.

[49] See *It's Time: Newsletter of the National Gay Task Force* 5, no. 8 (October 1978): 1-3.

[50] Betty Fairchild, "For Parents of Gays: A Fresh Perspective," in Betty Berzon and Robert Leighton, eds. Positively Gay (Millbrae, California: Celestial Arts, 1979), 103-104. (101-112)

[51] Cornell University, Division of Rare and Manuscripts Collection, PFLAG, 7616, Audio Tape, 90-A122, "Accepting Your Gay or Lesbian Child: Parents Share Their Stories" (Boulder, Colorado: Sounds Time Recordings, 1990).

[52] IGIC Ephemera, PFLAG, Essay "Parents of Lesbians of Gay Men Protest the Persecution," 1 (of 4).

[53] IGIC, Jeanne Manford, Box 1, File 4, "Correspondence: 1977", Ann Landers, "Parents Shouldn't Reject Homosexual Son" in *Pensacola News Journal*, September 8, 1977, and Jean Smith, "Dear Ann Landers," September 8, 1977.

[54] Abigail Van Buren, "Don't Blame Yourself," *Choice* (14 August, 1981): 59.

[55] This cultural practice of trying to evoke a reader's empathy through something perhaps horrific was also a technique of sentimental fiction in nineteenth century America. See Shirley Samuels' discussion of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in The Culture of Sentiment: Race, Gender and Sentimentality (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 4.

[56] On the murder of Robert Hillsborough, see Clendinen and Nagourney, Out for Good, 319.

[57] On the low sales of her book, see Rodger Streitmatter, Unspeakable, 219. And on Johnny Carson making jokes at Bryant's expense, see Clendinen and Nagourney, Out for Good, 329.

[58] IGIC, Jeanne Manford, Box 1, File 4, "Correspondence: 1977," Jean Smith, "Parents of Gays vs. Anita", June 1, 1977.

[59] On this idea, see Paula Fass, Kidnapped: Child Abduction in America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

[60] IGIC Jeanne Manford, Box 2, Folder 5, "Non PFLAG Newsletters," Jean Smith, "The Key to the Closet: Dedicated to the Gay Community of Pensacola--For Helping Me to Understand," May 26, 1978, Third Annual Florida Gay Conference, Tallahassee, Florida.

[61] IGIC Ephemera, PFLAG, Essay "Parents of Lesbians of Gay Men Protest the Persecution," 2 (of 4).

[62] IGIC Jeanne Manford, Box 1, File 4, "Correspondence 1977," "Dear Mr. Tanno," September 12, 1977, p. 2 (of 2).

[63] For PFLAG's shared mandate with groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous and Overeaters Anonymous, see Public Affairs Pamphlet No. 559, by Elizabeth Ogg, "Partners in Coping: Groups for Self and Mutual Help" (New York: Public Affairs Committee, 1978) and Dali Castro, "We Love Our Gay Children Too," *Parents of Gays National Newsletter* 1 (April, 1980): p. S 4.

[64] Sandra Rivard, "Listen World! My Son is Gay. Accept Him--Please," *Living* (Sunday, February 26, 1976): p. D.

[65] See Jo Brans, Mother, I Have Something to Tell You (New York: Doubleday, 1987).

[66] IGIC, Jeanne Manford, Box 1, File 13: Clippings, Ellie Grossman, "Groups that Want to Help," 1979.

[67] IGIC, Jeanne Manford, Box 2, File 12, Publications: "If Man Were Meant to Fly....", p. 1 (of 10), (Anderson, S.C.: Orthodox-Catholic Church, No Date.)

[68] Ibid., 3 (of 10).

[69] On the dangers of new reproductive technologies, and sex changes, see, for example, Robert and Anna Francoeur, The Future of Sexual Relations (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1974).

[70] Regina Kahney, "Everybody's Favorite Mother," 7.

[71] Ibid, 7.

[72] Ibid, 9.

[73] IGIC, Jeanne Manford, Box 1, File 1, "Correspondence: 1972-74", Mary C. Milam, "My Son is Gay," 1973, p. 1 (of 6).

[74] IGIC, Jeanne Manford, Box 1, File 4, "Correspondence: 1977," Letter to "Jules Manford," Sept. 5, 1977 p. 2 (of 2).

[75] Mary Borhek, Coming Out to Parents: a Two Way Survival Guide for Lesbians and Gay Men and their Parents (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 1983), 17.

[76] On parents talking to their children about sex during the postwar period, see, for example, Sol Gordon and Irving R. Dickman, Sex Education: the Parents' Role (New York: Public Affairs Pamphlet No. 549, 1977), p. 18-19 as well as other more popular works such as Arkady Leokum, Tell Me Why: Answers to Questions Children Ask About Love, Sex, and Babies (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1974), which included a section of questions on homosexuality such as "How do homosexuals have sex?" and "What makes a person a homosexual?"

[77] In fact, a survey of high school youth in the early 1980s found that almost half had learned nothing about sex--presumably heterosexual sex--from their parents. D'Emilio and Freedman, Intimate Matters, 341.

[78] The Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation had formed by 1985, primarily spurred on by sensationalized AIDS coverage during the early 1980s, but also as an agency that would monitor media and pop culture portrayals of gays in song lyrics and mainstream movies, for example. It was presaged by a huge gay outcry against the movie "Cruising."

[79] On the CBS News report, see Clendinen and Nagourney, Out for Good, 449.

[80] Mary Borhek, Coming Out to Parents, 117.

[81] Gloria Guss Back, Are You Still My Mother? Are You Still My Family?, (New York: Warner Books, 1985), 230.

[82] Fairchild, "For Parents of Gays: A Fresh Perspective", in Positively Gay , 106.

[83] Borhek, Coming Out to Parents, 73.

[84] See, for example, Parents and Friends of Gays, "About Our Children" (Los Angeles, 1978), 5 ; see also Helaine Lovett Michaels, "When Your Child Is Gay--The Shock and the Acceptance," *Single Parent*, (November 1981): 23 (p. 20-23) : see also IGIC, Jeanne Manford, Box 2, File 3: "Newsletters: NYC PFLAG," "Did You 'Myth' This One?"

[85] The organization took a particularly firm stance against the North American Man Boy Love Association (NAMBLA). One PFLAG group even withdrew from the Community Council of Long Island over NAMBLA's admission to their scene. On this, see *Long Island Connection*, Section 1 (August 17-31, 1983): 15. By 1993, PFLAG had issued a press statement outright denouncing NAMBLA. See Cornell University, Division of Rare and Manuscripts Collection, PFLAG 7616, Box 43, "Press Statement: PFLAG Denounces NAMBLA and Sexual Exploitation of Children."

[86] Parents and Friends of Gays, "About Our Children" (Los Angeles, 1978), 4.

[87] Borhek, Coming Out to Parents, 70.

[88] Marlene Fanta Shyer and Christopher Shyer, Not Like Other Boys: Growing Up Gay: A Mother and Son Look Back (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1996), 20.

[89] Ibid., 57.

[90] Mary Borhek, My Son Eric (New York City: Pilgrim Press, 1979), 76.

[91] Gloria Guss Back, Are You Still my Mother? Are You Still My Family?, 95.

[92] Cornell University, Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, PFLAG Collection, 7616, *Can We Understand?* (New York City Parents of Lesbians and Gay Men, Inc., 1983), 6.

[93] I am thinking here of memoirs of mental illness such as Joanne Greenberg's account I Never Promised You a Rose Garden (New York: New American Library, 1964 and 1976), memoirs of incest such as Charlotte Vale Allen, Daddy's Girl (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1980), or Katherine Brady, Father's Days: A True Story of Incest (New York: Seaview, 1979), and a large outpouring of feminist studies of wife abuse such as Del Martin, Battered Wives (San Francisco: Glide Publications, 1976), and the documentaries "Loved, Honoured, and Bruised" (Montreal: National Film Board of Canada, 1982) and "Wife Beating" (New York: National Broadcasting, 1977). In the visual media, Phil Donahue's groundbreaking expose talk show opened up the forum to previously undiscussed issues, with topics such as "Women who Love Porn" in 1975. In the 1980s, he did a number of shows on gays including "From Gay to Straight: Conversion Therapy," "Gay Characters on TV," (1984) and "Lesbian Nuns" (1985).

[94] On self- help movements and their origins, see Alan Gartner and Frank Riessman, The Self Help Revolution (New York: Human Sciences, 1974). See also Elizabeth Ogg, "Partners in Coping: Groups for Self and Mutual Help" (New York: Public Affairs Pamphlet No. 559, 1978), which discussed the Alcoholics Anonymous movement (which actually had its origins in the 1930s but became more mainstream in the 1970s with spin-off organizations for the families of alcoholics), the group SHARE "Self Help Action and Rap Experience," Parents Without Partners (PWP) founded in 1957, and other parental support groups for parents who had children with learning disabilities, physical handicaps, and emotional problems.

[95] On this, see Gerard Vincent, "A History of Secrets?" 145-231 in Antoine Prost and Gerard Vincent, eds. Vol. V A History of Private Life, 167.

[96] IGIC Jeanne Manford Collection, Box 1, File 10, "How to Come Out to Family and Friends", Parents and Friends of Gays Information, Los Angeles, No Date.

[97] Borhek, My Son Eric, 30.

[98] IGIC, Jeanne Manford, Box 1, File 9, "Correspondence: 1970s," "Dear Sir," February 5, 1973, p. 1.

[99] For these song lyrics, see *PFG San Francisco Newsletter* (November, 1984), p. 3 ; to listen to this song, see the PFLAG audio tape, "Accepting Your Gay or Lesbian Child: Parents Share Their Stories" (Boulder, CO: Sounds Time Recordings, 1990).

[100] IGIC Ephemera Organizations, PFLAG, Federation of Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays, Inc., "Dear Member of the Clergy," 25 January, 1985.

[101] IGIC, Jeanne Manford. Box 2, File 12, Publications: "If Man Were Meant to Fly....", p. 5 (of 10), Anderson, S.C.: Orthodox-Catholic Church, No Date.

[102] Ibid., 6.

[103] See Betty Fairchild and Nancy Hayward, Now That You Know, (San Diego: Harcourt Brace, 1998 [1979]), 4.

[104] On women's sentimental culture, see Lori Merish, Sentimental Materialism: Gender, Commodity, and Culture in Nineteenth Century American Literature (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000), 79; and

see Andrew Burstein, Sentimental Democracy: The Evolution of America's Romantic Self Image (New York: Hill and Wang, 1999). See again Donald K. Freedheim's discussion of the American self in the nineteenth century in his introduction to A History of Psychotherapy, 33.

[105] I am getting this bit of history from Borhek's biographical statement on www.lgbtran.org, in the Religious Archives Network.

[106] This inset is from the edition of My Son Eric published in 1979 by the Pilgrim Press (New York).

[107] Mary Borhek, Coming Out to Parents: A Two Way Survival Guide for Lesbians and Gay Men and Their Parents, 13.

[108] Cornell University, Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, PFLAG 7616, *Can We Understand?,* (New York City Parents of Lesbians and Gay Men, Inc., 1983), 6.

[109] Charles Faber, "Parents and Friends and an Organization to Support Them," *The Advocate*, Issue 359 (January 6, 1983): 22 (of 23).

[110] This is in the newsletters from the NYC Parents of Lesbians and Gay Men, Inc., "Mary Calderone Salutes Parents of Gays on Their Ninth Anniversary", Sunday, January 31, 1982, Lenox Hill Station, New York.

[111] David and Shirley Switzer, Parents of the Homosexual (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, Christian Care Books: Help For Living Today, 1980), 25.

[112] See T. H. Sauerman, Read This Before Coming Out to Parents, 6 (1984). These are the very phases Kubler-Ross noted in her dying parents; see Elizabeth Kubler-Ross On Death and Dying: What the Dying Have to Teach Doctors, Nurses, Clergy, and Families (New York: Touchstone, 1969).

[113] Marilyn Elias, "Gay Children, Sad Parents, And Help for Them Both," *USA Today* (Monday, January 31, 1983): p. 8D.

[114] "With Arms That Encircle", PFLAG Wichita, Kansas, 1993.

[115] On self-help's function for this sense of nurturance, see Eva S. Moskowitz, In Therapy We Trust: America's Obsession with Self Fulfillment (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 2001).

[116] See D'Emilio and Freedman, Intimate Matters, 323.

[117] See again Freedheim, A History of Psychotherapy, 32. This thought was backed up by Philip Rieff in his work, The Triumph of the Therapeutic: Uses of Faith After Freud (New York: Penguin, 1973 [1966]), and of course Lasch, The Culture of Narcissism.

[118] See Irene Taviss Thomson, In Conflict No Longer: Self and Society in Contemporary America (Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000), 70. She cites such work as Robert J. Ringer, Looking Out for Number One (1977) and Mildred Newman and Bernard Berkowitz, How to be Your Own Best Friend (1971). Family intimacy also was a popular theme of the commercial press. I am thinking particularly here of the failure of intimacy with men, in books such as Steven Naifeh and Gregory White Smith, Why Can't Men Open Up? Overcoming Men's Fear of Intimacy (New York: Clarkson Potter, 1984).

[119] For particular 1980s concerns about family life, including the increasing trend of mothers working, see Koontz, The Way We Never Were, 149. And see also Elaine Tyler May, "Myths and Realities of the American Family," in Prost and Vincent, eds., Vol. V History of Private Life: Riddles of Identity in Modern Times, p.589. On working mothers and social change at the popular level, see, B. Hazen and Deborah Calvin Borgo, Why Can't You Stay Home With Me? (New York: Golden Books, 1986) and

Jeanne Deschamps Stanton, Being All Things: How to be a Wife, Lover, Boss, and Mother (and Still be Yourself) (New York: Doubleday, 1988).

Figure 14. Advertisement for "Parents of Gays," 1973

PARENTS OF GAYS

NEWLY FORMED DISCUSSION GROUP

for mothers and fathers of Lesbians and Gay males.

The first gathering of PARENTS OF GAYS was held March 11. An enthusiastic and energetic assemblage of parents of Lesbians and Gay males met, for the first time, other parents similarly concerned with common family situations.

"How do I relate to my child ?"

"What should I say to friends and family ?"

"Did I make any mistakes ?"

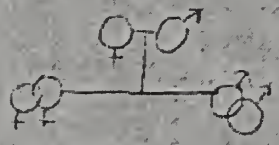
"Why aren't more parents coming to these meetings ?"

"What can we do to help our daughters and sons ?"

JOIN THIS DYNAMIC GROUP OF PARENTS

Learn from their experiences

Share with them your experiences



The next meeting of Parents of Gays Will be held:

Tuesday, April 3rd 1973
8 p.m.
United Methodist Church
(corner, 7th Avenue and 13th Street, Manhattan)

For further information: Barbara Love
Morty Lenford 212 691-6431

Figure 15. Advertisement for Pro Family Rally, re-printed in *It's Time: Newsletter of National Gay Task Force*, 1978

CHAPTER 5

'EVERY GENERATION HAS ITS WAR'

When the AIDS activist group ACT-UP, AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power, staged street theatre oriented protests in the later 1980s, one of their iconographic Ronald Reagan posters asked the question: 'What If Your Son Gets Sick?'[1] [Figure 16] The question was deliberately provocative, of course, part of the ongoing needling about the president's son's sexuality that was present in both gay activist and gay humour sources, but it also had a more somber underlying intention: gay men dying with AIDS were indeed sons who would be mourned by their parents even in traditional families.[2] In a society that increasingly reinforced polarities between the so called innocent victims of the disease and the presumably immoral ones, the simple idea that those dying with AIDS were family members was a poignant one.

When AIDS first became known in the early 1980s, it was deemed purely a gay disease. Doctors at the UCLA Medical Center and in New York City were puzzled that young gay men in their 20s and 30s were dying with pneumocystis pneumonia (PCP), an infection normally only seen in transplant or cancer patients. Some were suffering with a particularly virulent strain of Kaposi's sarcoma, a disfiguring skin cancer characterized by purple and brown lesions, previously only seen in aging Mediterranean men, and even then considered not to be life threatening.[3] These patients all showed a lowering of their immune function, their bodies unable to ward off even typically harmless infections. Doctors first referred to these symptoms as GRID, or Gay Related Immune Disorder, and

only called the condition AIDS, or Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome, after the Center for Disease Control renamed the epidemic in 1982. Before Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) transmission became understood in 1984, early theories about the disease suggested that gay men contracted it through an immune overload that was the consequence of spending sleepless nights at gay bars and discothèques, inhaling poppers, and having promiscuous sex.[4] Early media reports followed suit by calling the disease the "Gay Plague."[5]

AIDS casualties multiplied rapidly throughout the 1980s: in 1981, the mortality rate was 225, jumping to 1,400 by 1983, 15,000 by 1985, 40,000 by 1987, and over 100,000 by 1990.[6] The great majority of these deaths were young men between the ages 25 and 44.[7] The disease spread rapidly within urban centres, most notably New York City, San Francisco and Los Angeles. In Canada, where AIDS was initially seen as an American disease, AIDS cases multiplied first in major cities such as Montreal and Vancouver. After the mid 1980s, however, the disease had made its way to other North American cities and rural areas. [8]

Throughout the 1980s, AIDS had become a potent part of the politics and sensibility of the culture wars, the acrimonious divisions between social conservatives and traditionalists on the one hand, and social liberals and pluralists, on the other, in the late twentieth century United States. The body was often the site of these conflicts; controversy surrounded not just gay sexuality, but abortion, pornography, and sex education.[9] Within the public imagination, AIDS added a dimension of a frightening, visible disease to an already entrenched New Right notion that homosexuality was

unnatural.[10] As the Reagan-era Surgeon General C. Everett Koop noted, the disease was marked by mystery, fear and the unknown.[11] Those gay men who contracted it especially

during the early part of the decade were seen as abstract or alien figures who suffered as a 1985 *Newsweek* article suggested, "Miles from Home with No Place to Die."[12]

Many observers of the AIDS epidemic have thus characterized the disease as one that united gay men and lesbians as peers within volunteer care networks, bringing the notion of chosen families--of partners and friends--to the forefront. And yet, this disease also overlapped the social lives, experiences, and cultures of gay men and their families of origin. The family emerged in metaphors and images within gay activist rhetoric, figured in health advertising and gay fiction, and appeared in personal testimonies and correspondence. Throughout the 1980s, gay men who suffered with this disease and their families alike often felt a powerful sense of isolation: they may have felt abandoned by indifferent politicians, alienated by callous images in visual and print media sources, and discriminated against by a fearful health care system. The understanding of this discrimination allowed parents to feel a sense of gay rejection first hand, placing them closer to their gay children and intensifying the relationships--often ambivalently but nonetheless recognizably—between them and their gay sons. Simply by virtue of it being such a visible and horrific disease, the entire family often witnessed and wrote about AIDS, including siblings, grandparents, aunts and uncles, as well as parents. The observations of parallel generations and extended family bring a different but nonetheless powerful set of perceptions to family members with this disease. Family relationships in

the face of AIDS even prompted a collective gay reconceptualization of ideas of care, nurturance, family love, and primal bonds.

That AIDS was first named Gay Related Immune Deficiency Syndrome indicates the extent that it was perceived, at first by the medical community and then more broadly, as a disease inherently related to gay sexuality, conceived strictly as anal sex.[13] This was an interpretation that some family members embraced as well, persisting in folklore even after 1984 when the virus was named and understood better. Charles Gaver, a performance artist living with AIDS in Washington, chose to tell his father and siblings, living in the small town of Adrian, Michigan, about his illness in 1987. Gaver's artistry and lifestyle had long set him apart from his family. Though he worked as a paralegal at the Federal Trade Commission, he was also a successful performance poet, receiving one of the first grants awarded to an artist dealing with gay subject matter from Washington D.C.'s Commission on Arts and Humanities, and having reviews of his performances in the *Washington Post*. After he contracted AIDS, Gaver performed poems about his experiences with the disease. He also kept a careful diary of his illness, and preserved clippings and correspondence about it between 1987 and his death in 1989, calling these collections the *Fever Journal*.

At first, some members of his family were ignorant and fearful about his disease, and these fears seemed bound up with a squeamishness about his sexuality. When his sister Jill and brother-in-law John came for a visit, Gaver noted that "John had a case of 'AIDS paranoia' and claimed he got crabs from my apartment. His sister, a former nurse (who thinks you can get AIDS just from looking cross-eyed at someone), advised John to

disinfect all his clothes in Quell and A-200 when he returned to Michigan. Real dumb!" He noted that John's attitude was particularly "disturbing.....especially since he's 'family.'"[14] While polls of Americans in the mid-1980s showed that many still believed one could become infected with AIDS through coughs or handshakes, John's paranoia seems more informed by homophobia than illness: if he truly were worried simply about getting sick, perhaps he would not have been so concerned that he had 'crabs,' which does imply a transmission fear based on sexual, rather than more routine, contact.[15]

AIDS in the family brought gay sexuality and gay existence--real and imaginary--to the forefront. A short story by Sherman Yellin, "An Early Frost," which was to become the first movie to dramatize AIDS on network television in 1985, portrayed the tense, fraught relationship between a heterosexual father and his gay son. Mike is a lawyer in Chicago living with his partner, and his well-to-do parents live in New England. Coming out to his parents poses an insurmountable barrier. He tells them both that he is gay and has AIDS only when it cannot be put off any longer, after he becomes ill with a vicious strain of pneumonia. When he tries to touch his father to comfort him after his revelation however, his father draws back as if to punch his son, only to be restrained by the mother. His father silences any conversation on the topic: "I heard you," he says, "That you're homosexual, that you have this....disease." In fact, his father can scarcely bring himself to say the word gay, and when he does it is as if the word tastes awful and he has to get it out of his mouth quickly: "He's a.....what do they call it now, *gay*?"[16]

Parental portraits at times highlighted a more general male voyeurism and queasiness about gay sex, one that seemed to suggest, as playwright Tony Kushner said,

gay men deserved to die simply for having sex with each other.[17] Paul Reed created a father who embodies this perspective, in his 1984 book *Facing It*, one of the first AIDS novels in North America. This father already considered his gay son, Andy, "his greatest disappointment."[18] He could not abide his wife's mentioning his son's "disgusting illness" but on the other hand "[h]e wasn't surprised; he knew the sorts of vile things that queers did--fucking strangers in alleys, sucking every cock that comes along, in bus stations, public parks, anywhere they could satisfy their groping lusts for men's flesh. And there was worse, he knew....it was no wonder Andy was sick. The whole subject made him nauseous."[19] The uneasiness here seemed to go beyond gay sex, and reach into a revulsion about sexuality and bodies in general, one that was grafted onto his gay son and his imagined sexual practices.

