

POLITICS AND MOTHERHOOD IN THE COLD WAR: THE AMERICAN PUBLIC  
RELATIONS FORUM, WOMEN STRIKE FOR PEACE, AND MATERNALISM AS A  
MOBILIZING STRATEGY

By

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To my parents, without whose support this thesis would not be possible.

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## INTRODUCTION

Exhausted from her cross-country voyage and from having to patiently wait her turn as last to speak that day, Stephanie Williams tried to quiet her nerves as she took her seat before the Senate Subcommittee on Territories and Insular Affairs in February of 1956. Her testimony was only one of many in these hearings that examined the Alaska Mental Health Bill, a federal measure written for the purpose of appropriating public land for use by the then-territory to hospitalize its own mentally ill residents, as opposed to sending them off to a location in the United States proper. Williams, a housewife from Southern California, introduced herself as president of the American Public Relations Forum, or APRF, a Catholic anti-communist women's study club. As she leaned into the microphone, her all-male audience could sense her nervousness from her occasional awkward phrases.

Maternalist concern for the youth of America and the values that they were learning implicitly in their communities and explicitly in school gave her the courage to go on. Williams was concerned that passage of the Alaska Mental Health Bill would desensitize the next generation of Americans to gross overreaches of federal power. Calmly and confidently, Williams concluded, “[M]any of your young people in school are told that they are mentally ill if they agree with many of the things that we feel pertain to pure Americanism.”<sup>1</sup> As Williams explained to the Senate committee, pure Americanism did not allow for subversive influences to take root on American soil, whether this meant infiltration of communist thought and sympathies or the growth of a socialistic state that could appropriate land as it pleased. The Alaska Mental Health Bill,

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<sup>1</sup> Michelle Nickerson, “Mothers of Conservatism: Women and the Postwar Right” (unpublished manuscript, used by permission), 1.

Williams sought to prove, represented the sort of misguided legislation that threatened to undermine America's founding virtues of freedom and democracy.

Several years later, another woman sat in front of another committee. In December of 1962, Blanche Posner took her seat in front of the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC). This time, rather than being on the offensive, attacking government officials for considering foolhardy legislation, Posner was on the defensive, defending the movement in which she was a participant, Women Strike for Peace (WSP), against claims of Communist infiltration and influence.<sup>2</sup> Or so HUAC would have the public believe. In fact, after three days of HUAC's investigation of subversive influences in WSP and other peace groups, it became increasingly obvious that the movement housed no conspirators against U.S. democracy. Posner made it very clear that the subversive influences that Williams and her cadre so feared had had no effect on WSP: "The women in this movement are bright; they are educated; they have love for children which has motivated us...No group of Communists could have duped these women into being led away from an American democratic position."<sup>3</sup> Both Williams and Posner, then, along with the female-led groups to which they belonged, were motivated by maternalist concerns for their children's futures, though they fell on very different sides

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<sup>2</sup> The fear stemmed from recent historical events. In Chairman Doyle's Opening Statement, he recalls how Communists had in the past used "peace" as a smokescreen to disguise their real intent: aggression against the capitalist world. Doyle asserted, "Late in 1948, Stalin launched a major 'peace' offensive...In June 1950, however, even as Stalin was directing the creation of this so-called World Peace Council (which was formally established about 5 months later), he launched a military attack on South Korea...In other words, according to fundamental Communist doctrine, there will be wars—there can be no real peace—as long as capitalism exists...As events have proved, peace propaganda and agitation have a disarming, mollifying, confusing, and weakening effect on those nations which are the intended victims of communism...Excessive concern with peace on the part of any nation impedes or prevents adequate defense preparation, hinders effective diplomacy in the national interest, undermines the will to resist and saps national strength." (Rep. Doyle's Opening Statement. Hearings before the Committee on Un-American Activities, House of Representatives, Eighty-Seventh Congress, 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, December 11, 1962. [Hereafter HUAC Hearings.] 2064-65.)

<sup>3</sup> Testimony of Blanche Posner. HUAC Hearings. 2092.

of the political spectrum: isolationist and libertarian versus internationalist and democratic.

WSP, like APRF, was organized by women through grassroots politics to address the certain concerns peculiar to the nuclear age like internationalism and the nuclear arms race. What is notable from these two historical accounts is that these women were testifying to governmental committees and taking on a formal, even aggressive, political role in a time when Americans attached increased importance to women's domestic roles as a reflection of the American way of life and even national security. Williams and Wilson were not alone in their activism in the political sphere, however. In fact many women stepped out of the home and into politics after World War II, a fact that is partly attributable to the rhetoric of group leaders like those of the APRF and the WSP. Through examining the language used by APRF and WSP leaders in bulletins and pamphlets, it is evident that there was a rhetorical "tightrope" between gender-appropriate maternalism and more gender-neutral activism to be walked by women activists of the early Cold War that served not only to draw housewives out of the home into the uncertain realm of politics, but also to gain credence with state and national leaders, all of whom were male. In particular, the rhetoric of maternalism was both comforting to women considering entering politics themselves and effectively provocative to men already in politics to effect real change for both of these groups, as well as the nation.

While others have examined the politics of maternalism,<sup>4</sup> few have done an extensive study of the versatility of maternalist rhetoric in women's political mobilization

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<sup>4</sup> *Mothers and Motherhood: Readings in American History*, ed. Rima Apple and Janet Golden (Columbus: Ohio State University, 1997); Molly Ladd-Taylor, *Mother-Work: Women, Child Welfare, and the State, 1890-1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994); Theda Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers:*

in the early Cold War era.<sup>5</sup> This thesis will show that despite considerable – at times oppositional – differences between the APRF’s and WSP’s aims and tactics, the politics of motherhood served both groups well not only in attracting new members to the movement, but also in framing their political positions into cogent arguments. To fully appreciate the versatility of maternalist rhetoric, one must appreciate the differences between the two groups. The APRF was a conservative, Catholic, anti-communist, anti-statist group that operated in the 1950s. It was fairly small in size – at most one hundred dues-paying members at any time – and it was restricted to a small geographic area – the suburbs of Los Angeles. Conversely, WSP, which stood for alternately Women Stand for Peace, Women for Peace, or Women Strike for Peace, as the local group saw fit, was a nationwide “movement.” A movement rather than a group, WSP considered themselves participants in a mass organization of women agitating for peace rather than members of a hierarchical organization like the APRF. WSP had no informal affiliation with a religion, as APRF had with Catholicism, but many of its members were Quaker pacifists. In addition, WSP participants were more often in line with the Left than the Right in their political views, though women of all political persuasions joined the movement.

The APRF operated from 1952 until 1960. In contrast, WSP was founded in 1961 and operated throughout the Cold War. Because of this difference in duration, APRF’s history reveals less intergroup and rhetorical change and less political success (as far as political actions successfully influenced and passed) than does WSP’s. However, because

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*The Political Origins of Social Policy in the United States* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University, 1992).

<sup>5</sup> Deborah Gerson, “Is Family Devotion Now Subversive?,” in *Not June Cleaver: Women and Gender in Postwar America, 1945-1960*, ed. Joanne Meyerowitz (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994), 151-179; Ruth Feldstein, *Motherhood in Black and White: Race and Sex in American Liberalism, 1930-1965* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2000)

APRF was a smaller group, it is easier for the historian to discuss the group's aims as a unified unit. WSP, as an amalgamation of individual actors, often had differing viewpoints within the movement so that group "leaders" had to adopt a parliamentary, democratic method to determining what acts the group would support or oppose, what political demonstrations to hold, and what conferences would be attended and by whom.

A final important difference between the two groups<sup>6</sup> should be noted: their historical records. APRF held meetings on the third Friday of every month, usually in the hall of a local Catholic church. Before each meeting, a bulletin was distributed to the group's members to apprise them of the topics that would be discussed in the upcoming meetings, the speakers who would be appearing, and the status of Congressional acts that were of interest to the group. Often, these bulletins utilized maternalist rhetoric to drum up interest in the contents of the upcoming meeting so as to attract the greatest number of bodies at the meeting. Three main patterns arose in the rhetoric of the APRF: maternalism, religiosity, and martial language. Examining these three rhetorical strains will give us some idea of how the APRF was able to successfully mobilize women without the leadership of men and simultaneously, attract the attention of both state and federal male leaders.

Like APRF, WSP also had bulletins, and from these I drew my analysis of the group's unique use of maternalist rhetoric.<sup>7</sup> However, due to the organizational structure

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<sup>6</sup> For the sake of convenience, I will use this term when comparing the APRF to WSP, though I have acknowledged that WSP was not, in fact, one unified group.

<sup>7</sup> In fact, WSP had several bulletins, but I have elected to use only the national clearinghouse bulletin and the local Washington, D.C. bulletin. The differences between the national bulletins are described in an undated WSP pamphlet entitled "For Your Information": "There are three national publications of Women Strike for Peace, described below."



of WSP, these bulletins often served a different purpose than did APRF bulletins. Each chapter of WSP operated with a great deal of local autonomy, and within each chapter, individual women could determine if and how they wanted to participate in certain group actions. The bulletins, then, served as a clearinghouse for ideas as well as a discussion board about political stances and actions. The ideas with seemingly the most support were the ones that the National Steering Committee, located in Washington, D.C. but separate from the local chapter there, began developing and organizing. Amy Swerdlow, editor from 1970 to 1973 of *MEMO*, one of WSP's newsletters, and author of *Women Strike for Peace: Traditional Motherhood and Radical Politics in the 1960s*, explains the problems with WSP's historical record, "Unfortunately the lack of formal structure in WSP has resulted in large gaps in the movement's records...many chapters intentionally kept no records or lists, and the WSPers never had the historical consciousness to create an official archive in one repository."<sup>8</sup> Another problem, she continues, was that, "[d]ue

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"1. 'Women's Peace Movement Bulletin' is published monthly, except August, and carries news of peace activities all over the country and in other countries too. The emphasis is on reporting events and happenings in the women's peace movement." [Published in Urbana, Illinois.]

"2. The only national mailing put out by the Women Strike for Peace office in Washington, D.C., is 'The National Information Memo.' This is a clearing house for proposals for action contributed by Memo subscribers and WSP groups. (These ideas may be used by some, none, or all WSP groups). Also, from time to time we publish under the title 'Issues for Discussion,' a paper which concerns itself with WSP policy, new or old, and this is sent to Memo subscribers.

"3. 'The U.N. Newsletter' is published intermittently with a total of 12 issues yearly. It brings news from the United Nations of its activities which are related to women and peace." [Published in New York City.] ("For Your Information," undated. Records of the Washington, D.C. Office of Women Strike for Peace, University Archives and Special Collections, American University Library, Washington, D.C. [Hereafter AU Papers]) Swerdlow, former editor of *MEMO*, one of WSP's circulations, and author of *Women Strike for Peace: Traditional Motherhood and Radical Politics in the 1960s*, notes that "[t]o improve communications, [WSP women] agreed to establish an official national office in Washington, with the proviso that it be distinct from the local chapter. This office, to be called the National Information Clearing House, was assigned the task of issuing a *National Information Memo* containing all proposals for national actions without any screening or selection by the national office. This replaced *WPMB*. The national memos were intended for key women in every community, who were to be designated by their local steering committee." (Amy Swerdlow, *Women Strike for Peace: Traditional Motherhood and Radical Politics in the 1960s* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993], 88.)

<sup>8</sup> Swerdlow, *Women Strike for Peace*, 11.

to the ad hoc, temporary, ‘just for emergency’ nature of the WSP movement, each campaign, demonstration, flyer, or petition was considered unique and never to be repeated; because they were unaware that anything they did was of historical significance, WSPers almost never dated their flyers or other printed material, except for newsletters.”<sup>9</sup> Despite these difficulties, it is possible to identify three strands of rhetoric: maternalism, femininity, and feminism. Tracing the use of these three strands illuminates not only how the group mobilized so many hundreds of women across the U.S., but also how the movement was adaptive to new national issues like racism and feminism.

In addition to the WSP national bulletin, *MEMO*, to which WSP women from all over the United States submitted ideas and reflections, I examine local newsletters from the WSP chapter located in Washington, D.C. Doing so provides an interesting, added dimension of comparison between the APRF and the WSP: geography; that is, West coast versus East coast. Thus, comparing the APRF and the WSP allows several binary comparisons: West-East, Right-Left, small-large, structured-unstructured, and Catholic-Quaker. Despite their differing platforms and political inclinations, the women of the APRF and WSP shared a similar strand of rhetoric that effectively mobilized housewives who previously had no political experience and who were encouraged by various sources to remain in the home.

## CONTEXT

Maternalist rhetoric as used here incorporates any discussion of motherhood, domesticity, and the private sphere. The convergence of these notions, as well as attention to “motherly concerns” are addressed as “maternalism” in this paper, a broadly

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<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 11-12.

defined term that incorporates the so-called female concerns for the upkeep of morality and protecting those in society who cannot fend for themselves. The politics of maternalism are particularly interesting to historians because maternalist rhetoric is so versatile and can be manipulated to serve various political purposes. As Sonya Michel and Robyn Rosen have argued, maternalism was not “a unified movement speaking with one voice,” but rather a “capacious umbrella [that] gathered individuals and organizations of many political stripes—radical, liberal, and conservative, feminist and anti-feminist, pro- and anti-suffrage.” “Conservative maternalists” like those of the APRF, according to Michel and Rosen, “were women who deployed the rhetoric of motherhood to express opposition against reform.”<sup>10</sup> Meanwhile, liberal maternalists, as shown by WSP mothers and women, sought reform during a nuclear age to ensure that their families would not become victims of radiation poisoning or, worse, nuclear holocaust. Maternalist rhetoric was especially important to the success of APRF and WSP because maternalism was within the realm of “acceptable” motivating forces for women to assert themselves into the political sphere in this period of conservative, traditional gender roles. Aware that in the conservative climate of the 1960s, their gender would add another layer of scrutiny by their opponents, WSPers dressed to impress, wearing white gloves, dresses, and all the trimmings of their middle-class affluence. The *New York Times* described their intent: “For the most part they [WSP] stress femininity rather than feminism. They are amateurs, women who, in less urgent times, would never have put down the mop to write a

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<sup>10</sup> Sonya Michel and Robyn Rosen, “The Paradox of Maternalism: Elizabeth Lowell Putnam and the American Welfare State,” *Gender & History* 4:3 (1992): 364.

Congressman, much less demonstrate with their women in the street.”<sup>11</sup> The same rules applied to the APRF.

The gender expectations of the early Cold War were especially conservative, but women of the twentieth century had not always been expected to remain in the domestic sphere. In the early part of the twentieth century, many young women asserted their equality, not only in their fight for suffrage, but also in their dress and independent lifestyles. These were the “new women” of the 1920s.<sup>12</sup> Several decades later, during World War II, women found that their roles, opportunities, and responsibilities expanded when their husbands and sons left to serve in the armed forces. Many women filled traditionally male jobs in factories, while others found roles in the military.<sup>13</sup> Because women were not allowed to serve combat duty, they served in other positions, such as nurses or desk workers, in order to free men who had previously occupied these roles to serve in the armed forces. Occasionally, when combat encroached upon civilian areas, women made the ultimate sacrifice of life itself. Lesser sacrifices were made on the home front, where civilians were asked to severely restrict their consumption and to dedicate money in the form of war bonds, time and energy in the form of charity work with such charities as the American Red Cross, and finally, to contribute to the general upkeep of morale during the war, no easy task.

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<sup>11</sup> *New York Times*, 19 April 1962. Quoted in Swerdlow, *Women Strike for Peace*, 72.

<sup>12</sup> For more, see Dorothy Brown, *Setting a Course: American Women in the 1920s* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1987).

<sup>13</sup> A bibliography of women in World War II should include Doris Weatherford, *American Women and World War II* (New York: Facts on File, 1990); Brenda Ralph Lewis, *Women at War: The Women in World War II, at Home, at Work, on the Front Line* (Pleasantville, NY: Reader’s Digest, 2002); Judy Litoff and David Smith, *American Women in a World at War: Contemporary Accounts for World War II* (Wilmington, Del.: Scholarly Resources, 1997); Emily Yellin, *Our Mothers’ War: American Women at Home and at the Front During World War II* (New York: Free Press, 2004); and *Bitter Fruit: African American Women in World War II*, ed. Maureen Honey (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1999).

With the war's conclusion in 1945, according to popular perception, most women returned to submissive roles as wives and mothers in the home. It is true that it was important in the eyes of the government as well as the returning soldiers themselves that women leave the factories and the military, because to remain in these roles was seen as an affront to masculinity. Moreover, these returning GIs would be unemployed if women retained these positions. Further, employers were more likely to hire veterans because there was a deep fear of a postwar recession, the likes of which Americans experienced after World War I. Through sexist hiring practices and such governmental measures as the GI Bill, male "breadwinners" were propped up and prewar gender economic relations were reestablished. The government produced pamphlets that were distributed to women that urged them to be both supportive and non-confrontational in the home, as it was believed that the psychological trauma that soldiers had endured in the war made them unprepared to face more conflict, particularly within their own home.

In addition, sources of women's popular culture, including films and magazines like *Ladies Home Journal*, portrayed women who were always well-kempt and sexually desirable yet never argumentative or critical.<sup>14</sup> Finally, the ideal of full-time mothering was reinforced when the federal government shut down childcare centers and Dr. Spock published in 1946 *The Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care* (1946), which emphasized the importance of hands-on parenting. For many soldiers, the prospect of returning home to wives and sweethearts was the dream that helped them endure life in

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<sup>14</sup> For an oppositional view, see Joanne Meyerowitz, "Beyond the Feminine Mystique: A Reassessment of Postwar Mass Culture, 1946-1958," in *Not June Cleaver: Women and Gender in Postwar America, 1945-1960*, ed. Joanne Meyerowitz (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994), 229-262. In this essay, Meyerowitz points to numerous articles that validated women's public participation and celebrated the public accomplishments of "successful" women to prove her thesis that, in fact, postwar magazines often contradicted the domestic ideal.

the trenches, and women were pressured to fulfill these fantasies as bakers of apple pies and deliverers of children. The efficacy of such “return-to-the-kitchen” rhetoric is debatable, as evidenced by the fact that many women were indeed active outside of the home. Many of these women were motivated by the belief that their roles as nurturers, educators, and caretakers made them attentive to certain implications of public policy that men overlooked.

In an APRF meeting, Williams read a pamphlet written by Pope Pius XII, and “emphasized the part which read in effect – ‘only a woman is able to understand and reject the immoral and unjust laws that may be passed and take steps to prevent them.’”<sup>15</sup> Williams gives no concrete reason as to why “only a woman” can play the described role, although this statement is part of a longer tradition of thought in which women acted as guardians of national morality, an idea particularly prevalent during the Progressive Era. Women of the 1950s expanded upon another U.S. tradition: engaging in the public sphere without male leadership, a tradition dating back to the Seneca Falls Convention of 1848.

