

**The Closet and the Cul de Sac: Sex, Politics, and Suburbanization in Postwar  
California**

By

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To Catherine

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## **List of Abbreviations**

American Psychiatric Association (APA)  
American Public Health Association (APHA)  
California Congress of Parents and Teachers (CCPT)  
Catholic Family Movement (CFM)  
Central City Community Action Program (CCAP)  
Council on Religion and the Homosexual (CRH)  
Family Life Education Association (FLEA)  
Federal Housing Administration (FHA)  
Gay Teachers and Social Workers' Coalition (GTSWC)  
Housing and Home Finance Agency (HHFA)  
League of Civil Education (LCE)  
National Association of Evangelicals (NAE)  
National Congress of Parents and Teachers (NCPT)  
Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (P-FLAG)  
Parent Teacher Association (PTA)  
San Francisco Redevelopment Agency (SFRA)  
Santa Clara County Citizens' Action Committee Opposed to Family Life Education  
(SCCCACOFLE)  
Sex Information and Education Council of the United States (SIECUS)  
Society for Individual Rights (SIR)  
Veterans' Administration (VA)

## **Introduction**

### **The Closet and the Culture Wars**

When California considered banning homosexual public school teachers in 1978, the initiative's principal champion and opponent toured the state together. In a series of debates that year, State Senator John Briggs from Orange County and San Francisco City Supervisor Harvey Milk faced off over the merits of Proposition 6, a ballot measure calling for the dismissal of openly gay instructors. As they spoke to packed audiences in California's high schools and community centers, both men understood that the political projects they represented had meaningfully come of age. For Briggs, the initiative's sponsor, the 1978 campaign appeared as a key moment in which a decades' worth of church-based organizing over "family values" might finally translate into electoral power. For Milk, California's first openly gay politician, the fight stood as an important second "coming out experience," in which gay men and lesbians might at long last shape the political world around them. Although Proposition 6 would eventually fail at the polls, the measure's sponsor proved prophetic in at least one regard: "Homosexuality," Briggs declared at a debate in a San Francisco suburb, "is the hottest social issue since Reconstruction." Foreshadowing the showdowns of the next decades, his words would resonate in subsequent national battles over AIDS, gays in the military, and same-sex marriage. The first statewide referendum on homosexuality in American history,

California's vote on sex and schools represented one of the opening shots in the "culture wars" of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.<sup>1</sup>

Although the Briggs-Milk debates showcased the rise of two competing social movements, the Religious Right and Gay Liberation, the contest over Proposition 6 also revealed deep ambivalence among the vast majority of Californians on the issue of homosexuality. When the "culture wars" over gay rights broke out across the United States in the late 1970s, most middle-class straight voters staked out a centrist position that elevated the question of a person's "right to privacy" over all others. This discursive middle ground effectively allowed them to both reject a more discriminatory state and to deny queer people the ability to speak openly about their sexuality. In the lead-up to Proposition 6, pollster Mervyn Field asserted that "The broad middle group, 50 to 60 percent, is in conflict. It's the kind of issue where there is some instinctive feeling, but the feeling is that it's highly discriminatory and not the way to do it."<sup>2</sup> Just a year earlier, a national poll indicated that while most Americans believed that employers should not discriminate against gay men and lesbians, they nevertheless overwhelmingly opposed hiring them as schoolteachers or members of the clergy.<sup>3</sup> Even in the face of Proposition 6's dismal failure, many voters who resisted firing gay teachers equivocated on the broader issue of homosexuality. In an interview with a local newspaper, a suburban priest near San Francisco, for example, justified his opposition to the measure

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<sup>1</sup> "Prop 6 Vote to Mark Milestone in Homosexual Controversy," *Orange County Register*, 27 October 1978; Teacher Role Crux of Debate," *Anaheim Bulletin*, 3 November 1978; Randy Shilts, *The Mayor of Castro Street: The Life and Times of Harvey Milk* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1982), 229-31.

<sup>2</sup> "Briggs' Wild Rumors About Gay Teachers in the City," *San Francisco Examiner*, 3 October 1978.

<sup>3</sup> "Gallup Poll on Homosexuality," *San Francisco Examiner*, 24 July 1977.

because “It doesn’t do away with homosexuality. [But] it sets up a dangerous form of policing individual lives in a frightening way.”<sup>4</sup>

The widespread adoption of an ambivalent ideology centered on a “right to privacy” in the 1970s grew out of the construction of a political, cultural, and legal “closet” for queer sexuality in the two decades after World War II. In this period, people publicly involved in straight relationships enjoyed the fullest benefits of American citizenship, while those who engaged in various forms of queer sex risked social isolation, political marginalization, and legal prosecution. Although gay men and lesbians would not refer to the “closet” until the 1960s, their use of the term retroactively framed the repression of the previous two decades.<sup>5</sup> For the first time in United States history, policies at all level of governance in the 1940s and 1950s made sexuality a key matter of public concern.<sup>6</sup> The closet’s significance, however, transcended its legal components. It created a social code of conduct on the ground that allowed for the open celebration of marital heterosexuality but which also required the suppression of sexuality that violated social norms. A spatial metaphor, the closet made everyone’s private life a matter of public concern and compelled the constant concealment of queer behaviors. In 1978, the concept cast a long shadow over the debates over Proposition 6. It produced the question of whether or not openly gay teachers should work in California’s classrooms; it defined the neighborhoods that elected Briggs and Milk to

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<sup>4</sup> “Peninsula Clergy Oppose Propositions 6, 7,” *San Mateo Times*, 28 October 1978.

<sup>5</sup> George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940* (New York: Basic Books, 1994).

<sup>6</sup> Margot Canaday, *The Straight State: Sexuality and Citizenship in the Twentieth Century United States* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press: 2009). This did not mean that public officials did not police sexuality before World War II. The postwar era, however, represented a period of heightened surveillance in which federal, state, and local authorities coordinated their efforts to police deviant sexuality.

office; and it enabled moderate heterosexual voters to tolerate- but not endorse- certain private, same-sex relationships.<sup>7</sup>

This dissertation connects the history of the postwar closet to the outbreak of the culture wars over gay rights in the 1970s. It follows the elevation of “straightness” as a key concern of scientific authorities, the state, and voters at the grassroots level by analyzing the transformation of urban space and controversies over sexuality and schools. In the first two decades after World War II, normative heterosexuality evolved from an unmarked social tradition to a distinct political identity that garnered the protection of the state. In the same period, federal policies structured the suburban housing market in a manner that steadily concentrated people in different communities based on common social characteristics, including sexuality, race, and class. By the 1970s, an urban-based Gay Liberation movement in places like San Francisco faced off against a Religious Right built around networks of churches in the “family friendly” suburbs. Together, they competed for the support of the straight, suburban moderates who made up a plurality of the nation’s electorate. Concealed beneath the United States’s contentious culture wars, therefore, lay the growth of an increasingly self-aware straight public, an activist state that encouraged straight relationships and penalized queer ones, and a suburban housing market that steadily sifted people based on their sexuality.

Viewing the closet and the culture wars as continuous processes challenges some longstanding assumptions about the scope and origins of the nation’s conflicts over sex,

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<sup>7</sup> Scholars have employed the term “closet” in two different ways. First, several historians have used it to emphasize the importance of queer resistance, describing it as a strategy for evading repression. See for example Chauncey, *Gay New York*; John Howard, *Men Like That: A Southern Queer History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999). Second, other scholars have used it to emphasize straight efforts to silence gay men and lesbians. See for example, William Eskridge, Jr. *Gaylaw: Challenging the Apartheid of the Closet* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999); Canaday, *The Straight State*. I use it broadly to explain the simultaneous repression of queer relationships and promotion of straight ones.

faith, and family. Too often, journalists and scholars have begun their narratives on the subject with the sexual revolution of the 1960s, and they have framed the rise of the Religious Right primarily as a “backlash” against the Counterculture, Gay Liberation and Feminism.<sup>8</sup> Writing the history as an echo of Woodstock, however, mystifies the liberal state’s crucial role in stigmatizing deviant sexuality; obscures the privileges enjoyed by the vast majority of straight voters who never joined the Religious Right; and divorces the allegedly cultural concerns of gender and sexuality from the political and economic trends of the mid-twentieth century. More than mere “backlash,” the rise of antigay conservatism in the 1970s specifically represented a call for the recreation of the postwar closet. This social order not only repressed queer sexuality, it also granted people involved in straight relationships a distinct set of political rights and economic benefits. Without an analysis of the closet, scholars merely reinforce the belief that concerns about sexuality only surface when gay men and lesbians contest their marginalization and shift

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<sup>8</sup> William Martin, *With God On Our Side: The History of the Religious Right in America* (New York: Broadway Books, 1996); John Gallagher and Chris Bull, *Perfect Enemies: The Religious Right, Gay Liberation, and the Politics of the 1990s* (New York: Crown Books, 1996); Sara Diamond, *Not By Politics Alone: The Enduring Influence of the Religious Right* (New York: Guilford Press, 1998); Janice Irvine, *Talk About Sex: Battles Over Sex Education in the United States* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2002); Beth Bailey and David Farber, *America in the Seventies* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 2004); Thomas Frank, *What’s the Matter With Kansas? How Conservatives Won the Heart of America* (New York: Basic Books, 2004). This tendency reflects, in part, the tendency of American political historians to use the “New Right” as the most significant lens through which to understand electoral realignment since the 1960s. Not all of the books in this subfield necessarily focus on controversies over homosexuality, yet most of them attribute conflicts over “cultural issues” like gay rights or abortion primarily to organized social conservatives. See Alan Brinkley, “The Problem of American Conservatism,” *The American Historical Review*, Volume 99, Number 2, (1994); Lisa McGirr, *Suburban Warriors* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001); Michelle Nickerson, “Domestic Threats: Women, Gender, and Conservatism in Cold War Los Angeles, 1945-1966” (Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University, 2004); Donald Critchlow, *Phyllis Schlafly and Grassroots Conservatism: A Woman’s Crusade* (Princeton University Press, 2005); Daniel Williams, “Reagan’s Religious Right: The Unlikely Alliance Between Southern Evangelicals and a California Conservative,” in Cheryl Hudson and Gareth Davies, *Ronald Reagan and the 1980s: Perceptions, Policies, Legacies* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008); Bruce Schulman and Julian Zelizer, eds. *Rightward Bound: Making American Conservative in the 1970s* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008). Political scientists have also rigorously debated whether or not the United States has been experiencing a “culture war.” See for example James Davison Hunter, *Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America* (New York: Basic Books, 1991); James Davison Hunter and Alan Wolfe, *Is There a Culture War? A Dialogue on Values and American Public Life* (Washington, D.C.: Pew Research Center, 2006).

focus away from the important roles that public policies and straight voters have played in perpetuating that inequity.<sup>9</sup> Gay Liberation and the Religious Right undoubtedly represent two of the most significant social movements based around sexuality of the late twentieth century. Yet a focus on their mobilization alone conceals the roots of both groups in the postwar patterns of metropolitan development, the powerful role of the state, and the broad politics of the moderate middle. Only by investigating the sexuality of the normative center, can historians move beyond flat analyses that focus on polarization alone.

### **The Closet, Culture War, and the San Francisco Bay Area**

This project uses a local case study of the San Francisco Bay Area in order to rethink the origins of the culture wars. Scholars have frequently focused on the histories of the Religious Right and Gay Liberation, in part, due to an over-reliance on national frameworks for explaining debates over sexuality. Birds-eye views on the culture wars tend to reinforce essentialized spatial divisions between liberal coasts and the “Bible Belt,” blue states and red states, erotic cities and vanilla suburbs. Yet historians can best see the complex interplay of sexuality, class, gender, and race in debates over sexuality at the metropolitan level. Between World War II and the 1970s, major urban areas across the country encompassed a wide array of segmented communities that included middle-class gay neighborhoods and “family friendly” cul de sacs; inner city red-light districts and suburban school districts; queer bars and evangelical mega-churches. The culture

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<sup>9</sup> Of course, GLBT historians have long noted the repressive characteristics of the postwar state. Few of them, however, have focused much attention on straight privilege at the grassroots level beyond the boundaries of the Religious Right. See for example, John D’Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities*; David Johnson, *The Lavender Scare*.



wars of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries represented the political expression of those divisions as much as they reflected the legacy of postwar repression. Only by viewing them in relation to one another can scholars hope to underscore the complexity of current debates over gay rights.<sup>10</sup>

When it comes to thinking about homosexuality, the San Francisco Bay Area has loomed large in the national imagination for at least a half-century. In many writings, the name “San Francisco” alone can serve as rhetorical shorthand for sexual radicalism and political liberalism. Yet the city and larger metropolitan region have histories that both conform to and differ from national trends. In many respects, the city deserves its reputation as a “gay capital.” As early as the mid- nineteenth century, San Francisco developed an illicit vice economy serving the sailors, immigrants, and fortune-seekers that passed through the Golden Gate. With the end of Prohibition in the 1930s, entrepreneurs in the city opened queer nightclubs and bars, catering to local residents and visitors from across the country. These subcultures expanded considerably with the outbreak of World War II, which marked the first time that the American military screened its members for homosexual conduct. As the United States waged three consecutive wars in East Asia, San Francisco accumulated a steady stream of personnel discharged by the armed forces’ policy. By the early 1950s, the city boasted a sizable number of queer residents, numerous gay and lesbian businesses, and a group of activists intent upon protecting the rights of homosexuals known as “homophiles.” In the mid-

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<sup>10</sup> In a 2003 article Thomas Sugrue cogently argues that political historians can best see the interplay between federal programs and voter ideology at the local level. See Sugrue, “All Politics is Local: The Persistence of Localism in Twentieth-Century America,” in Meg Jacobs, William Novak, and Julian Zelizer, eds. *The Democratic Experiment: New Directions in American Political History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003).

1970s voters in the city's predominantly gay and middle-class Castro District elected Harvey Milk to office.<sup>11</sup>

If San Francisco has had an exceptionally long queer history, patterns in the development of its gay and lesbian neighborhoods and businesses converged with national trends in the mid-twentieth century. Suburbanization reshaped metropolitan areas across the country, helping to concentrate a variety of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender spaces in older urban centers. By the 1970s, cities as diverse as Chicago; Jackson, Mississippi; Los Angeles; Flint, Michigan; Miami; Atlanta; Buffalo, New York; and Philadelphia all boasted a mixture of gay neighborhoods, red-light districts, queer bars, and politically active GLBT voters. Similar to San Francisco, these cities underwent massive demographic upheaval in the postwar era, as public policies and private developers encouraged the outward migration of middle-class, white, straight families. At the same time, large numbers of single residents, people of color, and queer inhabitants increasingly settled near the urban core. In cities across the country, businesses and social institutions such as bars and churches served different groups of people in a metropolis increasingly segmented by sexuality, race, and class. These spaces and communities grew within local contexts and varied in size from place to place, yet they also evolved in relation to one another in the same period. If San Francisco has

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<sup>11</sup> For other histories of San Francisco see: Shilts, *The Mayor of Castro Street*; Susan Styker and Jim Van Buskirk, *Gay by the Bay: A History of Queer Communities in the San Francisco Bay Area* (San Francisco, CA: Chronicle Books, 1996); Gayle Rubin, "The Miracle Mile: South of Market and Gay Male Leather in San Francisco 1962-1996," in *Reclaiming San Francisco: History Politics, and Culture* (San Francisco, CA: Chronicle Books, 1998); Nan Alamilla Boyd, *Wide Open Town: A Queer History to 1965* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003); Martin Meeker, *Contacts Desired: Gay and Lesbian Communications and Community, 1940s-1970s* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2006); Josh Sides, *Erotic City: Sexual Revolutions and the Making of Modern San Francisco* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

garnered national attention for the visibility of its queer communities, its development has also mirrored processes that reshaped metropolitan areas across the country.<sup>12</sup>

Even more significantly, a regional view that includes the wider Bay Area brings into focus an even more diverse array of sexual communities. Scholarship on the postwar history of sexuality has almost always focused on groups of people deemed deviant by other parts of society, chronicling the rise of queer bars, gay neighborhoods, and red light districts in relative isolation from the rest of society. Yet adherence to normative standards has also played a crucial role in the development of real estate, commerce, and social communities. The second largest metropolis in the nation's most populous state, the Bay Area has included remarkable demographic, developmental, and political diversity beyond its urban core. Stretching from the affluent redwood communities of Marin County to the white-collar sprawl of the South Bay, the region encompasses both older industrial centers like Oakland and newer boom cities such as San Jose. It includes major universities in Berkeley and Palo Alto and inner-ring working-class communities in places like San Leandro and South San Francisco. Like cities across the country, racial segregation defined the region's postwar real estate market, and in this period it contained

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<sup>12</sup> For studies of GLBT communities in other cities see Elizabeth Kennedy Lapovsky and Madeline Davis, *Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold: A Study of a Lesbian Community* (New York: Routledge, 1993); Brett Beemyn, *Creating a Place for Ourselves: Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Community Histories* (New York: Routledge, 1997); Marc Stein, *City of Sisterly and Brotherly Loves: Lesbian and Gay Philadelphia, 1945-1972* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000); Lillian Faderman, *Gay L.A. A History of Sexual Outlaws, Power Politics and Lipstick Lesbians* (New York: Basic Books, 2006); Timothy Stewart-Winter, *Raids, Rights, and Rainbow Coalitions: Sexuality and Race in Chicago Politics, 1950-2000*, doctoral dissertation, University of Chicago, 2009. Historian John Howard has convincingly argued that scholars have dedicated too much attention to GLBT communities in major cities like San Francisco. His book not only describes a similar process of queer commercial spaces and social networks in postwar Jackson, Mississippi, but also analyzes the ways in which men in rural spaces cruised for sex and forged relationships with one another. See John Howard, *Men Like That*.

predominantly white suburbs, urban African-American neighborhoods, Latino barrios, and Asian American enclaves across the metropolis.<sup>13</sup>

Within the wider Bay Area, few places experienced a more dramatic postwar transformation than the “bedroom communities” of San Mateo and Santa Clara counties. Their story stands as the crucial counterpart to the proliferation of gay businesses, bars, and neighborhoods in San Francisco’s older neighborhoods in the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s.<sup>14</sup> Similar to suburbs across the country, these areas hosted an enormous influx of new homeowners in the postwar period, almost all of whom were white, middle-class and married. Whereas San Francisco represented one of the few cities in California to lose residents in the postwar era, San Mateo County saw its population more than double between 1950 and 1970. In addition, Santa Clara County in the same period witnessed a boom of over 350 percent.<sup>15</sup> In this long period of growth, the two adjacent suburban areas exhibited levels of racial and sexual exclusivity that contrasted sharply with trends in the central city. According to the 1970 census, between 80 and 90 percent of San Mateo and Santa Clara counties areas were white and over 80 percent of their respective populations were either married or a child under the age of 18.<sup>16</sup> The sexual differences

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<sup>13</sup> Robert Self, *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003); Stephen Pitti, *The Devil in Silicon Valley: Northern California, Race, and Mexican Americans* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003); Margaret Pugh O’Mara, *Cities of Knowledge: Cold War Science and the Search for the Next Silicon Valley* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005); Charlotte Brooks, *Alien Neighbors, Foreign Friends: Asian Americans, Housing, and the Transformation of Urban California* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009).

<sup>14</sup> Although I am underscoring the importance of straight communities in the suburbs, this does not mean that queer people have never lived there. The suburbs have always included both open and closeted gay men and women, and in the 1970s the South Bay suburbs included several gay bars, bookstores, and nightclubs. Despite the region’s population growth, however, the suburbs have always had significantly fewer queer spaces than San Francisco.

<sup>15</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, *1970 Census*, San Mateo County Statistics, available at [www.socialexplorer.com](http://www.socialexplorer.com).

<sup>16</sup> The 1970 census listed 91.5 percent of San Mateo as white, 4.5 percent as black, and 3.7 percent as “some other race.” In a separate category, it labeled 88.7 percent of the county’s population “not of Spanish origin.” The 1970 census labeled 94.6 percent of the population in Santa Clara County as white, 1.7 percent as black, and 3.7 percent as “some other race.” 83 percent were “not of Spanish origin.”

between center and periphery were even more sharply defined at the census tract level. In 1960, for example, parts of Santa Clara County were populated almost entirely by married couples and children under the age of eighteen.<sup>17</sup> By contrast, several census tracts near San Francisco's waterfront in that same year consisted almost entirely of single adults over the age of eighteen.<sup>18</sup>

These processes mirrored trends in metropolitan areas across the country, but suburban Santa Clara County differed in one important respect. From the 1940s through the 1970s, the South Bay represented one of the country's largest recipients of Cold War-related military spending. According to one estimate, the U.S. Defense Department awarded 40 percent of its research and development budget to firms in California, and private companies in Santa Clara County secured more of those funds than any other part of the state after Los Angeles and San Diego.<sup>19</sup> These connections to the Cold War industrial complex and the relative affluence of the region gave the area demographic characteristics common to many other "Sunbelt" metropolises such as Orange County, California; Colorado Springs, Colorado; and Cobb County, Georgia.<sup>20</sup> Yet the area's

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Statistics about marital status and children were derived by adding the number of married people to the number of people listed under the age of 18. This assumes that no one under the age of 18 was married. In a total population of 556,234 people, 266,446 San Mateo residents were listed as married and 179,182 were listed as under the age of 18. In Santa Clara County, the census listed 478,350 married people and 390,483 children under the age of 18. The county's total population was 1,064,714. California legalized "no-fault divorce" in 1969 so these statistics may reflect a slight change in marital patterns evident earlier in the decade. U.S. Census Bureau, 1970 Census, San Mateo County Statistics, available at [www.socialexplorer.com](http://www.socialexplorer.com). Ibid. Santa Clara County Statistics.

<sup>17</sup> U.S. Bureau of the Census, *1960 Census of Population and Housing, San Jose Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area*, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1961). At least 19 census tracts near San Jose had ratios of married couples or children under the age of eighteen over 90 percent.

<sup>18</sup> U.S. Bureau of the Census, *1960 Census of Population and Housing, San Francisco-Oakland Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area*, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1961).

<sup>19</sup> James Clayton, "Defense Spending: Key to California's Growth" *Western Political Quarterly*, Volume 15, Number 2, 1962, 286.

<sup>20</sup> For more on the politics and development of Sunbelt cities see Bruce Schulman, *From Cotton Belt to Sunbelt: Federal Policy, Economic Development and the Transformation of the South, 1938-1980* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); McGirr, *Suburban Warriors*; O'Mara, *Cities of Knowledge*.

relative affluence also set it apart from other suburbs. Military-related spending made satellite manufacturer Lockheed-Martin the largest employer in the South Bay in 1960, and it ensured that the suburbs near San Jose primarily attracted residents who worked in high skill, white-collar professions. In 1956, the *Wall Street Journal* marveled that residents of the Peninsula community of Palo Alto were approximately four times as likely to have graduated from college than other Americans.<sup>21</sup> In 1970, the Census Bureau estimated that approximately one out of four residents in Santa Clara County worked as an engineer, doctor or other skilled professional.<sup>22</sup>

Over the long postwar period, these urban and suburban communities unfolded alongside one another, producing parallel, interrelated forms of sexual politics. At the same time that San Francisco witnessed an upsurge in gay bars and the birth of homophile activism in the 1950s, suburban residents joined church groups, homeowners' associations, and school PTAs. In the 1960s, the city's leadership waged a losing campaign to retain and attract white, straight families back to the urban core, and queer voters mobilized to decriminalized homosexuality. During the 1970s, many religious conservatives in Santa Clara joined organizations like the Moral Majority, and suburban moderates justified their tolerance for gay relationships by speaking of an individual "right to privacy." By the time of the Briggs Initiative, the Bay Area's outer limits encompassed a wide array of sexual communities, including gay suburbanites, middle-class PTAs, evangelical churches, and homeless queer teens in the inner city. Rather than an inherently liberal place, therefore, the region is best understood as a diverse social

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<sup>21</sup> "Hometown U.S.A.: High IQ, High Income Help Palo Alto, Calif. Grow Fast, Live Relaxed," *Wall Street Journal*, 10 August 1956.

<sup>22</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, *1970 Census, Santa Clara County*, available at [www.socialexplorer.com](http://www.socialexplorer.com).

landscape and an ideal case study for understanding the history behind the closet and the culture wars.

### **Science, Parenthood, and the State**

Although controversies over sex did not originate in the mid-twentieth century, the three decades after World War II represented a crucial turning point. In earlier, reformers used government resources to combat what they saw as deviant sexuality, yet three important factors distinguished the postwar period from previous attempts. First, beginning in the 1930s and 1940s American voters and policymakers increasingly looked to the field of psychology to solve social problems. Psychologists' belief that sexuality constituted an unconscious learned behavior transformed queer relationships from a form of vice particular to an individual's moral character to a type of "disorder" capable of afflicting anyone in the general population. Second, World War II sparked a national upheaval in family life, and facilitated the growth of a diverse set of urban queer subcultures. At the same time that psychological experts argued that environmental factors played a key role in determining a person's sexuality, cities across the country developed highly visible collections of gay bars, brothels, and pornographic book stores to serve military personnel. And third, the expansion of government power during the New Deal spurred an unprecedented level of coordination between local, state, and national officials when it came to policing the boundaries of normative sexuality. As straight voters in places like San Francisco expressed alarm at what they deemed as an upsurge in queer sex during the war, policymakers incorporated psychologists' theories about human development into their approaches to policing, education, urban planning,

and housing. Together, these trends made the postwar period an era of particularly heightened sexual anxiety and repression.

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, controversies over sex largely took place at the local level, and they consisted primarily as campaigns to suppress vice rather than efforts to treat mental disorders. In the three decades after the Civil War, “preventative societies” in cities like New York and San Francisco attempted to close brothels, saloons, and dance halls that middle-class reformers believed spread venereal disease and crime. Crusaders occasionally argued that schools offered a potential tool to address vice, and the Progressive Era witnessed the first attempts to institute classroom-based education on sex, marriage, and childrearing. Prostitution and pornography primarily occupied the minds of these reformers, but after the turn of the century homosexuality also raised concerns. During the 1920s and 1930s, authorities in New York sought to suppress gay life by closing theaters that produced plays with homosexual themes and by prohibiting bars from serving queer patrons. Before the New Deal, federal officials played a relatively small role in the policing of sex, but in the few cases in which they intervened, they helped supplement local attempts at suppression. Most notably, in 1874 Anthony Comstock and his allies convinced Congress to prohibit the mailing of literature which contained sexual content or which advocating the use of birth control. And, similarly, in 1910 the federal government sought to make prostitution suppression easier by banning the smuggling of women across the state lines.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> For more on nineteenth and early twentieth century conflicts over sex see Kathy Peiss, *Cheap Amusements: Working-Class Women and Leisure in Turn of the Century New York* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1986); John D’Emilio and Estelle Friedman, *Intimate Matters: A History of Sexuality in America* (New York: Harper and Row, 1988); Timothy Gilfoyle, *City of Eros: New York City, Prostitution, and the Commercialization of Sex, 1790-1920* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1992); Chauncey, *Gay New York*; Kristin Luker, “Sex, Social Hygiene, and the State: The Double Edged Sword of Social Reform,” *Theory and Society*, Volume 27, Number 5, (1998); Jeffrey Moran, *Teaching Sex: The Shaping of*



During the postwar period, by contrast, officials at all levels of governance worked in great coordination to police sexual conduct and homosexuality emerged as a more specific locus of concern. This shift began with the rise of psychology as a dominant intellectual paradigm during the 1930s and 1940s. Although many nineteenth and early twentieth century scientific authorities had viewed same-sex desire as an illness or social disorder, experts had largely confined their debates on the subject to academic and professional audiences. This isolation slowly eroded as professional psychologists in the 1930s and 1940s began arguing that Freudian theories about the human subconscious offered potential tools for solving social problems. Experts in this period established heterosexual marriage as a healthy norm, and they delineated a growing list of sexual disorders which required professional intervention, including pedophilia, homosexuality, and female promiscuity. They argued that the attainment of either healthy straight relationships or aberrant queer ones depended primarily on behavioral patterns that people learned unconsciously early in life. A person's ability to adequately mature, marry, and begin a new family depended largely on his or her exposure to adult role models, and many parenting experts argued that even incidental contact with a queer person risked derailing an individual's mental development. The ascendance of psychology as an intellectual paradigm, therefore, not only reinforced older hierarchies

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*Adolescence in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000); Nayan Shah, *Contagious Divides: Epidemics and Race in San Francisco's Chinatown* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2001); Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz, *Rereading Sex: Battles Over Sexual Knowledge and Suppression in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 2002). Although I reserve the term for the struggles over sex that have played a prominent role in national American politics since the 1970s, several scholars have read the term "culture wars" back into conflicts in the late nineteenth century. Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz, for example, uses the phrase to describe Anthony Comstock's crusades in the 1870s and 1880s: "What had first begun as a New York struggle became one of our first national culture wars, a battle between those committed to sexual knowledge and those determined to suppress it." Horowitz, *Rereading Sex*, 15. For an analysis of the federal government's approach to homosexuality see Canaday, *The Straight State*.

between “good” and “bad” sex, it also suggested for the first time that almost anyone could develop deep-seated queer tendencies and that only broad efforts to protect children’s environments could adequately stave off a mental health crisis.<sup>24</sup>

The spread of these scientific discourses overlapped with the massive upheaval of World War II. Even as professional experts increasingly promoted heterosexual marriage as a sign of mental health, the national mobilization sparked an upsurge in visible non-marital sex. As conscripts, recruits, and industrial workers streamed into major urban centers such as San Francisco, illicit sexual behavior such as prostitution and heterosexual sex outside of marriage flourished. Even more significantly, the war marked a crucial watershed in the growth of lesbian and gay communities in cities across the country. As several scholars have argued, the gender-segregated environments of the armed forces and industrial workplaces offered many Americans the first opportunity to act on same-sex desires, allowing historian John D’Emilio to call the war “something of a national coming out experience.”<sup>25</sup> By the end of the war, gay and lesbian urban subcultures with bars, bookstores, social groups, and cruising areas had emerged in cities around the country. In places like San Francisco, the conflict magnified pre-existing communities, increasing the number of businesses that catered to queer patrons and cementing the city’s reputation as a travel destination for illicit sex.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> For more on the history of psychology and sexuality see Estelle Friedman, “Uncontrolled Desires: The Response to the Sexual Psychopath,” *Journal of American History*, Volume 74, Number 1, 1987; Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1988); Ellen Herman, *The Romance of Psychology: American Political Culture in Age of Experts, 1940-1970* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1995); Jennifer Terry, *An American Obsession: Science, Medicine, and Homosexuality in a Modern Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).

<sup>25</sup> John D’Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of a Homosexual Minority in the United States, 1940-1970* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 20.

<sup>26</sup> D’Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities*; Allan Bérubé, *Coming Out Under Fire: The History of Gay Men and Women During World War II* (New York: Free Press, 1990); Lisa Meier, *Creating G.I. Jane: Sexuality and Power in the Women’s Army Corps During World War II* (New York: Columbia University

No trend, however, demarcated the postwar period from earlier eras more than the dramatic expansion of state power. As urban queer subcultures grew more visible, straight voters, particularly parents and church groups, pushed policymakers to take action to promote marriage and normative sexuality. Psychological approaches that treated queer behaviors as a mental disorders expanded, rather than constricted, the disciplinary actions of the state. Instead of treating homosexuality or prostitution as forms of vice, authorities treated them as public health problems, and they used multiple policy tools to repress queer relationships and to promote straight ones. In each of these cases, direct suppression subjected all citizens to formal surveillance. Government efforts to contain queer threats made every American's private life a matter of public concern. At the onset of the Cold War, federal officials believed that homosexuals constituted security risks and they fired them in large numbers. The investigations that supported these campaigns put all employees' under suspicion and left them vulnerable to rumors and innuendo. In the same period, state officials in places like California raised the criminal penalties for oral and anal sex and conducted mass firings of gay and lesbian public school teachers. And local authorities in cities such as San Francisco aggressively policed public spaces, revoking the licenses of bars that catered to homosexuals and arresting men and women who transgressed gender norms.<sup>27</sup>

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Press, 1996). Although there is largely a consensus that World War II represented a crucial watershed in GLBT history, several historians have argued that scholars should devote more attention to the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. For examples of scholars who begin their narratives before World War II see Chauncey, *Gay New York*; Boyd, *Wide Open Town*; Canaday, *The Straight State*.

<sup>27</sup> D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities*; George Chauncey, "The Postwar Sex Crime Panic," in *True Stories from the American Past*, ed. William Graebner. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1993); Boyd, *Wide Open Town*; David Johnson, *The Lavender Scare: The Cold War Persecution of Gay Men and Lesbians in the Federal Government* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004); Karen Graves, *And They Were Wonderful Teachers: Florida's Purge of Gay and Lesbian Teachers* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2009).

These explicitly repressive measures accompanied the dramatic expansion of educational efforts about the importance of straight relationships. After World War II, psychologists' theories about human sexual development circulated broadly among public officials and parents at the grassroots. Although scholars have aptly characterized the postwar period as one of the most repressive eras in American history, the liberal expansion of state power did not create silence about sex. Instead, the mobilization of citizens at the grassroots level nurtured sex education in its broadest sense, as scientific ideas about straight relationships circulated widely in the nation's homes, schools, and churches. These campaigns included explanations about heterosexual reproduction and authoritative advice about straight relationships. Reformers worked with government officials to establish research institutes on parenting and marriage, to host conferences on straight family, to train teachers about sex education, and to disseminate articles about sex and childrearing to the wider public. State officials in California encouraged parents to talk to their children about the importance of marriage, and many school and religious groups formal curricula on straight family life to young people.<sup>28</sup>

These attitudes about queer sexuality shaped federal housing policies and private residential development, effectively stretching the closet across the postwar metropolis. In the quarter century after World War II, government insured mortgage programs gave preferential treatment to married couples, and, as a result, pulled middle-class, white, straight families out to new suburbs and pushed queer inhabitants into the inner city.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Most of the secondary literature on GLBT history has focused on the more explicit forms of repression such as the purge of the federal civil service employees. Nevertheless, sex education represented the crucial counterpart to those efforts. For a history of sex education that includes the postwar period see Moran, *Teaching Sex*.

<sup>29</sup> For similar analysis of suburbanization and race see Kenneth Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985); David Freund, *Colored*

The same logic that propelled sex education campaigns for California's parents and students and compelled the repression of queer people also strengthened straight people's position in the postwar housing market. Federal authorities viewed married couples as reliable consumers and good neighbors, and therefore encouraged banks to offer them mortgages at lower rates of interest. Officials simultaneously warned lenders that people living together outside of marriage represented financial risks, and they specifically denied veterans accused of homosexuality the benefits associated with the 1944 G.I. Bill of Rights.<sup>30</sup> Along the metropolitan fringe, private developers and city planners, eager to profit off the unfolding Baby Boom, built entire communities specifically for new parents and their children. Combined with discriminatory federal lending policies, these efforts created a segmented housing market that steadily concentrated straight couples in the new suburbs and, inadvertently, contained large numbers of queer people in older cities.

Over the course of the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s, the coalescence of straight privilege and these sexual-spatial divisions in the postwar metropolis set the foundation for the "culture wars" of the late twentieth century. The pooling of people with common sexual identities fostered the creation of new communities built around a diverse array of urban and suburban homes, schools, churches, bars, and neighborhoods. This sorting process differed from the rigidity of racial segregation, since residents capable of concealing deviant sexual behaviors could choose where they lived in relative freedom. Straight families never entirely left the city, and queer people have always lived in the suburbs. In the long postwar period, however, commercial sites and social organizations catering to people based on their sexuality and marital status accumulated in different

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*Property: State Policy and White Racial Politics in Suburban America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).

<sup>30</sup> Canaday, *The Straight State*, 138-41.

parts of the postwar metropolis. By the 1970s, these spaces served as crucibles for the development of shared attitudes on sex and family life and for different political ideologies.

Rather than eternal prohibitions or mere offshoots of the sexual revolution of the 1960s, therefore, the culture wars of the late twentieth century rippled out from massive transformations in American parenting, politics, and metropolitan space after World War II. Government repression in the postwar period may have subjected all citizens to official surveillance, but straight people benefited materially and socially from the crackdown. Exclusionary policies gave Americans who adhered to sexual norms, advantages in education, employment, and housing. They also benefited from the fact that official sources, including scientific authorities, educators, and religious leaders, specifically sanctioned their relationships as healthy and mature. And, just as significantly, the repression of the postwar period created separate standards for official discussions of sexuality. The imposition of the closet, of course, never actually eradicated queer behaviors and relationships. Instead, it merely compelled the people who engaged in them to commit to a public silence about their allegedly private lives. Access to material goods, social relationships, and the political arena depended on the concealment of any form of sexuality that deviated from heterosexual norms. In place for over thirty years, this social order made secrecy and privacy political issues and laid the foundation for battles over gay rights in the late twentieth century.

## **Sex and Politics**

Connecting the postwar closet to the culture wars of the late twentieth century demands the integration of some of the best insights of the recent “metropolitan history” with those of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender studies. In the past two decades, a number of scholars have transformed the study of race and postwar politics by exploring the interactions of the state with voters at the grassroots level. Most notably, historians Thomas Sugrue and Robert Self have thoroughly discredited the idea that white “backlash” against racial integration erupted suddenly amidst the urban riots and Black Power protests of the late 1960s. Instead, they have conclusively demonstrated in studies of Detroit and Oakland that racial segregation represented one of the central promises of the New Deal, and that opposition to civil rights in the urban North and West unfolded with the Great Migration of African Americans in the 1940s.<sup>31</sup> Their work has astutely drawn attention to the ways in which the liberal state preserved white privilege and has provoked a re-thinking of some of the most important political events of the long postwar era, including the origins of the urban crisis, the rise of Nixon’s “Silent Majority,” and the collapse of the New Deal Order.<sup>32</sup> Yet most of this scholarship hardly mentions the issue of sexuality. Incorporating the subject into a local study of the state and voters at

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<sup>31</sup> Thomas Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996); Self, *American Babylon*. See also Kenneth Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the Postwar United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985); David Freund, *Colored Property: State Policy and White Racial Politics in Suburban America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).

<sup>32</sup> For historians who have specifically built on Sugrue’s key insights see Eric Avila, *Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight: Fear and Fantasy in Suburban Los Angeles* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003); Elizabeth Cohen, *A Consumer’s Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 2003); Kevin Kruse, *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005); Matthew Lassiter, *The Silent Majority: Suburban Politics in the Sunbelt South* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007); Scott Kurashige, *The Shifting Grounds of Race: Black and Japanese Americans in the Making of Multiethnic Los Angeles* (Princeton University Press, 2008); Andrew Highsmith, “Demolition Means Progress: Race, Class, and the Deconstruction of the American Dream in Flint, Michigan,” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 2009).

the grassroots can strengthen historical analyses of the rise of the Religious Right, Gay Liberation, and battles over sex education.

At the same time, scholars of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender history have persuasively tied the rise of modern queer communities to the dislocations produced by industrial capitalism. Most significantly, historian John D’Emilio argued in 1982 that the nineteenth century creation of a market economy in the United States divorced wage labor from household production, and thereby, for the first time, allowed large numbers of people to adopt homosexuality as a distinct social identity. In subsequent decades, D’Emilio contends, groups of gay men and lesbians found one another in the bars and neighborhoods of booming cities, and, with the massive upheaval of World War II, growing queer communities coalesced in urban areas across the country.<sup>33</sup> Subsequent scholars have elaborated on this framework, exploring the ways in which modern cities, consumption patterns, and transportation networks have facilitated the creation of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender communities.<sup>34</sup> While work in this subfield has decisively ensured that queer life in the past no longer lies “hidden from history,” it has largely left the politics of normative heterosexuality unexplained and “hidden in plain sight.”<sup>35</sup> Without an adequate analysis of straight identities and communities, scholars cannot fully explain ongoing American hostility to queer sexuality, and they risk reinforcing the idea that normative heterosexuality constitutes an eternal and immutable tradition.

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<sup>33</sup> John D’Emilio, “Capitalism and Gay Identity,” in *Making Trouble: Essays on Gay History, Politics, and the University* (London: Routledge, 1992).

<sup>34</sup> See for example, Chauncey, *Gay New York*; John Howard, *Men Like That*; Stein, *City of Sisterly and Brotherly Loves*, Boyd, *Wide Open Town*; Johnson, *The Lavender Scare*.

<sup>35</sup> For an example of an early project designed to render gay and lesbian history “visible” see George Chauncey, Martin Duberman, and Martha Vicinus, eds. *Hidden from History: Reclaiming the Gay and Lesbian Past* (New York: New American Library, 1989). One partial exception to this trend is Jonathan Ned Katz, *The Invention of Heterosexuality* (New York: Penguin, 1995).



In the 1940s, straightness emerged as one of the central preoccupations of the state, and historians have only just begun to untangle the complex interconnections of postwar public policies, sexuality, and voters at the grassroots level.<sup>36</sup> In her 2009 book, *The Straight State*, historian Margot Canaday cogently argues that over the course of the twentieth century, national welfare, military, and immigration bureaucracies increasingly made normative heterosexuality a prerequisite for access to the benefits of American citizenship.<sup>37</sup> Beginning with the New Deal, federal policies similarly helped shape two of the most important internal migrations in the history of the United States: the influx of queer migrants to older cities and the outward migration of married couples to the postwar suburbs.<sup>38</sup> National approaches to housing and education encouraged the creation of new straight communities and promoted heterosexual marriage as an important social norm. Moreover, in the postwar period straightness concerned authorities at all levels of government: at the local and state levels, administrators launched public health campaigns, urban redevelopment initiatives, and police sweeps in attempts to enforce heterosexual norms.

From the mid 1940s through the 1960s these policies garnered support from large portions of the citizenry, enabled the creation of new social communities built around normative sexuality, and mobilized voters on behalf of straight family life. If World War II represented a crucial watershed in the growth of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender communities across the country, it also stood as a key transitional moment for straight Americans. During the conflict, middle-class parents in California forged a new

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<sup>36</sup> One notable exception is Josh Sides, *Erotic City*. Sides, however, focuses almost exclusively on groups who deviate from sexual norms, such as gay residents or pornographers and he only analyzes dynamics within San Francisco, and pays little attention to the suburbs.

<sup>37</sup> Canaday, *The Straight State*.

<sup>38</sup> For a similar formulation see Self, *American Babylon*, 3.

relationship with the state, demanding that authorities repress the increasingly visible groups of queer people in major cities and promote heterosexual marriage in public schools. Over the course of the 1950s and 1960s, suburban homes, schools, and churches represented key counterparts to urban gay bars and bookstores, bringing communities of like-minded individuals together. In the long postwar period, many of these groups served as the most ardent supporters of classroom-based sex education. Although almost all suburban residents agreed that heterosexual marriage represented the only socially acceptable place for sex, they disagreed over whether schools or churches could best supplement lessons taught in the home. In the twenty years before the battles over classroom-based sex education in California attracted national attention in the late 1960s, suburban parents debated the issue's merits in their PTAs, religious groups, and homeowners' associations.<sup>39</sup>

Examining controversies over homosexuality and sex education in the homes, schools, churches, and neighborhoods of postwar America, therefore, reveals longstanding concerns about the importance of straight marriage and hostility to queer relationships. It draws out the pre-history of social movements like the Religious Right, and it helps explain how the period between World War II and the late 1960s can be remembered both as one of the most "liberal" periods in American history regarding distribution of income and the expansion of the welfare state and one of the most "conservative" eras in terms of its gender and sexual politics. One of the principal

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<sup>39</sup> Most histories of the controversies over sex education begin their accounts in the late 1960s. See for example Janice Irvine, *Talk About Sex: The Battles Over Sex Education in the United States* (Berkeley, CA: University of California, 2002). Sociologist Kristin Luker convincingly argues that the Progressive Era offered the first significant "sexual revolution" in modern American history, but she then skips over the postwar period to focus on the battles over sex education that unfolded in the late 1960s. Luker, *When Sex Goes to School: Warring View on Sex Education Since the Sixties* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2006).

consequences of the postwar expansion of the activist state was the dramatic mobilization of parents at the grassroots level in defense of marriage, childrearing, and heteronormative sex. Rather than a mysterious “backlash” that broke out in the 1970s in response to Gay Liberation and Feminism, the rise of the Religious Right represented a renewed call for state affirmation of straight family life and the repression of queer people that first emerged in the 1940s.

Examining these conflicts at the local level, furthermore, can better help scholars expand their understandings of postwar America beyond the recent interest in the rise of the New Right. One of the crucial offshoots of the “grassroots turn” in political history has involved an intense investigation of specifically conservative activists at the local level. In the last two decades, scholars dedicated to explaining the origins of the “Reagan Revolution” in 1980 have dedicated their attention to chronicling the histories of right-wing organizations in the postwar era, including Young Americans for Freedom, the Young Republicans, and the John Birch Society. These works have significantly expanded scholarly understandings of conservative and Republican Party politics in the 1960s and 1970s, but they have tended to view their subjects as representative of the entire straight electorate. Intent upon explaining the “rise of the Right,” they have frequently mistaken the fringe with the center, using devoted conservative activists to explain larger transformations in the electoral arena.<sup>40</sup>

Most middle-class, straight Americans, however, have always felt more comfortable identifying themselves as consumers, homeowners, taxpayers and parents

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<sup>40</sup> For examples see Rebecca Klatch, *Women of the New Right* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1987); Mary Brennan, *Turning Right in the 1960s: The Conservative Capture of the GOP* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1995); John Andrew, *The Other Side of the Sixties: Young Americans for Freedom and the Rise of Conservative Politics*; (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1997); McGirr, *Suburban Warriors*. Nickerson, “Domestic Threats.”

than they have with strict ideological labels.<sup>41</sup> When it comes to topics like sex education or gay rights, for example, the views of Parent Teacher Associations have always carried more influence than those of the John Birch Society. Although “straightness” has served an enduring form of privilege for many Americans, some of the key culture wars of the last half-century have frequently pitted heterosexual moderates and liberals against conservatives. The Religious Right has represented one important form of straight politics, but the privileges of normative heterosexuality have stretched across the political spectrum to include voters who believed in “family values” but disliked the overt persecution of homosexuality. Exploring controversies over sex education and gay rights in local contexts reveals that these struggles have frequently pitted different groups of straight voters against one another over how to best nurture strong marriages and normative heterosexual relationships among young people. Rather than disputes with clear “progressive” or “traditional” points of view, they have frequently represented circumscribed debates in which an endorsement of straightness was the only acceptable public position held by all participants.

Since the 1960s, struggles over sex education and gay rights in the Bay Area suburbs have repeatedly forced the majority of straight residents to stake out a “middle-ground” between what they view as the “excesses” of the sexual revolution and the “repression” of the Religious Right. In his study of the school integration crises of the late 1960s, historian Matthew Lassiter has argued that most middle-class whites adopted a political discourse built around “moderation” that staked out a rhetorical center between the egalitarian agenda of the civil rights movement and the explicit racism of massive

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<sup>41</sup> Matthew Lassiter similarly argues that partisan labels have often mattered less in middle-class suburban politics than populist identifications seemingly devoid of hard political ideology. See Lassiter, *The Silent Majority*, 7.

resistance. To achieve this goal, they frequently promoted a “color-blind” rhetoric, which accepted the principle of equal opportunity but rejected policies designed to break down racial disparities in education, housing or employment.<sup>42</sup> In debates over sex education and gay rights, middle-class “moderates” have similarly argued in favor of a “right to privacy.” By the late 1960s, large numbers of middle-class voters embraced the idea that people should be permitted to behave as they would like behind closed doors, but that discussions of sex had no place in the public sphere. A fundamentally conservative idea, this notion both allowed for limited gains in gay rights, such as antidiscrimination ordinances, but which also allowed straight voters to deflect claims by gay rights activists for equality. Similar to the “color-blind” rhetoric used by many white Americans in the second half of the twentieth century, the invocation of a person’s right to privacy allowed many straight voters to distance themselves from the overt bigotry of the Religious Right while simultaneously denying the important historic role that the state has played in repressing queer sexuality and promoting heterosexual privilege.