This gay writer's creation of a homophobic father evoked a condemnation of sodomy that saw a wider circulation during the 1980s. Conservative writer and commentator William F. Buckley called up a prurient image of gay sex when he announced that every gay man with AIDS should have a tattoo declaring his disease "on the buttocks to prevent the victimization of other homosexuals."[20] Supreme Court judges reinforced the idea of sodomy as unnatural in the 1986 Bowers vs. Hardwick case by upholding the Georgia Sodomy Statute, one of the many state statutes prohibiting sodomy still on the books that were only overturned in 2003.[21] Michael Hardwick had been arrested for having sex with another man in his own bedroom; the Supreme Court justified this invasion of privacy for an act of consensual sodomy on the grounds that not all private acts at home between family members could be protected, placing sodomy on the same plane as crimes such as murder and incest. Upholding Hardwick's conviction,

the Supreme Court ruling said that this sexual behaviour had been denounced by a "millenia of moral teaching." Was this idea of sodomy informed by AIDS, as well as these millennia of moral teaching? Notably, sodomy restrictions were not applied to heterosexual sex.[22]

The connotations of anal sex and promiscuity discomfited some parents, and seemed to taint the unqualified sympathy they might have offered were the disease 'just' cancer, or a more morally neutral one. As Susan Sontag has pointed out, however, even cancer has been a disease fraught with interpretations of negligence: at times, individuals with cancer have been seen as self indulgent and irresponsible about their health, perhaps reflecting a distinctly American view of health as an individual, rather than a collective or state responsibility.[23] AIDS was especially vulnerable to the charge of individual neglect or irresponsibility. By the mid-1980s, mainstream American media sources and political culture had started distinguishing between "innocent" victims of the disease, such as newborns and the recipients of HIV-contaminated blood transfusions, and willful perpetrators of the disease, such as gay men or drug users.[24] Portraits of the innocents—especially hemophiliacs and children--were careful to show them as ingenuous, asexual beings. By contrast, portraits of gay men and drug users often showed them in urban settings, clustered together anonymously in bars, as if they had no daily life outside of promiscuity and certainly no families.[25]

These interpretations of the disease's sufferers also pervaded family life, and were apparent in the desire to understand the origins of illness within a gay son. Postulating the cause of disease was not, of course, unique to AIDS, and this might have been particularly the case during the 1980s when North American exercise and nutrition habits

came under a sharper scrutiny.[26] However, AIDS seemed to demand of parents that they defend their sons from the taint of promiscuity. Barbara Peabody, a mother who would go on to found the Mothers of AIDS Patients (MAP) organization in San Diego, reflected that her son had not "led an especially promiscuous life" and as far as she knew only had two lovers. However, she supposed "it was possible" that his sex life had been more active than she had imagined it. But "[e]ven so, [she] would never reject him, especially now."[27]

These assurances of their sons' innocence at times seem reminiscent of PFLAG rhetoric about the child's lack of choice in being gay, only here parents affirmed that their children did not choose to be sick. BettyClare Moffatt wrote a memoir combined with advice literature for families with a son with AIDS. Here she included a section written by her own mother to give a grandparent's perspective. This grandmother recalled feeling that her grandson, Michael, "would not....join that category of people most susceptible to AIDS!"[28] She knew well that AIDS was a "disease fraught with social stigma", and that if she told her friends that she had a grandson with AIDS, they would first want to know "Is he a homosexual?"[29] Religion played a role in her acceptance, however; she reminded herself that Christ had "walked with lepers," a group of people who had also, from a Christian standpoint, led sinful lives that needed forgiving.[30] Ultimately, she advised grandparents not to "recoil from that grandchild who has contracted AIDS. He is still the same little boy....who came running joyfully into your arms to show off his Superman suit, the same little boy who used to play games with you, whose dimples and shining dark eyes made any day brighter and more blessed."[31]

This disquiet about how sons got AIDS appeared even in portraits of exemplary, accepting families. The 1993 AIDS film "Philadelphia", directed by Jonathan Demme, attempted to show parallels between gay and racial discrimination, perhaps to make gays a recognizable topic to mainstream North Americans. The central character, Andrew Beckett, played by Tom Hanks, has a loving and supportive family of parents, sisters and brothers, in-laws, nieces and nephews. They are there for him in his court case against the law firm that has fired him for having AIDS. Still, when the defendant lawyer interrogates him on the stand about an anonymous sexual encounter he had had in a gay male pornography theatre, his mother looks down in shame, the only such moment in the film. It is not clear whether or not Andrew and his partner had a strictly monogamous relationship or if they considered this encounter the definite source of AIDS. But the mention of her son's anonymous sexual encounter does give this mother pause. The movie seems to say that the young man's disease and death could all have been prevented, had he not indulged himself that one time, a theme perpetuated even in some gay cultural sources, such as Randy Shilts' journalistic account, *And the Band Played On.* This work angrily portrayed the flight attendant Gaetan Dugas, the notorious "Patient Zero," as a reckless, promiscuous sociopath perceived to have spread AIDS around North America.[32]

For some parents, the notion of individual responsibility was not irrelevant, even in the face of their own children dying. The desire to attribute blame to their sons' perceived promiscuity did not preclude sympathy for their sickness, though it certainly precipitated a re-evaluation of the sexual revolution. One mother, Beverly Barbo, pointed out in the first page of her memoir about her son Tim: "Why is my son dying? Because

he made some bad choices a few years ago, one of which resulted in the disease AIDS, and AIDS related cancer, Kaposi's Sarcoma, is killing him."[33] Though Barbo was religious, her family had accepted their son's sexuality. The "bad choices" she referred to were not her son's "choice" to be gay but his choice of sexual partners. She believed that when her son first moved to California, he must have experienced the culture shock of gay acceptance and it was in this situation that she felt "sexual excesses do occur."[34] Another memoirist, Ardath H. Rodale, seemed haunted by how her son's AIDS death could have been avoided. Like Barbo, she noted that her son, David, had grown up amidst an ethos that seemed to say, "Enjoy sex to the fullest.....People were encouraged to experiment with the latest ideas. There were suggested positions for having sex that I never heard of before--never even imagined! People throughout the media winked an eye at, even openly approved of, multiple partners."[35] Careful to set herself apart from these sensibilities, she noted that she was brought up with more "Victorian attitudes" and having sex in her day was not "a function of getting acquainted as it often is nowadays!" In her view, these more liberal sexual mores had only led the younger generation "into anguish."[36]

This perception had its adherents in the gay world as well. Some prominent gay observers, most notably Michael Callen, criticized the sexual revolution's excesses and the joys of an unfettered gay sexuality during the 1970s, the kind of hedonistic, post-liberation gay mood that novelist Andrew Holleran gave voice to in his 1978 novel, *Dancer from the Dance*. There is an eerie emptiness to the gay lives he portrays in his novel: most of Holleran's dancers--gay men in bars, in discothèques--are preoccupied with beauty, clothes, and anonymous sex and appear to be shallow and emotionally

absent.[37] These observations of gay sexual practices prompted bitter debates among gay men about the legitimacy of casual sex in the face of AIDS. In cities with large gay populations, many wondered if commercial establishments such as baths and gay bars should be closed.[38] Though Rodale made oblique references to her son's sexual partners as the probable cause of his death, she did not blame a perceived gay lifestyle. Instead, most of the book is devoted to memories of his innocence. The picture to emerge is similar to the icon of the innocent victim. She wrote that David had been a "good little boy, with a deep, wonderful chuckle", who wrote plays, was gentle with animals, and was "peace loving."[39] She even appeared to conceive of her son as a cultural type or a separate category of person: her dedication was to "all the Davids, and those who love them."

Even with this attempt to distance gay sons from promiscuity, AIDS made gay sex more real, if only as the acknowledged method of transmission. This complicated PFLAG's response to the parents of gay sons. If the rhetoric of organized parents had made gay children real, it had nonetheless severed sexuality from these children. Now gay sexuality also needed to be recognized. Moreover, AIDS challenged the PFLAG metaphor of gay as condition. If gay children already had the condition of being gay, then what was AIDS? For Mary Borhek, gay sons with AIDS appeared to have two unfortunate diseases. She instructed gay sons with AIDS that they must tell their parents that they are gay first, and let that sink in, since this announcement in itself would cause "enough grief....without having to deal with further cause of grief." As she warned HIV positive gay men: "if you don't tell them you are gay, in the event of your death you will present them with an agonizing triple blow: their child has died; they discover that their

child was gay; and they discover that he died of AIDS.....Not only do the parents lose their child to death; they also lose the child they thought they had, so that even the memory of him as they thought he was eludes them."[40]

For some parents, the boundary between the revelation of gayness and a fatal disease was itself blurry. Coming out about gay sexuality and AIDS were both monumental and at times foreboding moments in parental representations of family life. Two other PFLAG and AIDS activist parents, Bernie and Sylvie Goldstaub, were moved to publish an account that urged parents of gay sons to love their children. Their son, Mark Goldstaub, a publicist for entertainers in New York City, had revealed his sexuality on his father's birthday in 1979, introducing what he had to say with, as Mrs. Goldstaub recalled it, "I love you both, and God knows, I wish I could spare you the agony I know you must both feel at this moment."[41] By 1986 Mark had been diagnosed with AIDS, but, doing well on a new drug, azidothymidine (AZT), he did not reveal his disease to his parents until a year later, when his health had started to deteriorate. Mrs. Goldstaub recalled her son using almost the very words he had when he approached them about his sexuality: "Mom, Dad, I love you both. I wish with all my heart I could spare you this, but the time has come for me to tell you."[42] Had he truly said this, or was the moment so staggering to Mrs. Goldstaub that the words simply appeared the same in her memory? Was gayness such a menacing revelation, until it was trumped by something much more immense--and tragic--still?

Gay men with AIDS also seemed to inhabit an unseen and unknown world of viruses, and, especially in the epidemic's early years, uncertain means of transmission. Cartoonist Howard Cruse, who was noted for combining both satire and brutal realism in

his comic strips, evoked these early AIDS fears in his 1983 "Wendel" strip. The panels here depict many different scenarios of AIDS in American life, such as an immigrant from Haiti--seen as primary carriers of HIV--being stamped with a message "Presumed Sick Until Proven Well."[43] In one scenario, a mother serves her son at a holiday dinner wearing long rubber gloves and a surgical mask, and her son asks her, "Been watching a lot of TV recently, Mom?"[44] [Figure 17] If humour about AIDS was sparse during these years, the hysteria surrounding AIDS infection might sometimes be fodder for satire.[45] However, even as late as 1993, when the dangers of AIDS transmission were well known and reinforced many times by the media and public health advertising campaigns, PFLAG advice literature to families noted that AIDS could not be easily transferred and that there is "no reason to fear you are catching AIDS by being in the same room with someone who has AIDS, or by using the same linens, or kitchen utensils after proper washing. There is no reason to believe that AIDS is spread by casual household contact."[46] Such advice was meant to calm care-givers and those sharing domestic space with their gay sons. That this hesitancy could last until the early 1990s attests to the level of uncertainty about the underlying presence of disease and the unknown entities that carried it.

Quite commonly, especially during the early 1980s, the hospital experience itself reinforced the idea that AIDS might be contagious, amplifying the idea of plague, which, as Susan Sontag famously noted, had become AIDS' central metaphor.[47] Before it was widely known that the disease was virus-based, hospitals confined AIDS patients to isolation zones, hospital workers refused to clean their rooms, and funeral workers refused to embalm their bodies.[48] Barbara Peabody was quite distressed when she had to

visit her son at New York's St. Vincent's hospital in an isolation room. When she and her husband left this zone, they took off their "masks and gloves and stuffed them into the bag labeled 'Infectious Waste'. The yellow gowns go into 'Infectious Linens.'" Her experiences are reminiscent of one major artistic response to AIDS, choreographer Bill T. Jones' ballet, "Absence," in which the dancers were wrapped in bed clothes borrowed from his dead partner and his lover's hospital robes, as if to save these fragments of loved ones that otherwise would have been destroyed.[49] Such hospital precautions, even when in place to protect the person with AIDS as much as the parents, made Mrs. Peabody feel that she was visiting a leper.[50] Her former husband, a doctor, was grateful that he could treat his son during his seizures--common as AIDS progresses--because he knew that an "ambulance crew might have panicked at the prospect of treating an AIDS victim."[51]

Gay men with AIDS often had to educate their own family members on this score and at times endure their ignorance. In one of the first AIDS plays for a mainstream audience, William Hoffman's *As Is*, a dying gay man, Rich, receives a visit from his brother with whom he has had a distant relationship. The brother apologises for not having visited yet. By this point Rich is dispirited and almost grimly amused by the extensive contraptions his brother has donned simply to stand by his bedside. As he deadpans to his brother, "Unless you're planning to come into intimate contact with me or my body fluids, none of that shit you have on is necessary."[52]

At times families were placed in the complicated circumstance of fearing contamination and the physicality of the disease and yet wishing to show their loved ones compassion. Perhaps these fears attest to the success of public health advertising campaigns throughout the twentieth century which, as historian Nancy Tomes says, were

so successful in evoking an invisible world of germs that individuals grew constantly wary.[53] It would indeed be hard for family members not to pay heed to the place AIDS held in the public imagination as potentially more deadly than scientists had imagined. The visual and news media did little to dispel these thoughts, particularly when magazines, newspapers, radio and television began reporting on AIDS more regularly after 1983.[54] Geraldo Rivera claimed on the ABC programme *20/20* in 1983 that the nation's "entire blood supply" could be infected with AIDS and even more respectable sources such as the *Journal of the American Medical Association* said during the same year that AIDS could in fact be spread through casual contact.[55] Gay men themselves feared that they might be contagious to those around them.[56]

Basic acts of caring for someone with AIDS, then, could be fraught with fear. This was true for Marie Blackwell's family, who cared for her brother, Chet. Blackwell wrote up her family's story for the African American women's general interest magazine, *Essence*, in 1985. Here she made it clear that Chet's gayness was firmly a part of their family lore, and was never questioned. Chet "never had the pressure of having to 'break it to the family' [because] his being gay or acting sort of feminine" was what they considered a fundamental part of his personality. Mrs. Blackwell even told her son, "If you have to mess around with men, then go and find yourself a rich one."[57] Chet was diagnosed with AIDS in 1983, a time when her family felt "totally ignorant about the extent of AIDS contagiousness." Thus, when they brought him home to care for him, Chet was not allowed in the family kitchen, and they were wary of touching any food that they had left for him in his room. Blackwell often turned him down "with the excuse of being on a diet. He always looked very disappointed when I didn't eat his offerings." She

became desperate to find ways to make her brother feel less contaminated and yet still care for him in a way that necessitated intimate contact and gestures, such as sharing food.

In this family, fears about AIDS and its prognosis also reflected a degree of mistrust of the medical profession. When Chet would have moments of feeling somewhat better, his mother would say, as if to convince herself, that he was "getting better. I knew those stupid-ass doctors didn't know what they were talking about.....All you have to do is eat a lot of food and be around people who love you. Those doctors just want to experiment."[58] The idea of hospitals as alien institutions was becoming quite engrained in late twentieth century United States, one that prompted theologian Paul Ramsey to ask that doctors treat *The Patient as Person* in 1970.[59] A notion of doctor distrust, however, was particularly prevalent for African American families, owing to the greater public awareness during this period of a history of medical experimentation on African Americans, most notably the legacy of the Tuskegee experiments during the Georgia Public Health Service Syphilis Study in the 1930s and 40s. This medical history specific to African Americans compounded a more general shift in public consciousness that regarded doctors with suspicion.[60]

The physicality of AIDS went far beyond connotations and hints of contamination, however. Those with full blown AIDS became shockingly disfigured. They suffered from violent fevers, coughing, incontinence, and dementia, looks and smells and ailments that were well beyond the world of unseen germs. As would be true in Blackwell's family, many family members felt devastated by the emaciating quality of the disease, by how waxen, and sallow, and skeletal their family members had become.

Charles Gaver, who was fond of drawing doodles to illustrate his points in his letters, once closed with a picture that he labeled "Death Mask," or, his reflection that he saw in the bathroom tile one evening at about 2 a.m.[61] [Figure 18] These physical symptoms were understandably shocking and painful for family members to behold in their loved ones. Michael Lassell's poem from the perspective of a brother of a gay man with AIDS, "How To Watch Your Brother Die," is written in the imperative tense, the narrator trying to reassure himself about being a witness to something so unimaginable: "Try not to be shocked that he already looks like/a cadaver."[62]

The face of those suffering with AIDS could be ravaged by the purple-brown lesions of Kaposi's Sarcoma, as though gay men with AIDS carried the visual lacerations and markings of a perceived non-ascetic life. Even an experienced physician such as Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, who had worked previously with syphilis patients in Africa, a disease whose ulcerations could terribly disfigure the face, found it trying to behold an AIDS patient scarred with KS lesions.[63] She wrote of a young man with AIDS who had been estranged from his family, seeking one last visit home before he died. He confided to Ross that he had wondered, upon seeing his mother come out to greet him from the front porch: "what would happen if she really saw the purple lesions on his face? [Would she] stop and hesitate? [Would she] put her arms down and stop a few feet before they would hug each other?"[64]

Though in this case the man's mother did not respond as he feared, the anxiety about appearing grotesque was salient for many gay men within their families. Striking in these accounts is that siblings seem more willing to admit to a revulsion about the physical aspects of the disease, perhaps because of the simple familial fact that they had

not provided the material care for their siblings that parents had. Writing about her brother, Montreal painter Nick Palazzo, Marie Palazzo said that she felt cruel because she could scarcely bear to behold him during the final stages of his disease. During his dying years, her brother had produced a series of paintings in which he drew himself as something half skeleton and half human, called "The Disappearing Series." Marie Palazzo acknowledged that "AIDS deforms. I don't want to remember my brother looking like he did then--he used to be so good-looking--but I can't get that vision out of my mind. It still haunts me."[65]

However, even AIDS advice books for parents recognized that such feelings of repugnance were quite common. Betty Fairchild advised parents not to "put off a visit for fear of what your child will look like. Most people with AIDS want more than anything else for their parents to be there, and to know that Mom and Dad love them no matter what they look like. Keep in mind that your child is already extremely aware of and sensitive about his loss of good looks." She then advised parents to maintain physical relationships with their sons: "your willingness to look at him, to embrace him, hold his hands and kiss him, and to be at ease with him, will convey even without words how much you love him."[66]

There is some universal character to observing a loved one with disease, of course, because the observers are always in some sense on the periphery, outside of the prolonged and painful suffering. Yet what is specific to this crisis is that the family members of gay men with AIDS were already somewhat peripheral to gay sons. Gay sexuality was often hidden to parents at least for some portion of time. In the words of BettyClare Moffatt, reflecting on her then estranged son Michael, the disease "had

combined with the hiddenness of his life, the aloneness, too."[67] Her feeling resonated with media portraits that reinforced the idea of mysterious diseases for mysterious sons.[68] In one sense, the universal aspects of disease and suffering seemed to make their gay sons more familiar and knowable to parents, or at least more concrete. Yet in another sense this particular disease seemed to mark gay sons with another layer of abstraction, reinforcing the sense that parents were only the observers of their sons' veiled and obscure gay lives. Though her son did not develop AIDS until 1989, Bobbie Stasey recalled in her memoir that when her son came out to her in 1981, she became preoccupied with thoughts of a gay disease. Interspersed through her son's coming out conversation as she recounted it is her stream of consciousness: "*A disease is killing homosexuals./A mysterious disease killing homosexuals.*"[69] Just as gay men throughout the 1980s were starting to perceive an interconnection between gay sex and death, parents appeared to be doing the same.[70] [Figure 19]

At times, parents finessed their son's illnesses, so that their children did not die of this mysterious disease associated almost solely with homosexuals, but instead died of Hodgkin's disease or meningitis, or an unspecified lengthy illness. This misrepresentation of their children's illnesses seemed necessary in many cases to protect the family. Ann Des Rosiers, whose son had come home to Worcester, Massachusetts to die, reflected that in her small city, "everything is hush-hush....and that's how we had to live it."[71] For this family the AIDS Commemorative Quilt became an essential way of expressing pride in their son and grief for him and acknowledging that they had indeed cared for him during his slow death. One of the purposes of the AIDS Quilt, subtitled the NAMES Project, was to give a name, or a reality, to those who had died with AIDS, one often denied within

published death notices or newspaper obituaries. Yet, even the Quilt's organizers received letters that urged them to keep a gay man's name anonymous, because it would contradict parents' stories about how their sons had died.[72]

Some parents lied about their sons' diseases as a way to gain empathy for their family's suffering. Michael Stone faced the unique position of being one of the first teenagers to die with AIDS, at the age of 19, in 1984.[73] At the time, the Stone family, according to their father, "told everybody at work it was Hodgkin's disease." He felt that, if he had said AIDS, "everyone focuses on AIDS and the homosexuality and not on the person."[74] In making up another disease, this father felt that he could in effect give his son the grief that he deserved. He was not amiss in thinking he might not receive sympathy if his son had died from AIDS. Even AIDS funerals had become the sites of anti-gay protests: mourners had been spat upon, derided, and reminded of biblical condemnations of gays during the services.[75] There was even violence against those 'innocent' victims of the disease: Ryan White was run out of his small town of Kokomo, Indiana, after a bullet had been fired into his family's living room, and the Ray family, whose hemophiliac sons had all contracted AIDS, had had their house burned down in Arcadia, Florida in 1986.[76] The fabricated illnesses need to be considered in this context of profound stigma and even physical violence; Surgeon General C. Everett Koop said a new word needed to be coined for homophobia during these years because homophobia was simply not strong enough to capture the hatred he had witnessed.[77] Thus, discretion about children's illnesses could reflect a basic desire for dignity and protection rather than parental shame.