Postwar women’s activism in the public sphere, however, took on new meaning in the 1950s due to a resurgence of importance placed on the home and the domestic sphere at this time. Elaine Tyler May’s *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* argues that the desire for security and social tranquility, as well as the fear of Communism, revitalized traditional gender norms, spiked marriage and birth rates, and invigorated nuclear family life.<sup>16</sup> “In the domestic version of containment,” May writes,

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<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1988), 14. The thriving economy, moreover, invited Americans to secure “individuality, leisure, and upward mobility,” by buying more (18). May equates postwar domesticity and consumer culture with less interest in politics. “The familial ideology that took shape in these years,” she asserts, “helps explain the apolitical tenor of middle-class postwar life (14).”

“the ‘sphere of influence’ was the home. Within its walls, potentially dangerous social forces of the new age might be tamed, where they could contribute to the secure and fulfilling life to which postwar women and men aspired.” That women like APRF and WSP members left the home to pursue roles in the public sphere, then, is all the more remarkable in this conservative climate. Women of the early Cold War engaged in grassroots activism, a form of protopolitics, or informal politics, that affects policy outside of the political realm; that is, outside of partisan politics.<sup>17</sup> Even though these women were not political actors in the formal sense, however, they were treated as such by their opponents.

### **AMERICAN PUBLIC RELATIONS FORUM**

“We are wives and mothers who are vitally interested in what is happening in our country.”<sup>18</sup> So the group’s president, Stephanie Williams, at one of the group’s first meetings, described the constituency membership of the APRF, a women’s conservative study club in Southern California that operated from 1952 until around 1960. The group was formed with the intent of combating Communist forces abroad as well as at home, the latter an especially real concern in light of the holdover of New Deal policies in the Eisenhower administration, policies that APRF women considered to be pseudo-socialistic. The women of the American Public Relations Forum had been attracted to the group for many reasons, certainly, but one of the most attractive features of the group

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<sup>17</sup> Louise A. Tilly and Patricia Gurin, “Women Politics, and Change,” in *Women, Politics, and Change*, ed. Louise A. Tilly and Patricia Gurin, (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1990), 7.

<sup>18</sup> “Notes on American Public Relations Forum—Meeting Friday Evening, May 2, 1952.” Box CRCIV, Folder 12. Jewish Federation Council of Greater Los Angeles, Community Relations Committee Collection. Urban Archives Center. Oviatt Library. California State University, Northridge [Hereafter CSU Papers].

was the maternalist rhetoric utilized by APRF leaders. Leaders of such groups as the APRF structured certain aspects of their language so as to make national issues immediately relevant to the “wives and mothers” they wished to attract as members, women who often had more to worry about on a day-to-day basis than becoming involved in activities outside the home.

The act of becoming involved in the public sphere was not looked favorably upon during this post-World-War-II era because this was a period of American history in which domesticity experienced a resurgence in importance and in which security in domestic life came to be seen as an important part of national security. The success of the APRF to mobilize over one hundred female members is particularly remarkable in light of this fact. This success is rivaled by that of the group’s leaders in catching the ears of many policy-makers, not only in Southern California, but also in Washington. Hence, the leaders of the APRF balanced upon that rhetorical tightrope of appropriately “feminine” and gender-independent political rhetoric quite well and the group itself effectively served as part of the women-led, grassroots-level vanguard of the New Right.

My work on the APRF follows in the tradition of two other works, the first of which is Lisa McGirr’s *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right*, which examines the rise of conservatism at the grassroots level in southern California. *Suburban Warriors* focuses on the mixed-sex response in the 1960s to the specter of Communism. As McGirr argues, “anticommunist initiatives flourished” in Orange County, cloaking “conservative concerns with American liberalism – fears of federal government centralization and apprehensions over the penetration of liberal ideas into the nation’s schools, churches, and communities – under an overarching discourse of



‘communist subversion.’”<sup>19</sup> Revising this view is Michelle Nickerson’s dissertation, “Domestic Threats: Women, Gender, and Conservatism in Cold War Los Angeles, 1945-1966,” in which she disagrees with McGirr on two points: that this groundswell of conservatism began in the 1960s, and that women waited for men to mobilize before they did so themselves.<sup>20</sup>

In examining the rise of conservative sentiment in southern California through studying the APRF, it is evident that women, indeed, mobilized before and independently of men. My question, then, is a more fundamental one: why did these women join groups? Both authors seem to take for granted that these women joined voluntary, collectivist organizations rather than act upon their conservatism in highly individualized ways, while attending bridge club, for example, or other, less political, group activities. Asked another way, how did APRF leaders persuade prospective members to join the movement? My contribution to the revisionist literature of the political activism of women in the postwar era is, in essence, a study of rhetoric. The three strands of APRF rhetoric examined here – maternalism, religiosity, and martial language – reveal how APRF leaders were able to mobilize women by appealing to their femininity and, at the same time, build political clout and credence.

The reasons behind the founding of the APRF can only be speculated upon. Its founding in the early 1950s can probably be attributed to the zealous anti-Communist vigilance recommended by Joseph McCarthy, a vigilance taken up by many contemporary women’s groups, including the Minute Women of the U.S.A. and, local to

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<sup>19</sup> Lisa McGirr, *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 55-56.

<sup>20</sup> Michelle Nickerson, “Domestic Threats: Women Gender and Conservatism in Cold War Los Angeles, 1945-1966,” (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 2003), 12.

southern California, the Los Angeles Women's Breakfast Club. The APRF makes for a particularly interesting case study of group mobilization because of its unabashed ties to religion, making it a precursor to the Christian Right in America. What is clear are the logistics of the group's founding. The group was once part of the Public Relations section of Cabrini Literary Guild of Glendale, California, which stated its principles thusly, "[W]e strive to carry out the wishes expressed by our Holy Father, Pope Pius XII to become interested and active in civic affairs and in the interests of our country. He has said, 'You cannot be a good Catholic and not be a good citizen.'" <sup>21</sup> Elaborating upon this point, the author adds, "We realize that if our country goes our church and all civilization will go with it [so] we are doing what we can towards becoming informed on the activities of our enemies with a view towards furthering the interest of all we hold dear." <sup>22</sup> Four years later, this small group had attracted a membership sufficient to establish an organization of its own right, the American Public Relations Forum. Why it retained the "Public Relations" part of its name is unknown.

Founded in 1952 by San Fernando housewife Williams, the APRF was an anti-Communist study club that met in various meeting halls in the suburbs of Los Angeles on the third Friday of every month. The monthly bulletin described the group to be a "non-sectarian, non-partisan, organization [that] is made up of men, women and young adults who devote their efforts towards the support of Constitutional government." <sup>23</sup> This self-description is complicated by the fact that although "non-sectarian" in name, the APRF

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<sup>21</sup> "Public Relations Section of Cabrini Literary Guild Statement of Principles and Report." Circa 1948. Don Belding Papers, Barbara McCarthy Papers, Box 14, Folder 26. Southwest Collection/Special Collections Library. Texas Tech University [Hereafter TTU Papers].

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> APRF Bullet 41; March 1956. TTU Papers.

membership was largely Catholic. Indeed, the group was affiliated with, though not endorsed by, the Archdiocese of Los Angeles,<sup>24</sup> and the APRF regularly incorporated Catholic prayers into meetings. In reassuring members of the group's non-partisanship, the president of the APRF claimed, "We have been accused of being a Republican club – we are NOT – we are a bipartisan club and would attack any Republican or Democrat whom we felt to be in the wrong and expose them."<sup>25</sup> However, the group political leanings favored members of the Republican Party more often than not, most likely out of a shared appreciation of conservatism.

Finally, the group described itself as being "made up of men, women and young adults" but it is worth noting that the APRF's membership was mostly female and its leadership was entirely female. Meeting at 10:30 in the morning, the group's constituency was mostly middle-class suburban housewives who had the leisure to attend these lengthy meetings rather than work.<sup>26</sup> Marie Koenig, the public relations officer for APRF, explained how the members viewed their roles within the organization and within the anti-Communist movement at large in pointing out the fact that "[m]en don't have time to

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<sup>24</sup> There was much concern from those outside the group about the relationship between the APRF and the Archdiocese, as many considered the APRF's actions and opinions to be too radical to be endorsed by the church. A letter from Reverend Benjamin G. Hawkes to Mrs. Frances Langford, dated May 29, 1952, clears up the confusion: "The American Public Relations Forum has no approval from the Archbishop other than a recommendation to the effect that discussion of public questions is desirable at the present time as a medium of information on clouded points. The Archbishop in no way sponsors the Forum or its operations, or the opinions expressed by participants or the management of the Forum. The meetings have not been held at the Chancery Office, but in a hall that happens to be near the Chancery office." (Letter from Reverend Benjamin G. Hawkes to Mrs. Frances Langford, May 29, 1952. CSU Papers.) APRF President Stephanie Williams forthrightly settled any suspicion early on that the Archbishop had a certain stake in what the APRF said or did when she addressed the club in 1952 saying, "As a group we are approved by the Archbishop -- but he does NOT endorse all that is said here." ("Notes on APRF May 16, 1952 Meeting." CSU Papers.)

<sup>25</sup> "Notes on April 18, 1952 Meeting." CSU Papers.

<sup>26</sup> Meetings were broken up into two sessions: a morning session and an afternoon session. Meetings, including lunches, could be four hours or more. None of the bulletins reflect whether or not children too young to go to school were brought to the meetings, but it is probable that mothers unable to secure a caretaker for the day would bring their children to the meetings.

be...doing the things we women do...to sit and write letters...when they get home at night they don't want to run around to meetings."<sup>27</sup> Men, however, did occasionally attend the morning meetings and an associate group of the APRF, the "'76 Club," routinely held evening meetings so that men could attend and hear various speakers discussing topics relevant to the group's anti-Communist endeavors.<sup>28</sup>

And yet, it was the female presence in the group that drove the action of the APRF. As women and as mothers, APRF members felt they had a real stake in the direction of the nation because this was the America that their children would inherit. Stephanie Williams explained the group's motivation to fight Communism and other subversive forces as a result of the fact that "...we [members of the APRF] are wives and mothers who are vitally interested in what is happening in our country -- America -- some of us have sons who fought in the second World War and some of us are raising sons to be cannon fodder for the next one."<sup>29</sup> At the time of its operation, APRF members shared the widespread belief – one that WSP women, too, later held – that the advent of a nuclear arms race could quite possibly escalate to catalyze a third world war. The threat that Communism posed to democracy and to the American way of life – as well as the American's right to life – was a very real concern in the postwar period. The threat of subversion was also more immediate for early Cold War Americans, for seemingly "un-American" legislation was regularly introduced in Congress by either so-called New

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<sup>27</sup> Marie Koenig, interview with Michelle Nickerson, tape recording, Pasadena, California, April 5, 2001. Quoted in Michelle Nickerson, "Women, Conservatism, and Postwar Domesticity," *Magazine of History* 17.2 (January 2003), 18.

<sup>28</sup> The Community Relations Committee was a Los Angeles Jewish Defense organization that sent spies into suspected anti-Semitic groups, APRF included, to take notes on their meetings. The spy who attended the evening meeting on May 2, 1952 recorded that the "[a]uditorium was approximately half filled and the audience was half men." ("Notes on APRF May 2, 1952 Evening Meeting." CSU Papers.)

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

Dealers or alleged internationalist sympathizers, both considered equally dangerous by the APRF.

Contemporary views of conservatism created an oppositional milieu not only for the men of the conservative movement, but also for the women. In order to understand the importance of rhetoric and recruitment patterns to the APRF, it is necessary to realize that in many respects, these women were asked to oppose the seemingly necessary expansion of the federal government, the very thing that many credited with ending the Great Depression. Riding on the coattails of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Harry Truman had upheld his predecessor's adherence to New Deal liberalism. As a result, the federal government continued its expansion in the form of various institutions that increasingly exerted influence over state governments. New Deal measures called for a necessary expansion of the state, as did the advent of World War II.

The construction of a military-industrial state required increased the government's physical presence in those areas of the country, including Southern California, into which federal money was being pumped for the purpose of defense manufacturing. Southern California was a particular hotbed of conservatism in the post-war era because of the relative affluence of the region, a result of the concentration of the profitable, government-subsidized military-industrial industries there that contributed much by way of defensive technology in World War II. This wealth, in addition to the fear of racial integration in an increasingly heterogeneous community, led many Southern Californians to establish suburban communities as bastions of what Nickerson calls "a prodefense, free enterprise, 'get-the-government-off-our-backs' brand of conservatism." This conservative sentiment contributed greatly to the region's near-vigilantism during the

Red-hunting days of the McCarthy Era. Believing anticommunism to be a danger whose pervasiveness required vigilance at every level, and most importantly the local one due to the immediacy of the threat, conservative women like those members of the APRF swore allegiance to Senator Joseph McCarthy and his Red-baiting investigations, even after his fall from grace, and, further, began their own investigations on the local level. The virulence with which the APRF opposed any shade of communism or socialism in the United States made the general, moderate populace, especially academics, wary.<sup>30</sup>

In spite of the wariness with which many Americans approached “fringy” Rightist organizations like the APRF, women joined the group, a fact that can be attributed in part to the contemporary political climate of southern California. Nickerson points out that “[a]s the power centers of American conservatism shifted from the Northeast to points

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<sup>30</sup> Contemporary academics were horrified by the political mayhem that followed wherever McCarthy’s accusatory finger pointed, and sought to combat this chaos in the only way they knew how: by writing a book about it. One of the first scholars to recognize this movement in America and to deem it worthy of study was literary critic Lionel Trilling, who in 1950 wrote that the “conservative impulse” does not express itself ‘in ideas but only in action or irritable mental gestures which seem to resemble ideas” (Lionel Trilling, *The Liberal Imagination: Essays on Literature and Society* [New York, 1950], ix). Historian Richard Hofstadter seized upon this idea with alacrity and contributed an especially visceral essay in an anthology originally published in 1955 entitled *The New American Right* that purported to “analyze” the right using some of the latest social scientific research available. Hofstadter’s essay, “The Pseudo-Conservative Revolt,” theorizes that conservatism is a particularly “paranoid style” of American politics. Hofstadter writes, that the “political reactions” of pseudo-conservatives, which he delineates from the more moderate “classical” conservatism associated with President Eisenhower, “express rather a profound if largely unconscious hatred of our society and its ways” (Richard Hofstadter, “The Pseudo-Conservative Revolt [1955],” in *The Radical Right: The New American Right Expanded and Updated*, ed. Daniel Bell [New York: Anchor Books, 1964], 76-77). Hofstadter’s book, *The Paranoid Style in American Politics and Other Essays*, an elaboration of his essay, states that the pseudo-conservative “sees the hostile and conspiratorial world in which he feels himself to be living as directed specifically *against him*; against a culture, a way of life whose fate affects not himself alone but millions of others...His sense of his political passions are unselfish and patriotic, in fact, goes far to intensify his feeling of righteousness and his moral obligation” (Richard Hofstadter, *The Paranoid Style in American Politics and Other Essays*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1965], 4). Interpreting threats to the status quo in terms of Christian visions of the apocalypse, these “pseudo-conservatives” combat affronts to traditional American ideals with the fervor of a religious zealot. Hofstadter writes that pseudo-conservatives “believe that we have lived for a generation in the grip of a vast conspiracy” and that they have “the tendency to secularize a religiously derived view of the world, to deal with political issues in Christian imagery, and to color them with the dark symbology of a certain side of Christian tradition...If the warning of those who diagnose the central treachery are not heeded soon enough, it is argued, we are finished: the world confronts an apocalypse of a sort prefigured in the Book of Revelation” (*Ibid.*, xi-xii). Hofstadter was highly regarded in his day, as both a professor at Columbia and an outspoken intellectual, and many Americans in society adopted his view.

west and south during the 1950s, southern California became the face of the Old Right.” As Becky Nicolaides shows in her study of the mid-twentieth-century working-class suburb, South Gate, the influx of not only militarized industry, but also civilian industry in Southern California<sup>31</sup> spurred the gradual adherence to a severely protectionist view of one’s right to private property.<sup>32</sup> This view was not exclusive to working-class Southern Californians, of course. Lisa McGirr shows how middle-class Southern Californians increasingly viewed their possessions as signifiers of American citizenship and immune to the intervention of the federal government in such measures as neighborhood integration. These “suburban warriors” were affected by the changes that the Cold War military-industrial complex brought to their lives and work, thereby “disposing many of its inhabitants to embrace a radicalized form of politics”<sup>33</sup> that eventually culminated in “a vibrant, zealous mobilization.”<sup>34</sup> Both neighborhood and school integration led working- and middle-class suburbia to coalesce in grassroots politics against the threat of racial equality and the perceived threat to property values and status that such equality might bring. Though the APRF women did not address racial integration specifically in their campaigns, as residents of homogeneous suburban neighborhood, they, too, would have been concerned about this issue. Nicolaides and McGirr both show suburbanites in

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<sup>31</sup> As Thomas Sugrue points out in *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), many civilian industries, including automobile and heavy machinery industries, migrated from what is now called the Rust Belt to California, where tax codes were more favorable to industry and factories had more room to expand their plants. While this was a welcome source of jobs for Southern Californians and contributed not only to an increase in affluence and population for the region, this left Detroit and other industrial cities in the Midwest in a state of economic crisis.

<sup>32</sup> Becky Nicolaides, *My Blue Heaven: Life and Politics in the Working-Class Suburbs of Los Angeles, 1920-1965* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).

<sup>33</sup> McGirr, *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right*, 8.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 71-72.

communities like South Gate drove the political machine behind the conservative movement of the 1960s, rather than being manipulated from above. These authors also both portray this type of grassroots politics to have been mixed-sex in composition, but to have been led primarily by the men of the community. However, this paper demonstrates that women were at the forefront of this grassroots movement and that they had no qualms about acting without male leadership.

As leaders of the grassroots movement in California, women approached social and political problems in a highly intellectual way, that is, through extensive research and discussion of contemporary political debates. Clubwomen in Southern California, as elsewhere, formed study groups and letter-writing networks to research and report on communist and other potentially subversive activities in government and in other influential spheres, including education and medicine.<sup>35</sup> This postwar activity can be placed in a long tradition of anti-Communist activism in America. During the first Red Scare of the 1910s and 1920s, concerned women created “a widespread network of female countersubversive activity,”<sup>36</sup> cooperating with state and local law enforcement agencies, as well as non-governmental groups to keep tabs on alleged Reds.<sup>37</sup> They pored over Socialist and Communist propaganda, pamphlets, and newspapers and created massive amounts of research data. “Propaganda reading groups” were highly popular

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<sup>35</sup> For more info on women and politics in postwar suburbia, see Sylvie Murray, *The Progressive Housewife: Community Activism in Suburban Queens, 1945-1965* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003).