### **The Meaning of Straightness**

Most accounts of postwar sexual repression tend to narrowly explain it as a form of anxiety or “homophobia.” This over-reliance on fear as an explanatory framework stems in part from a strong and lengthy literature on gender, sexuality, and the Cold War. For over a generation, several historians have convincingly argued that Americans, afraid of communism and nuclear war, sought reassurance in what they saw as a return to a

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<sup>42</sup> Lassiter, *Silent Majority*, 4-5.

traditional gender and sexual order.<sup>43</sup> Although these scholars have persuasively tied the outset of the Cold War to both an upsurge in heterosexual marriages and the persecution of gay men and lesbians, the international conflict has overly dominated the literature on the postwar period. The persistence of hostility to homosexuality in the two decades since the fall of the Berlin Wall alone suggests the need for an additional framework.<sup>44</sup> But, even more significantly, relying primarily on the Cold War to explain sexual repression inadvertently offers public officials and straight voters a form of historic innocence. All forms of prejudice include anxiety and fear, but some groups have wielded social, political, and economic power for their own ends. Fear of nuclear annihilation, after all, represented a very legitimate concern in the postwar period, but some groups have borne a heavier burden in times of crisis than others.

“Straightness” represents a privileged cultural and political identity more than just a mere anxiety. Similar to other normative subjectivities such as whiteness or masculinity, straightness has evolved as part of larger modern social systems that demarcate communities, distribute wealth, and relate to the state.<sup>45</sup> American society in

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<sup>43</sup> Historian Elaine Tyler May, for example, writes: “Although strategists and foreign policy experts feared that the Soviet Union might gain the military might and territorial expansion to achieve world domination, many leaders, pundits, and observers worried that the real dangers to America were internal ones: racial strife, emancipated women, class conflict, and familial disruption. To alleviate these fears, Americans turned to the family as a bastion of safety in an insecure world.” Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound*, xviii. John D’Emilio, “The Homosexual Menace: The Politics of Sexuality in Postwar America,” in Kathy Peiss and Christina Simmons, eds. *Passion and Power in America: Sexuality in History* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989).

<sup>44</sup> The very term “culture war” emerged when conservative Presidential Candidate Patrick Buchanan specifically altered it as an alternative to the Cold War. Worried that Americans lacked a national sense of purpose in the wake of the Soviet Union’s collapse, Buchanan argued at the 1992 Republican National Convention that gay activists and feminists offered “normal” voters a set of common enemies. For a transcript of his speech see: <http://factonista.org/2008/12/20/pat-buchanans-culture-war-speech>.

<sup>45</sup> Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Race and Gender in the United States, 1880-1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995); Grace Hale, *Making Whiteness: The Culture of Segregation in the South, 1890-1940* (New York: Vintage, 1996); Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998); Avila, *Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight*; James Gilbert, *Men in the Middle: Searching for Masculinity in the 1950s* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

the second half of the twentieth century rewarded people economically, politically, and culturally for adhering to “legitimate” relationships, such as heterosexual marriage, and it has punished others for deviating from them. Like the word “queer,” “straight” acts as a self-consciously anachronistic term that draws attention to the ways in which cultures constantly distinguish between acceptable and undesirable forms of sexuality. Like all social constructs, it is best understood as a relational identity that sits on a hierarchical continuum of relationships and behaviors. More than just a synonym for “heterosexual,” the term “straight” implies adherence to a public system of conduct that privileges some forms of sex over others. As scholars such as Gayle Rubin and Michael Warner have argued, in the twentieth century Americans have largely understood sexuality as a series of hierarchical binaries that pit “good, normal, or healthy,” behaviors and relationships against “bad, normal, or unhealthy ones.” Warner and Rubin present these relationships in a grid as follows:

<u>Socially Sanctioned</u>	<u>Socially Tabooed</u>
Heterosexual	Homosexual
Married	Unmarried
Monogamous	Promiscuous
Procreative	Non-Procreative
Noncommercial	Commercial
In pairs	Alone or in Groups
In a Relationship	Casual
Same Generation	Cross Generational
In Private	In Public
No Pornography	Pornography
Bodies Only	With Manufactured Goods
Vanilla	Sadomasochistic <sup>46</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Gayle Rubin, “Thinking Sex: Notes on a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality,” in *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader*, eds. Henry Abelove, Michele Aina Barale, David Halperin (New York: Routledge, 1993); Michael Warner, *The Trouble with Normal: Sex, Politics, and the Ethics of a Queer Life* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999).

“Straight” identities primarily represent an adherence to this public categorization and ranking, not an ability to conform to all socially sanctioned behaviors and relationships. As Rubin and Warner point out, most people transgress at least one of these taboos in their lifetimes, and violating them affects people differently. Some behaviors frequently have carried lower stigmas than others. Masturbation in the confines of one’s home, for example, has never incurred the same penalties as prostitution. Other behaviors, such as teenage premarital sex, appear to many Americans as undesirable products of otherwise “normal” heterosexual urges. By contrast, they frequently view homosexuality and child molestation as products of abnormal underlying conditions that stigmatize an individual whether they act on their sexual desires or not.<sup>47</sup> What matters most, however, is that a hierarchy of some sort has almost always existed, and that it has applied to consensual relationships between adults as much as it has to forms of sexual violence such as child molestation or rape. Obedience to that order offers power and privilege, and a person’s ability to claim that authority represents the most significant concern for whether or not they ultimately can claim to be straight. If the term’s definition required complete adherence to the left side of the grid, then hardly anyone would qualify as straight at all.

This case study of the Bay Area reveals that government actions played a large role in enforcing these hierarchies. Government actions alone, however, cannot explain the construction of the postwar closet or the subsequent outbreak of the culture wars. The

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<sup>47</sup> Paraphrasing Rubin, Warner argues that, “these distinctions tend to be ranked in an ever-shifting continuum of more or less serious deviation, with a constant battle over ‘where to draw the line...’ Some kinds of deviation have become more respectable over time. Others remain beyond the pale for all but the most radical or the most libertarian.” Warner goes on to argue that certain forms of deviation such as premarital sex can bring a person public shame that fades with time. Other kinds, such as homosexuality, attach themselves to people, following them forever. Warner, *The Trouble with Normal*, 27-9.



1940s and 1950s marked a crucial period in which significant numbers of Americans first developed shared senses of straight identities. Two significant trends gave shape to the process. First, medical and psychological discussions about the nature of sexuality circulated widely in popular parenting magazines, books, and films. Although medical authorities initially sought to explain homosexual pathology in the late nineteenth century, the postwar period saw the rapid dissemination of elite scientific ideas to a wide, popular audience. This broad proliferation of texts on human sexuality stemmed, in part, to meet a demand for expert texts on parenting during the long Baby Boom of the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s. It also emerged, however, thanks to a newly activist state after the war, which provided institutional and financial support to an array of experts on straight family life and sex education.<sup>48</sup>

These texts often originated with scientific, government, and religious authorities, but they ultimately circulated at the grassroots level. Parents purchased books on sex education; they subscribed to magazines on the subject; and they recommended them to their friends and neighbors. In many cases, organized groups of voters formally came together to discuss a film or article, but even when they did not physically congregate, the circulation of these texts helped organize a larger straight public composed of the countless anonymous readers who shared mutual concerns about marriage, childrearing, and sex education. Obviously, the dissemination of this scientific material did not create uniform adherence to the ideologies promulgated by state, medical, or religious authorities. Their wide circulation, however, did ensure broad awareness of officially sanctioned sexual norms. Even when individuals deviated from those standards, they

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<sup>48</sup> For an analysis of scientific discourses about homosexuality in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries see Terry, *An American Obsession*.

increasingly did so with the knowledge that medical authorities, state officials, and most importantly, other people “like them” sought to uphold them. The wide dissemination of texts on sex in the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s always suggested the existence of an indefinite imagined (yet also real) community of parents, voters, and consumers tied together by common social characteristics.<sup>49</sup>

Second, the physical and cultural organization of space further encouraged straight Americans to view themselves as part of a larger community with shared values and sexual characteristics. These connections emerged in part thanks to the steady concentration of married couples with children in suburban neighborhoods in the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s. Although many cities in the early part of the twentieth century had individual neighborhoods inhabited by large numbers of straight families, the governmental and market actors that created the postwar suburbs helped concentrate them in new communities in an unprecedented fashion. Many of these families moved to the suburbs from different urban neighborhoods or migrated there from diverse parts of the country. Once there, they found communities of like-minded people, with common racial, class, and sexual identities in suburban neighborhoods, schools, and churches. Similar to queer bars and bookstores, these sites served as important gathering spaces for groups of straight residents.<sup>50</sup>

Furthermore, the physical landscapes of postwar suburban America acted as a unifying, cultural text akin to the articles published in parenting magazines. Their

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<sup>49</sup> For more on the idea of imagined communities see Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections On the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983); Michael Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics* (New York: Zone Books, 2002).

<sup>50</sup> For an analysis of gay gathering sites see D’Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities*; Boyd, *Wide Open Town*; Tim Retzlaff, “Cars and Bars: Assembling Gay Men in Postwar Flint, Michigan,” in *Creating a Place for Ourselves*.

common design helped bring together a middle-class straight public by signaling the almost ubiquitous presence of other people “just like them.” Rather than circulating from person to person like films or books, the growth of modern transportation networks, like the interstate highway system, facilitated the movement of suburban residents within a built environment that constantly suggested the anonymous presence of other straight voters, consumers, and parents. The fact that these spaces consisted of solid materials such as concrete, steel, and wood further helped reinforce the idea that the identities of the people who circulated among them and the communities that surrounded them rested on seemingly eternal and immutable cultural foundations. In addition to facilitating the physical meeting of actual groups of parents and residents, therefore, the spatial arrangements of the postwar suburbs, with their single-family homes, schools, churches, playgrounds, and malls, also helped suggest the existence of a larger imagined community of straight couples and their children that stretched beyond the confines of any given neighborhood.<sup>51</sup>

At the same time, some of the physical places dotting both cities and suburban areas in the postwar period also came to serve as what historian Grace Hale has termed “spatial mediations of modernity” for a generation of straight Americans.<sup>52</sup> In environments transformed by urban development, capitalist accumulation, and mass migrations, people in the last two centuries have attempted to ground seemingly fluid

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<sup>51</sup> Place has always played an important role in constituting identities. According to theorist Linda McDowell: “The organization of space, in the sense of devising, channeling, and controlling social interactions, and the constructions of places, in the sense of known and definable areas, is a key way in which groups and collectivities create a shared, particular, and distinctive identity.” Linda McDowell, “Introduction: Rethinking Place,” in *Undoing Place? A Geographical Reader*, edit. Linda McDowell (London: Arnold, 1997), 2. For a similar argument about race see Avila, *Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight*.

<sup>52</sup> Grace Hale, *Making Whiteness: The Culture of Segregation in the South, 1890-1940* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1998). Elaine Tyler May makes a similar argument in her book on the Cold War, only in the context of larger cultural anxiety. May, *Homeward Bound*.

senses of self and community in the seeming permanence of place. In order to construct a more stable world, they have attached identities to physical moorings such as bodies, buildings, regions or nations. In the postwar era, the powerful trinity of “homes, schools, and churches” came to symbolize the unity of a straight public, in the context of massive migrations to places like metro San Francisco and the reordering of sexual life under industrial capitalism. For many Americans the invocation of this triumvirate represented an almost routine reference to the alliance between citizens, the state, and religious authorities for the preservation of marriage and sound childrearing. In both professional and popular discourses about straight family life in the period, “homes, schools, and churches” referred both to the groups of parents, teachers, and clergy many Americans hoped would nurture healthy sexuality among children and a larger idealized social order that valued such cooperation. From the 1940s through the mid-1960s, “homes, schools, and churches” not only served as physical places in which straight people encountered one another, they also discursively signified the existence of a unified, imagined community of people and institutions dedicated to normative sexuality and conduct.

### **From the “Home, School, and Church” to the Triumph of the “Right to Privacy”**

This dissertation follows the intertwined stories of straightness, space, and politics, and it unfolds in two significant sections. Part 1 chronicles the creation of a social order built around the interrelationship of homes, schools, and churches in education about sexuality from the early 1940s through the mid-1960s. Chapter 1 charts the foundation of the closet, beginning with the ways psychology reshaped sex education during the New Deal, and it moves to straight voters’ reactions to an apparent rise in

queer and promiscuous heterosexual behavior during the Second World War. In the wake of the conflict, public officials criminalized most forms of sexual conduct between consenting adults outside of marriage, policed public places to keep queer people from gathering there, purged gay teachers from the public education system, and encouraged schools to teach children about the importance of heteronormative sex.

Even as scientific and governmental authorities criminalized queer sexual conduct, and mobilized citizens at the grassroots on behalf of straight family life, California underwent one of the largest home, school, and church construction campaigns of the twentieth century. Chapter 2 explores how in response to the demands of the Baby Boom and housing shortages in cities like San Francisco, government officials and private developers built entire communities specifically for white, middle-class, married couples with children. By 1960 suburbs in places such as San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties boasted almost exclusive concentrations of straight families, and Chapter 3 narrates the ways in which suburban residents forged social connections with one another in their homes, schools, and churches over the mutual investment in marriage and childrearing. The common straight identity stretched across these community groups concealed fundamental differences between voters over the institutions best able to teach children about sex: schools or churches. Chapter 3, therefore, begins and ends with two battles over classroom-based sex education in the city of San Mateo in 1951 and the city of Santa Clara in 1962. These conflicts reveal the simultaneous mobilization of secular and religious parents' groups and suggest that struggles over sex education broke out in local contexts before they trickled up to the state and national level in the late 1960s.

Metropolitan development sparked fears of obsolescence in San Francisco, and Chapter 4 returns to the city to analyze attempts by officials to expel queer residents through police surveillance and urban renewal. Even as public officials and private developers helped concentrate millions of white, middle-class, straight families in places like Santa Clara County, most of the people denied housing in the postwar era took up residence in older urban neighborhoods. Worried about an emergent “urban crisis,” city planners, police, and public health authorities in San Francisco launched simultaneous law enforcement crackdowns and queer meeting places and demolished neighborhoods with large numbers of “single” people, many of them inhabited by people of color. In their place, city officials expanded the downtown central business district and attempted to build a “family friendly” neighborhood in the sparsely populated Diamond Heights area. By the late 1960s all of these efforts failed to attract the desired demographic of residents back from the suburbs. The destruction of most of the city’s low-income residential hotels, however, created a new housing crisis and most of its queer bars relocated to neighborhoods recently denuded of middle-class, white straight families, such as the Castro District west of downtown.

These failed efforts at urban renewal mark the end of Part 1, and Part 2 charts the development of a new social order in the 1960s which preserved straight privilege, but which included a limited tolerance for gay rights. Chapter 5 chronicles the rise of San Francisco as the “unquestioned gay capital of the United States,” and it follows the dual evolution of middle-class gay neighborhoods and the red light district in the central city. Beginning in the early 1960s groups of Protestant pastors traveled to the city to help rebuild congregations stripped of their middle-class, white, straight constituents. Once

there they encountered large concentrations of gay men, lesbians, and transgender people, and they helped form the Council on Religion and the Homosexual, one of the nation's first religious gay rights organizations. With their help, and the Tenderloin's Glide Memorial Church, several middle-class gay men helped form a Community Action Program in the red light district during the War on Poverty.

Chapter 6 explores the mobilization of straight parents in San Mateo and Santa Clara counties on behalf of sex education in the late 1960. Similar to the conflicts over the issue that erupted after World War II, these debates followed the transformation of urban space as suburban teenagers flooded their local schools and homes with explicit sexual conduct and illicit drug use. With many of their children traveling in and out of San Francisco's countercultural Haight-Ashbury neighborhood, straight parents in Santa Clara and San Mateo counties clamored for local schools to offer "health programs" on the dangers of drug use and the importance of marriage. They almost immediately encountered resistance from another set of parents who believed that expanded curricula on sex education would encourage teenagers to experiment with drugs and sex and who worried that classroom discussions would potentially disrupt their families' privacy.

Chapter 7 narrates the rise of the nation's contemporary "culture wars" over sexuality by exploring the rise of conservative Christian churches in Santa Clara County, gay-friendly churches in San Francisco, and several controversies over the treatment of homosexuality in sex education classes. It concludes with an analysis of the Briggs Initiative, as moderate voters lined up against the measure, contending that it violated an individual's "right to privacy," even as they frequently signaled that they did not believe homosexuality was equal to straight marriage. This discourse on sexual privacy helped

voters stake out a middle ground between the alleged “excesses” of Gay Liberation and the strident rhetoric of the Religious Right. Although the broad acceptance of this principle allowed for gay rights advocates to make limited gains, such as the passage of employment and housing antidiscrimination ordinances, it also served the more conservative purpose of rejecting any acknowledgement of past persecution.



## **Part 1: Home, School, and Church**

### **Chapter 1**

#### **Closet: Sex, Parents, and the Liberal State**

##### **Introduction**

When it came to the nation's families after World War II, *Newsweek* editor Harold Isaacs contended that something was terribly, terribly wrong. "As everybody knows," he wrote in 1947, "some kind of education of young people for adult sex life is going on all the time." Too often, the editor lamented, adolescents learned lessons on the subject "in the street, in the barn, or behind the back fence," with "scribbles on the toilet walls" serving as their only textbooks. American society, in Isaac's view, had let down many of its children, and the consequences of this failure were growing more apparent every day. Drawing on contemporary psychology, *Newsweek's* editor concluded that scores of young people, all across the country, were putting their informal educations to poor use. Isaacs contended that scores of Americans lacked basic information about "healthy" sexuality, and he alleged that they were developing destructive social patterns built upon guilt and ignorance. Armed only with myths and half-truths learned on the street, many young couples passed on their "dissatisfaction, life-long misery, and neuroses" to the next generation, and, given this chaos, Isaacs cracked that few people should "wonder that we have sex maniacs and disoriented people." Searching for a

solution to the crisis, the editor posed only a brief, rhetorical query: “Shall Our Schools Teach Sex?”<sup>1</sup>

When Californians considered Isaac’s question in the 1940s, their answers effectively made the state’s classrooms a key part of the postwar closet. This process involved the simultaneous encouragement of straight relationships and repression of queer ones. In the years following World War II, sex education emerged as a broad political strategy to manage the social disorder of urban life. Isaac’s article appeared in *Newsweek* at a significant historical moment when large numbers of middle-class Americans were looking for solutions to what they viewed as a serious crisis in straight family life. For sex education’s proponents, the term most frequently evoked the integration of scientific teachings on human reproduction, “normal” sexual development, and heterosexual marriage into the broader curricula of public schools. This instruction, they hoped, would take the mystery out of the act and encourage students to behave responsibly. But for many of its postwar supporters, the phrase “sex education” often also carried broader connotations. Leading psychologists and educators in the 1930s and 1940s argued that, if healthy, a person’s sexuality unfolded in a series of steps that culminated in a happy marriage. At each stage, positive or negative role models nurtured the eventual outcome, encouraging unconscious patterns of socially acceptable or objectionable behavior throughout a person’s life. Lessons learned “on the street” or “behind the back fence” threatened to produce future generations incapable of forming “normal” relationships, and, therefore, sex education carried with it the implication that society should work to surround young people only with healthy exemplars. When it came to thinking about sex and schools, a student’s learning stretched well beyond the

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<sup>1</sup> Harold Isaacs, “Shall Our Schools Teach Sex?” *Newsweek*, 19 May 1947.

campus boundaries, and the kind of people doing the teaching mattered almost as much as the curricula.

For much of the twentieth century, calls for sex education have closely followed changes in urban space and middle-class concerns about youth deviance.<sup>2</sup> For many of the issue's champions, World War II marked a key watershed in which Americans appeared to lose control of their cities. The chaos of the conflict forged a general consensus among middle-class voters like Harold Issacs who contended that, when it came to sex, society had somehow failed its children. During the war, large numbers of Americans, including many people of color, migrated to urban centers; an unprecedented number of middle-class, married women entered the paid labor force; groups of unsupervised teenagers congregated in parks and on street corners; and queer people visibly gathered in public cruising areas and commercial venues like bars. Conscription and military-related industrial employment pulled men and women out of small towns across the country and concentrated them in sex-segregated environments. The turmoil of the war years created heterosexual and homosexual pick-up scenes in major cities such as San Francisco, and for many Americans experiencing same-sex desire, the pooling of men and women in separate workplaces often offered them the first opportunity to act on those urges.<sup>3</sup> In a cultural climate that stressed the significance of environmental factors to explain a person's normal or deviant sexual development, the visible transformation of urban space in the mid 1940s not only helped explain the social disorder apparent in

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<sup>2</sup> For a survey of sex education in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century United States see Jeffrey Moran, *Teaching Sex* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000).

<sup>3</sup> George Chauncey, Jr. "The Postwar Sex Crime Panic," in *True Stories from the American Past*, ed. William Graebner. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1993).

places like San Francisco, it also augured future waves of queer people, broken marriages, and juvenile delinquents.

For many middle-class parents, publicly supported “sex education” represented a crucial strategy to manage this chaos, and the state’s response to their demands embedded a closet in its postwar policies. Government-sponsored repression in the 1940s and 1950s effectively required people who engaged in queer sex to conceal their relationships and behaviors or face legal reprisals. In the years following the conflict, residents in California debated how the state could best solve the crisis, and authorities erected a piecemeal set of reforms that simultaneously proclaimed the significance of heterosexual marriage and purged, incarcerated, or restricted people who deviated from it. On one hand, California’s political leadership promoted the teaching of sex as a matter of public concern. This entailed both the mobilization of adults with children in a “parent education” campaign and the creation of classroom-based instruction for the state’s students. This last reform set off an ideological struggle between liberals and conservatives over whether or not schools would supplement or eclipse the values imparted to children in the home. The controversy, however, remained unresolved by the end of the war decade, and the failure for either side to claim a victory left control of the issue in the hands of local administrators. By 1950, classroom-based sex education reinforced the state’s outreach to parents, cropping up in individual districts wrapped in uncontroversial monikers like “family living,” “human relations,” or “life problems.”<sup>4</sup>

On the other hand, government authorities broadened the state’s ability to monitor and control people who deviated from straight norms. This expansion of government

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<sup>4</sup> Isaacs, “Shall Our Schools Teach Sex?” *Newsweek*, 19 May 1947; Howard Whitman, “Sex Education Grows Up,” *Los Angeles Times*, 24 October 1948.

power effectively eradicated distinctions between “public” and “private” behaviors, since the state simultaneously celebrated some relationships and repressed others. Their restrictions encompassed a broad collection of residents who engaged in sex outside of heterosexual marriage-- including child molesters, homosexuals, exhibitionists, voyeurs, rapists, sadists, and masochists-- and subjected all people, queer or not, to official scrutiny. In the immediate postwar era, California officials stiffened criminal penalties for a large assortment of sex crimes including acts between consenting adults; heightened police surveillance of public spaces such as bars, parks, and streets; and purged its schools of gay teachers. Born of the same logic, these restrictions paralleled and reinforced the state’s attempts at parent- and classroom-based sex education. In the postwar period, public celebrations of straight relationships and the restrictions of queer ones occupied two sides of the same cultural coin. Intent upon molding future generations of straight citizens, government authorities launched simultaneous campaigns to encourage the creation of normative sexual role models for young people and to remove deviant ones from places in which children gathered.

The struggles over sex education in the 1940s, therefore, stood at the center of this larger story about the meaning of urban space, the mobilization of voters at the grassroots level, and an activist state. Underscoring the ways in which classroom-based instruction on reproduction, marriage, and childrearing accompanied restrictions on queer behaviors in the postwar period complicates several recent historiographical trends. Most notably, previous histories of sex education in California have tended to view the topic primarily as an offshoot of Great Society liberalism and the sexual revolution of the 1960s.<sup>5</sup> For

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<sup>5</sup> See for example, Janice Irvine, *Talk About Sex: The Battles Over Sex Education in the United States* (Berkeley, CA: University of California, 2004); Kristin Luker, *When Sex Goes to School: Warring Views*

chroniclers of the “rise of the New Right,” in particular, analyses of this later period have offered a crucial window into conservative activism at the grassroots.<sup>6</sup> Focusing exclusively on the battles of the 1960s, however, obscures the crucial role the state played in promulgating information on the importance of straight sex and family life in the previous two decades. During the New Deal, for example, government authorities sought to nurture the development of straight children, and over the course of the 1940s and 1950s, school districts across California adopted their own curricula on sex and family life. Rather than a distinctive offshoot of Great Society liberalism and the sexual revolution of the 1960s, therefore, classroom-based sex education first emerged as a government concern and as an attempt to inculcate straight norms on the tail end of the New Deal.

Similarly, underscoring the turmoil of the war, straight privilege, and the role of the state in these debates can help scholars re-think the significance of the Cold War in the development of a repressive legal regime in the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s. For at least two decades, historians have argued that anxieties about communism and nuclear war in the period elevated the importance of “traditional” family arrangements and provoked a “lavender scare” in which federal officials purged gay men and lesbians from the national government.<sup>7</sup> The Cold War undoubtedly aggravated anti-queer sentiment in the United States, but its presence before the late 1940s and its endurance long after the conflict

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*on Sex Education Since the Sixties* (New York: W.W. Norton Company, 2006). Luker opens with changes in sexuality brought on at the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and then jumps to the battles over sex education in the 1960s.

<sup>6</sup> See for example, William Martin, *With God On Our Side: The Rise of the Religious Right in America* (New York: Broadway Books, 1996); Lisa McGirr, *Suburban Warriors: The Rise of the New American Right* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000).

<sup>7</sup> See for example John D’Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of a Homosexual Minority in the United States, 1949-1970* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983); Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1988).

ended suggests that historians need multiple lenses through which to understand homophobia. Discriminatory policies towards gay men and lesbians did not merely trickle down from the federal government; state and local officials responded to their own set of concerns far away from the immediacy of nuclear war or communist subversion. Urban disorder magnified queer subcultures and made them visible to straight voters. That process prompted a backlash against a wide range of people who violated sexual norms, and government authorities responded by cracking down on gay and lesbian gathering places and purging homosexuals from the state's classrooms.

This response built off scientific ideas that circulated widely during the Depression, gaining currency with prominent advocates of sex education in the New Deal. Experts' attitudes towards space and psychological development subsequently played two significant roles in the postwar politics of California and the rest of the nation. First, the broad dissemination of normative ideas about sex and childrearing through parenting groups and state-run campaigns broadened public awareness of the alleged differences between queer and straight sexuality and mobilized voters on behalf of heterosexual marriage. In the postwar period scientific ideas about the normalcy of straight relationships provided a significant social adhesive for groups of middle-class parents.

Second, psychological attitudes towards space and human development not only set the stage for a postwar crackdown on queer life in San Francisco, they also subsequent state and local policies in the 1940s and 1950s. The same worldview that reshaped state and local school curricula ultimately reverberated throughout all government regulations that potentially affected children and urban space, including

policing, zoning, housing, redevelopment, and public health. Most notably, concerns about sexuality structured the massive suburban development that unfolded during the long Baby Boom of the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s. Even as the state policies grew more repressive, they played a key role in building new straight communities at the fringes of the postwar metropolis.

### **Cities, Science, Parents and the State**

From their very inception, demands for classroom-based sex education have represented attempts to use state resources to manage the sexual transformation of urban space. In the early twentieth century middle-class parents and medical experts called for schools to play a greater role in helping young people learn about heterosexual reproduction and marriage. Their campaigns emerged in response to the seeming disorder of newly industrialized cities. In the 1910s and 1920s, many middle-class parents and scientific authorities worried that the growth of queer subcultures in red light districts and sex-related businesses such as bars, brothels, and burlesques threatened to tempt impressionable young people into immoral or criminal behaviors. Early twentieth century reformers argued that, if unregulated, disordered cities threatened to create future generations beset by venereal disease, sexual deviance, divorce, and criminality. Campaigns for classroom-based sex education, therefore, also unfolded alongside parallel drives to close or restrict sex-related businesses. Even as many middle-class parents and medical experts sought to change school curricula, police, liquor authorities, and religious leaders worked to ban alcohol, to restrict prostitution, and to imprison people who violated contemporary sexual and gender norms. Part of a larger Progressive Era project



to “clean up” the city, these early calls for sex education served as a kind of preventative measure, designed to keep young people from straying too far from socially acceptable forms of sexual conduct.<sup>8</sup>

The “parent education” movement of the 1910s and 1920s represented one of the most significant offshoots of these early reforms. Even as medical authorities argued that high school teachers should instruct young people directly about the importance of heterosexual reproduction and marriage, organizations of urban, middle-class women, particularly in the National Congress of Parents and Teachers (NCPT), sought to disseminate scientific ideas about childrearing and family life to the public at large. These reformers contended that the complexity of modern life presented new challenges to mothers and fathers, and they hoped to use professional expertise to raise children in a wholesome environment. Their “parent education” campaigns brought together citizens facing common problems in lectures, discussions, and study sessions, and presented them with scientific information about how to solve their dilemmas. Programs sponsored by the NCPT covered topics such as discipline, toilet training, and teaching children right from wrong, and they frequently included the latest scientific ideas about human sexual development.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> For a history of sex education in the twentieth century see Jeffrey Moran, *Teaching Sex: The Shaping of Adolescence in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 2000). In a study of late 19<sup>th</sup> Century San Francisco, historian Nayan Shah similarly argues that with the development of modern public health systems government and scientific officials constructed universal behavioral norms and that they explained sickness as a failure of groups to adhere to those standards. He writes: “With the formation of contrasting categories of normal and deviant, medical therapy and medical health instruction emphasized a repertoire of habits and civilizing norms to ensure health.” Nayan Shah, *Contagious Divides: Epidemics and Race in San Francisco’s Chinatown* (Berkeley, CA: University of California, 2001), 47.

<sup>9</sup> Ellen Lombard, *Parent Education Opportunities*, United States Office of Education Bulletin, Number 3, 1935; Margaret Defferios, “A History of the California Congress of Parents and Teachers,” doctoral dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1958.

These Progressive Era “parent education” campaigns represented the most significant avenue for the circulation of expert knowledge about sex at the grassroots level, and the California branch of the NCPT represented one of the most vocal supporters of these discussions. In 1925 leaders of the National Parent-Teacher Association joined with medical and scientific authorities on sex and family life to form the National Council on Parent Education. This coordinating body included government officials, professional experts, and middle-class mothers and fathers, who joined together to promote local discussions on child development across the country.<sup>10</sup> In 1926, with a private grant from the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial Fund, the California Congress of Parents and Teachers asked the state government to help administer a network of study groups and formal courses for mothers and fathers that stretched from San Diego to Sacramento. In 1932 the organization reported that almost 17,000 of its members in the Golden State took at least one class or participated in a discussion section on scientific ideas about parenting.<sup>11</sup>

Classroom-based instruction on sex and parent education first emerged as a part of the larger reforms of the Progressive Era, but the 1930s and early 1940s witnessed a pair of dramatic transformations that set the stage for the panic and state activism of the postwar period. First, the popularization of Freudian ideas about the human unconscious among psychologists in the period galvanized calls for education on “normal” sexual relationships. Although calls for sex education originated in the disorder of the early twentieth century city, the spread of psychoanalytic theories about sexuality during the

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<sup>10</sup> Edgar Schmeideler, “Adult Education for Family Life,” *Journal of Educational Sociology*, Volume 8, Number 8, April 1935, 485.

<sup>11</sup> Ellen Lombard, *Parent Education Opportunities*, United States Office of Education Bulletin, Number 3, 1935, 11.

Great Depression fundamentally altered the relationship between parents, schools, and urban space. Scientific experts in the period argued that adult role models held enormous sway over the mental development of children, and they contended that society needed to protect young people from grown-ups who might derail their healthy maturation. Rather than re-focusing medical attention on seemingly self-evidently toxic spaces such as bars or brothels, this new concern with role models dramatically multiplied the number of sites in which a young person might develop socially unacceptable attitudes towards sex. In this new view, almost any place that young people gathered could host negative role models capable of derailing a child's mental development.

Second, the New Deal greatly expanded the circulation of these psychoanalytic theories of human sexual development. In her study of federal welfare, military, and immigration programs, historian Margot Canaday argues that government authorities during the Depression approached homosexuality as something to merely contain, rather than to emphatically purge from the general citizenry.<sup>12</sup> An analysis of the New Deal's approach to schools similarly reveals a relatively passive role in the regulation of sexuality. Moreover, local officials in the United State have long held more influence over educational policy in their districts than their counterparts in Washington, D.C. Even so, federal authorities in the 1930s played an important nurturing role in the development of a "straight public." During the Depression, the U.S. Office of Education encouraged state and local administrators to disseminate the most recent psychological ideas about human sexual development to parents and students. Although the programs amounted to a mere fraction of the federal government's larger expansion in the 1930s,

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<sup>12</sup> Margot Canaday, *The Straight State: Sexuality and Citizenship in Twentieth Century America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press), 94.

New Deal officials nevertheless funded experimental child study programs, coordinated discussions on straight family life, organized conferences on sex, parent, and family life education, and broadened the larger circulation of psychoanalytic ideas about human development at the state and local level.<sup>13</sup>

Taken together, these two trends magnified the concerns about the urban environment and the role of the state already present in campaigns for sex education in the early twentieth century. The adoption of psychoanalytic theories in the period significantly elevated the importance of place in scientific understandings of a person's sexual growth. Whereas earlier experts had argued that a combination of biological and social explanations affected the development of an individual's erotic urges, the popularization of Freud's ideas in the 1930s and 1940s decisively shifted their attention to childhood experiences. Scientific authorities during the Depression argued that although people might not become aware of sexual desire until their adolescence, individuals nevertheless patterned themselves after role models they encountered early in life. In 1937, for example, child development researcher Raymond Royce Willoughby concluded in a study sponsored by the University of California that "adolescence does not initiate, but only intensifies, specific sexual behavior."<sup>14</sup> In 1939, family life expert Sidonie Matsner Gruenberg scoffed at the idea that sex was "something that suddenly

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<sup>13</sup> Jennifer Terry, *An American Obsession: Science, Medicine, and Homosexuality in Modern Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 290. Although Terry does not directly implicate the New Deal in the spread of scientific ideas about sexual deviance, she does contend that psychologists in the 1930s "contributed to an optimistic and interventionist approach to social problems. Like those responsible for the New Deal, these writers were confident that enlightened public policy could reduce if not cure many social ills." Terry, 286.

<sup>14</sup> Raymond Royce Willoughby, *Sexuality in the Second Decade* (Washington, D.C.: Society for Research in Child Development, 1937), 1.

intrudes during puberty,” and she told parents that it was a vital part of the human personality, “slowly growing and developing as body and mind matures.”<sup>15</sup>

Following Freud, psychologists in the 1930s and 1940s specifically saw an individual’s sexual development as an evolutionary process with people experiencing different natural urges depending on their age and mental maturity. In their view, this progression began with infantile bodily explorations and ended with heterosexual marriage. In their 1949 book, *These are Your Children*, developmental experts Gladys Gardner Jenkins, Helen Shacter, and William Bauer laid out this process by asserting that a child’s

ability to develop a satisfactory marriage and family life begins with his early attachment to this mother... It grows through the early years when the little child has very deep... feelings for both father and mother. It continues through the stage of close friendship with youngsters of the same sex in grade-school days, and on into attachment for members of the opposite sex during adolescence. It culminates in marriage and the starting of a new family cycle.<sup>16</sup>

Beginning literally from birth, a person’s sexual development unfolded, step by step, and concluded with straight marriage.

Although psychologists in the 1930s and 1940s saw this as a universal process, they also contended that important biological differences in the sex drives divided the experiences of boys and girls. In their accounts, males experienced aggressive sexual urges earlier in life and with greater intensity. Females, by contrast, valued intimacy and relationships but experienced weaker physical desire than adolescent or grown boys. In 1935, for instance, child development expert Winifred Richmond exclaimed that whereas

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<sup>15</sup> Sidonie Matsner Gruenberg, *We, the Parents: Our Relationship to Our Children and the World Today* (New York: Harpers and Brothers, 1939), 125.

<sup>16</sup> Gladys Gardner Jenkins, Helen Shacter, and William Bauer, *There Are Your Children: How to Develop and How to Guide Them* (Chicago: Scotts Foresman, 1949).

when it came to girls “the physical aspects of sex are not so constantly in her conscious,” boys were “going to masturbate, to take an excessive interest in obscenity of various types, and even perhaps engage in some form of experimentation with his own or opposite sex.”<sup>17</sup> Frances Bruce Strain similarly declared in 1942 that, “great variation in the sex impulse exists normally... between men and women. Women are more content with affection divorced from mating, but with men are equally eager for home and children.”<sup>18</sup>

If they frequently described human sexual development as an evolutionary process, psychologists in the 1930s and 1940s did not view it as an inevitable progression. At any moment, negative role models could derail the healthy growth of young boys or girls. In their eyes, straight marriage stood only as the most desired outcome, and they contended that due to negative environmental factors in childhood, a growing number of people faced complex sexual mental disorders, including voyeurism, homosexuality, pedophilia, sadism, masochism, and exhibitionism. In 1935, for example, psychologist Winifred Richmond asserted that “the development of sex follows the same pattern wherever we find it, but the problems arising from it will differ with the environment of the individual child.”<sup>19</sup> At a 1938 conference on “sex offenders,” psychiatrist Karl Bowman argued that a person’s “sex life passes through a number of stages, and that the final and healthy adult stage is heterosexual.” In between birth and straight maturity, he contended, all people passed through a series of phases, including a

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<sup>17</sup> Winifred Richmond, “Sex Problems in Adolescence,” *Journal in Educational Sociology*, Volume 8, Number 6, February 1935, 337.

<sup>18</sup> Frances Bruce Strain, *Sex Guidance in Family Life Education: A Handbook for the School* (New York: Macmillan, 1942), 235.

<sup>19</sup> Winifred Richmond, “Sex Problems in Adolescence,” *Journal in Educational Sociology*, Volume 8, Number 6, February 1935, 337.

“polymorphous perverse” step, in which infants took physical pleasure in touching themselves and objects around them, and an adolescent period, characterized by physical attraction to people of the same sex. Bowman alleged that young people failed to progress out of these stages primarily when environmental factors and adult role models “produce alterations of the sex life, causing arrests of development or regressions.”<sup>20</sup>

In scientific accounts from the 1930s and 1940s, sexual “deviance” or “perversion” frequently represented the inappropriate adult expression of behaviors deemed “normal” among children or adolescents. Grown-ups who displayed those behaviors not only failed to adhere to the cultural norm of sex within heterosexual marriage, they also appeared to many psychologists as people trapped in a world of perpetual adolescence. Winifred Richmond, for instance, argued that adolescent boys often demonstrated a natural erotic interest in others of the same sex. She worried, however, that the stage rendered young males vulnerable if exposed to queer role models, and she warned that “the ranks of the homosexuals are every year recruited from adolescents in the impressionable stage, who fall victim to their own half-understood desires.”<sup>21</sup> Psychiatrist Phillip Piker similarly explained “peeping” as a form of arrested development, where “somewhere in the individual’s psychosexual evolution he developed... some blocks in his thinking about and reacting to sexual matters.”<sup>22</sup> And Benjamin Karpman, Chief Psychotherapist at Washington D.C.’s St. Elizabeth’s Hospital, asserted that, “the sexual deviate has not matured sexually, having failed to

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<sup>20</sup> Karl Bowman, “Psychiatric Aspects of the Problem,” *Mental Hygiene*, January 1938, Volume 22, Number 1, 19.

<sup>21</sup> Richmond, “Sex Problems of Adolescence,” 335.

<sup>22</sup> Phillip Piker, “Sex Offenses as Seen by A Psychiatrist,” *Journal of Health and Physical Education*, November 1947, Volume 18, Number 9, 646.

integrate his sexual needs and activities in such a way as to accord with socially acceptable modes of sexual expression.”<sup>23</sup>

Since they contended that environmental explanations played a crucial role in an individual’s mental development, psychologists in the 1930s and 1940s argued that, given the right circumstances, almost anyone could fail to evolve to the final stage of heterosexual development. Since a plethora of environmental factors could derail an individual’s sexual growth, then all people potentially risked succumbing to “deviant” impulses. With children absorbing behaviors from the diverse role models around them, the possibility of future waves of mentally ill or perverse people appeared to many to constitute a serious mental health crisis. In 1939, psychiatrist Joseph Wortis warned that since “our normal sexual pattern is not simply instinctive, but rather the end result of an individual development within a certain cultural setting, it must be acknowledged that the susceptibility to perverse practices is nearly universal.”<sup>24</sup> A year later, Sidonie Matsner Gruenberg called for mental health experts to “recognize that psychiatry cannot operate in a vacuum,” and that almost every person’s “emotional needs” depended on the “social conditions” around them.<sup>25</sup>

Environmental explanations for sexual drives, therefore, turned significant attention to parents and teachers, the two categories of grown-ups who spent the most time with children. Scientific experts from the period argued that only by closely monitoring the interactions these adults had with young people, and the possible effect those relationships could have on immature minds, could society hope to ensure the

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<sup>23</sup> Chauncey, *Postwar Sex Crime Panic*, 167.

<sup>24</sup> Joseph Wortis, “Sex Taboos, Sex Offenders and the Law,” *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, Volume 9, 1939, 562.

<sup>25</sup> Sidonie Matsner Gruenberg, “Parent Education,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Volume 212, 1940, 83.



healthy mental development of future generations. Leading psychologists in the period argued that mothers and fathers, by virtue of their daily proximity to children, played the most significant role in these processes. Sidonie Matsner Gruenberg, for instance, wrote that, “For better or worse, parents fix children’s values and purposes, whether or not they are aware of what they are doing.”<sup>26</sup> Family life expert Anna Wolf contended that “parents’ attitudes speak louder than words,” and that their unspoken and unconscious attitudes toward the body always makes an impression.”<sup>27</sup> And in 1947, psychiatrist Phillip Piker bluntly told the readers of the *Journal of Health and Physical Education* that “Most of the child’s- and as a consequence, the adult’s- personality traits... are derived from his relationship with his parents. This is as true for his sexual attitudes and behavior as it is for the other aspects of his personality.”<sup>28</sup>

Although psychologists in the 1930s and 1940s argued that both parents played an important role in young people’s sexual development, they frequently singled out mothers as particularly significant role models. Assuming a middle-class division of labor between men and women, experts contended that since mothers would presumably perform most of the household labor, they would shape their child’s immediate environment to a greater degree than their husbands. In 1939, sociologist John Anderson argued that since women primarily “ministered” to their children’s needs in the most impressionable period of their psychological development, “boys and girls are more

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<sup>26</sup> Sidonie Matsner Gruenberg, “Parents’ Problems in Sex Education,” *Journal of Educational Psychology*, Volume 8, Number 6, February 1935, 323.

<sup>27</sup> Wolf, *The Parents’ Manual*, 158.

<sup>28</sup> Phillip Piker, “Sex Offenses as Seen by a Psychiatrist,” *Journal of Health and Physical Education*, Volume 18, Number 9, November 1947, 645. Leon Blumgart also declared: “Just as children use their parents as models in all other spheres, so also are they models in their sex life, though perhaps in a more subtle but no less significant way.” Blumgart, “The Parents’ Role in Sex Education,” *Child Study*, May 1931, 253.

attached to their mothers in their early years.”<sup>29</sup> Anna Wolf asserted: “A young child’s relation to his home, his parents and especially his mother lie at the very root of his existence.”<sup>30</sup>

If parents wielded considerable influence over the unconscious development of their children, psychologists from the period similarly argued that teachers and other school personnel played an important role in that process. In 1932, for instance, Sidonie Matsner Gruenberg contended that when it came to helping young people mature in a healthy manner, “it is important to ask who does the teaching as well as what is being taught.”<sup>31</sup> Gladys Ridsen wrote in a 1938 issue of *Mental Hygiene* that “wittingly or unwittingly, [teachers] are helping to determine which of each child’s potentialities are going to be develop,” and she contended that they must “develop sensitivity to the evidences of thwarted and distorted growth.”<sup>32</sup> And after the war, Philip Piker contended that “sexual maladjustment would not occur if children were exposed to proper adult attitudes.” He therefore argued: “If such attitudes are to prevail, parents, teachers, and all those who have to do with the rearing and guidance of children need to be properly informed regarding sexual matters, and to attempt to straighten out the emotional kinks in their own reactions to sex.”<sup>33</sup>

Teachers and parents merely represented only the two most likely figures of concern for medical authorities in the 1930s and 1940s. Since environmental factors

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<sup>29</sup> John Anderson, “The Development of Social Behavior,” *Journal of American Sociology*, Volume 44, Number 6, 844.

<sup>30</sup> Anna Wolf, “The Home Front in War Time,” *Journal of Educational Sociology*, Volume 16, Number 4, December 1942, 202.

<sup>31</sup> “Education of Children for Family Life,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Volume 160, 209.

<sup>32</sup> Gladys Ridsen, “Everyday Mental Hygiene and the Everyday Teacher,” *Mental Hygiene*, July 1938, Volume 22, Number 3, 409.

<sup>33</sup> Piker, “Sex Offenses as Seen By a Psychiatrist,” 646.

could play such a crucial part in an individual's growth, psychologists from the period frequently saw the whole world as a "classroom" for the inculcation of good or bad habits. Medical experts worried that urban spaces, in particular, offered the possibility of harmful encounters between adolescents and negative role models, and they constructed in their writings an elaborate social geography in which some places represented sites in which young people would learn socially acceptable attitudes towards sex, and others in which they would not. The hierarchies they established between "good" and "bad" forms of sex played themselves out across the very physical landscape, as some places brought children into contact with positive role models and others did not. They frequently singled out playgrounds, movie theaters, and streets as sites in which young people learned misinformation on the subject or encountered potentially threatening adults. Family life education professor Bernard Desenberg, for example, argued for greater parent education about sex, since by the time a child reached school "he is likely to have a strong dose of education at the street corner level." Once there, Desenberg warned, "'smut' and the salacious become the training for marriage."<sup>34</sup> Winifred Richmond lamented that young boys frequently learned "false and perverted" facts about sex from older peers who frequently suffered from "their own 'gutter' education."<sup>35</sup>

On the other hand, Depression-era proponents of sex education saw homes, schools, and churches as three key sites in the creation of healthy children who would later grow into normative, straight relationships. Few books or articles on the subject in the period failed to mention those places as sites that fostered strong character

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<sup>34</sup> Bernard Desenberg, "Home Sex Education and Monogamy," *Marriage and Family Living*, Volume 9, Number 4, November 1947, 92.