This discretion, however, added a layer of isolation to parents' grief. Jean Baker, who lost her son to AIDS, sought acknowledgement of her grief from a community of family sufferers. She recalled in her memoir that after her son died she developed a preoccupation with reading obituaries, hoping for some connection to those who had endured the same sorrow she had. She would take note of the "death of a man, particularly between the ages of about twenty-five and forty or possibly even older, who was unmarried; whose survivors included parents, siblings, nieces, and nephews, but no spouse and no children; whose death was unexplained; and who was often involved in some creative field."[78] As she aptly observed, AIDS had a particularly devastating impact on the North American artistic community: gone were artists Keith Haring, David Wojnarowicz, and Robert Mapplethorpe, among others.[79] These kinds of descriptions would "immediately alert me to think that maybe this unknown person was gay, like my son, and maybe this person had died from AIDS, like my son."[80] The community of grief that Baker sought was only found through these subtle messages, akin to the gay cultural codes of earlier decades, only here with the tragic spin that they came about through a gay death.[81]

The community of fellow sufferers was at times so elusive that family members of sons dying with AIDS sought one through an identification with collective sufferings of the past. For Barbara Peabody, AIDS was a genocide rather than a randomly cruel biological phenomenon, and thus she felt some affinity for witnesses to the Holocaust. After having seen a placard at a demonstration declaring AIDS "God's pest control", Peabody noted that some "sincere Christians" felt AIDS to be a " 'final solution', as the gas chambers were for the Jews."[82] It was not a coincidence that ACT UP organizers

chose an inverted pink triangle as their symbol, to evoke the badge sewn onto the uniforms of gay prisoners in Nazi concentration camps, nor that activists took up metaphors of war to describe what was happening to gay people during this period.[83] Some perceived the striking physical similarities between AIDS bodies and concentration camp victims. In the words of Peabody, who made this comparison, both were "gaunt, knobby, emaciated...weak from malnourishment." What really struck her was what she called "an AIDS face." An AIDS face was "prematurely aged. Men of 30 appear years older, the skin stretched tight over skin and jawbone.....The eyes are torturous, sunk deep into their bone-ridged hollows."[84] These World War Two analogies were also common in artistic responses to AIDS. In his print, "Phrophylaxis: Blind Admonition," Michael Tidmus juxtaposed an image of a baby doll and a little boy against a mushroom cloud, with Hitler's face hovering in the background, inscribed with the words "AIDS Baby: (Born 1951)."[85] [Figure 20] AIDS babies were, of course, a group deemed innocent victims of the disease; in this photo, the innocents were adult gay men born soon after the Second World War themselves. AIDS was producing a culture of suffering inflected with Holocaust imagery. Looking to the Holocaust for a verification of suffering was not unlike Jean Baker's motivations in scanning the obituaries.

In late twentieth century North America, however, the dying were often hidden, or at least removed from public view, placed within clinical atmospheres of hospitals and quickly disposed of in morgues and graves.[86] Reticence about the dying, moreover, is not unique to AIDS. And yet this particular historical moment of the experience of death could be said to have collided with a collective gay craving for family acknowledgement and care. This longing was a theme in philosopher/photographer Duane Michaels'

haunting AIDS photograph and narrative poem, "The Father Prepares His Dead Son for Burial" (1991). Lying on a mattress on the floor, the son in the photo appears too perfectly poised to be sleeping; on the other hand, he appears too robust to be dead. The room appears somewhat filthy, with spattered walls, dirty carpets, and scraps on the floor, yet the son lies sheathed in a white, translucent sheet, his face and body form apparent, prepared for burial by his father. The father had washed his son's body "slowly, deliberately, looking hard at him/for the last time./He touches him with oil, carefully as if not to awaken him." In a scene of squalor, the father has cleansed his son most meticulously for his death. But in performing this loving ritual the father "begins to quiver with grief" and this escalates into a "terrible shout of anguish."[87] The odd juxtaposition of both alive and dead here suggests a yearning for these kinds of parental caring rituals expressed throughout a child's life time: sleeping and dreaming, as opposed to oblivious and dead. [Figure 21]

Organizations responding to the AIDS crisis had taken into account this kind of longing and insisted that a son's dying could become a moment of profound family intimacy that was so elusive in this photo. During the mid 1980s, PFLAG had developed an HIV/AIDS Family Support Project, and it was joined by other groups, including several independent organizations, such as Mothers of AIDS Patients, or MAP, that provided support in various cities.[88] Though the PFLAG Family Support Project had warned parents about the discrimination they might face in exposing their sons' illnesses, ultimately the organization cautioned against reticence because "[t]he silence may…feel like a betrayal of their loved one and lead to feelings of worry and guilt....[Moreover,] the bereaved loses an important avenue for recovery--talking about the loved one."[89]

This idea of family closeness through open discussions about the disease was taken up in public health advertising campaigns as a way to encourage AIDS knowledge. "Ojos Que No Ven" ("Eyes That Fail to See"), produced in 1987 by the Instituto de la Raza, a community based non-profit organization in San Francisco, was one such ad, specifically targeting the city's Chicano community. Latinos in the United States had been particularly hard hit by AIDS; in 1990, they represented 27% of all cumulative AIDS deaths.[90] In this series of realist photo captions, an unsuspecting mother comes home early from work to find her son, Manuel, and another young man, making out on her couch. In subsequent captions, they sit down to talk about all of this. When Manuel's sister, Isabel, arrives home, she wants to know just what the scene is all about. Manuel explains that he has just told his mother that he is gay. Shocked, Isabel insists that it cannot be, and then, in her unthinking haste, tells her brother that she is glad that their father is already dead, otherwise this would see his death. Horrified by this comment, the mother reaffirms that Manuel is, above all, family. But Isabel remains wary and cross, saying that the next thing he would probably confess was that he had AIDS. When Isabel later approaches Manuel to apologise for her rash response, the conversation becomes chatty and chummy, with Manuel even protectively asking his sister if she was having sex with her boyfriend and telling her that she, too, should practice safe sex. Isabel is grateful for both the information and the ability to talk about sex openly like this with her brother, because she had not yet been able to do so with her mother. Likewise, the mother is relieved and heartened to return home to find her son and daughter laughing and joking together, and even more relieved to know that her son had been working at an AIDS

Information Line. She then initiates a conversation with her daughter about sexuality.[91] [Figure 22]

As this portrait shows, AIDS was increasingly seen as a threat to heterosexuals, and gays had something to teach them about the disease. After 1985 especially, mainstream visual and news media insisted, as *Life Magazine* declared during this year, that "No One is Safe from AIDS."[92] The Instituto de la Raza's ad showed a marked difference from earlier more judgmental public health advertisements showing gays and bisexuals passing the disease to unsuspecting wives and other heterosexuals.[93] [Figure 23] By contrast, the Instituto's 1987 ad showed AIDS surfacing in the context of familial relationships. Though many Chicano writers have described the difficulties and uncertainties of being gay within a culture that often views homosexuality as a violation of *la familia*, the Instituto's ad shows that an ideal of family strength within Chicano communities could be harnessed for a communal effort at AIDS prevention, shaped by a reconciliation between gays and heterosexuals.[94]

Nonetheless, the acute hostility to gays and AIDS sufferers continued throughout the 1980s, an explicit part of the New Right view of moral problems in contemporary life. The slow responses of both the Reagan and Bush administrations to the AIDS crisis appeared to all but condone the suffering of individuals with AIDS and their families. Ronald Reagan did not discuss AIDS publicly until a speech in 1987.[95] North Carolina Republican Senator Jesse Helms proposed quarantining people with AIDS and staunchly opposed bills allocating money to AIDS research; he declared on the Senate Floor in 1987 that every case of AIDS could be traced back to a homosexual act.[96] "The poor homosexuals," conservative columnist and Reagan speech writer Patrick Buchanan wrote

most infamously in 1983, "They have declared war on nature, and now nature is exacting an awful retribution."[97] Religious commentators such as Jerry Falwell placed a picture of a white family wearing surgical masks on the cover of his *Moral Majority Report* with the headline "Homosexual Diseases Threaten American Families."[98]

The conservatives' emphasis on moral and family values contrasted cruelly with their treatment of gay men with AIDS and their families. In her memoir, Jean Baker indicted both Presidents Reagan and Bush, who could "barely bring themselves to say the word AIDS." She believed that the administrations' "callous [response] affected all those who have suffered and died from the disease and those who love them."[99] Ultimately, she felt that many AIDS deaths were needless ones: "[v]ast numbers of young gay men, including my son Gary, may have become infected simply because they did not know of the existence of a sexually transmitted virus that could kill them and because they were not given the information, soon enough, that could have helped save their lives.....I often picture Gary and his friends, young and strong, striding happily through the bustling streets of Manhattan, laughing, partaking of the city's excitement and promise, thinking their lives are ahead of them, and all the while living, unknowingly, on the edge of disaster."[100] Her criticisms echoed a larger branch of gay activism, such as Larry Kramer's well noted journalistic piece, "1112 and Counting" in the *New York Native*, which emphasised that even if a cure could not have been found early, information and warnings most certainly could have been circulated much earlier than they were.[101]

Abandoned by politicians, gay men and their families also depicted the medical system as having failed them. Parents and sons were flabbergasted by the cost of drugs such as AZT, particularly when the drug first began its testing during 1986 and 1987. Not only did the drug cost as much as ten thousand dollars a year, putting it out of reach of those without medical insurance or Medicaid, but its side effects could be ghastly.[102] Some parents thus became resolute activists demanding changes in the health care system. Ann Baker, for example, wrote a letter to President George H.W. Bush in 1989 which she then published in the *PWA (Persons With AIDS) Coalition Newsline*. She and her husband had come to Washington to commemorate the AIDS death of their son, Curtis. Sixty thousand people were doing the same in a Candlelight Procession around the Lincoln Memorial. However, she was disappointed that the President and his family were not among them. In her letter, she established herself and her family as decent, law-abiding citizens whose sons had served in the Vietnam War. As she saw it, the president too was a "family man, good husband, good father, and good grandfather," and yet he was "supposed to represent the Father of our country."

The most concrete demand of this letter was to ask for better health care for people with AIDS by calling their care a basic civil right. Federal health care funding in general had suffered during the 1980s: Reagan's health policies had been to limit public expenditure on Medicare and Medicaid for the elderly and the poor and to give local governments greater responsibility for these matters.[103] Not until 1987 did Congress, in response to protests about the high costs of AZT, give money to states to offset costs.[104] And it was not until 1990 that Congress passed the Ryan White Comprehensive Care Act which provided funds towards planning and services for people with AIDS.[105] Mrs. Baker

noted that she herself had seen first hand "how much these people have to pay to stay alive (if that's what you can call it) for two years tops." She was merely "only one mother who has suffered and will go on suffering the pain of the loss of my beautiful son." Her final appeal to the president was: "Please help all of humanity all around the world by making sure that the pharmaceutical companies don't make great amounts of money on these people who have to live with a death sentence."[106]

The plain fact that AIDS sufferers were indeed family members always underlay these activist petitions: they were pleas for recognition as much as they called for support or assistance. Ann Baker stressed it over and over: she was the mother of a son who died with this disease. It was a recognition that AIDS activists, through such organizations as ACT-UP, sought as well. Drawing on an idea of participatory democracy and activist street theatre and art, Larry Kramer founded ACT-UP in New York City in 1987.[107] Other groups soon appeared in Los Angeles, and many American cities, as well as Canadian ones such as Vancouver.[108] Taking up the artistic and advertising skills of its members, the group began to stage imaginative, dramatic, militant demonstrations.[109] ACT-UP's first political funeral took place on Election Day in 1992, when 250 members carried the emaciated corpse of Mark Lowe Fisher, a New York architect, to the Bush-Quayle campaign headquarters in New York City's midtown. Protestors held up a banner that read, "Mark Lowe Fisher, 1953-92, Murder by George Bush", while chanting, "George Bush, you can't hide, we charge you with genocide."[110] Before he died, Mark Lowe Fisher had issued a statement about his prospective public funeral. The statement became an ACT UP advertisement entitled "Bury Me Furiously." Here Fisher explained that he did not want a "discreet memorial service." He understood that "our friends and

families need to mourn. But we also understand that we are dying because of a government and health care system that couldn't care less." Acknowledging that his funeral was going to "shock people," he wanted, nevertheless, "to show the reality of my death, to display my body in public; I want the public to bear witness. We are not just spiraling statistics; we are people who have lives, who have purpose, who have lovers, friends, and families."[111] Did it take a grisly, shocking protest simply to underscore the reality of AIDS sufferers and the basic claim that they, too, had loved ones?

There was a kind of surreal, nightmarish quality about living with and caring for a loved one with AIDS in the context of a broader culture that scarcely acknowledged the mass grief that the epidemic had produced, preferring to focus instead upon its risks or the prurient aspects of gay sex. Family members and partners of gay men with AIDS seemed to be part of a war that nobody else recognized or experienced as a part of their daily lives. In an article on AIDS writing in *Christopher Street*, Michael Denneny wrote that his life had become a "surrealistic series of medical disasters, hospital vigils, and memorial services [while] everyday life went on as if nothing were happening."[112] He wrote of Annie Dillard's advice to writers in a recent issue of the *New York Times Book Review*, to write as if you were dying "for an audience consisting solely of terminal patients." Yet, she had not "imagine[d] that a whole generation of writers might be" already living out this metaphor.[113]

Horrific as the disease was, it did offer sons and their parents a unique parallel experience. A generation of gay baby boomers was now witnessing the kinds of mass deaths normally reserved for those in old age. In a letter to his father when his partner

was dying, Robert John Florence wrote, "I sure know what it's like to be surrounded by people who are sick & dying, as you mentioned in your letter about the mobile home park. Several friends have died recently & my intimate friend of five years has been in the hospital eight times so far this year."[114] AIDS also could put sons closer to the calamities that their parents had seen in their own time. Writer James Edwin Parker's mother scarcely mentioned her son's involvement with men or sexuality, though she did know about it.[115] He felt that she must have been "somewhat aghast to think of the number of sexual partners I had, especially with people dropping dead of pneumonia and KS and other AIDS related diseases." Still, she appeared to feel a kinship with her son, seen through the lens of her past grief. When her son found out a friend was dying with AIDS, she offered: "I went through a similar thing, you know, with the war....the end result was the same: young men dying. Every generation has its war. You have to fight them when they happen."[116]

Parents also remembered the shame and stigma of sickness, a recognition that might have been particularly true for adults who came of age in the 30s and 40s, when the humanity of the sick was not so readily seen, before Elisabeth Kubler-Ross's groundbreaking work on the experience of the dying had become a part of medical school curricula, and before the advent of the hospice movement in the 1960s and 70s.[117] Dean Lechner's parents knew the mark of disgrace of sickness all too well, particularly contagious sickness, as they had a son who died with polio during the 1950s. Polio had been blamed on uncleanliness in the literal sense: parents were urged to keep their homes spotless and to observe proper nutrition.[118] The state Health Department had nailed a sign to this family's front door, to tell the public to keep away. This experience had fortified

them to speak up against anyone in their small farming town of Waseca, Minnesota, who might shun their son dying with AIDS. He was living in San Francisco, but his parents and siblings invited him home to die there. As his sister addressed him, "Dogs go off to die....and you're no dog....You're a son; you're a brother. And you are loved."[119]

Like this son who came home to die in rural Minnesota, the two Americas, one rural and seemingly unsophisticated and homophobic, and the other urban and at least on the surface cosmopolitan and diverse, were, like the disparate generations and sexual sensibilities, meeting one another through AIDS. Although the story of a gay man with rural roots who leaves home to experience an urban gay scene is an archetypal configuration of gay lives, this idea did have some basis in reality. [120] *Farm Journal* commented upon this phenomenon in 1991 with its feature article, "Back to the Farm to Die: Rural America is about to be blindsided by the AIDS Epidemic".[121] Shocking examples of discrimination, of course, had occurred against gays in these rural contexts, such as Kokomo, Indiana, and even PFLAG literature felt the need to warn parents in rural areas that taking in their loved ones could result in violence. [122] Nonetheless, these areas could also be sites of a loyalty and even tribal embrace of anyone once their own. Wayne Schow, the father of a gay son living in Pocatello, Idaho, accepted his son's return home when he started ailing with AIDS. Still he could not help but notice that there seemed some profound disjuncture between his son's death and his rural social circumstance. He saw Pocatello, where he worked as an English professor and where his son had grown up, as a "comfortable place....sheltered from the ills that beset contemporary urban life. Here you generally expect life to be kind." When his son, Brad,

came home to die he reflected that his brutal, slow death was "not the sort of thing that should have happened in southern Idaho. The cultural geography is altogether wrong."[123]

To be sure, some gay men felt an ambivalence about this prospect of returning home to die, and even toward the home itself. Charles Gaver could not bear rural Michigan, finding that the place produced a feeling of "confinement, limitation, and drabness." He referred to the town where his father and sister lived as "that prejudice Adrian."[124] He had arranged for his death and his funeral in Washington. Similarly, in his personal essay, "Kentucky 55 South: A Visit with Dad," writer James Carroll Pickett felt a simultaneous pull towards and distaste for the rural Kentucky farm where he had grown up. Living in Los Angeles, he had visited his father at home, to talk about his impending death. While he and his father appeared to grow closer during the visit, he was emphatic with his father that his ashes be spread over the Pacific and that he did not, in any circumstance, wish to be returned to Kentucky.[125] Rosalind Solomon captured this ambivalence about the home and parents in an arresting photograph that became part of her series, "Portraits in the Time of AIDS." Here a son and parents pose in a backyard with a fence, shrubs, and garden. In the foreground, the son appears somewhat defiant or fed up with arms folded, and a resigned yet daring expression. His parents, hovering behind him, seem hardly posed at all, but almost awkwardly placed in the photograph, standing outside in their backyard, as if momentarily in the way of the picture. Not only are they distant from their son, but aged, tired, old fashioned, and detached from the scene, looking away from both their son and the photograph. The overall impression of the photograph is disjuncture and a feeling of disorientation. Yet the son's resolute stance suggests a need or perhaps a right to be rooted in families.[126] [Figure 24]

One of the pulls that drew gay sons home was the care and nurturing offered there--or the memory, prospect, or hope of it. AIDS suggested a potential for intimacy that was not defined by knowing children's inner worlds or understanding their feelings, but perhaps by a more basic kind of family love and the material aspects of care. We have seen that the gay liberation and lesbian feminist movements had also re-evaluated the meanings of family love, to include open communication, an understanding of inner lives, a recognition of a breadth of sexual experiences and choices, and mutual revelations. AIDS, however, seemed to spur on an esteem of the nurturing qualities often associated with motherly love. If gay activists and writers had in previous decades rejected dailiness and the quotidian as aspects of the conformist nuclear family and the oppressive character of the day to day, a new ethos was taking shape during the AIDS crisis that suggested an embrace of domesticity.

Sue Halpern evoked this sensibility when writing about the Chris Brownlie AIDS Hospice in Los Angeles, where she observed a mother ritualistically bringing meals for her ailing 32 year old son that he would never eat. Halpern reflected that the "dailiness of [family life was] that which gives love its openings."[127] This sense was not limited to the family she observed at the hospice. A sense of renewed parenting surfaced during the AIDS crisis between parents and gay sons. Gaver felt that his father had become a quiet, daily presence that was extremely comforting to him. He wrote that "....although he's not one to say much, I can really feel the caring when I see him (like at Christmas) and talk to him on the phone."[128] This sort of interaction was certainly a departure from his earlier relationship with his father. His father had expressed his wariness about his son's poetry performances in 1977 because "according to the article [in the *Washington Post*], you use

a lot of props and act like a queer or whatever it is--I just don't understand."[129] But they had reached some understanding during his son's illness, even comparing the pills that they had to take for their various ailments.[130] In turn, the uneasiness about his son's sexuality seemed to have faded.

Michael Williams also felt that his father offered such a pacifying presence. He was an environmentalist living in California, and he wrote letters to his sister and his father during his partner's and his own sickness with AIDS. Feeling destitute and hopeless in 1989, Williams wrote to his father to break the tough news that he was going to start taking AZT. "Since it is probably my last good opportunity to begin AZT, and since the FDA won't sanction any of the other reasonable alternatives at a reasonable speed so that my insurance company would have to cover them, I will probably start taking it next week," he explained, "I am very upset about the whole mess. .....if I didn't feel that my real task is showing the world that it is silly to flush my life down the drain as they are doing, I would do something very drastic and sensational, like inject the virus into some prominent bigot, and tell them they've got a few years to promote the search for a cure. I am in a state of shock, fighting depression."[131] Williams' father was quite taciturn in his letters, and generally wrote in an unvarnished way. He stated candidly to his son in response, "Very distressed about your health. Your letter of 16 April caused me to cry. Still, better I know now, than be terribly surprised later. We have nice weather today."[132] In this context, a comment about the weather, one that had been such a prominent symbol of the emotional poverty of family talk within gay liberation sources, was a valued gesture of small talk. Here the daily observation seemed to reinforce some commonality between father and son, or shared humanity. Williams and his father shared

an interest in gardening, and in the same letter his father told him that he had started to see some yields from his spring garden-- "a few spuds, some garlic."[133] When Michael developed terrible stomach cramps as a side effect ofAZT, his father again expressed his concern through their shared interest in gardening: "Are there any herbs you would use to help your stomach cope with AZT? Will close for now and to Post Office. Love, Dad."[134]

Fathers were perhaps cherished for this reticence more than mothers were, and the expectations of nurturing might have been higher for mothers. In her book on AIDS, Elisabeth Kubler-Ross described mothers who, she felt, took on the most difficult physical duties of caring, bringing their sons home, cleaning up after them, providing their medication, and being on call all through their sons' sleepless, feverish nights, having little reprieve from their caring obligations. Ross saw these tasks as particular to the feminine domestic sphere.[135] Fittingly, the AIDS advice that PFLAG had now started to dispense not only concerned emotional intimacy with one's gay child through talking about personal issues, but included a prominent component on the material aspects of care, often directed at mothers who were presumed to take on these tasks. In the PFLAG *Family Support Guide*, the authors gave substantial attention to the physical comfort of sons with AIDS who were receiving care in the home, including the necessity of changing the bed clothes, ways to cope with spiking fevers, and the kinds of massages that might offer comfort.[136] This advice pamphlet, subtitled "A Need for Constant Love," reminded that an unequivocal embrace of gay children was reflected in this care. The authors noted that sons with AIDS "are usually more isolated and have fewer visitors

than most patients. They are also touched less and may be in need of more caring physical contact. Remember, they are dealing with more psychological pain than others with terminal illness. Quiet conversations with loved ones in familiar surroundings are encouraged."[137] In this portrait, the family's functions seemed parallel to an extremely caring nurse.