<sup>36</sup> Michelle Nickerson, “Domestic Threats,” 46.

<sup>37</sup> Kirsten Delegard, “Women Patriots: Female Activism and the Politics of American Anti-Radicalism” (Ph.D. diss., Duke University, 1999), 437-441.



voluntary activities that allowed women to raise anti-radical consciousness.<sup>38</sup> This sort of voluntary, collectivist fact-finding carried over into the post-World-War-II era, when study clubs, political coffees (sometimes called “Kaffeeklatsches”), canvassing, newsletters, letter-writing campaigns, and speeches became standard operating procedures of an expanding network of anti-Communist voluntary groups.<sup>39</sup>

The political traditions of the APRF, then, is reflective of a historical pattern in which these conservative women operated; the rhetoric, recruitment tactics, and political measures that the APRF exercised had a long history, dating back to the Progressive Era. So, too, can the kind of anti-Communist political activism displayed by the APRF claim this history. The grassroots type of activism of women’s Republican groups served a purpose in both the Progressive and post-World-War-II eras, namely, to influence politics but not present a perceived threat to the male hegemony of the political sphere so as to avoid being shut out of the formal politics altogether. Catherine Rymph shows that from woman’s suffrage to the women’s liberation movement, women tried to join the ranks of the Republican Party.<sup>40</sup> Male members of the party remained so resistant that one woman remarked as late as 1965 that “gentleman in this Party would be very smart if they would take the ladies into their confidence and utilize them on policy-making boards and

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<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 456-457, 462-464.

<sup>39</sup> Nickerson, “Domestic Threats,” 1.

<sup>40</sup> Catherine Rymph, *Republican Women: Feminism and Conservatism from Suffrage through the Rise of the New Right* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 26-28. After women gained the right to vote, women agitated for positions in the Republican Nominating Convention until their efforts were rewarded in 1924, when 111 new delegate slots were created providing the possibility of women delegates being selected (26-27). “After 1924 the perception of women delegates at the GOP convention dropped considerably beginning in 1928 and would not reach 1924 levels again until 1952...the basic problem was clear: women could not force men to set aside tradition and open the party councils to women...Creating women’s seats on the party committees gave ordinary women no more input into the party organization than ordinary men had” (27-28).

committees.”<sup>41</sup> Excluded from the national Republican Party, women instead operated on a localized level and, consequently, their political activities often seem “hidden” within women’s typical activities as wives and mothers, almost as if these political groups were equivalent with bridge clubs and Tupperware parties. The invisibility of women’s politics made it seem as if there was no precedent to the founding of John Birch Society, a nationwide conservative group, or for the groundswell of support for the Goldwater campaign in 1964. Illustrating how women formed these networks, attracted new members, and gained support for their campaigns demonstrates women’s importance to the outpouring of conservative feeling that allowed later, more formalized conservative groups to take action.

Tracing the continuity of women’s grassroots activism and anti-Communism over the span of over forty years is not meant to imply that there was nothing new to the type of grassroots organizing found in the early Cold War. Indeed, “[a]lthough the clubs retained many of the rituals and institutions of the early period, they updated their symbols, rhetoric and political styles to reflect contemporary middle-class notions of femininity and domesticity.”<sup>42</sup> Maternalist concerns led women to enter into politics, for they felt that male politicians were either too corrupt or too callous to do anything more than wage wars at the expense of American societal advancement. For the APRF, this meant that while men concerned themselves with the dry logistics of national defense during the Cold War, women were charged with maintaining morality and democratic

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<sup>41</sup> Patricia Hutar, Transcripts of Republican National Committee meeting, 23 January 1965, frame 673, reel 4, *RPP I-b = Papers of the Republican Party, Part I: Meetings of the Republican National Committee, 1911-1980. Series B: 1960 -1980* (Bethesda, Md.: University Publications of America, 1988). Quoted in Rymph, *Republican Women*, 28.

<sup>42</sup> Rymph, *Republican Women*, 22.

values in the home and in the community at large. This responsibility can be said to be a resurgence of the idea of Republican Motherhood, the notion during the Revolutionary period that informed mothers would imbue their children with appreciation of and respect for democracy.<sup>43</sup> Indeed, mothers were also charged with the duty of teaching their children to become active within the democratic process, or, as put summarily in an APRF bulletin, “YOUNG ADULTS MUST LEARN TO WRITE THEIR SENATORS AND CONGRESSMEN ON IMPORTANT LEGISLATION.”<sup>44</sup> Additionally, because members of the community other than mothers educated children, namely schoolteachers, the politics and rhetoric of maternalism extended to the academic sphere in the postwar era to ensure that children were learning democratic values, rather than “subversive” ones.

In their bulletins and meetings, APRF leaders utilized maternalist language to justify their entrance into politics and to reassure members that, though they could now be considered political actors, they had lost none of their femininity.<sup>45</sup> This language was manifest most often in APRF bulletins in relation to caring for the young and emphasizing the importance of protecting youth from subversive influences. This became

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<sup>43</sup> For more on Republican Motherhood, see Linda Kerber, “Women and the Shaping of the Republican Ideology after the American Revolution,” in *Toward an Intellectual History of Women: Essays*, ed. Linda Kerber (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997).

<sup>44</sup> “APRF Bulletin 32, Section 1; July (16) 1954.” Koenig Collection. American Public Relations Forum Folder. Huntington Library [Hereafter Huntington Papers].

<sup>45</sup> Of course, rhetoric – maternalist or otherwise – is not the only cause for women to join voluntary organizations. As in interesting aside, it has been argued that there is psychological basis for the rationality behind women’s collectivism. See, for example, Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women’s Development* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982). Gilligan argues that women have a natural proclivity toward building networks of support and personal relationships. Theda Skocpol concurs when she writes in *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers*, “[G]ender is not just a relation of social domination or social inequality, as the patriarchal theorists emphasize. Female gender identities—which are not all the same, and which change over time—can also be sources of social solidarity, organization, and moral purpose” (37).

a particularly relevant cause with the advent of the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), a U.N. subagency that promoted an internationalist view of education and encouraged world peace. Conservatives were highly displeased with the U.N., and Eisenhower's complicity in maintaining the U.S.'s role within the United Nations,<sup>46</sup> because they viewed such internationalism as an affront to America's traditional isolationism. With UNESCO, conservative housewives in general, and APRF members in particular, saw the invasion of subversive influence from an external, disconcertingly globalized source that threatened to "brainwash" children and lure them into the Communist fold, thereby fomenting a revolution from within the United States. This fear was especially real following in the wake of the recent Redbaiting within America's universities and subsequent loyalty oath controversies that attempted to ensure that "subversives" had not infiltrated the ranks of academia in the United States.<sup>47</sup>

In the early- and mid-1950s, parents in Los Angeles and its surrounding suburbs began to question the role of public education in combating Communism. In school board

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<sup>46</sup> Eisenhower's enthusiasm for the U.N. was but one of right-wing conservatives' criticisms of the president, who they viewed to be a pawn of the still-existent New Dealers in Washington. In a '76 Club, another version of the APRF that held meetings in the evenings so men could attend, bulletin, Eisenhower was portrayed thusly: "Those who expected little of Mr. Eisenhower cannot be greatly disappointed by the course of his administration. Those who expected nothing have seen the fulfillment of their expectations. Eisenhower was foisted upon the Republican Party by Trumanites who knew that Truman could not win. He carries on precisely as his predecessor would wish him to do." ('76 Club Bulletin No. 2, August 15, 1953. TTU Papers.) Elsewhere, the APRF criticized Eisenhower's moderation by calling him the "Eisenhower Dream – One Man for Both Parties" (APRF Bulletin No. 36; January 1955. TTU Papers.)

<sup>47</sup> The loyalty oath controversy in California's universities spanned from 1949 to 1951. Clark Kerr, the first chancellor of the University of California, Berkeley and the twelfth president of the University of California shows that the effects of anti-Communism on California's university system outlasted the loyalty oath controversy in his two-volume memoirs, *The Gold and the Blue: A Personal Memoir of the University of California, 1949-1967* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001). Kerr writes, "In the wake of the oath controversy, a second obstacle was McCarthyism's chilling effects on free speech and association among faculty members...A third issue was the pressure being put on librarians around the state to acquire only politically acceptable books" (130-131).

and PTA meetings, ideological warfare raged among parents regarding whether or not UNESCO's internationalist stance was beneficial to the shaping of young minds. For the APRF and other conservative groups, the answer was a resounding "no." To the largely Catholic APRF membership, the fact that UNESCO promoted birth control and discouraged the establishment of parochial schools was especially disconcerting.<sup>48</sup> The APRF attacked the controversy in typical fashion: by studying it and educating others about it. An APRF bulletin published in 1952 suggests that the group was making progress in its community education efforts:

It is encouraging to see that more and more people are investigating and finding out for themselves just what the teaching of UNESCO in our schools would do to our young people...If more people would keep alert to what is being planned for us and for our children we would not have such a difficult time holding on to our God-given rights, and many crackpot ideas would never reach the dangerous proportions that they do.<sup>49</sup>

Such community education relied on the testimony of "experts," including those who spoke to the APRF like a Mr. C.O. Garshweiler, who gave an "excellent expose [sic] of subversive influence in the textbooks being used in public schools."<sup>50</sup> Possibly the most vigorous opponent of UNESCO was a member of the APRF herself. Florence Fowler Lyons spoke out against the program in front of various civic groups and testified in front of the School Board. In an APRF session, she delivered a message to the group described as being "of vital importance to each individual, man, woman or child, but especially to the young adults of the organization who plan to return to school, and to their parents, as

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<sup>48</sup> APRF Bulletin (Un-numbered), August 15<sup>th</sup>, 1952. TTU Papers.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> APRF Bulletin 53; May 1956. TTU Papers.

well as the school teachers who honestly wish to be able to detect the infiltration in the textbooks they will have to use.”<sup>51</sup>

What is especially telling about the subject of Lyons’ talk is the fact that it was directed towards the youth in the group, as well as the youth of the Los Angeles region at large. This concern for educating the next generation of Red-baiters and anti-Communists was another form of maternalism aside from shielding one’s children from subversive influence. Therefore, the women of the APRF invited young adults into meetings in order to allow them to learn about the evils of Communism so that they were less susceptible to brainwashing. An August 1954 meeting was especially devoted to this cause because, as the APRF bulletin asserted, “[o]ne of the most important tasks before you now is to see that your children can recognize subversive propaganda which is prevalent in their schools and textbooks. THIS IS THE MEETING TO BRING THEM TO [referring to the August 13<sup>th</sup> meeting].<sup>52</sup> Indeed, young adults, who were allowed to attend meetings for free as long as they were accompanied by a parent, became an increasingly important constituency in the APRF. So much so, in fact, that a special “Youth Forum” was established in 1954 that met every week in order to “bring themselves up to date ...[because o]nce the young people are informed, there is no limit to the good they can accomplish.”<sup>53</sup> At least in one instance, one of the young adults of the APRF did go on to do “good” for the anti-Communist cause. A 1956 bulletin details,

SOMETHING TO BOAST ABOUT is the CONSERVATIVE newspaper coming out of HARVARD UNIVERSITY and whose editor is a former member of our YOUNG ADULTS. In the issue for March 29<sup>th</sup>, he has printed the most

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<sup>51</sup> APRF Bulletin 33; August 1954. TTU Papers.

<sup>52</sup> APRF Bulletin; August 1954. TTU Papers.

<sup>53</sup> APRF Bulletin; September 19, 1952. TTU Papers.

wonderful editorial AGAINST the Alaskan mental health bill, taking it apart bit by bit...BRAVO, JERRY, KEEP UP THE GOOD WORK. WE'RE SO PROUD OF YOU, WORDS FAIL US.<sup>54</sup>

The motherly pride evident in such language reveals that women of the APRF presented themselves as first and foremost mothers, and the UNESCO controversy raised their hackles because it put their children at risk of subversion. As Nickerson explains, "Many housewives became more politically active through their involvement in public school affairs because the education wars made the Communist threat seem all the more real and immediate."<sup>55</sup> With a reliance on maternalist language, the APRF beckoned mothers everywhere to become more involved in politics, if not for the sake of educating themselves, then certainly for the fact that their loved ones were in danger of subversion.

The threat of subversion was present not only in schools and universities, but also in the newly invigorated field of mental health. It is in the APRF's opposition to the Alaska Mental Health Bill of 1956 that we find the second important strand of rhetoric in the APRF leaders' repertoire: appeals to the religiosity of its members. As will be shown, this religious rhetoric served the maternalist purpose of creating concern for children's moral wellbeing, aside from their physical and mental wellbeing. The APRF, of course, was largely Catholic in constituency and oft-repeated in APRF meetings was the Biblical passage, "faith without works is dead" (St. James 2:26), which reminded members that aside from attending meetings and "studying" Communism and other subversive threats, they were obliged to take action in the local and national community to ensure the sanctity of democracy in America. The Alaska Mental Health Bill of 1956 appropriated land and money to fund psychiatric facilities and programs so that the territory of Alaska

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<sup>54</sup> APRF Bulletin 52; April (20<sup>th</sup>) 1956. TTU Papers.

<sup>55</sup> Nickerson, "Domestic Threats," 136.

could hospitalize its own mentally ill residents, instead of sending them to Portland, Oregon according to a previous arrangement.<sup>56</sup>

In its appropriation of private lands for state use, the Alaska Mental Health Bill seemed socialistic to the APRF members but for these women, this bill posed an even larger threat. The advent of the highly scientific practices of psychology and psychiatry seemed to supplant the traditional role of the Church in maintaining psychological balance and mental clarity in one's life.<sup>57</sup> The concurrent resurgence of religiosity in the postwar era as well as the increasing acceptance of psychology and psychiatry as legitimate social sciences led the conservative women of the APRF to attack the mental health movement as being socialist in an effort to protect the more traditional approach of dealing with one's emotions: seeing one's priest or pastor rather than an anonymous professional. The fear, then, that the women of the APRF held regarding the Alaska Mental Health Bill was that the advent of psychology and psychiatry would supplant the role of religion and make morality obsolete. With this predisposition against the intentions of the Alaska Mental Health Bill as well as the field of professional psychiatry as a whole, the women of the APRF unleashed an energetic campaign against the bill.

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<sup>56</sup> The APRF conveys this fact thusly, "The bill provides that AFTER THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT BUYS the MILLION ACRES OF LAND and GIVES it to the Territory of Alaska, we then relinquish all rights to it, any way they wish and to whom they wish and no report has to be given to the Federal Government. The United States starts this off by GIVING THEM SIX AND ONE HALF MILLION DOLLARS to purchase this huge grant of land 'for the mentally ill' in the United States and Alaska." (APRF Bulletin 47; December 1955. TTU Papers.)

<sup>57</sup> Ellen Herman, *The Romance of American Psychology: Political Culture in the Age of Experts* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 5: "As an academic discipline, psychology traces its historical roots to nineteenth-century philosophy and physiology. But in the period after World War II, it has already been noted, the professions most likely to be associated with psychological expertise were those that originated in or had grown into "helping" trades: psychiatry, clinical psychology, and social work. This varied and flexible history allowed psychological experts to make extremely broad claims to authority. They possessed, in turn, a technology of behavior, a science of social relations, a theory of society, and a theology of emotional healing. Psychology sometimes appeared as a social or natural science, sometimes as a source of moral, cultural, and political values that could address the meaning of human identity and existence, matters that were traditionally the exclusive province of religion next hit or philosophy."



Beyond the threat that the Alaska Mental Health Bill posed to religion and morality, there were more practical threats, like the rise of a socialist state, that all conservatives – religious and non-religious – opposed. Conservatives in general were leery of the fact that the administration of this mental health movement toward was overseen by one centralized office, a kind of autocracy, and, further, that those deemed “unstable” could be removed from their homes and have their personal property confiscated, an affront to American libertarianism. APRF members were particularly concerned by the fact that children were the targets of psychiatric experiments: “What are they doing to the children, the first ones attacked in these barbaric experiments? An article by a reputable psychiatrist shows the kind of experimentation they are subjected to through a continual stream of wrong diagnosis. Children who misbehave are diagnosed as mental patients and sent for a series of shock treatments which destroys their memory.”<sup>58</sup>

In the 1950s and early 1960s, conservatives attacked psychiatric professionals, calling them, as did a journalist for *The Southern Conservative*, “‘head shrinkers’ and ‘brain tinkerers’ and accused them of using their medical expertise to advance a left-wing political agenda.”<sup>59</sup> Further, conservatives feared that the preponderance of “foreigners” in mental healthcare could lead to the importation of un-American ideas and any who stood in the way of this importation of foreign ideas might be in danger of brainwashing techniques to ensure compliance, an especially real concern after it was publicized that

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<sup>58</sup> APRF Bulletin 87; May-June 1960. Huntington Papers.

<sup>59</sup> “If You’re a Good Conservative American Patriot...Let’s Face It...You’re Nuts,” *The Southern Conservative* (April 1957), reprint, personal collection of Marie Koenig, Pasadena, California. Quoted in Michelle Nickerson, “The Lunatic Fringe Strikes Back: Conservative Opposition to the Alaska Mental Health Bill of 1956,” in *The Politics of Healing: Histories of Alternative Medicine in Twentieth-century North America*, ed. Robert D. Johnston (New York: Routledge, 2004), 118.

American GIs had been brainwashed in Korea during the war.<sup>60</sup> In addition to the fear of the advent of an authoritarian state in the United States capable of silencing dissenters through brainwashing, APRF members feared that such a state could commandeer one's thoughts as easily as it could arbitrarily seize private property.