<sup>35</sup> Winifred Richmond, "Sex Problems of Adolescence," *Journal of Educational Sociology*, Volume 8, Number 6, February 1935, 335.

development among young people. Psychologists from this period singled out “the home,” as a crucial space in the development of children’s unconscious drives since it stood as the place in which they would have the most direct contact with their parents. In an article entitled “Parents’ Problems with Sex Education,” Sidonie Matsner Gruenberg argued that when it came to sex education, “the home occupies a distinct place.” It “operates continuously,” she contended, “for even when children are old enough to go to school... the home is there with its frequent reminders and persistent pressures in the direction of its own traditions.”<sup>36</sup> Floyd Dell argued that “sex is first and last a relation of people of the opposite sex to one another, and the home is the school in which the child learns by example what that relation is.”<sup>37</sup>

In an earlier era, direction within the home might have proven sufficient to help foster healthy married relationships. Psychologists in the 1930s and 1940s, however, contended that modern life required support from multiple institutions to ensure that children did not suffer from encountering negative role models in the wrong place. In their eyes, the temptations of the “street” no longer stood for adult vices that might potentially corrupt adolescents. Instead, they saw modern urban environments as places in which impressionable children might encounter socially unacceptable behaviors that would structure their unconscious minds for their entire lives. Gruenberg contended in 1935 that a “special need exists today because we are completely surrounded by all sorts of people.” She warned that in the current climate, children “are constantly exposed to numberless influences and suggestions charged with sex, so that no home can rely upon

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<sup>36</sup> Sidonie Matsner Gruenberg, “Parents’ Problems in Sex Education,” *Journal of Educational Psychology*, February 1935, 323.

<sup>37</sup> Dell, “Sex in Adolescence,” 261.

its own ideals and mode of life to ensure adequate protection and guidance.”<sup>38</sup> Newell Edson, a member of the American Social Hygiene Association, contended that when “it comes to reinterpreting the street wholesomely... many parents cannot deal with these matters at all.”<sup>39</sup>

These psychologists argued that parents in modern cities could not raise young people without the help of sympathetic educational and religious institutions, and their calls for greater instruction on straight sex and marriage created a social geography that used the spaces that housed those authorities- homes, schools and churches- as a cultural shorthand for a potential collaboration among them. In 1947, Pasadena School Superintendent John Sexson succinctly declared in a California education journal that “together, the home, the church, and the school have produced the American citizen.”<sup>40</sup> Two years later, a committee of religious leaders in Illinois pushed for classroom-based sex education in public schools and contended that, “one of the great tasks facing education today is to restore the great triumvirate- home, church, and school. Education can only be effective to the degree that the major forces in the child’s life join hands in a common interest and effort- a sort of collusion in the interest of the child.”<sup>41</sup>

In the eyes of many psychologists during the 1930s and 1940s, parent and classroom-based sex education represented two potential tools for helping mothers and fathers to raise responsible straight children and to combat sexual deviance. In particular, they hoped to convince adults not only to teach young people to channel their sexual

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<sup>38</sup> Gruenberg, “Parents’ Problems in Sex Education,” 324.

<sup>39</sup> Newell Edson, “Sex Education as a Community Problem,” *Journal of Educational Sociology*, Volume 8, Number 6, February 1935, 364.

<sup>40</sup> John Sexson, “Parental Education: Our Opportunity,” *California Journal of Secondary School Administrators*, Volume 22, Number 1, January 1947, 26.

<sup>41</sup> Rabbi Stanley Rav, et al. “The Committee on Religion and the Family,” *Marriage and Family Living*, Volume 11, Number 1, February 1949, 8.

urges into marriage, but also to exhibit healthy attitudes towards sex themselves so as to avoid cases of inadvertent repression among their children. Literary critic and psychologist Floyd Dell argued in 1931 that “sex in its normal development is nothing to be feared. It is sex repressed and perverted and degraded into neurotic promiscuity, into frigidity and impotence, into homosexuality and sadism, which ought to be feared.”<sup>42</sup> In 1935 Newell Edson warned that, “Sex education is of vital concern to the community. Its courts, its jails, institutions, and hospitals are crowded with those who have failed in social adjustment from lack of such education.”<sup>43</sup> And in 1942 sex educator Frances Bruce Strain blamed personality disorders, such as “frigidity,” a “lack of sexual response, “or a lack of heterosexual attraction,” on parents who taught their children to fear sex, offered “disgust teachings,” meted out “punishment for sex play,” or allowed them to indulge in “premature sex experiences.”<sup>44</sup>

To solve these problems, authorities called for the dissemination of scientific material on sex and marriage to parents, educators, and religious authorities. Hoping to help Americans walk the line between unduly permissive or repressive attitudes towards sex, they called for the education of the larger public about the importance of straight marriage and family life. Sidonie Matsner Gruenberg, for example, pushed parents not only to give their children “factual information” about marriage and reproduction but also healthy attitudes towards “every phase of life, including homemaking and mating.” “Young people,” she declared, “are entitled to know the lasting meaning of marriage...

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<sup>42</sup> Dell, “Sex in Adolescence,” 261.

<sup>43</sup> Edson, “Sex Education in the Community,” 363.

<sup>44</sup> Frances Bruce Strain, *Sex Guidance in Family Life Education: A Handbook for Schools* (New York: Macmillan, 1942), 236.

and why the issue of monogamy is important.”<sup>45</sup> Strain similarly called for the transformation of teachers into trained “psychologists,” so that the “sexual nature of children is given recognition, is afforded normal channels of expression and brought into harmonious balance with the rest of their unfolding personalities.”<sup>46</sup> And Newell Edson noted that since the “church has long been interested in marriage and the family,” it could give “give high sanction to sex conduct that no other community agency can equal.”<sup>47</sup>

In order to broaden public awareness of the importance of sex education in the home, school, and church, these psychologists in the 1930s and 1940s began publishing articles in magazines and books that specifically targeted mothers and fathers. In 1935 *Parents* magazine awarded Strain its “Book of the Year” prize for her text *New Patterns in Sex Teaching*, and just a few months later psychologist Roy Dickerson told the publication’s readers that “the chief concern in sex education is not the child, but the child’s parents who are inevitably its teachers.”<sup>48</sup> In 1939 and 1941, Sidonie Gruenberg and Anna Wolf each published parents’ manuals on how to teach children about sex, and in 1939 *Time* magazine estimated that every year “some 500 books, innumerable magazine articles and pamphlets on how to raise children” rolled off the presses. With parents confronting a virtual avalanche of potentially bewildering scientific advice, *Time* sarcastically cautioned its readers that when it came to childrearing, they ought to simply “Relax!”<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Matsner Gruenberg, “Parents Problems in Sex Education,” 330-1.

<sup>46</sup> Strain, 4.

<sup>47</sup> Edson, “Sex Education in the Community,” 367.

<sup>48</sup> “Book Notes,” *New York Times*, 21 March 1935; “Sex Education of Child Can’t Be Delegated,” *Washington Post*, 23 May 1935.

<sup>49</sup> “Education: Parents, Relax!” *Time*, 13 November 1939.

Even as these experts disseminated books and articles, the state gradually took on a larger role in helping to circulate scientific information about sex and straight family life. During the 1930s and 1940s, groups of middle-class parents across the country, particularly the National Congress of Parents and Teachers, asked federal officials to help coordinate local efforts to build discussion groups, lectures, and formal courses on marriage and childrearing. In 1930 the National Congress of Parents and Teachers formed a Committee on Parent Education that pushed for greater “organized study by parents of the growth and development of the child” and local branches reported during the Depression that study groups on the subject were the most popular activities undertaken by the group.<sup>50</sup> In 1931 the organization formally met with the U.S. Office of Education to request greater assistance from the government.<sup>51</sup>

From 1931 to 1932 the White House Conference on Child Health and Protection sponsored several investigations on how to bolster the work parents performed in preparing their offspring for marriage. In 1931 members of the Committee on Family and Parent Education argued that some of the “cardinal principles” of secondary schooling included the “establishment in the youth of heterosexuality” and an “appreciation of home and community life.” When it came to preparation of marriage and parenting, the group concluded that in “far too many cases the child’s own family life is inadequate so that the school has the additional responsibility of setting up new ideas.”<sup>52</sup> A study by the Conference’s Subcommittee on “Preparental Education”

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<sup>50</sup> Deffterios, *History of the California Congress of Parents and Teachers*, 167; Grant, *Raising Baby by the Book*, 60.

<sup>51</sup> National Congress of Parents and Teachers and United States Office of Education, *Education for Home and Family*, proceedings of a conference held in Hot Springs, Arkansas, 1-2 May 1931.

<sup>52</sup> Ellen Miller, “Elementary and Secondary Education for Family Living,” *Journal of Home Economics*, Volume 24, Number 3, March 1932, 221. Based on a paper given at the American Home Economics Conference in Detroit, MI 23 June 1931.



lamented that too often sex education in American high schools consisted “mostly of biological information and a limited amount of instruction in personal health habits.” Instead, the authors of the government report suggested that educators ought to provide students with “character education” in order to better prepare them for courtship, marriage and parenthood.” Ideally, such teaching would help “boys and girls properly to evaluate the significance of blind sexual attraction in their lives.”<sup>53</sup>

Subsequently during the New Deal, public officials helped expand the circulation of scientific ideas about sex across the country. In 1934 the Office of Education worked with the National Council of Parent Education to incorporate teachings on marriage and straight family life into state relief programs. The initiative’s champions sought to both extend the benefits of instruction on proper childrearing to groups adversely affected by the Depression and to provide work for unemployed teachers, social workers, and nurses. As with the broader parent education movement, the federally sponsored programs on the subject involved a wide variety of topics of potential relevance to mothers and fathers, including nutrition, sewing, and first aid, but they also included lectures on mental health and the psychological development of children.<sup>54</sup>

Even more important, the United States Office of Education served as a coordinating agency for the exchange of information about parenting and offered financial assistance to states and local districts interested in developing curricula on the

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<sup>53</sup> Subcommittee on Preparental Education, *Report: Part I, Education for Home and Family Life*, White House Conference on Child Health and Protection (New York: The Century Company, 1932), 96-8. See also Committee on The Family and Parent Education, *The Adolescent in the Family*, White House Conference on Child Health and Protection, (New York: Appleton, 1932). In 1932 the *New York Times* reported: “Where should the child receive his sex education- at home, school, church, or in camp? Probably at all of these says the latest pronouncement on the subject by the White House conference on child health and protection, with the fundamental responsibility shared by home and school.” “In Classroom and on Campus,” *New York Times*, 19 June 1932.

<sup>54</sup> Edgar Schmiedeler, “Adult Education for Family Life,” 486-7.

subject. In order to encourage adults to behave as responsible role models government officials in the 1930s and 1940s employed multiple strategies to help circulate scientific ideas about straight family life at the local level. In some cases, they funded research on parenting at the collegiate level in academic centers such as the University of California at Berkeley's Institute on Child Welfare.<sup>55</sup> The Office of Education also distributed recommended reading lists on sex education to teachers, parents, and clergy at the local level. In 1932, for example, federal officials circulated lists of books about how to teach children about sex and marriage to school administrators and parents' groups around the country.<sup>56</sup> Most significantly, they encouraged state governments to create special agencies to encourage the formation of parent's groups, the distribution of scientific literature on sex and childrearing, and the incorporation of psychological explanations for human growth into school curricula. California's Bureau of Education represented the most expansive model of such a bureaucracy, and federal officials observed that since its incorporation into the state government in 1931, administrators had advised local districts and parent-teacher associations on how to set up their own programs on the subject.<sup>57</sup> By 1940, at least sixteen states, including California, had established specific agencies or hired professional consultants to encourage education on childrearing, marriage, and sex within their jurisdictions.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Lombard, *Parent Education Opportunities*, 11. The Universities of Minnesota and Iowa developed similar institutes. See Sidonie Matsner Gruenberg, "Parent Education," 84.

<sup>56</sup> United States Department of the Interior, Office of Education, *Government Publications of Interest to Parents and Leaders in Parent Education*, Washington, D.C. April 1932. Federal officials divided their reading list into four categories, including "General Problems Dealing with Child Development," "Behavior Problems and Sex Instruction," "Problems of Physical Care," and "Miscellaneous."

<sup>57</sup> Ellen Lombard, *Supervision of Parent Education as a Function of State Departments of Education*, Number 6, Monograph 13, United States Office of Education, Washington, D.C. 1940, 8-9.

<sup>58</sup> Sidonie Gruenberg, "Parent Education," 84.

By the early 1940s, federal officials routinely invoked sex education as a potential tool for addressing a wide range of social issues. At the 1940 “Conference on Children in a Democracy” in Washington D.C. the United States Department of Labor brought together experts from all over the country to put forward ideas about how to best help parents raise their families during the Depression. Although most of the proposals at the conference dealt with the economic problems confronting families, several participants argued that “parent education” represented the best tool for curbing juvenile delinquency, divorce, and sexual deviance. Sociologist Lawrence Frank, for example, told a panel on “The Development of Children and Youth” that although parents often raised their families as best they could, many Americans nevertheless were “mentally disordered, delinquents, criminals or sex offenders, or are unable to make a satisfactory adjustment in family life.”<sup>59</sup> The authors of the Conference’s Preliminary Report proposed that schools should help students adequately prepare for adult family life and suggested that school-administered “sex education” might help young people confront future “problems and conflicts.”<sup>60</sup>

In its final report the conference called for greater parent education to help ensure harmony within families. Its authors argued that “home means, first of all, parents—preferably two, and the same two, at least until the child reaches maturity. Children born out of wedlock are at a great disadvantage... They can never have a completely normal home life, rarely one that is even stable and secure.”<sup>61</sup> To ensure that the greatest number

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<sup>59</sup> Lawrence Frank, discussion, “The Development of Children and Youth in Present-Day American Life,” Conference on Children in a Democracy, U.S. Department of Labor, Children’s Bureau, Initial Session, 26 April 1939, Washington, D.C. 78.

<sup>60</sup> White House Conference on Children in a Democracy, *Preliminary Statements*, United States Department of Labor, Children’s Bureau, Washington, D.C. 18-20 January 1940, 99.

<sup>61</sup> White House Conference on Children in a Democracy, *Final Report*, United States Department of Labor, Children’s Bureau, Washington D.C. 18-20 January 1940, 63.

of families had two married parents, the conference recommended formal instruction on childrearing. “Parents bewildered by the changes in family life,” they wrote, “need help in understanding those changes through counsel and guidance.... To this end the school, the church, recreation agencies, and health departments can contribute effectively.”<sup>62</sup> At a similar conference in 1944, the federal Office of Education called for the integration of psychological views on sex and marriage into a broad range of courses and curricula. In an official statement, conference participants called sex education “a convenient heading” to bring together teachings on physical health, mental development, venereal disease, and “the building of sound bases for marriage, family life, and constructive community living.”<sup>63</sup>

Taken together, these efforts helped disseminate current psychological theories about human sexual development to an audience across the country, and they facilitated the exchange of expertise about the importance of sex education in the home, school, and church. Federal officials played little role in determining curricula in specific classrooms or districts. They nevertheless played an important nurturing role, encouraging the development of sex-inclusive programs on parenting, marriage, and straight family life. By the mid-1940s, federal officials had helped circulate scientific theories about the significance of environmental factors in a child’s psychological development, and with the eruption of the Second World War those ideas would play an important role in determining how many Americans would respond to the chaos of the conflict.

## **Population Shifts: The Transformation of Urban Space**

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid 66.

<sup>63</sup> Cited in Kirkendall, *Sex Education as Human Relations*, 57.

Even as psychologists in the 1930s and 1940s constructed social geographies that distinguished between “good” and “bad” sites for children’s development, World War II dramatically transformed the ways people used actual urban spaces in cities like San Francisco. The turmoil of the conflict accelerated trends already in motion since the early twentieth century. Conscription created a shortage of male laborers, and married, middle-class women entered paid employment in unprecedented numbers. The mobilization spurred the mass migration of military personnel and workers to major ports and industrial centers, sparking acute housing shortages there. The war remade pre-existing sexual cultures as groups of teenagers congregated without supervision in parks, movie theaters, and street corners. It allowed heterosexual men and women, temporarily relocated to port cities, to flout social taboos against sex outside of marriage. And, for the first time, a queer subculture built around bars, restaurants, and public cruising became visible to many Americans. According to historian Allan Bérubé: “By uprooting an entire generation, the war helped to channel urban gay life into a particular pattern of growth- away from stable private networks and toward public commercial establishments serving the needs of a displaced, transient, and younger clientele.”<sup>64</sup>

The “public” nature of these venues spurred a reaction from alarmed straight residents and public officials. Shifts in urban life that had troubled Progressive Era reformers in the 1910s and 1920s took on a new significance in an era in which psychologists increasingly agreed that chaotic social environments threatened the healthy development of children. To many city residents, the presence of unsupervised young people congregating in public places, visibly queer commercial establishments, and

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<sup>64</sup> Allan Bérubé, *Coming Out Under Fire*, 126. See also Nan Alamilla Boyd, *Wide Open Town: A History of Queer San Francisco to 1965* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003).

general sexual licentiousness in city streets, parks, and bars signaled a deep tear in the normal social order and augured future generations of mentally ill adults. The war pulled millions of Americans into major cities, and urban life simultaneously enabled new forms of sexual expression and generated anxiety about the consequences of those changes.

The unease produced by these shifts eventually culminated in a nationwide panic about the safety of children in the years after the war. In the late 1940s, parents in San Francisco, alongside urban residents from across the country, expressed outrage at what they saw as an upsurge in crimes against children. Although the postwar period did not witness an actual boost in adult crimes against young people, large numbers of Americans, particularly in cities, believed that “maniacs” and “sex deviates” threatened the safety of their families. According to historian George Chauncey, periods of acute social disorder in American life have frequently provoked “moral panics,” in which people focus wider fears about the future on specific individuals or groups that symbolize threats to their way of life. In the case of the immediate postwar period, Chauncey argues that concerns about child molesters “tapped into deep anxieties already existing within the culture about the disruptive effects of World War II on family life, sexual mores, and gender norms.”<sup>65</sup>

Already visible during the conflict and in its immediate aftermath, the national outcry over crimes against children refracted longstanding concerns about the stability of the nation’s straight families and the safety of city living. In an age of overcrowded housing conditions, visible queer subcultures, unsupervised children, and racial residential transition, many white, straight, middle class American worried that urban areas fostered a series of negative environmental influences on young people. These

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<sup>65</sup> Chauncey, “Postwar Sex Crime Panic,” 175.

fears further reflected the outbreak of the Cold War in the late 1940s, as the sudden threat of communist aggression and nuclear annihilation suggested to many the need for a more stable gender and sexual order. In addition to several actual, well-publicized, brutal sex crimes against children, 1949 witnessed the Soviet Union exploding its first atomic bomb, the Chinese revolution, and the outbreak of the Korean War. In many ways, anxiety about international Communism accentuated local concerns about the safety of children and the durability of marriage. If the Cold War heightened the general concerns Americans felt about straight family life, those concerns came to rest on the queer and diverse groups of people that city residents encountered in their neighborhoods, streets, schools, and workplaces.

These concerns about urban space surfaced amidst the turmoil of the Second World War. The conflict sparked an enormous population boom in California, as service personnel and industrial workers flooded the state on their way to fight in the Pacific Theater or to work in local factories.<sup>66</sup> Between 1940 and 1943, close to 314,000 people migrated to the Bay Area alone, and in 1945 San Francisco's population soared to an all-time high of 825,000 people.<sup>67</sup> Shipbuilding represented the region's largest source of work during the war, and according to one estimate, private and naval construction yards in the Bay Area employed close to 200,000 people in 1943.<sup>68</sup> The boom in industrial employment dramatically shifted San Francisco's racial make-up, with the number of African-Americans living in the city growing tremendously during the conflict. Whereas

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<sup>66</sup> For more on California during the war decade see Marilyn Johnson, *The Second Gold Rush: Oakland and the East Bay in World War II* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993); Kevin Starr, *Embattled Dreams: California in War and Peace, 1940-1950* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

<sup>67</sup> House Subcommittee on Naval Affairs, *Investigation of Congested Areas, Part 3*, San Francisco, 1943, 925.

<sup>68</sup> Richard Foster, Jr. "Wartime Trailer Housing in the San Francisco Bay Area," *Geographical Review*, Volume 70, Number 3, July 1980, 278.

approximately 4,800 black inhabitants lived there in 1940, almost 25,000 resided there in 1945.<sup>69</sup>

This massive influx of war workers and military personnel provoked dramatic shifts in social relations in San Francisco. Most notably, large numbers of white, married, middle-class women, entered the paid labor force in large numbers. As historians such as Alice Kessler-Harris have argued, the Second World War magnified a pattern of married women working outside the home that began during the Great Depression. Although large numbers of single women had needed paid labor before that period, the economic slump of the 1930s compelled many middle-class, married women to find wage-paying jobs for the first time. The war accelerated this process as defense-related industries, such as shipbuilding in the Bay Area, expanded to meet the needs of the military and conscription created a shortage of male laborers. In 1945 19.5 million women served in the paid labor force nationwide. This figure represented an approximate 25 percent increase in female workforce participation over pre-war levels, and roughly three quarters of these new workers were married.<sup>70</sup> According to one estimate, women made up between 36 and 41 percent of all government workers in California during the war, and 40 percent of the civilian personnel on some of the military bases in the Bay Area.<sup>71</sup>

This shift in the gender make-up of industrial workplaces did not include innovations in childcare services. Many of the middle-class women who took on

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<sup>69</sup> James, "Profiles: San Francisco," 168.

<sup>70</sup> Alice Kessler-Harris, *Out to Work: A History of Wage-Earning Women in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 276-7. See also Nancy Cott, *Public Vows: A History of Marriage and the Nation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000).

<sup>71</sup> Lochtin, "California Cities in the Hurricane of Change," 415. Charles Cox, *Investigation of Congested Areas*, 771.



industrial employment had large families and husbands serving in the armed forces. Without outside support, the war effort left large numbers of young people unsupervised. Few employers in the period offered to supervise workers' children, and the federal government only provided a small number of centers in major industrial centers.<sup>72</sup> In 1944, public officials determined that only 5 percent of female employees nationwide had access to government-run childcare, that most had to rely on a piecemeal network of relatives, older children, or husbands for assistance, and that as many as 16 percent left their sons and daughters without adult supervision while they worked.<sup>73</sup> In San Francisco, civic groups attempted to compensate for the shortage of war workers and parents by creating a "Neighbors' Workers Exchange," in which adults with free time between shifts offered to watch over multiple children at once.<sup>74</sup> In 1943 Charles Cox, Lieutenant Commander at the Alameda Air Station, complained to a Congressional Committee that a failure to create family support programs explained supervisors' "inability to recruit a good many additional women in this area who are already available for employment if their children can be adequately cared for."<sup>75</sup> Without government support for child care centers, Bay Area workers relied on informal personal networks and many children went without adult supervision altogether.

The population surge also created a dramatic housing shortage that lasted well into the postwar era. With military-related industries siphoning off labor and raw

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<sup>72</sup> See for example, Susan Riley, "Caring for Rosie's Children: Federal Child Care Policies in the World War II Era," *Polity*, Volume 26, Number 4, Summer 1994. Riley points out that federal support for daycare reached an all-time peak during the conflict, but she argues that those efforts "were unsystematic and were delayed by red-tape, bureaucratic in-fighting, and uncertainty about the legitimacy of the policy." Riley, 658.

<sup>73</sup> Mary Schweitzer, "World War II and Female Labor Participation Rates," *Journal of Economic History*, Volume 40, Number 1, March 1980, 93.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid*, 94.

<sup>75</sup> Cox, *Investigation of Congested Areas*, 772.

materials, home construction stalled across the country at the exact moment that vast numbers of people were flooding metropolitan regions like the Bay Area. In 1943 Mayor Angelo Rossi complained to federal investigators that San Francisco lacked “adequate cheap housing for servicemen on leave,” and he confessed that he could not find adequate homes “for servicemen assigned to this city and their families” or for “the great influx of workers engaged in the war production program.”<sup>76</sup> Public Health Director J.C. Geiger observed in the same investigation that the population boom had pushed San Francisco’s residential hotels to the limit, with many of the lodging houses “occupied almost entirely by shipyard workers who have come here from other parts of the country.”<sup>77</sup> In order to mitigate demand for housing, the Navy proposed refitting industrial lofts along lower Market Street to house military personnel, and in 1944 federal officials compelled the city to allow four trailer parks in San Francisco’s South of Market area to house roughly 1,000 new residents.<sup>78</sup>

This congestion did not ease with the end of the conflict in 1945. After discharge, many veterans passed back through the Bay Area and sought to settle there after the war. Their individual decisions to marry and have children in the late 1940s, in particular, collectively strained an already limited housing supply. In 1947 the California Real Estate Association observed that “this sudden increase in family units, [has] caused additional demand for living space in congested areas.”<sup>79</sup> In that same year the San Francisco Chamber of Commerce concluded that although peace had revived residential construction, the sheer volume of newly married couples searching for a place to live in

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<sup>76</sup> Angelo Rossi, *Investigation of Congested Areas*, 647-8.

<sup>77</sup> J.C. Geiger, *Investigation of Congested Areas*, 661.

<sup>78</sup> C.A. Carlson, *Investigation of Congested Areas*, 713; Richard Foster, Jr. “Wartime Trailer Housing in the San Francisco Bay Area,” 287-9.

<sup>79</sup> “Wanted... Housing,” *California Real Estate Magazine*, April 1947.

the city vastly exceeded the available housing supply. The group of businessmen noted that marriage rates specifically in the Bay Area in the previous year had outstripped the national average by 7 percent, and it conservatively estimated that to meet the high demand of newlyweds, the local building industry would need to increase the production of new units by approximately 40 percent.<sup>80</sup> District Attorney Edmund Brown similarly reported that although San Francisco's population itself remained consistent with wartime levels, "the formation of new family groups within our population has increased the need for housing."<sup>81</sup>

Couples with children, in particular, found it difficult to find housing after the war. In the late 1940s, the editorial pages of the city's newspapers frequently served as forums in which parents vented their frustration about the inadequacies of the local rental market. Oakland resident Mrs. Albert Wollner reported to the *San Francisco Chronicle* in 1947 that she knew a young couple that "had to sign a lease which would automatically terminate if they had a child. Needless to say they are not planning on having a baby." The apparent unfairness of the situation prompted her to ask: "Since when are children a detriment to society?"<sup>82</sup> In that same year Madeleine Butler O'Neill complained to the *Chronicle*: "Couples with a new-born child cannot bring the child home because of a landlord's ruling... We can pour billions of dollars' worth of equipment overseas for

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<sup>80</sup> San Francisco Chamber of Commerce Research Department, "1947 Bay Area Housing Study," Institute of Governmental Studies, University of California, Berkeley. The report declared that between 1940 and 1947 the housing industry had build an average of 34,000 units a year, but it estimated that to meet the upsurge in demand it would need to build an average of 56,700 new units a year between 1947 and 1952. In 1946 the national marriage rate was 10.7 percent, but in San Francisco and Oakland the rate was 17.7 percent.

<sup>81</sup> Edmund Brown, *Third and Final Report on Housing Conditions in San Francisco*, May 1948, 11. Earl Warren Papers, Office of Planning and Research, California State Archives.

<sup>82</sup> Mrs. Albert Wollner, letter *San Francisco Chronicle*, 18 January 1947.

destruction... but we cannot build housing units for fundamental living.”<sup>83</sup> In 1949, Mrs. L. Anderson told the *San Francisco Examiner*: “For six months I have tried to find a place to live with my two children. I have advertised in the paper, also contacted many rental agencies. But the answer is always the same, we don’t allow children.... Why can’t landlords give the children a chance to have a nice home?”<sup>84</sup> And in that same year, an anonymous letter writer to the *Examiner* in that same year succinctly demanded: “Just how long are these unmerciful landlords going to keep up their ‘No Children Wanted’ attitude?”<sup>85</sup>

The reluctance of property owners to rent space to couples with children compounded the difficulty faced by renters of color. Legal restrictions on leasing and property ownership, including racial covenants, seriously limited the neighborhoods available to Asian American, Latino, and African-American residents. In 1942 the federal government forcibly evacuated the city’s Japanese residents from the Western Addition District, and wartime black migrants flooded the area in search of housing. At a 1943 Congressional investigation of living conditions in San Francisco, J.C. Geiger, reported serious shortages in the “old Japanese district... into which the majority of our colored population has moved. These people have occupied stores, rear porches, in fact practically any space available in this area. Occupancy consists of everything from single persons to married couples with four or five children.”<sup>86</sup> In 1945 the *Chronicle* noted that a group of merchants in the Park-Presidio neighborhood were blocking the sale of homes and businesses to non-whites, and the newspaper cited one of the organization’s

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<sup>83</sup> Madeleine Butler O’Neill, letter, *San Francisco Chronicle*, 25 March 1947.

<sup>84</sup> Mrs. L. Anderson, letter, *San Francisco Examiner*, 8 August 1949.

<sup>85</sup> “Disheartened,” letter, *San Francisco Examiner*, 12 September 1949.

<sup>86</sup> J.C. Geiger, *Investigation of Congested Areas*, 661.

members, who declared that the merchants were “interested in keeping the Asiatics and Negroes out of this district.”<sup>87</sup>

After the war, the Council for Civic Unity, a local civil rights group, called for the construction of greater numbers of public housing, and declared: “While the housing shortage is serious for the whole population, it is critical and dangerous for the population of minority groups.”<sup>88</sup> In that same year, Edward Howden, the organization’s executive director, told a Congressional committee on San Francisco’s housing problems: “Approximately 8 percent of our city’s people are of Chinese, Japanese, Negro, or Filipino ancestry, and for them the housing situation is several times more serious than the general population. Restrictive practices in private subdivisions... segregation in public housing, and generally uncertain job futures... combine to create and perpetuate ghetto neighborhood patterns.”<sup>89</sup>

Even as the war decade witnessed an increase in married women’s employment and a housing shortage, the conflict significantly transformed sexual life in San Francisco. As military personnel and industrial workers streamed in and out of ports like San Francisco, heterosexual men and women created an informal sexual marketplace centered on commercial gathering places. Local and federal authorities noted high incidences of extramarital sex in the city, with a wartime study by San Francisco public health officials noting with disapproval that disease was often “spread through promiscuity among friends and acquaintances.”<sup>90</sup> In 1943, Raymond Smith of the San

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<sup>87</sup> “Racial Issue- In S.F.” *San Francisco Chronicle*, 26 July 1945.

<sup>88</sup> “Housing Problem,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, 5 March 1947.

<sup>89</sup> Edward Howden, *Study and Investigation of Housing*, Hearings Before the Joint Committee on Housing, San Francisco, CA, 13-14 November 1947.

<sup>90</sup> Psychiatric Service, San Francisco City Clinic, *An Experiment in the Psychiatric Treatment of Promiscuous Girls* (San Francisco Department of Public Health, 1945), 7.

San Francisco Civilian War Council complained to federal authorities that the large number of married women left alone while their husbands served in the military had contributed to a growing sexual “delinquency” problem: “Often these ladies are lonesome,” he contended, “and they make friends out of the bars, picture shows; all just because they are lonesome.... [It’s] delinquency in its broad sense.”<sup>91</sup> In the same year, Howard McKinley, the 12<sup>th</sup> Fleet’s District Morale Officer, alleged that, “Due to worry, lack of interest and family ties, as well as possible shortages of money, some wives of naval personnel at sea have become involved in indiscretions.”<sup>92</sup>

These concerns about extramarital affairs unfolded alongside even deeper anxieties about the sexuality of unsupervised children, adolescents, and teenagers. The war had disrupted many households, and with many married women working in the paid labor force, young people frequently gathered with their peers in plain view of strangers in the city. The fact that many of them seemed to brazenly engage in premarital sex signaled to many authorities that Americans risked producing an entire generation of “maladjusted” adults. In 1943, for example, J.C. Geiger told a Congressional Committee that under-age prostitutes or young women who slept with soldiers on leave in San Francisco offered “the home, the church, the school” a “serious problem.”<sup>93</sup> City officials often ascribed this upsurge in teenage sexuality to overcrowded housing conditions in addition to working mothers, and in 1944 Edmund Brown reported to the mayor that unsupervised young people were “flocking into San Francisco literally in mobs and droves.” Unable to find places to live, the district attorney alleged that teenagers of both sexes found shelter “in cheap ‘flop houses’” or “all-night movies,” and

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<sup>91</sup> Roger Smith, *Investigation of Congested Areas*, 686.

<sup>92</sup> Howard McKinley, *Investigation of Congested Areas*, 702.

<sup>93</sup> Geiger, *Investigation of Congest Area*, 656.

that they frequently opted to “go home with truck drivers or other chance pick-up acquaintances.”<sup>94</sup> In 1945 the San Francisco Department of Public Health attributed an upsurge in premarital sex among young women to groups of single girls rooming together in hotels: “Patients,” officials reported, “would sometimes begin living with a girl friend in a hotel immediately following their chance meeting on a streetcar or in a dance hall. No semblance of home or family life was possible, and such living arrangements were conducive to unstable, promiscuous behavior.”<sup>95</sup>

If the prevalence of premarital teenage sex threatened to produce a generation of unstable adults, the sudden visibility of queer subcultures during the war signaled to many straight Americans that the war had already derailed the mental health of their neighbors. As historians Allan Berubé and John D’Emilio have argued, the conflict represented a crucial watershed in queer history in the United States.<sup>96</sup> Across the country, the mass migration of people from small towns to major cities pushed members of the armed services and wartime industrial workers into sex-segregated environments far from home. Similar to the rising prevalence in heterosexual teenage sex, the conflict created new erotic situations for individuals experiencing same-sex desire. The social upheaval of the war years offered them the opportunity to experience queer love, sex, and relationships away from the potentially hostile surveillance of parents, clergy, or neighbors. For lesbians, in particular, the rise in female employment in defense-related

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<sup>94</sup> Edmund Brown, *Report of the Crime Prevention Department for 1944*, 3, Earl Warren Papers, California State Archives.

<sup>95</sup> San Francisco City Clinic, *Psychiatric Treatment of Promiscuous Girls*, 20.

<sup>96</sup> Historians who see the war as the most significant precursor of modern gay communities and politics see Allan Berube, *Coming Out Under Fire: The History of Gay Men and Women During World War II* (New York: Free Press, 1990); John D’Emilio, “Capitalism and Gay Identity,” *Making Trouble: Essays on Gay History, Politics, and the University* (New York: Routledge, 1992). Although they also see World War II as an important watershed, several recent historians have begun to draw out the histories of queer communities before the mobilization to stress the longstanding roots of queer life in America. See, for example, Boyd, *Wide Open Town*.

industries offered a particular kind of social freedom. Groups of gay and straight women traveled city streets and visited bars, theaters, and restaurants without male escorts, and the large groups of female war workers visible in urban spaces allowed lesbians to congregate in public venues without attracting hostile attention in an unprecedented manner.<sup>97</sup>

The combination of these factors allowed D’Emilio to term the war “something of a national coming out experience,” and he argues that it effectively marked “the beginning of the nation’s, and San Francisco’s, modern gay history.”<sup>98</sup> In 1944 the American Academy of Political and Social Science published a special issue of its yearly journal, entitled *Adolescents in Wartime*, and one of its contributors noted that in a study conducted during the war that 10 percent of young men across the country “had indulged in overt homosexual activities.”<sup>99</sup> Just a few years after the war Alfred Kinsey would report even high incidences of male homosexuality, including findings that 37 percent of American men had at least one post-adolescent gay sexual experience to the point of orgasm while one out of eight had experienced same-sex eroticism for at least a three year period.<sup>100</sup>

Queer nightlife boomed in major ports across the country, as military personnel and industrial workers sought release in gay bars, drag shows, and red light districts. In

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<sup>97</sup> Berubé, *Coming Out Under Fire*, 98-127; D’Emilio, “Capitalism and Gay Identity.” In a separate article Bérubé argues: “The massive war mobilization forced many American men and women to discover their homosexuality for the first time, to end their isolation in small towns and find other people like themselves, and to strengthen their identity as a minority in American society.” Bérubé, “Marching to a Different Drummer: Lesbian and Gay GIs in World War II,” *Hidden from History: Reclaiming the Gay and Lesbian Past* (New York: Meridian, 1990), 384.

<sup>98</sup> John D’Emilio, “Gay Politics and Community in San Francisco Since World War II,” *Hidden from History: Reclaiming the Gay and Lesbian Past* (New York: Meridian, 2004), 458.

<sup>99</sup> George Gardner, “Sex Behavior of Adolescents in Wartime,” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* (Philadelphia, 1944), 64.

<sup>100</sup> John D’Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of a Homosexual Minority in the United States, 1940-1970* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1983), 35.



San Francisco, sailors and soldiers cruised for sex on Broadway in North Beach, in the hotels in Union Square, and waterfront bars, such as the Silver Rail.<sup>101</sup> Although the city boasted a handful of queer-related business since the end of Prohibition in 1932, the mass mobilization of the war years dramatically increased the amount of sex-related commerce in the city.<sup>102</sup> In 1943, Jim Kepner, a soldier who passed through the city, recalled seeing “the largest gay gathering I have ever seen” at the Mark Hopkins Hotel, with over a hundred people in attendance.<sup>103</sup>

Furthermore, World War II represented the first time the military explicitly banned homosexual conduct, and the Bay Area represented one of the crucial ports in which the armed forces discharged gay soldiers from the Pacific Theater. By the end of the conflict San Francisco had accumulated a large number of service personnel jettisoned by the military, and the discriminatory policy had the unintended consequence of greatly expanding the city’s queer community.<sup>104</sup> Uprooted from small towns and rural homes in other parts of the country and publicly labeled as homosexuals, gay members of the military frequently elected to stay in the urban centers in which they were discharged. Historian John D’Emilio claims that these castaways joined queer soldiers who successfully evaded exposure and “swelled the gay population of port cities or centers of war industry, such as Los Angeles, New York, and the San Francisco Bay Area, to which the war years had exposed them.”<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Boyd, *Wide Open Town*, 113.

<sup>102</sup> In her book *Wide Open Town*, historian Nan Alamilla Boyd argues: “Clearly, World War II had a tremendous impact on the city’s queer entertainments... But... World War II functioned to elaborate and extend the tourist-based cultures that emerged in the post-Prohibition era, rather than to fundamentally alter them.” Boyd, *Wide Open Town*, 9.

<sup>103</sup> Berube, *Coming Out Under Fire*, 112.

<sup>104</sup> Berube, *Coming Out Under Fire*; D’Emilio, “Gay Politics and Community Since World War II.”

<sup>105</sup> D’Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities*, 31.

The growth of these sexual communities played out against a racially segregated residential landscape. As in other parts of the country, San Francisco's African-American and Chinese-American neighborhoods hosted a significant share of the city's "vice"-related businesses, including gambling, prostitution, and queer bars.<sup>106</sup> Although these commercial sex sites lay in neighborhoods predominantly populated by people of color, their patrons frequently included large numbers of white customers who sought them out across the color line. In 1945, for example, a study of African American life in the city reported that the predominantly black Fillmore District hosted a wide range of businesses that catered primarily to white consumers: "Negro night clubs and bars catered to Negroes only incidentally. Most patronage came from whites on 'slumming tours' through what they were wont to term 'Little Harlem.'"<sup>107</sup> In San Francisco's Chinatown, white tourists frequently sought out racialized, sex-related entertainment in clubs, such as the Forbidden City, Li Po's, or the Jade City. In 1943, Jim Kepner, a serviceman stationed in San Francisco, wrote a letter to a friend relating that when the military began cracking down on gay bars on the waterfront, queer soldiers and sailors began going to Li Po's night club in Chinatown.<sup>108</sup>

These shifts in San Francisco's racial, gender, and sexual make-up convinced many local residents that a previously stable social order had suddenly collapsed under the weight of the war's upheaval. The sight, in particular, of unsupervised teenagers or gay men in urban spaces produced widespread social anxiety that the mobilization had

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<sup>106</sup> For more on the overlap between vice districts and racial segregation see Kevin Mumford, *Interzones: Black/ White Sex Districts in Chicago and New York in the Early Twentieth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997). For a history of vice reform in San Francisco see Boyd, *Wide Open Town*, 40-4.

<sup>107</sup> Joseph James, "Profiles: San Francisco," *Journal of Educational Sociology*, Volume 19, Number 3, November 1945, 167.

<sup>108</sup> Berubé, *Coming Out Under Fire*, 125.

left an entire generation of children bereft of adult guidance. This “crisis in parenting” began during the conflict, extended through the end of the decade, and, ultimately, culminated in a social “panic” that sexual deviants, including homosexuals, threatened children across the country. In 1943 an assembly interim committee chaired by Long Beach representative Lorne Middough and San Francisco’s Edward Gaffney held hearings in California’s major cities to hear from local officials and citizens on how to best eliminate youthful misbehavior, including sexual misconduct. The California PTA joined church groups, law enforcement agencies, women’s clubs, prison officials and other organizations “interested in and devoted to the juvenile delinquency problem” to speak about their concerns at these public meetings, and almost all of them saw the war as a unique “crisis in parenting.” Agnes Ain of the Mental Hygiene Society of Northern California told the committee that, “unhappy parents made unhappy homes and therefore unhappy children... those who were unable to hold out against the unhappiness generally became delinquents.”<sup>109</sup> George Hjetle, of the Los Angeles Department of Recreation, “gave as the fundamental cause of juvenile delinquency ‘inadequate parenting.’”<sup>110</sup> And John Meehan of the San Francisco Police Department reported that the transience of many mothers and fathers had unduly strained straight families, and that fundamentally, “being a parent is hard job and that the home is the greatest school of all.”<sup>111</sup>

In the eyes of many of the witnesses before the committee, this “crisis in parenting” had provoked a destructive loosening of sexual traditions in California, and several of them complained about a rise in premarital and deviant sex. Representatives of the Los Angeles-area California Women’s Council, for instance, decried what they saw

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<sup>109</sup> California Assembly Interim Committee on Juvenile Delinquency, *Preliminary Report*, 1943, 37.

<sup>110</sup> Assembly Interim Committee on Juvenile Delinquency, *Preliminary Report*, 23.

<sup>111</sup> Assembly Interim Committee on Juvenile Delinquency, *Preliminary Report*, 37.

as “a marked falling away from the standards of ethics and morals among adolescents, and that there was little if any sexual inhibition in certain areas of the State.”<sup>112</sup> Georgia Bullock, a judge from Los Angeles, related that “she had observed in many instances young girls in the city who were unable to gain entrance to liquor joints and dance halls, made a rendezvous in the arcades with their boy friends. She also gave it as her opinion that the penny arcades were probably the greatest breeding place for homosexual activities of any place in the community.” And E. H. Donnegan, a Los Angeles-area doctor, showed the committee a series of “wax works showing the development of the embryonic child” and “entered into vigorous criticism of the failure to teach sex hygiene” in the state.<sup>113</sup>

These complaints lasted well after the war’s end, as parents and public officials worried that the conflict had permanently disrupted straight family life. In 1946, Probation Officer George Osoke told a local newspaper that San Franciscans should expect a future upsurge in youth crime and sexual misconduct since the “basic and stabilizing influence on the child, namely, the home has in untold instances been unbalanced,” leaving children “insecure and without purpose.” Peace promised little respite to Osoke, who anxiously concluded that “the war and the changes it wrought on the average family unit has affected our social patterns so adversely it is not unreasonable to believe that the immediate future will find the problem still more acute.”<sup>114</sup> In a letter to the editor a year later, Stanford Professor Fred Sontag echoed the probation officer’s assessment by bluntly asking the *Chronicle*’s readers: “Just how far have we gone toward producing an amoral generation, how far toward cutting off the rational processes of all

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<sup>112</sup> Assembly Interim Committee on Juvenile Delinquency, *Preliminary Report*, 17.

<sup>113</sup> Assembly Interim Committee on Juvenile Delinquency, *Preliminary Report*, 20-1.

<sup>114</sup> “The Causes of Crime,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, 8 May 1947.

moral controls?”<sup>115</sup> And in April 1949 the *San Francisco Examiner* emphatically agreed, editorializing that “the staggering number of bad things done by so many boys and girls every year in the United States... INDICATES THAT SOMETHING IS TERRIBLY BAD AND WRONG ABOUT OUR AMERICAN SOCIETY.”<sup>116</sup>

Many public officials blamed juvenile delinquency and queer sexuality specifically on the cramped living conditions brought on by the housing shortage. In their analyses of the crisis, their writings echoed the social geographies constructed by contemporary psychologists and sex educators. Many of them saw city streets, in particular, as a kind of “classroom” in which young people learned immoral sexual or criminal behavior from unsavory role models. These authorities argued that children and teenagers, unable to find space at home, spilled out into urban neighborhoods in search of amusement and trouble. At a 1947 Congressional hearing on San Francisco’s housing crisis, J.C. Geiger alleged that “overcrowding bears an important relationship to the spread of social diseases, and also contributes to mental and moral delinquency.” The health director called apartments with too many people an “unfavorable environment,” that adversely affected “the moral background of the child.”<sup>117</sup> A year later, San Francisco District Attorney Edmund Brown alleged that children who came from a “bad home environment” tended to “congregate on the streets, turning to delinquency at an early age.”<sup>118</sup> The city prosecutor relied heavily on postwar psychology when he noted that “the character of most children is formed chiefly in by the conditions existing in the

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<sup>115</sup> Fred Sontag, letter, *San Francisco Chronicle*, 12 June 1947.

<sup>116</sup> “Juvenile Crime,” editorial, *San Francisco Examiner*, 20 April 1949, emphasis in original.

<sup>117</sup> J.C. Geiger, *Study and Investigation of Housing*, Hearings Before the Joint Committee on Housing, San Francisco, CA, 13-14 November 1947.

<sup>118</sup> Edmund Brown, Third and Final Report on Housing Conditions in San Francisco, Earl Warren Papers, California State Archives.

home.... You can't have people sleeping in the Terminal Building, the Ferry Building and other public buildings for lack of a home, and expect those people to raise normal, healthy children."<sup>119</sup>

This anxiety about sexuality and the welfare of children found a particularly significant outlet in public discourses about late-night movie theaters. During the war, the San Francisco police stopped enforcing an old ordinance requiring film houses to close at 1 a.m. "as a courtesy to members of the armed forces and persons unable to find rooms who try to sleep through the shows."<sup>120</sup> Allowed to run all night, city theaters offered parents and soldiers a tool for coping with the housing shortage. Unable to secure apartments or hotel rooms, they frequently slept in the movie house auditoriums or sent their children there while they worked. In 1944 District Attorney Brown told the mayor that cinema owners "complain bitterly of the practice which has become quite prevalent during the past two years, of parents 'parking' children in theatres.... These arrangements have been discovered when the small children become restless after seeing the show and start running up and down the aisles."<sup>121</sup> Brown went on to specifically allege that the large number of unsupervised children at the movies created an atmosphere that facilitated molestation: "In many cases involving sex offenses against children," he asserted, "it was observed that the contact between the offending adult and child had been made in a theatre."<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> Edmund Brown, "Report of Crime Prevention Department for 1944," Governor Earl Warren Papers, California State Archives.

<sup>120</sup> "Juvenile Aides Favor Ban on Late Shows," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 30 June 1945.