Gay men certainly looked to their peers to provide this kind of care, as well, and they did, creating their own caring structures and organizations. The Gay Men's Health Care Crisis (GMHC) formed in 1981 in New York City, and it drew together volunteers to help care for the sick and the dying in a buddy system, a relationship beautifully portrayed in David Leavitt's novella, *Saturn Street*.[138] The Shanti Project in San Francisco, an organization that predated AIDS, as well as the AIDS Project of Los Angeles (APLA), performed similar functions, assuring gays that they were not without committed and caring individuals in families by design, a kinship strategy that anthropologist Kath Weston has suggested is a particularly poignant one for gays.[139] Moreover, AIDS tended to mobilize gay men as well as lesbians, who brought expertise from their own public health ventures.[140] Lesbian memoirs of caretaking reflect similar themes of maternal care, of washing and changing bed clothes, of providing meals, and ensuring comfort.[141]

One mobilizing factor within these peer communities of care was rejection by the family of origin. A 1990 Caregiver's Guide for people with AIDS assumed that AIDS patients did not have biological family support, and could only get this support within the community itself.[142] In her memoir about caring for her friend, Mike, Amy Hoffman wrote that her friend's 'real family', as her mother referred to them, were "a bunch of ill-

matched people living in too small a space, making each other miserable." It was his 'fake family' who performed all of the caring in the midst of his disease.[143] A nurse at Sloan-Kettering was moved to become a member of the GMHC upon witnessing the suffering of some familyless patients with AIDS. In her solicitation of support for the GMHC, she wrote of an AIDS patient named Robert who had told her that his family was ashamed of him for having the disease. She phoned his mother to try and intervene and to "explain how desperately Robert needed her" and the mother hung up on her.[144] Mr. and Mrs. Goldstaub, in turn, were moved to write their book on unconditional love because of the stories they had heard of rejecting parents. Bernie Goldstaub, a music professor, had already composed a tribute to their son entitled "Venetian Echoes." In their book, they made a specific appeal to families who disowned their gay sons sick and dying with AIDS: "Don't Do That To Your Child During the Most Needed Time of His or Her Life! This IS Your Very Own Flesh and Blood!"[145]

Despite these stories of family rejection, the nurturing and care that gay peers offered to each other nonetheless seems inflected with a familial sensibility, and perhaps reflects a token of a family connection or a longing for one. Even generic advice pamphlets on caring for those dying with AIDS assured friends that they were instrumental to the caring process, and that friends could also be "part of the family."[146] Organizations such as the GMHC did not presuppose that parents were absent from the lives of their dying gay sons altogether. In fact, one function of the GMHC was to blend the "chosen" families with the biological. In a collection of personal stories for the GMHC, one man wrote about his lover's mother who had moved from Florida to New York City to be with them. He did not know "what [they would have done] without

Nick's mother, Nita. Through this crisis, the three of us have bonded to become a new kind of family."[147] PFLAG advice pamphlet to families caring for a son with AIDS tried to encourage this sort of family blending, as well. It reassured parents that even if they lived far apart from their sons, their sons most likely had "developed an extended family comprised of a number of relationships." This pamphlet told the story of a mother who travelled from the East Coast to see her son in California, finding the presence of these friends "very reassuring."[148]

PFLAG itself encouraged a family reassessment, not to see the superiority of a biological or a chosen family, but to unite the two for a more effective family. At the PFLAG National Convention in 1991, Anne Serabian, whose son had died of AIDS in 1985, made a heartfelt speech. She hoped that by 1991 parents were beyond the shame and sense of disgrace she had felt when her son had succumbed less than a decade before. In his illness and death, she relied on young people, feeling that their generation was not so preoccupied with the stigma of a disease contracted sexually.[149] Her feeling exemplified a broader generational strategy on the part of parents of gay sons during this period. The 1992 advice book *After You Say Goodbye: When Someone You Love Dies of AIDS* advised families to honour their sons' friendships and relationships as a healing strategy in the wake of death.[150] Similarly, after her son Jimmy died, Bobbie Stasey turned to his friends, who shared their stories about Jimmy with her. "Look what families cut themselves off from when they cut themselves off from their son's friends," she reflected, "There's a part of him they'll *never* know if they don't know his gay friends."[151]

For parents, the re-embrace of the caring role could also become a re-evaluation of gay sexuality, or their perceptions of gays. Before this epidemic was made known, PFLAG had already asked parents to transform their homophobic attitudes. AIDS caused parents to come to terms with a much more profound sense of regret about how they had treated their gay children before the onset of their disease. In a PFLAG advertisement, Betty Holloran, whose son had died of AIDS, told a story of reconciliation with her son through the disease. She admitted that when their son told them about his gayness, she was "sorry to say....we were shocked and upset."[152] However, during his 3 year struggle with AIDS she "learned to love and accept him as a gay man," they became very close, and he died in the family home.[153]

When Jean Baker reflected on the death of her son, she could not quite imagine that she had ever experienced her son's gayness as remotely tragic and issued a poignant challenge to an interpretation of a child's gayness as a child's loss. "How strangely insignificant [now] seemed the fact of his gayness," she said, "How difficult to believe I had ever thought his being gay was a tragedy. Being gay is not the tragedy; what is tragic is that any parent can reject a child simply because the child is gay. And, of course, the death of one's child is the ultimate tragedy."[154] As her testimony suggests, AIDS changed how gay sons and their parents imagined each other, and their expectations of each other. As a disease and social phenomenon, AIDS brought about a more intense parental repentance for not having given their children unconditional love, something that was tested most rigorously in the face of this disease. Even as AIDS made gay sexuality more vivid and highlighted a chasm between gays and heterosexuals, it also emphasized the importance of parental care. Thus, the AIDS crisis helped to shift the tenor of gay

perceptions of the meanings of family love. The disease substantially altered the demand and fantasy of family intimacy by embracing familial care and rethinking an array of family roles that had been rejected during the liberation era. For gays, a new relationship to family and domesticity took form.[155]

[1] See, for example, the picture graphics in Douglas Crimp, ed., AIDS: Cultural Analysis, Cultural Activism (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1988). Another ACT-UP Ronald Reagan poster congratulated him on the "undeclared war" in the country where the enemy was identified by "the color of their skins/the size of their bank accounts/[and] the objects of their love." Cornell University, Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Collection # 7574, Robert Garcia, Box 3, File 14, "Congratulations, Ronald W. Reagan."

[2] See, for example, *Gay Comix*, no. 6 (Winter 1985): Back Cover.

[3] Miller, Out of the Past, 439.

[4] James Curran, "The CDC and the Investigation of the Epidemiology of AIDS," 19-29 in Victoria A. Harden and John Parascandola, eds., AIDS: the Public Debate (Amsterdam: IOS Press, 1995), 23. See also James Kinsella, Covering the Plague: AIDS and the American Media (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1989), 19. See also Anthony S. Fauci, "AIDS: Reflections on the Past, Considerations for the Future", 67-73 in Harden and Parascandola, eds. AIDS and the Public Debate and see Steven Epstein, Impure Science: AIDS, Activism and the Politics of Knowledge (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 46-48. Epidemiologists paid particular attention to those gay men with multiple partners. See Steven Epstein, Impure Science, 49 and see Paula A. Treichler, "AIDS, Homophobia, and Biomedical Discourse: An Epidemic of Signification," 31-70 in Douglas Crimp, ed., AIDS: Cultural Analysis, Cultural Activism (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1988), 48. See also Ronald Bayer and Gerald Oppenheimer, AIDS Doctors: Voices from the Epidemic (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 56.

[5] See Dennis Altman, AIDS in the Mind of America (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1986), 17. *Discover* magazine pronounced AIDS the "fatal price" one could pay for anal sex. On this article, by John Langone, "AIDS: The Latest Scientific Facts," (December 1985): 40-41 see Allan M. Brandt, "AIDS: from Social History to Social Policy," 147-171, in Elizabeth Fee and Daniel Fox, AIDS: The Burdens of History (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).

[6] D'Emilio and Freedman, Intimate Matters, 354. The 1990 stat is from Marcus, Making History, 405. For Canadian stats, see David Spurgeon, Understanding AIDS: A Canadian Strategy (Toronto: Key Porter, 1988). By 1988, there were 1765 cases in Canada.

[7] Bayer and Oppenheimer, AIDS Doctors: Voices from the Epidemic, 171.

[8] Jacques Bourque, "AIDS: Where's It Left Us?" *Angles* [Vancouver] (May 1986): 11.

[9] See James Davison Hunter. Before the Shooting Begins: Searching for Democracy in America's Culture War (New York: The Free Press, 1994), 3.

[10] On the notion of gays as diseased figures from the nineteenth century until the present, see again Terry, An American Obsession: Science, Medicine, and Homosexuality in Modern Society.

[11] C. Everett Koop, "The Early Days of AIDS as I Remember Them," 9-19 in Victoria A. Harden and John Parascandola, eds., AIDS and the Public Debate, 18.

[12] See Jean Seligmann and Nikki Finke Greenburg, "Only Months to Live and No Place to Die: The Tragic Odyssey of a Victim Turned Pariah" *Newsweek* (August 12, 1985), p. 26, part of the larger article by Matt Clark and Mariana Gosnell et al., "AIDS," in this issue, p. 20-27. This story tells of 32 year old Robert Doyle, a former construction worker, whose parents had died and siblings were estranged from him. He was discharged from both his job and his hospital completely destitute and alone with no place to die.

[13] On the attribution of AIDS to anal sex and to gay 'lifestyle', such as inhaled drugs or 'poppers', see Anthony S. Fauci, "AIDS: Reflections on the Past, Considerations for the Future," 67-73, in Victoria A. Harden and John Parascandola, eds., AIDS and the Public Debate, 68.

[14] Cornell University, Division of Rare and Manuscript Collection, Charles Gaver, Collection # 7575, Box 1, File 22. Fever Journal, Oct. 1987-June 1988, Diary Entry, 11/17/87.

[15] On the polls, see Epstein, Impure Science, 96 and see Brandt, "AIDS: From Social History to Social Policy", 147-171, in Elizabeth Fee and Daniel Fox, AIDS: The Burdens of History, 153, for a *New York Times* poll in 1985 that showed the widely perceived sources of social contact transmission.

[16] I am quoting from the TV movie of "An Early Frost," rather than the short story; the movie version was run on NBC-TV on November 11, 1985. The teleplay was by Daniel Lipman and Ron Cowen. The mother, Kay, was played by Gena Rowlands; the father, Nick, by Ben Gazzara; the gay son, Michael, by Aidan Quinn; and the boyfriend, Peter, was played by D.W. Moffatt. See the Lesbian Herstory Archives Video Collection, "An Early Frost."

[17] This comment was in an interview with Patrick Pacheco, "Tony Kushner Speaks Out on AIDS, Angels, Activism and Sex in the 90s," 15-26, in Tony Kushner, Angels in America: Part 1: Millenium Approaches (New York: Theatre Communications Group, 1992), 22.

[18] Paul Reed, Facing It: A Novel of AIDS (San Francisco: Gay Sunshine Press, 1984), 153.

[19] Ibid., 154.

[20] Buckley was quoted in Crimp, AIDS: Cultural Analysis, Cultural Activism, 8.

[21] By 1983, 23 states still had statutes condemning sodomy. See David B. Goodstein, "Our Sweet 16th: Remembering 1967," in *The Advocate* 377 (September 29, 1983): 30 (30-36).

[22] For an analysis of the idea of privacy and how it was taken up in the Bowers vs. Hardwick case, see Jed Rubenfeld, "The Right to Privacy," *Harvard Law Review*, 102 (February, 1989): 737-807, especially 747-748. See also McGarry and Wasserman, Becoming Visible, p. 28-29. Finally, see Simon LeVay and Elisabeth Nonas, City of Friends: A Portrait of the Gay and Lesbian Community in America (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1995), 273, and Clendinen and Nagourney, Out for Good, 534 ff.

[23] Susan Sontag, AIDS and its Metaphors (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1988), 25. On this sensibility of illness as character flaw, see Altman, AIDS in the Mind of America, 14. And on the theme of individual vs. collective responsibility, see Dennis Altman, "Legitimation Through Disaster: AIDS and the Gay Movement," 301-316 in Elizabeth Fee and Daniel Fox, AIDS: The Burdens of History, 336.

[24] Dennis Altman attributes this division to *New York Times* journalist Robin Henig for an article she wrote about "innocent bystanders" in 1983 called "AIDS: A New Disease's Deadly Odyssey" in the *New York Times Magazine* (February 6, 1983): 36. See Dennis Altman, AIDS in the Mind of America, 74. See also Brandt's discussion in, "AIDS: From Social History to Social Policy,"147-171 in Elizabeth Fee and Daniel Fox, AIDS: The Burdens of History, 165.

[25] On media portraits, see Timothy E. Cook and David C. Colby, "The Mass-Mediated Epidemic: The Politics of AIDS on the Nightly Network News," 84-122 in Elizabeth Fee and Daniel Fox, AIDS: The Making of a Chronic Disease (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).

[26] The 1980s saw a spate of popular books on nutrition and exercise habits, as well as official reports from the Surgeon General about nutrition. See also Prost and Vincent, eds., Vol. V, History of Private Life: Riddles of Identity in Modern Times, 85 ff. Finally, see Patterson, Grand Expectations, 713.

[27] Barbara Peabody, The Screaming Room: A Mother's Journal of Her Son's Struggle with AIDS; A True Story of Love, Dedication, and Courage (San Diego, CA: Oak Tree Publications, 1986), 25.

[28] BettyClare Moffatt, When Someone You Love Has AIDS: A Book of Hope for Family and Friends (New York and Scarborough, ON.: Plume, 1986), 76.

[29] Ibid., 78.

[30] Ibid., 79.

[31] Ibid., 80.

[32] On the villification of Patient Zero, see Douglas Crimp, "How to Have Promiscuity in an Epidemic," 237-270 in Douglas Crimp, ed., AIDS: Cultural Analysis, Cultural Activism, 242.

[33] Beverly Barbo, The Walking Wounded: A Mother's True Story of Her Son's Homosexuality and His Eventual AIDS Related Death (Lindsborg, KS: Carlsons', P.O. Box 364, 1987), 1.

[34] Ibid., 73.

[35] Ardath H. Rodale, Climbing Toward the Light: A Journey of Growth, Understanding, and Love (Emmaus, PA: The Good Spirit Press, 1989), 180.

[36] Ibid., 181.

[37] See Michael Callen, Surviving AIDS (New York: Harper Collins, 1990), 4. On debates surrounding the validity of free love in the face of AIDS, see D'Emilio and Freedman, Intimate Matters, 355.

[38] See Clendinen and Nagourney, Out for Good, 515 ff.

[39] Rodale, Climbing Toward the Light, 58-59. The David chapter is 58-73.

[40] Borhek, Coming Out to Parents: a Two Way Survival Guide for Lesbians and Gay Men and their Parents (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 1983 and 1993), 238.

[41] Cornell University, Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, the Goldstaub Family Papers, #7567, Box 1, File 39, Sylvia Goldstaub, Unconditional Love: 'Mom! Dad! Love Me! Please!' (Boca Raton, FL: Cool Hand Communications, Inc., 1993), 124.

[42] Ibid., 21.

[43] Haitians continued to be stigmatized as disease carriers throughout the 1980s and even in 1990 were barred from being blood donors in Miami. On this, see James Harvey Young, "AIDS and the FDA," 47-66, in Victoria A. Harden and John Parascandola, eds., AIDS and the Public Debate, 48 and see Dennis Altman, AIDS in the Mind of America, 58. Finally, see Steven Epstein, Impure Science, 66 and Sheldon H. Landesman, "The Haitian Connection", 28-37 in Kevin Cahill, ed. The AIDS Epidemic (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983).

[44] *Christopher Street*, 79, vol. 7, no. 7 (1983): 5.

[45] Some have argued that camp was revived in the face of AIDS. See, for example, David Roman's discussion of the play, *Pouf Positive*, in Performance, Gay Culture, and AIDS (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), 87-88. Humourous portraits of AIDS were controversial, particularly in this period, given that some of these were homophobic, done by heterosexual cartoonists. One by Steve Benson aired in the *Arizona Republic* in 1983 depicted two frail, sickly men in a hospital bed dying, with a Mother Nature hovering above them saying, "I told you it's not nice to fool mother nature!" The cartoon drew a

negative reaction both from readers and the Washington Post Writers Group. See *The Advocate*, "Bad Taste and Bad Manners: Benson's Bomb," Issue 373 (August 3, 1983): p. 18. For a non-homophobic AIDS comic of realism, see a strip of the *PWA Coalition Newsline* in the late 1980s: "AIDS: Another Interesting Day Starts" by Sal Melito. For debate regarding the appropriateness of AIDS humour, see the discussion in Edmund White's autobiography, Edmund White: The Burning World by Stephen Barber (London: Picador, 1999), 149 ff. On AIDS jokes, see John Rechy, "AIDS Mysteries and Hidden Dangers" in *The Advocate*, Issue 383-384 (December 22, 1983): 31. Finally, see Paula A. Treichler, "AIDS, Homophobia and Biomedical Discourse," 31-70, in Douglas Crimp, AIDS: Cultural Analysis, Cultural Activism, 67. My sense is that the phenomenon of AIDS humour was more prevalent after its transformation into a chronic disease, in the early 1990s. See, for example, Steven Moore's 1993 routine in the "Out There!" comedy series, "Drop Dead Gorgeous."

[46] Cornell University, Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, PFLAG, #7616, Box 43, File 47: Selections from "HIV/AIDS Family Support Packet", 1993, p. 12. These campaigns promoting savviness and AIDS awareness were produced in large numbers by gay activist organizations such as ACT UP. For some of ACT UP's art and posters with information on the actual way AIDS could be spread, see Ted Gott, Don't Leave Me This Way: Art in the Age of AIDS (Melbourne: Thames and Hudson, 1994) for Keith Haring's poster, "Ignorance=Fear," p. 68, for ACT UP San Francisco's portrait, "Clark Wants Dick: Dick Wants Condoms," p. 156, and for Gran Fury's photograph, "Kissing Doesn't Kill: Greed and Indifference Do." For other campaigns such as Niki de Saint Phalle's posters in her "Plague" series in 1986, see Carla Schulz-Hoffmann, ed., Niki de Saint Phalle, My Art, My Dreams (Munich: Prestel, 2003), 118-119.

[47] See Douglas A. Feldman and Julia Wang Miller, The AIDS Crisis: A Documentary History (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1998): 135.

[48] Before the advent of specific AIDS hospices in 1987, many long-term care facilities refused to take AIDS patients. On the emergence of AIDS hospices, see Feldman and Wang Miller, The AIDS Crisis: A Documentary History, 242, and Daniel Fox, "AIDS and American Health Policy," 316-343, in Elizabeth Fee and Daniel Fox, eds., AIDS: The Burdens of History, 335. On doctors' duties to those patients who posed them risk, particularly blood bank personnel, lab technicians and IV teams, see Sydney M. Finegold, M.D., "Protecting Health Personnel" in Kevin Cahill, ed., The AIDS Epidemic (New York: St. Martin's, 1983), 125 and Bayer and Oppenheimer, AIDS Doctors, 64.

[49] On this ballet, see Richard Golstein, "The Impact of AIDS on American Culture," 132-136 in Victoria A. Harden and John Parascandola, eds. AIDS and the Public Debate, 135. Many of the dancers in his piece already had full-blown AIDS and hence needed no make-up to portray KS lesions. See also Douglas Sadownick, "The Dancer Speaks Out: New Directions, New Candor," in *The Advocate* 545 (February 27, 1990): 38.

[50] Peabody, The Screaming Room, 18. For details on hospital isolation, in the early 1990s, see Larry Josephs, "The Harrowing Plunge" in Cornell University, Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell AIDS Action, 51/1/2746, Box 1, Folder 16, in *New York Times Magazine* (November 11, 1990), 41 (38-43). AIDS activists such as Larry Kramer recalled that even the Sloan-Kettering Hospital in New York City, which specialized in skin cancer, treated its patients like lepers. Larry Kramer, Reports from the Holocaust: The Making of an AIDS Activist (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989), from "1112 and Counting," 38 (38-51); this famous piece was first published in the *New York Native* 59, March 14-27, 1983.

[51] Walter O. VomLehn, "A Doctor's AIDS Heartbreak: 'Well, Dad, I Finally Have It.'" *Medical Economics* (December 23, 1985): 48-53 ; 51-52.

[52] William M. Hoffman, As Is (New York: Vintage Books, 1985), 77.

[53] See Nancy Tomes', The Gospel of Germs: Men, Women and the Microbe in American Life (Cambridge,

MA: Harvard University Press, 1998).

[54] On the media explosion during the summer of 1983, see David Black, The Plague Years: A Chronicle of AIDS, the Epidemic of Our Times (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1985), 191 ff.

[55] See again Streitmatter, Unspeakable, 261.

[56] For a vivid portrait, see Jameson Currier's novel, Where the Rainbow Ends (Woodstock: Overlook Press, 1998), especially 123-124.

[57] Marie Blackwell, "AIDS in the Family" in *Essence* (August 1985): 56 (56 and 105-108).

[58] Ibid, 106.

[59] On this theme, see Suzanne E. and James Hatty, The Disordered Body: Epidemic Disease and Cultural Transformation (Albany: SUNY Press, 1999), 15.

[60] On Tuskegee, see Sander L. Gilman, "AIDS and Syphilis: The Iconography of Disease," 87-107 in Douglas Crimp, ed., AIDS: Cultural Analysis, Cultural Activism , 100 and see James H. Jones, Bad Blood: The Tuskegee Syphilis Experiment (New York: Free Press, 1981). On doctor suspicion, see Bayer and Oppenheimer, AIDS Doctors, 6.

[61] Cornell University, Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Charles Gaver, Collection # 7575, Box 1, File 23, "Dear Family and Friends," 2/19/88, p. 5 (of 5).

[62] Michael Lassell, "How To Watch Your Brother Die" in Carl Morse and Joan Larkin, ed. Gay and Lesbian Poetry of Our Time (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988), 224.

[63] For visual representations of KS lesions, see Rosalind Solomon's photographs in her series Portraits in the Time of AIDS (New York University: Grey Art Gallery, 1988), p. I, VI, XII,XXVI. See also Mark I. Chester, United States, "Robert Chesley--KS Portraits with Harddick & Superman Spandex #3 and #5" from Diary of a Thought Criminal, 1990-91, gelatin silver photographs in Gott's compilation, Don't Leave Me This Way: Art in the Age of AIDS, 226.

[64] Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, AIDS: The Ultimate Challenge (New York: Macmillan Publishing, 1987), 23.

[65] Mary Melfi, ed. Painting Moments: Art, AIDS, and Nick Palazzo (Toronto: Guernica, 1998), 41.

[66] Betty Fairchild and Nancy Hayward, Now That You Know: A Parents' Guide to Understanding Their Gay and Lesbian Children (San Diego: Harvest Books, 1998). This is the third edition of her book; the chapter on AIDS from which I quote was added in 1989 and updated in 1998. See 247.

[67] Moffatt, When Someone You Love Has AIDS, 5.

[68] On this, see James Kinsella, Covering the Plague, especially 76 and 136 on the oblique terms in which gay sex was discussed.

[69] Bobbie Stasey, Just Hold Me While I Cry: A Mother's Life-Enriching Reflections on Her Family's Emotional Journey Through AIDS (Albuquerque, NM: Elysian Hills, 1993), 12.

[70] In his 1992 photograph, "Tigger," Bill Bytsura expressed this sense by showing a gay man kissing a hooded skeleton. This photo is in Ted Gott, Don't Leave Me This Way, 58. See also Liz Grosz, "Animal Sex: Libido as Desire and Death," 278-299, in Liz Grosz and Elspeth Probyn, eds., Sexy Bodies: The Strange Carnalities of Feminism (New York: Routledge, 1995), 297. She notes that AIDS safe sex

advertising itself tried to reassure gay men that sex did not have to be boring if it was safe, as if to suggest that "one need not court danger and possible death in the search for an ultimate sexual high." Gay sex had traditionally been associated with danger, with the threat of violence and police intervention, for example, and this might have, at least subconsciously, lent some added charge to gay sexuality. This interconnection between sex and death seems embedded more broadly in postwar culture as well: I am thinking of poems such as the violently-charged sex poems of writers Sylvia Plath and Ann Sexton, as well as Leonard Cohen and Irving Layton.