According to Nickerson, "In the eyes of its opponents, the Alaska Mental Health Bill provided both the physical structures and the legal mechanisms for a Soviet-style police state in America."<sup>61</sup> Indeed, a member of the APRF, Mrs. Leigh F. Burkeland, coined the term "Siberia, U.S.A." to describe the impending situation in a local newspaper article.<sup>62</sup> APRF leaders popularized this term in meetings, saying, "WE COULD NOT HELP REMEMBERING THAT SIBERIA is very near Alaska and since it is obvious no one needs such a large land grant, we were wondering if it coule [sic] be an AMERICAN SIBERIA."<sup>63</sup> Not only was the prospect of Siberia in America threatening

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<sup>60</sup> Nickerson, "Domestic Threats," 136, n. 7: "The term 'brainwashing' is a translation of the Chinese work *his-nao* which means cleansing of the brain or mind. Journalist Edward Hunter first introduced the concept to American readers in his 1951 book, *Brain-washing in Red China*. While interviewing Chinese refugees in Hong Cong, Hunter learned that the Communists had executed a massive thought reform program designed to indoctrinate its citizens and bring them in line with the Communist program. However, Americans first became alarmed and fascinated by Communist re-education techniques in the summer of 1950, during the Korean War. They learned from news reports that American soldiers were being taken to prisoners-of war camps in North Korea, where they were subjected to arduous interrogation and indoctrination sessions. Over the 1950s, the word 'brainwashing' became a popular expression in the United States, used to describe any and all forms of indoctrination. For more on brainwashing, see Edward Hunter, *Brain-washing in Red China: The Calculated Destruction of Men's Minds* (New York: The Vanguard Press, 1951); Robert Jay Lifton, *Thought Reform and the Psychology of Totalism: A Study of 'Brainwashing' in China* (New York: Norton, 1963); and Abbot Gleason, *Totalitarianism: The Inner History of the Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 89-107."

<sup>61</sup> Nickerson, "Lunatic Fringe," 118.

<sup>62</sup> Mrs. Leigh F. Burkeland, "Now—Siberia, U.S.A.," *The Register*, January 24, 1956, reprinted by Keep America Committee. Radical Right Collection, Box 45, Hoover Institution. Quoted in Michelle Nickerson, "Lunatic Fringe," 119.

<sup>63</sup> APRF Bulletin 47; December 1955. TTU Papers.

because of its implications for political freedoms,<sup>64</sup> but also because of its implications for religious freedoms. As APRF officer Mrs. Wolfe reminded the group, “Communism is a faith and can only be conquered by another faith.”<sup>65</sup> Because the Catholic religion was an international in scope, much like Communism itself, the Church was often accused of “being in favor of world government and opposed to the sovereignty of the United States.”<sup>66</sup> APRF leaders were careful to draw the distinction between such internationalist impulses as Communism and Catholicism. For instance, study materials at APRF meetings included *How to tell a Catholic from a Communist*, “[a] four-fold card outlining in sentence juxtaposition the differences between Communism and Catholicism. It was published by the Catholic Home Journal of Pittsburgh Penn...[Its i]nitial premise is that the ‘Catholic believes [sic] there is a god – The Communist denies his existence.’”<sup>67</sup>

Soviets were godless, APRF members believed, and the encroachment of Soviet influence into the field of mental health made this battle over the Alaska Mental Health Bill a fight for the morality of Americans that women needed to spearhead. Indeed, Soviets had aspirations to infiltrate and start a revolution within the United States through psychological tactics. Lavrenty Beria, chief of the Soviet security and secret police, counseled Communist agents in America on the utility of “psychopolitics” in the Cold

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<sup>64</sup> APRF Bullet #51; March 1956. TTU Papers: “WE DON’T LIKE TO BOAST, (OR DO WE) but the fact that you found it at all is due to the astounding miracle of one member of this organization who moved to Alaska not too long ago and continued to read our bulletin. The Alaskan Bill was given to her and she promptly sent it on to us for analyzation [sic]. WE ALMOST DROPPED IN OUR TRACKS for we realized from the first few minutes that WE WERE NEVER MEANT TO SEE THIS BILL. It was to be passed quietly and with no fanfare, and then the bomb was to be lowered later as we were quietly picked up in the middle of the night and transported to Alaska where this faction of the New Deal would not be bothered with us again but would definitely and permanently be in power forever.”

<sup>65</sup> “Notes on April 18, 1952 Meeting.” CSU Papers.

<sup>66</sup> APRF Bulletin 32, Section 2; July 1954. Huntington Papers.

<sup>67</sup> “List of Materials Distributed at Meetings of American Public Relations Forum.” CSU Papers.

War. “A psychopolitician,” he writes, “must labor to increase the personnel and facilities of ‘mental healing’ until at last the entire field of mental science is entirely dominated by Communist principles and desires. To achieve these goals the psychopolitician must crush every ‘homegrown’ variety of mental healing in America. Actual teachings of James, Eddy, and Pentecostal Bible faith healers amongst your misguided people must be swept aside.”<sup>68</sup> In this US-Soviet conflict over the hearts and minds of American citizens, many APRF members saw the final conflict between good and evil as predicted in Revelations. A 1956 bulletin urged its members to agree that “THIS YEAR IS OUR TIME FOR ACTION. We are reminded of the verses in Ecclesiastes 3# [sic] : and some of it should be quoted before we tell you some of the action that we hope to take on. IF YOU REALLY LOVE THIS COUNTRY, THIS IS THE YEAR TO SHOW IT FOR IT IS NOW IN ITS DEATH AGONY. This is not meant to alarm you, but anyone who is active will agree that it is late, indeed.”<sup>69</sup>

This apocalyptic language was not restricted to discussion of the Alaska Mental Health Bill. Indeed, as the purportedly more religious sex, women in the APRF had adopted their roles as protectors of religion with fervor. APRF leaders expressed the fear that “[t]he enemy abroad in the land today has dedicated himself toward the destruction of every person who believes in Christ. His progress is growing by leaps and bounds because too many who profess a love for Our Blessed Lord will not believe they have a duty to perform towards anti-Christ and his angels. In 1941 Pope Pius XII is said to have stated that ‘we are living in the last days.’ The Bible prophesies [sic] are evident to all

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<sup>68</sup> Lavrenty Beria, “An Address By Beria.” In *Brainwashing: A Synthesis of the Russian Textbook on Psychopolitics*, ed. Dorothy Baker, v-vii. Grass Pass, OR: The Foundation of Human Understand, 1991.

<sup>69</sup> APRF Bulletin 56; September 1956. TTU Papers.

except the blindest that we are indeed approaching the last days. For Christ has told us exactly when these days will come upon us.”<sup>70</sup>

In preparation for these “last days,” APRF women pursued two seemingly contradictory paths of action. Firstly, they devoted themselves more fervently to God and the pursuit of devoutness constituted an important part of each meeting. Catholic prayer books were distributed to members,<sup>71</sup> each meeting began with prayer, and Mrs. Wolfe, the Fatima chairman of the APRF, repeatedly reminded members of their “to carry out our Blessed Mother’s requests made known at Fatima – Prayer, daily Mass if possible, Morning Consecration, Daily Family Rosary, Masses and Communion on First Fridays[,] Mass Communion and 15 minute meditation on First Saturdays.”<sup>72</sup> Indeed, APRF women considered their faith to be paramount to any political inclinations. In addressing members in a 1952 meeting, the same Mrs. Wolfe commiserated with fellow members in their disillusionment over Eisenhower’s recent nomination for candidacy, a seeming concession by the Republican Party to New Deal liberalism because of Eisenhower’s moderate platform. She then outlined the way in which concerned members of the group would bring about political change despite the lack of a strongly conservative candidate by saying, “We can bring it all about -- first, put God where HE belongs -- second, sanctify ourselves, follow the plan set forth by Our Lady at Fatima. Then write letters, attend those meetings and speak up if you do not agree with things that are said. Remember that faith without works is useless.”<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> APRF Bulletin 33; August 1954. TTU Papers.

<sup>71</sup> “List of Materials Distributed at Meetings of American Public Relations Forum. CSU Papers.

<sup>72</sup> “Notes on APRF May 16, 1952 Meeting.” CSU Papers.

<sup>73</sup> Notes on APRF August 15, 1952 Meeting.” CSU Papers.

The second path of action was to challenge those who challenged the motivations of the group in a way that seems a far cry from perceived women's submissiveness and certainly contradictory to Christ's admonition to "turn the other cheek." In order to display the aggressiveness of their attack against Communism, APRF leaders adopted martial language and spoke of their campaign in terms of a very real and very important battle. Such language did not pose a threat to these women's femininity because, rather than utilizing this language in the context of such a "masculine" pursuit as actual war, APRF members were fighting for their families and for their faith, two concerns much in keeping with maternalism and religiosity. Consequently, the women of the APRF saw nothing amiss about adopting the language of war to suit their purposes. The idea of a soldier's toil and sacrifice fell very much in line with how APRF members perceived their efforts. One bulletin enhanced this perception by reprinting a message from Pope Pius XII that revealed he indeed endorsed and encouraged the aggressive activism with which the APRF sought to challenge and rout out subversive and socialistic forces in the United States:

Every woman has then, mark it well, the obligation, the strict obligation to conscience, not to absent herself but to go into action in manner an [sic] way suitable to the condition of each... Never in the course of the history of humanity have events required on the part of woman so much initiative and daring, so much sense of responsibility – so much fidelity, moral strength, spirit of sacrifice and endurance.<sup>74</sup>

To the women of the APRF who read this message, the Pope's words of encouragement to continue the "battle" against subversion did not challenge, but instead highlighted the importance of, being assertive in the typically masculine realm of politics.

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<sup>74</sup> "Notification for Summer Meetings; in (actual APRF) June 1952 bulletin." CSU Papers.

Believing APRF members to be the vanguard of Americans' freedom, president Stephanie Williams lamented the ambivalence of those who had not spoken for the conservative, anti-Communist cause: "THE MAJORITY OF THE MEN AND WOMEN present at the last meeting have been fighting this battle many long weary years, WHILE OTHERS SLEPT. We are tired would love to take a vacation. But the Communists are not taking vacations SO NEITHER WILL WE. But this is your fight also, and your place is beside us. Perhaps we are too late. We do not know. Perhaps we cannot save our country. WE CAN AT LEAST SAVE OUR SOULS IN THE "ZERO HOUR" AS DID THE THIEF ON THE CROSS."<sup>75</sup> This combination of militant language with Biblical references was a common trope in the rhetoric of APRF leaders. Another instance of such language is more pointed in its concern for those not supporting APRF's cause: "If you don't enter the fight to preserve our Christian way of life, you must expect to be unpopular with the mobs catering to the anti-Christ."<sup>76</sup> Most, but not all, of this militant rhetoric addressed religious concerns for the apocalypse. This does not mean, however, that APRF members were not moved to aggressiveness in more personal and more secular ways.

In a most unladylike fashion, APRF President Williams challenged two opponents of the APRF directly in a 1956 meeting: "I NOW CHALLENGE YOU to a national debate, preferably on TV so that all of the people you have duped can know how false your charges are...I AM VERY SERIOUS ABOUT THIS AS YOU WILL see. This challenge will go to all newspapers, columnists, commentators, and other outstanding citizens. All patriotic bulletins will be notified. These at least will carry this challenge. I

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<sup>75</sup> APRF Bulletin 33; August 1954. TTU Papers.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

suggest you either PUT UP OR SHUT UP.”<sup>77</sup> This sort of personal attack on opponents to the APRF, however, was rare and more common were the more universally appealing calls to “battle” for the sake of the Church and for the sake of freedom. Despite the seeming apathy of their fellow countrymen about the threats of Communism, APRF members were told to “...keep working, to keep trying to warn people in spite of all obstacles. We will be working WHEN THEIR RED SOLDIERS COME FOR US. We have already made the choice of DYING ON OUR FEET, not selling our country, our Church, our homes out by trying to live on our knees.”<sup>78</sup>

The combination of appeals to members’ religiosity and almost bellicose desire to attack Communism head-on is logical when one considers the fact that these women were at the forefront of the anti-Communist movement. Their grassroots activism preceded organized political action so that in lieu of professional, bureaucratized party politics, clubwomen had to command a certain degree of respect by showing that they possessed the “toughness” to engage in real, political debate. As Nickerson notes, “Even while utilizing their skills as gracious hostesses and enthusiastic community mobilizers, many also strove to demonstrate intellectual prowess and political savvy through intense study, research, and ardent, forceful speech-making. They wanted to be taken seriously, which required more than simplified, upbeat platitudes. Their meetings...involved more than your average friendly kaffeeklatch.”<sup>79</sup> The adoption of aggressive, militaristic language commanded respect from policy-makers because it showed how fervently these women cared about their children and their children’s future.

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<sup>77</sup> APRF Bulletin 56; September 1956. TTU Papers.

<sup>78</sup> APRF Bulletin 33; August 1954. TTU Papers.

<sup>79</sup> Nickerson, “Domestic Threats,” 130.



Speaking in martial tones while yet maintaining the virtues of womanhood – maternalism and moral superiority – demonstrates the tightrope-walking act that APRF leaders practiced regularly in order to achieve the dual goals of drawing housewives out of the comfort of home and political apathy while also commanding attention within the largely masculine sphere of politics. The balancing act was partly successful. While UNESCO manuals were effectively banned in schools, the Alaska Mental Health Bill passed with only minor amendments. Despite this fact, it was clear that campaign had caused congressmen to sit up and take notice of the implications of the bill. Dr. Alfred Auerback wrote in the 1963 *American Journal of Psychiatry*, “We cannot be sure, but the evidence definitely suggests that Williams and her cohorts had a great deal of influence on the senators’ decision” to examine the bill more closely.<sup>80</sup> More successful than their political influence on male politicians was the way in which the American Public Relations Forum attracted women to its cause. At any given time, there were about one hundred dues-paying members<sup>81</sup> and thousands more received bulletins.<sup>82</sup> This membership was largely the result of both the causes that the APRF had chosen to espouse and the way in which those causes were portrayed through rhetoric to prospective and existing members.

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<sup>80</sup> Alfred Auerback, “The Anti-Mental Health Movement.” *American Journal of Psychiatry* 120:2 (August, 1963): 106.

<sup>81</sup> Michelle Nickerson, who interviewed APRF Public Relations Officer Marie Koenig to gain this information, gives this estimate. Michelle Nickerson, “Domestic Threats,” 160-161.

<sup>82</sup> This estimate is taken from the following plea for dues from members in a 1954 meeting: “Remeber [sic] this Forum is run on your donations which can be deducted from your income tax. We either ‘sink or swim’ now, and we need your assistance. We have deliberately ‘gone all out on this one’ because we feel this summer will be the deciding time for America. With your contributions we were able to send out over two thousand bulletins last month. This month we should send out five thousand. We must work fast before our Representatives leave the capital.” APRF Bulletin 31; June 1954. TTU Papers.

In addition to effectively recruiting many local women, men, and children to the conservative movement, the APRF also gained a degree of notoriety within the larger political sphere. The fight led by the APRF and other conservative groups against UNESCO in California attracted national attention.<sup>83</sup> In addition “THIS ORGANIZATION ALONE,” APRF leaders proudly recounted in a 1956 “Emergency Bulletin,” “ALERTED THE NATION TO THE DANGERS OF THE ALASKAN MENTAL HEALTH BILL. WE SENT THE INFORMATION AROUND THE COUNTRY AND OTHERS TOOK IT UP. BUT THE NEWS FIRST CAME FROM THE TIRELESS WORKERS OF THIS ORGANIZATION.”<sup>84</sup> With such public recognition, President Stephanie Williams of the APRF was asked several times to testify in front of both state and federal Senates, in addition to speaking to several other like-minded groups.<sup>85</sup>

The APRF so perfected its study techniques that members often took the role of educating others.<sup>86</sup> Towards the end of the group’s existence, an APRF bulletin noted this

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<sup>83</sup> For more on how the UNESCO controversy captured the attention of the nation, see Glen Warren Adams, “The UNESCO Controversy in Los Angeles, 1951-1953: A Case Study of the Influence of Right-Wing Groups on Urban Affairs” (Ph.D. diss., University of Southern California, 1970).

<sup>84</sup> “Emergency Bulletin [circa November 1956].” Huntington Papers. In a 1960 bulletin, the group takes credit for successfully “alerting the nation” to the misunderstood parts of the bill and, consequently, ‘the mail that flooded the Senate forced them to re-write the bill...’ (APRF Bulletin 87; May-June 1960. Huntington Papers.) Another APRF bulletin reported that the APRF was alone in its efforts to defeat the bill: “OVER AND OVER WE ARE TOLD, ‘YOU ARE THE ONLY PEOPLE DISAPPROVING OF THIS LEGISLATION NOW.’ IT WAS TRUE. FEW OF THE RIGHT-WING WERE VOICING THEIR OPINIONS AND THEY HAVE ALWAYS BEEN VERY OUTSPOKEN BEFORE.” (APRF Report on S.B. No. 244, Mental Health Bill. TTU Papers.)

<sup>85</sup> The March 1953 APRF bulletin states, “The morning session will be devoted to the report of our President’s trip through the East on a speaking tour as well as her testimony given before the Interior and Insular Affairs Committee of the United States Senate.” APRF Bulletin 51; March 1956. TTU Papers.)

<sup>86</sup> One doctor acknowledged in 1963 that “We cannot be sure, but the evidence definitely suggests that Williams and her cohorts had a great deal of influence on the senators’ decision. An article published in the *American Journal of Psychiatry* eight years later credits American Public Relations forum with defeating the bill and inciting the ‘first significant public denunciation against the mental health movement.” Alfred

fact: “Few speakers come to us with NEW INFORMATION. FORUM MEMBERS are daily active in research, current events, TV and radio topics of the day, etc. In many instances they are far more informed than many of our best speakers.”<sup>87</sup> In studying and discussing public policies, the women of the APRF educated themselves on contemporary events and, in turn, took on knowledgeable advisory roles to male policy-makers. The APRF and other, similar organizations thereby allowed women a voice in government in an age supposedly hostile to women in politics. And yet, following the publication of the final APRF bulletin in 1960, the record seems to fall silent on the group. The truth, however, is that the voices of these women were joined by a chorus of men’s voices as the rise of the conservative movement in America incorporated both sexes into such nationally cohesive groups as the John Birch Society (JBS) and the Goldwater campaign.

### **WOMEN STRIKE FOR PEACE**

While APRF women were leaving their women-led group to join national, mixed-sex, male-led, and increasingly hierarchical groups that contributed to the rise of the New Right, women concerned with international peace were leaving such hierarchical and male-led groups to form their own movement. The decision to found a movement, rather than an organization, was a conscious choice made out of disillusionment with the way that a lot of structure in a group stymied mobilization.<sup>88</sup> This group was motivated by fear

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Auerback, M.D., “The Anti-Mental Health Movement.” *American Journal of Psychiatry* 120 (August, 1963): 106. Quoted in Michelle Nickerson, “The Lunatic Fringe,” 126.

<sup>87</sup> APRF Bulletin #68; January 1958.” Huntington Papers.