<sup>121</sup> Edmund Brown, "Report of Crime Prevention Department for 1944," Governor Earl Warren Papers, California State Archives.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*

Police officials and parents complained that late night movies tempted children to stray from the safety of their homes. Juvenile probation officer George Osoke contended that when the school year ended, “children will be roaming the streets looking for amusement and all-night movies... when they should be home in bed.”<sup>123</sup> An irate reader of *The San Francisco Chronicle* related discovering two children alone at a train station after going to see a late night film showing and reported that “their mother sounded completely untroubled when I telephoned her... Here is another source of the delinquency problem. If parents don’t know or care where their children under 12 spend their evenings, all the social agencies in the world are fighting a losing battle.”<sup>124</sup> And a pair of letter writers in the *San Francisco Chronicle* protested the police chief’s decision to close the movie houses because they believed the edict would merely push “juveniles to juke-box joints, night clubs, dance halls, bowling alleys, the streets and parks.” The writers sarcastically suggested that, “it seems that the problem could be much more effectively solved by instituting a curfew that will keep the juveniles at home, instead of just chasing them from on place to another.”<sup>125</sup>

By the late 1940s these concerns about changes in straight family life contributed to a national panic about the threats from child molesters and “sex deviates” more broadly. Although San Francisco represented an acute example, married women in the paid labor force, the housing shortage, unsupervised teenagers, and visible extramarital sexuality to varying degrees transformed urban centers across the country. In 1949 a series of brutal child rapes and murders in California, Idaho, and Michigan garnered national press attention, and the crimes focused the diffuse anxiety of many American

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<sup>123</sup> “Juvenile Aides Favor Ban on Late Shows,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, 30 June 1945.

<sup>124</sup> Mrs. H. H. Van Gelder, letter, *San Francisco Chronicle*, 26 June 1945.

<sup>125</sup> Ralph Hess and Irving Kophi, letter, *San Francisco Chronicle* n.d.

parents about the sexual upheaval exposed by the war on the specific threat potentially posed by molesters. While the era did not witness an actual upsurge in violent crimes against young people, widespread concerns about the future of straight family life warped many parents' perceptions of the dangers their children faced. In the wake of the violent crimes, *Collier's* magazine alleged that in city after city children "were becoming hunted game, stalked by the molester," and *Newsweek* editorialized that crime against children always "arouses the wrath of the community in which it occurs like no other event."<sup>126</sup> In San Francisco, newspapers misleadingly alleged that more than 200 sex crimes had taken place in the city, and they reported that mobs of parents had panicked when a man allegedly molested a kindergartner on her way to class at the Francis Scott Key Elementary School.<sup>127</sup>

The panic specifically hinted at deep-rooted anxieties among Americans about the instability and dangers of city living. The Second World War and hostility with the Soviet Union may have affected the entire nation, but media analyses of the crisis cast it primarily as a symptom of urban living. *Collier's* magazine launched a thirteen-part series entitled "Terror in Our Cities," in which it published exaggerated accounts of actual crimes to contend that hordes of "sexual psychopaths" were using the anonymity of the postwar metropolis to rape and murder children. Media narratives of the panic relied upon the same cultural geographies as contemporary psychologists and sex educators' to distinguish between "safe" and "unsafe" places for children to venture. In his analysis of the panic, George Chauncey noted that these press accounts created "the

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<sup>126</sup> Howard Whitman, "Terror in Our Cities," *Collier's*, 19 November 1949; "The Sex Rampage," *Newsweek*, 13 February 1950, 22.

<sup>127</sup> "Second District Urges Sex Offender Control," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 29 November 1949; "S.F. has 200 Cases Involving Attacks," *San Francisco Call-Bulletin*, 6 December 1949.



image of a country whose streets and alleyways were overrun with murderous sex psychopaths.”<sup>128</sup> In 1949, *Collier's* alleged that “scores upon scores of children [were] led into alleys and molested on their way to school,” and Georgia Congressman James Davis told the magazine: “We’ve reached the point where it is risky for women and girls to be on the streets after dark.”<sup>129</sup>

### **Sex, Family Life, and Parent Education as Remedies for the Wartime Crisis**

Taken together, the turmoil of the Second World War and the child molester panic of the late 1940s set the stage for the dramatic expansion of the availability of scientific information about parenting at the grassroots and a larger ideological struggle over sex and schools in California. Distraught at what they deemed an unacceptable disruption of straight family life, liberal psychologists and parents’ organizations like the National and California PTA sought to marshal public resources to prevent future cases of divorce, delinquency, and deviance. In order to manage the disorder caused by the war they pursued a two-part strategy. On one hand, they reached out to parents through discussions, lectures, magazine articles, and formal courses in order to help them speak to their children more openly about sex and to model healthy straight relationships for them. Convinced that mothers and fathers served as crucial role models for younger family members, liberal psychologists and their allies at the grassroots in California sought to teach them the fundamentals of human sexual development. Armed with this knowledge, they hoped parents would not only feel more comfortable speaking to their children about sex and marriage, but also improve the home environments in which young people grew

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<sup>128</sup> Chauncey, “Postwar Sex Crimes Panic,” 175

<sup>129</sup> Howard Whitman, “The City that is Doing Something About Sex Crimes,” *Collier's*, 17 December 1949, 15; “Whitman, “Terror in Washington,” *Collier's*, 24 June 1950, 20.

up. On the other hand, they sought greater classroom-based instruction on sex and family life. For many prominent psychologists and their allies at the grassroots, the turmoil of the war conclusively proved that the home alone could not adequately teach young people the specifics of normal sexual relationships. Popular support for classroom-based sex education boomed in the mid-1940s, and the subject's leading proponents hoped to reform school curricula to instill healthy attitudes towards sex and marriage in children and adolescents.

Even as many liberals worked to convince the state to adopt a preventative strategy, a second set of conservative voters mobilized in opposition to the teaching of sex in the public education system. Although parents across the ideological spectrum in California agreed that the war had created a crisis and that straight family life needed preservation, most opponents of classroom-based sex education argued that mass instruction on the subject would encourage, rather than deter, young people from experimenting with premarital and queer sex. In debates that foreshadowed the explosive battles over the subject that erupted in the late 1960s, many conservatives worried that an expansion of school curricula would contradict the teachings of parents and religious authorities on marriage and family. Their opposition, however, did not include an absolute rejection of state power. Although many of them disapproved of any curricula that might "incite" young people to experiment with premarital or queer sex, most conservatives nevertheless endorsed the use of school prayer or instruction focused on morality to encourage students to later prepare for marriage and become parents themselves.

In order to appease these competing visions of government and straight family life school authorities at the state and local levels in California adopted a piecemeal set of reforms in the late 1940s. Since voters across the ideological spectrum endorsed the idea that mothers and fathers should do more to teach their children about sex within the home, “parent education” flourished after the war. California authorities established a bureau on the subject, disseminated scientific information on human development to groups like the PTA, and encouraged local districts to develop formal courses for adults on sex, childrearing, and marriage. At the same time, individual school systems reformed their curricula to include a combination of sex and family life education, prayer, and “released time” instruction in which students left campus to attend religious classes at a church of their choice. Although California did not mandate instruction on sex in every school, legislators in Sacramento nevertheless broadened the scope of the state’s parent education programs and allowed individual districts to adopt their own programs on the subject.

These reforms largely took place due to the efforts of liberal reformers such as Lester Kirkendall. A college professor and former consultant at the federal Office of Education, Kirkendall led efforts to use the nation’s schools in a preventative strategy to avert future divorces, teenage promiscuity, and sexual deviance such as homosexuality. In the second half of the 1940s, Kirkendall joined other prominent psychologists to argue that the turmoil of the war years had sufficiently disrupted straight family life to warrant state intervention. No mere aberration, the upheaval of the conflict suggested that Americans could expect future upsurges in divorce, teenage promiscuity, and sexual deviance. As Kirkendall wrote in his 1948 book, *Sex Education as Human Relations*:

“The present evidences of changes in morals, individual and family instability, and social upheaval are in part the consequences of war. The present prevalence of sexual promiscuity, family instability, and juvenile delinquency... are eloquent arguments for a positive educational program leading to better understanding of sex, and preparation for and success in marriage and family life.”<sup>130</sup>

Since parents in the home served as the most important role models in their children’s lives, Kirkendall and his allies pressed for the creation of educational campaigns to bring scientific knowledge about human sexual development to new mothers and fathers. This project included both a push to help parents speak to children about sex in the home, but it also entailed reshaping the attitudes of the adults themselves to help them instill better attitudes on the subject in their children. In 1946, for example, California counselor and educator Ralph Eckert asserted: “It is still important to help parents understand children, but today it is much more important to help them understand *themselves* as adults and the emotional climate which they, as persons, create.”<sup>131</sup> In 1948, San Francisco parent educator Frances Miller confessed that although teachers planned on providing parents with scientific information to “teach what he believe to be appropriate sex behavior to children,” courses usually shifted to focus on the attitudes of the adults first. It quickly “becomes apparent,” she declared, “that a process of re-education of parents... must come to pass before much progress is made in learning techniques of sex education to use in guidance the development of their children.”<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> Lester Kirkendall, *Sex Education as Human Relations: A Guidebook on Content and Methods for School Authorities and Teachers* (New York: Inor Publishing, 1950), 13.

<sup>131</sup> Ralph Eckert, “Adult Education Through Parent Education,” *California Journal of Secondary Education*, Volume 21, November 1946, 303.

<sup>132</sup> Frances Miller, “Sex Education for Parents,” *California Journal of Secondary Education*, Volume 23, 98.

After the war, the California Congress of Parents and Teachers served as one of the most vocal proponents of a state-run “Bureau of Parent Education.” In 1946 the state legislature approved the re-creation of a government-run Bureau of Parent-Education under the supervision of Ralph Eckert, a family counselor and dean at Stockton Junior College, after receiving “urgent requests for the reestablishment of this position... from parents throughout the state.”<sup>133</sup> As state officials deliberated on the future of California’s schools after the war, many of them called for an expansion of these pre-war programs to meet what they saw as a great crisis in marriage and straight family life. In a public speech soon after the end of the conflict, George Mann, the chief of the Department of Adult Education correlated the housing crisis with a rise in the nation’s divorce rate, and he promised: “Even if little can be done about a house to live in, much can be done toward making a house one does get a better home.”<sup>134</sup>

During the reconversion period, state officials like Eckert and Mann encouraged local school districts and parents’ groups to organize academic courses, discussion groups, and public events to protect straight family life. Their efforts broadened public awareness of the need for sex education, and helped politicize parents and teachers at the grassroots level. Under Eckert, the Bureau of Parent Education held conferences with P.T.A.s, various community agencies, schools, administrators and teachers to help them incorporate the latest tenets of modern psychology into their childrearing practices.<sup>135</sup>

Eckert believed that his agency’s primary service lay in helping to stabilize the mental

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<sup>133</sup> Report on Parent Education, 1947, California Department of Education Records, California State Archives, Sacramento, CA.

<sup>134</sup> George Mann, “Adult Education in the Reconversion Period,” speech, Department of Education Records, Adult Education Bureau Chief Speeches, 1942-1949, California State Archives.

<sup>135</sup> Report on Parent Education, 1947, California Department of Education Records, California State Archives, Sacramento, CA.

health of the state's population, and he contended: "Society must somehow break through the vicious cycle by which a generation of emotionally immature and unstable individuals marry and produce a generation of emotionally immature and unstable individuals, ad infinitum."<sup>136</sup>

Eckert contended that sex education in the home, school, and church represented one of the key tools the state could use to break that cycle. In 1947 he told fellow education administrators that in a poll of PTA members in the Los Angeles area only 30 percent of respondents reported complete confidence in their ability to speak to their children about the subject, and that 97 percent of them replied that they would welcome help from education officials to "give the youngster the information he needed at the time he needed it."<sup>137</sup> Echoing Depression-era psychologists such as Sidonie Matsner Gruenberg, Eckert later argued that if California's children did not learn about sex from their parents, teachers, or religious leaders, they would inevitably absorb lessons on the subject from less reputable role models. "It is not a question of whether a child gets a sex education," he cautioned, "but only 'what kind and from whom.'"<sup>138</sup>

Eckert's work rested heavily on the support of volunteers at the grassroots level. State legislators provided him merely with an advisory role, and his bureau required the assistance and goodwill of the California Congress of Parents and Teachers. In 1947, the State Department of Education not only reported that the California PTA had arranged for Eckert to speak in all of its districts but also that it had helped send him to a national

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<sup>136</sup> Ralph Eckert, "Moving Five Steps Ahead," *Educational Leadership*, November 1947, 102.

<sup>137</sup> Eckert, "Moving Five Steps Ahead," 104.

<sup>138</sup> Eckert, "The Role of the P.T.A. in Sex Education," *Marriage and Family Living*, Volume 13, Number 2, May 1951, 58.

conference on family life in Chicago.<sup>139</sup> During the Depression, the group had called for voluntary financial contributions from members to support parent education, and in 1949 they shifted to require all local units to contribute two dollars to sponsor programs on the issue across the state.<sup>140</sup> Eckert later called the PTA the best “means of improved cooperation between home and school,” and he credited the group with leading the “way in broadening the concept of sex education to its present scope.”<sup>141</sup>

In the late 1940s, the *California Parent-Teacher*, the CCPT’s magazine, served as a significant tool for the dissemination of scientific ideas about sex and family life to a wider audience. In 1948, for example, Los Angeles parent educator Harriett Randall wrote an article entitled “He Loves Me... He Loves Me Not,” in which she told PTA members that an individual’s healthy attraction to the opposite sex emerged gradually, and that it evolved best with the careful supervision of concerned mothers. “This maturing heterosexual interest is not necessarily a suddenly accomplished fact,” she asserted, but rather progressed “rapidly or slowly according to the development tempo of each young person.” No matter how things unfolded with their children, she cautioned “parents should be guiding and helping their young to mature emotionally along happy patterns without undue activity or mishap.”<sup>142</sup> A year later, Eckert told the readers of the PTA magazine that “preparation for marriage begins at birth” and that “a lack of satisfaction in their parents’ marriage tends to produce emotional conflict in young people.”<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>139</sup> Report on Parent Education, 1947, California Department of Education Records, California State Archives, Sacramento, CA.

<sup>140</sup> “Parent Education Committee,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, 22 August 1949.

<sup>141</sup> Eckert, “The Role of the P.T.A. in Sex Education,” 58.

<sup>142</sup> Harriet Randall, “He Loves Me... He Loves Me Not,” *California Parent-Teacher*, December 1948.

<sup>143</sup> Ralph Eckert, “Ready for Marriage,” *California Parent-Teacher*, March 1949.

Over the course of the late 1940s, Eckert and his allies sought to enlist volunteers from groups like the PTA to serve as “lay leaders,” capable of setting up discussion groups, distributing literature on sex and straight family life to their neighbors, and serving as instructors in local classes on the subject. In 1947 the bureau chief reported that, “increasingly, professional parent-education leaders... are being employed by city and county school systems to organize and to co-ordinate parent study groups in connection with nursery groups, Parent-Teacher Associations, and other natural groups of parents.”<sup>144</sup> George Mann, head of the Department of Adult Education, looked at the state’s rising divorce, delinquency, and mental illness rates in that same year, and he called for greater cooperation between groups of mothers and fathers to address the problems at the local level. In 1947 he wrote in *California Parent-Teacher*:

The solution can be accomplished only with the aid of all groups of parents in all localities... It all boils down to the creation of many communities... where parents and their children learn to live together in well-adjusted happiness. Then, and only then, will the answers emerge to the problems of understanding parents, well-adjusted happy children, adolescence, sex education, preparation for marriage. That new community is the antidote to the diseases of society- increased divorce, juvenile delinquency, alcoholism, crime and neurosis.<sup>145</sup>

A concern that stretched across social and geographic boundaries, state authorities like Mann hoped to mobilize groups of voters across California to address the perceived crisis in straight family life.

Even as the state helped bring together new communities of parents, liberal reformers such as Lester Kirkendall sought to implement formal teaching on sex and straight relationships in public schools. In the wake of the upheaval of the war, public

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<sup>144</sup> Ralph Eckert, “Trends in Parent Education,” *California Journal of Secondary Education*, January 1947, 19-20.

<sup>145</sup> George Mann, “Are You Worried?” *California Parent-Teacher*, November 1947, 13.



enthusiasm for the subject appeared at an all-time high. A Gallup Poll in 1943 reported that 68 percent of Americans favored classroom instruction on sex and marriage, with urban areas approving of the idea at significantly higher rates than rural ones. Pollsters explained their results as a product of the considerable concern many Americans felt towards “the increase in sex delinquency in wartime, particularly among school girls.”<sup>146</sup> Although it did not release specific numbers, a *Los Angeles Times* article in 1947 similarly reported that “typical parents” that year were worried about juvenile delinquency and were “convinced that young people should be taught more about sex before they get married.” The majority of Americans, the newspaper reported, “would like to see courses in sex education given in every high school.”<sup>147</sup>

For proponents of classroom-based sex education, the turmoil of the war years seemed to offer an ideal opportunity to push states and local districts to adopt formal curricula on the subject. Just a few weeks before Japan’s surrender, Kirkendall warned western education administrators that “adolescent boys and girls are going to get sex education somehow and somewhere,” and he argued that even minimal school teaching on the subject could “improve the training of the back-alley type.”<sup>148</sup> Just three months later in an education journal, the former federal official announced that, “Never before has a more favorable public opinion existed for the initiation, development, and expansion of soundly conceived programs of sex education.”<sup>149</sup> Kirkendall’s former colleague at the U.S. Office of Education, Benjamin Gruenberg, concurred a year later,

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<sup>146</sup> “The Gallup Poll,” *Washington Post*, 4 June 1943. 79 percent of people living in urban areas approved of classroom based sex education, while only 56 percent of people living in rural areas stated they favored it.

<sup>147</sup> “Poll Shows Average Gentleman Prefers Beeksteak and Not Blonds,” *Los Angeles Times*, 24 August 1947.

<sup>148</sup> “U.S. Education Aide Tells Training Need to Teach Sex,” *Los Angeles Times*, 12 July 1945.

<sup>149</sup> Lester Kirkendall, editorial, “Progress in Sex Education,” *Clearing House*, October 1945.

simply declaring in the pages of the *California Journal of Secondary Education* that when it comes to sex, “the schools are called upon to reach far beyond their walls and particularly into the homes.”<sup>150</sup>

In the years following the armistice, the national, state, and local branches of the P.T.A. worked to promote scientific instruction on sex, marriage, and childrearing at all levels of education. At its 1946 convention in Denver, the National Congress of Parents and Teachers established a resolution calling for greater education on sex and straight family life in the country’s schools. The group argued that since “sound character training in childhood and youth is the major influence in the promotion of high moral standards of sex conduct,” it pushed “its membership to take an active part in all community efforts designed to raise the standards of community life; to reinforce ethical sex conduct; and to provide suitable training, guidance, and protection for youth.”<sup>151</sup> A year later, the California Branch of the CPT pushed the state legislature to sanction classes on sex and parenting in public schools.<sup>152</sup> In 1948, an article in the Golden State PTA’s magazine argued that if parents wanted to do something about the recent upsurge in sex crimes, “sex should be discussed openly and without embarrassment within the

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<sup>150</sup> Benjamin Gruenberg, “What Shall We Do About Sex Education?” *California Journal of Secondary Education*, Volume 22, Number 1, January 1947, 39. C. Edward Pederson similarly argued that “sex education” could involve a total education on the “natural” relationships between family members. He wrote: “There are ways of righting the conditions which face us, and I believe the answer is to be found in a complete, sound family living program in every locality. I would go one step further and state that a strong missionary-like effort on the part of us educators to stimulate interest and create family living classes would do more good than we are able to contemplate.” C. Edward Pederssen, “Adult Programs in Family Living Expand,” *California Journal of Secondary Education*, November 1945, 407.

<sup>151</sup> Bess Rosa, “Social Hygiene Report,” National Congress of Parents and Teachers, *Official Reports and Records*, Proceedings of the Annual Convention in Denver, CO, 20-22 May 1946, 163-4.

<sup>152</sup> “Senate Defeats Bill for Classes on Parenthood,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, 10 June 1945.

home,” and that “sex instruction should be on the curriculum for all senior high school and college students.”<sup>153</sup>

Proponents of classroom-based sex education found several allies among lawmakers in Sacramento, and debates over the issue at the state level helped spur PTA activism in local districts. California’s first official government endorsement for sex in schools came in 1945 after the Assembly Interim Committee on Juvenile Delinquency heard complaints from concerned citizens about the social upheaval caused by the war. In its final report the committee called for “sex instruction” in schools, declaring: “We concur in the judgment of some social and educational leaders that scientific instruction, offered as a regular part of the studies of adolescents is the sensible preparation for life.”<sup>154</sup> Shortly after the Committee’s endorsement of the proposal, the *Los Angeles Times* reported that the local district PTA had invited national authority Frances Bruce Strain to give a series of lectures on sex and marriage, and that the group was working closely with city’s schools to develop courses on “family living.” John Goffin, health consultant with the Los Angeles Board of Education, called teaching on the subject “one more angle to the prevention of delinquency” and declared that modern instruction on sex focused on “psychological understanding between the sexes in the home and school.”<sup>155</sup>

Thanks to the advocacy of scientific experts like Kirkendall and the grassroots efforts of organizations such as the California Congress of Parents and Teachers, sex education returned again and again to the state’s discussions of how to prevent sexual delinquency and deviance. From 1947 through 1949, Governor Earl Warren convened a series of conferences on youth welfare, mental health, and crime, and large numbers of

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<sup>153</sup> Shirley Gordon, “For Your Children’s Sake,” *California Parent-Teacher*, January 1948.

<sup>154</sup> Assembly Interim Committee on Juvenile Delinquency, *Final Report*, 12.

<sup>155</sup> “Thinking Parents Urge Sex Teaching in School,” *Los Angeles Times*, 18 March 1945.

parents and medical professionals attended the meetings held by these commissions in order to demand greater instruction on the subject in California's classrooms. After holding hearings in major cities and consulting with scientific experts, the Commission for the Study of Juvenile Justice reported that "the best way to approach the problem of delinquency of children is through the improvement... [of] community environmental conditions. This includes parental education, including education for marriage and parenthood, education looking to the upbringing of children, better family life, and better health."<sup>156</sup> The Governor's Special Crime Study Commission on the Social and Economic Causes of Delinquency, which began its investigation in 1947, similarly concluded that studies by psychology experts "have shown that mutually satisfactory relationships between children and their parents is a fundamental requirement for the development of a socially well-adjusted personality," and that "the school is next to the family in its influence on personality growth."<sup>157</sup> And at the Governor's Conference on Mental Health in 1949, the discussion panel on "Preventative Mental Hygiene" opened its statement to the public by declaring: "Beginning with the family- the foundation of our culture and our system of life, we have the framework within which from the day of birth, for better or worse, our character traits and habits are begun."<sup>158</sup>

These conferences all firmly linked the cause of sex and straight family life education- in homes, schools, and churches- with the prevention of sexual misconduct more broadly. In its final report, the Commission for the Study of Juvenile Justice called for continued sex and family life education in order to "contribute to the ability of our

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<sup>156</sup> Commission for the Study of Juvenile Justice, *Final Report*, 30 June 1949, 7-8.

<sup>157</sup> Special Crime Study Commission on Social and Economic Causes of Crime and Delinquency, *Final Report*, 30 June 1949, 8,14.

<sup>158</sup> Discussion Panel on Preventative Mental Hygiene, "Preliminary Statement," Governor's Conference on Mental Health," 3-4 March 1949, California State Archives, Sacramento, CA

youth to establish better homes.”<sup>159</sup> Viewing this set of straight relationships as a fundamental foundation for the creation of a healthy citizenry, the panel on Preventative Hygiene at the Governor’s Conference on Mental Health asked: “What can we do to prepare young adults for marriage? To understand themselves... to select a marriage partner... to fortify them with the knowledge they need to work out the economic, sex and social adjustments inherent in marriage?”<sup>160</sup> This panel, which included Parent Education Bureau Chief Ralph Eckert, answered its own question by arguing that since sexual “confusion” within marriages led to higher divorce rates, the state needed to arm young adults with knowledge on the subject, and it repeatedly proposed “making education for marriage one of our important educational goals.”<sup>161</sup>

Lectures on sex in California’s classrooms sparked a controversy that spurred many conservative voters and politicians to work to block a statewide change in curricula. In 1945 nearby Oregon required all high schools to integrate teaching on the merits of straight family life into their larger educational programs.<sup>162</sup> Even as many legislators, medical experts and PTA volunteers called for greater classroom-based sex education in California, conservative voters spoke out to keep their state from following in its northern neighbor’s footsteps. In 1945, San Francisco Assemblyman Edward Gaffney dissented from the Interim Committee on Juvenile Delinquency’s call for sex education, arguing that “such instruction by others than parents or religious guardians ‘would increase this ugly though relatively small percentage of the juvenile delinquency

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<sup>159</sup> Special Crime Commission on Juvenile Justice, *Final Report*, 54.

<sup>160</sup> Discussion Panel on Preventative Mental Hygiene, “Preliminary Statement.”

<sup>161</sup> Discussion Panel on Preventative Mental Hygiene. Governor’s Conference on Mental Health, *Final Report*, Sacramento, CA, 3-4 March 1949, 35.

<sup>162</sup> Howard Wittman, “Sex Education Grows Up,” *Los Angeles Times*, 24 October 1948.

problem.”<sup>163</sup> A year later, the *San Francisco Chronicle* called Kirkendall’s efforts “preposterous,” and accused the former Office of Education official of trying to create a federal takeover of the nation’s families. When it came to government and sex education, the newspaper editorialized: “A more ill-considered proposal... would be hard to invent.”<sup>164</sup>

The Catholic Church emerged in the late 1940s as a particularly vocal opponent of sex education in public classrooms, objecting to potential teachings on birth control and the removal of sex from the home. In 1947 *Newsweek* reported that the Church represented the nation’s most organized opponent of the issue, since it feared that “birth control would form part of such education... under secular control” and because it regarded “sex matters as belonging within the exclusive purview of the home and spiritual counselors.”<sup>165</sup> In 1949 the Catholic magazine *America* editorialized that, “Sex instruction, as much as possible, must be kept where the nature of the family demands it be kept- in the home,” and concluded that, “quite obvious solution would be to place the overwhelming emphasis not on teaching children the facts of sex, but on *teaching parents on how to teach it.*”<sup>166</sup>

During the struggles of the 1940s, conservative opponents frequently inverted the logic advocates used to champion sex education in order to justify banning it from schools altogether. Both proponents and foes of classroom-based sex education agreed that premarital teenage sex, homosexuality, child molestation, and divorces all posed

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<sup>163</sup> “Juvenile Bill Wins Support of Authorities,” *San Francisco Examiner*, 9 March 1945.

<sup>164</sup> “Sex Lessons from Washington,” editorial, *San Francisco Chronicle*, 31 December 1946.

<sup>165</sup> “Shall Our Schools Teach Sex?” *Newsweek*, 19 May 1947.

<sup>166</sup> “Teach Parents to Teach Sex,” editorial, *America*, 27 August 1949, 555. Emphasis in original. The magazine also declared: “Sex education? Yes! By all means! The Church (is this news to you?) has never opposed it- it has opposed types of it. The best type, because it’s the kind that God and nature indicate, is through parents who ought to be helped to do the job calmly, efficiently and lovingly. Educators (Catholic as well as otherwise) haven’t begun to scratch the surface of this problem in *adult* education.”

threats to California's welfare. Opponents of the issue, however, contended that broad instruction on the subject in the state's classrooms would aggravate rather than ameliorate the problem. If all adults served as role models for impressionable children and adolescents, they asked, then why risk exposing them to potentially harmful discussions from teachers who did not know their students as well as their parents? Opponents further argued that rather than helping make straight families stronger, school-based instruction on the subject would undermine the authority of parents who actually taught their children to behave themselves. Marie Jones, for example, told Los Angeles education officials that she stood against the committee's legislation, "because it would 'stimulate open discussion of sex on playgrounds,' 'fail to discourage petting,' lead to a conflict between parent and child 'especially if the child is taught one thing at home and another at school, and result in 'too open a mode of teaching for young minds.'"<sup>167</sup> Jones told the school board that several other parents and church groups supported her objections, but she went out of her way to argue that she agreed that parents needed to do more to teach children about sex and marriage to reduce "delinquency." "Instead of educating the children," she declared, "we should educate the parents and let each assume his or her responsibility. There is a way of presenting such matters and each mother should know best the technique she must apply in teaching her own child."<sup>168</sup>

In 1949 Mrs. Walter Ferguson, an opponent of sex education, wrote in the *San Francisco News*: "With all due apologies to them, adolescents are adventurous, reckless, quick to experiment with danger." She alleged that teachers in another city had offered students text books that not only provided a "detailed account of normal conjugal

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<sup>167</sup> "Sex Education in Schools Plan Fought by Mother," *Los Angeles Times*, 9 March 1945.

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

relations,” they also included a “study of the perversions.” With liberal parents proposing that schools offer impressionable young people explicit lectures on the subject, and adolescents’ inherent risk taking Ferguson asked: “Is it hard to believe that advanced sex knowledge... will be put to a test at once?”<sup>169</sup>

Again and again, the character and background of teachers emerged as an essential feature in these debates over classroom-based sex education. Second only to parents, school instructors represented key role models capable of promoting or derailing a student’s sexual development. In 1947, *Newsweek* reported that “most teachers, like parents, are in fact intellectually and emotionally disqualified” from running classes on sex and marriage. “Teachers,” the magazine alleged, “no more or less than people in general, are prudish or prurient, biased or bigoted, and filled with emotional blocks and conflicts.”<sup>170</sup> A year later, a writer in the *Los Angeles Times* argued that “the job of finding good teachers of sex education is a stickler. No matter how much they study or memorize, teachers who themselves suffer from warped sexual attitudes can hardly engender wholesome attitudes in students.” The challenge facing school administrators, therefore, lay in finding a teacher with a “well-rounded, well-adjusted, and well-developed personality.”<sup>171</sup>

This concern stretched far beyond conservative circles to include even ardent proponents of classroom-based sex education. A fairly young discipline, the subject lacked a large cohort of trained professionals, and even great champions of school-based family life education wavered in enthusiasm due to the shortage of instructors.

*Newsweek* alleged: “One argument against sex teaching is made by almost all its

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<sup>169</sup> “School Sex Education Dangerous?” *San Francisco Chronicle*, 24 August 1949.

<sup>170</sup> “Shall Our Schools Teach Sex?” *Newsweek*, 19 May 1947.

<sup>171</sup> Howard Whitman, “Sex Education Grows Up,” *Los Angeles Times*, 24 October 1948.



opponents and acknowledged by most of its proponents: the lack of teachers to conduct such a program.”<sup>172</sup> In 1942, Frances Bruce Strain pushed schools to hire teachers who were married, “sexually mature and adjusted.” She worried, however, over the lack of formal training available to students in major universities.<sup>173</sup> When California legislators proposed making classroom-instruction on sex and marriage mandatory, Strain declared: “It appears unwise to legislate such courses into all schools... Badly taught classes and indifferent teachers and parents would make a law worse than no law at all.”<sup>174</sup>

Opponents of classroom-based sex education soon found a champion in State Senator Jack Tenney, who made teachers’ characters a crucial political issue. Across the country in the late 1940s, conservatives created powerful government agencies to ferret out perceived communist sympathizers and to obstruct liberal activism more generally.<sup>175</sup> Tenney chaired California’s influential Un-American Activities Committee, and he proposed legislative limits on the teaching of sex education in public schools. In January 1947, he set forth a number of amendments to the Education Code, including a rule forbidding instruction on sex or marriage before the eleventh grade, requiring that education administrators only ask licensed physicians to advise students on the subject, and a mandate that doctors communicate all of their advice on sex or marriage to pupils on an individual basis “with the consent of parents.”<sup>176</sup> Tenney paired these proposals with requirements that schools teach pupils students about the Constitution, “morals and

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<sup>172</sup> “Shall Our Schools Teach Sex?” *Newsweek*, 19 May 1947.

<sup>173</sup> Strain, *Sex Guidance in Family Life Education*, 307.

<sup>174</sup> “Thinking Parents Urge Sex Teaching in School,” *Los Angeles Times*, 18 May 1945.

<sup>175</sup> For examples of how the red scare limited liberal pushes for civil rights, unionism, and public housing see Robert Korstad, *Civil Rights Unionism: Tobacco Workers and the Struggle for Democracy in the Mid-Twentieth Century South* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2003); Don Parson, *Making a Better World: Public Housing, the Red Scare, and the Direction of Modern Los Angeles* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2005).

<sup>176</sup> “School Code Revisions Proposed by Sen. Tenney,” *Los Angeles Times*, 31 January 1947.

manners,” and “healthful living.”<sup>177</sup> In February of that year the senator led an investigation into a family life education course in the Northern California city of Chico amidst protests from area high school students.<sup>178</sup> In March 1947 the committee asked the national government to “outlaw the communist party,” and its 374-page report singled out the Chico family life education program as “pornographic in content” and “unfit for high school students” because it paralleled the “Communist party line for destruction of the moral fiber of American youth.”<sup>179</sup>

Tenney’s amendments sparked controversy and several proponents of sex education in schools spoke out against them. Although the state senator marshaled considerable support from many conservatives, his ideas infuriated most liberals and failed to receive enough political support to become law. In late February, *The San Francisco Chronicle* editorialized that the anticommunist’s proposal “made no sense,” since “the primary purpose of sex education in the public schools is to arm youngsters with facts which will prevent them from becoming sex delinquents. Delaying this till a youngster is 16 or 17 years old merely gives a head start of several years to the opportunities and temptations of delinquency.”<sup>180</sup> A few days later a reader concurred with the newspaper’s opinion, and declared in a letter to the editor: “If more young people had an education in the matters of sex there would be far more moral delinquents.”<sup>181</sup> A month later a letter writer to the *San Francisco Chronicle* succinctly

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<sup>177</sup> “School Code Revisions Proposed by Sen. Tenney,” *Los Angeles Times*, 1 February 1948.

<sup>178</sup> “Students Denounce Unamerican Inquiry,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, 27 February 1947.

<sup>179</sup> “Un-American Report,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, 25 March 1947.

<sup>180</sup> “Tenney and the Facts of Life,” editorial, *San Francisco Chronicle*, 28 February 1947.

<sup>181</sup> L. Varanese, letter, *San Francisco Chronicle*, 4 March 1947.

declared: “I think the Tenney bills are crazy. They will put us in the same position as Germany was under Hitler.”<sup>182</sup>

Concerned parents similarly flooded Earl Warren’s office with objections about Tenney’s proposals. Murray Hill, a father from Richmond, told the governor that “the need is for MORE not less sex education: witness the increasing number of sex crimes, juvenile delinquency in matters of morality and the divorce rate.”<sup>183</sup> Charles Benson, a Los Angeles resident, wrote: “Sex education is necessary in schools because some parents fail to teach their children anything about it. Too many marriages go on the rocks now a days [sic] because people don’t realize the obligations that are involved. Children become sex delinquents because they don’t know any better.”<sup>184</sup> And Eve Bennet Brecher, a mother from Los Angeles, called the bills “a disgrace to the State of California,” and she told Warren: “No one waits until a child is in the twelfth grade to give him proper instructions regarding sex and general living relationships. It is needed when a child is younger.”<sup>185</sup> In late June, the state legislature voted to drop Tenney’s amendments “after much bickering” and when the Education Committee refused to pass them.<sup>186</sup>

By the end of the war decade, California authorities ultimately remained ambivalent about whether parents or schools should take the lead in teaching children

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<sup>182</sup> Bernice Hollister, letter, *San Francisco Chronicle*, 14 May 1947.

<sup>183</sup> Murray Hill, letter to Earl Warren, 16 May 1947, Earl Warren Papers, Legislative Files on Education, California State Archives. Hill went on to tell Warren that he was a “practicing Catholic” and that during a college course on family life education he had “not found anything... which did not increase my faith in the creed of the church.”

<sup>184</sup> Charles Benson, letter to Earl Warren, 12 June 1947, Earl Warren Papers, Legislative Files on Education, California State Archives.

<sup>185</sup> Even Bennet Brecher, letter to Earl Warren, Earl Warren Papers, Legislative Files on Education, California State Archives.

<sup>186</sup> “Bill to Register Sex Offenders Approved,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, 11 June 1947; “Assembly Approves Bill Against Jurisdictional Strikes,” *Los Angeles Times*, 20 June 1947; “Jerthberg, Loeb Nominations to School Posts Confirmed,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, 20 June 1947.

about sex. Unable to decide if classroom-based instruction would help create future happier homes in California or foster playground gossip and undermine parents, state officials equivocated. Their ambivalence left an opening for individual districts to develop their own curricula on the subject, and as early as 1946 San Diego public schools adopted formal programs on sex and family life education for all its students. Los Angeles, too, offered a series of courses on “Family Living” that incorporated sex education.<sup>187</sup> San Francisco officials in 1949, however, rejected such a curriculum because, according to Board of Education member Joseph Alioto, “sex education belongs in the family not in the schools.”<sup>188</sup> Left without guidance from authorities in Sacramento, grassroots proponents of the subject would work to implement their own programs in individual school districts across the state.

### **The Other Side of Sex Education: The Purge of Gay Teachers**

This expansion of government power encompassed both the soft persuasion of sex education and the hard discipline of a police state. The creation of the closet included two mutually reinforcing shifts in governance: the official promotion of marital heterosexuality and the repression of people who deviated from that norm. In the postwar period, state power shaped the intimate behaviors and relationships of all Americans. Official surveillance and marital education not only reinforced one another, they made all types of sexual expression a matter of public concern. Even straight people, who only adhered to socially acceptable standards of intimacy, knew that government authorities, their employers, or even their neighbors might scrutinize their

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<sup>187</sup> “Shall Our Schools Teach Sex?” *Newsweek*, 19 May 1947

<sup>188</sup> “School Board Opposes Bill on Bible Reading,” *San Francisco Examiner*, 23 March 1949.

sexual relationships. Of course, this expansion of public knowledge and policing never completely eradicated queer behaviors. It did, however, compel their concealment from potentially hostile gazes and effectively meant that no individual truly possessed a completely private life. From homes, schools, and churches, to city streets and commercial districts, almost any site could bring children into contact with social disorder and, therefore, almost any space could become a site of official surveillance.

As with the expansion of sex-related education, public demands drove the repression of queer sexuality. In many cases, it outstripped the ability or willingness of government authorities to enforce existing laws. Liberals and conservatives in the 1940s may have disagreed over whether or not schools could supplement teachings offered in homes and churches, but they shared a mutual concern that the state should forcibly remove people who violated sexual or gender norms from places in which children gathered. Their demands that public officials monitor queer sexuality stemmed in part from postwar fears that molesters roamed urban landscapes, seeking to physically harm children. They also represented the obvious extension of the logic underpinning the most current scientific thinking on human sexual development in the period: when it came to the evolution of an individual's sexuality, environmental factors played an enormous part. Parents and psychologists in the late 1940s worried as much about the mental harm children might endure if exposed to queer role models as they did about the physical damage potentially inflicted by molesters. In order to cleanse their families' environments of adults who might adversely affect their mental development, voters and government authorities worked diligently to criminalize forms of sexual behavior outside of marriage, demanded the imprisonment or hospitalization of those who violated those

norms, and, most critically, insisted upon a purge of gay teachers from the state's classrooms.<sup>189</sup>

As with the push for sex education, local, state, and national PTAs played an influential role in demanding restrictions on individuals whom they believed posed threats to both the physical and mental health of children. In the late 1940s, the group's volunteers in cities around the country served as "block mothers," staking out street corners and alleys during the hours when children walked to school.<sup>190</sup> In 1947 San Francisco's 2<sup>nd</sup> District PTA worried about gay cruising in neighborhood parks, and the group asked city officials "to curb the sex perverts" and for more supervision at playgrounds "to protect the children."<sup>191</sup> In 1949 the group met with San Francisco authorities to "demand [that] supervision and surveillance of sex offenders be tightened."<sup>192</sup> The *Chronicle* reported that year that when judges refused to give offenders the maximum sentence, a committee of PTA members mobilized "to meet with authorities and to urge greater penalties."<sup>193</sup>

The postwar panic in the late 1940s represented a particularly acute period in which the CCPT joined with other parents' groups to demand that the state take even greater action. In November 1949, the San Francisco's District PTA joined groups from other parts of the state to request that Governor Warren call a special session of the

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<sup>189</sup> For a history of teacher firings that uses the Cold War as a primary category of analysis see Karen Graves, *And They Were Wonderful Teachers: Florida's Purge of Gay and Lesbian Teachers* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2009).

<sup>190</sup> Whitman, "The City that is Doing Something About Sex Crime," 64.

<sup>191</sup> Second District PTA, Executive Board Meeting Minutes, 17 September 1947, San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library.

<sup>192</sup> Second District CCPT, *Executive Board Meeting*, 21 November 1949; Mrs. J.D. Forbes, "Resolution on Attempted Kidnapping," *District Meeting Minutes*, 29 November 1949, Second District PTA Records.

<sup>193</sup> "Second District Urges Sex Offender Control," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 2 November 1949.

legislature to look into the problem of sex crimes.<sup>194</sup> At the organization's urging, the State Assembly Judiciary Committee recommended significantly stiffer penalties for sex crimes, including a twenty year prison sentence for sodomy, and advocated the strengthening of the law requiring the registration of offenders. State PTA Juvenile Protection Chairman Elizabeth Lewis approvingly noted that whereas the "CCPT was an organization crying in the wilderness" at the end of the war, "there are now moves on the part of many official groups from all levels, statewide, county and municipal."<sup>195</sup>

At the end of 1949, parents' groups prompted Earl Warren to host a previously unscheduled conference on "sex crimes against children" and spurred the legislature to hold hearings on the subject beginning in December of that year. The Governor's meeting not only recognized public outrage over the seeming outbreak of postwar "perversion" but also called for greater watchfulness and cooperation between the state and its citizens. The *San Francisco Chronicle* reported that Warren pledged, "constant vigilance from 'cops on the beat' and all law enforcement officers on the grass roots level."<sup>196</sup> Don Keller, San Diego's District Attorney, argued that public authorities could not shoulder the burden alone, and he gave the conference a number of recommendations, including that "parents should know their children's whereabouts," that "children should be warned not to ride with or accept favors from strangers, and that officials should "encourage the practice of bringing children... into the home after dark."<sup>197</sup> The conference made a series of recommendations to the legislature, which included

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<sup>194</sup> Second District CCPT, *District Meeting Minutes*, 29 November 1949, Second District PTA Records, San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library.

<sup>195</sup> Mrs. J.D. Forbes, "Juvenile Protection," *Cable Grams*, newsletter, January 1950, Second District PTA Records, San Francisco History Center, SFPL.

<sup>196</sup> "Conference on Sex Crimes," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 8 December 1949.

<sup>197</sup> Governor's Law Enforcement Agencies' Conference on Sex Crimes Against Children," *Summary Report*, Sacramento, CA, 7 December 1949, Institute for Governmental Studies, University of California, Berkeley, 1-2.

increased penalties for adults who molested children, stiffened vagrancy laws and prohibitions against homosexuality, fingerprint records for anyone convicted of a sex crime of any kind, and mandatory registration of offenders with their local police departments.<sup>198</sup>

These demands for greater state surveillance of queer sexuality, including acts between consenting adults, also accompanied calls for more education on straight family life. CCPT Juvenile Protection Chairman, Elizabeth Lewis told officials at the Governor's Conference on Sex Crimes that, "The basic answer probably lies in early and adequate sex education in home and school. Certain maladjustments could be avoided or recognized in time for something to be done about them."<sup>199</sup> San Francisco Judge Milton Sapiro concurred with Lewis, and he told the conference that the state could do more to prevent sex crimes by raising public awareness on the issue. "Prevention is... a matter of education," he argued. "Parents play a great role in prevention, first through the process of sex education of their children which may result in the kind of control of sex impulses that would prevent these offenses, and second in training so as to teach children not to place themselves in situations with strangers where these occurrences might happen."<sup>200</sup> Reverend E. C. Farnham of the Southern California Council of Protestant Churches similarly contended that when it come to preventing sex crimes, the state should buttress those institutions that helped build the moral character of children of young people. He asserted that the first line of defense against this problem included "the home, the church, the school, the recreational and character building institutions... and the other socially responsible organizations." Together, Farnham argued that these agencies could help

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<sup>198</sup> Ibid. 8-11.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid.

<sup>200</sup> "Excerpt from Testimony of Judge Milton D. Sapiro," Governor's Conference on Mental Health, 133-4.



support the work of parents, and he declared: “marital trouble in the home, whether concealed or overt, is a threat to the emotional stability of the children in the home and out of this situation may come the sex criminal of a few years hence.”<sup>201</sup>

Over the course of the late 1940s, public pressure spurred the creation of a series of laws criminalizing sex between adults and children or between adults of the same sex. At one of its meetings in Sacramento in 1947, for example, A.A. Scott, a Los Angeles judge meeting with the Special Crime Commission on Juvenile Justice, called for a study “to take care of the investigation of individuals who are designated as homosexuals, who are a constant bother to us.” That year the legislature passed a law requiring convicted sex offenders to register with their local sheriff’s department, and enacted a law that specifically forbade “the practice of spying into the windows or doors of a human habitation.”<sup>202</sup>

The state proved reluctant or unable to enforce these decrees, and within just a few years of their enactment public pressure mounted again to tighten surveillance of the state’s sex offenders. George Brereton, a senior official at the Department of Corrections, complained in 1949 that two years after the policy’s implementation only 719 of California’s estimated convicted 4,300 sex offenders had registered with the police.<sup>203</sup> In March 1949 State Senator Hugh Burns of Fresno sought to prevent the prison system from paroling people convicted of two or more sex offenses, including “perversion,” assault, or “lewd and lascivious conduct.”<sup>204</sup> And at a hearing in San

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<sup>201</sup> “Statement of Rev. E.C. Farnham,” Governor’s Conference on Sex Crimes, 218.

<sup>202</sup> “Assembly Passes Bill Against Jurisdictional Strikes,” *Los Angeles Times*, 20 June 1947; California Assembly Interim Committee on Judicial System and Judicial Process, Subcommittee on Sex Crimes, *Preliminary Report*, 1950.

<sup>203</sup> “Death Penalty Urged for Child Molesters,” *Los Angeles Times*, 8 December 1949.

<sup>204</sup> “Parole Curb Urged in Sex Offenses,” *San Francisco Examiner*, 6 March 1949.

Francisco in 1949, the Special Crime Commission on Juvenile Justice's chairman, Charles De Young Elkus, acknowledged that "there is a growing active dissatisfaction in the way we are handling our sex offenders in this state," and in its final report the committee recommended that the Legislature fund a study on how to treat "abnormal sex behavior."<sup>205</sup>

In December 1949 and January 1950, the legislature created a special Subcommittee on Sex Crimes, which catalogued California's laws, compared them to those in other states, and consulted with concerned parents and medical professionals on how to address the issue. Although the group acknowledged that, "California has not been engulfed by a wave of sex crimes," it capitulated to the concerns of voters, and it formally recommended the compulsory registration of perpetrators and the use of fingerprinting to track repeat offenders.<sup>206</sup> Even more significantly, it called for greater support from parents, teachers, and religious leaders in instructing children on the dangers of sex crimes, and it specifically enlisted the state's PTAs in its public awareness campaign. It warned that, "children are not in all instances instructed in the home and in the schools as to precautionary measures to safeguard them against sex offenses."<sup>207</sup> Although it did not make an official recommendation on the issue, the subcommittee reported that many witnesses who spoke at its hearings asked for the "family life education of children to be conducted in both the home and church," and that, "special

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<sup>205</sup> Special Crime Commission on Juvenile Justice, Meeting Transcript, Public Health Building, San Francisco, CA, 21 March 1949, 243, California State Archives, Sacramento,

<sup>206</sup> Subcommittee on Sex Crimes, *Preliminary Report*, 72-5.