[71] Cindy Ruskin, "Taking Up Needles and Thread to Honor the Dead Helps AIDS Survivors Patch Up Their Lives," *People Magazine Weekly* (October 12, 1987): 44 (42-49).

[72] Cindy Ruskin, The Quilt: Stories from the NAMES Project (New York: Pocket Books, 1988), 78.

[73] Between 1980 and 1984, only about three dozen teenagers in America had contracted the disease. Steven Petrow, Dancing Against the Darkness: A Journey Through America in the Age of AIDS (Lexington, MA and Toronto: Lexington Books, 1990), 16.

[74] Ibid., 182.

[75] For context on public displays of shunning mourners and homophobia at the hands of workers, see Paul Monette's account of the homophobia of the cemetery employees he encountered in Last Watch of the Night: Essays Too Personal and Otherwise (New York: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1994), 109. On the fear of funeral undertakers and hospital workers, see also Altman, AIDS in the Mind of America, 62-63. For more on funeral directors see Anne Aaron and Iben Browning, The Economic Impact of AIDS (Albuquerque, NM: Sapiens Press, 1988), 28.

[76] For details, see PFLAG's Family Support Project. By 1987, PFLAG had established the Family Support Project, to help those living with family members with AIDS. They found family reticence understandable in light of this violence. See Cornell University, Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Collection # 7616, Box 5, File 4, "Family Support Project." On the Ray family specifically, see Sander L. Gilman, "AIDS and Syphilis," 87-107 in Douglas Crimp, ed., AIDS: Cultural Analysis, Cultural Activism, 105. Ryan White's family was invited to Cicero, Indiana after Kokomo. On White, see Douglas A. Feldman and Julia Wang Miller, The AIDS Crisis: A Documentary History, 113 and see Tomes, The Gospel of Germs, 256.

[77] See C. Everett Koop, "The Early Days of AIDS as I Remember Them," 9-19, in Victoria A. Harden and John Parascandola, eds., AIDS: the Public Debate: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives (Amsterdam: IOS Press, 1995), 15-16.

[78] Jean Baker, Family Secrets: Gay Sons, A Mother's Story (New York: Harrington Park Press, 1998), 5.

[79] On losses to the art world see again Erika Doss, Twentieth Century American Art, 223.

[80] Baker, Family Secrets, 5.

[81] On the silence about AIDS within obituaries, see Peter Nardi, "AIDS and Obituaries: The Perception of Stigma in the Press" in Michelle Cochrane, ed., When AIDS Began: San Francisco and the Making of an Epidemic (New York: Routledge, 2004), 159-168.

[82] Peabody, The Screaming Room, 153.

[83] On the metaphors of war in AIDS activism, see Michael S. Sherry, "The Language of War in AIDS Discourse," 39-53 in Timothy F. Murphy and Suzanne Poirier, eds., Writing AIDS: Gay Literature, Language, and Analysis (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 40.

[84] Barbara Peabody, The Screaming Room, 154.

[85] Michael Tidmus (United States), "Phrophlylaxis: Blind Admonition," from "From a Life: Selections Gay and Grave," 1993, in Gott, Don't Leave Me This Way, 227.

[86] See Philippe Aries' social history of death and dying, Western Attitudes Toward Death: From the Middle Ages to the Present (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1974), 87. He cites that between the 1930s and the 1950s the home was displaced as the site of death in favour of lonely hospital deaths. On the growing privacy of the death experience, see also David Dempsey, The Way We Die: An Investigation of Death and Dying in America Today (New York: Macmillan, 1975), 124 ff. Finally, see Sherwin Nuland, How We Die: Reflections on Life's Final Chapter (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993).

[87] Duane Michaels (United States), "The Father Prepares His Dead Son for Burial," 1991, gelatin silver photograph, reproduced in Gott, Don't Leave Me This Way, 130.

[88] On these organizations, see Sharon McDonald, "Tender Loving Care," *The Advocate* no. 515 (January 3, 1989): 52-53.

[89] Cornell University, Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Collection # 7324, AIDS Work, From Box 8, File "PFLAG", Kitsy Schoen and Ellie Schindelman, "AIDS and Bereavement", 16 (of 19).

[90] Blasius and Phelan, We Are Everywhere, 635.

[91] For this photo essay/public health ad, see figure 2. Cornell University, Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Collection # 7439, Box 12, File 51, excerpt from "Una Fotonovela Completa: 'Ojos Que No Ven: Una historia de hoy.....de nuestras vidas y la realidad del SIDA!' (San Francisco: Instituto de la Raza, 1987), 3 and 4.

[92] For an analysis of the *Life* article, see James Kinsella, 265. On this, see Douglas Crimp, " How to Have Promiscuity in an Epidemic," 237-270 in his edited collection, AIDS: Cultural Analysis, Cultural Activism, 262 as well as Allan M. Brandt, "AIDS: From Social History to Social Policy," 147-171 in Elizabeth Fee and Daniel Fox, AIDS: The Burdens of History, 212. See also Timothy E. Cook and David C. Colby, "The Mass-Mediated Epidemic: The Politics of AIDS on the Nightly Network News," in Elizabeth Fee and Daniel Fox, AIDS: The Making of a Chronic Disease, 110.

[93] For an example of one such ad, see Cornell University, Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Collection # 7574, Robert Garcia, Box 3, File 21.

[94] See Tomas Almaguer, "Chicano Men: A Cartography of Homosexual Identity and Behavior," in Henry Abelove et al, eds., The Lesbian and Gay Study Reader (New York: Routledge, 1993), 255-273. See also Cherrie Moraga's discussion in Loving in the War Years (Boston: South End, 1983), p. v, 99, 102.

[95] Altman, AIDS in the Mind of America, 118. James Kinsella mentions a 1985 press conference in which Reagan expressed sympathy with parents whose children went to school with other kids with AIDS, see Covering the Plague, 266.

[96] Dennis Altman, AIDS in the Mind of America, 63-67. On quarantining efforts, including a 1986 ballot proposition in California to quarantine HIV-infected citizens, see Feldman and Wang Miller, The AIDS Crisis: A Documentary History, 22; Epstein, Impure Science, 52; and Crimp, AIDS: Cultural Analysis, Cultural Activism, 8, as well as his essay, "How to Have Promiscuity in an Epidemic" in this same collection: 262 (237-270). See also Ronald Bayer, Private Acts, Social Consequences: AIDS and the Politics of Public Health (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1989), 169.

[97] See reference in David Gelman and Pamela Abramson, "AIDS," *Newsweek* (August 12, 1985): 20 (20-29); this comment was originally quoted in "Mother Nature Getting Even," *Seattle Post Intelligencer* (May 25, 1983): 1-15, according to Streitmatter in Unspeakable, 261. See also Kenneth MacKinnon, The Politics of Popular Representation: Reagan, Thatcher, AIDS and the Movies (London and Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1992), 164.

[98] See Toby Johnson, "AIDS and Moral Issues: Will Sexual Liberation Survive?" *The Advocate* 379 (October 27, 1983): 24. Miller, Out of the Past, 51 and D'Emilio and Freedman, Intimate Matters, 354.

[99] Baker, Family Secrets: Gay Sons, 188.

[100] Ibid., 192.

[101] This was a piece that Kramer wrote in the *New York Native* on March 13, 1983. For an account of the piece, see Kinsella, Covering the Plague, 34, and for the piece itself see Blasius and Phelan, eds., We Are Everywhere, 578-586. Kramer also noted that it took an entire year before the *New England Journal of Medicine* would even publish doctors' observations when they first saw AIDS symptoms in 1980. See Larry Kramer, p. 602, "An Open Letter to Richard Dunne and the GMHC," from the *New York Native* 1987, reprinted in Blasius and Phelan, We Are Everywhere, p. 601-609. See also Epstein, Impure Science, 45.

[102] On the drug's side effects of anemia, headaches, nausea, insomnia, and muscle pains, see Peter Arno and Karyn Feiden, Against the Odds: The Story of AIDS Drug Development, Politics, and Profits (New York: Harper Collins, 1992), 18, and see 84 for hospitalization costs, which ranged between 13 and 16 thousand dollars. For details on how AZT functions, see Cindy Patton, Sex and Germs: The Politics of AIDS (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1986), 99. Finally, see Bayer and Oppenheimer, AIDS Doctors, 134, and Norman Daniels, Seeking Fair Treatment: From the AIDS Epidemic to National Health Care Reform (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 9, 20, 84.

[103] Altman, AIDS in the Mind of America, 121.

[104] Fox, "AIDS and American Health Policy," 316-343 in Daniel Fox and Elizabeth Fee, AIDS: The Burdens of History, 335.

[105] See Feldman and Wang Miller, The AIDS Crisis: A Documentary History, 161, and Daniel M. Fox, "The Politics of HIV Infection," 125-143, in Daniel Fox and Elizabeth Fee, AIDS: The Making of a Chronic Disease, 137 and 138. This Act coincided with the Americans with Disabilities Act that gave antidiscrimination protection to people with AIDS.

[106] Ann Baker, "A Mother's Cry for Help," *PWA Coalition Newsline* 49 (November 1989): 23.

[107] On the founding, see Clendinen and Nagourney, Out for Good, 547 ff.

[108] D'Emilio and Freedman, Intimate Matters, 367.

[109] Epstein, Impure Science, p. 1-2 and p. 9 and 11. A prominent demonstration took place at the Harvard Medical School in 1988 featuring hospital gowns and fake blood. The protestors spoke against medical elitism and the overwhelming scientific attention to AZT, deemed toxic and not even satisfactory as a temporary cure.

[110] See Timothy McDarrah, "An AIDS Victim Protests From Beyond Grave," *New York Times*, Obituaries, Monday, November 2, 1992, no page no. and Sarah Wood, "Coffin Protest," *New York Newsday*, Tuesday, November 3, 1992, no page no., in Lesbian Herstory Archives, Collection # 91-1, ACT UP.

[111] Mark Lowe Fisher, "Bury Me Furiously," from Lesbian Herstory Archives, Collection # 91-1, ACT UP.

[112] Michael Denneny, "A Quilt of Many Colors: AIDS Writing and the Creation of Culture," *Christopher Street* 141, vol. 12, no. 9 (1989): 16 (15-21).

[113] Ibid., 18.

[114] Robert John Florence, "Coming In," *Out/Look* 2, no. 6 (Fall 1989): 67 (67-73).

[115] James Edwin Parker would go on to write the play *Two Boys in Bed on a Cold Winter's Night* (1995).

[116] James Edwin Parker, "Snakes, Trolls, and Drag Queens," p. 99-109 in Dean Kostos and Eugene Grygo, eds. Mama's Boy: Gay Men Write About their Mothers (NYC: Painted Leaf Press, 2000), 106.

[117] On these themes and Kubler-Ross' impact, see Michele Catherine Gantois Chaban, The Life Work of Dr. Elisabeth Kubler-Ross and Its Impact on the Death Awareness Movement (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2000), 327 ff.

[118] See Charles Rosenberg, "Disease and Social Order in America," p. 27-50 in Elizabeth Fee and Daniel Fox, AIDS: the Burdens of History, 50.

[119] Dirk Johnson, "Coming Home, With AIDS, to a Small Town," *New York Times*, (Monday, November 2, 1987): A 1.

[120] Eric Rofes called this the story of Hank Homo, who spent his youth in the Midwest or the South, has a sexual awakening, and then moves to New York City or Los Angeles or San Francisco or Chicago. See Eric Rofes, Reviving the Tribe: Regenerating Gay Men's Sexuality and Culture in the Ongoing Epidemic (New York: Harrington Park Press, 1996), 155.

[121] See Greg Lamp, "Back to the Farm to Die," in *Farm Journal*, (January 1991): 17--20.

[122] On the PFLAG warnings to rural parents, see Cornell University, Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Collection # 7616, Box 5, File 4, "Family Support Project."

[123] H. Wayne Schow, Remembering Brad: On the Loss of a Son to AIDS (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1995), p. X.

[124] Cornell University, Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Collection # 7575, Charles Gaver, Box 1, File 12, Letter to Jill, 10/27/88, p. 1.

[125] James Carroll Pickett, "Kentucky 55 South: A Visit with Dad" in John Preston, ed. A Member of the Family: Gay Men Write About their Families (New York: Dutton, 1992), 99 (95-101) (A version of this essay first appeared in *Frontiers*, October 26, 1990).

[126] See Rosalind Solomon (United States), "Untitled", from *Portraits in the Time of AIDS*, p. XI.

[127] Cornell University, Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell AIDS Action, 51/1/2746, Sue Halpern, "Values Which Are Simply There" in the *New York Times*, May 20, 1990.

[128] Cornell University, Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Collection # 7575, Charles Gaver, Box 1, File 11, Letter to Family and Friends, 2/14/88.

[129] Charles Gaver, Collection # 7575, Box 9, Firebooks: Selected Poetry and Journals 1969-83, Letter from Father, No Date, 1977.

[130] Charles Gaver, Collection #7575, Box 1, File 24, Journal Entry 6/11/88, p. 2 (of 2).

[131] Cornell University, Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections. Collection # 7444, Michael Williams, Box 2, File 12, Letter "Dear Dad", April 16 1989, p. 1 and 2.

[132] Michael Williams, Collection # 7444, Box 2, File 13, Letter to Michael from Dad, May 4, 1989, p. 1.

[133] Ibid., 2.

[134] Michael Williams, Collection # 7444, Box 2, File 18, Letter to Michael from Dad, January 16, 1990.

[135] See Kubler-Ross, AIDS: The Ultimate Challenge, 32-33 and 35-37.

[136] Cornell University, Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Collection # 7324, AIDS Work, Box 8, File "PFLAG," "Family Support Guide" (1993), David Kessler, "A Need for Constant Love," 9-10.

[137] Ibid., 10.

[138] D'Emilio and Freedman, Intimate Matters, 356 and Altman, AIDS in the Mind of America, 83. David Leavitt's *Saturn Street* is in the collection Arkansas: Three Novellas (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997). The GMHC also raised money for research, and lobby both state and federal governments for accessible treatments and a cure.

[139] See Kath Weston, Families We Choose: Lesbians, Gays, and Kinship (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 35. See also Michael Helquist, "An Epidemic in the Family," *The Advocate*, 404 (October 2, 1984): 29 and 56, and Michael Bronski, "Death and the Erotic Imagination," 219-228 in Erica Carter and Simon Watney, ed.s, Taking Liberties: AIDS and Cultural Politics (London: Serpent's Tail, 1989), 220. On the Shanti Project, see Gregory M. Herek and Beverly Greene, AIDS, Identity, and Community: The HIV Epidemic and Lesbian and Gay Men (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1995), 4.

[140] On lesbians and caring and AIDS activism, see Ann Cvetkovich, An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2003), 156-204. On the definition of health care as political issues, the province of radical feminists, see again Taylor and Rupp, "Women's Culture and Lesbian Feminist Activism," in *Signs* 19, No.1 (Autumn 1993), 52. On this see Peg Byron, "Lesbians in the Fight Against AIDS," *The Advocate* Issue 457 (October 14, 1986): 48-50 and Neil Miller, Out of the Past, 452. Also see Mark Blasius and Shane Phelan, We Are Everywhere, p. 638-641, speech given at the NGLTF town meeting for the gay community in 1989 by Maxine Wolfe.

[141] See, for example, Rebecca Brown, The Gifts of the Body (New York: Harper Perennial, 1994), and Amy Hoffman, Hospital Time (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997), a memoir of care for her friend Mike, who died in 1992.

[142] See Bill Kirkpatrick, AIDS: Sharing the Pain: A Guide for Caregivers (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1990), 48 ff.

[143] Hoffman, Hospital Time, 111.

[144] Cornell University, Division of Rare and Manuscript Collection, Collection # 7325 Robert Roth, Box 2, File 68, Kay Glidden, R.N., "Dear GMHC Supporter," p. 1 (of 4).

[145] Sylvia Goldstaub, Unconditional Love: 'Mom! Dad! Love Me! Please!', 36.

[146] See, for example, Cornell University, Division of Rare and Manuscript Collection, Collection # 7567, Goldstaub Family Papers, Box 2, File 13, "When a Friend Has AIDS" in State of Florida, Dept. of Health and Rehabilitation Services, 1989.

[147] Cornell University, Division of Rare and Manuscript Collection, Collection # 7325, Robert Roth, Box 2, file 68, From Gay Men's Health Care Crisis Organization (GMHC), August 1988, a letter from a Dennis C. Daniel.

[148] Cornell University, Division of Rare and Manuscript Collection, Collection # 7616, PFLAG, Box 43, File 47, "HIV/AIDS Family Support Packet", 1993, 8.

[149] Cornell University, Division of Rare and Manuscript Collection, Collection # 7616, Box 11, PFLAG Convention Tapes, Tape # 91-22, Anne Serabian, "Mother, Do You Know What AIDS is?" for the PFLAG National Convention in Charlotte, North Carolina.

[150] Paul Kent Froman, After You Say Goodbye: When Someone You Love Dies of AIDS (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1992), 216.

[151] Stasey, Just Hold Me While I Cry, 185.

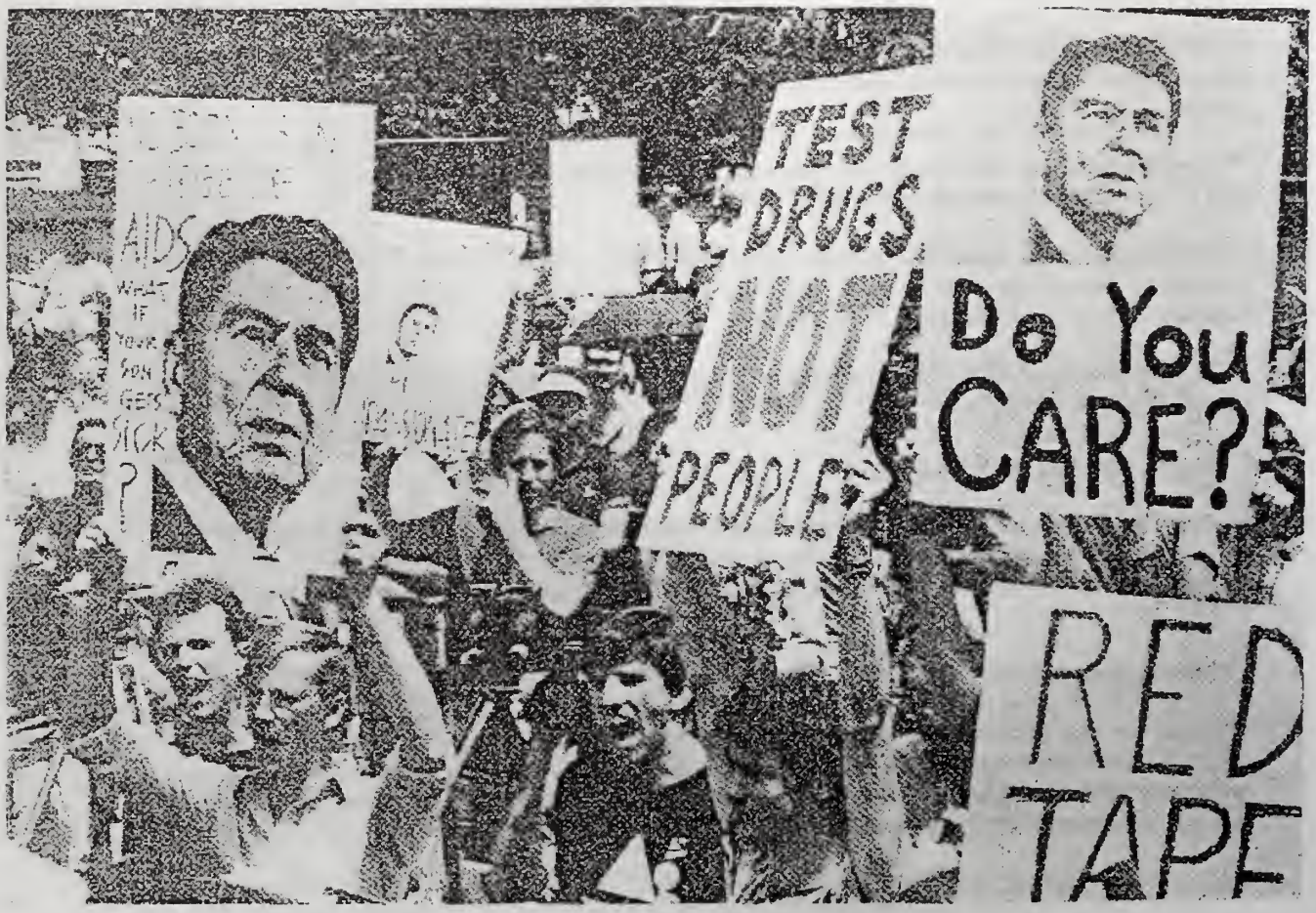
[152] Cornell University, Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, PFLAG, Collection # 7616, Betty Holloran, "Dear Friend," p. 3 (of 4), Box 43.

[153] Ibid., 4.

[154] Baker, Family Secrets, 181.

[155] Here I am referring to something beyond housekeeping and the physical aspects of the home, but as Nancy Walker defined domesticity: "social relationships, child rearing practices, personal well being, purchasing habits, recreation, neighborhoods, gardening, civic involvement, food preferences, health, and personal appearances. See again, Shaping Our Mothers' World, p. viii.

Figure 16. ACT-UP Poster, 1988



Demonstration by AIDS activists in front of the White House at the time of the Third International Conference on AIDS, June 1, 1987.

Figure 17. Cartoon in *Christopher Street*, 1983

Figure 18. Charles Graver's Drawing of a "Death Mask," 1988

'He's resting now and I don't think it would be fair to wake him.' As Norman Cousin points out in his Anatomy of an Illness, rest is often the patient's only recourse. People who protect my rest are not being mean or coy with you, but are only trying to make the last part of my life easier for me. AIDS is a disease without many answers, so keep up on it (ask your doctors what they know), but don't always expect "sure things." My sisters used their local library and it helped.