<sup>88</sup> Swerdlow, *Women Strike for Peace*, 233: “[T]he women who founded WSP, appearances to the contrary, were not political neophytes. All the Washington founders had met as members of SANE, and many of the

that the Soviet resumption of atmospheric nuclear tests in 1961 after a three-year moratorium would lead to an escalation of the arms race, a threat that, no doubt, concerned the former members of the APRF, despite their differing political views. WSP participants also feared the Soviet-American confrontation over the Berlin Wall.<sup>89</sup> According to Swerdlow, WSP leadership put faith in the appeal that its construction of “moral motherhood” and its gender-independent activism held for all women, both on the Right and on the Left.<sup>90</sup> Indeed, members of both sides of the political spectrum joined the movement, but while WSP members reported that “[w]e have had people from the ‘radical right’ present”<sup>91</sup> in their meetings, “few WSPers were likely to feel comfortable in the Republican party, even on the liberal fringe.”<sup>92</sup>

Other contemporary peace-advocacy groups, including Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy (SANE) and Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), were concerned about the same events.<sup>93</sup> Several of the founders of WSP,

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local organizers knew each other from WILPF. Still others had been involved in Quaker pacifism or Communist popular front groups in the late 1930s and 1940s. What these women shared, in addition to social concerns, was the role of mother and homemaker, middle-class affluence, and moral indignation.”

<sup>89</sup> For more, see Lawrence Freedman, “Berlin and the Cold War,” in *The Berlin Wall Crisis: Perspectives on Cold War Alliances*, ed. John Gearson and Kori Schake (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003), 1-9; John Gearson, “Origins of the Berlin Crisis of 1958-1962,” in *The Berlin Wall Crisis: Perspectives on Cold War Alliances*, ed. John Gearson and Kori Schake (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003), 10-21.

<sup>90</sup> Swerdlow, *Women Strike for Peace*, 143.

<sup>91</sup> Message from Portland Oregon WISP. “Women’s Peace Movement Bulletin;” Vol. No. 1. WHS Papers.

<sup>92</sup> Swerdlow, *Women Strike for Peace*, 148.

<sup>93</sup> Even though WSP founders and participants were frustrated by the organizational patterns of these and similar groups, WSP founders maintained that it was important to remain amicable and cooperative with these groups. A June 1963 *MEMO* advised “WSPers” thusly, “Women Strike for Peace-Women for Peace urge the utmost cooperation by our local groups with every peace group willing to work with us locally or nationally to advance, within our statement of policy, our broad goal of ending nuclear threats to the existence of humanity. We are working toward a reduction of international tensions, an expanded peace movement, and for eliminating the cold war psychology wherever it exists.” (National Information Memo, Vol. 2, No. 2. 28 June 1963. AU Papers.)

including Dagmar Wilson, Bella Abzug, and Jeanne Bagby, were members of SANE or WILPF, or both. These women held a planning meeting in the living room of Wilson's Washington, D.C. home on September 21, 1961 to plan not only a one-day national peace protest for that November, but also a new way of mobilizing women in the peace effort.<sup>94</sup> These women had met at the Washington chapter of SANE and they agreed that hierarchical structure, particularly male-led hierarchical structure, within a peace organization stifled local activism as well as spontaneity. Founder Jeanne Bagby expounded upon the benefits of sex separatism: "It was great working without men! Organizations invariably suffered from the hierarchical formalistic impediments we so briskly ignored. Our naïve disorganized methods seem to annoy men of all ages."<sup>95</sup> Contemporary female-led groups shared SANE's hierarchical structure, and thus shared the disinterest of WSP members. WILPF, for example, which was founded in the 1920s and was the only peace group to survive World War II, had a top-down organizational structure that WSP members considered "paralyzed by Cold War fears" and "unresponsive."<sup>96</sup> Ethel Taylor, a former member of San Francisco's WILPF who later

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<sup>94</sup> Swerdlow, *Women Strike for Peace*, 247 n. 9: "Also present at the exploratory meeting were Ralph Russell, Anne Bloom, Mary Chandler, and Lawrence Scott. Several of the founders believe that Jeanne Bagby was there, but the minutes do not show her name (notes for the planning meeting, 21 September, 1961, typescript, [Women Strike for Peace Papers, Swarthmore College Peace Collection] [Hereafter WSP Papers.]). For a complete list of those involved in planning the strike, see Amy Swerdlow, 'The Politics of Motherhood: The Case of Women Strike for Peace and the Test Ban Treaty,' Ph.D. diss., Rutgers University, 1984."

<sup>95</sup> Jeanne Bagby, letter to *Liberation*, December 1966, 33. Quoted in Swerdlow, *Women Strike for Peace*, 240.

<sup>96</sup> Amy Swerdlow, *Women Strike for Peace*, 50.

joined WSP, explained, “if WILPF had been dynamic, WSP would probably never have been born.”<sup>97</sup>

Not only the WSP founders, but also many of the women who would join the WSP movement were members of these organizations when WSP founder Dagmar Wilson invited housewives across the nation to strike on November 1, 1961. Swerdlow explains how even the dissemination of information about the strike occurred in uniquely “feminine” fashion: “It was circulated rapidly through informal female networks, by word of mouth and chain-letter fashion from woman to woman, from coast to coast and brought forth an instant response.”<sup>98</sup> The tools of these “informal female networks,” Swerdlow explains, included “personal phone books, Christmas-card lists, and contacts in PTAs, church and temple groups, women’s clubs, and old-line peace organizations.”<sup>99</sup> In this way, WSP’s founders and early members were able to reach thousands of women in only five weeks to successfully organize rallies in sixty-eight cities across America. Many of the women who demonstrated that day were concerned about how participating in this strike would affect their image. One participant, when interviewed, “conceded that she had been self-conscious and a little timid about participating in her first

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<sup>97</sup> Ethel Taylor, “A Personal Reaction to the Urbana Conference,” *Issues for Discussion* 1 (July 1963). AU Papers. Lyla Hoffman wrote in “A Personal Reaction to Reports on the Urbana Conference” that “WSP was born into an already crowded field --SANE, WILPF, CNVA, FRIENDS and many others were actively functioning. Yet we had our own reason for being. We filled a void. / Our particular role was to afford ordinary women an action outlet for peace-- in simple, feminine, imaginative direct action, rather than cold statements by boards of directors, stereotyped resolutions from meetings, or dull, never printed, conclusions of months of study. Women can now express their strong feelings about survival in ways which are meaningful to them, ways which are understandable to the American public, and hopefully, ways which will influence other women... We felt that we women, with a new, warm personal approach to survival could gear our message, (as does the Pentagon) to the standards of the powers that be... All women who participate with WSP must share this basic commitment--then they are free, as individuals, and their groups are also free, to go as much farther in depth or diversity as they see fit.” (National Information Clearing House Issues for Discussion -- #1; 8 July 1963, 1. AU Papers.)

<sup>98</sup> Swerdlow, *Women Strike for Peace*, 18.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*

demonstration” but did so anyway because she was “frightened” by what she saw developing in US-USSR relations.<sup>100</sup>

Converse to WILPF’s and SANE’s relative lethargy, WSP was quite a dynamic group, owing to its innovative political style, characterized by its “unorganizational” format that operated without a headquarters and, for the most part, without designated spokespersons, paid staff, or officers.<sup>101</sup> This organizational structure so “annoy[ed] men of all ages” that HUAC, when investigating the group, spent the majority of the three-day investigation trying to draw out of the witnesses the nature and justification for WSP’s structure. One witness, Lyla Hoffman, was exasperated with the prosecutor’s, Alfred Nittle’s, insistence on determining this information, as is evidenced in her answer:

I just repeat again that Women Strike for Peace is not a membership organization, so we do not have members. We have a communication system...The way things happen is that if somebody comes to one of our demonstrations, their name is put on our local membership list and they are notified by phone or by postcard of other activities that they might be interested in. If there are meetings, and the so-called steering committee meetings are open to everyone on the mailing list, and if anyone shows any interest in other aspects, other than demonstrations, in discussions, asks questions or who would just like to receive anything in the mail, they are put on the mailing list.<sup>102</sup>

Without hierarchical structure and a fixed, centralized office, WSP women had greater freedom to shape their activism than did their counterparts in SANE or WILPF.

In regard to local autonomy, women were allowed to determine nearly every logistical aspect, including the name, of the way in which their group functioned. When asked on the stand whether the group should be called Women Strike for Peace or

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<sup>100</sup> “What Makes a Mother March?” *The Issue*, January 1963. 4. AU Papers.

<sup>101</sup> Dagmar Wilson said to a *Washington Post* reporter once: “I am not a speech maker. It makes a tremendous lot out of me...It’s no accident that I took to art, a visual form of expression. I find it the most difficult thing in the world to discuss self-evident matters.” *Washington Post*, 29 October 1961. Quoted in Swerdlow, *Women Strike for Peace*, 55.

<sup>102</sup> Testimony of Lyla Hoffman. HUAC Hearings. 2106.

Women for Peace, Dagmar Wilson explained that the movement could not be named so simply. In addition to Women Strike for Peace and Women for Peace,<sup>103</sup> she asserted, “[i]n one area they prefer to call themselves Women Stand for Peace, as a matter of fact. This again is most characteristic of the movement, that local groups have assumed names that they prefer. Some ladies don’t like the idea of striking. It sounds a little too violent for them, so, all right, they can just be Women for Peace or Women Stand for Peace.”<sup>104</sup> Wilson’s assumption that WSP members were “ladies” and as “ladies,” they were naturally opposed to violence, speaks to the gender conventions of the day. Women were supposed to be nurturing and non-confrontational, so women’s actions in the political realm could not carry the taint of violence. Wilson herself seemed not to like the connotations of “picketing,” perhaps for its association with the radical labor movement of the 1920s, for she corrected Nittle when he asked if she had organized the “picketing” on November 1, 1961 by saying, “I prefer you to call it a demonstration. Picketing sounds so hostile.”<sup>105</sup>

This feminine, non-confrontational image was key to WSP’s survival and acceptance by the popular media, which had the power to create a negative image of a movement, and thereby hinder its ability to enact change and attract new members. In regards to its rhetoric, Swerdlow notes that “[m]ost WSPers did not have to take special

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<sup>103</sup> Later, as the group became more international in scope, there was a proposal to change the name of the movement to Women’s International Strike for Peace (WISP). As Swerdlow explains, the proposal to adopt the new name met with some recalcitrance: “[P]robably...each [WSP] group felt that it could chose [sic] to accept or ignore international proposals as it saw fit. Shortly afterward [Ruth] Gage-Colby issued a rhapsodic communication proclaiming that WSP had become ‘WISP,’ Women’s International Strike for Peace...most groups chose to continue to call themselves WSP or WFP (Women for Peace).” (Swerdlow, *Women Strike for Peace*, 188-189.)

<sup>104</sup> Testimony of Dagmar Wilson. HUAC Hearings. 2198.

<sup>105</sup> Testimony of Dagmar Wilson. HUAC Hearings. 2193.



efforts to talk and act like ‘ordinary mothers,’ because that is the way they had been talking and acting for many years.”<sup>106</sup> She continues, “Although most of the WSPers were familiar with left and pacifist discourse, as well as the rhetoric of the State Department, the women refused to speak in terms of ‘capitalism,’ ‘imperialism,’ ‘containment,’ ‘deterrence,’ or even of ‘truth to power,’ because they believed that ideological language obliterated the felt experiences of ordinary mothers.”<sup>107</sup> In addition to the attention paid to their rhetoric, WSP women took pains to ensure that their physical appearance bespoke their middle-class respectability by wearing hats, dresses, and white gloves to protests.<sup>108</sup>

Peace activists of the time were considered at the time to be “kooks,” and thus, WSP, as the APRF had before it, advocated rather non-mainstream positions. In the case of the WSP, the press noticed WSPers’ efforts to separate themselves from the “kooks.” The *Washington Post* made it clear that WSP members were respectable members of society who agitated for peace only because they felt that action was of the utmost necessity for survival. The unnamed reporter wrote, “They are neither beatniks, infidels, nor ignoramuses. One can not associate long with them without realizing that they are average, intelligent, concerned women. Some so timidly refined that, as one mother of three confided: ‘I died a thousand deaths at the thought of going out with placards and

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<sup>106</sup> Swerdlow, *Women Strike for Peace*, 236-237.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>108</sup> Swerdlow, *Women Strike for Peace*, 3: At a time when politicians solemnly declared, ‘Better Dead than Red,’ and when the press and the public tended to dismiss peace advocates as either ‘commies’ or ‘kooks,’ the image projected by WSP of respectable middle-class, middle-aged ladies, wearing white gloves and flowered hats, picketing the White House and protesting to the Kremlin to save their children and the planet, helped to legitimize a radical critique of the Cold War and U.S. militarism.”

picketing the White House. I was moved by desperation.”<sup>109</sup> Not all media personnel were so easily convinced, as Swerdlow recalls, for many “were intrigued with the contradiction between domesticity and political activism.”<sup>110</sup> Regardless of the fickle media, WSP women continued to cling to the importance of a respectable appearance to one’s political credibility.

Peace was not a controversial issue. What was controversial about the WSP was the way in which it agitated for peace. WSP women faced opposition for two reasons: because they were women who had abandoned their traditional gender roles by leaving the domestic sphere; and because they urged coexistence with the Communist enemy. In regard to the former, the *Washington Post* records a particularly apt example of the way in which some Americans opposed these women, as well as the way in which they responded to such criticism. Documenting the December 1962 WSP protest at the White House against nuclear testing, the unnamed reporter relayed that “Masculine reactions are diversified. One male heckler, during a demonstration, threw a surly ‘Why don’t you go home and read?’ at the strikers. ‘We have been reading; that’s why we’re here,’ one calmly replied. Husbandly emotions range from hostility to sympathy to excessive pride.” However, not all were in opposition to the ladies, as the reporter goes on to say that “...another one, a White House policeman, responded with a verbal tip of his blue hat and a humble: ‘I hope you win.’”<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> “Monument to the White House dignified but determined protest,” *Washington Post*, 16 December 1962. AU Papers.

<sup>110</sup> Swerdlow, *Women Strike for Peace*, 72-73.

<sup>111</sup> “Monument to the White House dignified but determined protest,” *Washington Post*, 16 December 1962. AU Papers.

In her survey of the history of the WSP (at least up until the article's publication in 1970), WSP participant Jeanne Weber recalled that "It took real courage to protest in the face of hostile jeers of 'Go back to your kitchens!' – the stares of unfriendly policemen – and physical threats from counter-demonstrators [sic]."<sup>112</sup> However, as Swerdlow points out, WSPers were allowed a certain amount of flexibility with their time that was not allotted the baby boom mothers of the APRF. She notes that "[b]y 1961 [WSP participants'] children had outgrown the need for full-time mothering, and the women were becoming restless at home, ready for work of their own that would offer a greater sense of personal and social accomplishment than domesticity."<sup>113</sup> These women, like the women of the APRF, were baby boom mothers, mostly white, and largely unemployed, leaving them large amounts of leisure time. Despite WSPers' "restlessness," it was still socially unacceptable for women to engage in politics, a male-dominated sphere.

Even WSPers' femininity came under fire, though this was the thing that was supposed to have kept them politically credible, rather than politically radical. Weber reminded members that the media had not always been sympathetic with their cause: "Yes, WSP has an image – sometimes, in the cartoons not so favorable. We vigorously deny that we're all busty, grim, and wear hats, as the caricatures have it." Indeed the likes of Herb Block and his colleagues often portrayed the women as towering menacingly over male politicians in an act of gender role reversal. "But," Weber continued, "it is a tribute to WSP that an image exists, even if unflattering." While some believed that WSP

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<sup>112</sup> "You've Come A Long Way!" by Jeanne Weber, 13, in Memo Commemorative Issue, April 1970. AU Papers.

<sup>113</sup> Swerdlow, *Women Strike for Peace*, 41.

members were not being feminine enough, others, however, held that WSP women were being too feminine. Eleanor Garst, one of the “leaders” of the WSP, wrote in a *MEMO* commemorative issue in 1970 that “[p]roponents of the ‘suffering’ school of pacifists are sometimes scornful of the enjoyment the average woman gets from her peace work. Just like a women’s club, they scoff. But they’re missing the point. *The Women Strikers* are joyful – they do enjoy peace work – because it relieves them from the dreadful frustration of waiting, passively, for destruction.”<sup>114</sup> Participation in Women Strike for Peace, then, was not only voluntary, but it was fulfilling for these women. Such gender-appropriate voluntarism was too passive for some, however. Around the time of this commemorative issue, feminists had begun to criticize the movement for reinforcing traditional gender roles. This criticism, in fact, caused WSP to adapt its aims, as well as its rhetoric.

As WSPers were being criticized alternately for being too feminine or not feminine enough, they encountered opposition from virulent anti-Communists, including the government in the form of HUAC and regular citizens. WSPers earned the suspicion of Rightists who feared that their fight for peace was undermining anti-Communist crusades. In the same commemorative issue of *MEMO* mentioned above, Weber recalled that WSP demonstrators often had to face hostile crowds, counter-demonstrators from the John Birch Society or the American Nazi Party. “Sometimes,” Weber writes, “we were physically attacked by these extremists. Our Los Angeles office has been vandalized, and

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<sup>114</sup> “Women Middle-Class Masses” by Eleanor Garst, 5-7, in *Memo Commemorative Issue*, April 1970. AU Papers.

several WSP leaders have received letter threatening their lives.”<sup>115</sup> Opposition did not only come from private actors, but in fact from the government itself. Weber continues,

Attempts at repression and the unheeding attitude of the government bred a more militant spirit in WSP, too. At one of its Washington demonstrations, WSP was the first group to be penalized by a hasty government edict saying that only 100 persons could picket in front of the White House at one time. Naturally, the WSP women felt this to be a denial of their right to petition the government. When the police tried to stop the women, they broke through police lines to reach the White House. Later WSP, aided by several legal groups, challenged the edict in court.<sup>116</sup>

Of course, the most visible act of government opposition was the HUAC trials of 1962. WSP’s strategy in dealing with this investigation was uniquely maternalist. By bringing children to the trials, by applauding and laughing during the testimonies to make a mockery of the solemnity of the occasion (one reporter described the event as equivalent to “ladies’ day at the ball park”<sup>117</sup>), WSP women revealed to the nation that the committee no longer had any relevance in the nuclear age.<sup>118</sup> Motherhood was something

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<sup>115</sup> “You’ve Come A Long Way!” by Jeanne Weber, 14, in Memo Commemorative Issue, April 1970. AU Papers.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, 14-15.

<sup>117</sup> Reprint of “Women Steal Show,” *The Oregonian (Portland)*, 15 December 1952. In “So Many Great Things Have Been Said.” 1962. Wisconsin Historical Society (Madison, Wisconsin) (Hereafter WHS Papers): “As one correspondent put it, the committee hearing, with the women in the witness stand and filling the spectator seats, has been ‘just like ladies’ day at the ball park.’”