<sup>207</sup> Subcommittee on Sex Crimes, *Preliminary Report*, 75.

consideration be given to the curriculum and to the personnel to handle such an education program in the school.”<sup>208</sup>

In November 1949 Governor Warren called for the state’s courts and parole boards to treat sex offenses as the most serious form of crime, and asked them to avoid lenient sentencing. “Parents, teachers, and citizens should generally report every offense,” he declared, and “the Police should make a drive to keep known sex psychopaths from places where children gather- such as playgrounds, bus stations, schools, etc.”<sup>209</sup> In that same year the California legislature passed bills allowing courts to send molesters to the gas chamber if their crimes involved the death of a child, and permitting them to sentence people who committed “unnatural” sex acts such as homosexuality to twenty years in prison.<sup>210</sup>

The sympathetic response of public officials in Sacramento further reinforced the mobilization of parents at the grassroots on behalf of averting crimes against children and expanding education on sex and straight family life in the public schools. In the wake of their interactions with the state and local government, the San Francisco District PTA held its own series of meetings on the subject of sex offenders. In January 1950 the group held a two-day conference at a hotel in San Francisco to discuss further recommendations and legislative proposals to curb crimes against children.<sup>211</sup> Even as the group attempted to elevate public awareness of these crimes, it also promoted programs on sex education for parents at large. In the same meeting that it voted to ask District Attorney Brown for the disposition of child molestation cases in San Francisco,

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<sup>208</sup> Ibid. 65-6.

<sup>209</sup> “Sex Offender Law Needs Enforcing, Warren Says,” *Los Angeles Times*, 23 November 1949.

<sup>210</sup> “Senate Votes Death for Sex Crimes,” *Los Angeles Times*, 17 December 1949.

<sup>211</sup> “PTA Board to Hold Conference,” *San Francisco Examiner*, 11 January 1950.

the Second District's Executive Board resolved to examine the state of family life education in the city's schools.<sup>212</sup> In January 1950, the CCPT began broadcasting a series on childrearing on radio stations across California, and San Francisco's District PTA voted to begin showing the motion picture *Human Beginnings* with "qualified personnel" at their meetings.<sup>213</sup>

Although people across the country would face stricter state surveillance, teachers endured particularly stringent scrutiny. While California's parents and political leaders lacked a clear consensus on sex education in the state's classrooms, they shared a common concern about "sex deviates" working in the education system. In a cultural environment in which many Americans worried about straight family life and in which they saw teachers as role models for young children similar to parents, the sex lives of education personnel came under formal surveillance. In many ways, this concern about teachers extended the logic implicit in the debates over sex education: some parents had allegedly failed to teach their children about appropriate behavior, and most Americans expected public institutions, such as the schools, to offer them support. Even as groups such as the PTA demanded expanded programs on sex education for both adults and adolescents, public officials turned inward to scrutinize the people who worked in California's schools to ensure that none of them would adversely affect the "normal" mental development of their students.

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<sup>212</sup> Second District CCPT, *Executive Board Meeting*, 21 November 1949.

<sup>213</sup> California Congress of Parents and Teachers, with the cooperation of 20<sup>th</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Districts, "The Inquiring Parent," n.d. Second District PTA Records; Second District CCPT, *Executive Board Meeting Minutes*, 18 January 1950, Second District PTA Records. At the same meeting the group resolved to "study conditions in their neighborhoods that might be contributing to the hoodlumnism that is now going on [sic]." See also "Two Oregon Films Brought to City," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 4 December 1949.

While school employees in the 1930s or early 1940s may have faced harassment or termination, the California Department of Education launched a coordinated statewide purge of gay teachers after the war. Between 1947 and 1949, multiple state authorities recommended that school administrators work with law enforcement agencies to screen out potentially dangerous employees. At the Governor's Conference on Sex Crimes, for example, Alfred Lentz, Administrative Advisor for the State Department of Education, confessed that his agency knew that, "there were sexual deviates in public school employment, threatening the safety and welfare of pupils." Lentz pledged that, "the department was making every effort to remove persons known to be sex deviates from school employment" and to prevent the entrance of such persons into the public school system."<sup>214</sup> The larger conference went on to recommend that law enforcement officials should routinely notify the State Board of Education when courts convicted teachers of sex crimes and that they should fingerprint all applicants for teaching licenses.<sup>215</sup> The Assembly Subcommittee on Sex Crimes concurred, arguing that, "fingerprinting would be of assistance in the screening of all doubtful personnel engaged in activities having constant contact with children."<sup>216</sup>

Although public officials at these meetings wanted to eliminate obvious physical threats to children, they also specifically sought to use the public education system to nurture straight sexuality among its pupils. They contended that inadequate relationships between parents and children created a poor climate for individual emotional development, and they contended that schools could either aggravate or ameliorate that problem. In its preliminary report, the Panel on Preventative Mental Hygiene for the

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<sup>214</sup> Governor's Conference on Sex Crimes, *Summary Report*, 5.

<sup>215</sup> *Ibid.* 11.

<sup>216</sup> Subcommittee on Sex Crimes, *Preliminary Report*, 75.

Governor's Conference on Mental Health remarked that "for some, the school represents the extension of the early satisfactory experiences; for others a change for better or worse; but for all- it is an experience that ranks second only to the home in building or maintaining mental health."<sup>217</sup> In its final report, the committee asserted that "schools are engaged in human engineering," and it recommended that all teachers learn the fundamentals of normal psychological growth since they came into frequent contact with children and their families, and therefore occupied "a position of strategic importance."<sup>218</sup>

This circulation of scientific information on human sexual development to teachers incorporated them into the state's postwar family-building project, paralleled the concurrent parent education campaigns, and ultimately justified the purge of queer personnel. At the Governor's Conference on Sex Crimes Against Children, Los Angeles school Superintendent Alexander Stoddard firmly linked the need for instruction on sex and straight family life and the need to remove teachers with "abnormal tendencies" from the education system. He argued that in order to reduce the number of sex offenders in the general population schools needed to provide students with a "clean, wholesome environment" in order to help them form "morally sound" personal relationships. The superintendent pledged to develop curricula on sex and straight family life, noting that, "If boys and girls know and understand the normal growth process they will be more capable and inclined to discern and reject the abnormal."<sup>219</sup> At the same time, he vowed to vigorously screen out any school worker with "a history of aberrant sexual behavior,"

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<sup>217</sup> Panel on Preventative Hygiene, *Preliminary Statement*, 4.

<sup>218</sup> Panel on Preventative Hygiene, *Final Report*, 33, 38.

<sup>219</sup> "Statement of Dr. Alexander J. Stoddard," Governor's Conference on Sex Crimes, 181-4.

and to push students and teachers to “be constantly on the lookout for suspicious strangers loitering in or near school buildings.”<sup>220</sup>

Although individual superintendents technically had the power to terminate teachers, the state’s licensing system served as the principal tool for the exclusion of gay teachers. The Board of Education required all instructors working in California to receive official credentials, and authorities in Sacramento policed the sexuality of individual school employees by denying or revoking their licenses. Although public officials spoke out against allowing gay teachers in 1949 and the legislature did not specifically forbid their employment until 1952, the State Department of Education first directed local administrators to report employees it suspected of homosexual conduct in 1948. In a letter to every county superintendent in the state, a senior official working for the Superintendent of Public Instruction asserted that, “The Department has been recently advised by the Attorney General’s Office that we have the authority to proceed in securing the revocation of credentials held by individuals who are admitted homosexuals even though they have not been convicted by court.” The official went on to request that the county superintendents provide them with the names of employees who had admitted committing a homosexual act, and promised, “to proceed in securing the revocation of the state credentials held by such individuals.”<sup>221</sup>

This directive from the Department of Education set in motion a wave of mass firings and helped found a sexual legal system that would remain firmly in place until the late 1960s. In the two decades following its circulation, the top school officials revoked

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<sup>220</sup> Ibid.

<sup>221</sup> Letter to Chief Administrative Officers, 3 March 1948, Teachers Credentialing Commission, Investigative Files, California State Archives. Due to a confidentiality agreement required by the California State Archives, I am not allowed to reveal the names of anyone who is mentioned in these records.

the licenses of anyone arrested- but not necessarily convicted- of violating the state's laws against sex between adults of the same-sex, and clandestinely investigated teachers who their colleagues or superiors believed to be queer. In a 1960 review of the Department of Education's credentialing policy, administrative advisors working for the state noted that concerns about teachers fell into three categories, "professional training," "health," and "character," and went on to observe that "the vast preponderance of credential matters, involving both applicants and holders of credentials, which result in investigation, review by the Commission of Credentials, or in hearings... are on the issue of character."<sup>222</sup> Their conception of "character" problems ranged from professional misconduct, alleged affiliations with the Communist Party, criminal violations, to an elastic conception of normal mental health that allowed state authorities to revoke credentials if they suspected that an employees behavior would adversely affect the psychological development of children.

Policing teachers required a dramatic expansion of the state's bureaucracy. A review conducted by the Department of Education in 1960 noted that since the legislature approved the fingerprinting of school employees, the agency had processed 70,000 applications and produced 4,000 arrest records for a number of different infractions.<sup>223</sup> These cases included rape, child molestation, and numerous other acts, but the overwhelming number of the files currently retained by the California State Archives pertained to gay teachers caught up in dragnets set by local police. When legislators in Sacramento formally required the removal of instructors convicted of sex crimes in 1952, former San Francisco prosecutor and current California Attorney General Edmund Brown

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<sup>222</sup> Intradepartment correspondence, 6 May 1960, Teachers Credentialing Commission, Investigative Files.

<sup>223</sup> Intradepartment correspondence, 6 May 1960, Teachers Credentialing Commission, Investigative Files.



promised to also apply the law retroactively to anyone ever arrested for such an offense.<sup>224</sup> In that same year the Department of Education created its own staff of internal investigators to look into allegations of misconduct brought by school employees or parents. Although it is impossible to determine exactly how many teachers lost their credentials for gay-related sex crimes, an internal investigation undertaken by the department in mid-1963 revealed that in the previous three and half years the state's Commission of Credentials had revoked the licenses of 109 teachers for sex crime convictions alone.<sup>225</sup>

Court convictions only represented a fraction of the number of teachers dismissed from their positions for homosexuality. As indicated by the 1948 memo sent to county superintendents, the Department of Education sought only an arrest or the "admission" of homosexuality before pursuing disciplinary action, and, in many cases, the mere suspicion of local police officers spurred school officials to conduct their own investigations.<sup>226</sup> Officials in Sacramento frequently used the information they gathered to compel employees to "voluntarily" request the termination of their credentials. In a 1948 letter, an administrative advisor at the State Department of Education informed an instructor who had been arrested in Oakland and San Francisco for "moral delinquency" before the war, that, "This office has information concerning your arrests... Under the

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<sup>224</sup> Memo, 25 April 1961, Teachers Credentialing Commission, Investigative Files, California State Archives.

<sup>225</sup> Everett Calvert, *A Report of the California Commission of Credentials of the State Department of Education*, 1963, 6, Department of Education Records, Commission of Credentials Reports, California State Archives.

<sup>226</sup> When a private attorney from Southern California challenged the dismissal of a teacher who had been acquitted of a homosexual-related crime, state officials reacted by asserting in an internal memo: "The request of the attorney appears to be based solely on the fact that Mr.—had been acquitted of criminal charges. I do not think this information (which was previously known to the Commission) constitutes persuasive grounds for a reversal by the Commission or a reconsideration of its prior determination [to revoke the teacher's credentials]." Intradepartment Correspondence, 14 November 1961, Department of Education Records, Commission of Credentials, Investigative Files.

circumstances it is best that you immediately request the State Board of Education to revoke all credentials issued by the Board and held by you.”<sup>227</sup> In exchange for their compliance, the state offered teachers suspected of sexual misconduct a pledge to protect their privacy. In a 1955 letter to a Southern California man, for instance, a special agent for the Department of Education promised: “This procedure... voids the necessity of appearing before a State Hearing Officer... as well as preventing adverse publicity to all concerned.”<sup>228</sup> In its own internal inquiry, the Department of Education concluded that 158 of the 199 “voluntary” revocations it oversaw between 1960 and 1963 “involved sex misconduct.”<sup>229</sup>

The crackdown transcended the direct revocation of credentials; it also subjected all teachers and their families to official surveillance. By making an instructor’s sexual conduct a prerequisite for employment and by exposing gay teachers to public shame, the Department of Education compelled all of its employees to conceal relationships or behaviors that might expose them to legal action or social sanction. In order to uncover potential misconduct, state investigators examined every relationship in a teacher’s non-professional life, and they saw even minute details as potential evidence for dismissal. In a 1954 case, a state agent looked into allegations that a male vice-principal in the Los Angeles-area had molested high school boys, and he reported that, although the administrator was married, his “reputation in that area is that he is a homosexual.” The investigator discovered that the police had previously arrested the vice principal’s wife for “lodging at a hotel with a sailor,” and that another teacher “under suspicion as a

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<sup>227</sup> Letter, 9 June 1948, Department of Education Records, Commission of Credentials, Investigative Files.

<sup>228</sup> Letter, 1 September 1955, Department of Education Records, Commission of Credentials, Investigative Files.

<sup>229</sup> Calvert, *A Report of the California Commission of Credentials of the State Department of Education*, 6.

lesbian” currently rented one of his former apartments.<sup>230</sup> In 1959, a superintendent from Riverside asked the state to look into the background of a teacher in Palm Springs because “his actions indicate that he could be a homosexual, and certain things do not check out.”<sup>231</sup>

These policies subjected even senior administrators to state surveillance. In the most dramatic case of the purge, California investigators compelled the resignation of a senior education official in San Francisco in 1955. The administrator first came to their attention in 1950 after a secret informant repeated rumors to state authorities that the male administrator had allegedly carried on an affair with a man from an educational film company.<sup>232</sup> After conducting their own inquiry, state investigators passed along their findings to the San Francisco Board of Education in the hopes that they would terminate the senior official.<sup>233</sup> When, for unknown reasons, the board failed to take action, authorities at the Department of Education leaked a compromising letter about the allegedly queer school administrator to a prominent Methodist minister in the city. The clergyman, in turn, passed the investigators’ note over to San Francisco District Attorney Thomas Lynch and to parents’ groups. In 1954, the city launched a grand jury investigation of the school official, and in 1955 newspaper columnist Herb Caen reported: “Scurrilous anonymous letters about a top S.F. official are being circulated

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<sup>230</sup> Intradepartment Correspondence, Memo, 29 September 1954, Teachers Credentialing Commission, Investigative Files.

<sup>231</sup> Letter, 21 September 1959, Teachers Credentialing Commission, Investigative Files.

<sup>232</sup> Intradepartment Correspondence, 16 January 1950, “Mr. Hush” File, Teachers Credentialing Commission Investigative Files.

<sup>233</sup> Letter, 8 December 1952, Teachers Credentialing Investigative Files.

among 22,000 members of the local [PTA].”<sup>234</sup> Just a year later, the senior administrator resigned under duress.<sup>235</sup>

Reflecting the postwar belief that men held more aggressive sex drives than women, state authorities devoted almost all of their attention to threats posed by male teachers. In the files retained by the California State Archives only three cases focused on possible lesbian relationships. In one case, the superintendent of an elementary school district in Merced County reported in 1954 that two teachers working under her had engaged in activities “alleged to be of a homosexual nature.” The evidence amassed by the administrator included the fact that the two women lived together, had joint bank accounts, that they purchased real estate together, and, mysteriously, “during a television show in discussing their mode of living, they stated that they wore each others underwear.”<sup>236</sup> A year later, the Department of Education called the former superintendent of the Modesto Junior College after a police officer reported that he had received complaints that one of the instructors who worked there might be a “sex deviate (Lesbian).”<sup>237</sup> And in 1959 the concerns of an administrator in Carmel provoked the

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<sup>234</sup> Herb Caen, “Baghdad by the Bay,” *San Francisco Examiner*, 19 January 1955.

<sup>235</sup> It is important to note that the state relied primarily on tips from confidential sources to make its case and that it consciously played different political interests in San Francisco off one another. The state’s stance on homosexuality subjected all educators to official surveillance and suspicion. In several instances, a confidential source within the San Francisco Department of Education provided investigators with hearsay and impressionistic evidence about their target. In one instance, the informant alleged that the administrator had hired a male secretary that she found “‘queer’ and ‘odd’ looking.” Letter to Department Investigator, 12 August 1954, Teachers Credentialing Commission, Investigative Files. When state officials considered how to handle the Board of Education’s refusal to fire the official, the informant alleged that the mayor was “queer” and was protecting the school administrator. The same informant counseled investigators to leak the incriminating letter to the Methodist minister because the clergyman believed the target of their inquiry had argued in favor of protecting Catholic parochial schools from taxation. Letter to Department Investigator, 24 January 1955, Teachers Credentialing Commission, Investigative Files.

<sup>236</sup> Internal memo, no title, 20 January 1954, Teachers Credentialing Commission, Investigative Files.

<sup>237</sup> Internal memo, no title, 7 October 1955, Teachers Credentialing Commission, Investigative Files.

extended investigation of a female principal who lived with another woman who worked as a stenographer at the same school.<sup>238</sup>

Although the Department of Education principally targeted gay men, its investigations also subjected heterosexual women, particularly single ones, to increased scrutiny. In the two decades after the Second World War, California and many local jurisdictions prosecuted women for sex outside of marriage and these arrests frequently came to the attention of the Department of Education. Female promiscuity, like male homosexuality, potentially justified the denial or revocation of a teacher's credential, and the state looked into several cases involving women arrested for heterosexual sex outside of marriage. In 1950, it followed up on the arrest of a homemaking teacher whom the Long Beach police found sharing a bed with a man who was not her husband.<sup>239</sup> In a 1956 case the Commission of Credentials looked into the arrest of a female teacher in Oceanside for sharing a hotel room with man.<sup>240</sup> And in a 1959 case from San Francisco, it responded to a note written by a parent education teacher's husband, who alleged that his wife had moved in with another man and who thought that "a person who does this is unfit to supervise children and adults especially in the school system."<sup>241</sup>

Despite the public humiliation and threats to their careers, all of the women who endured probes from the Department of Education retained their positions. Women faced

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<sup>238</sup> Intradepartment Correspondence, 22 April 1958, Department of Education Records, Commission of Credentials, Investigative Files.

<sup>239</sup> Long Beach Police Department, Report of Arrest, 22 July 1950, Teachers Credentialing Commission, Investigative Files, California State Archives. It is worth pointing out that the Long Beach Police, after receiving a "neighborhood complaint," took on the role of "peeping toms" to enforce the law when they "looked into an open window and observed the defendant and a man... both in bed in the rear bedroom of this house."

<sup>240</sup> Letter, 5 December 1956, Teachers Credentialing Commission, Investigative Files, California State Archives.

<sup>241</sup> Letter to San Francisco Board of Education, 19 October 1959, Teachers Credentialing Commission, Investigative Files.

a double standard when it came to extramarital sex, but state officials viewed such indiscretions merely as a socially unacceptable extension of an otherwise “normal” heterosexual impulse. Even in some cases involving female homosexuality, they presumed that women’s less aggressive sex drives would keep them from hurting the mental development of children. The Commission decided in the Oceanside case, for example, to grant the woman’s application for a credential, despite having pleaded no contest after her arrest.<sup>242</sup> In its probe of the two female teachers who lived together in Merced County the state concluded that, “Further investigation has failed to reflect sufficient evidence to substantiate the allegations contained in the report that the Subject[s] [were] immoral person[s].”<sup>243</sup> State officials notably exerted very little effort to look into the allegations that the instructor at Modesto Junior College was a lesbian, and they terminated the case after one agent followed up with a local police officer and a complaining witness, and noted, “I have not received any calls or other information from either to date.”<sup>244</sup>

Although the state’s investigatory system cost thousands of instructors their jobs and likely deterred many queer workers from pursuing careers in teaching, some teachers successfully contested their expulsion and state officials frequently found enforcement difficult. In 1958, after lengthy deliberations, the California Board of Education voted to restore the credential of a Bay Area teacher whom the police had previously arrested for a homosexual solicitation. State officials made their decision based on the fact that the

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<sup>242</sup> Letter, 5 December 1956, Teachers Credentialing Commission, Investigative Files, California State Archives.

<sup>243</sup> Case report, no title, 17 December 1954, Teachers Credentialing Commission, Investigative Files.

<sup>244</sup> Internal memo, no title, 7 October 1955, Teachers Credentialing Commission, Investigative Files. After looking through federal welfare, immigration, and military records in the early- to mid- 20<sup>th</sup> Century, historian Margot Canaday argues that government officials subjected to gay men to higher levels of scrutiny because “they valued male citizens more than female ones.” Canaday, *The Straight State*.

incriminating incident had taken place in 1953 and that the teacher had not committed any deviant acts since then. In order to prove his rehabilitation the instructor reported that he was married, declared that he had two sons, and provided numerous letters of support from church leaders, psychiatrists, his spouse, and employer. In a review of his case, a hearing officer counseled the board to reinstate the teacher's credential based on a psychiatrist's recommendation and the alleged fact that his solicitation of an undercover male police officer "was an outgrowth of marital difficulties" and that since then he had "led a normal happy married life."<sup>245</sup>

Although teachers could sometimes contest their termination, evasion proved a more successful tactic for many of them. The Department of Education notably found enforcing its policies difficult. In 1963, Assistant Superintendent Everett Calvert complained that the 1952 law requiring all teachers to submit fingerprints to law enforcement officials had "created a 'monster' within the Department of Education," and that the "workload is insurmountable and can only be alleviated by a staff increase."<sup>246</sup> In 1957 the *San Francisco Examiner* reported that two local teachers had worked in the city school system undetected until recently, despite previous arrests for soliciting sex from other men. In one case, the police failed to report the teacher to state authorities because he "mentioned nothing about being a schoolteacher," and the Department of Education only found out about the arrest after the *Examiner* published its story on the scandal.<sup>247</sup>

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<sup>245</sup> Hearing on the Matter of the Applications for a General Secondary Credential in Correction of Speech Defects, and the Junior College Credential of --, hearing transcript, Minutes of California State Board of Education, November 1957. Final decision was rendered in 1958, Minutes of California State Board of Education, November 1958, 8210-17. The name of the teacher in this case is a matter of public record, but in order to protect his privacy, I have elected not to use his name here.

<sup>246</sup> Calvert, *A Report of the California Commission of Credentials of the State Department of Education*, 67.

<sup>247</sup> "Another S.F. Teacher Out as Morals Case Disclosed," *San Francisco Examiner*, 21 March 1957.

The fact that some employees evaded state surveillance, however, did not mean that the system had little effect. The postwar closet not only required formal scrutiny of teachers' sexuality, it also offered an important inducement for queer people to pass as straight. Although public officials undoubtedly would have preferred to remove anyone they suspected of homosexuality from California's classrooms, they settled for the illusion of nearly universal straightness. Part of the damage inflicted by the closet, therefore, lay in its ability to convince people that queer sex required concealment and that no one really suffered for having hidden it. By inadvertently allowing some gay teachers to pass undetected, public officials preserved a larger social and legal order that sanctioned some relationships between consenting adults but not others.<sup>248</sup>

## **Conclusion**

By the early 1950s, the state saw the protection of straight family life as one of its central concerns. This use of public power to regulate sexuality provided the foundation for the postwar closet, and although it played out most obviously in the direct repression of gay men and lesbians it also included the development of parent and student-centered sex education programs. The dissemination of material on straight family life through magazines such as *California Parent-Teacher* represented the flip side of the firing of gay teachers. Both campaigns stemmed from a similar cultural logic, in which adults with direct contact with children stood as potential threats to the larger community.

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<sup>248</sup> Historian Margot Canaday makes a similar point. She argues: "That so many went undetected suggests less the limitations of state power than the law's light touch in realizing its aims. The closet, after all, was a deliberate state strategy that became increasingly explicit toward the end of the [20<sup>th</sup>] century. Its brilliance was in inviting people to pass and then suggesting that they suffered no harm because they could hide. Yet the incitement to pass was part of the harm, and so much more effectively did the state shape its citizenry by letting people un under certain conditions than by keeping them out absolutely." Canaday, *The Straight State*, 256.



Blaming juvenile delinquency, homosexuality, divorce, and child molestation on the collective failures of parents and teachers, postwar psychologist, PTA volunteers, and public officials all worked together politicize the role of mothers, fathers, and school instructors.

In the coming decade the politicization of the school system and mobilization of parents at the grassroots would take place in a metropolis increasingly divided by sexuality, race, and class. Over the course of the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s federal housing regulations would mirror state and national educational policies, sorting people based on their sexuality and helping to build entire communities specifically for straight families. In these decades California would undergo one of the longest home, school, and church building booms of the twentieth century, and the state's PTAs would pull in new members at astronomical rates. In this context, controversies over sex education would later reemerge at the local level, as middle-class parents pushed for their schools to teach their children about the importance of straight marriage and family life.

## Chapter 2

### Boom: Bedrooms, Babies, and the Making of a Straight Suburban Public

#### Introduction

For California's postwar city builders, biology was destiny. In the early 1950s, planners in the Bay Area suburbs saw each part of their municipalities as a series of interconnected units, and, taken together, they believed those bits mirrored the components of life itself. "The community," proclaimed the Santa Clara County Planning Commission in 1951, "may be considered as a celled organism. Each cell is in part independent and identifiable as residential, commercial or industrial but all the cells are integrated in an organic relationship."<sup>1</sup> In the two decades after the Second World War, San Francisco's suburbs sat on the receiving end of one of the largest sexual migrations in the history of the United States, and the natal metaphors employed by the region's planners spoke of the promise they envisioned in the South Bay's farms and orchards. By 1960 the arrival of almost a quarter of a million young parents had transformed the sparsely populated agricultural communities of San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties into a massive series of interlocking suburbs that stretched from the outskirts of San Francisco to the base of the Santa Cruz Mountains. With each wave of arrivals, the public officials of the Peninsula and the South Bay replicated the "cells" of their communities- one by one- until they consumed the entire Santa Clara Valley.

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<sup>1</sup> Santa Clara County Planning Commission, *Sunnyvale Planning Program*, 1951.

In the two decades after the Second World War, the construction of these suburbs gave married couples a material investment in straightness and enabled the formation of new social networks based around parenting and heteronormative sexuality. Beginning in the 1940s, an upsurge in marriages and procreative sex literally drove demand for new housing. Scores of newlyweds, many of them returning veterans, all entered the postwar real estate market simultaneously as they sought new homes for their families. Their marriages and subsequent Baby Boom, however, did not spur massive residential construction projects on the metropolitan fringe alone. Suburbanization also brought together a combination of public officials and private investors who sought to specifically profit from the construction of communities for married couples with children. This alliance of state actors and market agents made normative heterosexuality one of the principal requirements for the purchase of a new home, helped concentrate white, middle-class, straight families in new neighborhoods in unprecedented numbers, and set the stage for a regional economy that used the presence of married people with children as a barometer for business investment. By tying marital status to economics, this process dramatically reshaped the sexual make-up of communities at the center and periphery of the postwar metropolis, and it set the structural foundation for the “culture wars” of the late twentieth century.

In the last fifteen years, scholars have aptly demonstrated the ways in which the state’s involvement in the postwar housing market made whites the primary beneficiaries of New Deal housing programs and deepened racial residential segregation, spurring one historian to call suburbanization a process that “resembled apartheid.”<sup>2</sup> Almost none of

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<sup>2</sup> Robert Self, *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University, 2005), 97. See also Kenneth Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United*

these accounts, however, have addressed the significant role sexuality played in metropolitan development, and this historical omission leaves contemporary debates over gay rights, the role of marriage, and sexual privacy largely understood primarily as “cultural issues,” independent of larger political and economic processes. By underscoring the significant role sexuality played in metropolitan development this chapter not only seeks to expand existing scholarship on suburbanization, but also to integrate gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender history into existing academic debates about urban inequality and the welfare state. Government officials and business leaders have never treated sexuality in a neutral fashion; uncovering their historic role can shed new light on the relationship among sex, race, and class in America.<sup>3</sup>

Reexamining these discussions demands an exploration of the ways in which capitalism and the state’s intervention in the market make different conceptions of sexuality possible. As scholars such as John D’Emilio and Michael Warner have argued, capitalism since the nineteenth century has both disrupted straight family life by compelling individual migrations to urban centers and has widened awareness of queer practices through the circulation of pornographic books, magazine, and films.<sup>4</sup> The federal government’s intervention in the housing market after the Second World War,

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*States* (New York: Oxford University, 1986); Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumer’s Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Knopf, 2004); and David Freund, *Colored Property: Federal Policy and White Racial Politics in Suburban America* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2007). For other books that deal with race and suburbanization see Becky Nicolaides, *My Blue Heaven: Life and Politics in the Working-Class Suburbs of Los Angeles, 1920-1965* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2002) and Andrew Wiese, *Places of Their Own: African American Suburbanization in the Twentieth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2003).

<sup>3</sup> For academic discussions of urban inequality and the welfare state see Michael Katz, *The Undeserving Poor: From the War on Poverty to the War on Welfare* (New York: Pantheon, 1990); Michael Katz, editor, *The Underclass Debate: Views from History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University, 1993); Thomas Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University, 1996)

<sup>4</sup> John D’Emilio, “Capitalism and Gay Identity,” in *Making Trouble: Essays on Gay History, Politics, and the University* (New York: Routledge, 1992); Michael Warner, *The Trouble with Normal* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 1999).

however, joined with powerful real estate interests to promote idealized versions of straight marriage and sex. The previous chapter outlined the ways in which postwar psychological, legal, and religious authorities conceived of human sexual growth as an evolutionary process that culminated in marriage and depicted “deviant” sexualities, such as homosexuality, as forms of arrested development. Beginning in the 1940s, public officials and private investors used this worldview to structure the postwar real estate market, setting it in a theory of property that singled out married, white men as the most reliable consumers, and, ultimately, embedded sexual differences into the physical landscape of the postwar metropolis itself. When planners from the period spoke of “growth” and “development,” they described more than just the distribution of industrial or commercial resources. They also consciously deployed a discourse rooted in contemporary psychology that cast the buying and selling of property as an evolutionary process akin to human sexual maturation. In this cultural framework the sexuality of individual consumers and the social construction of sex and urban space dictated property’s value and organized the economics of homeownership.

This process complemented racial segregation, but it also worked quite differently. For the public officials and private investors who made suburbanization possible, racial and sexual exclusivity reinforced one another as mutual signs of stable property markets. The expanded role of the federal government and the empowerment of the real estate industry after the war specifically helped shape normative sexuality in two significant ways. First, almost all of the institutions responsible for the postwar housing boom narrowed the residential market to individuals engaged in straight relationships. Even as state and federal lawmakers criminalized most types of sex between consenting

adults, government interventions in the real estate market gave married people significant advantages in the purchase of a new home. Federal Housing Administration guidelines singled out white, married men as ideal loan applicants, and specifically forbade bank officials to offer mortgages to individuals arrested (but not necessarily convicted) for “crimes of moral turpitude.” Housing developers, realtors, and savings and loan officers crafted promotional campaigns that associated homeownership with strong marriages and “good families.” And suburban officials used their zoning powers to minimize residential or commercial development that might attract people of color, low-income renters, or single inhabitants to their communities. These city builders could never fully exclude all queer residents, but since buying a home represented the largest purchase many consumers would make in their lifetimes, and mortgages frequently rested on the ability of borrowers to convince banks of their reliability, the process created enormous incentives for people to conceal any sexual relationship that might jeopardize that transaction. In addition to keeping out thousands of openly gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people, the institutions that built the postwar suburbs also compelled a notable public silence on queer acts, behaviors, and relationships.

Second, by designing homes, neighborhoods and cities specifically to accommodate married parents, postwar city builders erected a physical landscape that helped to normalize heterosexual relationships. Federal housing authorities, developers, and realtors primarily saw homes as types of property, and their housing construction guidelines mirrored the restrictions they imposed on individual consumers. Even as the state increasingly monitored spaces such as theaters, parks and bars for sexual “deviants,” suburban planners and architects established spaces that signaled the social acceptability

of certain sexual behaviors and welcomed the public gathering of straight communities. Federal housing policies demanded that all new homes shield bedrooms and bathrooms from potentially hostile viewers. Urban planners designed neighborhoods to insulate individual houses from passing traffic. And city officials included schools and churches in clusters of new homes to facilitate the meeting of local parents. Collectively, these spatial arrangements acted as a text, informing residents about the acceptability of straight sex within the home and the presence of a larger, like-minded community.

The building of suburbs in places such as San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties began as an attempt to meet the housing demands of the postwar Baby Boom and as a profit-making enterprise for public officials and private investors. Over the course of the 1950s and 1960s, however, the state's intervention in the real estate market concentrated white, middle-class straight families in new communities in unprecedented numbers. The subsequent strain on fledgling, suburban school districts forced municipal officials to attract outside capital to offset the costs of funding public education on the Peninsula and in the South Bay. In order to attract investment, San Mateo and Santa Clara counties' political and economic elites inflected the logic that propelled the postwar real estate market, and their pitches to national business leaders included promises that industrial firms would find "family friendly" communities from which to draw their workforces. By the early 1960s, the Bay Area's regional economy had tilted southward as influential manufacturing firms, such as Lockheed and IBM, bypassed San Francisco and settled on the Peninsula and in the South Bay.

### **Marriage Boom, the State, and Housing**

Procreative sex lay at the heart of the postwar suburban expansion. In the two decades after the Second World War the United States went through one of the largest marriage and baby booms of its history. In 1946, 2.2 million people married nationwide, and beginning in that same year, the country's collective birthrate soared. In 1947, 3.8 million children were born; 3.9 million were born in 1948; and between 1954 and 1964 at least 4 million of them were born each year.<sup>5</sup> This Baby Boom specifically remade the San Francisco Bay Area in a dramatic fashion. In 1948, the U.S. Department of Commerce reported that the marriage rate had outstripped population growth in the San Francisco-Oakland metropolitan region in the previous seven years by 41 percent.<sup>6</sup> And in 1950, The Bay Area Council, a regional chamber of commerce, crowed that the nine-county Bay Area alone boasted a birth rate that exceeded that of 21 states and the District of Columbia.<sup>7</sup>

Population growth by itself, however, cannot account for the shape and character of residential development in places like the San Francisco Peninsula and South Bay. Suburbanization brought together a public-private alliance composed of the federal government, representatives of the real estate industry, and individual homeowners who all used straight sexuality as a means of structuring the postwar housing market. The mutual desire of all three groups to drive up home values compelled them to embed the sexual hierarchies promoted by contemporary psychologists into a sexually constructed theory of property. In his 2005 book *American Babylon*, historian Robert Self argues:

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<sup>5</sup> James T. Patterson, *Grand Expectations: The United States, 1945-1974* (New York: Oxford University, 1996), 77.

<sup>6</sup> V. B. Stanberry, "Economic Expansion in the San Francisco Bay Area, 1940-1947, United States Department of Commerce, 1948, 8.

<sup>7</sup> Bay Area Council, *Facts About the Bay Area*, Economic Series P-10, 9 May 1950, Institute of Governmental Studies, University of California, Berkeley.



“Cities are fundamentally based on leveraging property into one form of community or another- they are the result of the social production of markets, the social production of space.”<sup>8</sup> In the Bay Area’s postwar suburbs, federal housing officials, private real estate interests, and individual homeowners worked together to produce communities that would safeguard their investment in housing market, and three overlapping assumptions underlay their efforts. First, federal officials, city builders, and homeowners all believed that white, married men made better financial decisions than other types of people. Second, they assumed that straight families would drive consumption for residential real estate for the foreseeable future, and that this demand for housing could buoy the entire economy. And, third, they believed that neighborhoods homogenous by sexuality, class, and race represented the best means of creating a nurturing environment for children and, consequently, safeguarding the area’s property values.

This alliance of public officials, private real estate interests, and individual homeowners first came together amidst the growing housing crisis of the late 1940s. Most returning veterans and their spouses expected to rent or own a home of their own, and the massive spike in marriages after the war created a severe home shortage in San Francisco and virtually every major city in the country. During the Depression and subsequent wartime mobilization building construction had almost completely stopped. Multiple expert observers around the Bay Area noted the relationship between the aggregate increase in marriages and a rise in demand for housing, with the California Real Estate Association observing in 1947: “This sudden increase in family units [has] caused additional demand for living space in congested areas.”<sup>9</sup> A study by the San

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<sup>8</sup> Self, *American Babylon*, 97.

<sup>9</sup> “Wanted... Housing,” *California Real Estate Magazine*, April 1947.

San Francisco Chamber of Commerce in that same year observed that although the transition to a peacetime economy had revived residential construction, the sheer volume of newly married couples searching for a place to live vastly exceeded the available housing supply. The business group also noted that marriage rates in the Bay Area in the previous year had outstripped the national average by 7 percent, and it conservatively estimated that to meet the high demand of newlyweds, the local building industry would need to increase the production of new units by approximately 40 percent.<sup>10</sup> Despite the Chamber of Commerce's warnings, construction in the Bay Area continued to lag through the end of the war decade, and in 1950 census takers noted that San Francisco boasted the highest percentage of married couples without their own household in the state.<sup>11</sup>

The federal government represented the first and most significant part of the postwar suburban building coalition, and it attempted to ease the housing crisis by expanding New Deal-era housing programs designed to encourage homeownership. Since the Great Depression, the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) had offered banks and savings and loans insurance for mortgages they extended to borrowers and builders, provided that they met certain qualifications. By underwriting potential losses and compensating lenders for defaulted payments, the FHA allowed banks to make more loans with lower interest rates and smaller down payments. At the dawn of the postwar

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<sup>10</sup> San Francisco Chamber of Commerce Research Department, "1947 Bay Area Housing Study," Institute of Governmental Studies, University of California, Berkeley. The report declared that between 1940 and 1947 that the housing industry had build an average of 34,000 units a year, but it estimated that to meet the upsurge in demand it would need to build an average of 56,700 new units a year between 1947 and 1952. In 1946 the national marriage rate was 10.7 percent, but in San Francisco and Oakland the rate was 17.7 percent.

<sup>11</sup> U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Census of the Population: 1950, Volume II, Characteristics of the Population, Part 5: California*, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1952). The average rate of married couples in urban areas without their own households was 5 percent, but San Francisco's rate exceeded that ratio by 2 percent.

Baby Boom, Congress dramatically increased its financing for FHA programs and, under the 1944 G.I. Bill, it gave the newly created Veterans' Administration (VA) the same authority to insure home loans specifically for returning servicemen. These programs gave millions of Americans, particularly veterans, greater access to capital with which to buy a home, and, by empowering consumers, they proved remarkably successful in creating a mass market for the private real estate industry. Between the initial creation of the FHA and 1972 the percentage of homeowners living in the United States jumped from 44 percent to 63 percent.<sup>12</sup> From 1945 to 1966, the FHA and VA insured one out of every two houses in California, and in the first four years after the Second World War, 65 percent of new homes around San Francisco came just from loans guaranteed by the Veterans' Administration.<sup>13</sup> In 1956 alone, the Bay Area VA office reported single-handedly insuring just over 230,000 home loans.<sup>14</sup>

The government's willingness to insure private mortgages, hinged on the exclusion of borrowers it deemed poor investments from the postwar real estate market. Even as the Federal Housing and Veterans' Administrations empowered millions of consumers to purchase their own homes, the restrictions they imposed on lending and building dramatically reshaped the sexual, racial and gender geographies of metropolitan regions across the country. Eager to safeguard the public investment in the expanding housing market, government officials pushed lenders to investigate the fundamental "character" of loan applicants, pushing them to watch for "unacceptable hazards" such as

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<sup>12</sup> Kenneth Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 203-5. See also Freund, *Colored Property*.

<sup>13</sup> Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumers' Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Knopf, 2004), 141; Paul Wendt and Daniel Rathbun, *The Role of Government in the San Francisco Bay Area Mortgage Market*, University of California, Bureau of Business and Economic Research, 1952.

<sup>14</sup> Administrator of Veterans Affairs, *Annual Report for Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1956, 1957*. In that year the VA listed 234,968 home loans from its San Francisco office.

“habitual drunkenness,” “illegal connections,” and the vaguely stated “operations that may adversely affect the individual’s basic attitudes.”<sup>15</sup>

Most notably, federal administrators directed banks to use marriage as a basic barometer of an applicant’s financial reliability. The 1952 FHA *Underwriting Manual*, a resource also used by the VA, advised lenders that, “The mortgagor who is married and has a family generally evidences more stability than a mortgagor who is single because, among other things, he has responsibilities holding him to his obligations.”<sup>16</sup>

Government officials worried that volatile social relationships would threaten the ability of borrowers to pay back their loans, and they similarly warned lenders that when two people unrelated by marriage or blood sought to own home, appraisers should give their application a “low rating,” since: “The probabilities of dissatisfaction, disagreement, and other contingencies which might arise between members of the partnership are strong and may seriously affect the desire for continuing ownership on the part of any one of the principals.”<sup>17</sup> The FHA even recommended that married couples themselves endure a strict screening process, since, it asserted, “It has been demonstrated that inharmonious domestic relationships are an important cause of foreclosure.” In its estimation, lenders should watch for “evidence of family discord, pending divorce suits, reconciliation after initiation of divorce suits, and other items which point to unstable family conditions.”<sup>18</sup>

This narrow definition of marital loan eligibility paralleled sharp restrictions on the access of openly gay men and lesbians, many straight single women, and most people of color to public resources in the postwar era. In addition to failing to recognize same-

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<sup>15</sup> United States Federal Housing Administration, *Underwriting Manual*, 1952, section 1635.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.* 1636.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.* 1640 (7).

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.* 1636 (1).

sex unions of any kind, federal and state officials barred gay men and lesbians with criminal records from applying for mortgages with government assistance. The previous chapter detailed the ways in which California authorities outlawed most forms of homosexual sex, and those restrictions brought anyone arrested for “lewd conduct” into conflict with the requirements of the FHA that applicants be free of “illegal connections.” Just as significantly, the 1944 Veterans’ Readjustment Act, which gave low-interest home loans to returning servicemen, specifically barred anyone discharged for homosexual conduct during the war from receiving benefits under its provisions. As Margot Canaday argues in her article “Building a Straight State,” the bill represented the first federal policy to deliberately single out homosexuals as a group worthy of exclusion. Canaday estimates that the VA ultimately denied approximately 9,000 gay servicemen remuneration under the act, and although many other veterans had engaged in queer sex during the war, their receipt of those benefits hinged entirely on their ability to conceal their sexuality. The state’s intervention in the housing market, therefore, not only upheld homosexual veterans as official pariahs, it further demanded secrecy from the others who escaped public scrutiny, allowing Canaday to succinctly conclude: “In essence the military establishment used the G.I. Bill to build a social closet in federal policy.”<sup>19</sup>

Although married women benefited from their husband’s loan eligibility, the government officials reinforced gender hierarchies within straight relationships. Several historians, such as Nancy Cott and Lizabeth Cohen, have argued that New Dealers in the 1930s understood their intervention in the national economy, in part, as a way to help men to return to what they saw as their traditional role as patriarchal “breadwinners”

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<sup>19</sup> Margot Canaday, “Building a Straight State: Sexuality and Social Citizenship Under the 1944 G.I. Bill,” in *Journal of American History*, Volume 90, Number 3, December 2003, 956. See also Cohen, *A Consumer’s Republic*, 143.

during the Depression. According to Cott: “Attempts in federal agency after agency to shore up the nation’s individuals and families during the economic crisis addressed the husband-father as the principal wage-earner and citizen.”<sup>20</sup> Federal housing policies after the war reinforced these patterns. The government’s decision to make the housing and educational benefits of the 1944 G.I. Bill available exclusively to veterans most notably channeled resources from the general population to a specific group of male beneficiaries. As Cohen and others have shown, even when women from the military applied for loans, the VA assumed that they would eventually marry and gave them reduced benefits. Before the late 1960s most banks refused to lend money to single or married women, and, in a booklet entitled, *Your Home-Buying Ability*, the FHA told male borrowers that the government did not recognize their wives’ wages as “real income,” because “it would not be reasonable to conclude that a wife’s employment is a definite pattern of the family life if she has been married only a short time or had been employed only recently.”<sup>21</sup>

Even as government administrators crafted this “closet,” they simultaneously restricted mortgage assistance almost exclusively to white borrowers. As several historians, such as Kenneth Jackson and David Freund, have argued, the intervention of the national government in the postwar housing market aggravated racial segregation. Both the FHA and VA worked diligently to promote divided neighborhoods, and in the immediate postwar era they endorsed the use of prohibitive covenants to exclude residents of color, discouraged banks to lend to African American or Latino borrowers, and openly pushed developers and realtors to create new neighborhoods homogenous by

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<sup>20</sup> Nancy Cott, *Public Vows: A History of Marriage and the Nation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 2000), 174; Cohen, *A Consumer’s Republic*.

<sup>21</sup> FHA, *Your Home Buying Ability: FHA Credit Analysis for Home Buyers*, 1960.

race and class. Their explicit support for segregation stemmed from a similar desire to solidify the postwar housing market, and from fears that residents of color would fail to maintain their property or that anxious whites would trigger panic selling by fleeing integrated areas. As early as 1936 the *FHA's Underwriting Manual* declared that, "If a neighborhood is to retain stability, it is necessary that properties shall continue to be occupied by the same social and racial classes," and that a "change in social or racial occupancy generally leads to instability and a reduction in values."<sup>22</sup> In the San Francisco Bay Area specifically, a public health worker in Santa Clara County reported that when she asked bankers in San Jose in the mid-1950s about their willingness to extend credit to local Chicano residents, one allegedly answered: "Some of the people live in slum areas, and home loans in those areas are considered special risks."<sup>23</sup>

The limits federal officials imposed on queer borrowers, single straight women, and most people of color did not merely unfold at the same time. They reinforced one another. Since California did not legalize marriages between blacks and whites until 1948, the FHA and VA's use of these official unions as a marker of financial reliability constituted racial as well gender and sexual discrimination. Federal officials further subscribed to a theory of property that prized harmony within neighborhoods as well as in domestic relationships. Their efforts to exclude people of color from the postwar housing market reflected their belief that integrated areas created social strife that threatened the well-being of straight white couples and their children. According to the FHA's *Underwriting Manual*: "The tendency of user groups to seek compatible conditions can sustain, diminish or destroy neighborhood desirability. Neighborhoods that are

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<sup>22</sup> FHA, *Underwriting Manual*, 1936, sections 229 and 233. See Freund, *Colored Property*, 130.

<sup>23</sup> Margaret Clark, *Health in the Mexican-American Culture* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1959), 92.

constituted of families that are congenial... generally exhibit strong appeal and stability.”<sup>24</sup> Racial exclusion, therefore, reinforced the desire of federal officials to avoid lending to borrowers in “inharmonious” relationships. In both cases they feared that conflict between neighbors or domestic partners would result in mortgage defaults or lower the value of adjacent properties. By making “congenial” families the target of their intervention in the postwar real estate market, they not only discriminated against people outside of straight relationships, they also cast racial integration as a potential threat to happy marriages and sound parenting.