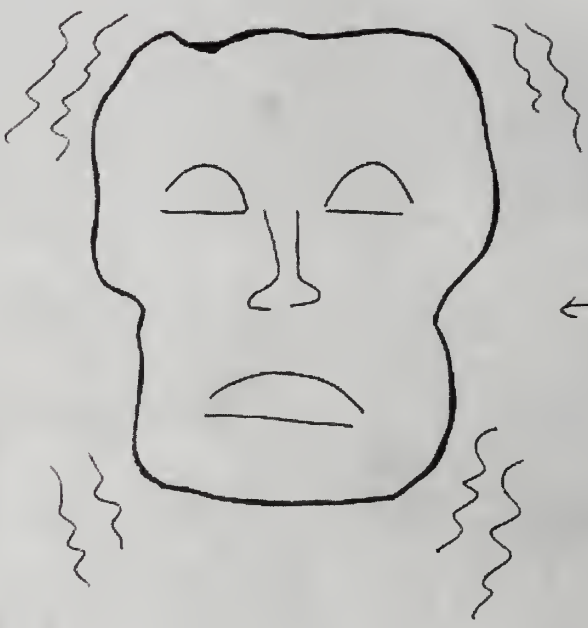
Again, you've all been a big plus in my life (and I don't mean to diminish your efforts with this chain letter -- which can, by the way, be shared with people who know me). Even if I don't follow your advice (especially on new, experimental treatments) don't be discouraged. You may eventually prove me wrong. (So dance on my grave -- Ha! -- but dance !!).

This last point might seem minor, but it will save a big headache for my friend Craig (who will administer my Will): don't fight over my ashes. You don't get much from a cremation, you get other people's ashes mixed in (if it's a busy day), and I've instructed Craig to dispense cigarette ashes to pests. He will do the best he can with what he has.

We'll communicate again. My fever is now 101.4°, so I'd better end this.

Love,

Charles



"Death Mask" (which I saw 2/20/88 on the bathroom tile at about 2 a.m.

Figure 19. Bill Bytsura, "Tigger," 1992

Figure 20. Michael Tidmus, "Phrophlylaxis: Blind Admonition," 1993

Michael Tidmus, United States, *Phrophylaxis: Blind Admonition*, from *From a Life: Selections Gay & Grave* 1993, iris print. Courtesy of the artist.

Figure 21. Duane Michaels, "Father Prepares His Dead Son for Burial," 1991

Figure 22. Instituto de la Raza, Advertisement, 1987

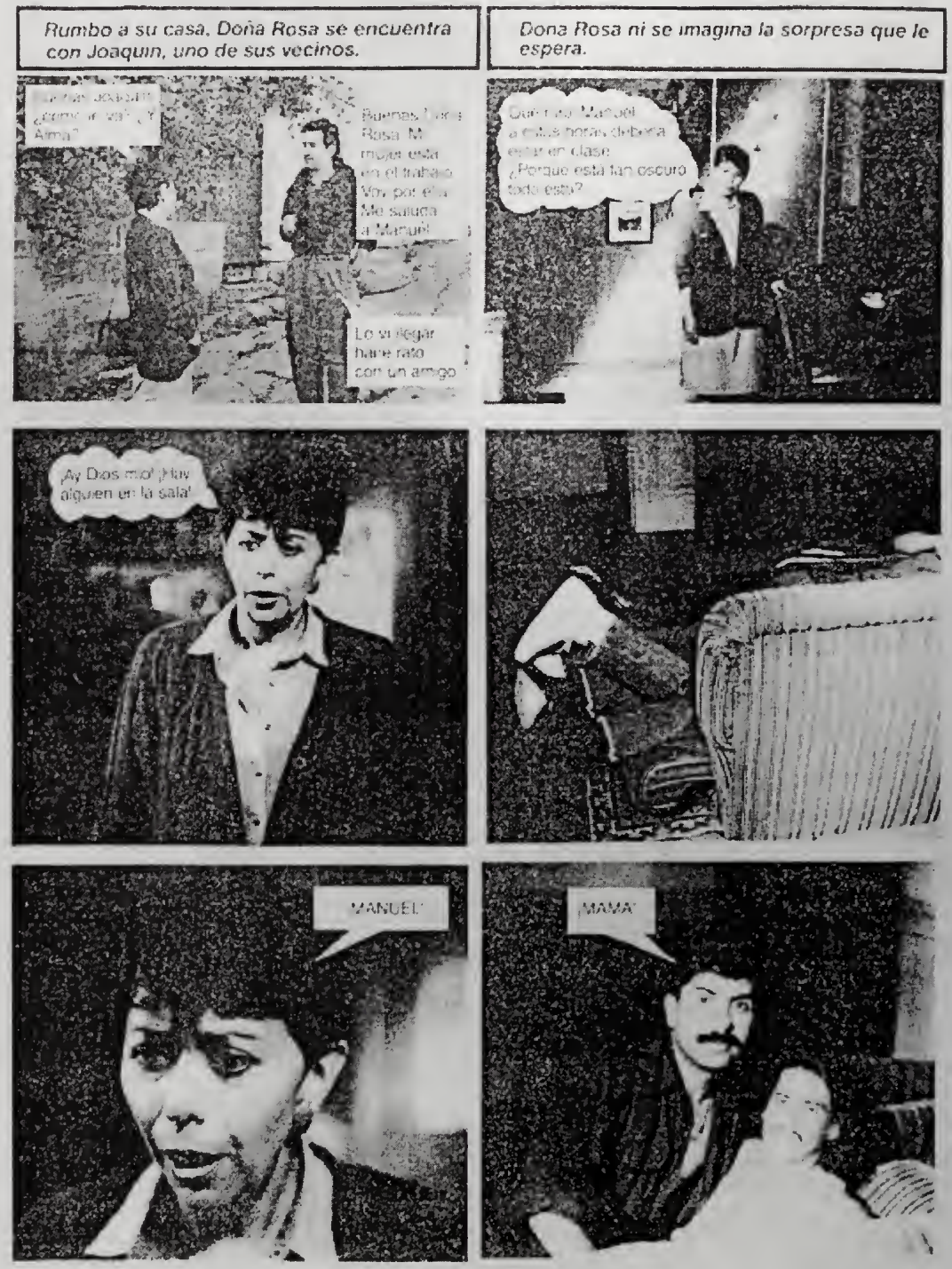


Figure 22 continued

Figure 22 continued

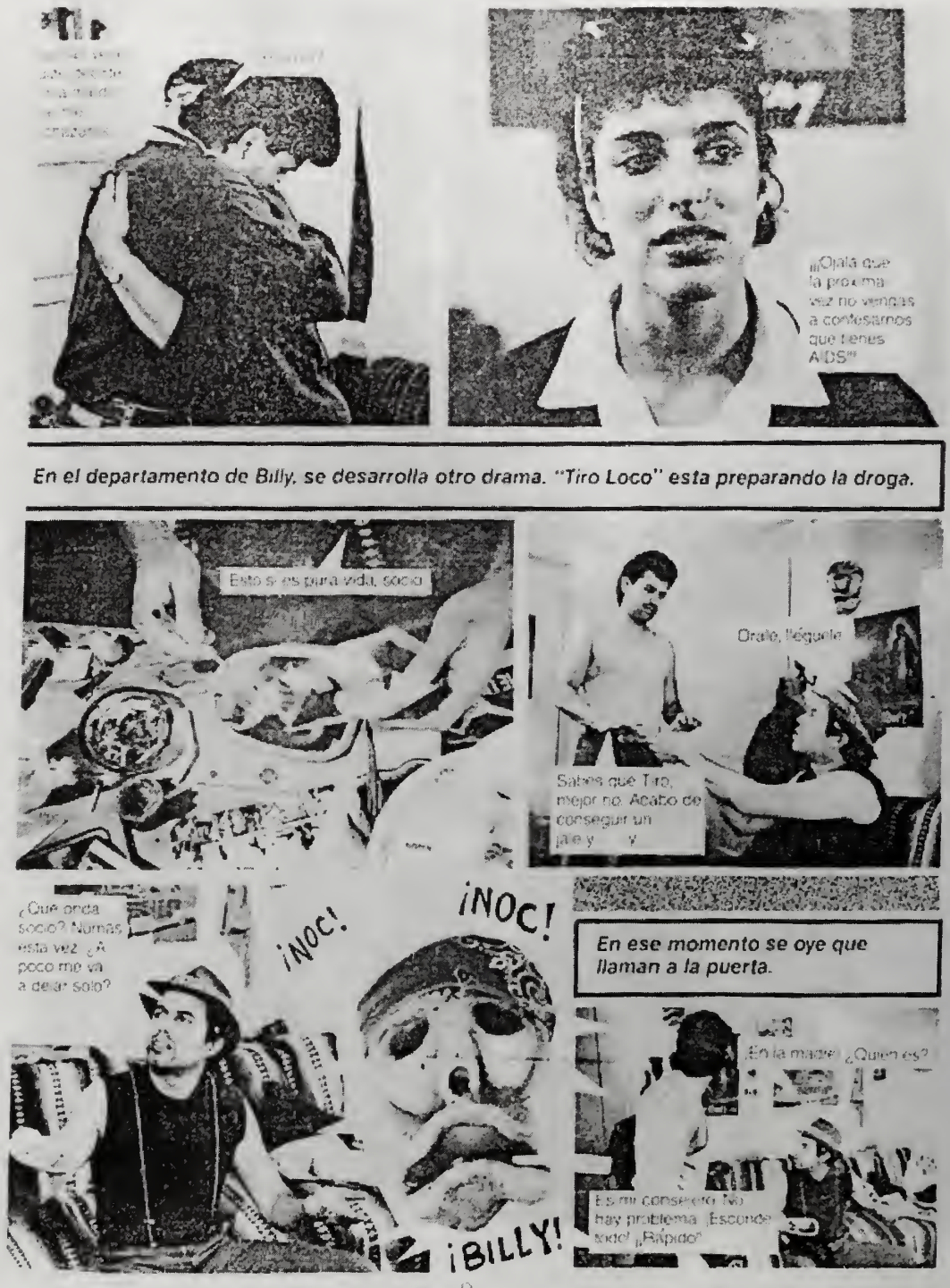


Figure 22 continued

Figure 22 continued

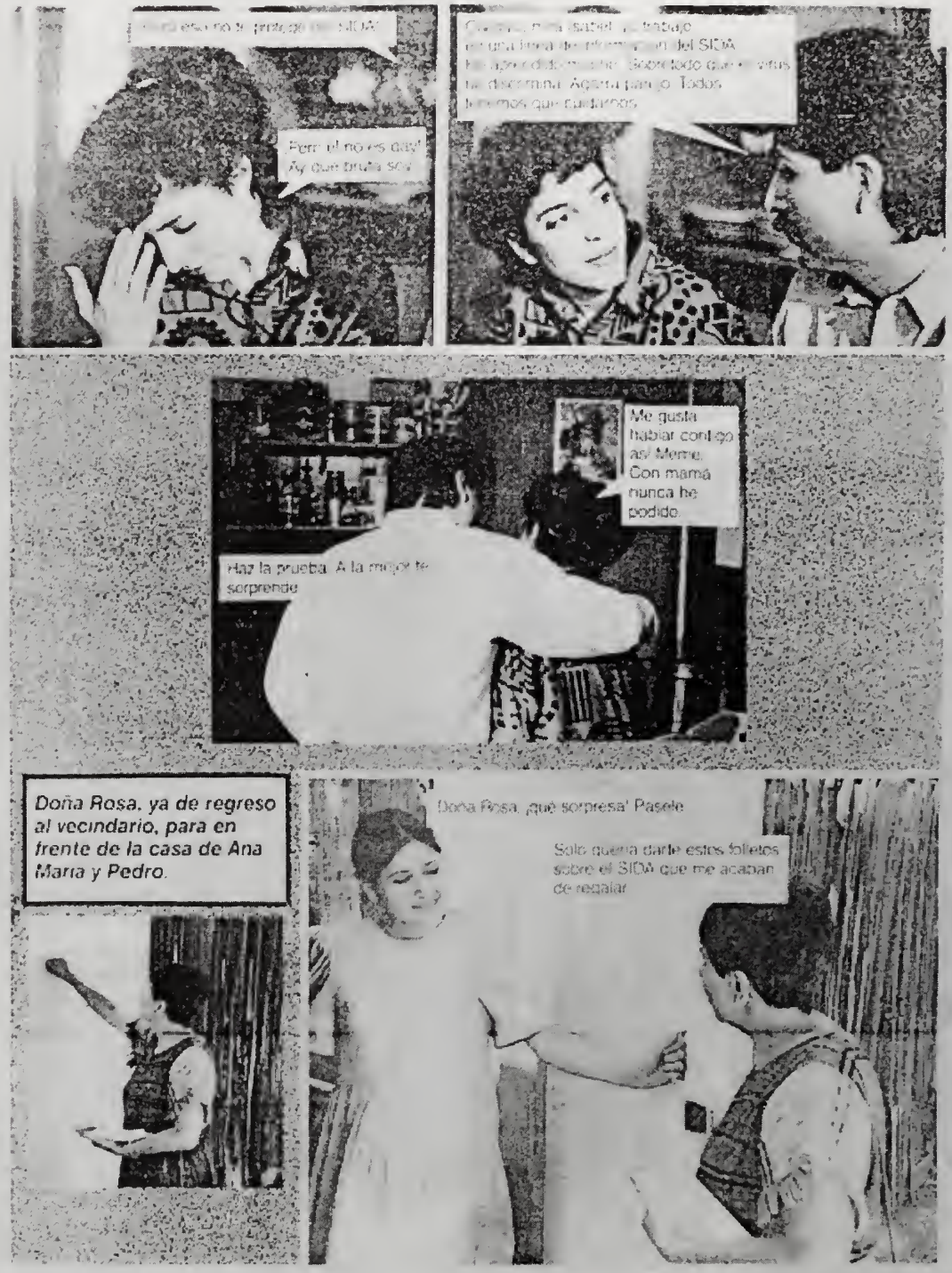


Figure 22 continued

Figure 23. NYC Health Department AIDS Advertisement

The other night Charlie brought home a quart of milk, a loaf of bread and a case of AIDS.

Charlie always felt his bisexual affairs were harmless enough.

But Charlie did catch the AIDS virus. That's why his family's at risk. His wife risks losing her husband, and when she has sex with him, her own life. If she becomes pregnant she can pass the AIDS virus to her baby.

Charlie could have protected himself. Saying "No" could have done it, or using a condom.

Right now there's no vaccine for AIDS, and no cure in sight. With what we know today, and with the precautions that can be taken, no one has to come home with a story like Charlie's.

AIDS

If you think you can't get it, you're dead wrong.

NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH. FOR MORE INFORMATION CALL (718) 483-4111

Figure 24. Rosalind Solomon, "Untitled," 1988

Rosalind Solomon, United States, *Untitled*, from *Portraits in the Time of AIDS*, a series of 60 works (No XI), 1988, gelatin silver print. Courtesy of the artist.

EPILOGUE

MOM, DAD, I'M GAY

By the 1980s and early 1990s, gays were starting to envision themselves as enduring, if contested, family members. Images proliferated of gays revealing their sexuality to their parents, having their partners home to meet the parents, and participating in family events. The desire for family integration appeared throughout gay advice literature and gave inspiration to gay and parental confessional stories alike. Increasingly, gays seemed to be embracing domesticity and the expressions of interiority that it offered.

This impetus for family integration, however, was a long standing one, just as the fear of family banishment was never far from the surface. During the immediate postwar period, gays devised strategies to maintain both their gay identities and their family membership through discretion. During the late 1960s and early 1970s, those gays who had adopted a liberation perspective largely abandoned discretion, claiming a more unequivocal recognition from heterosexual society, which included their families. This demand encompassed a substantial critique of the stunted emotional expression that heterosexual society, nuclear families, domesticity, and their own parents represented. Paradoxically, the very vehemence of this critique also seemed to suggest a longing for family to which the gay culture of this period also gave expression. In seeking to expand the possibilities for family intimacy, lesbian feminists embraced this liberation analysis as well, but felt even a greater ambivalence, as anti-family ideas contradicted the

movement's ethos of womanly intimacy and mother-daughter love. In turn, the AIDS crisis suggested a profound reimagination of family care and nurturance.

During the post-AIDS period, however, these sentiments became supplemented by a conception of intimacy characterized by both material care *and* understanding and empathy, one that seems to fuse the desires of liberation cultures with AIDS caring values. Could basic care and primal love be combined with an understanding of inner lives? Could the family of origin have an unequivocal place in the chosen family? This was not an unqualified fantasy for gays, and a substantial ambivalence remained as the family of origin seemed to become more omnipresent in gay lives, perhaps more so than many gays had ever hoped for or envisioned.

Parents, too, held an array of confusing feelings about their gay children during the postwar period. During the immediate postwar period, they were prompted to view gay sexuality as a psychological phase or a consequence of psychological immaturity; during the liberation period, they tended to see it as a political phase or a consequence of an experimental, exhibitionistic youth culture. Seeing children as 'really' gay, as some parents increasingly did through parental organizing and writing, necessitated understanding a child's lost connection to parents: any commonality through a heterosexual sensibility was now irrevocable. In turn, the AIDS crisis tended to highlight gay sexuality and gay existence even as it suggested a committed form of family caring that was not concerned with sexuality.

By the end of the century, what definitively changed in parents' expectations of gay children and in gay children's expectations of their family lives was the ritual of coming out. Gays no longer could live a life of discretion, a life without an increasingly

formalized and scripted coming out to their families. A fully developed, mature PFLAG organization was deeply implicated in establishing the necessity of the coming out moment for the sanctity of both parents and gay children. By 1988, PFLAG had nearly 200 local groups, and was making gains within smaller, rural areas; the organization had re-located from Denver to Washington where it now had an executive director and staff. During these years, PFLAG developed a more formalized advertising campaign in which the organization tried to make families with gay children conventional or normal. One way they did so was by making these families white. One telling PFLAG advertisement, which served as an invitation to PFLAG's annual dinner in New York City in 1986, entitled "We Are Family!", featured the Norman Rockwell painting "Freedom from Want" (1943). The painting shows a white family at a holiday turkey dinner, a mother/grandmother ready to hand out the fixings, and several young people at the table.[1] In this version, however, the image is gayed up by showing two young men and two young women making eyes at each other from across the table.[2] [Figure 25] The desire to portray the families of gays as utterly conventional, white and even Christian, seemed to preclude non-white organizational images, or even non-white member parents.[3]

The very kind of rhetoric emphasising conventional families with gay children also applied to PFLAG political activism, which took on an even more intensely inward, familial dimension during these years. As PFLAG developed more committees and task forces on specific issues, the organization received greater publicity for these efforts. Former PFLAG president Paulette Goodman's series of letters to then First Lady Barbara Bush in 1989 received perhaps the most attention of any PFLAG action during this period.

While twenty-five years ago Jeanne Manford wrote to the president, as both a mother and a citizen, Goodman now wrote to the *wife* of the president, "mother to mother." Goodman emphasised that PFLAG had "lifted the veil of ignorance [to learn that] our gay and lesbian children are fine, responsible, contributing members of our communities. They deserve our love and support." Still, she identified the most central oppression faced by gays as the tumult they faced within their own families: "Families are often overwhelmed when confronted by the issue of homosexuality. The suffering we experience due to our prejudice toward gay men and lesbians is unnecessary and disrupts family life.....We and our gay loved ones would certainly appreciate a kinder and gentler America." Taking up George Bush's cliched slogan, Goodman then asked Mrs. Bush to show "the human face of homosexuality [by helping PFLAG] to dispel the myths." Soliciting "positive words" from those who were "important and respected in government [could stop] violence and hysteria in our society." She praised Mrs. Bush for being a "powerful role model as a mother and grandmother" and for being "loving and compassionate", and thus having the power to "help heal the wounds" of gays and their families.[4] In this letter, Goodman's emphasis was not civil rights, as Manford's had been, but instead the vital roles of gays within the family.

This letter was premised almost solely on motherly devotion, and Mrs. Bush could do no other than respond in kind. Her brief note affirmed the principle of equality, and commended Mrs. Goodman for being a "caring parent" who loved her child and spoke with "compassion for all gay Americans and their families."[5] But this simple and rather noncommittal response was enough to generate some controversy and pressure for Mrs. Bush to rescind her comments.[6] Betty Fairchild urged her not to do so, writing her

back and telling her of the urgent need for family support since "families continue to suffer needlessly" and the work of the organization "reunited [them] in love and understanding."[7] PFLAGers were in the unique position of pronouncing, as signs read in early 1990s gay pride parades, that "Prejudice and Bigotry are Not Family Values."[8] The deepening conservative rhetoric about family values had provided a family framework for activism that left room for this intensely personal kind of political plea.

The notion that gay children and parents had encountered and withstood homophobia prompted a sense of mutual victimhood. Parents were not only blameless in causing gayness, but there was a sense emerging amongst gay children themselves during this period that parents were not to be held accountable for homophobia. This trend was made manifest in the burgeoning rituals surrounding the act of coming out to family members during these years. These coming outs had originally been an aspect of the liberation cultures of the late 1960s and early 1970s, only then they were often performed in a political context. By contrast, the family coming outs of the 1980s and 1990s seemed much more internal in purpose, encompassing feelings of self-worth and self-fulfillment; Rob Eichberg offered this plea in his advice on coming out in 1990: "[Coming out] is…the first step in liberating yourself to be a whole, complete, and powerful adult--the authority figure in your own life. Withholding the truth from others, as well as from yourself, generally leads to depression and feelings of powerlessness."[9] He even encouraged gays to come out to parents who were already dead, by writing them a letter or even taking this letter to the parents' grave side and reading it aloud to them.[10] These revelations reflect a narrated, confessional self emerging during these years.

The recognition that parents might have their own pain and difficulties with the revelation, one that PFLAG insisted be recognized, seemed to have permeated even the revelations that gays made to their families within intimate contexts. UCLA doctor and diarist Robert Kevess was quite self conscious about his coming out to his mother in 1989. He wrote in his diary about the build-up to writing his mother and carefully composed the letter he would send her in New York City, even selecting the PFLAG materials to send along with it. He included a copy of the coming out letter in his diary, telling his mother that it was necessary for him to tell her because "we simply cannot have a good relationship without you being aware of it." Assuring her that she was a terrific mother, he also allowed his mother time for all of this to sink in. "Mom, I don't expect you to understand all of this right away," he assured her, "You are of a generation which has had much less tolerance for non-traditional lifestyles, especially that of gay people." The only thing he asked from his mother was that "unless you have positive things to say" he would rather that she "wait 2 weeks before talking to me about the contents of this letter. I certainly wouldn't want you to say things that you might later regret. Take two weeks, think it over, and call."[11] These two weeks allotted seemed to be for the raw, potentially painful emotional reaction that his mother would presumably have, before she had time for thoughtful meditation or reading over the PFLAG materials. In a published collection of coming out letters of 1988, several other authors made a similar suggestion to their parents. "Alan", aged 42, told his parents that this was "the most emotional letter that a son or daughter could write to his parents" and that he thought it might be "easier on all of us if you both had a chance to read this and 'mull' it

over before we eventually sit down and talk about it."[12] Even if coming out was a significant life moment, it was not an entirely spontaneous one, on either side.