<sup>118</sup> Ultimately, the HUAC trials can be considered a great success for WSP. Firstly, the hearings and their revelation that the committee was chasing a red herring revealed to the populace that HUAC had lost all credibility. Secondly, the press were sympathetic to the women, as evidenced by one reporter’s analysis of the hearings: “Mankind also owes Dagmar Wilson another debt for finally breaking through the ideological [sic] nightmare of the last 45 years that working with Communists for peace is impossible... Only when other peace organizations divorce themselves from the present cold war hysteria and close ranks with all who oppose the common and most deadly enemy of man, war, will they become truly effective” [Reprint of “Essentials of Peace” by Hugh Hester *Courier-Journal (Louisville, KY.)*, 22 December 1962. In “So Many Great Things Have Been Said.” 1962. WHS Papers.) In addition, as WSP leader Eleanor Garst recalls, “The HUAC hearings brought in many new women, who continued raising public awareness of the nuclear threat in every possible way” (“Women Strike for Peace -- The Link to Liberation”, 4. AU Papers.) The HUAC trials also caused a spike in contributions to the movement, as calculated by participant Kay Johnson in 1969 in her financial report: “We have had three ‘waves of income during our existence; HUAC, when large (for us) quantities of money came in unsolicited, and two other times when we sent out an appeal--one early in 1963 and one early this year. Special activities like the MLF conference produce

untouchable and sacred, and the visible presence of mothers in these hearings that opposed a movement driven by motherly concerns spelled the ultimate doom for HUAC as public opinion turned against the committee.

My examination of this group builds upon the work of Amy Swerdlow, *Women Strike for Peace: Traditional Motherhood and Radical Politics in the 1960s*. Aside from this volume, the WSP has only been treated peripherally in accounts detailing the entire peace movement of the early Cold War, such as Lawrence Wittner's *The Struggle Against the Bomb: Resisting the Bomb*, and books on women's history like Rhodri Jeffreys-Jones's *Changing Differences: Women and the Shaping of American Foreign Policy, 1917-1994*.<sup>119</sup> Swerdlow's work is not particularly controversial, as it offers simply a historical account of the movement, created both from still-extant primary sources, as well as Swerdlow's first-hand experiences. Swerdlow's work does not adequately address how the group's maternalist and feminine rhetoric accommodated WSP's changing objectives. My examination of WSP will reveal that as the group entered into three phases of its existence, phases I call "domestic concerns," "international outreach," and "feminism," three types of rhetoric were used: "women as mothers," "women as women," and "women as equals," respectively. The latter phase and rhetoric style was the least maternalist of the three, reflecting a major shift in the group's objectives.

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more expenses than income" (National Clearing Information House Special Report Issues for Discussion No. 9. 26 May 1969. AU Papers.)

<sup>119</sup> Other works include Barbara Burrell, *Women and Political Participation: A Reference Handbook* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2005); Dawn Keetley and John Pettegrew, *Public Women, Public Words: A Documentary History of American Feminism*, Vol. 2 (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc. 2005); and Stephanie Gilmore and Sarah Evans, *Feminist Coalitions: Historical Perspectives on Second-Wave Feminism in the United States* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008).

The first phase, “domestic concerns,” corresponds to what many housewives in 1961 considered to be emergency circumstances: the unnerving threat that the arms race posed to humanity and the prospect that radioactive materials, particularly Strontium-90, were poisoning the milk that children drank. Dagmar Wilson and the other WSP founders invited women to strike on the first day of November, 1961. Their plan, as outlined in their circulated letter, “Call to Strike,” was that “[f]or this one day, the regular routine—home, family, job—will be suspended while women everywhere in the country visit their elected representatives, and the UN delegates from other countries, to appeal for the future of mankind.”<sup>120</sup> Women responded with an enthusiasm that surprised even the founders.

The explanation for this overwhelming response was that “[f]eminine energy, long pent-up and frustrated, is being released in a loud and prolonged whoosh from coast to coast. Business women, school marms, actresses, housewives complete with strollers, turn joyfully to sidewalk demonstrations: ‘Here is something I can do!’”<sup>121</sup> The demonstration was a success, capturing the attention of President John F. Kennedy. In a press conference, Kennedy responded to questions about the demonstration, “I saw the ladies myself (through the window). I recognized why they were here. There were a great number of them. It was in the rain. I understood what they were attempting to say and, therefore, I considered that their message was received.”<sup>122</sup> Kennedy knew, as the demonstrators knew, that “why they were there” could be explained by their maternal

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<sup>120</sup> Call to Strike. AU Papers.

<sup>121</sup> “Women’s Peace Movement Bulletin,” Vol. No. 1. WHS Papers. 1.

<sup>122</sup> Quoted in *Ibid.* Originally printed in *New York Times*. 16 January 1962.

instincts, expressed aptly by the protest slogan of the day: “END THE ARMS RACE—NOT THE HUMAN RACE.”<sup>123</sup>

As progenitors of the human race, women could be mobilized and attracted to the movement by appealing to their motherhood and femininity, WSP founders realized. Weber recalls how careful thought was put into framing political actions so as to appear within the scope of acceptable motherly concerns:

Throughout its life WSP has been aware that to appeal to a wide cross-section of women it must not forget that it is, after all, made up of women. Though we can train ourselves to lobby, make speeches, testify at city council meetings, at base there is a womanly, emotional commitment to making the future safe for our families that it is a great strength. As we move now into more militant times in which women are challenging the old truisms about women’s role, we continue to find a valid footing in the idea that women, as givers of life, have a special role to play in working for world peace.<sup>124</sup>

A “No More Testing!” pamphlet showed an image of an older girl holding a younger boy’s hand, beside which was written “Sure... You’re O.K....but what about your children? What about those children yet unborn?”<sup>125</sup> The concern for their children’s future is what motivated women to leave the domestic sphere, even if uncomfortable doing so, in order to act on their behalf. To ease the discomfort of doing something as new and as foreign as entering the political realm, even the actions themselves were tailored to suit maternalist politics. For instance, as noted earlier, “striking” seemed too masculine a pursuit, so a

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<sup>123</sup> Call to Strike. AU Papers. Swerdlow, *Women Strike for Peace*, 20: “Disclaiming any platform beyond the slogan ‘End the Arms Race—Not the Human Race,’ the founders nevertheless listed six demands: (1) a ban on all atomic weapons testing; (2) negotiations to put all atomic weapons under international control; (3) concrete steps to be taken at once toward worldwide disarmament; (4) immediate allocation of as much of the national budget to preparation for peace as was being spent in preparation for war; (5) an immediate moratorium on name-calling on both sides; and (6) the strengthening of the United Nations.”

<sup>124</sup> “You’ve Come A Long Way!” by Jeanne Weber, 18, in Memo Commemorative Issue, April 1970. AU Papers.

<sup>125</sup> The image was actually drawn by Dagmar Wilson, who had first been a children’s book illustrator before she had become a peace activist.



pamphlet distributed to all WSP chapters assured participants that “striking” simply meant to “leave our routine to walk in public ... [and to] refuse to accept outdated solutions to world tensions...”<sup>126</sup> Such a non-confrontational, non-violent action for the sake of their children was surely within traditional gender norms, no more “feminist” or “radical” than attending a PTA meeting.

Like WSP rhetoric, WSP actions had a particular maternalist bent. The test ban treaty of 1963, for instance, was in part the consequence of a massive “Mother’s Lobby,” launched by WSP in May of that year in Washington, D.C. Two weeks, in fact, after the lobby, thirty-three senators introduced a resolution declaring that the United States unilaterally pursue securing a test ban, a very encouraging turn of events for WSPers.<sup>127</sup> Some politicians admitted to the influence that the Mother’s Lobby had on their vote. An *Issues for Discussion* bulletin recorded the actions of three such politicians: “One influential northeastern Senator said that his constituents’ mail had changed his mind; two others, from the Midwest and the South, indicated that they could not ignore the ‘Mothers’ and Children’s Lobby’ from their home states.”<sup>128</sup>

Aside from the Mother’s Lobby, one of many campaigns was especially tailored to WSPers’ concerns about events within the United States. This campaign was one against the regular portrayal of war in commercials and the vending of war paraphernalia in toy stores, both of which contributed, WSPers believed, to children’s wholesale acceptance of war as a fact of life and their anesthetization to violence. For instance, WSP participant Betty Harlow of Oak Bluffs, Massachusetts wrote in to the September

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<sup>126</sup> Untitled, Undated Pamphlet. AU Papers.

<sup>127</sup> Swerdlow, *Women Strike for Peace*, 93.

<sup>128</sup> National Information Clearing House Issues for Discussion #2. 3 October 1963. AU Papers.

1963 *MEMO* asking WSPers to write to the Kraft Candy Company in protest of a commercial that portrayed “children imitating Marines in ‘war games’ (meanwhile eating candy).”<sup>129</sup> Another WSPer wrote more extensively about the problem of “war toys” in toy stores:

1. Conditioning such as war games and war toys can make war seem acceptable in a time when war is no longer feasible. / 2. Children needing to work out their aggressions can do so just as easily with a punching bag / 3. Russian toy manufacturers have not made war toys since WW II. / 4. You will not in good conscience, be able to purchase a particular brand of toy in the future until the company undergoes noticable [sic] arms reduction / 5. Our Buyers are being notified that we will not be purchasing war toys (Next time you are in a toy store or department ask for the Buyer. We’ve found them usually very happy to discuss the subject.)<sup>130</sup>

Instead of these “war toys,” WSP women were encouraged to purchase toys that encouraged peace, such as the one advertised in a December 1963 *MEMO* called Swords and Plowshares that “introduces the child to deductive logic and is based on disarmament strategy.”<sup>131</sup> Play represented an informal type of learning for children, and WSP mothers

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<sup>129</sup> National Information Memo Vol. 2 No. 5; c. September 1963; 2. AU Papers.

<sup>130</sup> National Information Clearing House Memo Vol. 2 No. 20. 31 March 1964; 2. AU Papers. The campaign to eradicate martial toys took on a special significance in the wake of President Kennedy’s assassination: “FROM: Mrs. Rose Della-Monica, 4055 39<sup>th</sup> Ave., Oakland 19, California / RE: War toys / After President Kennedy’s tragic assassination about 15-20 of us began to meet to discuss what could be done effectively to counteract the trend toward violence and the acceptance of violence as a game, even a way of life...A sporting goods dealer informs me that manufacturers are already planning even more extreme toys for next year, such as replicas of nuclear warfare and booby-traps which go off unexpectedly; and he advises me that a TOY MART will be held in New York City March 9-16, at which event toys will be put on display and buyers from all over the country will place their orders, including those for Christmas wares. We are anxious to reach WSP all over the country urging them to write to manufacturers – Mattel, Marx, Remco, etc. – and to contact local toy dealers. Our resource person tells us that the very best way to get our message across is to emphasize that we will not buy where we see extreme war toys displayed. / We are particularly interested in contacting women in New York City and in the area generally, for local action regarding the TOY MART in March. / (Enclosed with letter was a flyer with two photographs--on one side a child all dressed up in war equipment, on the other a child building a cabin of Lincoln logs. Between the pictures it says ‘A plea for CHILD DISARMAMENT.’ It suggests what parents can do to encourage the purchase of suitable toys.)” (National Information Memo, Vol. 2. No. 18. 28 February 1964. 4. AU Papers.)

<sup>131</sup> National Information Memo Vol. 2. No. 13. 20 December 1963; 3. AU Papers.

wanted to be certain that every form of education to which their sons and daughters were exposed was pacifist.

Like the women of the APRF, WSP women felt that not only should they educate elected officials about peace and the dangers of nuclear arms, but they should also educate their children. WSP women attached the same value to getting youth involved in political issues and campaigns as had APRF women. Also like the APRF, WSP participated in local study of national politics and soon realized that the movement's participants were more informed than the policy-makers deciding their fate in the nuclear age. Swerdlow asserts that WSP women "knew by the time the movement was six months old that they possessed more knowledge and understanding of the components and dangers of radioactive fallout than did most of the men in Congress, and at least as much as the members of the Atomic Energy Commission, who pursued a policy of 'hear no evil and see no evil' in regard to the dangers of nuclear testing."<sup>132</sup> WSP women, because they continued to remain current on the issues, never lost their intellectual edge on politicians, so who better to educate their children on the importance of peace? During United Nations Week in October 1963, WSP women were urged to request their children's schools "have their programs include peace as an aspect so that children can understand that this great organization is here to protect them and their future. Here again it seems that the most importance has been attached to UNESCO."<sup>133</sup> As virulent opponents of the UN and UNESCO, APRF would, of course, have enthusiastically countered such a proposition. Nevertheless, the tactic of focusing on children and

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<sup>132</sup> Swerdlow, *Women Strike for Peace*, 237.

<sup>133</sup> National Information Memo Vol. 2 No. 5; c. September 1963. AU Papers.

education was shared by these two organizations because, as mothers, they felt responsible for what values were instilled in their children.

In addition to encouraging the peace education in schools, WSP mothers wanted to ensure that intolerant messages were not a part of their children's schooling. A November 1963 bulletin reported upon the efforts of one mother, Myrtle Lane of Montpelier, Vermont, in order to encourage other WSP women to follow suit. Lane suggested that women analyze their children's textbooks for Cold War propaganda.<sup>134</sup> To prove that this suggestion was not without cause, she pointed to a personal example of such propaganda that had "infiltrated" her own home:

A blatant example of CWP is the stream turned out by Scholastic Magazines, which prints magazines for several age levels. My son's 7<sup>th</sup> grade geography class is using Junior Scholastic and the report is that his teacher 'swears by it.' There is also 'World Week' for higher grades. The September 13 issue of JS gives 'Our Editorial Platform,' under which the statement is made: 'We are unalterably opposed to communism, fascism, or any other system in which men become slaves of a master state.'...Broadly speaking, there are three areas of objection: (1) Misinformation or outright lying; (2) Clever word associations to build up false image; (3) Incomplete information, short of lie, but leading to distorted understanding...Other parents may find other periodicals used in their schools worth studying in addition to text books.<sup>135</sup>

Just as APRF women feared that UNESCO textbooks would teach their children to believe in internationalism and pacifism, WSP women feared school textbooks would breed intolerance and isolationism. Children's education, then, was central to both maternalist organizations.

Mothers' attention to their children's upbringing extended beyond the classroom. In Washington, D.C., for instance, peace education became "fun" when parents were encouraged to bring their children to the November 1969 Children's Peace Festivals,

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<sup>134</sup> National Information Clearing House, Vol. 2 No. 11, 25 November 1963. AU Papers.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*

whose “[t]entative plans call[ed] for mural painting, dance and drama for children of all ages (thru [sic] Jr. H.S.) and a Peace Parade right after school.”<sup>136</sup> Finally, children’s education took place in the home itself, a fact that revealed to women a particular irony of rearing children in the Nuclear Age. In a special bulletin outlining the Shelter Bill of 1963, a bill that licensed and planned over one hundred million shelter spaces across the nation, WSP leaders informed WSPers that not even a shelter could guarantee survival in the event of a nuclear attack. “Knowing this,” the bulletin’s author continues, “how can we answer the logical questions that even our littlest children ask when told to practice dying? How can we persuade them to live loving and moral lives, if we are stocking shelters for mankind’s last hours?”<sup>137</sup> The prospect of nuclear war, then, was not only threatening the lives of WSPers’ families, but also interfering with their roles as mothers.

Swerdlow notes that the years of 1961 to 1962, when WSP was in its fledgling stages as a movement, was “a period of relative quite in terms of foreign policy and peace protest.”<sup>138</sup> Yet it was precisely at this moment in American history that women acted politically on a national scale rivaled only by the suffrage movement. The reason for this is early Cold War women’s realization of their political clout and of their political calling to reveal the fallacies of Cold War thinking to male politicians who purported to be experts. As Dagmar Wilson explains, “You know how men are. They talk in abstractions and prestige and the technicalities of the bomb, almost as if this were all a game of chess. Well, it isn’t. There are times, it seems to me, when the only thing to do is let out a loud

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<sup>136</sup> The Washington WSPer. November 1969. AU Papers.

<sup>137</sup> National Information Clearing House, Vol. 2 No. 11, 25 November 1963. Records of the Washington, D.C. Office of Women Strike for Peace, University Archives and Special Collections, American University Library, Washington, D.C.

<sup>138</sup> Swerdlow, *Women Strike for Peace*, 240.

scream...Just women raising a hue and cry against nuclear weapons for all of them to cut it out.”<sup>139</sup> In “raising a hue and cry,” the women of WSP were challenging the gender norms of a traditional, conservative era.

One of the peace strikers on November 1, 1961 remarked, “For a lot of women this is the first time on a picket line. Women are naturally conservative. But once they take the step they become stronger and much more radical.”<sup>140</sup> We can take issue with the first part of this statement because, in fact, one WSPer conducted a study in 1962 to determine whether most WSP members were political ingénues or political “pros.” Elise Boulding mailed out surveys to each chapter of WSP and from those that were completed and returned, she determined that WSP women’s “concerned mommy” popular image belied the truly introspective and reflective nature of WSPers’ political beliefs. Though the immediate goal of WSP was to stop nuclear testing, only ten percent of answers to the question of “How would you state the fundamental purpose of your group?” reflected this fact. Instead, WSP women tended toward larger, more abstract goals: twenty-three percent answered in general terms of educating the community, and twenty-one percent in specific terms of developing a mechanism for conflict resolution.<sup>141</sup> Part of the brilliance of WSP’s organizational and mobilization tactics was to project political ideas while putting forth the image of concerned motherhood. Maternalist rhetoric, though,

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<sup>139</sup> Dagmar Wilson, quoted in Mary McGrory, “A Hue and Cry is Raised,” *Washington Evening Star*, 26 October 1961. WSP Papers. Quoted in Swerdlow, *Women Strike for Peace*, 22.

<sup>140</sup> *Los Angeles Mirror*, 2 November 1961. Quoted in Swerdlow, *Women Strike for Peace*, 26.

<sup>141</sup> Elise Boulding, “Who Are These Women?” Quoted in Swerdlow, *Women Strike for Peace*, 66-67. Boulding found the following statistics, among others:

1. 65% of the respondents did have a B.A. degree or higher, and only 9 percent of those who answered had no college education at all. This reflected a much higher percentage of college graduates among WSPers than in the general female population
2. 41% were active at the time in civic, race relations, civil liberties, peace groups, or political parties
3. 62% of their husbands were active in the peace movement
4. preferred letter writing and distribution of literature to visiting public officials

remained an important way to attract uninitiated women into the sphere of politics. Regardless, it is obvious that once women joined the ranks of WSP, they were unwilling to return to the domestic sphere. Most APRF women, too, remained politically active, if in the ranks of male-led groups, but WSPers felt more inclined to remain in a uniquely feminine movement.