After the war, state policies ensured that the “closet” described by Canaday stretched across the metropolis. These biases in FHA and VA lending practices overlapped with two other significant government trends. First, both agencies favored mortgages for the construction of owner-occupied single-family homes, rather than for apartment buildings or other forms of consolidated living. Federal officials promoted home ownership as a means of supporting straight families as early as the first years of the Great Depression. In 1932 President Herbert Hoover declared: “A family that owns its own home takes pride in it, maintains it better, gets more pleasure out of it, and has a more wholesome, healthful, and happy environment in which to bring up children... A husband and wife who own their own home are more likely to save... As direct taxpayers they take a more active role in local government.”<sup>25</sup> The California Reconstruction and Reemployment Commission in the immediate aftermath of the war concurred, asserting: “private ownership of homes tends to make for a more stable family life and a higher

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<sup>24</sup> FHA, *Underwriting Manual*, section 1320.

<sup>25</sup> Herbert Hoover cited in J.M. Gries and J. S. Taylor, *How to Own Your Own Home*, U.S. Department of Commerce, 1931, v.



sense of community responsibility.”<sup>26</sup> Across the United States, in the first five years after the war FHA-insured single-family loans exceeded those for multi-family dwellings by four to one, and between 1950 and 1960 that margin grew up to seven to one.<sup>27</sup> In the Bay Area, owner-occupied, single-family homes made up 80 percent of all new housing built in the region.

Second, government backed mortgages favored residences on the outskirts of metropolitan areas, rather than pushing new development back into older urban neighborhoods. Public health authorities in the immediate postwar period frequently commented on the toll “overcrowding” took on the mental wellbeing of residents. The American Public Health Association, in particular, published a three-part series on the country’s housing needs, and it advised public officials and private homebuilders that, “[T]here is little doubt that adequate dwelling space, properly organized, is essential for the well-being of the family.”<sup>28</sup> Most notably, this drive for additional space contained a sexual component, as organizations such as the APHA pushed for bigger houses on undeveloped land in order to better insulate the sex lives of married couples with children. Citing psychologist Paul Lemkau, the national association of medical and health professionals pushed for the construction of larger houses and told public officials and private homebuilders: “Crowding in bedrooms makes the sexual life of the parents very apparent to children who have not yet the maturity or capacity to understand this aspect of the living of their parents... Parents are forced to make the sexual function

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<sup>26</sup> California State Reconstruction and Reemployment Commission, “Postwar Housing in California,” June 1945.

<sup>27</sup> Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*

<sup>28</sup> American Public Health Association, Committee on the Hygiene of Housing, *Planning the Home for Occupancy*, Public Administration Service, 1950, 1.

furtive and guarded rather than fully satisfying as more likely would be if completed in the freedom of privacy.”<sup>29</sup>

In addition to promoting the construction of single-family homes, federally supported loans favored new residences on the outskirts of metropolitan areas. This push to the urban fringe accompanied a massive highway building campaign, which, by providing automobile commuters easier access to already established commercial districts, provided yet another federally supported incentive for decentralization. Nationwide, approximately 80 percent of all new home construction after the war occurred outside older cities. In 1951, University of California economist Sherman Maisel, estimated that although 60 percent of the Bay’s Area’s population resided in either San Francisco or Oakland, 83 percent of all new residential construction after the war took place outside the urban core.<sup>30</sup>

### **The Business of “Family Values”**

Taken together, the policies of the FHA and VA subsidized the outward migration of millions of white, middle-class straight parents out of older cities. The interests of the private real estate industry, however, most directly affected the supply of housing on the Peninsula and in the South Bay. This second branch of the postwar suburb-building coalition included homegrown large-scale developers in San Mateo, Sunnyvale and Palo Alto, such as David Bohannon and Joseph Eichler, Los Angeles-based housing firms, like Kaiser and Sunshine Homes, that speculated on smaller projects in Northern California;

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid. American Public Health Association, *Planning the Home for Occupancy*.

<sup>30</sup> John Herzog, *Dynamics of Large-Scale House-Building*, University of California Real Estate Research Program, Report Number 22, 1963; Sherman Maisel, *Housebuilding in the San Francisco Bay Area*, Bureau of Business and Economic Research, University of California, Berkeley, 1951, 169.

members of the powerful California Real Estate Association; and sympathetic allies in local governments and chambers of commerce. Together, this collection of “pro-growth” businessmen and city boosters hoped to harness the ongoing Baby Boom and state restructuring of the mortgage market for their economic advantage. Like their counterparts in the federal government, they assumed that straight men made better financial decisions, that married couples with children would generate almost perpetual demand for housing, and that neighborhoods exclusive by race, class, and marital status represented sounder investments.

During the 1950s, builders in Northern California put together almost half a million new single-family homes, allowing *Fortune* magazine to exclaim in 1952, that if developers continued to churn out new units, “All the new brides and babies of the forties could be considered more or less settled, or at least as settled as Americans get.”<sup>31</sup>

Thomas Holden, head of the F. W. Dodge Corporation, told the readers of *Architectural Record* in that same year that the “The Big News is the Birth Rate.” Since home construction buoyed other industries, he contended, population growth meant good prospects for the country’s businesses: “Babies do not immediately require new houses,” he declared. “But, as they grow a little older and acquire little brothers and sisters, their parents are very likely to build on additions or even move into bigger houses.”<sup>32</sup>

Even as federal mortgage guidelines encouraged the outward migration of white, straight couples, members of the private real estate industry employed a set of rules that further encouraged the sifting of people based on race, class, and sexuality.

Homebuilders across the country almost universally believed that social homogeneity

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<sup>31</sup> “How Sound is the Baby Boom?” *Fortune*, June 1950.

<sup>32</sup> Thomas Holden, “The Big News is the Birth Rate,” *Architectural Record*, May 1952.

within neighborhoods insured sustainable profits. In a 1953 manual assembled under the direction of Bay Area developer David Bohannon, for example, the National Association of Home Builders recommended that, “It goes without saying that the wise operator will resist the temptation for a quick sale by using discrimination in the selection of his buyers in order to insure... that families who are forming a new neighborhood belong to compatible racial and social groups. Failure to follow this practice has ruined more than one developer financially.”<sup>33</sup>

Bay Area realtors similarly endorsed the notion that new subdivisions needed sexual, racial, and class exclusivity in order to sustain housing prices and profits for their profession. Until the mid-1950s the National Association of Real Estate Boards required individual realtors to promise to “never be instrumental in introducing into a neighborhood... members of any race or nationality, or any individuals whose presence will clearly be detrimental to property values in that neighborhood.” The group made prohibitions against racial mixing the most explicit component of its code of ethics, but its vaguely worded proscription against “individuals whose presence will clearly be detrimental to property values” almost certainly included queer people of all kinds and mirrored its similarly opaque pledge that, “Under no circumstances should a Realtor permit any property in his charge to be used for illegal or immoral purposes.”

Developers and realtors frequently enforced these restrictions single-handedly by refusing to allow individuals they deemed unfit for a neighborhood to see available houses. Throughout the 1950s and early 60s, for example, civil rights groups regularly charged that individual builders or brokers refused to admit people of color to all-white subdivisions. A 1950 study undertaken by students at San Jose State College determined

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<sup>33</sup> National Association of Home Builders, *Home Builders Manual for Land Development*, 1953, 17.

that South Bay realtors regularly steered minority homebuyers away from new subdivisions, and that at least one local broker lost his license for introducing a group of Filipinos to an all-white neighborhood.<sup>34</sup> In 1953, Ernest Gonzalez, a married, Chicano veteran with two children, reported that a salesman at the McKellar and McKay building firm had flatly told him that the company “frowned upon” sales to non-whites.<sup>35</sup> And a later civil rights investigation of housing discrimination in the 1970s found that in the previous three decades South Bay developers and realtors had combined to steer most residents of color in the area into a narrow strip of housing tracts, stretching along the Bayshore freeway from East Palo Alto on the Peninsula to San Jose’s eastside.<sup>36</sup>

Public officials in San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties compounded the discrimination of developers and realtors by restricting residential developments in their municipalities almost exclusively to owner-occupied, single-family homes. Reinforcing federal preferences for low-density, detached dwellings, planning authorities used their zoning power to set aside large portions of their districts uniquely for their construction, and made it exceedingly difficult for most single people, low-income renters, queer residents, or people of color from living on the Peninsula or in the South Bay. Between 1950 and 1956, the combined municipalities of Santa Clara County zoned almost 83 percent of available residential areas exclusively for low-density, owner occupied housing.<sup>37</sup> Several smaller communities in the valley, including Los Altos Hills and Monte Sereno, prohibited the construction of duplexes and apartment complexes

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<sup>34</sup> Nazar Hajinian, et al. *Interracial Prejudices in San Jose, California*, San Jose State College, 1950.

<sup>35</sup> “Tract Developers Refute Discrimination Complaint,” publication unknown, 20 January 1953, History San Jose clippings file.

<sup>36</sup> City of San Jose, County of Santa Clara, and City of Palo Alto Human Relations Commission, *Public Hearings on Housing Patterns, Zoning Laws, and Segregated Schools in Santa Clara County*, August 4-September 22, 1975, 37.

<sup>37</sup> Robert W. Travis, *A Development of Housing Research Techniques and Analysis of Housing Inventory and Estimate of Needs and Trends in San Jose, CA*, 1960, California State Library, Sacramento.

altogether. And when larger cities, such as Sunnyvale, Santa Clara, or San Jose permitted denser developments, they frequently limited their construction and used them to shield nearby groups of single-family homes from potential nuisances including freeways, business districts, or manufacturing areas.<sup>38</sup>

Land developers, realtors and public officials promoted these restrictive policies because they believed that only communities exclusive by sexuality, race, and class would enjoy stable home prices and greater financial returns on their investments. These city-builders, however, viewed racially inflected “property values” and “family values” as mutually reinforcing variables. Like federal authorities, they frequently contended that mixed-race neighborhoods not only threatened to atrophy home prices, but that they also created social strife detrimental to the well-being of straight couples with children. Their discrimination against African-American, Mexican-American and Asian-Americans, therefore, served both as a means of buoying property values through segregation and convincing middle-class, white, straight buyers that suburban subdivisions offered ideal places for their families. In 1959, a national association of savings and loans told potential borrowers: “Most home-owning neighborhoods are comprised of people of similar social, economic and educational backgrounds. This similarity of interests usually means a minimum of friction, and a maximum of opportunity for developing lasting friendships, not only for parents, but for their children as well.”<sup>39</sup> Looking back on his actions in the 1950s, long-time real estate developer Dick Randall candidly told the Santa Clara Human Relations Commission in 1975 that he believed that wholesome family living demanded racial and class segregation, and, according to the civil rights

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<sup>38</sup> San Jose Planning Department, *Santa Clara Subdivision Activity, 1957-1967*, 1967, Institute of Governmental Studies, University of California at Berkeley.

<sup>39</sup> United Savings and Loan League, *What You Should Know Before You Buy a Home*, 1959.

group's final report: "It was [Randall's] opinion that to 'mix widely priced living units next to or within the same subdivision would be a disservice to the lower income purchaser, since the children would probably have difficulty adjusting to the affluence evidenced by the higher income families."<sup>40</sup>

Throughout the 1950s and 60s, civil rights groups and individual buyers of color filed multiple lawsuits to contest the growing segregation of the Peninsula and South Bay real estate markets.<sup>41</sup> No records, however, remain to document housing discrimination against gay men, lesbians, bisexual or transgender people. Alternately criminalized or treated as mentally ill, queer residents had little legal ground on which to file a court challenge or appeal to the media for equitable treatment. This key difference between the civil rights movement's struggle for open housing and the fledgling homophile movement has created a gap in the historical record. Although some gay men and lesbians "passed" as straight and found housing in the South Bay, the heterosexist elements of postwar city building largely went unchallenged in the state's courts. An article published by a gay rights organization in 1966, however, revealed the case of an insurance company which had denied policies to a pair of men in the North Bay town of Sausalito. In its monthly magazine, *Vector*, The Society for Individual Rights in San Francisco detailed a report leaked by a sympathetic employee at a credit bureau that cited the use of "informants" to deny the couple coverage on "homosexual grounds," and went on to declare: "those of us who have seen many of these 'reports,' have reason to suspect

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<sup>40</sup> "Human Relations Commission, "Public Hearings on Housing Patterns, Zoning Laws, and Segregated Schools," 33.

<sup>41</sup> See for example, "Negro Couple Sue Tropicana," *San Jose Mercury*, 22 March 1960; "'Go for Broke' Vet Cites Discrimination," *San Jose Mercury*, 17 May 1960; "Japanese Vet Sues Realtor," *Santa Clara Journal*, 17 May 1960.

that once again taboo, fiction, and fear are the basis for denial of processes due him in fair measure as to other citizens untainted by homosexuality.”<sup>42</sup>

These restrictions paralleled the open celebration of straight relationships in the private real estate industry. Realtors, developers, and local chambers of commerce in the postwar period crafted a language that implicitly defined “family” in narrowly heteronormative terms, but which also helped gradually expand the material privileges associated with straightness. Throughout the long postwar period members of the private real estate industry promoted the notion that homeownership and suburban living made people better parents. In 1954, for example, Palo Alto realtor and president of the California Real Estate Association Floyd Lowe promised to devote his organization, “to advancing family life through the ownership of homes.”<sup>43</sup> Just two years later, the Sunnyvale Chamber of Commerce told local residents: “Well aware that the future of our nation and our community rests in building solid citizenship, Sunnyvale placed emphasis on family life.... No matter how large this city becomes, it is understood that the basic social unit is the family and Sunnyvale’s guiding hand must aid and protect it.”<sup>44</sup>

These broad assertions about the boons homeownership and suburban living offered new parents blanketed the promotional campaigns launched by developers and realtors in the 1950s and 60s. The builders of San Jose’s “Tropicana Village” subdivision told would-be buyers in a pamphlet that they had designed houses “with the dreams of young families in mind” and offered potential residents a “fabulous master

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<sup>42</sup> Mark Forrester, “Another Victory for Freedom,” *Vector*, January 1966.

<sup>43</sup> “New Statement of Views States Policy of CREA,” *Los Angeles Times*, 24 October 1954.

<sup>44</sup> Sunnyvale Chamber of Commerce, “Sunnyvale’s Panorama of Progress,” May 1956, Local History Collection, Sunnyvale Public Library.



bedroom suite.”<sup>45</sup> In 1952 *The San Francisco Chronicle* carried an advertisement for a Palo Alto based developer that told its readers: “These homes represent the best dollar value outside of tract homes, in a family house now on the market. Consideration has been given to the needs to children in the design of these homes.”<sup>46</sup> In 1955 the *San Jose Mercury-News* carried publicity for the Hermosa Gardens subdivision in Santa Clara that promoted its “Homemaker” style house “for the growing family that wants space and privacy.”<sup>47</sup>

These promises ultimately served as the founding documents for the creation of a postwar, suburban straight public. Married, heterosexual homeowners represented the third major group responsible for postwar suburbanization, and the circulation of discourses promoting homeownership and parenting enabled a self-selecting group of straight parents to enter the real estate market all at once. Although they worked in different professions and came from places as far away as Massachusetts, the tens of thousands of migrants who flooded the Peninsula and South Bay in the postwar era almost universally shared a common investment in marriage and childrearing. A study conducted by the federal Housing and Home Finance Agency in 1955 observed that nationwide, five out of seven new homeowners already had at least one child.<sup>48</sup> Arthur Gimmey, an economist at San Jose State, observed that nine out of ten homeowners living in Santa Clara County in 1958 had children, and their average family size generally exceeded the national average by a significant margin. “A basic characteristic of

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<sup>45</sup> Branden Enterprises, *Tropicana Village: San Jose, CA*, Rare Books Collection Environmental Design Library, University of California, Berkeley.

<sup>46</sup> *San Francisco Chronicle*, 19 October 1952.

<sup>47</sup> *San Jose Mercury-News*, 14 January 1955.

<sup>48</sup> U. S. Housing and Home Finance Agency, *What People Want When they Buy a House*, (Washington, D.C.: U. S. Department of Commerce, 1955).

Suburbia as a market, one that colors its preferences and habits,” he concluded, “is its propensity for having children.”<sup>49</sup>

Individual straight couples may have sought to purchase houses to meet a specific need for more space, to shorten a commute, or to build equity. Their common identity as parents and their mutual desire to own a home, however, pulled them into a collective search with thousands of other would-be buyers who similarly sought an ideal place in which to raise their children. Even as federal financing gave married borrowers preferential treatment in their search for a mortgage, the search for a new house gave heterosexual buyers a sense of responsibility for the kind of community in which they would raise their children. In this sense, shopping for a home represented a highly political act, as straight couples selected from a range of relatively similar residential options on the Peninsula or in the South Bay. Even as Santa Clara County’s developers and realtors spent fortunes on advertising campaigns designed to attract buyers, at least 50 percent of the people who bought houses in the South Bay in 1958 reported that they had primarily shopped for a new residence by traveling from one cluster of new houses to another. Arthur Gimmy reported in 1958 that “when there is a wide selection of houses, buyers will drive around in the general area where new subdivisions are located and look at the houses that they happen to find.”<sup>50</sup>

Realtors attempted to capitalize on the desire of purchasers to select their own home by deploying eye-catching roadside advertising, to grasp the attention of passing motorists. South Bay Baby Boomer David Beers recalled that in the mid-1950s his parents looked for a house the way one “shopped for a new car.” In his memoir, *Blue*

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<sup>49</sup> Arthur Gimmy, *A Descriptive Survey of Urban Fringe Home Owners, Their House Buying Habits, and Their Mobility*, San Jose State Real Estate Research Bureau, 1958.

<sup>50</sup> Gimmy, *A Descriptive Survey of Urban Fringe Home Owners*, 19.

*Sky Dreams*, Beers reflected on the almost daily tours of his mother and father through the newly assembled subdivisions of the South Bay, reminiscing: “They roved in search of balloons and bunting and the many billboards advertising ‘Low Interest!’ ‘No Money Down!’ to military veterans like my father. They would follow the signs to the model homes standing in empty fields and tour the empty floor plans and leave with notes carefully made about square footage and closet space.”<sup>51</sup>

Even as they passed the orchards and fields of the South Bay’s fading agricultural economy, young couples, such as Beers’ parents, clearly envisioned a fertility of a different sort. Their son’s memoir about growing up in Sunnyvale makes it clear that straight couples associated homeownership with good parenting as much as any realtor or developer, and it forcefully outlines the ways in which individual buyers joined representatives of the real estate industry to help transform much of the South Bay into a community specifically for straight families. According to Beers: “[My parents] had sat in folding chairs in the garage of a model home while a salesman showed them maps of streets yet to exist, the inked idea of something to be called Clarendon Manor. They had been given a choice of three floor plans, the three floor plans from which all dwellings in Clarendon Manor were to be fashioned.” After selecting the outline of their future home and signing the requisite mortgage paperwork, Beers reported that his parents grew restless in anticipation of their upcoming move, and he fondly remembered childhood trips to his yet-to-be-built home: “Early on, my father would go from stake to yellow-ribboned stake, telling us where the kitchen would be, where the front door would go, which would be getting the most sun. Later, after the concrete foundation and plywood

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<sup>51</sup> David Beers, *Blue Sky Dreams: A Memoir of America’s Fall from Grace* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace, 1996), 39-40.

subflooring were in and the skeletons of the walls were up, we would wander through the materializing form of our home, already inhabiting with our imaginations its perfect potentiality.”<sup>52</sup>

The “potential” many parents saw in the new subdivisions of the Peninsula and South Bay stood in sharp contrast to what they saw as an inferior urban option. The purchase of a home involved extensive conversations among consumers what features marked certain places as desirable areas to raise a family and which implicitly denigrated other areas as potentially dangerous or unpleasant. Carol Bosanko, a recent migrant from Oregon, told the *San Francisco Examiner* that she and her husband “decided we’d be more comfortable raising our children on the Peninsula than in the city.”<sup>53</sup> Former New Yorker and current Santa Clara resident Virginia Alfinito succinctly told her local newspaper that she liked suburban living “mostly for our children’s sake.”<sup>54</sup> Residents like Bosanko and Alfinito saw the great amount of privacy afforded by suburban living and the community of like-minded people they found in their neighbors to be the principal advantages over their old residences. Janet O’Keefe from Portola Valley, for example, told the *Examiner*, that “it was natural for us to land on the Peninsula” since she and her husband “don’t like living close to people.”<sup>55</sup> Mrs. Louis Fiore confessed that she and her husband “never cared much for big cities... so naturally we settled on the Peninsula.”<sup>56</sup> Jesse Gillis of Santa Clara told the *Journal* that he had three children and that “in a crowded city you can’t have too many kids running around.”<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Beers, *Blue Sky Dreams*, 43.

<sup>53</sup> “Why Did You Choose the Peninsula for Home?” *San Francisco Examiner*, 4 June 1962.

<sup>54</sup> “Why Did You Move Here?” *Santa Clara Journal*, 10 January 1962.

<sup>55</sup> “Why Did You Choose the Peninsula for Home?” *San Francisco Examiner*, 4 June 1962.

<sup>56</sup> “Why Did You Choose the Peninsula for Home?” *San Francisco Examiner*, 4 June 1962.

<sup>57</sup> “Inquiring Reporter: What is Ideal Size of Family?” *Santa Clara Journal*, 16 February 1960.

Even more significantly, the suburban residents interviewed by the newspapers almost universally commented on how much they appreciated their new neighbors. The public and private actors who helped built the postwar suburbs marketed their developments as places where consumers could find similar, like-minded, “congenial” people. When residents exclaimed to local newspapers about how much they liked their new neighbors, their words reflected, in part, the promises of realtors and developers who pledged to help buyers find communities of people with similar backgrounds and consumer preferences. Marian Correia from San Jose told the *Examiner* in 1962: “I like the particular place where we live. I like our neighbors and we’ve made friends.” Virginia Alfinito asserted that, “the people of Santa Clara are very friendly and good.” And Doug Hale of San Mateo marveled that although he grew up in Oakland, after he’d moved to the Peninsula, “I’ve met some wonderful people.”<sup>58</sup>

### **Designing for Straightness**

These exclamations of suburban residents about the agreeability of their neighbors in the early 1960s hinted at a remarkable social transformation in the region. Almost all of the migrants who flocked to San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties in the postwar period came amidst a sea of strangers. Moving from different parts of the country, most of them came unmoored from extended families and friends, and few of them knew their fellow residents initially. They did so, however, relatively at the same time, alongside a wide mass of people with common social traits and consumer preferences, in a built environment with similar characteristics. The act of shopping for a house pulled individual straight couples into a wider cultural conversation about the ways in which

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<sup>58</sup> “Why Did You Choose the Peninsula for Home?” *San Francisco Examiner*, 4 June 1962.

certain housing amenities, neighborhoods or community facilities could meet the needs of their families. As David Beers recalled: “Everyone was arriving with such forward momentum. Everyone was taking courage from the sight of another orange moving van pulling in next door, a family just like us unloading pole lamps and cribs and Formica dining tables just like our own, reflections of ourselves multiplying all around us in our new emptiness.”<sup>59</sup>

Although migrants like Beers’ parents brought with them a relatively diverse array of family relationships, personal experiences, and political affiliations, the physical landscape of their new homes played a crucial integrative function. Over the course of the long postwar period, these discourses about straightness and suburban living widened so that the homes, schools, churches, and even streets of the Peninsula and South Bay acted as a collective (sub)urban text that employed a common set of referents about sex, parenting, and community. If this environment failed to magically boil away all differences among people, it bracketed those dissimilarities within a shared experience of consumption, domestic architecture and public space.<sup>60</sup>

Even as federal policies, real estate interests and the preferences of individual homeowners progressively pooled straight couples in greater and greater numbers, residential architects and urban planners designed a physical landscape specifically to accommodate them. The architects who worked to fill the “emptiness” described by Beers designed it principally as a means of attracting consumers with children and

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<sup>59</sup> Beers, *Blue Sky Dream*, 40.

<sup>60</sup> For a related analysis of the ways in which the urban landscape can play an “integrative function,” see David Henkin, *City Reading: Written Words and Public Spaces in Antebellum New York* (New York: Columbia University, 1998). Henkin, however, focuses his argument around the deployment of words in advertisements and newspapers around antebellum New York City. I argue that physical spaces, in addition to written language, can play a crucial role in the definition of modern communities.

stabilizing property values. When architects and developers built new subdivisions they created commodities that spoke not to a single, individual family, but to the broad audience of white, middle-class, straight couples that made up the suburban real estate market. They hoped to both find buyers for homes immediately after their construction, and to facilitate the re-selling of those residences at some point in the future. To accomplish this goal they gave each structure several notable features as a means of buoying its value. First, they ensured that all new homes had master bedrooms with adjacent bathrooms, and they worked to ensure the privacy of those spaces. Second, they provided extra bedrooms to accommodate the sons and daughters of straight homeowners. And third, they anticipated a gendered division of labor in which women worked primarily in the home, and they built a series of open, connected spaces in order to facilitate mothers' surveillance of their children. This landscape told suburban residents both that they belonged and that they were right to live as they did. It not only hailed them as a collective set of consumers with common social characteristics, it also signaled that their sexual and domestic arrangements fell within a narrow range of sanctioned cultural norms.

This array of architectural standards set only the first part of the foundation of a postwar straight public. Public officials and private developers built entire neighborhoods with the intention of helping residents forge social connections with one another. They understood property values as collective phenomena, encompassing entire neighborhoods, and they believed that the inclusion of schools, churches, and parks in their plans would both help attract buyers and bolster local home prices. They contended that easily accessible educational facilities, space for recreation, and houses of worship

safeguarded the welfare of children, forged senses of solidarity among residents, and encouraged the creation of community groups dedicated to improving straight family life. In their calculations, amenities for parents with children ensured stable housing prices, and allowed the FHA in 1954 to advise buyers that, “The home should be situated not too far from schools, churches, parks, and playgrounds. These mean better living for the entire family and contribute to the value of your home.”<sup>61</sup>

The inclusion of these institutions stood in sharp contrast to the efforts of city officials to exclude places, such as public housing and bars, they deemed detrimental to healthy family life. Even as realtors and public officials limited the types of people who could enter the postwar suburban housing market, planners and developers created an entire residential landscape composed almost exclusively of homes, schools, and churches in which those consumers could find one another. These spaces similarly hailed the influx of new residents as a welcome community of parents, homeowners, and churchgoers, but also provided key sites in which an emergent straight public could congregate. Physically close to one another, the homes, schools, and churches of the Bay Area suburbs both symbolized a social order geared around straight sexuality, childrearing, and property ownership, and subsequently served as the very forums in which the proponents of those ideals would first come together.

Although the world designed by builders and public officials encompassed whole neighborhoods, and even included entire cities, the single-family home represented the cornerstone of this social order. It represented the largest single investment most people made in their lifetimes, and its acquisition pulled new owners, such as the Beers family,

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<sup>61</sup> FHA, *The FHA Plan of Home Ownership* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1954), 12.



into neighborhoods and a real estate market designed almost entirely for them.<sup>62</sup> As mentioned above, federal guidelines encouraged their construction, and the suburbs of the Peninsula and South Bay zoned residential areas overwhelmingly in favor of owner-occupied detached dwellings. They encouraged their construction not only to exclude residents they deemed detrimental to the community, such as low-income renters or single people, but also because they believed their design favored healthy straight family life. The National Association of Realtors told its members in 1954: “It is believed that the kind and character of the real estate... in which people live may have definite influence upon their ambitious, health, morals, religion and personal habits.”<sup>63</sup> In its guide to architectural appraisal the United Savings and Loan League contended that “Design in housing starts with the family unit, its physical needs and social requirements; the inter-relationship of eating, working, recreation and sleeping patterns at the center in a house.”<sup>64</sup>

Nationally-recognized architect Robert Woods Kennedy gave a more concrete framework when he pushed the members of his profession to apply a “zoning scheme” to residential floor plans, grouping spaces by common usage and erecting walls between them. According to Kennedy, this clustering pattern broke up the house by degree of privacy, steering the circulation of outsiders away from areas reserved for “sleeping,” “excreting,” and “love making.” “The increasing desire for privacy,” declared Kennedy, “as one enters deeper and deeper into the family’s activities, appears as a succession of

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<sup>62</sup> For more on individuals and home ownership see Niccolaides, *My Blue Heaven* and Cohen, *A Consumer’s Republic*.

<sup>63</sup> Harry Atkinson and L. Frailey, *Fundamentals of Real Estate Practice* (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1954), 5.

<sup>64</sup> United Savings and Loan League, *What the Savings and Loan Association Needs to Know About Design: A Handbook of Case Studies on Standards for Successful Home Planning*, (Chicago: Savings and Loan League, 1956), 2.

barriers against sight and sound. In terms of privacy, the front door at one end, and the study, water closet, and connubial chamber at the other, are three worlds apart, separated by four distinct barriers. Each group of activities constitutes a little world of its own, cohesive and very distinct in atmosphere and character.”<sup>65</sup> By dividing homes into “zones” defined by common usage, architects such as Kennedy not only discouraged couples from having sex outside the bedroom, they also actively sanctioned them to have it within the “connubial chamber.” Scaling their designs from bedroom to doorway, they ensconced straight couples behind a series of barriers that steered outsiders away from them, muffled sound, and limited their visibility.

The layout of the home made “privacy” one of the most widely discussed aspects of postwar residential architecture and made the bedroom a figurative Archimedean point for all other development. From the late 1940s through the 1960s public officials and builders on the Peninsula and in the South Bay almost universally promised that their homes afforded complete privacy to the places in which parents slept. FHA guidelines from the period told mortgage assessors that “A high degree of privacy, from without as well as within the dwelling, enhances livability and continuing appeal.”<sup>66</sup> Palo Alto builders Stern and Price offered houses with “bedrooms set well back from the street for privacy.” Santa Clara’s Gavello Glen promised buyers that his subdivisions varied the lot orientation of each home and therefore “avoided the all-too-common practice of placing bedroom windows of neighboring houses opposite each other across a narrow side yard.”<sup>67</sup> And Redwood City’s John Funk designed houses with an “H” shaped floor plan,

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<sup>65</sup> Robert Woods Kennedy, *The House and the Art of Its Design* (New York: Reinhold Corporation, 1953), 113.

<sup>66</sup> Federal Housing Administration, *Underwriters’ Manual* (Washington, D.C.: The Administration, 1952).

<sup>67</sup> “Fresh Design = Fast Sales,” *House and Home*, October 1952.

separating sleeping spaces from living areas, providing “better sound insulation,” and ensuring that parents’ bedrooms looked out only onto secluded patios or backyards.<sup>68</sup>

This desire to afford straight couples privacy not only appeared in almost all residential development in the period, it served as a basic foundation for determining the size and location of all other rooms in the home. Floor plans of houses built in Santa Clara County invariably included the clustering of sleeping areas, with larger “master bedrooms” dwarfing those reserved for children. Suburban architects almost universally included several of these smaller spaces in their designs, implicitly acknowledging that couples with their own homes would have procreative sex, boosting population growth, and allowing the editors of *House and Home* to exclaim in 1954 that, “the three bedroom [has] rapidly established itself as minimal for American families.”<sup>69</sup> Cultural perceptions about the need to separate brothers and sisters during their sexual development further drove the physical expansion of the single-family home, with the American Public Health Association cautioning builders in 1950 that “children of different sexes, unless both are very young, should sleep in different rooms.”<sup>70</sup> As parents produced growing numbers of sons and daughters, architects contended that they would need more bedrooms to accommodate them, and, as a result, Bay Area builders offered buyers “expandable” homes in which they left open space near the rear of a residence for “add-ons” as families grew. Promotional material for the Cranston Company in Palo Alto in the 1950s offered cartoon renderings of a man and woman madly dashing across the floor plan of new house, exclaiming about the possibility of enlarging their home as they had more

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<sup>68</sup> “H-Plan and V-Roof,” *House and Home*, November 1952; “Built-in Merchandising Lifts California Joe Eichler Into the Big Time,” *House and Home*, July 1955.

<sup>69</sup> “Four Bedrooms Solve Space Squeeze,” *House and Home*, June 1954.

<sup>70</sup> American Public Health Association, Committee on Housing and Hygiene, *Planning the Home for Occupancy* (Chicago: Public Administration Service, 1950).

children.<sup>71</sup> Beginning in 1950, *Parents' Magazine* held an annual competition for architectural innovations in “expandable homes,” and they awarded their top prize for two consecutive years to Bay Area builder Joseph Eichler for his houses in Santa Clara County.<sup>72</sup>

In the eyes of the postwar real estate industry, larger families necessitated not only greater sleeping space but also more washing facilities, and as they added two or more showers to each home, household bathrooms joined bedrooms as one of the few places in postwar America where men, women, and their children commingled in states of undress. In 1954 the editors of *House and Home* advised developers to provide adequate heat since, “The bathroom is the only place in the house where people traditionally run around naked,” and “people want it warm when they get out of bed in the morning.”<sup>73</sup> The Federal Housing Administration’s *Underwriter’s Manual* specifically underscored the need to avoid “exposing the bedroom to bathroom passage or the bathroom to view from the living portion of the dwelling” and counseled builders to arrange “windows or exterior planting to prevent the intrusion upon the privacy of one family unit from the windows of another.”<sup>74</sup> The United Savings and Loan League similarly denigrated home designs that exposed bedrooms and bathrooms to unnecessary traffic, and it advised its mortgage appraisers to watch for “errors” in interior design that led visitors to inadvertently walk by washing and sleeping areas.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Advertisement of the Cranston Company in Susan Hall Harrison, *Post World War II Tract Homes: The Subdivision Developments of Joseph Eichler, 1949-1956*, Master’s Thesis, University of Virginia, 1980.

<sup>72</sup> Maxine Livingstone, “4<sup>th</sup> Annual Builders’ Competition,” *Parents’ Magazine*, February 1954.

<sup>73</sup> “Better Bathrooms and More of Them,” *House and Home*, May 1954.

<sup>74</sup> Federal Housing Administration, *Underwriting Manual*, 1952.

<sup>75</sup> United Savings and Loan League, *What the Savings and Loan Association Needs to Know About Design*, 15.

As evidenced by the push by powerful governmental and financial institutions for bedroom and bathroom privacy, Americans from public officials to private developers to individual homeowners envisioned sharp distinctions between the “living” and “sleeping” zones of a postwar home. The differences between these two parts of domestic space shaped attitudes towards gender and sexuality in two crucial ways. First, postwar architects envisioned a middle-class gendered division of labor in each household, and they designed kitchens, living rooms, and yards primarily to accommodate the perceived needs of Santa Clara County’s stay-at-home mothers. Whereas they built bathrooms and bedrooms with the understanding that fathers would join their families to bathe, sleep, and have sex there, they built the rest of the house principally with the belief that mothers would need to cook and clean laundry even as they watched over their sons and daughters.

In sharp contrast, therefore, to the bedrooms and bathrooms that architects worked diligently to shield from prying eyes, builders designed suburban living rooms, kitchens, and backyards specifically to facilitate mothers’ surveillance of their children. Although large glass doors, picture frame windows and open space between kitchens and living rooms offered a variety of advantages to residents, postwar home designs also undoubtedly served as a reminder that children faced numerous dangers, including sexual ones, and only vigilant parents could protect them. Lauding the merits of an expandable home in 1951 *Parents Magazine* told its readers: “One of the most important features of the [floor plan] is that the children’s playroom is immediately adjacent to the kitchen so Mother can keep an eye on them while she goes about her work- yet the children are not underfoot.” In 1954, South Bay builders Mackay and Associates told potential buyers:

“Children are the major consideration in a four-bedroom house, so the architects planned the outdoors- like the indoors- as much for the kids as for the house-wife-mother... The architects arranged glass walls and doorways in front of side yards so a mother could keep an eye on her children, even share in the pleasure of outdoor living herself.”<sup>76</sup>

Second, these living areas designed for women and children served as quasi-public spaces between the private worlds of the bedroom and the wider world beyond the home. Even as they opened up those areas to facilitate mothers’ surveillance of their sons and daughters, postwar architects also expected parents to host outside visitors in their living rooms, kitchens and backyards. Designed to accommodate handfuls of friendly outsiders, these spaces made powerful statements about the desirability of straight family life, and no trend reflected this desire to showcase heterosexual parenting more than the growing popularity of “family rooms” in postwar architecture. In an investigative report on the growing popularity of “family rooms” on the Pacific Coast, *Sunset* magazine toured recently built houses in Western cities from San Diego to Seattle and offered potential homebuyers a variety of suggestions on how they could make use of these spaces: “In these rooms, we saw new kittens in a basket; we watched a table-top puppet show; we admired children’s drawings on the wall; we saw sewing machines, flats of cuttings by windows, electric trains, ironing boards, desks for studying or letter writing, the family bar... and none of this activity too far from the kitchen range or a pot of coffee.”<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> “Four Bedrooms Solve Space Squeeze,” *House and Home*, June 1954. For more on the expectations of mothers in South Bay homes, see Annmarie Adams, “The Eichler Home: Intention and Experience in Postwar Suburbs,” in *Perspectives Vernacular Architecture*, Volume 5, Gender, Class, and Shelter, 1995.

<sup>77</sup> “There’s a New Room in the Western House...the Family Room,” *Sunset*, April 1956, 74.

In addition to bringing parents together with their children, the inclusion of “family rooms” in postwar floor plans frequently supplemented other trends in domestic architecture. Cupertino’s Stern and Price, for example, advised other builders to place these spaces between the kitchen and sleeping areas: “While children are small it is their playroom, easily supervised by a mother working in the kitchen... As children grow into teenagers, this family room can become the young people’s entertainment area, close to the kitchen and convenient for snacks.” Placed near the cooking area, it further blurred the boundaries between the living portions of the house, and further secluded the bedrooms: “While the kitchen expands into the family room, it need not infringe on it... But it is also the buffer between the living areas and the bedroom wing.... This family room overcomes one of the major criticisms of one-story houses: that the bedrooms are too close to the living rooms.”<sup>78</sup>

Homebuilders included private bedrooms, ample bathrooms, open floor plans, and specially designated family rooms in an effort to make their houses appealing to white, middle-class straight consumers. For federal officials, bankers, developers, realtors, local planners, and many individual homeowners the inclusion of these features made homes better investments. Their concerns about property values, however, did not end at the household door. The architects of postwar suburbia argued that residential areas needed to conform to specific guidelines in order to buttress local home prices, and local planners frequently employed many of the same principles used by domestic architects to design the surrounding neighborhoods.

Most notably, the urban planners of the Peninsula and South Bay extended the provisions for privacy elaborated in domestic floor plans into the larger layout of

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<sup>78</sup> “Where Should You Put the Family Room?” *House and Home*, July 1955.

surrounding subdivisions. Just as architects such as Kennedy steered visitors away from bedrooms areas, postwar builders and urban planners pushed most auto traffic away from residential areas. These designs insured homeowners a greater sense of privacy and helped protect small children from speeding motorists. Moving from cul de sacs to loop streets to connector roads and freeways, planners on the Peninsula and in the South Bay put together a circulatory system that encouraged automobile drivers to avoid the heart of new subdivisions, further secluding domestic interiors and safeguarding young people. In 1955, for example, the city of Palo Alto proclaimed: “To minimize the traffic hazard for children... all residential areas should have their own internal street systems, closed to through traffic to the greatest extent possible.”<sup>79</sup> In that same year Sunnyvale’s planners asserted: “The neighborhood should be arranged so that the only traffic is that which relates to the residents. Arterial routes should go around the neighborhood and should be used to define it.”<sup>80</sup>

The areas carved out by these thoroughfares served as tools for federal officials, land developers, and realtors eager to stabilize local property values as well as fundamental planning units for local officials intent upon providing services for straight families. Federal officials, private builders, bankers and realtors demanded the inclusion of “community facilities” in order to attract young straight families as buyers and no institution garnered their attention more than new schools. The FHA, for instance, advised mortgage evaluators that, “Where a school has acquired prestige in the community... it will usually... be conducive to the maintenance of the desirability of the

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<sup>79</sup> Harold Wise Associates, *1955 Report: Palo Alto Interim General Plan*, April 1955.

<sup>80</sup> Sunnyvale Planning Department, *Preliminary Studies for a General Plan for the City of Sunnyvale*, March 1955, Institute of Governmental Studies, University of California at Berkeley.



entire area comprising the school district.”<sup>81</sup> The National Association of Homebuilders concurred: “The presence of elementary schools is one of the greatest drawing cards in new residential development, for it is the family with children of school and pre-school age which forms a substantial part of the prospective home-owning market.”<sup>82</sup> And the United Savings and Loan League counseled borrowers to investigate the surrounding their homes, and asked them: “Is there a public or parochial school within walking distance...? Such facilities are a very important part of family living. Without them, many families... would be unhappy.”<sup>83</sup>

Local officials in San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties assessed the need for new classrooms, in part, based on the number of building permits issued in an area and the size of surrounding homes. More bedrooms meant more children, and school planners designed entire residential areas primarily to accommodate the flood of young students they envisioned spilling out of neighborhood houses. Planners not only endeavored to provide sufficient schools in developing areas, they also worked to make educational facilities easily accessible to local residents. After single-family houses, schools represented the most carefully planned feature of suburban residential districts, and officials on the Peninsula and in the South Bay almost universally promised to place campuses within short distances of the home. Education authorities in Sunnyvale, for instance, attempted to distribute schools evenly across residential areas to ensure a “minimum of walking through business and industrial areas and traffic hazards.”<sup>84</sup> Santa

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<sup>81</sup> Federal Housing Administration, *Underwriting Manual*, section 1322.

<sup>82</sup> National Association of Home Builders, *Home Builders Manual for Land Development*, (Washington, D.C. 1958), 204.

<sup>83</sup> United Savings and Loan League, *What You Should Know Before Buying a Home*, 1959. The League also counseled buyers to watch for churches and playgrounds.

<sup>84</sup> *Schools and Sunnyvale*, 1951.

Clara County officials decreed in 1952 that no campus should lie more than a half-mile from any student's doorstep, and they pledged to "provide nursery, kindergarten, and elementary schools within walking distance of the home."<sup>85</sup> And authorities in San Jose boasted in 1958 that, "The City Planning Commission... [has] had a strong traditional relationship with the various school districts. Each neighborhood design is developed with the elementary school as its nucleus."<sup>86</sup>

This proximity between home and school indicated more than just the practical concern of easing students' movements to class. Postwar architects and educational builders explicitly viewed elementary schools as extensions of the home, and in many ways they saw classrooms as developmental zones layered upon the bedrooms and living areas of family residences. Postwar educational architects believed that kindergartens and early grades represented the first steps children would take into the larger world, and they worked to ease the transition from the private world of the parents with the realm of the public school. Editors at the building journal *American School and University* told education officials in 1950: "A child's first venture away from home should not be too great a contrast which may create aversions. The elementary school should be child scale, low and small, with intimate homelike atmosphere rather than monumental or institutional."<sup>87</sup> Similarly, South Bay builders Ernest Kump and Mark Falk told the readers of *Progressive Architecture* in 1949 that they hoped their designs met the "psychological needs" of young students, and in an explanation of their goals for the Jefferson Union elementary school in Santa Clara, they declared: "In a basic primary school, the pupils experience their first adventure away from the security of familiar

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<sup>85</sup> Santa Clara County Planning Commission, *Planning Goals*, Monograph Number 2, 1952.

<sup>86</sup> San Jose Planning Commission, *Master Plan of the City of San Jose*, January 1958.

<sup>87</sup> "School Plant Trends," *American School and University*, 1949-50.

surroundings and the guidance of their parents. This implies as a design aim a feeling of shelter, security, and intimacy.”<sup>88</sup>

These attempts to mirror the nurturing environment of the home often translated into physical features that echoed domestic architecture, and postwar designers specifically tried to construct schools that would mirror or supplement socialization performed by nearby straight families. In order to blend in with the sprawling subdivisions that surrounded them most campuses from the period featured low-rise, single-story structures and boasted amply manicured lawns.<sup>89</sup> One innovative designer on the San Francisco Peninsula topped his schools with red shingles in order to visually echo the housetops in the surrounding subdivisions.<sup>90</sup> Once students arrived for class, postwar education officials frequently steered them to assigned “home rooms,” a tool teachers and administrators used to anchor students in the otherwise confusing circulatory systems of secondary schools and to offer them continuous adult role models akin to their parents at home. Like the exterior architecture of suburban campuses, the “home room” concept used the straight family and domestic life as a metaphor for school organization, and allowed Bay Area architect John Lyon Reid and California state education consultant Charles Bursch to proclaim: “Home-rooms, which are really housing units for basic student groups, are an absolute essential for the proposed high school... The same teacher

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<sup>88</sup> Ernest Kump and Mark Falk, “P/A Fields of Practice: School Designs,” *Progressive Architecture*, April 1949, 52. A education consultants at a 1952 conference on school planning at Stanford University in Palo Alto told participants: “In the transition from home to school, the child comes in contact with new concepts which differ from the home... the architect should be made aware of the standards for planning and designing an elementary school necessary for the establishing of a homelike, healthful, safe, and attractive living atmosphere for children to grow physically, socially, mentally, and spiritually.” School Planning Laboratory, Stanford University Department of Education, Conference Report, 1952.

<sup>89</sup> “School Plant Trends,” *American School and University*, 1949-50.

<sup>90</sup> “Shoreview School,” *Architectural Record*, November 1949.

continues in charge [for a student's entire career] and provides the link between pupil and home, and pupil and community."<sup>91</sup>

Education authorities understood the physical proximity between homes and schools not only as a means of helping children get to class, but also as part of the education system's larger mission to help young people prepare for domestic life after graduation. The design of these institutions instructed students not only in the fundamentals of reading, writing and arithmetic, but also taught them key lessons about sexuality and gender. The provisioning of high schools with "home economics laboratories" for girls and "industrial shops" for boys not only reinforced the connections between family and student life, but also underscored the idea that men and women occupied separate, but compatible, places in the social order.<sup>92</sup> Education officials explicitly intended to design schools to prepare male and female students for different roles later in life, and, as some of the nation's leading planners proclaimed in 1949, classroom curricula from the period sought "to produce more competent household managers and general handymen around the house as well as to establish firmer foundations for more successful family relationships."<sup>93</sup>

The frequent inclusion of model domestic space within home economics classrooms, complete with staged bedrooms, kitchens, and living areas, sought to prepare young women in particular for their future lives as wives and mothers. In almost direct contrast to the private sleeping areas in students' homes, school officials opened up the bedrooms in these classroom in order to parade female pupils through them to facilitate

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<sup>91</sup> Charles Bursch and John Lyon Reid, *High Schools Today and Tomorrow* (New York: Reinhold, 1957), 52.

<sup>92</sup> National Council on Schoolhouse Construction, *Guide for Planning School Plants*, 1953, 67-69.

<sup>93</sup> N.L. Engelhardt, Sr. N.L. Engelhardt, Jr. Stanton Leggett, *Planning Secondary School Buildings* (New York: Reinhold Publishing Company, 1949), 174.

broader discussions about the importance of child care, family relationships, and household management. In 1956 a group of school builders advised new architects to include model kitchens, family rooms, and bedrooms in their designs to accommodate new classes on “home and family living.” In their estimation, these public educational spaces would help students prepare for their future private domestic lives since young people “will continue to live in families and will marry and create families of their own.”<sup>94</sup>

Teaching students about the importance of normative gender and sexuality began as soon as planners believed that children could understand the physical differences between males and females. School toilets, showers, and changing facilities, in particular, all offered public sites in which groups of strangers commingled in states of undress, and campus designers in the 1940s and 50s staggered the types of spaces they employed in their blueprints to accommodate the perceived developmental needs of students. Educational consultants Merle Sumption and Jack Landes recommended in 1957 that kindergartens offer their students a single unisex bathroom, in order to avoid confusing children too young to understand public sexual and gender decorum. “In the home,” they noted, “free use is made of toilet facilities by members of the family without self-consciousness or embarrassment. One line of reasoning concludes that there should be no differentiation between common toilet facilities in the home and school. Accordingly, a single room toilet adjacent to the classroom is specified.”<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> John Herrick, et al. *From School Program to School Plant: A Discussion of Problems of Planning School Buildings* (New York: Henry Hold and Company, 1956), 282.