The very idea that parents would need to take time before talking to their children suggests a fear of an irrational parental response and the desire to control it, as well as a somewhat mechanistic quality to these revelations: they might have been sparked by an inner imperative but they were managed after that. Even if they did hear these initial reactions, gay writers made great allowances for their parents' homophobia. Rachel Pepper was living in Chicago while her parents were living in Canada and she came out to them over the Christmas holidays in 1988. She was working for Chicago's *Outlines* magazine at this time, and published her musings on this parental confrontation there. Their reactions were quite severe: they swore a lot at her, and her father had told her that homosexuality was "bringing down the modern western world." They told her that they "no longer wanted to be a part of [her] world" and that they were "no longer proud of who [she] was." They even suggested that she just invented being a lesbian to hurt them, or that she had some unresolved psychological issues from her youth. Though their "remarks hurt badly", she knew that "my parents need time to work through the shock I've given them. And I love them enough not to push them. In time, they'll deal with it, in their own way."[13]

These parental interactions departed quite dramatically from the unrepentant style of coming out of the liberation period, and almost seem a throwback to the early postwar period, in which many gay writers simply expected that their parents would be terribly upset. However, there was one crucial difference here. These revelations presumed the transformation of parents. A National Gay Task Force pamphlet of the early 1980s,

"About Coming Out", suggested that even though the revelation could "surprise, anger, or upset", gays should not "react angrily or defensively" because the "initial reaction may not be the long-term one." What gays needed to do was give parents "time to adjust and to comprehend the new information about you. Don't expect or demand immediate acceptance."[14]

The idea of familial embrace of gay sexuality, partners, and gay sensibility was in fact illusory for many gays writing in this period. For Susan Chen, a first generation Chinese woman, the narratives of transformation that circulated about PFLAG parents contrasted starkly with how her family had reacted to her sexuality. In 1988, she was a sophomore in college and her parents found out that she was in a relationship with a woman. Her father told her in Mandarin, "You step on my heart."[15] In turn, "[s]ome of my non-Asian friends suggested that I just respond with, 'Forget it; if they don't accept me it's not my problem. I'll just continue with my life as I please, and ignore them.'" Yet, even at her lowest moments "I could only maintain that attitude for a short period of time. Then the guilt returned. Besides I loved them very much. Despite feelings of bitterness....I knew everything I had came from my parents. They had done so much for me and I owed much to them in return."[16] Chen's story speaks to a different assessment of parental obligation between gay children of immigrant families and non-immigrant ones, as well as a greater attention to parental shame.[17] Despite her fear that "Asian parents just didn't become PFLAG parents", she hoped to see her parents join the organization and "march in a huge gay and lesbian parade."[18]

The idea of parental duty was particularly pronounced for Chen, but perhaps this notion was still very much in place within a broader consciousness of gays, at least more

so than it was for heterosexual children. Twenty years after Barbara Stephens had given her outraged testimony about having to take on the financial and caring burdens of her aging parents, Glenn Wein, a writer for *Christopher Street*, wrote in 1985 that gay children are still the children whom parents depend upon when they need help as they grow older and their health diminishes, even when these parents refused to acknowledge their children's sexuality.[19] Had the pain and alienation of being gay, as well as the experience of being witnesses to the AIDS epidemic, produced a kind of empathy with aging parents who were marginal and somewhat alien now themselves? And could this empathy for parents become a gay political strategy? William Dubay thought so. Writing in *Christopher Street* in 1985, he thought that a new direction for gay liberation could be found in returning to the family of origin and cultivating an understanding between the two sexual sensibilities.[20]

These two journalists evoke a complex family situation in which family selves but not gay selves were acknowledged. This kind of family accommodation was inherently contradictory and it bred equally contradictory gay responses and interpretations. Not all gays assumed their family roles cheerfully when their gay selves were shunted to the side. Poet and performance artist Essex Hemphill wrote an arresting poem from the perspective of a gay man who appears to have only a duty-oriented presence within his family. In "Commitments", he writes "I will always be there": in the family photographs, he will be "smiling/among siblings, parents/nieces and nephews." While the children in these photos are held by parents, "[m]y arms are empty, or around/the shoulders of unsuspecting aunts/expecting to throw rice at me someday…./I am always there/for critical emergencies,/graduations,/the middle of the night./I am the invisible son./In the

family photos…./I smile as I serve my duty."[21] There is a hollowness to his family existence, almost like the flat, plastic figure he appears to be in the photograph. The poem seems to comment on the barrenness of family duty, even family care, without the accompanying closeness that would come through an understanding of gay selfhood.

Gay cultural expressions about the family took into account both Hemphill's feeling of a fragmentary, unsatisfying presence in family life, as well as a desire to become more fully connected with the rites of the family during the 1980s and 1990s. Even gay cartoons and humour appeared to recognize that the family might be simultaneously alienating and accepting, that it might combine many elements of oppression and love.[22] In these cartoons gay partners were being brought home to the parents and gays were mingling with their families in kitchens, living rooms, and house porches, interactions seldom depicted in the gay cartoons of even slightly earlier eras.[23] [Figures 26-35] The finality of gayness during this period seemed to combine with a sense of finality about the family's presence. The children were gay whether parents liked it or not, and the parents were going to have some part in the lives of those children whether the children wanted it or not.

During this period, gays also gave a more intensive consideration to what it would mean to have their parents' unconditional acceptance, a prospect which itself bred some ambivalent feelings. In the short story "Territory", David Leavitt imagined the mother of a gay son who had been in touch with PFLAG the day after her son come out to her, and was also a chapter president. She and her friends would drive their "station wagons to San Francisco, set[ting] up their card tables in front of the Bulldog Baths, the Liberty Baths, pass[ing] out literature to men in leather and denim who were loath to admit they

even had mothers." She gave her son, Neil, a sophomore in college living in San Francisco, "pamphlets detailing the dangers of bathhouses and back rooms, enemas and poppers, wordless sex in alleyways." These acts of caring did not make Neil feel particularly comfortable or accepted, but more violated: "he winced at the thought that she knew all his sexual secrets, and vowed to move to the East Coast to escape her."[24] Neil starts to feel quite discomfited by this pride. He detects that it is somewhat disingenuous, or at least more hesitant than his mother avowed. She tells her son that one has to "be brave to feel such pride."[25] She bristles about affectionate displays between her son and her son's partner, though she does not admit this forthrightly.[26] She claims to be "very tolerant, very understanding" but she "can only take so much."[27]

This mother seemed to symbolize the gay privacy that had to be ceded when suddenly an older generation of heterosexuals began to participate in gay culture. The impetus to get parents to acknowledge and understand gay children's private lives, bred, at the same time, a parental right to know about, comment upon, and probe a gay child's sexuality, and set up a dialogue that was all the more intensely personal. Parents had a new entitlement to their gay children's private lives.

To be sure, parents in previous decades speculated about their children's growing up and the 'causes' of their sexuality--and got upset about it--but the expectation that parents and children should talk over these matters was becoming much more pronounced in the 1980s and early 1990s. These trends were highlighted in parental "coming outs" about their gay children, in memoirs and other confessionals, encouraged perhaps by a tell-all biography genre particularly prevalent at this time.[28]

In her reflection for the 1987 collection, *Different Daughters: A Book by Mothers of Lesbians*, Deborah, a 46 year-old cardiology technician living in suburban New Jersey, attempted to understand her 24 year-old daughter's lesbianism. Deborah wrote wistfully that as a teenager her daughter, Melissa, had been "popular and beautiful and went out with a zillion boys." But when her daughter turned sixteen, "I started to notice how much she talked about a certain friend of hers. I noticed that she ignored her boyfriend in order to spend time with this friend. I joked with her that she might be gay, but basically I just thought she was behaving strangely." This sense of something awry turned to a focus on Melissa's fantasy life. When her daughter turned eighteen, Deborah noticed that Melissa "developed an obsession about the TV program, *Cagney and Lacey*," and had a "thing" for Cagney.[29] When Melissa came out to her mother, Deborah justified her hostility by the pain she felt. After her daughter came home with her first girlfriend, Deborah recorded that she felt "tense and angry and was quite nasty and short tempered with her. I knew this was bad behavior, but I couldn't stop myself. I didn't feel guilty because I was so mad at her…she was…changing. She started looking totally different. Out went the hair dye and the make up…I missed the other Melissa, because that's the one I knew."[30] Yet, after she and her daughter had talked about Melissa's childhood, and her girlhood crushes, Deborah "realize[d] that [Melissa] kept many of her feelings to herself." Even after admitting that she had disparaged her daughter, she still expected her daughter to have shared her feelings: "I feel badly that we couldn't talk when she was growing up."[31] Striking in this account is how Deborah recounted Melissa's progression to being a lesbian as a gradual realization in Deborah's own life. It came through a scrutiny of something as intangible as her daughter's interests--her 'obsessions' or fantasy life--and

the more concrete manifestations such as her appearance.[32] The surveillance of her daughter's affective life was quite broad.

Linda Alcoff has written about the ways that visual media during this period contributed to the feeling of spectacle surrounding confessional stories.[33] Gay confessionals were certainly taken up as spectacle during these years, particularly in the venue of television talk shows. Donahue was particularly fond of gays as a topic, and Geraldo Rivera, Sally Jesse Raphael, and Oprah Winfrey all featured gay themed shows during this period, including one *Oprah* in 1993, on "parents who can't deal with the fact that their children are gay."[34] Oprah used this show both to reconcile estranged parents and their gay children, and to dispel myths about gays to a somewhat unsure audience. At the beginning of the show, she held up a photograph of a young woman named Nicole, who then had long hair and make up. She juxtaposed it with another photo of a young woman with a shaved head and more of a butch look, saying that this is what Nicole looked like now. Nicole had told her mother she was gay and it was "tearing her [mother's] heart out right now." The show centred around this mother and daughter pair, as well as an estranged mother and son, and several members of the audience claiming to be in the same situation. Nicole's mother, Karen, had coiffed hair and lots of make up and cried liberally as she spoke. Her daughter, in turn, seemed to be in physical pain whenever her mother spoke, wincing and rolling her eyes at many of the things her mother said. This mother told Oprah that she was not "opposed to people being gay"-- which prompted an audible sigh from her daughter's corner-- but "as a mother, I had an expectation that my daughter would walk down the aisle just like everybody else, get married, have babies." Taking up, consciously or not, some of the very words PFLAG

had apportioned to this parental moment of sadness, Oprah said, "so you grieve the loss of the daughter you thought you had." The mother affirmed that this was so.

Here too a gay daughter's private life had given way to a mother's casting about for explanations of the origins of her sexuality. As the mother said to Oprah, "I had certain reasons to believe that maybe she was a victim at one time." At this, Oprah raised her eyebrows and asked: "Meaning? Somebody molested her?" The mother said, "something happened. I don't know. It's never been talked about and it's never been brought out." The daughter shook her head furiously, and pronounced, "I *never* was a victim. I don't know what any of that is about." Oprah tried to bridge the confrontation by suggesting, again in the vein of PFLAG, that gayness simply existed and one could not be victimized into it. When the mother said that she was not "opposed" to gayness, Oprah said, "that to me is like saying, I'm not opposed to people being black, but I'd prefer they…." "No!" the mother exclaimed, not letting Oprah finish the analogy. Seeing that this had embarrassed the mother, Oprah explained her response: "I only said that, though, Karen, because I think….you're born gay, and that's what you are…..I always say, you know, it's like going in a field of clovers. Most of them are three leaved, sometimes there's a four leaf clover. And I always think, oh, that's a gay clover. [laughter and applause from the audience] It's a gay clover!"

Despite this greater visibility, including sympathetic images of gays who had at least some family role or presence, the 1980s and early 1990s were also in many ways a bleak era for gays. Reported violence against gays increased, particularly amongst gay youth, as did gay suicide.[35] There had been a 200% increase in reported anti-gay violence between 1985 and 1988 alone.[36] Perhaps these acts of violence were also the

unintentional, tragic consequences of gay visibility, and were even pervading family life in the wake of a more widespread acknowledgement of gay existence. If gay children could not be talked out of it, and nothing could be attributed with blame, then what parental response was there to this knowledge? There was acceptance of course, as PFLAG advocated, but there was also resignation, disbelief, and even punishment. This kind of stark and brutal response to gay children did not go unheeded in the gay cultural expressions of this period. One poignant example is the series of comic books by Ivan Velez, Jr., published during the late 1980s by the gay youth help organization, the Hetrick-Martin Institute, a New York City group that tried to ensure the protection of gay young people by providing services and public education. These comics portray gay high school kids living in Queens, New York, who endure teasing and cruelty at the hands of their peers, doctors, teachers, and, most prominently, their parents. The reality of the young people portrayed here is isolation, suicidal thoughts, and daily, relentless violence, both from outside sources and their families.[37] [Figure 36]

Perhaps discretion as a strategy, then, might still have been useful even for the gays of this generation, for protection from the thoughts, fantasies, and the violence of families, as well as other observing heterosexuals. But discretion was a scarcely acknowledged strategy or value, even within the gay culture of this period. Spurred on by Queer Nation, an activist group that had emerged from ACT-UP in 1990 to combat homophobia, gay activism increasingly esteemed the coming out moment. One Queer Nation advertisement proclaimed that "Your Closet is Your Coffin."[38]As this poster bluntly declared, keeping sexuality private could be conceived as a kind of violence in

itself.[39] A debate ensued about the ethics of outing public figures within the gay press, and more generally, about the value of being out.[40]

In the face of these emerging trends, filmmaker and playwright Arch Brown, writing for *About Town*, a gay entertainment magazine, reflected that since Stonewall "mostly what has been lost is that special feeling of belonging to a secret subculture, having its own language, style, mores, and anonymity." In his view, gays had forfeited "subtle things that belonged to us and no one else. The most obvious being language. Words like 'Gay' and 'Camp' could be safely used in front of straight friends and in fact whole conversations could go on in public that were essentially private between those who 'understood'."[41] In this vein, Elizabeth Kennedy has recorded a lesbian interview correspondent's feeling that there was also a sense of excitement in having a secret, a feeling that being gay was something unique and special.[42]

By the late 1980s and the early 1990s, gays experienced and represented an obligation to confess, and telling the family became a central, necessary stage of self-revelation. In the process, gays had gone from secret to known, even formalized selves. The selves that could once be considered purely personal in the early postwar period, had become more expressly political during the liberation period, and then, during the AIDS crisis and in this most recent period, public. Parents could not help but register these changes. What they may have once considered simply an abstraction—gay life—was now claiming an undeniable presence in family spheres.

But families did not simply come along and intrude on gay privacy. The preoccupation with the family of origin was long present in gay culture, and the family hovered over the lives of gays even when gay sexuality was not precisely known,

declared, or discussed. In turn, the embrace and symbolization of the family was always hesitant, contradictory, and uneven, both at moments of profound gay radicalism and in this period of mainstream integration. Even now, model families were considered to be idealized versions of acceptance, family love, and domesticity that many gays did not think they had--but were not sure they truly wanted, either. In turn, what gays owed their parents and vice versa was ever present, and remained a pronounced dilemma as these decades progressed, not one that had slipped away from family considerations altogether.

What does seem irretrievable in gay culture and in gay representation more broadly, even in the day to day interactions of letter writing and diary keeping, are those screened, nebulous allusions to gayness within the family. Gays once bred a culture about their relationships to the family that was expressed largely metaphorically, and even within the realm of fantasy. These representations became displaced by more direct portraits: the coming out statement, "Mom, Dad, I'm gay," was absolutely direct and concrete. The need to live a double life of sorts that had once shaped a set of gay writings that straddled family roles and gay roles, had given way to writings increasingly informed by autobiographical reflection and revelation.

Gay culture and politics, and the dynamics within it, were not solely the consequences of a broader repeal of discretion in the postwar period: gays--and their parents--had fuelled this larger trend as well. The changing shape of gay culture and politics has created a world in which opportunities for privacy are scant, the personal is named and talked about, and selves are known, as though the companionate family's central question, "who are you?" had had a definitive response-- "let me tell you, exactly"-- and become grafted onto the larger culture.

[1] On this painting, see again Warren Susman, Culture as History: the Transformation of American Society in the Twentieth Century (New York: Pantheon, 1984), 194.

[2] IGIC Ephemera, PFLAG, "We Are Family!"

[3] To be fair, PFLAG did undergo some internal questioning about why they had failed to attract minority groups. PFLAG Convention topics in these years reflect these concerns. For example, in 1987, a discussion group was held on "Reaching Out to Minority Families of Gays and Lesbians" and in 1990, "Coming Out to an Hispanic Family," which tried to take into account both PFLAG failures, and the taboos within the groups they hoped would join PFLAG. See Cornell University, Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, 7616, PFLAG, Box 9, Audio Tape 87-5 and Box 11, Audio Tape 90-29. See also tape 90-38, Outreach to Families of Colour, October 14'90, Anaheim Convention, where a speaker speculated about the role of PFLAG in African American communities.

[4] Cornell University, Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, 7616, PFLAG, Box 2, Paulette Goodman, "Dear Mrs. Bush," 13 June, 1989, 1.

[5] Cornell University, Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, 7616, PFLAG, Box 2, Barbara Bush, "Dear Mrs. Goodman," May 10, 1990, 1.

[6] Cornell University, Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, 7616 PFLAG, Box 2, Robert Bernstein, "Family Values and Gay Rights," *New York Times*, 1990.

[7] Cornell University, Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, 7616, PFLAG, Box 2, Betty Fairchild, "Dear Mrs. Bush," June 11, 1990, 1.

[8] See, for example, ACT-UP Finding Aid, MSS. and Archives Section, New York Public Library.

[9] Rob Eichberg, Coming Out, An Act of Love: An Inspiring Call to Action for Gay Men, Lesbians, and Those Who Care (New York: Plume, 1990), 21.

[10] Ibid., 159.

[11] Robert Kevess Diary, Personal Copy, 10/7/89.

[12] "Alan" in Med Umans, ed., Like Coming Home: Coming Out Letters (Austin, TX: Banned Books, 1988), 95 (95-98). Other letters in this collection that were particularly sensitive to parents' feelings, giving them thinking time, include, "Vivian," (age 23, Arizona), 29-33 and "Harriet," 71-73.

[13] Rachel Pepper, "A Coming Out Christmas Tale," *Outlines* (Jan. 1988), No Page Number.

[14] Cornell University, Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Kristin Gay Esterberg, Collection # 7452, Box 1, National Gay Task Force, "About Coming Out", (New York: NGTF, No Date).

[15] Susan Y.F. Chen, "Slowly But Surely, My Search for Family Acceptance and Community Continues," (1991), P. 79-84 in Sharon Lim-Hing, ed., The Very Inside: An Anthology of Writing by Asian and Pacific Islander Lesbian and Bisexual Women (Toronto: Sister Vision, 1994), 79.

[16] Ibid., 81.

[17] Martin Hiraga, a gay Japanese American, agreed with this characterization of Asian parents. When he came out to his parents, he started his coming out letter with the Japanese words: "I, your dishonorable son, am sorry to have shamed you...." See Martin Hiraga, "Rising Son: An Asian Comes Out to His Parents," in *The Empty Closet* 188, (December 1987/January 1988): 14 and 15. Themes of parental shame and obligation were also prominent in the collection of coming out stories and letters by Toronto Asian gay men, Celebrasian: Shared Lives: An Oral History of Gay Asians (Toronto: Gay Asians of Toronto, 1996).

[18] Chen, "Slowly But Surely, My Search for Family Acceptance and Community Continues," 82 and 81.

[19] Glenn Wein, "Gay Siblings in an Aging America," *Christopher Street* 101, vol. 9, no. 5 (1985): 26 (26-28).

[20] William H. Dubay, "You Can Go Home Again," *Christopher Street* 101, vol. 9, no. 5 (1985): 18-21.

[21] Essex Hemphill, "Commitments" in Essex Hemphill, ed., Brother to Brother: New Writings by Black Gay Men (Boston: Alyson, 1991), 57-58.

[22] For some examples, see Gerald Donelan's cartoons, "It's a Gay Life" in *The Advocate* 451 (July 22, 1986): 40 ("Mr. You're-So-Hot"); *The Advocate*, 402 (September 4, 1984): 29 ("All I Ask for is Grandchildren"); *The Advocate* 452 (August 5, 1986): 49 ("Maybe your friend has a brother..."); *The Advocate* 428 (September 3, 1985): 32 ("Mom's so Happy..."); and *The Advocate* 503 (July 19, 1988): 63 ("Please, Amy, Tell Me"). See also Tom Brady, "Life at the Closet Door," in *Baltimore Gaypaper* (September 2, 1988), 19 ("That's All Right, Dear, So Are We.")

[23] For an example, see Tim Barela, "Revenge of the Yenta," (1984) p. 26-29 in Domesticity Isn't Pretty (Minneapolis: Palliard Press, 1993). And see also Shelly Roberts and Melissa K. Sweeney, illustrator, Hey, Mom, Guess What! 150 Ways to Tell Your Mother (San Diego: Paradigm Publishing, 1993), p. 136 ("And to think Binky Ashton's mom...."), p. 45 ("Homo is Where the Heart Is") and p. 94 (the "PFLAG Bake Sale").

[24] David Leavitt, "Territory" in Family Dancing (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1984), 8.

[25] Ibid., 17.

[26] Ibid., 20 and 25.

[27] Ibid., 25.

[28] On tell-alls, see Evan Ember-Black, Secrets in Families and Family Therapy (New York: W. W. Norton, 1993), 30. See also Melissa Jane Hardie on scandalous memoirs, " 'I Embrace the Difference': Elizabeth Taylor and the Closet," 155-171, in, again, Liz Grosz and Elspeth Probyn, Sexy Bodies: The Strange Carnalities of Feminism. Finally, see Jeffrey Weeks, "Intimate Citizenship and the Culture of Sexual Story Telling," 34-52 in Jeffrey Weeks and Janet Holland, Sexual Cultures: Community, Values and Intimacy (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996).

[29] Deborah, "The Odd Man Out," p. 80-83 in Louise Rafkin, ed. Different Daughters: A Book by Mothers of Lesbians (Pittsburgh: Cleis Press, 1987), 80.

[30] Ibid., 81.

[31] Ibid., 83.

[32] See also Darlene Palmer's story of her daughter in this same collection, "A Second Chance," p. 114-119.

[33] In her case, these confessionals were incest survivor stories. Linda Alcoff, "Survivor Discourse: Transgression or Recuperation?" *Signs* v. 18, no. 2 (Winter 1993): 260-90. For more details on television media confessional formats, see Gilbert T. Sewall, The Eighties: A Reader (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1997), especially David Rieff's piece, "Victims All?", 349-361. On incest stories specifically, see Elaine Showalter, Hysteries: Hysterical Epidemics and Modern Culture (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 146 ff. Finally, see Judith Herman, Trauma and Recovery (New York: Basic Books, 1992).