As WSP women grew more comfortable in their roles as women in politics, new campaigns presented themselves. With the successful passage of a partial test ban treaty in 1963, some women might have been content to rest on their laurels, but WSP leaders would not allow it. In her second anniversary message to WSP, Wilson congratulated the movement in helping to create the swell of popular opinion against nuclear testing and arms build-up. However, she was quick to inspire WSPers to continue working toward the eradication of all things connected to the nuclear age. After expressing her anger and frustration with the State Department, Congress, the Pentagon, and all other (male) politicians who had duplicitously promulgated war while promising peace, she urged women to continue their struggle for complete and total disarmament and to oppose the Civil Defense Bill of 1964.<sup>142</sup> Proven successful in their accomplishment of the partial test ban treaty, WSPers were eager to work for other political successes in the war for peace.

WSP women continued to campaign for peace and an end to the nuclear arms race. Part of their campaigning style, and part of their increasing assertiveness in the political realm, was to directly and indirectly influence the Democratic and Republican parties. A June 1963 *MEMO* outlined the way in which WSP leaders recommended that

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<sup>142</sup> Address by Dagmar Wilson, Second Anniversary Celebration, New York City, 1 November 1963. Women Strike for Peace Papers, Swarthmore College Peace Collection. Quoted in Swerdlow, *Women Strike for Peace*, 96.

WSPers insert themselves into party politics by attempting, “insofar as possible, to work in and with the two major political parties running independent peace candidates only where no other recourse is feasible. In this connection, it is also understood that, where a real peace candidate emerges locally, the local WSP/WFP groups should feel free to endorse such a candidate, as well as it have members work individually to help his campaign; indeed, endorsement is to be encouraged.”<sup>143</sup> Further, WSP leaders asked participants to “help in any way possible to influence their respective political parties to include peace programs in their platforms,” as well as to educate “the community, as well national, state, and local officials, on specific peace proposals to which we are committed.”<sup>144</sup> At all times, however, WSP women were told to keep in mind that “We are not a political party...we are a movement. We strongly recommend that the political activity of WSP be confined to supporting the peace *issues*, as a pressure group appealing to *all* voters, *all* candidates, *all* political leaders, and *all political parties*” (emphasis in original).<sup>145</sup> WSP, as a movement, needed the support from individuals all along the political spectrum if peace were to become a reality.

WSP was highly influential in its domestic politics in the early 1960s, a fact that has been recognized by several influential journalists, academics, and politicians. I.F. Stone, the independent radical journalist, proclaimed in 1970 that he knew of no other antiwar or radical organization of any kind that had been “as flexible and intelligent in its

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<sup>143</sup> National Information Memo, Vol. 2. No. 2. 28 June, 1963. AU Papers.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>145</sup> Guidelines for Use with Political Parties,” n.d., mimeo, Women Strike for Peace Papers, Swarthmore College Peace Collection. Quoted in Swerdlow, *Women Strike for Peace*, 148.



tactics, and as free from stereotypes and sectarianism in its strategy.”<sup>146</sup> The science advisor to President Kennedy and a fierce advocate of ending atmospheric nuclear testing, Jerome Weisner, credited WSP and contemporary peace activists with being more influential on the president regarding the test ban treaty than were the federal professional arms controllers.<sup>147</sup> Several historians of HUAC have proclaimed WSP as the victor in the peace movement trials that struck a crucial blow in what Eric Bentley has called “the fall of the HUAC’s Bastille.”<sup>148</sup> More than influencing domestic politics, part of becoming aware of their political power as women was to realize that *all* women, regardless of nationality, could be a powerful political actor in the campaign for peace.

As the months passed, WSP participants began to realize that the nuclear threat to American families extended, too, to families of all nationalities. Thus, women across the globe could prove powerful allies in the fight for peace. In this phase of WSP’s existence that I call “international outreach” we find the second adaptation of maternalist rhetoric, “women as women,” in which WSP women seized upon their and foreign women’s political power. This was a two-step process in that WSPers had to first recognize their political clout before recognizing the political clout shared by women everywhere. Acting in cooperation with foreign women, particularly Vietnamese women during the Vietnam War, brought a special consciousness to WSP women. It was then that they realized that while wars were designed and fought by men, women didn’t have to sit in complacency. Instead, they could raise a unified voice against war and against militarism in general.

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<sup>146</sup> I.F. Stone to National Office of WSP, Washington, D.C., reprinted in *MEMO*, April 1970, 14. Quoted in Swerdlow, *Women Strike for Peace*, 12.

<sup>147</sup> Jerome Weisner, quoted in Andrew Hamilton, “MIT: March 4 Revisited amid Political Turmoil,” *Science* 167 (March 1970): 1476.

<sup>148</sup> Eric Bentley, *Thirty Years of Treason: Excerpts from Hearings before the House Committee on Un-American Activities, 1938-1968* (New York: Viking Press, 1971), 951.

From the first, WSP took an internationalist approach to the fight for peace. In 1961, WSPers wrote identical letters to Jacqueline Kennedy and Nina Khrushchev, asking them to use their womanly influence on their husbands for the sake of peace. In the very first bulletin produced by the movement, WSP participants were already curious about creating gender solidarity with “enemy” women. A member of the Boulder, Colorado Women For Peace wrote, “Many in our group have expressed particular interest in ways in which we may transmit these ideas to women behind the iron curtain. What methods will be employed in this respect?”<sup>149</sup> Dagmar Wilson shared their interest in gaining the cooperation and mutual respect of women in the Soviet bloc, and soon, all received their answer. With the cooperation of the New York and Washington WSP chapters, Ruth Gage-Colby organized WSP's first international demonstration only six weeks after the first national strike. This action, organized in the typical informal manner, was a coordinated series of peace marches, rallies, visitations to public officials, and press conferences, both at home and abroad, held on January 15, 1962.<sup>150</sup> At this time, a proposal was made to change the name of the movement to Women’s International Strike for Peace, a proposal that most groups chose to ignore.

In the spring of 1965, the first women traveled overseas in the name of WSP. Lorraine Gordon of New York and Mary Clark of Los Angeles were the first American peace activists to travel to Hanoi during the Vietnam War. While in Hanoi they arranged for a meeting of U.S. and Vietnamese women, which took place in Djakarta in July. This was just the beginning for WSP women’s overseas work. By the time Jeanne Weber

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<sup>149</sup> Message from Boulder, Colorado WFP. “Women’s Peace Movement Bulletin;” Vol. No. 1. WHS Papers.

<sup>150</sup> Swerdlow, *Women Strike for Peace*, 192.

wrote her history of the WSP in 1970, “WSP women had been to “the Hague, Helsinki, Stockholm, Budapest, Frankfurt, Paris, Montreal, London, Athens, Jakarta, Tokyo, Hanoi, and many other places to establish contact with women who share our concerns.”<sup>151</sup> WSP’s contact with Vietnamese women, however, was arguably the most important of these international liaisons because these women on both sides of the Vietnam War in fact were on the same side: against a war that conscripted their sons into the military. Eleanor Garst recalls how “[t]he first contact with ordinary Americans and Vietnamese was...an event which caused uneasiness in the State Department” but WSP women who traveled to Vietnam were undeterred. They felt that they were there for two reasons: firstly, to end the horrific treatment of women and children in Vietnam by American soldiers and, secondly, to end the war itself.

In February of 1967, WSP women took part in a Washington Lobby that sought to “confront” both Congress and the Pentagon. The *MEMO Special to the Steering Committee and Contacts* explained that the action “be designated a ‘confrontation,’” in which the “[f]ocus would be that the Pentagon has usurped the determining of foreign policy; that Congress must reestablish its responsibility for war and peace.”<sup>152</sup> The demonstrators, the *MEMO* urges, should carry signs with slogans like “No Taxes for Burning Children, “No Appropriations for Burning Villages,” “Stop bombing North and South -- Save the Children,” and “Don’t Draft Our Sons to Kill Children.”<sup>153</sup> Further, the *MEMO*’s editors assured WSPers that “[f]ull use will be made of the important mass-

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<sup>151</sup> “You’ve Come A Long Way!” by Jeanne Weber, 18 , in Memo Commemorative Issue, April 1970. AU Papers.

<sup>152</sup> Memo Special to Steering Committees and Contacts 13 January 1967. AU Papers.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*

media material recently published on the children of Vietnam and of civilian casualties.” At the Pentagon, for instance, WSPers were instructed to march holding blown-up pictures of Vietnamese children who had been burned by napalm.<sup>154</sup>

In addition to advocating for Vietnamese children, WSP started a medical program in Vietnam to provide aid to napalm victims. In 1968, at the WSP National Conference in Winnetka, Illinois, WSP members adopted a Children’s Bill of Rights, which states as follows:

... WE DECLARE that every child, whatever his race or nationality, has the inalienable right to protection and shelter, pure air and water, nourishing food, free relationship with other children, access to the most current and relevant knowledge, and the best of medical care... WAR MUST BE ABOLISHED... WE OF WOMEN STRIKE FOR PEACE rededicate our lives and recommit our strength to the task of achieving the rights for all children. We ask women everywhere to join us, now, if we are to build a human society in time to preserve the human race.<sup>155</sup>

With their shared interest in maternal concerns, women crossed not only political, but also geographic boundaries and borders to learn that women could exercise their political clout and that it was acceptable for women, as women, to act politically without the protection of men.

Vietnam was an especially trying time in America’s history, particularly for women who had to see their sons go off to a controversial war, many of whom did not return. Barbara Bick, member of WSP, wrote an editorial in *MEMO*’s 1970 commemorative issue, explaining that the Vietnam War, and war in general, was especially provocative for women

because women have not been trained historically to believe that war is the natural outlet for their conflicts and feelings of aggression. Even the painfully

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<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>155</sup> Children’s Bill of Rights, 8, in Memo Commemorative Issue, April 1970. AU Papers.

wrong domination of our lives by men – fathers, husbands, sons – has forced us to look at war and oppose it. Because after every war, millions of women are condemned to half-lives through the loss of their men who historically gave meaning to their lives – either as mates or as sons. But the most important thing is that women bring forth life, and our overwhelming need is to conserve it. That is why the struggle for peace – for life – is ours.<sup>156</sup>

Nguyen Thi Binh, Vice-Chairwoman of South Vietnam’s Liberation Union and personal friend of many WSPers, asserted that women had the power to end war: “...I am convinced that our strength—the strength of the mothers who have given life—will have the better of the evil of death, and Peace will win.”<sup>157</sup> These “mothers who have given life,” regardless of their nationality, helped to raise consciousness about the dangers not only of war, but also of conscription.

From 1965 until the end of the Vietnam War, WSP used Mother’s Day, graduation week, and Christmas as occasions to speak out, demonstrate, and vote against the atrocities of the war, as well as the conscription of their sons. One popular slogan displayed in international protests was “Not Our Sons, Not Your Sons, Not Their Sons,” which reflected the gender solidarity that WSPers felt with Vietnamese women, whose sons were also being slaughtered by the thousands. WSP women believed that their sons were not killers, and lamented the fact that they were being forced to participate in brutality towards the Vietnamese. A December 1969 *Washington WSPer* newsletter had this to say about the massacre at My Lai:

VIETNAM – A BLOODBATH OF OUR MAKING / For those of us whose nights and days have been haunted for years with visions of the hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese men, women, and children slaughtered and mutilated by U.S. firepower, the belated exposition of the massacre at Mylai [sic] is part of an

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<sup>156</sup> “Women and the Vietnam War” by Barbara Bick, 9-11, in Memo Commemorative Issue, April 1970. AU Papers.

<sup>157</sup> Reprint of Letter from Nguyen Thi Binh to WSP, 1 February 1970. Memo Commemorative Issue, April 1970. 28. AU Papers.

ongoing bloodbath. What is most painful about it to some of us is that it has revealed the depths of brutality to which the war has taken our own young men. As the mother of Sgt. Meadlo, who participated in the massacre, said: “He was a good boy and they made him a murderer...”<sup>158</sup>

In opposing the war and conscription, WSP leadership urged WSP participants to talk to their sons and other young men about their options in avoiding the draft, but cautioned against urging these men to do so. The fear was that not only would these men suffer the consequences of draft-dodging after making an uninformed decision, but also that WSPers could be accused of “momism.”<sup>159</sup> That is, WSPers would fall under attack of the still-extant anti-“momism” sentiments of the 1940s and 1950s, which blamed assertive mothers for trying to “shear” their sons of their masculinity out of jealousy for men’s freedom and greater self-worth.<sup>160</sup>

Eager to appear as concerned, but not overbearing, mothers, WSPers took a supportive, parental role towards young men who were considering draft resistance. In the maternalist tradition of women’s education of children, WSP chapters set up counseling centers across the nation to advise young men of their legal rights within the Selective Service System.<sup>161</sup> For those men who chose to resist the draft, WSPers

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<sup>158</sup> The Washington WSPer. December 1969, 1. AU Papers.

<sup>159</sup> Swerdlow, *Women Strike for Peace*, 172. The term “momism” was coined by American writer Philip Wylie in his book, *Generation of Vipers*, a popular book first published in 1942 that had gone into twenty printings by 1955. Wylie’s chapter on “Common Women” from the 1955 version provides an excellent example of the “Momism” philosophy in American Cold War culture. Also, see Molly Ladd-Taylor’s “Bad” Mothers: *The Politics of Blame in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: New York University Press, 1998) and Dana Heller’s *Family Plots: The De-Oedipalization of Popular Culture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995).

<sup>160</sup> Clinton Jessor, “Reflections on Breast Attention,” *The Journal of Sex Research* 7.1 (1971): 15.

<sup>161</sup> Swerdlow, *Women Strike for Peace*, 167: “One of the difficulties was that [certain counseling center directors] insisted that no lawyers be enlisted as draft counselors because they might exploit the draftees to build their own practices. This meant that the women who ran the center had to know the draft law, which was chaotic, subject to frequent changes due to new regulations and court decisions...[S]tudying [the law] diligently... [and] giving lawyers ‘the third degree’...did not sit well with the men.” For parents, WSP

supported them in typically maternal fashion: by providing food, clothing, and emotional support to those facing arrest by federal marshals. Men of the antiwar movement did not provide such motherly attention, and the younger women of the draft resistance movement differed very much in their role in that movement. Younger, more militant women who opposed the draft saw the young men for whom they were demonstrating and lobbying Congress as significant others, while WSPers considered these men their political “sons.”<sup>162</sup>

The Vietnam War era was accompanied by many changes in society, including the rise of the civil rights and feminist movements. These changes prompted WSP to change, to some degree, its rhetorical style to one I call “women as equals.” This rhetorical style represents a remarkable departure from the maternalist language of the early years of the WSP towards feminist, gender-independent language. Despite their differing stakes in the anti-war, anti-draft movement, WSPers and the younger, feminist generation worked together with increasing cooperation, cooperation that can be first dated to WSP’s interaction with the Jeannette Rankin brigade in the late 1960s. In so doing, WSPers became more attuned to the feminist arguments of the day and began on a path of self-actualization that brought this older generation of women into the feminist fold. For many WSP participants, once realized their lobbying power as equals in the political sphere, there was no returning to the domestic sphere.

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offered a pamphlet called “Your Draft-Age Son: A Message for Peaceful Parents” that systematically exposed the unfairness of conscriptions, including conscription’s bias against young men of certain racial and socioeconomic backgrounds, and interpreted the options a potential draftee faced in evading the draft. (See, “Your Draft-Age Son: A Message for Peaceful Parents.” Special Collections & University Archives, W.E.B. Du Bois Library. Valley Peace Center Records, 1967-1973, Box 18:331.)

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*, 161.

Jeannette Rankin was a former suffragist as well as a leader in the first pacifist-feminist generation, and the first woman to ever be elected to Congress. In 1967, heading her second-wave-feminist group, the Jeannette Rankin Brigade (JRB), Rankin was quoted, “It is with the same conscience and devotion [that I showed in the fight for suffrage] which compels me now at age 86 to oppose with all my heart and strength, this illegal and terrible war in Vietnam.”<sup>163</sup> Following this statement, Washington WSPers were asked to demonstrate with the JRB in Washington that December.<sup>164</sup> The January 1968 *Washington WSPer* invited women of the D.C. group to join “[w]omen from all parts of the country” and “from all parts of the political and social spectrum” to witness a delegation of fifty JRB women “read the demands before the assembled women” on the top of the capitol steps. The demands, the bulletin continues, “state that the first order of business for Congress must be to resolve to end the war in Vietnam by immediately arranging for the withdrawal of American troops and turning Congressional attention to the crisis in America.”<sup>165</sup>

Younger JRB women, however, were tired of petitioning Congress, the typical *modus operandi* for women’s groups. They felt that it was a futile effort to solicit the help of an entity that was helpless to end a war for which it had never even voted. WSPers knew that they could not stop the war themselves but, as Swerdlow explains, “[w]hat they were trying to build was a mass women’s movement that would have a ripple effect in local communities, turning women away from cooperation with the war machine and

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<sup>163</sup> Quoted in *The Washington WSPer*. December 1967. AU Papers.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>165</sup> *The Washington WSPer*. January 1968. AU Papers.



toward political action in support of antiwar candidates in the 1968 elections.”<sup>166</sup> Without understanding WSP’s intent, radical feminists often wrote off WSP actions as being too timid and “backward” in gender consciousness. Eleanor Garst expressed frustration that “[t]he tactics of the original WSPers were deliberately geared to the feminine myth: Men in power responded traditionally to this appeal -- with a pat on the head and no real change.”<sup>167</sup> Garst points out that, though WSP women had been too cautious for too long, they soon realized their political potential: “In the intense efforts to end the arms race and then the war in Vietnam, thousands of women experienced an unexpected side-effect: they liberated themselves. To achieve their political goals they found had to throw off the protective cocoon in which most had always lived. They had to take stands, and actions, with or without the approval of husbands, lovers, sons, and colleagues.”<sup>168</sup> This self-actualization of their gender-independent political power had considerable implications for the ways in which WSPers chose to carry out their political campaigns, as well as their campaigns themselves.

From 1964 until the end of the Vietnam War, WSPers became increasingly confrontational in their tactics. In addition to letter-writing, consumer boycotts, and advertisements in local and national newspapers, WSP participants conducted intensified and more frequent lobbying, picketing, and marching campaigns. Some actions were even more drastic, including sit-ins in congressional offices, where women chained themselves to the White House gate, and stormed the White House despite fences and

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<sup>166</sup> Swerdlow, *Women Strike for Peace*, 137.