<sup>95</sup> Merle Sumption and Jack Landes, *Planning Functional School Buildings* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1957), 266-7.

As students moved up through the educational system builders provisioned campuses with a growing number of gender-specific facilities for students in various stages of undress. As pupils approached puberty, designers such as Sumption and Landes used segregated bath- and locker rooms to teach young people the importance of privacy when removing clothing and reminded them that unmarried men and women should avoid bodily contact with one another when naked. Just as public health authorities recommended that homebuilders provide brothers and sisters with separate bedrooms after the early years, school planners increasingly worked to guide the presumed heterosexual desires of their students and progressively sifted male and female students from one another as they grew into sexual maturity. The National Council on Schoolhouse Construction told builders that “individual toilets for each sex are recommended” after the third grade.<sup>96</sup> Similar to the preoccupation of domestic architects with bedroom and bathroom privacy, Sumption and Landes advised builders to provide restrooms with exterior facilities but cautioned: “Toilet rooms should be designed with vision screening in mind... windows should not open into courts nor be located so that casual observation into the room is possible.”<sup>97</sup>

No physical feature facilitated cultural connections between home and school more than the creation of interior floor plans that facilitated the supervision of young students. According to Sumption and Landes: “Our first concern is with the physical

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<sup>96</sup> National Council on Schoolhouse Construction, *Elementary School Plant Planning*, 1958, 18.

<sup>97</sup> Sumption and Landes, *Planning Functional School Buildings*, 268. The National Council on Schoolhouse Construction similarly advised planners to give restrooms adequate soundproofing to insure student privacy: “The better planned schools provide noise reduction treatment in restrooms, as well as special sound interception measures within the room boundaries. Individual toilets need special attention, particularly in the form of adequate noise reduction treatment and equally adequate sound barriers which include doors.” National Council on Schoolhouse Construction, *Guide for Planning School Plants*, 232.

safety of youth so that they may attain able-bodied adulthood.”<sup>98</sup> Just as residential architects popularized open kitchens and living rooms, glass patio doors, and large picture windows to facilitate mothers’ surveillance of their children, school planners worked to enable teachers’ oversight of their students. The fact that women made up the vast majority of schoolteachers only strengthened the parallel. As in the home, open sight lines both safeguarded against potential dangers *to* children from strangers or speeding cars and helped prevent transgressions committed *by* children, such as fights, vandalism, or sexual misconduct. Education consultants advocated that planners should make classrooms free from obstructions, in part, so that teachers could take in the entire space with little difficulty.<sup>99</sup> They advocated the creation of wide corridors “clear of all fixed and movable obstructions” to facilitate pupil movement and to create direct sight lines for adults.<sup>100</sup> And, for children too young to understand sexual norms, they even recommended easing instructors’ access to students’ toilets to maintain discipline. According to Berkeley architect Hugh Hiatt: “It is desirable for the teacher to be able to supervise toilet room facilities without leaving her classroom. Glass should be provided in the doors to the washing area to permit the teacher to view most of the toilet room.”<sup>101</sup>

If gender-segregated bath- and locker rooms officially gave students one kind of sex education, the pooling of boys and girls separately and provisions for their individual

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<sup>98</sup> Sumption and Landes, *Planning Function School Buildings*, 231.

<sup>99</sup> See for example National Education Association, Department of Elementary School Principals, *Elementary School Buildings... Design for Learning*, 1959, 22.

<sup>100</sup> See for example, National Council on Schoolhouse Construction, *Guide for Planning School Plants*, 1958, 159.

<sup>101</sup> Hugh W. Hiatt, “Toilet Provisions in Elementary Schools,” *American School and University*, 1949-50, 410. The National Education Association similarly advised builders: “In the primary grades, toilet facilities should be provided either in or directly adjacent to each classroom. The same may be done for the upper elementary grades or, if preferred, gang toilets may be utilized. In the latter case, however, they should be located near the classrooms so as to be easily accessible and easy to supervise.” National Education Association, *Elementary School Buildings... Design for Learning*, 128.

privacy also offered them an alternate one. Separate facilities may have inscribed gender differences into a school's physical plant, but they also placed boys and girls in queer proximity to other members of their sex. If nothing else, gender segregated bath- and locker rooms offered students experiencing same-sex desire the opportunity to look at their peers in relative seclusion. The fact that school planners offered teachers privileged vantage points for watching students only complicated matters further. In an era when psychologists and legal authorities warned the public about the dangers of pedophilia and voyeurism, campus-washing facilities created a scenario in which adults looked at children in states of undress in their official capacity as teachers.

Although schools represented the most significant addition to any neighborhood, federal officials, private builders, and banks also advocated the inclusion of churches and parks as a means of maintaining local property values and strengthening straight family life. In its 1953 *Home Builders Manual* the National Association of Home Builders contended that "The church is an important and necessary component of American community life. [It] can help to stabilize neighborhood desirability and value, and often is a deciding factor in helping a prospective buyer to choose his location."<sup>102</sup> William Claire, an urban planner from Los Angeles, told his professional colleagues a year later: "The planner... sees the church as a factor in the stabilization of land values, the increase in neighborhood solidarity and the fostering of community pride. He sees the church as a focal point for family activities and interests; religious education for children... and,

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<sup>102</sup> National Association of Home Builders, *Home Building Manual for Land Development*, 202.



finally, as a means [of reducing] juvenile delinquency, crime, divorce, [and] loose morals.”<sup>103</sup>

Similarly, public health officials and community planners held that residential areas needed an adequate park system to accommodate families with young children. They designed these outdoor recreational spaces in order to supplement the socialization function of the home and to provide an additional community gathering spot. The American Public Health Association, for example, held that, “outdoor recreation helps to relieve the nervous strain of urban life. Furthermore, the opportunities provided for group recreation are helpful in fostering good social relationships.”<sup>104</sup> Planners on the Peninsula and in the South Bay almost always included playgrounds and parks in their designs, and, like elementary schools, they ensured that each one lay within a short walk of individual homes. Santa Clara County’s planning commission promised to keep playgrounds within a half mile of every residence, while the city of Sunnyvale noted in its general plan that since “people have expressed their need for open space in their preference for single family dwellings with patio and yard areas,” the suburb would place “large public recreation areas” in convenient locations.<sup>105</sup> This desire to make parks accessible to the home encouraged planners to place them near educational facilities, and

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<sup>103</sup> William H. Claire, “The Church in the City Plan,” *Journal of the American Institute of Planners*, Volume 20, Fall 1954, 173.

<sup>104</sup> American Public Health Association, *Planning the Neighborhood* (Chicago: Public Administration Service, 1948), 47.

<sup>105</sup> Santa Clara County Planning Commission, *Neighborhood Standards* (San Jose, 1953); Sunnyvale Planning Department, *Preliminary Studies for a General Plan*. These standards were increasingly put in place across the country, and the National Recreation Association counseled planning departments: “Children’s playgrounds should be within easy walking distance of every home.” National Recreation Association, *Suggested Standards for Recreation Agencies* (New York: The Association, 1934).

the San Jose Planning Department declared that parks and playgrounds were, “as a rule, developed on the grounds of elementary schools.”<sup>106</sup>

### **Designing for Exclusion**

Even as this collection of federal officials, bankers, private builders, health authorities and urban planners worked together to craft communities to meet the needs of straight families, their designs reinforced many of the discriminatory patterns at the heart of suburban development. Most notably, their preoccupation with “neighborhood schools” reinforced racial segregation in the local housing market. A study on “interracial prejudice” in 1950, for example, noted that only one teacher of Mexican descent and not a single African American worked in San Jose’s schools,<sup>107</sup> and, in the mid-1950s, the Mayfair Elementary School in San Jose boasted a 65 percent Mexican-American enrollment, whereas the neighboring districts had almost exclusively Anglo-white student bodies.<sup>108</sup> In 1957, a married couple from the predominantly African American and Latino city of East Palo Alto told the readers of the *San Francisco Examiner*: “Although it has been denied by many officials, we feel that segregation is the factor in the... boundaries for our fifth high school.”<sup>109</sup> And as late as the end of the 1960s, a report sponsored by the Santa Clara County Department of Education concluded that the segregation of students of color and discriminatory hiring policies towards minority teachers characterized the entire postwar era. Looking at the entire South Bay the school authorities noted the “high concentration of minority ethnic groups in

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<sup>106</sup> San Jose Planning Commission, *Master Plan of the City of San Jose*. See also Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors, *Recreation: Santa Clara County*, 1955.

<sup>107</sup> Nazar Hajinian, et al. “Interracial Prejudices in San Jose, California,” San Jose State College, 1950.

<sup>108</sup> “Negro Housing Problem Reported to City Council,” *San Jose Mercury*, 1 July 1958, History San Jose.

<sup>109</sup> Mr. and Mrs. R.A. Larned, letter, *San Francisco Examiner*, 12 July 1957.

neighborhoods afflicted by social blight” and asserted that schools in the county had hired only one teacher with a “Spanish surname” for every ninety-three students.<sup>110</sup>

If the architects of these cities believed that certain sites, such as single-family homes, schools, churches and parks attracted straight consumers, they also set aside spaces that might threaten the stability of property values in their areas. Most notably, planners and health authorities singled out bars and public drinking places as sites worthy of exclusion. In 1948 the American Public Health Association advised city planners that, “Establishments which tend to exert a socially undesirable influence on the residents, especially on children and adolescents, may be a hazard to morals and the public peace. These include gambling houses, bars, low-grade taverns and night clubs, and houses of prostitution.” In order to deal with these “moral hazards” the APHA counseled planners to work closely with local police departments, but most significantly, to design their communities in such a manner that “streets leading to schools and other facilities used daily by the residents” should be free of the gathering spots of “immoral people.” In 1950 the organization declared: “Where taverns, bars, liquor stores, gambling places, houses of prostitution and other undesirable elements are concentrated and intermixed with residences they present unquestionable moral hazards to adolescents and young people and a disruptive influence on family life.”<sup>111</sup>

Health authorities believed that public drinking places attracted degenerate people, including homosexuals, and encouraged young people to misbehave. City planners used their zoning authority to limit alcohol-selling businesses exclusively to the

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<sup>110</sup> Edwin Rios, *Improving Ethnic Balance and Intergroup Relations, A Report to the Santa Clara Board of Education* (San Jose: Santa Clara County Board of Education, 1968).

<sup>111</sup> American Public Health Association, Committee on the Hygiene of Housing, *An Appraisal Method for Measuring the Quality of Housing: A Yardstick for Health Officers, Housing Officials and Planners, Part III, Appraisal of the Neighborhood Environment* (Chicago: The Association, 1950), 8.

central business districts of larger municipalities, like San Jose, with some communities banning them altogether. In 1956 the *Wall Street Journal* told its readers that in the Peninsula suburb of Palo Alto, “Night falls with a deep yawn over much of this city... But for the most part, Palo Altans, who prefer to spend a good part of their time at home, don’t complain about the scarcity of bars...”<sup>112</sup> In 1962 Mountain View passed an ordinance forbidding the opening of a bar with telephones at patrons’ tables, with the suburb’s police chief alleging that it might become a “pickup place” for “homosexuals or prostitutes.”<sup>113</sup> By the mid-1960s Santa Clara boasted the lowest ratio of on-site liquor licenses per person of any county in the state.<sup>114</sup>

These concerns about the congregation of people suburban authorities deemed threatening to children not only increased official pressure against public drinking places, but also stepped up police surveillance of queer life more specifically. As in other parts of California, authorities on the Peninsula and in the South Bay monitored individuals they deemed threatening to children, and they periodically arrested gay men and lesbians and conducted raids of known cruising areas. This upsurge in surveillance worked alongside homebuilders’ concerns with privacy for heterosexual couples, and the actions of area law enforcement officials sent powerful signals about where and with whom residents should have sex. In 1955, for example, the Santa Clara County District Attorney’s office conducted a month-long investigation of two local restaurant owners and arrested them

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<sup>112</sup> “Hometown U.S.A.: High IQ, High Income Help Palo Alto, Calif. Grow Fast, Live Relaxed,” *Wall Street Journal*, 10 August 1956.

<sup>113</sup> “Dial a Doll’ Cocktail Bar Promoter Gets Wrong Number,” *Sunnyvale Daily Standard*, 12 April 1962; “So Much for Table Talk,” *San Jose Mercury*, 13 April 1962.

<sup>114</sup> Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control, *Report: Santa Clara County, 1965-66*, Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control, Subject Files, County Activity Reports, California State Archives. State authorities reported that Santa Clara had a total of 156 bars or restaurants that served alcohol, or one “on-site liquor” license per 3,825 residents who lived there. A note in the report singled out the South Bay by saying: “Santa Clara has more persons per license than any other county [in the state].”

for having sex with a pair other men in the supposed privacy of the bedroom of their Los Altos home.<sup>115</sup> In 1956 and 1959, Palo Alto police used “motion picture cameras” and “walkie-talkies” in high tech “stakeouts” of the city’s railroad station, and, after watching the depot’s men’s room for ten days they swept up dozens of local commuters, contending they had come there seeking gay sex.<sup>116</sup> And, similarly, a ten-day vigil on a department store restroom in 1962 in Santa Clara allowed the city’s law enforcement to arrest eight men “on homosexual charges.”<sup>117</sup>

### **School Strains and the Sexual Industrial Revolution**

The narrowing of the postwar real estate market to married couples and the marketing of suburbs as “good places to raise children” concentrated straight families in these new communities in unprecedented numbers. Between 1950 and 1960, the percentage of married people living in San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties boomed by 20 percent, even as the number of “single” people living in San Francisco doubled. Fifteen years after the end of the Second World War the U.S Census reported that 184,813 married couples lived in the suburban counties, and that over 98 percent of them “had their own household.” Although older cities, such as San Francisco, encompassed neighborhoods with large numbers of straight families, the new suburbs exhibited unprecedented ratios of exclusivity. At least nineteen census tracts in the San Jose Standard Metropolitan Area in 1960 had almost no single adults over the age of 18. These areas overlapped considerably with the newest residential developments, and they

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<sup>115</sup> “Restaurant Partners Flee Sex Perversion Charges,” *San Jose Mercury*, 5 January 1955.

<sup>116</sup> “Stanford Drops 7 Students Seized as Sex Deviates,” *San Francisco Examiner*, 14 February 1956; “Students Seized on Sex Charges Granted Leave,” *Los Angeles Times*, 15 February 1956; “Cop Movies Net 24 in Sex Case,” *San Francisco Examiner*, 27 January 1959.

<sup>117</sup> “8 Nabbed On Morals Charges,” *San Jose Mercury*, 6 February 1962.

reflected the federal government and real estate industry's investment in racial segregation. Over 97 percent of Santa Clara County's residents in 1960 were white, and according to the census that year only 13 percent of them has a "Spanish surname."<sup>118</sup>

This progressive concentration of straight couples with children placed enormous burdens on the small school districts of San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties. As developers sold cluster upon cluster of single-family homes on the Peninsula and in the South Bay, they helped steadily shift the state's student population away from older urban centers, and prompted the *San Jose Mercury* to reflect: "[Last year] Subdivisions spread across the valley like a fast growing ground cover in springtime. Every new batch of houses means more children to be educated in the district."<sup>119</sup> Whereas San Francisco's school enrollment stagnated in the postwar decades, Santa Clara County's student population increased almost five fold, growing from approximately 36,000 students in 1947 to almost 150,000 new pupils in 1960.<sup>120</sup> Although this enrollment boom paralleled the overall population growth of the area, young people under the age of 18 took up a disproportionate percentage of the South Bay's residents. Similarly, San Mateo's student population outstripped general growth in this period, and although the county's population doubled over the course of the 1940s, the number of children living on the Peninsula tripled. By 1960 the number of people under eighteen living in San Mateo County exceeded the total population of the area before the war.<sup>121</sup>

As mentioned above, planners in the South Bay frequently assessed the number of school-age children in an area based on the number of local building permits issued in a

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<sup>118</sup> U.S. Bureau of the Census, *1960 Census*, (Washington, D.C: Government Printing Office, 1961).

<sup>119</sup> "Crisis in Schools: It Adds Up to Tax Dollars," *San Jose Mercury*, 15 April 1962.

<sup>120</sup> "Squeezed Schools: They Battle Teacher, Space Shortages, With New, Old Tricks," *Wall Street Journal*, 3 September 1957; "Schools Get Bigger," *San Jose Mercury*, 24 January 1960.

<sup>121</sup> "More Payrolls for a Bedroom Community," *Urban Land*, May 1953.

community and the number of bedrooms in the surrounding homes. As the Baby Boom fueled the housing boom, therefore, the school districts of the Peninsula and South Bay underwent a subsequent classroom construction binge, and the soaring costs of education threatened to consume all of the suburbs' meager educational resources. In 1951 consultants for a district in San Mateo County observed pessimistically that, "The diaper shortage of the forties has resulted in the elementary school shortage of the fifties, and will result in high school and college building problems for the foreseeable future."<sup>122</sup> Although San Mateo and Santa Clara County's education authorities built many new schools in the two decades after the war, classroom and teacher shortages loomed over the area for the entire twenty-year Baby Boom. Throughout that period, observers reported on an educational system chronically deficient of resources. In 1952 the *San Francisco Chronicle* noted that classroom shortages compelled many Peninsula students to meet in storerooms, gymnasiums, or even school garages.<sup>123</sup> In 1956, the *Wall Street Journal* reported that 15 percent of all districts in Santa Clara County had held "double sessions" in which students only attended school for half the day.<sup>124</sup> And in that same year, the *San Francisco Examiner* observed that education authorities in San Mateo had even resorted to asking area churches for permission to host classes on their sites.<sup>125</sup>

These mounting costs competed with the promises of municipal officials to keep residential property taxes low, and, as student enrollments in their districts rose, public

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<sup>122</sup> Mary Drury, et al. *A Study of the School Building Program of the Laguna Salada union Elementary School District*, 1951, IGS, 9.

<sup>123</sup> "Schools Within a School is Unique Set-Up at Sequoia," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 26 October 1952.

<sup>124</sup> "High Income, High IQ Help Palo Alto, Calif. Grow Fast, Live Relaxed," *Wall Street Journal*, 10 August 1956.

<sup>125</sup> "Predicted Crisis for San Mateo Schools at Hand," *San Francisco Examiner*, 27 February 1956.

officials scrambled to find alternate means of funding their schools. In 1953, a report by the Urban Land Institute estimated that although it took approximately \$204 a year to put a child through school in San Mateo County, residential property taxes that year yielded a mere \$50 per house, and with most families sending more than one child to local public schools, the Peninsula suburbs faced an enormous budgetary deficit.<sup>126</sup> A 1955 study by independent consultants in Palo Alto concluded that, based on the current tax structure, a median-priced household in the city with a single child only paid for 44 percent of its share in school services, and that with larger families, the gap between property assessments and the cost of education grew.<sup>127</sup> In 1956 *The San Francisco Examiner* somewhat awkwardly admitted that the Bay Area's largest city had, in effect, created San Mateo's educational problems when it had "made the Peninsula its bedroom," and James Tormey, an overwhelmed suburban school superintendent observed: "We have a bedroom county and our problem essentially is that bedrooms are better producers of babies than they are of taxes."<sup>128</sup>

State aid provided some relief for struggling suburban school districts. In the first six years after the end of the Second World War the California legislature apportioned over \$305 million for the construction of new schools, and San Mateo and Santa Clara education authorities used X percentage of those funds. Although public aid came in the form of loans, local districts only had to pay a small sum every year back to the state, and after three decades the legislature promised to forgive any outstanding debts. According to education consultants on the Peninsula: "In most cases, at the end of the 30-year period for which the State funds are granted, there will be a large amount still

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<sup>126</sup> "More Payrolls for a Bedroom Community," *Urban Land*, May 1953.

<sup>127</sup> Palo Alto Planning Commission and Harold Wise Associates, *1955 Report*.

<sup>128</sup> "Predicted Crisis for San Mateo Schools at Hand," *San Francisco Examiner*, 27 February 1956.



due; but, at that time, this remaining sum will be forgiven and no further payments to the State will be asked.”<sup>129</sup> In order to ease the burden of growing suburban school districts, the California legislators essentially gave out over \$300 million in loans, for which they largely did not expect repayment. This suburban subsidy lasted well into the 1960s, and according to a 1963 study by the University of California’s Institute of Governmental Studies: “Because the rapidly growing fringe districts frequently have many children and little industrial or commercial property, they have had to turn the state for additional loans for school housing after the early exhaustion of their own borrowing capacity.”<sup>130</sup>

Although state aid helped defray some of the costs of new campuses, public officials in San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties increasingly looked to promote industrial development in order to diversify their tax bases. Manufacturing plants and office complexes offered the potential to bring in increased assessment revenues without sending more children to already strained suburban schools. The shortage was particularly acute on the Peninsula where large hills and state parks limited the ability of local governments to reserve space for manufacturing centers. In 1953 consultants from the Urban Land Institute told the San Mateo County Planning Commission that “expansion of industrial plants has been far outstripped by residential building.” They predicted that school costs would double by the end of the decade, and that officials could ease these economic strains only through “a program of selective industrial development.”<sup>131</sup> Similarly, with over 22 percent of the city’s population under the age of 18, local planners in Palo Alto knew they faced an enormous budgetary shortfall, and

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<sup>129</sup> Mary Drury, et al. *A Study of the School Building Program of the Laguna Salada Union Elementary School District*, 1951, IGS.

<sup>130</sup> Theodore Reller, *Problems of Public Education in the San Francisco Bay Area*, (Institute of Governmental Studies, University of California, Berkeley), 1963, IGS.

<sup>131</sup> San Mateo County Planning Commission, *Annual Report 1952-53*, September 1953.

in 1955 a group of private consultants warned the suburb's leadership that, "The difference between what an average residence yields in school taxes, and the cost of educating the children from that household, must be made up by allocations from state tax funds, and by local taxes on non-residential property."<sup>132</sup> And in 1960, *The Santa Clara Journal* bluntly told its readers: "As residential growth continues to mushroom in the area, greater industrialization will be needed to meet the rising costs of local government and education."<sup>133</sup>

Although the political and economic elites of the Peninsula and South Bay had sought to promote suburban industrial development as early as the Second World War, a dramatic expansion of national spending on defense-related manufacturing in the 1950s, helped them allay the ongoing school financial crisis. As early as 1951 the City of Sunnyvale pledged to pursue "balanced development" to avoid being a "bedroom community." Even as legislators in Washington in this period rejected attempts to use federal funding explicitly for education, their willingness to spend liberally on Cold War weapons programs indirectly subsidized San Mateo and Santa Clara County's classroom building programs. Between 1946 and 1965 the Defense Department consumed almost 62 percent of the federal government's total budget, and, as several scholars have argued, this massive increase in spending allowed Sunbelt states, such as California, to attract arms manufacturers from the Northeast and Upper Midwest.<sup>134</sup> As early as 1948 private consultants in the South Bay advised city leaders to target their efforts to attract new businesses in several key fields, including "ordinance and military equipment,"

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<sup>132</sup> Palo Alto Planning Commission and Harold Wise Associates, *1955 Report*.

<sup>133</sup> "Tax Alternatives," editorial, *Santa Clara Journal*, 15 March 1950.

<sup>134</sup> James Clayton, "The Impact of the Cold War on the Economies of California and Utah, 1946-65," *Pacific Historical Review*, Volume 36, Number 4, November 1967, 449.

“transportation equipment,” and “scientific instruments.” Their study took particular note of Santa Clara County’s well-developed institutions of higher learning, and concluded that the engineering schools at San Jose State, Santa Clara University and, most notably Stanford University could help the cities of the Peninsula and South Bay compete nationally for new industries.<sup>135</sup>

Over the course of the subsequent twelve years, Santa Clara County emerged as one of the nation’s leading Cold War manufacturing centers. The armed forces’ growing appetite for scientifically sophisticated armaments, such as satellites, missiles, and jet aircraft fueled the growth of high-technology firms. Santa Clara County’s boosters in this period successfully attracted an enormous number of military-related enterprises to defray the growing costs of public education. In 1956, for example, IBM built its West Coast headquarters on San Jose’s south side, and, in that same year, arms manufacturer Lockheed opted to open its satellite and missile division in Sunnyvale.<sup>136</sup> By the early 1960s Santa Clara County trailed only Los Angeles for projects funded by the Department of Defense in California. Between 1950 and 1963 military spending more than quadrupled manufacturing in the South Bay, with electronics construction increasing by 600 percent.<sup>137</sup>

These efforts to draw in outside capital brought the cities of the Peninsula and South Bay into direct competition with older urban centers, and suburban officials clearly

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<sup>135</sup> Industrial Survey Associates, *Santa Clara County: Its Prospects of Prosperity*, May 1948, California State Library, Sacramento.

<sup>136</sup> “IBM to Dedicate \$16 Million San Jose Industrial Plant,” *San Francisco Examiner*, 12 January 1956. “Lockheed Will Triple Sunnyvale Secret Missile Plant’s Size,” *San Francisco Examiner*, 2 May 1956; “Lockheed Moving Missile Division Into San Francisco Bay Region,” *Aviation and Space Technology*, 6 February 1956.

<sup>137</sup> James Clayton, “The Impact of the Cold War on the Economies of California and Utah,” 460. It’s important to note that although Santa Clara County trailed Southern California as a whole, it actually attracted more defense-related spending than its counterpart, Orange County.

believed that their efforts to build “family friendly” communities gave them an edge in their intra-metropolitan competition with San Francisco and Oakland. Throughout the 1940s and 50s their promotional campaigns endlessly touted San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties as ideal places for a middle-class labor force to raise its children. At a “Panorama of Progress” in 1956 a representative of the Sunnyvale Chamber of Commerce declared: “Well aware that the future of our nation and our community rests in building solid citizenship, Sunnyvale placed emphasis on family life.... No matter how large this city becomes, it is understood that the basic social unit is the family and Sunnyvale’s guiding hand must aid and protect it.”<sup>138</sup> In the early 1960s the Los Gatos Chamber of Commerce promised homebuyers that Santa Clara County offered them “a valley of orchards and beautiful homes” in which “youth shall be served.”<sup>139</sup> And in 1962 the Palo Alto Chamber of Commerce called the suburb a “tree-shaded city of beautiful homes,” and promised new parents an impressive array of “outstanding schools and churches” that “rank with the finest in the nation.”<sup>140</sup>

The efforts to market the Peninsula and South Bay as wholesome environments for the straight family sharply paralleled the growing concern of industrial and commercial firms to relocate to places particularly suited for parents of young children. According to historian Margaret O’Mara, Cold War defense firms, such as Lockheed, actively used the San Francisco Peninsula’s exclusive, suburban landscape and its proximity to Stanford University’s research facilities as a recruiting tool for its expanding workforce. She writes: “The desires of scientific workers to be near communities of

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<sup>138</sup> Sunnyvale Chamber of Commerce, “Sunnyvale’s Panorama of Progress,” May 1956, Local History Collection, Sunnyvale Public Library.

<sup>139</sup> Los Gatos Chamber of Commerce, *A View of Santa Clara County*, n.d. California State Library, Sacramento.

<sup>140</sup> Palo Alto Chamber of Commerce, *The Palo Alto Story*, 1962, California State Library, Sacramento.

other scientists and in places with the right amenities for them and their families gave the Stanford Industrial Park a huge advantage in luring industry, as it was located in the sort of community that offered all of these advantages.”<sup>141</sup> A survey undertaken by the University of Santa Clara business school in 1956 concluded that 86 percent of industrial and business executives in the South Bay valued the area’s “cultural facilities,” including its schools and churches, and that 96 percent of them would recommend the area’s living conditions to other firms looking to relocate.<sup>142</sup>

Even more tellingly, the technology and defense-related firms who relocated to the area frequently repeated the claims of Santa Clara County’s boosters. In a 1957 advertisement taken out in cooperation with the San Jose Chamber of Commerce Sylvania Electric Products told other manufacturers that it opened its South Bay plant after discovering the area’s “suitable housing,” “good schools and places of worship.”<sup>143</sup> Even more significantly, when the Lockheed Corporation recruited engineers to its new plants in Palo Alto and Sunnyvale, it repeated the claims of the South Bay’s boosters about family life almost word-for word. In a booklet entitled “Home Life in California’s Santa Clara Valley,” the arms manufacturer told its workforce that it had selected its new sites thanks, in part, to the area’s “well-developed system of schools and churches” and that the South Bay offered buyers a “a wide choice of homes and communities.” The firm introduced its employees to Santa Clara by visiting four “Lockheed Missile families

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<sup>141</sup> Margaret O’Mara, *Cities of Knowledge: Cold War Science and the Search for the Next Silicon Valley* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University, 2005), 124.

<sup>142</sup> Clausin Hadley, *Why Locate in Santa Clara: A Study of the ‘Reasons Why’ Industrial Firms have located in the City of Santa Clara, California during the 1946-1956 Period* (University of Santa Clara: College of Business Administration, 1956). It’s important to note that although the survey listed “cultural facilities” among possible reasons for a plant to relocate to the area, they only included it near the end of their study. The survey never asked executives about their homes or whether their workforce had children.

<sup>143</sup> San Jose Chamber of Commerce, “Ask This Firm... About Santa Clara County,” Advertisement, *Industrial Development*, October 1957.

at home” and reproduced a diverse photo array of happy male engineers barbecuing, biking, lawn mowing, playing ping-pong and relaxing outdoors with their wives and children.<sup>144</sup>

These promotional campaigns more accurately portrayed the ideals of suburban city planners than the reality of quality schools. Many of San Mateo and Santa Clara’s school districts experienced teacher and classroom shortages well into the 1960s. The relocation of large manufacturers, such as Lockheed, only compounded the problem at first, as their new plants gave further incentives for young parents to buy homes on the Peninsula or in the South Bay. Each new business in San Mateo or Santa Clara County brought with it a workforce largely composed of young straight families, who, in turn, sent their children to local public schools. The ability of area boosters and manufacturers to promote suburban living as an ideal rested precariously on the design and layout of places such as Sunnyvale and Palo Alto. Domestic architects, urban planners, and education authorities crafted idealized homes and neighborhoods to attract homeowners, and local chambers of commerce, in turn, used those communities to attract outside investors. Home, school and industrial development, therefore, all possessed a reciprocal relationship, with each new project renewing the push for the others. Residential developers built housing that appealed to white, middle-class couples, who sent their children to local schools. In order to pay for those educational facilities, city officials recruited manufacturing and commercial firms to diversify their tax base. Each relocated company, however, brought with it a large workforce that again fueled demand for housing.

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<sup>144</sup> Lockheed Missile Systems Division, “Home Life in California’s Santa Clara Valley,” date unknown, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

## Conclusion

By the mid-1960s, the Peninsula and South Bay garnered significant attention from national media for its massive population growth and economic prosperity. In 1964, for example, *Business Week* marked Santa Clara County's coming of age by coyly observing: "The once-sleepy valley's school's population alone in September 1964, outnumbered the total population in 1950."<sup>145</sup> The most crucial marker of the South Bay's success in the eyes of the national media lay in the rippling sea of homes, schools, and churches that extended from the tip of San Francisco all the way to San Jose. In 1956, *The Wall Street Journal* profiled Palo Alto's postwar electronics boom by trumpeting the community's "relaxed outdoor family life," "new schools for brainy kids," strict "Anti-Liquor Rules," and forty "places of worship."<sup>146</sup> Citing Stanford economist Robert Arnold, *Business Week* admiringly described the area by proclaiming: "The cultural center of Santa Clara County is the single-family dwelling unit... [and] the fence, six feet high and of durable redwood, is the identifying stamp of the Western residential tract... The high fence underlines the householder's resolve to put his family's roots into these 2,500 square ft. more or less, of California soil."<sup>147</sup>

The popular magazine's play with frontier symbolism framed the subdivisions surrounding San Jose as a great anchor on the end of great California migration of the previous twenty years. Its passing reference to the planting of "family roots" not only played with the South Bay's agricultural past, but also hinted at an enormous social transformation at work in the region. The vast collection of homes, schools, and

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<sup>145</sup> "San Jose Discovers How it Feels to be Rich," *Business Week*, 26 September 1964, 70.

<sup>146</sup> "Home Town U.S.A. *Wall Street Journal*, 10 August 1956.

<sup>147</sup> "San Jose Discovers How it Feels to be Rich," *Business Week*.

churches that enveloped Lockheed and IBM's new industrial centers stood as monuments to a new sexual order, and their construction produced several notable consequences. First, suburbanization channeled state resources from the general population to a narrower group of white, middle-class, straight couples. Beginning in the 1940s, a coalition of federal officials, bankers, realtors, and land developers implemented a social theory of property that distinguished among consumers based on their sexuality, gender, and race. They followed this logic in order to stabilize local and national housing markets, but their tools were remarkably undemocratic. In order to promote property values, they deliberately excluded most people of color, the poor, openly gay men, lesbians, bisexual and transgender people, and, by tying home ownership to straight family life, they created enormous incentives for residents involved in any form of queer sex to conceal those behaviors.

Second, the overwhelming concentration of white, middle-class couples with children gave rise to new communities dedicated to parenting and straight sexuality. As the next chapter will discuss, new suburban residents joined a variety of groups that brought together their status as homeowners with their role as parents. These organizations extended the exclusionary dimensions of federal policies and the practices of local developers, and they pressed their local schools to meet their needs as parents. They included homeowners' associations that sought to drive out African-, Mexican-, or Asian- American neighbors; church groups that worked to close local bars and liquor stores; and school PTAs that attempted to implement formal sex education in their suburbs' classrooms. Each of these issues spurred disagreement among San Mateo and Santa Clara County residents, and they represented the contentious postscript to



consumers' discussions about the meaning of "good neighborhoods" for children and straight community.

And, third, suburbanization helped push industrial and commercial firms out of older cities. Corporations, such as IBM, made their decision to relocate to places like Santa Clara County for a number of different reasons, but the presence of residential areas exclusive by race, class, and sexuality clearly played a role in their deliberations. As Chapter Four will explain, these concerns about providing workers and executives with wholesome places in which to raise children played a significant role in San Francisco's urban redevelopment projects in the early 1960s. Two decades after federal officials helped make straight marriage a social barometer of financial reliability, city officials up the Peninsula would use government urban renewal funding to displace large numbers of people of color, single and queer residents.

### **Chapter 3**

#### **Friction: Sex and Family Life Education at the Suburban Grassroots**

##### **Introduction**

In 1948, the Parent Teacher Association of the Peninsula suburb of Sunnyvale celebrated its thirtieth anniversary. In the auditorium of the city's lone elementary school, the group put on a "tableaux" of the four pillars of the PTA. Casting area children to play the necessary roles and engaging the 8<sup>th</sup> grade choir, they staged frozen images of the "home," "school," "church," and "community" for an audience of area residents. This tableaux consisted of immobile eight- to ten- year olds acting out the key arenas of "character development" embraced by most straight Americans, and it represented a ritualized celebration of the parents group's sense of community cooperation. With the home, school, and church working in tandem, the parents of Sunnyvale hoped to build an ideal community for themselves and their children.<sup>1</sup>

Although the PTA commemorated its past accomplishments in 1948, its tableaux celebration also foreshadowed the decade to come. Even as the group shuffled clusters of young students across the auditorium's stage, the coalition of private and public actors responsible for suburban growth were already beginning to transform the world around them. If homes, schools, and churches stood as the building blocks of a social order dedicated to raising good citizens, as discussed in the previous chapter, they also increasingly made up large portions of the literal physical landscape of most residential

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<sup>1</sup> "Program Marks 30<sup>th</sup> Birthday," *Sunnyvale Standard*, 13 February 1948.

areas after the war. From the late 1940s through the early 1960s, white, middle-class parents, particularly mothers, joined religious and education-oriented groups, such as the PTA, in enormous numbers. These school- and church- based organizations offered many women social outlets while their children attended class and their husbands worked outside the home, but they also acted as community-oriented groups dedicated to helping parents raise healthy children. Pooling collections of like-minded individuals, religious groups such as the Catholic Christian Family Movement, and the PTA, represented the organizational umbrellas of a postwar white, middle-class straight public. Working together for the betterment of home, school, church and community, these groups made the welfare of parents and children their top priorities.

Sex lay at the heart of their activism. Made up almost entirely by white, middle-class married adults, these suburban parents' organizations all hoped to encourage their children grow up to serve as model citizens with "healthy" straight relationships. Their investment in the institution of marriage and their desire to prevent future incidences of "broken homes," "sex deviance," and "teenage promiscuity" made many of them staunch allies for the state-sponsored Parent Education Bureau described in Chapter One. This chapter will detail the ways in which many school- and church-based parents' groups in San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties, notably area PTAs, embraced the cause of sex and family life education for both adults and young people. For the most part, the members of these organizations accepted the fundamental thesis advanced by state experts, such as Ralph Eckert, that frank discussions about sex within marriage between parents, teachers, clergy their children, congregants, and students encouraged healthy straight relationships later in life. In short, they hoped to enlist the combined resources of homes, churches and

schools to encourage young people to refrain from sex before marriage, to eliminate sexual deviance such as homosexuality, and eradicate incidences of divorce.

Over the course of the 1950s, these proponents of greater sex and family life education for young people clashed with a second group that opposed the inclusion of those subjects in the public education system. These opponents of school-based sex education shared with their counterparts the fundamental desire to help young people grow into model, straight citizens, but they drew different lessons from the sex panic of the previous decade. Taking seriously the counsel of postwar psychologists that highly impressionable children saw all adults as potential role models, they argued that parents alone should speak to their sons and daughters about sex. Even as the state of California purged its classrooms of gay teachers, opponents of school-based sex and family-life education on sex contended that they could not trust educators to give their children sufficiently individualized instruction on sex. They did, however, support the use of public resources to properly instruct parents on the subject, and many of them favored ample church-based education on sex, marriage, and family life for young people. Over the course of the 1950s, therefore, two different groups of parents in the suburbs shared the common goals of helping children grow up to engage in what they saw as healthy straight relationships, but they differed over which institutions could best accomplish that objective. As the immediacy of the postwar sex panic began to subside, both camps mobilized around the symbolic nodes of home, church, and school in order to either support or oppose the cause of greater straight-based sex education.

### **Mothers at the Grassroots**

Frustrated at their inability to convince lawmakers to pass mandatory family life education for all students in California, government proponents of the subject in Sacramento expanded their close alliance with the state's Congress of Parents and Teachers. For experts such as Parent Education Bureau Chief Ralph Eckert, work with PTA groups offered the possibility of speaking to mothers and fathers directly about the importance of teaching their children about sex and family life at an early age. For the large numbers of middle-class women who made up the bulk of California's Parent Teacher Associations, a liaison with state authorities not only gave them a greater voice in the state's educational system, it also helped them advance their organization's larger goals to "bring the home and school closer together" and to "help preserve healthy family life." In 1951 Eckert called the state's PTA "the means of improved cooperation between home and school all across America" and contended that when it came to sex and family life education "The PTA has been the most ardent supporter of group instruction."<sup>2</sup>

Over the course of the late 1940s and 50s, this coalition of state experts and parent volunteers dramatically increased the amount of scientific information on sex circulating at the grassroots. Beginning with the final years of the war decade, Parent Teacher Associations across California, from the state organization down to individual school units, began debating and discussing the merits of greater sex education for both parents and students. These groups of mothers sponsored lectures and film viewings on the subject. They established libraries with literature on sound sex and family living. They read articles written by Eckert and his allies in the organization's official magazine, *California Parent-Teacher*. And, in many cases, they lobbied their local school districts to implement either formal instruction on family life with components on sex for their

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<sup>2</sup> Ralph Eckert, "The Role of the PTA in Sex Education," *Marriage and Family Living*, May 1951, 58-9.

students, or to develop specific “parent education” programs to encourage greater numbers of mothers and fathers to speak to their children about the subject.

The steady circulation of scientific materials on sex at the grassroots produced two significant consequences in the postwar period. First, it gradually democratized many of the hierarchies of gender and sexual shame at the heart of most of postwar psychology. As described in the first chapter, sex education authorities rested many of their theories on notions of the inherent differences between men and women, and they contended that heterosexual sex within marriage constituted a sign of emotional maturity. Ralph Eckert defined the field of family and sex education as “that broad area of developing wholesome feelings about sex in life, from the earliest feelings of boys and girls about being boys and girls, learning about reproduction, on up through the problems of adolescence, boy-girl relations in dating, and the problems of courtship, engagement, and marriage that in any way relate to sex.”<sup>3</sup> Viewing sexuality as an evolutionary process, state authorities, like Eckert, promulgated the notion that adolescents needed preparation for healthy sex within marriage, and, by suggesting that young people could stray from the proper path, they helped spread the stigma that other forms of sexual expression constituted signs of immaturity or “emotional maladjustment.” According to Eckert: “Sex attitudes are developing in every situation in which boys and girls are together. Teachers trained in the broad field of family relations utilize the inevitable situations that arise to build the right attitudes... failure to do so builds wrong attitudes.”<sup>4</sup>

This vague allusion to “right” or “wrong attitudes” from the state’s chief “parent education” expert underscores the clear consensus among most Americans after the war

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<sup>3</sup> Eckert, “Sex and the PTA,” 58.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. 59.

that sex found its proper expression within the confines of marriage. State authorities did not need to elaborate at great length about the possible dangers of other forms of sexual expression because few members of their audience accepted them as viable alternatives. The second consequence of the upsurge in discourses about sex and family life, however, produced a considerable amount of strife among parents. Even as large numbers of people supported the objectives of state-sanctioned sex experts to eradicate “broken homes,” “sex deviance,” and “teenage promiscuity,” they increasingly differed on how to achieve those goals. On one hand, the state’s public education campaign sought to mobilize parents to teach their children the fundamentals of sex instruction in order to produce stronger marriages and better citizens later in life. Government officials in both Sacramento and local districts repeatedly held up mothers and fathers as the most important role models in their children’s lives. On the other hand, however, their emphasis on the dangers of failing to provide such an education raised the possibility of teachers circumventing parental prerogatives and providing it directly to their students in the schools. According to Eckert: “Regardless of how good a job many parents may do, the failure of even a few exposes other children to obscenity and vulgarity.”<sup>5</sup>

The decision to mobilize parents on behalf of family life education, therefore, carried within it two contradictory impulses. First, state authorities empowered individual parents and, second, they suggested that others had somehow failed to do speak to their children in sufficient depth on the subject. The result was the steady radicalization of middle-class straight citizens for or against increased family and sex instruction in California’s schools. The mounting conflict over sex and the public education system took place alongside the steady purging of gay teachers from the state’s

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<sup>5</sup> Eckert, “Sex Education and the PTA,” 59.

classrooms. Even as the state promulgated the notion that adults played enormous roles in the sexual and psychological development of children, it subjected teachers to greater and greater scrutiny. If proponents of family life education argued that schools offered parents unbiased partners in the struggle to raise healthy children, many of their neighbors rejected the notion that anyone could offer “neutral” teachings when it came to sex, and they viewed teachers as potential adversaries, rather than allies.

### **Suburban Panic: The Sex Education Crisis in San Mateo**

These conflicts within the “parent education” program spilled out into the open on the Peninsula and in the South Bay just a few years after its initiation. Amidst the sex panic of the war’s aftermath, several parent teacher associations began lobbying for formal family life and sex education programs for high school students. In 1948 Santa Clara’s Sixth District PTA hosted the viewing of state-sanctioned films on human growth and reproduction in school cafeterias, and the organization recommended that teachers employ those visual aids in their classrooms the following year.<sup>6</sup> Ralph Eckert reported that every PTA in San Mateo County saw the film *Human Growth* in that same year, after his bureau recommended it for them. Furthermore, he approvingly noted that the members of these organizations put together a series called “Sex Education for Parents and Teachers” under the direction of San Jose State professor Bertha Mason, and in 1949 several school officials on the Peninsula integrated the movies them into their classrooms “with parental blessing.”<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Sixth District PTA, “Summary of Minutes,” Sixth District PTA Records, Santa Clara County Board of Education Library, San Jose, CA.

<sup>7</sup> Ralph Eckert, “The Role of the P.T.A. in Sex Education,” *Marriage and Family Life*, May 1951.



Eckert and his allies soon discovered, however, that the politicization of parents could create conflict as well as harmony in the Bay Area suburbs. Controversy over the competing roles of parents and teachers broke out just eighteen miles from San Francisco in the city of San Mateo not long after PTAs on the Peninsula convinced school districts to show state-sanctioned films on family life in their classes. In 1949, Ralph Steele, a biology teacher at San Mateo Union High School, restructured his science curriculum in order to better answer his students' questions about sex, showing them *Human Reproduction*, a film approved by the California Department of Education, and offering them a take-home syllabus of suggested further reading. A year later, when several teenagers brought the list of books home to their parents, Donald Nichols, a father whose daughter sat in Steele's class, organized a group of parents from the high school to meet with area administrators, to demand an investigation of the matter, and to request the resignation of the biology teacher. After speaking to the parents of his daughters' friends, Nichols found out that both San Mateo Union and nearby Burlingame High School offered formal sex and family life education to their students, and he contended that, "The expansion of this sex instruction even spread to lunch hour forums conducted by Steele." The local newspaper reported that, "at the request of a group of parents and citizens," the father then called on "the P-TA and school authorities at the city, state and county level to do something about the level of sex instruction in the two local schools."<sup>8</sup>

San Mateo education officials responded by meeting with Steele in the fall of 1950 and then forbade him to suggest further reading for his students. The *San Francisco Examiner* noted that the high school superintendent discontinued lectures on sex for all students at Nichols' request but allowed ten to fifteen students to meet voluntarily with

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<sup>8</sup> "Sex Syllabus Starts Furore at High School," *San Mateo Times*, 28 February 1951.

Steele outside of class. When the father protested this action as well, the school ended even this limited, elective course.<sup>9</sup> In 1950 the local PTA held a public viewing of *Human Reproduction*, the film shown in Steele's class, and invited the school board, Nichols, and other concerned parents to attend. The *San Mateo Times* reported that the audience "unanimously approved" the use of the movie for high school seniors, and education officials later put together an "amplified curriculum committee" with parents, trustees, teachers, and administrators to discuss what texts on sex instructors should use to supplement the approved biology textbook.<sup>10</sup>

These efforts, however, failed to assuage Nichols' concerns. In February 1951 he told sympathetic journalists about the sex education class, and he offered a copy of Steele's take-home syllabus to San Mateo District Attorney Louis Dematteis.<sup>11</sup> Angry parents demanded that the board of trustees hold an emergency meeting, and school board chairman Carleton Hermann told the newspapers that the Steele's course "shocked" him and that he "took exception to contents of the course syllabus, which described in precise detail the most intimate of 'love relationships' and offered suggestions to 'beginners' on various sex practices."<sup>12</sup>

Although the incident set off a minor scandal in Bay Area newspapers, eliciting eye-catching headlines such as "Sex Syllabus Starts Furor at High School," the controversy demonstrated that many parents possessed a deep ambivalence- rather than outright hostility- towards the subject of sex education in schools. Whereas in the immediate aftermath of the press inquiries into the matter, San Mateo authorities,

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<sup>9</sup> "San Mateo School Head Says Sex Course Ended," *San Francisco Examiner*, 1 March 1951.