[34] This Oprah show on parents of gays was run in 1993. The quotations I am taking are from a viewing of this tape at the Lesbian Herstory Archives. In 1993, Sally Jesse Raphael also featured gays on her talk show on "Lipstick Lesbians and Gorgeous Guys Who Are Gay." In 1993, Geraldo had a show on "Gay Teenagers at the High School Prom."

[35] One Queer Nation advertisement for the Christmas season featured a picture of Christ saying: "I didn't say hate thy neighbor; so when are you going to stop beating up the queers? Season's Greetings from Queer Nation. GLBT Archives of Northern California, Queer Nation records 93-12 Box 1. On gay youth, see "IPLGY (Institute for the Protection of Gay Youth): Giving Refuge to Harassed Gay Youngsters" in *The Advocate*, Issue 425, (July 23 '85): 16.

[36] This statistic is from Cruikshank, The Gay and Lesbian Liberation Movement, 84. On gay bashing during the late 1980s and early 1990s, see Michael Bronski, "Death and the Erotic Imagination," p. 219-228 in Erica Carter and Simon Watney, ed.s, Taking Liberties: AIDS and Cultural Politics (London: Serpent's Tail, 1989), 223. See also "Gays Under Fire" in *Newsweek* (September 14, 1992), 35-41. Finally, see "Speaking Out About Our Lives" in the *Gay Community News* 10, no. 27 (January 29, 1983): 10.

[37] Ivan Velez, Jr. Tales of the Closet (New York: Hetrick-Martin Institute, 1987), See Book One, "Isolation," Book 2, "Family, and Book 3, "Violence." I want to note here that lesbian writings also dealt with family violence at an unprecedented rate during this period, as the realities of wife battering and incest, so prominent in the culture at large, also were discussed within lesbian specific sources. For some lesbians, the family was a place of inherent violence, before and after they had had their coming outs, and being gay in that context just confirmed the alienation they had already felt. On this, see Julia Penelope, "Tis the Season to be Jolly," in *The Lesbian Inciter* 1, no. 5 (December 1985): 16-21, and the responses to "A Letter to my Dad" in the *Lesbian Connection* 6, no. 2 (April/May 1983): 11, and in Vol. 6, Issue 3: p. 18 and Vol. 6, Issue 4: p. 14. See also the pieces on incest in *Common Lives/Lesbian Lives* in Issue No. 2 (Winter 1981), 62-63. Finally, see Bonnie Zimmerman, on the lesbian literary outpouring on lesbian themes in The Safe Sea of Women , 213 ff.

[38] This poster was in the Gay and Lesbian Historical Society of Northern California, 93-2, Queer Nation Records, Box 1. For more details on Queer Nation, see Guy Trebay, "In Your Face," in *The Village Voice* (August 14, 1990): 34-39. On the short-livedness of Queer Nation groups in Toronto and New York City, see Tom Warner, Never Going Back, 252 and 259.

[39] On this theme, see Elizabeth Schneider, "The Violence of Privacy," *Connecticut Law Review* 23 (Summer 1991): 973-94.

[40] See, for example, Rodger Streitmatter's discussion of the outing of Malcolm Forbes in 1990 in Unspeakable, 280.

[41] Arch Brown, "Gay Pride, Before and After" in *About Town* 1 (New York): no. 3 (June 30, 1980): 4 (4-5).

[42] See Elizabeth Kennedy, " 'But We Would Never Talk About It': The Structures of Lesbian Discretion in South Dakota, 1928-1933" in Ellen Lewin, ed. Inventing Lesbian Cultures, 18 (15-39).

Figure 25. PFLAG Advertisement, 1986

We are Family!

The Board of Directors of the New York City Chapter of Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays and its Board of Advisors and their families and

Denise Alexander & Ann Darlington and Denise's parents, Dorothy & Warren Alexander and her children, Dennis Joy & Michael Alexander and her grandchildren, Jeffrey & Patrick

Chris Almvig and her father Reginald Almvig

Virginia Apuzzo and her parents, Adolf Apuzzo & Ida T. Jones

Marge Barton and her mother, Dorothy Blumenthal

Larry Bloom and his mother Margot Bloom

Irving Cooperberg & Lou Rutmaster and their mothers, Selma Cooperberg and Lillian Wilson

Ken Dawson and his parents, Marge & George Dawson

Richard Dunne and his brother, Brian Dunne

Brent Nicholson Earle and his mother, Marion Nicholson

Ronald S. English and his mother, Irene English

Meryl C. Friedman & Abby Rubenfeld and their parents, Jeanette & Milton Friedman and Judy & Milton Rubenfeld

Matt Foreman and his parents, James & Virginia Foreman

Harold Gabel & Herb Julis, C.L.U. and his mother, Paula Julis

Steve Gerbee and his children, Jill & Paul Gerbee

Bill Hirsch and his parents, Ernest & Lotte Hirsch

Lee Hudson and her parents Richard Lee Hudson & Anne M.R. Downes

Andy Humm and his parents, John & Dorothea Humm

Sal Iacullo & Wayne Steinman and their parents, Sal & Josephine Iacullo and Beatrice Steinman

Mitchell Korn and his mother, Gertrude Korn

Scott Klein & Paul Morowitz and their parents, Polly & Sam Klein and Mary Morowitz

Larry Kramer & Rodger McFarlane and their parents, Rita Kramer and Robert & Lynn McFarlane

Diego Lopez & Ed Nicholas and Diego's mother and sister, Ann Lopez & Margarita Lopez, and Ed's father, Edward Lee Nicholas

Marie Marien and her daughter, Sheila Marien-Artz

Rev. Renn McCoy and her mother, Sally McCoy

Gary Miller and his parents, Carl & Rebo Miller

Terry Miller and his parents, Merle & Sally Miller

Sheldon Post and Jay B. Lesiger and his mother, Fay Lesiger

Lance Ringel and his parents and sister, Reginald & Jane [illegible] and Bonnie Schiff

David Rotenberg and his mother, Leonore Schulman

Vito Russo and his mother, Annie Russo

Jacqueline Schafer and her mother, Sylvia Charlesworth

Vivian Shapiro and her mother, Pearl Shapiro

Thomas B. Stoddard and his brother, John N. Stoddard

Arthur W. Strickler & David S. Spiegel and their parents, Sol Strickler and Jack & Annie Spiegel

David Summers & Sal Licata and David's mother and Sal's sister, Louise Graham and Rosemarie Brittain

Tim Sweeney and his brother, Mark Sweeney

Ron Vachon, P.A. and his father, Roland C. Vachon

Ginny Vida and her brother, Dr. Lee O. Vida

David Weinheimer and his sister and brother-in-law, Ellen Weinheimer & Mark Roberdt

Robert A. Woodworth and [illegible] & Dorothy

Cordially invite you to

The Annual Dinner of

Parents and Friends of

Lesbians and Gays

Sunday, November 2, 1986

3:00 PM

The Roosevelt Hotel

New York City

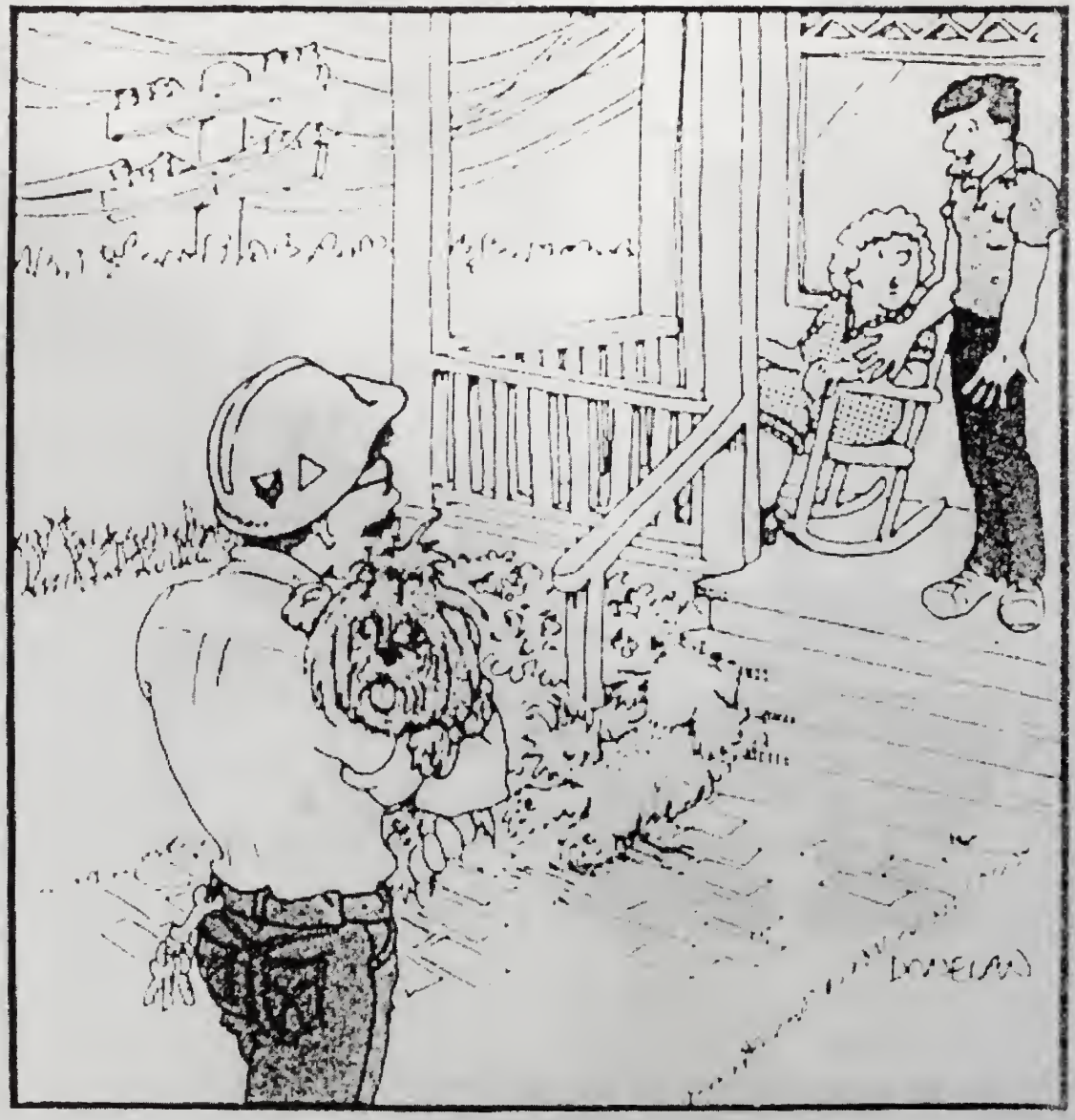
•

Make your tax deductible check of $50 per person payable to Parents FLAG and mail it to: Merle Miller, 157 East Pulaski Road, Huntington Station, NY 11746

Figure 26. Cartoon in *The Advocate*, July, 1986

So, Mr. You're-so-hot-my-son-becomes-a-fruit-for-you
. . . tell me about yourself.

Figure 27. Cartoon in *The Advocate*, 1984



ALL I ASK FOR IS GRANDCHILDREN...
WHAT DO I GET?...A CONSTRUCTION WORKER
AND TWO SHI-TZUS.

Figure 28. Cartoon in *The Advocate*, August, 1984

Figure 29. Cartoon in *The Advocate*, 1985

MOM'S SO HAPPY, I'M AFRAID TO TELL HER YOU'RE IN DRAG.

Figure 30. Cartoon in *The Advocate*, 1988

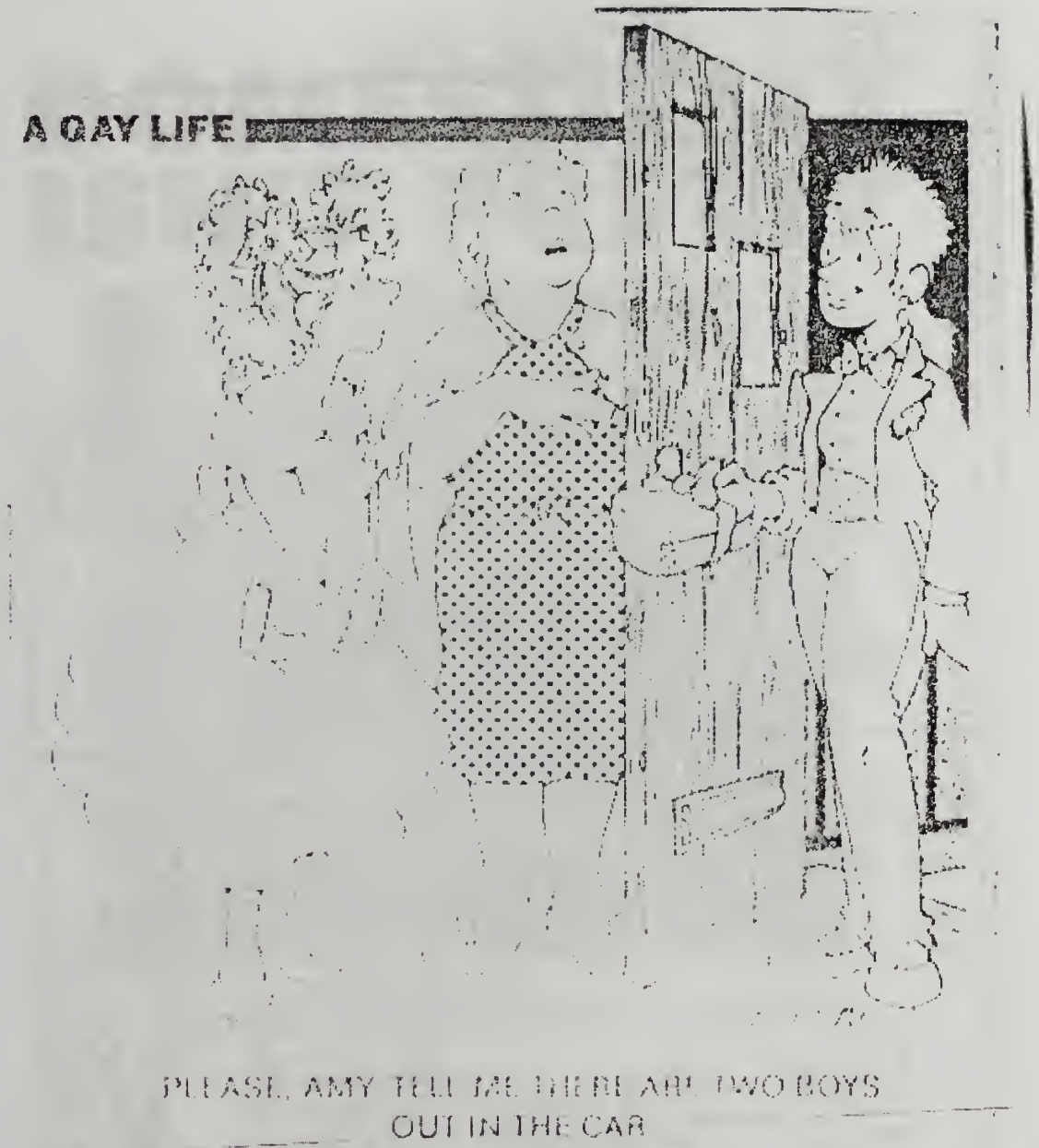


Figure 31. Cartoon in *Baltimore Gay Paper*, 1988

Figure 32. Tim Barela, "Revenge of the Yenta," 1984

Figure 32 continued

26

Figure 32 continued

Figure 32 continued

28

Figure 32 continued

29

Figure 33. Cartoon from *Hey, Mom, Guess What!*, 1993

Figure 34. Cartoon from *Hey, Mom, Guess What!*, 1993

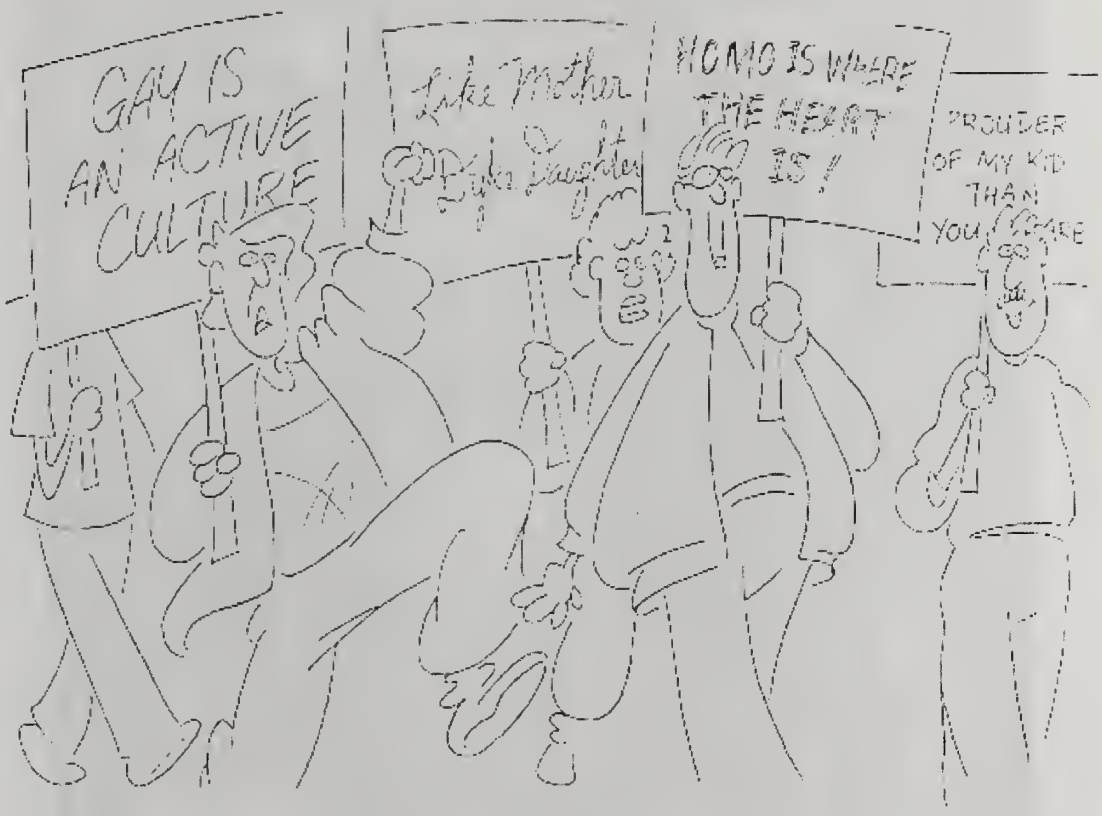


Figure 35. Cartoon from *Hey, Mom, Guess What!*, 1993

Figure 36. Ivan Velez, "Tales of the Closet," 1987

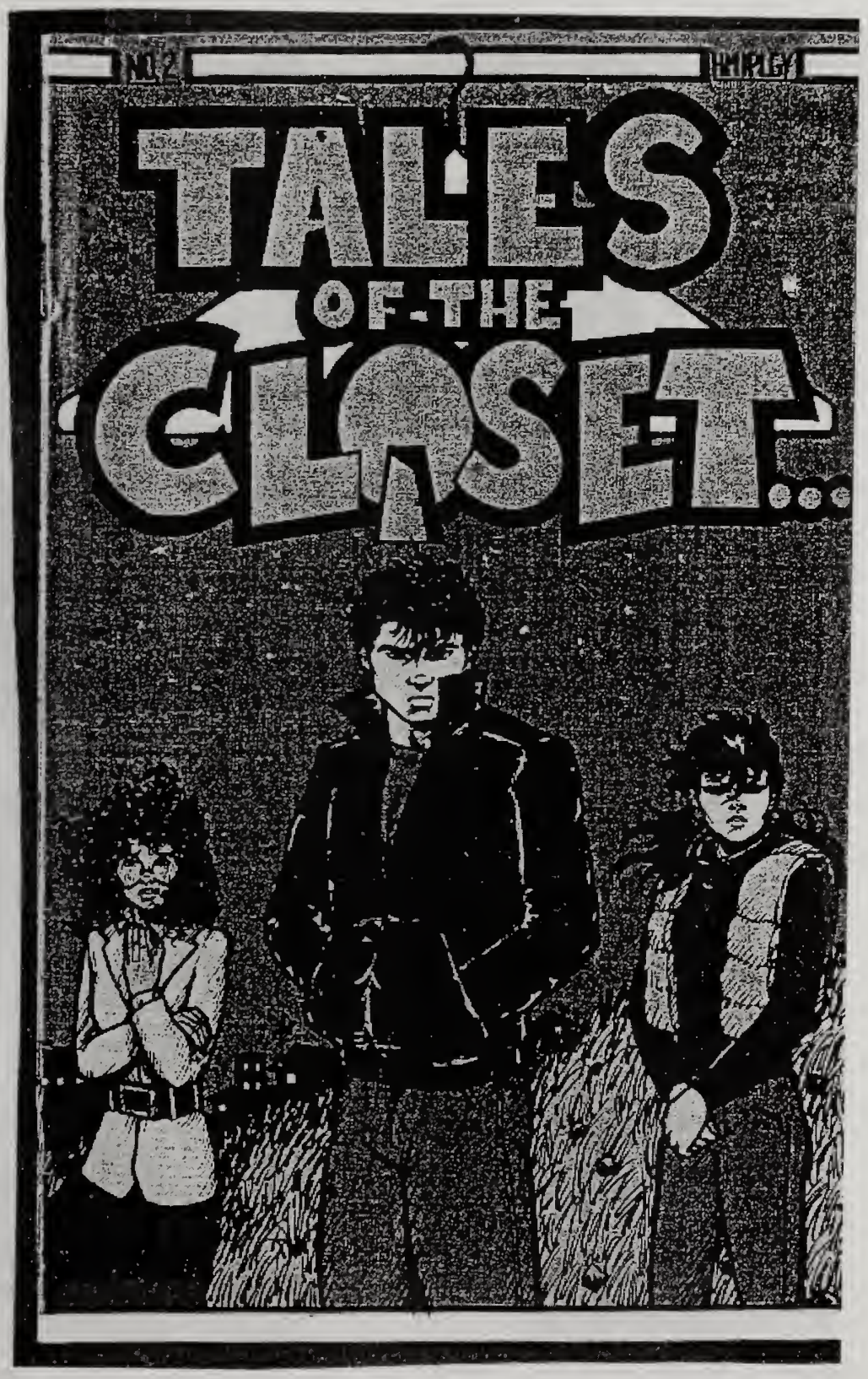


Figure 36 continued

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Figure 36 continued

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