<sup>167</sup> Rough Draft Précis: “Women Strike for Peace -- The Link to Liberation” by Eleanor Garst, 3. AU Papers.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

police lines. The latter event is one that deserves especial attention because it represents well the “unladylike” turn in WSP’s tactics reminiscent of the “unladylike” bellicosity of the APRF. In mid-September of 1967, several hundred WSP women “broke through the police lines” at a demonstration at the White House, “strengthened by the conviction that they were fighting for the lives of their sons, the survival of the people of Vietnam, and the right to petition the President.”<sup>169</sup> The *New York Times* reported in an article entitled “Women Fight near White House” “police turned back women antiwar demonstrators...when they crashed through a wooden fence keeping them across the street from the White House.” The article continued, “At the height of the fracas about ten women were seen lying on the ground, and one had blood on her head.”<sup>170</sup> This confrontation contradicted the “concerned mother” image that WSP leaders had crafted for the last six years. This departure from the maternalist rhetoric and tactics of the early years of the movement was deliberate because WSP members wanted to incorporate women more broadly in the movement, whether or not they were mothers. Thus, the constructed public portrayal of the WSP became less focused on motherhood and more focused on womanhood.

Garst wrote in her WSP history that “[a]t the height of the Vietnam protests, many younger WSPs and some older ones were becoming more militant – but their tactics were always those of non violent resistance... They discovered that ‘police brutality’ was not

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<sup>169</sup> For Immediate Release,” Washington, D.C., WSP, 22 September 1967, WSP Papers. Quoted in Swerdlow, *Women Strike for Peace*, 180.

<sup>170</sup> *New York Times*, 21 September 1967. Quoted in Swerdlow, *Women Strike for Peace* 179. It is also worth noting that, while they were breaking the law, these WSP women were given preferential treatment, to an extent. Swerdlow writes, “The two young male resisters, who had spoken at the rally and who had joined the women in the march, were treated much more severely than were the WSP women. They were dragged on the pavement, beaten, and arrested. This only confirmed the women in their belief that middle-aged, middle-class mothers could get away with more militancy than young men and that WSP had to do even more to aid the resistance” (179).

just an extremist phrase...”<sup>171</sup> It can be said that WSPers who had earlier been wary of civil disobedience were moved to such a drastic change in tactics because they realized, at the height of the Vietnam War, that the government was indifferent to more conventional, non-confrontational forms of opposition. However, WSPers had long been studying the use of civil disobedience by other groups, including the Quakers and civil rights activists.<sup>172</sup> At the Second National Conference of Women Strike for Peace-Women for Peace, held June 6-9, 1963 in Champaign-Urbana, Illinois, one workshop was dedicated to “the relevance of a force like non-violence to WSP.”<sup>173</sup> The workshop participants, according to the conference minutes, “have acted non-violently in the past in our own intuitive feminine way and ... this kind of action would bear further study and exploration.”<sup>174</sup> Whereas WSP women had been non-confrontational before in order to protect their image of femininity, now WSPers seized upon non-violence as an effective,

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<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>172</sup> WSP was particularly influenced by one Quaker group, the American Friends Service Committee, a group founded in 1917 to oppose violence of all kinds, especially war. For more on the group, see Chuck Fager, ed., *Quaker Service at the Crossroads: American Friends, The American Friends Service Committee, and Peace and Revolution* (Falls Church, Va.: Kimo Press, 1988). WSP’s official stance on the civil rights movement was as follows: “Adopted by consensus: / Statement on Civil Rights / As women dedicated to bringing about a world where every child may live and grown in peace and dignity, we identify ourselves with the heroic effort of Negro citizens to achieve this goal. / As a movement working for an atmosphere of peaceful cooperation among nations, we support the movement for integration in our own nation. Our goals are inseparable; the movement for civil rights is part of the movement for a world of peace, freedom and justice to which we have dedicated ourselves” (National Information Memo, Vol. 2. No. 2. 28 June, 1963. AU Papers.) However, some believed that fighting for civil rights would distract from the fight for peace. Dagmar Wilson was among those believers: “WSP is in a constant state of conflict over Civil Rights vs. Peace. The civil rights movement has a tremendous emotional appeal—as it naturally would do to the kind of women who are motivated by a sense of indignation at the disregard for human rights which the arms race represents. It has been very tempting at times to drop everything and work for civil rights, except for the fact that we all realize that civil rights without nuclear disarmament won’t do any of us any good. We realize that the two movements are different aspects of the same problem and that eventually the two will meet and merge” (Dagmar Wilson to Barbara Deming, Washington D.C., 15 October 1963, WSP Papers 1, 3. Quoted in Swerdlow, *Women Strike for Peace*, 92). Despite Wilson’s preference that WSP remain a movement dedicated solely to peace advocacy, Washington WSP worked officially with Washington Congress of Racial Equality (CORE).

<sup>173</sup> National Information Memo, Vol. 2. No. 2. 28 June, 1963, 7. AU Papers.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*

gender-neutral political strategy used by both sexes. Study materials suggested by the workshop leaders included Mahatma Gandhi's *An Autobiography*, Martin Luther King's *Stride Toward Freedom* and "Letter from the Birmingham City Jail," and an American Friends Service Committee pamphlet entitled "Speak Truth to Power – A Quaker Search for an Alternative to Violence."

While the Quakers and civil rights activists influenced the ways in which WSPers conveyed their message, second wave feminists of the 1960s and 1970s influenced WSP's political aims. The November-December 1968 issue of the *Washington WSPer* reported that at the national WSP conference that year, "WOMANPOWER WAS THE CRY."<sup>175</sup> At the conference "many young delegates insisted WSP become relevant" to the current societal concerns, including feminism. These young women, at least in Washington, D.C., proved impatient with the slow pace with which older WSPers came around to feminism, and hence, formed their own "Young WSP Group" in 1969.<sup>176</sup> Though there is no documentation of the actual impetus behind the formation of this younger group, one can surmise that the maternalist tactics of the older WSP members was too "old-fashioned" for this new wave of WSP membership.

Older WSPers did indeed come around to the idea, partly owing to the fact that they themselves were experiencing liberation of sorts.<sup>177</sup> After the Vietnam War was

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<sup>175</sup> The Washington WSPer. November-December 1968, 1. AU Papers.

<sup>176</sup> "NEW, YOUNG WSP GROUP A'FORMIN / Don't interpret this as a manifestation of the generation gap, but we're forming a n[e]w WSP group of younger women, with young children who have baby-sitting problems, who will meet during the day..." (The Washington WSPer. October 1969. 2. AU Papers.)

<sup>177</sup> Bella Abzug once lamented the fact that WSP women didn't understand the historical significance of their feminism and the legacy in which it followed. She recalls, "Every time I tried to show the historical perspective of the women's rights movement and the going from abolition to suffrage to peace, as well as to labor, they thought I was irrelevant. They never understood their historic role as women, and the link historically of the peace issue with the feminist issue" (Quoted in Swerdlow, *Women Strike for Peace*, 152).

over, many WSPers had grown so comfortable with life outside of the domestic sphere that they never “returned to the kitchen.” Many, in fact became the “reentry” women of the 1970s who pursued advanced degrees in academia or training in the professional world. This liberation had unforeseen consequences. Swerdlow explains that “of dubious value was one of the doctrines of the second wave that the women of WSP took most seriously, the denigration of volunteerism as female exploitation.”<sup>178</sup> Obviously, given that WSP was a movement built upon the work of volunteers and not on a fixed structure, professional organizers, and a paid staff, this affected its ability to function visibly and effectively in the political arena. WSP continued to operate, however crippled the movement was by 1970’s women’s aversion to volunteerism, and contributed to the advancement of American women with a considerable feat of politics unduplicated by any other peace or women’s group of the 1960s: successfully promoting the candidacy of one of their own leaders, Bella Abzug.<sup>179</sup>

Abzug’s election – an upset victory – to the Nineteenth Congressional District in the Democratic Primary of June 1970 unsettled professional politicians, though Abzug herself was quite comfortable with her new career. Directly after her election in 1970 she acknowledged the importance of WSP in her election: “The fact that I am legislative chairman of WSP contributed greatly to my credibility with the voters, and made them

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In her study of WSPers’ knowledge of the suffrage movement, Swerdlow noted that “for the most part, the women who had been close to the Communist party had even less historical memory of women’s rights and suffrage movements than did those with Quaker, Unitarian, liberal or anarchist background. For people on the Left in the 1930s and 1940s, the pressing issues of the Depression and the rise of fascism led to a focus on genderless working-class unity and international collective security, pushing the history of the fight for women’s rights into the background. Communists and their sympathizers believed that female equality was an essential aspect of social justice but that the fight for socialism was the only appropriate fight for female emancipation, and that insistence on women’s rights was a politically correct vestige of nineteenth-century bourgeois feminism” (238).

<sup>178</sup> Swerdlow, *Women Strike for Peace*, 158.

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*, 153.

believe in my leadership. My role in WSP was an important aspect of my campaign and was prominently featured in all my materials.... WSP played a major role in my victory.”<sup>180</sup> With this verbal nod in appreciation, Abzug turned her attention to making the changes in Congress that WSP had long pursued, including two acts that she introduced on her first day in office: a “Resolution to Set the Date” and a bill to abolish the Senate Internal Security Subcommittee.

The former bill called for the withdrawal of American forces from Indochina by July 4, 1971, a bill that prompted the advent of withdrawing troops and the process of “Vietnamization,” though a ceasefire was not declared until 1975. Many of the co-sponsors of the bill had never opposed the war before Abzug approached them, a fact that demonstrates her capacity for political influence.<sup>181</sup> The latter bill sought to abolish the committee that had succeeded HUAC, that organization that had earlier hounded the WSP, in the investigation of subversive influences in America. In addition to these two bills, on her first day in Congress, Abzug cosponsored a bill to make public the records of certain government agencies, cosponsored a bill to repeal the Emergency Detention Act, and jointly sponsored all bills and resolutions supporting withdrawal from Vietnam. Later, in 1975, Abzug exhibited her feminist tendencies when she, acting in the Subcommittee on Government Information and Individual Rights, held hearings on the National Women Conference Bill, a bill that “would create a series of state and regional

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<sup>180</sup> *MEMO*, Summer 1980, 8. Quoted in Swerdlow, 158.

<sup>181</sup> Swerdlow, *Women Strike for Peace*, 155.

and national conferences to evaluate the status of American women and the barriers to full equality, and establish an agenda for change.”<sup>182</sup>

Like Abzug herself, WSP as a movement became more vocal and more gender-independent in the 1970s. Eager to better solidify women’s role in politics, WSP contributed greatly to the founding in July 1971 of the national Women’s Political Caucus (NWPC) in Washington, D.C. This nonpartisan organization strove to strengthen women’s role in both the Democratic and Republican parties and cooperation with this organization gave WSP transformative insight into the ways in which women could work within the party system to pursue policy changes.<sup>183</sup> In January 1972, six months before the arrests at the Democratic National Committee headquarters at the Watergate Office complex, WSP and Abzug demanded the President Richard Nixon’s impeachment not for political corruption, but instead for his failure to heed a congressional mandate to end the war. That same year, WSP for the first time officially backed a presidential candidate. George McGovern became the candidate of choice for WSPers nationwide because he had pledged to end the Vietnam War. Despite this electoral choice, the New York political action committee cautioned WSPers not to be shortsighted:

WSP must continue its independent role in maintaining pressure on all candidates for better and stronger positions on the war, for amnesty, for welfare rights, for racial and social justice—and for the inclusion of women in the highest policy-making positions in the political arena and government.<sup>184</sup>

WSP, then, in its brush with feminism and female empowerment, became solidly a part of the political realm, organizing and influencing male politicians in a way that bespoke

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<sup>182</sup> WSP Legislative Alert. 24 September 1975. AU Papers.

<sup>183</sup> Swerdlow, *Women Strike for Peace*, 156.

<sup>184</sup> “Women Strike for Peace Urges Support for McGovern for President,” New York WSP, 1972, WSP Papers. Quoted in *Ibid.*

true political actors rather than the image politically naïve “concerned mothers” they created for themselves.

## CONCLUSION

The American Public Relations Forum and Women Strike for Peace were different in many ways, including geography, size, duration, structure, and political inclination. What also differed was the trajectory on which these two groups settled. APRF women and other women on the Republican Right, for the most part, were absorbed into men’s groups. The final APRF bulletin was published in the fall of 1960, at which time one can speculate that the members of the group were attracted to national groups like the John Birch Society (JBS) and the Goldwater campaign. These two organizations, reminiscent of the way that women’s grassroots activism in the Progressive Era was co-opted by the New Deal welfare state, co-opted the anti-Communist crusade of the women of the APRF and like-minded groups.<sup>185</sup> Not only did “Birchers” and Goldwater campaigners adopted both the anti-communist and anti-statist stances, as well as the grassroots organizing tactics, of postwar groups like the APRF. Benjamin Epstein and Arnold Forster reveal that the JBS organized first on the local level before joining a larger, national network, a pattern established during the postwar period of women’s grassroots activism. Epstein writes, “The Birchers... have burrowed their way into the fabric and the grass roots of American life and it is already clear that it will take a major effort by responsible forces to root them out.”<sup>186</sup>

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<sup>185</sup> Michelle Nickerson, “Domestic Threats,” 248.

<sup>186</sup> Benjamin Epstein and Arnold Forster, *The Radical Right: Report on the John Birch Society and Its Allies* (New York: Random House, 1967), 88.



Although the authors' political bias against the group is obvious, this does not detract from their observation that the organizational structure of the group, a structure built upon the grassroots networking of the JBS's female-led predecessors, made the group a potent political force. The Goldwater campaign in 1964 operated within this same grassroots network and utilized APRF recruitment and mobilizing techniques, including letter-writing, speech-making, and rigorous "study" of political issues. The importance of "studying" political issues manifested in a proliferation of conservative bookstores in Southern California. Nickerson notes that "[t]he shops were mostly staffed by female volunteers and, in some cases, grew directly out of women's organizations."<sup>187</sup> Thus, in helping to lay the groundwork for the New Right movement and structuring the way in which this movement operated, women's grassroots conservatism of the postwar era played a vital role in the rise of the Republican Party. The way in which the women of the APRF drew members to its cause and networked with other groups, as well as with male policy-makers, opened up channels of political opportunity for both women and men to assert a new resurgence of conservatism in the latter half of the twentieth century. APRF women and their contemporaries, then, can be said to be the true "roots" of the New Right grassroots movement.

While APRF women joined hierarchical, male-led campaigns, WSP women remained averse to centralization and, in keeping with their feminist aims, they remained independent from male leadership. Although the group's objectives changed, as Swerdlow explains, "'structurelessness' came to be the movement's hallmark and its

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<sup>187</sup> Michelle Nickerson, "Domestic Threats," 275.

most important legacy to the feminist groups that followed.”<sup>188</sup> After the draft law expired in the fall of 1971, WSP remained active in an increasingly gender-independent style, pressing the issue of amnesty for war resisters. WSP women asked that “...every prisoner, military or civilian, jailed for trying to stop the war in Vietnam should be freed immediately. In addition everyone who had fled the country to avoid fighting in the war should be free to return home without punishment.”<sup>189</sup> Nor had WSPers abandoned their antinuclear agenda in the midst of fighting first the war, and then the draft. In the same year that WSP women pushed an amnesty agenda, they attacked Nixon for his nuclear policies. In response to the Atomic Energy Commission’s plan to conduct a nuclear test in the Pacific, WSP’s annual conference dubbed President Nixon “the mad bomber who lives in the White House.”<sup>190</sup>

At the same time that WSPers were fighting against nuclear testing and for the amnesty of war resisters, many joined the ranks of “reentry” women who, in the 1970s, returned to the workforce or pursued higher education. As Swerdlow points out, this meant that WSP as a volunteer-driven movement suffered the loss of manpower.<sup>191</sup> WSP, like other peace groups of the time, also lost momentum because the war was over and most people seemed to accept nuclear testing as fact of life, so the motivation of members was diminished. What had not diminished, however, was WSPers’ dedication to acting as women in the political sphere. While it seemed that conservative women fell easily in

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<sup>188</sup> Swerdlow, *Women Strike for Peace*, 19.

<sup>189</sup> “Proposed Statement on Amnesty Submitted by Charity Hirsch,” East Bay (Calif.) Women for Peace, Washington, D.C., n.d., WSP Papers. Quoted in *Ibid.*, 183.

<sup>190</sup> *Chicago Sun-Times*, October 11, 1971. Quoted in Rhodri Jeffreys-Jones, *Changing Differences: Women and the Shaping of American Foreign Policy, 1917-1994* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1994), 147.

<sup>191</sup> Swerdlow, 158.

line with Phyllis Schlafly's opposition to gender equality, WSPers and other Leftist women embraced Betty Friedan's National Organization for Women. Indeed, Betty Friedan, Robin Morgan, Bernardine Dohm, and other feminists were sympathetic to the WSP agenda and the feminist movement seemed to have a reciprocal effect on WSPers.<sup>192</sup> WSP women, since the end of the Vietnam War, have remained separate from hierarchical, male-led groups, but have increased cooperation with them. Whether with the Democratic Party, SANE, or environmentalist groups, WSP women have continued their role in the political sphere as independent, empowered women.

Both the APRF and WSP began and were driven by maternalist politics, motivated by differing campaigns, but always expressing their concerns with maternalist rhetoric. That is, until the women's liberation movement created a divisive fissure in the formerly universal use of maternalism by women's groups across the political spectrum. With the advent of the argument for gender equality, Leftist women, for the most part, embraced this agenda and remained in separatist groups. That is not to say, however, that acting separately precluded motherly concerns and motherly language. Liberal groups like Code Pink, WSP's descendent, that continue to utilize maternalist language in an effort to mobilize women and mothers as a political force. Groups like Code Pink continue to oppose war and fight for measures to benefit the health and sanctity of children, such as healthcare and improved education.

While Leftist groups remained gender-independent, Rightist women joined mixed-sex groups like the Moral Majority that espoused family virtues and the sanctity of the family. Even today, in an examination of Rightist agendas, we see the family as an American stronghold of morality and patriotism in platforms that advocate the right to

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<sup>192</sup> Jeffreys-Jones, *Changing Differences*, 170.

life and radio and TV censorship, and oppose gay marriage. This is not to say that maternalist rhetoric is dead, for it is still clearly evident in such political groups as Mothers Against Drunk Driving. Rather, maternalist rhetoric has given way to a “family values” rhetoric shared by men and women conservatives. Thus, women on both the Right and the Left, regardless of whether they are in a mixed- or single-sex group, have continued to use domestic concerns – concerns for the family as a locus for moral, patriotic education and for children’s future – both as political campaigns and mobilizing strategies. That maternalist rhetoric remains as useful today to both ends of the political spectrum as it did decades ago reflects its true versatility.

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