<sup>10</sup> "Sex School Course Held Settled," *San Mateo Times*, 2 March 1951.

<sup>11</sup> "San Mateo School Head Says Sex Course Ended," *San Francisco Examiner*, 1 March 1951.

<sup>12</sup> "Sex Teaching Probe Widens," *San Francisco Call-Bulletin*, 2 March 1951.

including District Attorney Louis Dematteis, launched several high profile investigations into Steele's actions, the biology teacher ultimately retained his position, and County Superintendent James Tormey only deemed him deserving of a light reprimand: "It is very easy," he declared, "for an enthusiastic person to let his (best) intentions run away with him. In this particular instance, I do not feel there was any intent of lewd or lascivious conduct. The instructions [Steele] offered were in full sincerity." Even Nichols, the parent most incensed by Steele's actions, made a point to declare that he did not oppose all sex education. He claimed that he took exception only to the degree of "emphasis" given by his daughter's biology teacher to the matter. When a group of other San Mateo parents rejected a "full-scale effort" to dismantle sex education in the high school, Nichols called his campaign a "failure." "No one," noted *The San Francisco Chronicle*, "is interested in a full-scale battle against teaching high school seniors the facts of life. 'I am through,' said Nichols. 'Let the chips fall where they may.'"<sup>13</sup>

In fact, the outspoken opposition of Nichols and his allies may have produced some unintended consequences in the high school district. Rather than dismantling the program, his campaign may have galvanized other parents to support some sort of sex education from teachers for their children. The PTA's public showing of *Human Reproduction* and its role in organizing an "amplified curriculum committee" enlisted the support of sympathetic volunteers from the community. In the wake of the intense press scrutiny of their district, San Mateo administrators issued purposefully vague and contradictory information about their actions after the controversy, and it is unclear whether they implemented new information into the school's senior biology classes or

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<sup>13</sup> "Sex in San Mateo," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 1 March 1951. "Sex Education Protests Are Answered," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 3 March 1951.

retained information on human sexuality taught previous to Steele's actions.

Nevertheless, administrators' assurances that "common sense" would guide the interests of the curriculum committee, that they would only teach "normal textbook material," and that they would not "yield to the demands of any pressure group for or against instruction in this field" suggest that teachers continued to give limited lectures on human sexuality to high school seniors even after Nichols' initial complaint.<sup>14</sup>

The clearest outcome of the controversy, therefore, lay in the contradictory impulses many Bay Area residents expressed towards the subject of sex education in schools. Encouraged to believe that even the slightest exposure to inappropriate material could seriously warp their children's development, parents waffled on how to handle the question of sex education. Although Nichols and a group of local parents expressed outrage over Steele's actions, even they did not object to its inclusion in science curricula altogether. In the wake of the controversy, parents, administrators, and journalists all struggled to reach some sort of middle ground. Superintendent James Tormey told a local newspaper that "common sense dictates a conservative approach (to sex education), taking into consideration differences of opinion in the community."<sup>15</sup> As media interest in the struggle over sex education began to fizzle, the *San Francisco Call-Bulletin* simultaneously affirmed the need for such instruction in schools and urged restraint in its implementation. In an editorial meant to give its readers some closure on the subject, the newspaper called for a dedicated search for middle ground, declaring:

In this case, as indeed in many if not most instances of controversy, the best course to follow is a 'happy medium' between the two extremes.

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<sup>14</sup> "School Sex Course Issue Held Settled," *San Mateo Times*, 2 March 1951; "Sex Education Protests Are Answered," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 3 March 1951.

<sup>15</sup> "Means Sought to Bar Sex Course Recurrence," *San Mateo Times*, 1 March 1951.

The evasive ‘hush hush’ attitude, and that which would dismiss all restraint, delicacy, and moral considerations, are both in error. Sound and experienced educators, along with churchmen, sociologists, psychologists, and all competent students of the problem are agreed on this. It should be evident, then, that as far as the subject of sex instruction is concerned, the parents, of course, and the church, and the school, all can play an important role.... Naturally the primary responsibility lies, or should lie, ideally, with the parents. But this by no means excludes the school. And it does not mean that the subject should be regarded by schoolteachers as a fearsome taboo.”<sup>16</sup>

Although this vague formulation offered very little in the way of concrete suggestions for developing a sex education curriculum free of controversy, it demonstrates that many Bay Area residents continued to hope for some alliance between the home, church and school on the subject. Far from rejected in its entirety, the editorial from the *Call-Bulletin* affirmed that the idea of teaching young people about sex in preparation for marriage and parenthood would remain debated in the public discourse for the foreseeable future.

Although Bay Area educators, parents, and journalists would remain ambivalent about the subject of sex in schools, the controversy struck a clear chord in Sacramento. Three days into the scandal, journalists from *The Call-Bulletin* contacted the Bureau of Parent Education, asking about its attitude towards the protests in San Mateo. Ralph Eckert, aware of the scandal unfolding in the Bay Area suburbs, distanced himself from the story by asserting that teachers should avoid “suggestive” or “stimulative” material in their school sex classes. Despite this cautionary note, *The Call-Bulletin* attributed a good deal of responsibility for Steele’s action in San Mateo to the California Department of Education, charging that Eckert and his allies believed that “the schools can do a better job along sex education lines than can fathers and mothers.” It cited Eckert’s belief that such instruction should begin at an early age in preparation for happy married lives and

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<sup>16</sup> “Sex in Schools,” *San Francisco Call-Bulletin*, 7 March 1951.

included a surprisingly controversial statement from him: “‘The average parent is just not very objective about sex’ he said. ‘Parents are so emotionally involved with their own children, and with sex itself, that when you bring the two together it is difficult to discuss the matter objectively. A good teacher can become objective and really help the children.’”<sup>17</sup>

Given that this claim appears slightly incongruous alongside Eckert’s frequently optimistic assertions that parents themselves could benefit from sex education, it seems likely that the newspaper either misquoted him or willfully took the phrase out of context. Eckert later blamed the entire episode in San Mateo on an over-zealous editor at the *Call-Bulletin*, looking for “something sensational.”<sup>18</sup> The newspaper’s charge, however, that education officials working for the state denigrated the work of parents across California produced a noticeable effect among scandal-leery lawmakers in Sacramento. State Senator Hugh Burns called sex education in schools an “attempt to break down the family unit.”<sup>19</sup> Just a few months after the incident in San Mateo, State Senator Harold Johnson of Roseville launched an investigation of all adult education in California, and cited frequent incidents of wasteful use of taxpayer money. Although the Bureau of Parent Education itself never came under formal scrutiny, the Senate investigatory committee recommended large cutbacks in the state’s financial commitment to classes for adults and proposed placing the economic burden of hosting such courses on individual school districts. By the end of the 1952 legislative session, California’s financial commitment to parent education diminished considerably, and Ralph Eckert left the state to work temporarily in Connecticut.

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<sup>17</sup> “State Role in Sex Education Told,” *San Francisco Call-Bulletin*, 3 March 1951.

<sup>18</sup> Eckert, “The Role of the P.T.A in Sex Education.”

<sup>19</sup> “Sex Teaching Probe Widens,” *San Francisco Call-Bulletin*, 2 March 1951.

### **Suburban Networks: The Suburbanization of Sex Education**

Although the Bureau of Parent Education played a reduced role in the years following the San Mateo controversy, its mission continued to garner significant support among parents at the local level, particularly in the “bedroom communities” of the Peninsula and South Bay. From the early 1950s through the mid-1960s sex education emerged as a cause championed primarily by Parent Teacher Associations in the rapidly growing residential areas on the fringe of the postwar metropolis. This shift did not occur because the volunteers who made up the Peninsula and South Bay’s PTAs radically differed significantly in terms of ideology from their counterparts in San Francisco; white, middle-class straight parents across the metropolis hoped to drive down the incidences of “broken homes,” “sex deviance,” and “teenage promiscuity.” The changing residential patterns in the region after the war, however, steadily moved the debate over sex education from the urban centers to suburban school districts.

This shift took place for several reasons. First, cutbacks in government aid for “parent education” moved the financial burden for sex-related instructional programming from the state’s treasury to the wallets of individual taxpayers and helped make the subject increasingly a suburban issue. Although Eckert and his allies designed their postwar parent education campaign for all Californians, the requirement that local school districts pay for adult-oriented classes themselves gave increasingly cash-strapped city schools a disadvantage in the development of such courses. Denied state support for its projects, the San Francisco Unified School District announced massive cuts in its adult

education programs, including parent education, in 1954.<sup>20</sup> By contrast, the largely middle-class Peninsula and South Bay suburbs continued to add parent education programs piecemeal over the course of the decade.<sup>21</sup>

Second, the demographic shifts set off by the postwar housing construction boom outside San Francisco gave the Baby Boom an increasingly- but not exclusively- suburban character. The sheer concentration of new parents in new housing subdivisions in municipalities such as San Mateo, Redwood City, and Sunnyvale gave these areas large pools of residents significantly invested in further education on marriage, childrearing, and straightness. As detailed in the previous chapter, many school districts in San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties experienced astronomical growth, with some booming as much as 600 percent.<sup>22</sup> Several suburban districts failed to build sufficient classrooms for their skyrocketing populations and compelled students to attend half-day sessions. In 1955, as new subdivisions poured thousands of young students into his district, an exhausted superintendent in the city of Campbell told *The San Francisco Examiner*, ‘It’s a race between home and school building.’<sup>23</sup>

Most significantly, the new suburbs of San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties

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<sup>20</sup> “School Board Will Consider Cutting Adult Education Fund,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, 7 June 1954; “Adult Teaching Cut Opposed,” *San Francisco Call-Bulletin*, 23 June 1954. San Francisco’s earlier reliance on the State Department of Education became clear in a 1951 debate held by the city’s school board over whether or not they should sponsor a series of lectures on sex education for parents. At the conclusion of the debate, Superintendent Herbert Clish noted: “If properly controlled and organized, I don’t see any harm in it. What’s more... the state is footing the bill.” “Sex Education: School Board Votes 6 to 1 to Approve Series of Six Lectures,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, 7 February 1951. Frances Miller, a parent education teacher in San Francisco told a newspaper reporter in 1964 that: “In the late 40s and early 50s, we had discussion groups on sex education for parents in 90 percent of the schools. Today only between 10 and 15 percent of the schools hold such programs.” “Parental Apathy Towards Sex Education,” *San Francisco Examiner*, 10 May 1964.

<sup>21</sup> Helen Andres Snyder, “A Program of Parent Education and Public Relations in the Campbell Union High School District,” master’s thesis, San Jose State University, 1958, 21-23.

<sup>22</sup> Helen Andres Snyder, “A Program of Parent Education and Public Relations in the Campbell Union High School District,” 2.

<sup>23</sup> “42,000 Bay Area Pupils Attending School in Shifts,” *San Francisco Examiner*, 2 October 1955.



possessed large numbers of middle-class families with gendered divisions of labor. As several historians have argued, many women endured severe employment discrimination after the Second World War and faced serious social pressure to work in unpaid, domestic roles.<sup>24</sup> In the two decades after the war the subdivisions of the South Bay, hosted large numbers of single-income couples with mothers who took on the primary responsibility for homemaking and childrearing. According to the 1960 census only 34 percent of women over the age of 14 in Santa Clara County took an active role in the paid labor force. More specifically, the number of married women in the official employment statistics constituted an even lower ratio, just edging 30 percent of the total.<sup>25</sup>

With approximately 106,000 married women living in households where their husbands constituted the primary earners, Santa Clara County possessed a disproportionate number of mothers capable of volunteering in roles specifically dedicated to questions of parenting, childrearing, and straightness. Many of these mothers lacked access to an automobile during the day, and school campuses represented one of the few public forums accessible on foot. In the postwar period, the number of women in the South Bay volunteering for the California Congress of Parents and Teachers ballooned, outgrowing its sister organization in San Francisco.<sup>26</sup> With many new families flooding the area, the organization provided a principal social outlet for many mothers looking to forge relationships with other area residents. Brought together

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<sup>24</sup> See for example Alice Kessler-Harris, *In Pursuit of Equity: Women, Men, and the Quest for Economic Citizenship in 20<sup>th</sup> Century America* (New York: Oxford, 2001).

<sup>25</sup> U.S Bureau of the Census, *San Jose Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area: Labor Force Characteristics of the Population by Census Tracts*, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1960).

<sup>26</sup> In 1947 the *San Francisco Examiner* reported that the city's PTAs had reached an all-time high of approximately 13,000 members. It continued to grow in the subsequent years. By mid-1950s, however the organization's enrollment declined considerably, and by the early 1970s San Francisco's PTA had only 14,000 members.

by their mutual investment in marriage and parenting, tens of thousands of women found common purpose with one another in the schools scattered amidst the otherwise anonymous sprawl of the South Bay. Whereas the county's District Six listed 11,773 formal members in 1947, that number more than tripled by 1953; by the early 1960s that figure more than doubled again; with the total number of volunteers reaching 71,775 by 1965.<sup>27</sup>

These stay-at-home moms in the postwar period forged complicated relationships with the authorities at the California Department of Education. As these government experts actively used the machinery of the state to disseminate scientific information on sexuality they simultaneously circulated gendered discourses highly critical of women. Although most of the writings of this largely male cohort of physicians, academics, and administrators used the gender-neutral term "parent,"- "mothers" most often bore the brunt of their analyses of mental illness. According to one representative example, "It is natural for parents, and for mothers especially, to express love and its normal accompaniment, protectiveness for their children. In an exaggerated form, however, overprotectiveness or oversolicitousness on the part of either parent, but particularly the mother, has been found to accompany some nervous conditions in children."<sup>28</sup> These proclamations from California's Department of Education fit within a much larger trend common among postwar psychologists who understood the category of mental illness through a particularly gendered lens, allowing historian Ruth Feldstein to sardonically

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<sup>27</sup> Sixth District PTA Historian's Report 1947-48, Sixth District PTA Records. Ibid. 1952-53. Ibid. 1964-65.

<sup>28</sup> Robert Topp, "The Parents' Job," *California Parent-Teacher*, February 1953.

term “mom-bashing” “a national pastime” in the 1940s and 50s.<sup>29</sup> The repercussion of bad mothers could range from the rearing of homosexuals to the spawning of juvenile delinquency, and the types of failed mothers could come in a variety of shades. This lack of specificity, however, never hindered this collection of mental health authorities to single out women, in particular, for expert guidance and support.

Although these gendered discourses placed an unfair burden on the mothers of California, they also indirectly empowered women to play a role in state governance. After all, if bad mothers represented a crisis worthy of government intervention, then administrators in the Department of Education contended that women needed to participate in the solution, and beginning in the postwar period the predominantly female California Congress of Parents and Teachers served as the principal supporter of the state’s initiative on early sex education. By the early 1950s, the organization’s platform called for schools to give students adequate preparation for home and family life, including courses on courtship, marriage, and childrearing. In 1955 President Beulah Spencer told its membership that “the family is the basic unit of our society and therefore the school should supplement the work of parents in preparing young people for marriage and family life.”<sup>30</sup> State administrators, eager to provide this sort of education, enthusiastically embraced the support of women such as Spencer, and over the course of the late 1940s, 50s and 60s, the California Department of Education routinely looked to area PTAs for public support of their programs.

Most significantly, the Congress’s local units represented some of the grassroots

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<sup>29</sup> Ruth Feldstein, *Motherhood in Black and White: Race and Sex in Postwar Liberalism, 1930-1965* (Ithaca: Cornell University, 2000), 2.

<sup>30</sup> “Platform,” *California Parent-Teacher*, June 1950, 20; Beulah Spencer, “We Believe,” *California Parent-Teacher*, September 1955, 3.

organizations most invested in upholding the mutually constitutive ideals of marriage, child rearing and straightness. Mirroring many of the insights of the state's cohort of psychology and education experts, the PTA's *Parent Education Manual* on the Peninsula and in the South Bay declared: "The complexities and pressures of modern day living and their effect upon family life are of very real concern to everyone."<sup>31</sup> Literally meeting in the schools and homes that peppered Santa Clara County's built landscape, the Parent-Teacher groups of the South Bay sought to ensure that their suburbs' young people would pursue healthy, heterosexual relationships. From chaperoning student dances, to keeping pornography away from places accessible to children, to promoting an awareness of venereal disease, this collection of volunteers consistently demonstrated an interest in helping young people develop wholesome attitudes about sex.<sup>32</sup> And when members of the California Department of Education first sought to instill new parents with the importance of heterosexuality, building strong marriages, and early sex education, San Mateo and Santa Clara County's PTAs proved enthusiastic supporters of the public outreach program.

The growth of these organizations reflected more than the mere concentration of married couples with children in specific parts of the postwar metropolis. In many ways, the local PTAs of San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties embodied a self-selecting set of individuals most interested in the messages disseminated by the state. The Peninsula and South Bay's physical landscapes, with their criss-crossing freeways and scores of single-family homes, themselves greatly facilitated the coalescence of some groups but not

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<sup>31</sup> California Congress of Parents and Teachers, *Parent Education Manual*, Santa Clara Unified School District Records, Accession Papers, California State Archives.

<sup>32</sup> For examples of the PTA's efforts at sexual well-being in Santa Clara County see the Sixth District Historian's Notes for 1947-48, 1964-65 and 1965-68.

others. Frequently residing several miles from their fellow members, the volunteers of the Peninsula and South Bay's Parent Teacher Associations overcame the atomization intrinsic to a low density residential landscape by finding other like-minded individuals at meetings held at designated homes, schools, and occasionally churches. In a region where automobiles provided the primary mode of transport, residents often knew little of their immediate neighbors but could forge connections with others in more distant locations. Cumulatively, this process distilled the membership of the organization to a self-selecting collection of individuals traveling throughout the sprawling suburban landscape, exchanging ideas with one another, and confirming historian John Howard's succinct formulation that when it comes to sexual communities: "Circulation is as important as congregation, avenues as important as venues."<sup>33</sup> Although hundreds of thousands of married couples moved to the Bay Area suburbs in the 1950s and 60s, not all of them, of course, joined their local PTA or flock to lectures on the merits of family life education. Those who did, however, forged relationships with others they deemed most similar to themselves in outlook and beliefs.

Within the context of the Peninsula and South Bay, the schools and homes blanketing the rapidly disappearing farmlands represented more than the idealized spaces of psychological development scattered among the statements of California's education authorities. They also signified the very communal nodes within which a particular set of new residents in the booming metropolis found common cause with one another, and they served as the venues in which they first encountered the sexual information promulgated by the state. Throughout the 1950s and 60s, district schools and members' homes frequently served as meeting places, the spaces in which the actions of the PTAs came

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<sup>33</sup> John Howard, *Men Like That: A Southern Queer History* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1999), 14.

into existence.<sup>34</sup> In these venues they regularly invited mental health and education authorities, including Bureau Chief Ralph Eckert, from the state and local governments to speak on the merits of better marriages.<sup>35</sup> They subscribed to the *California Parent-Teacher* magazines in which those same experts published articles on sex and family life education, making supplemental literature on those subjects available to interested parties through school libraries.<sup>36</sup> And as early as 1948 the Sixth District PTA hosted the viewing of state-sanctioned films on human growth and reproduction in school cafeterias, recommending the following year that teachers employ those visual aids in their classrooms.<sup>37</sup>

Furthermore, the highway system built by the California and federal governments in the postwar period greatly accelerated the exchange of information on sex and family life education. The construction of this transportation network not only facilitated the travel of state-sponsored experts to places such as Santa Clara County, but also allowed for individual representatives of district, council, and local PTAs to attend conferences, meet fellow parents in other regions, and to interview school administrators in distant districts. In 1951, the California Congress of Parents and Teachers' Sixteenth District, representing the Bay Area's Contra Costa and Alameda Counties, published an article in an academic journal detailing this process in which interested parties at the grassroots

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<sup>34</sup> For example, the Lester Shields' Elementary PTA invited "all parents interested in a Parent Education study group" to the home of an individual member for a coffee hour in the Fall of 1958. "PTA Shieldsette," Lester Shields Elementary PTA, 14 November 1958, Sixth District Records.

<sup>35</sup> Sixth District Historian's Notebooks 1946-1947 and 1947-48. In both school years Eckert spoke at a countywide meeting of PTAs on "Home Responsibilities" and "Preparing for Marriage." During the 1952-53 school year the District PTA welcomed Eckert's associate at the Department of Education for a talk on "Family Living" as well as a representative from the State Department of Mental Hygiene who spoke on "Mental Health." See Ibid. 1952-53. Sixth District PTA Records.

<sup>36</sup> Helen Andres Snyder, "A Program of Parent Education and Public Relations in the Campbell Union High School District," 70.

<sup>37</sup> Sixth District PTA, "Summary of Minutes," Sixth District PTA Records.

circulated through the larger region. “Realizing that the goals of the organization can be achieved only through well-trained leadership,” asserted PTA member Mae Hurry Murphy, “the districts and councils have allowed in their budgets finances to enable representatives to attend many institutes and conferences on family relations and group dynamics workshops.”<sup>38</sup> As early as 1948 the district and several council PTAs in the Sixteenth District dispatched representatives to attend conferences run by state-sponsored experts around the Bay Area, to meet with administrators in other cities who successfully implemented family life education in their schools, and to witness an in-training workshop for health teachers run by the Alameda County schools. Bringing their experiences back to their district, these delegates established workshops of their own, encouraging local units to undertake projects dedicated to furthering the cause of family life education. In the months that followed, various volunteers conducted a survey of the area’s services dealing with children and youth, established a clearinghouse to coordinate information related to those topics, pushed for greater parent education programs in the county’s schools and churches, and proposed new curricula on family living for the county’s classrooms.<sup>39</sup>

Considerable evidence suggests that PTAs in Santa Clara County undertook a similar process of cross-pollination. Not only did they invite state-sanctioned medical experts to speak at their meetings, but the Sixth District organization histories and meeting minutes also indicate frequent attendance at government-initiated panels and

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<sup>38</sup> Mae Hurry Murphy, “Community Action for Family Life Education through the P.T.A.” *Marriage and Family Living*, Volume 13, Number 2, May 1951, 60.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.* 60.

conferences.<sup>40</sup> In 1950 alone, the South Bay's PTAs attended a conference on "Home School Relationships" at nearby Stanford University and sent a representative all the way to Santa Barbara to participate in a workshop on Parent Education run by Ralph Eckert. Like their counterparts in nearby Alameda and Contra Costa Counties, PTA volunteers in the South Bay used the information they garnered from these varying institutes to sponsor ten lectures on "Responsible Parenthood," concluding that "as an outgrowth of the classes, a guidance clinic seems assured for Santa Clara County."<sup>41</sup> By the mid-1950s, they established their own locally-organized leadership building sessions, with the District Six historian briefly noting that "Dr. Lola Fay Gordon, our Parent Education Chairman, sent out interest finders to all units for study groups to better serve the units and hold leadership meetings."<sup>42</sup> And in 1960 *The Santa Clara Journal* reported that the First Baptist Church in Sunnyvale would host a PTA-sponsored panel of administrators from the East Bay suburb of Hayward, and that interested members could hear about "Family Life Education: The Story and Success of One School District."<sup>43</sup>

Over the course of the 1950s the number and forms of parent education present in the South Bay proliferated rapidly. In the summer of 1951, the County Board of Education began recording the issuance of credentials to teachers specializing in parent- or family life education, and between 1951 and 1953 it documented the arrival of twenty such instructors in the local schools.<sup>44</sup> By 1956 the Sixth District reported that sixteen of

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<sup>40</sup> Sixth District, Summary of Minutes, Sixth District History. 1950-51, Sixth District PTA Records. When Ralph Eckert held a Parent Education Workshop in Santa Barbara in 1951, for example, Santa Clara County's Sixth District sent a representative, and the group's historian noted that the resulting report was "most inspiring."

<sup>41</sup> Sixth District, History 1947-48, Sixth District Records.

<sup>42</sup> Sixth District History, 1954-55, Sixth District Records.

<sup>43</sup> "PTA Roundup, *Santa Clara Journal*, 30 November 1960.

<sup>44</sup> County Board of Education Meeting Minutes, 1947-1953, History San Jose. It should be noted that the archive does not have minutes after 1953, and that the Board of Education did not indicate that teachers



its units possessed parent-education study groups.<sup>45</sup> A year later the Fremont High School district in the Santa Clara County suburb of Sunnyvale sponsored thirteen programs on child development at a Lutheran church, including meetings on “Sex Education,” “Positive Family Relations,” and “Human Beginnings.”<sup>46</sup> By 1958 several South Bay school districts appointed former PTA members as special coordinators for their parent- education classes.<sup>47</sup> And in the late 1950s, when Campbell Union High School implemented a comprehensive Parent Education program, it literally blurred the lines between home and school, specifically designating the individual living rooms in which study groups met as official extensions of the district and encouraging visiting mothers to come together in the model dining room erected in its home economics department.<sup>48</sup>

At the dawn of the 1960s state policies had not only made straightness an essential component of adult education, but they had also assembled growing numbers of the mothers of the Baby Boom together in growing social networks centered on parenting and straightness. Brought together by their common interests as parents and married persons, the PTAs of Santa Clara County represented an organization significantly invested in the newly politicized roles assigned to mothers and fathers. When a graduate student at nearby San Jose State University observed the meeting of a series of discussion groups in one area school district, she noted: “Parents realized that they were not facing their individual problems alone, but that all parents had something in common, and they

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receiving credentials for adult education before 1951 had any specialties. This may be a shift in the way that they maintained their records or it may indicate a change in the way that teachers became certified in adult education. Records for the period after 1953 are not available.

<sup>45</sup> Sixth District History, 1955-56, Sixth District Records.

<sup>46</sup> “Positive Relations is Parents’ Topic,” *Sunnyvale Standard*, 23 January 1957.

<sup>47</sup> Helen Andres Snyder, “A Program of Parent Education and Public Relations in the Campbell Union High School District,” 25.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.* 28.

learned from each other. Parents expressed the feeling that they had found a stimulating new way to bring teachers, parents, and children closer together.”<sup>49</sup> This growing solidarity between mothers serves as evidence of a growing self-awareness among many of the straight residents living in the South Bay. If married people had long reproduced and raised families in the decades before the 1950s, the upsurge in parent education after the war helped instill the idea that straightness took some effort and that not all forms of sexual expression were ideal. In the two decades after the war straightness emerged as an idealized social and political identity, and in the years to follow the communities first built around suburban notions of marriage and parenting would pressure local and state administrators to remake the schools to better serve their interests.

### **Church Building**

Although Nichols and his allies phrased their opposition to Steele’s syllabus exclusively in secular terms, the controversy in San Mateo unfolded against the rapid decentralization of religious communities in the post-war decades. In the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s, the dramatic exodus of middle-class married couples away from older urban centers prompted most major Christian organizations to build new churches in areas of significant population growth. After schools, these religious groups represented the most significant set of social organizations on the Peninsula and in the South Bay during the postwar period. Unlike the public education system, however, suburban churches operated within a larger market of organizations competing for the voluntary membership of area residents. Most religious leaders from the period understood that suburban residents frequently sought communities of like-minded individuals. In addition to their

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid. 46.

spiritual outreach, therefore, they also designed social programs such as day care or couples' nights in order to attract new congregants or parishioners. Reinforcing the sifting process already taking place in the suburban real estate market, church building involved the further concentration of people based on common social and ideological characteristics. By the early 1960s, San Mateo and Santa Clara counties included a patchwork of congregations and parishes that loosely paralleled local school districts, but which mostly included groups of self-selected adherents.

Even before the postwar building boom, Christian groups across the country believed that the specific inclusion of straight families represented the most important step for sustained congregational growth. Already conscious of the toll taken by metropolitan development, church planner Samuel Kincheloe observed during the Great Depression: "Family life, church and neighborhood conditions are intimately related. The family has constituted the backbone of church support. Those religions which have been most tenacious[,] have regarded the family as the basic unit for their work... Those attitudes which make people want to attend, support, and receive satisfaction from churches are fostered most of all in the family."<sup>50</sup> Two decades later, in the midst of the enormous outward migration of straight parents away from older cities, Catholic Bishop Josiah Chatham warned the readers of *Homiletic and Pastoral Review* in 1955 that suburbanization offered the Church "an opportunity to Christianize American life on the family and neighborhood level. The diocese which does not recognize this is making a

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<sup>50</sup> Samuel C. Kincheloe, *The American City and Its Church* (New York: Friendship Press, 1938), 60. Kincheloe goes on to declare: "Church, community, school and family have worked together as the basic nurturing agencies in the life of the child and the orientation of the adolescent and the adult."

mistake from which it may never fully recover.”<sup>51</sup> In 1957 Jared Gerig, the Chairman of the National Association of Evangelicals’ Commission on Evangelism and Church Extension called the “decentralization of our great cities” a “constant challenge in terms of church extension,” and he charged “that 100,000 new churches must be established in the United States in the next twenty years if the church is to keep abreast of the... population increases and shifts.”<sup>52</sup>

Church planning on the Peninsula and in the South Bay most often followed one of three patterns. First, highly organized religious groups with centralized hierarchies, such as the Catholic archdiocese, frequently employed formal planning offices to target areas of high growth and to determine future congregational needs. Second, local branches with less formal affiliations with larger associations of churches, including most mainline Protestant denominations, relied heavily on national or regional headquarters for financial and logistical support but usually made their own decisions to split, relocate, or start new congregations. And third, in rare instances, unaffiliated groups of Christians, including many evangelical Protestants, either formed independent congregations themselves or sponsored independent church planting organizations to match ministers with worshippers in growing areas. Although these patterns often varied with each construction project, they almost always featured the interplay of national and local forces to some degree. In almost every case, church building required both the involvement of an official representative of a religious organization, such as a priest or

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<sup>51</sup> Josiah Chatham, “Your Assignment: Build a New Suburban Parish,” in *Homiletic and Pastoral Review*, December 1955, 217.

<sup>52</sup> Jared Gerig, Introduction, *New Churches for a New America*, Evangelism-Church Extension Commission, National Association of Evangelicals (Winona Lake, IN: Light and Life Press, 1957), 3.

minister, and the participation of lay people who planned on joining the new congregation.

Christian groups in San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties only began new church building projects after they realized that residential development on the Peninsula and in the South Bay offered either a potential threat to their long-term viability or the opportunity to expand their congregations. As early as 1949, for example, the members of the First Congregational Church in downtown San Jose observed: “San Jose and Santa Clara County have been growing in population at record breaking speed during the past ten years... But as cities grow beyond 50,000, families move further and further from the center. Our younger families are following this centrifugal pattern- especially the new families that join us.”<sup>53</sup> A formal study of the Bay Area conducted by the national Presbyterian Church in 1951 monitored booms in school district enrollments, urged “a considerable number of house-to house surveys” in high growth residential areas, and recommended “a substantial program of building, rebuilding and church development” in parts of San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties.<sup>54</sup> In 1956, the First Methodist Church of Palo Alto assessed its facilities in light of the area’s booming population growth and declared: “A casual inspection of activities at First Church reveals the sanctuary unable to accommodate the congregation, overflow conditions in certain classes in the church school...inadequate choir facilities, overcrowded offices and insufficient storage space... The church is now operating well beyond normal capacity.”<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> S.C. Peabody, Service Program, First Congregational Church, San Jose, Herbert C. Jones Papers, Sourisseau Academy for State and Local History, San Jose State University, San Jose, CA.

<sup>54</sup> Everett Perry, *The Presbyterian Church in the San Francisco Bay Area* (New York: Department of City and Industrial Work, Board of the National Missions of Presbyterian Church, USA, 1951).

<sup>55</sup> Robert Leroy Wilson, *An Example of Local Church Planning in the Methodist Church, Palo Alto, California*, (Philadelphia, PA: Department of Research and Survey Division of National Missions of the Board of Missions of the Methodist Church, 1962), 12.

Beginning in the 1950s, Protestant groups in the South Bay, such as the First Congregational Church and First Methodist Church of Palo Alto, hoped to take advantage of the shift in residential patterns and sought to purchase land in the new subdivisions rapidly filling with married couples and young children. In the first decade after World War II, six of the twelve churches in Sunnyvale's central business district left for new locations on the city's periphery, and by 1962 eight Palo Alto congregations had relocated out of the suburb's center.<sup>56</sup> Although the First Methodist Church resolved to keep its sanctuary in the central business district, its members elected to finance the construction of two new churches on the margins of current housing development and agreed to help another Methodist church outside of downtown with an expansion project.<sup>57</sup> Its planning committee noted the changing demographics of the area and declared in the mid-1950s: "The center of the city's population is expected to move from about Colorado Avenue at Middlefield Road to Oregon Avenue at Alma Street in twenty years. Studies of population growth in Cubberly High School District and nearby areas show a potential development sufficient to support a 1,000 member church."<sup>58</sup> Just a few years later, the evangelical Willow Vale Free Methodist Community Church moved from its downtown location to the outskirts of San Jose, after its leaders determined that "the future growth of the church depended upon building new facilities and a site on the west

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<sup>56</sup> Sunnyvale Planning Department, *Preliminary Studies of a General Plan for the City of Sunnyvale, California* (Sunnyvale, CA: 1955); Wilson, *An Example of Local Church Planning*, 2.

<sup>57</sup> The group finished construction of St. Andrew's Methodist Church in south Palo Alto in 1961 and was still in the process of planning a second church in the Stanford Hills when the National Methodist Church conducted a study of their development process in 1962.

<sup>58</sup> Wilson, *An Example of Local Church Planning*, 11.

side of San Jose was desired. The area under consideration was destined to change from fruit orchards and estates to a densely populated residential zone.”<sup>59</sup>

The suburban boom similarly succeeded in drawing the attention of a group of non-denominational evangelicals, who formed their own church planting organization in 1953 in order to take advantage of the rapid migration of straight families to the Peninsula and South Bay. In 1954, *The Christian Standard*, a weekly newspaper published in Ohio, proclaimed that in the Bay Area “mile after mile of sections with new homes could be traveled without seeing a church,” and that the recently created Northern California Evangelistic Association sought to channel resources to congregations eager to begin building programs.<sup>60</sup> Begun by a group of non-denominational Christian ministers affiliated with San Jose Bible College, the organization hired a full-time pastor in that same year to “plant new congregations” in “underchurched areas.”<sup>61</sup>

While more established Protestant groups asked their regional or national offices for fund-raising support, many of the less centralized, evangelical Christians in the South Bay frequently held services in members’ homes until they could raise enough money to build their own church. In 1948, for example, the fifty founding members of the Calvary Baptist Church of Los Gatos met in the basement of a single-family home and converted a dilapidated wine cellar into a sanctuary before constructing their own, free-standing house of worship on Los Gatos Avenue.<sup>62</sup> Before moving to the intersection of South Sunnyvale and McKinley Avenues, the future members of Sunnyvale’s Community

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<sup>59</sup> Howard Lindstrom, Willow Vale Free Methodist Community Church, *The Story of Our Church*, 4 March 1983, 22. Willow Vale Free Methodist Community Church Records, San Jose, CA.

<sup>60</sup> “New Evangelistic Association Calls Full-Time Evangelist,” *Christian Standard*, 27 November 1954.

<sup>61</sup> “California Church Remodels Building,” *Christian Standard*, 1 May 1954.

<sup>62</sup> “History of Calvary Baptist Church,” courtesy of Calvary Church of Los Gatos.

Christian Church met in the living room of a married couple in the community at the end of 1962.<sup>63</sup>

Catholic, Mainline Protestant and Evangelical clergy in San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties employed multiple strategies in order to build new congregations. Patterning themselves after urban planners or marketers, many priests and pastors conducted surveys of area homeowners and collected demographic details on the community surrounding their churches. In his review of suburban church building, Bishop Josiah Chatham advised fellow clergymen to read the “society pages” of their local newspapers, advising them that, “In wedding stories and similar accounts you can pick up clues to help you track down [non-observant Catholics].”<sup>64</sup> The National Methodist Church’s Commission on Membership and Evangelism counseled ministers to contact the relatives of current congregants and to reach out to families with whom they came in contact through weddings, funerals, and “other pastoral contacts.”<sup>65</sup> Some of the more ambitious Protestant churches in the South Bay took out weekly advertisements in the *San Jose Mercury*’s Saturday religion section, or rented space on billboards near the area’s budding highway system.<sup>66</sup>

Protestant groups also frequently found new members by conducting door-to-door canvassing of individual homes in new subdivisions. The National Methodist Church advised pastors intent upon finding new members to create a “spotter committee to look for new residents in the community” and to “make Christ centered calls in the homes of

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<sup>63</sup> “History of Community Christian Church,” Sunnyvale Public Library, local history section.

<sup>64</sup> Chatham, “Your Assignment,” 219.

<sup>65</sup> “Your Church,” *The Methodist Story*, March 1957, 19-20.

<sup>66</sup> See for example, “Attend the Church of Your Choice,” *San Jose Mercury*, 30 April 1960; Church of Christ, “God Has Spoken: You are Without Excuse,” photograph of billboard, William Jessup University Archives.



prospects on Sunday afternoon and from 7 to 9:30 each evening Monday through Friday.”<sup>67</sup> When the mainline First Congregational Church of San Jose sought to purchase land in a new subdivision in nearby Santa Clara in 1951, volunteers canvassed homes within a quarter mile of their prospective church site and discovered 187 families with 370 children who expressed interest in joining a new congregation.<sup>68</sup> Marvin Rickard, the pastor of the evangelical Los Gatos Christian Church, recalled going door to door in new subdivisions in search of adherents soon after he came to the South Bay in 1957.<sup>69</sup> In a later book on church building, Rickard cited the advice of a more experienced pastor: “In my first years... I was often out calling in homes on Saturday. I still spend hours a week making calls. There is no better way to build a church in size than to add new members.”<sup>70</sup>

By the end of the 1950s, these suburban priests and ministers had succeeded in building an enormous collection of Christian communities centered around the many churches that dotted the physical landscapes of the Peninsula and South Bay. In 1956 the National Council of Churches estimated that over 215,000 people attended a Protestant or Catholic Church in San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties. The overwhelming majority of worshippers joined either a Roman Catholic parish or mainline Protestant congregation, with just under 150,000 people reporting they belonged to the former one and just over 45,000 declaring they attended services at the latter. Although the survey conducted by the National Council of Churches left out many non-denominational Christian groups,

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<sup>67</sup> “Your Church, *The Methodist Story*, March 1957, 20.

<sup>68</sup> “A Brief History of the Church of the Valley,” Herbert Jones Papers, Sourisseau Academy for State and Local History, San Jose State University. Their survey also concluded that 98% of the families in the area owned the home they lived in.

<sup>69</sup> Marvin Rickard, interview with author, 18 August 2008.

<sup>70</sup> Charles Blair cited in Marvin Rickard, *Let It Grow: Your Church Can Chart a New Course* (Portland, OR: Multnomah Press, 1984).

their census aptly observed that only a select suburban residents attended self-described evangelical or Pentecostal churches in the 1950s, with those groups holding just under five percent of the total in the two counties.<sup>71</sup> In 1957 the *San Jose News* reported that Santa Clara County had over three hundred churches, and the executive director of the South Bay's Council of Churches declared that "60 to 75 per cent of the churches in the [area] erected new buildings or began plans for new structures in the past few years."<sup>72</sup> And in that same year an association of ministers conducted a survey specifically of the church-going habits of Sunnyvale's residents, and they concluded that 72 percent of families living in the Peninsula suburb attended services regularly.<sup>73</sup>

Although Catholic, mainline Protestant and evangelical groups may have differed greatly from one another in terms of their underlying theology, their interpretation of the Bible, or their understanding of the church's role in earthly affairs, they all offered their members services that specifically sought to address the needs of straight couples with children. This focus on the family unified all of the Christian groups on the Peninsula and in the South Bay, and it made religious organizations in the suburbs an important player in public discussions about sex education. Catholic, mainline and evangelical Protestant churches helped create straight communities in two important ways. First, they promised would-be congregants and parishioners religious fellowship with communities of like-minded, married people with children. In 1959, the Protestant

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<sup>71</sup> The National Council of Churches in the USA, *Churches and Church Membership in the United States: An Enumeration and Analysis by Counties, States and Regions* (New York: Bureau of Research and Survey, 1956). The census calculated that Catholic Churches in San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties reported a membership of 149,981 and that mainline Protestant churches reported a membership of 46,233. They reported that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints had 3,850 members in Santa Clara County. They also reported that 1,750 Jews lived in Santa Clara County, but they did not provide a similar figure for San Mateo.

<sup>72</sup> "There's a Boom, Too, in Church Building," *San Jose News*, 2 February 1957.

<sup>73</sup> "Survey Proves SV is Religious," 14 February 1957, *Sunnyvale Standard*.

congregation-building magazine *The Methodist Story* advised its readers to, “Make Your Church Family Conscious... and Lead Families into Worship.”<sup>74</sup> In its “Invitation to Worship” the Congregationalist Ladera Community Church in Menlo Park not only offered prospective congregants a litany of photographs of men, women, and their children attending services together, it told them that, “The Ladera Community Church is a “family of families,” seeking God and worshipping together in faith, freedom and fellowship. We welcome your visit and hope that you will feel that this is the church for you and your family.”<sup>75</sup> Similarly, the Congregationalist Church of the Valley in Santa Clara promised would-be worshipers “a family-centered church,” “which has been organized to meet the spiritual needs of the entire family.”<sup>76</sup>

Although they did not explicitly advertise themselves in racially exclusive language, church membership frequently reinforced divisions within the metropolis. White families seeking a new church not only found an abundant array of options within their already segregated neighborhoods, but they also took advantage of their ability to join a congregation or parish of their choosing. In almost every case, white worshippers bypassed or overlooked the handful of predominantly Mexican-, Asian- or African-American churches within their communities. [more?] The Santa Clara County Council of Churches attempted to ease housing integration in the South Bay on a piecemeal basis by drawing up lists of liberal homeowners “ready to welcome into their neighborhoods people of whatever race, creed, color, or national origin.”<sup>77</sup> These efforts to convince

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<sup>74</sup> Mrs. Milton Randolph, “Make Your Church Family... and Lead Families Into Worship,” *Methodist Story*, April 1959, 13.

<sup>75</sup> Ladera Community Church, “Invitation to Worship,” n.d. Santa Clara Council of Churches Records.

<sup>76</sup> “Church of the Valley,” program, 1956, First Congregational Church, San Jose, Herbert C. Jones Papers, Sourisseau Academy for State and Local History, San Jose State University.

<sup>77</sup> “Church Council is Looking Ahead to Its Third Decade,” *San Jose Mercury*, 9 September 1962.

individual residents to allow people of color to buy houses in the suburbs failed to challenge the larger racial exclusions embedded in federal policies and local real estate practices, and they did not address the decision of many individual churches to build their parishes or congregations around segregated neighborhoods.

Second, church leaders designed significant numbers of programs specifically to cater to the needs of married couples and their children. These services ranged from clerical marital counseling, to Bible-study sessions for parents and children, to recreational activities for teenagers. These programs not only served as a means of attracting new members, they also sought to serve the narrowly-defined sexual demographics of the surrounding areas. Articles in *The Methodist Story*, for example, regularly gave ministers around the country advice on how to develop programming that supported straight family life. The magazine's lists included sermons on parenting or marriage, the dissemination of pamphlets on the importance of family prayer, home visits from pastors, "family camping," and "family nights" at the church with recreation for married couples and their children. In 1958 the First Methodist Church of Palo Alto offered a weekly course on marriage and family living that included discussions of "Qualifications for Parenthood" and "Sexual Adjustments in Marriage."<sup>78</sup> A year later the Santa Clara Council of Churches reported that South Bay Protestant groups planned on observing "National Family Week," and that "more and more of our churches seem to be entering into some aspect of this program and finding it very much appreciated by the people."<sup>79</sup> In 1960 St. William's Church in Los Altos offered a six-part series on "love and marriage" for teenagers in the congregation by inviting experts on family life, a

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<sup>78</sup> The First Methodist Church of Palo Alto, letter, 26 September 1958, Santa Clara Council of Churches Records, San Jose, CA.

<sup>79</sup> Santa Clara Council of Churches, "Annual Report," 1959, Santa Clara Council of Churches Records.

physician, school counselors, and local married couples to speak.<sup>80</sup> In 1961 the Saratoga Avenue Baptist Church in Saratoga launched a ten-week series called “Building Bible Homes for Christ,” which included sermons and lectures on “the problems of love, courtship, marriage and rearing of children.”<sup>81</sup> And in 1963 the First Baptist Church of Santa Clara offered a local Lockheed engineer and his wife their “family of the year” award for their service to the congregation.<sup>82</sup>

Similarly, the San Francisco Archdiocese formally adopted the principles of the Christian Family Movement [CFM] in 1951 and expanded its commitment to Cana and pre-Cana clerical counseling on marriage to young couples. The CFM originated in the western suburbs of Chicago and came to the Bay Area with the support of several priests and straight residents from the Peninsula and South Bay. The movement brought together clergymen with groups of five to six married couples for prayer and discussion, and sought to unite official representatives of the church with members of the laity to solve a diverse array of “family problems” through meditation, discussion, and social action in the community. The proponents of the CFM gathered at a conference at St. Patrick’s seminary in the summer of 1951 and declared that, “the family problems of the parish will not be solved by bringing families to Christ once a week on Sunday. Rather, Christ must be brought to the families every day and all day long.” CFM groups met every other week, and their efforts complemented the formal members counseling parish members received through “Cana” and “Pre-Cana” conferences. The Catholic Church notably confined membership in the CFM to married parishioners and encouraged its growth exclusively in the fast-growing areas of the Peninsula and South Bay. No

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<sup>80</sup> “Church Talks, Set on Love, Marriage,” *San Jose Mercury*, 5 March 1960.

<sup>81</sup> “Christian Home Series Continues,” *San Jose Mercury*, 11 February 1961.

<sup>82</sup> “First Baptist Elects ‘Family of the Year,’” *San Mercury*, 8 May 1963.

comparable program existed within the city of San Francisco. This decision reflected not only the demographic reality that middle-class, married couples with children made up the vast majority of suburban parishes, but also a public declaration that those parishioners played a special role in the Church. According to the CFM's proponents: "The Church is a true society, but more, she is an organic Body whose head is Christ... The tissue of the Body is the parish, and the unit of the parish is the family."<sup>83</sup>

Similar to the work done by local PTAS in San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties, area churches drew on a wide range of periodicals, guest speakers, and books to design their programs on straight family life. National mainline Protestant magazines, such as *Together* or *Presbyterian Life*, regularly carried stories on how to organize "family friendly" recreation or marital counseling. The evangelical San Jose Bible College held annual "conferences on evangelism" that drew guest speakers from across the West Coast to deliver a variety of lectures, including those on "The Church's Ministry to the Family."<sup>84</sup> Evangelical pastor Marvin Rickard later recalled frequently consulting *The Christian Standard* to draw on ideas for church building and new programs.<sup>85</sup>

These public demonstrations of support for straight family life paralleled the efforts of state-sponsored sex experts to stabilize marriage and help parents raise their children in a manner that would benefit society as a whole. Although Catholic and Protestant groups obviously saw the straight family specifically in religious terms, they absorbed the psychological framework of their secular counterparts, and they shared their concern for the process of child development that took place in the nation's homes and

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<sup>83</sup> "Summary of the Main Ideas Presented at the Family Apostolate Study Week," St. Patrick's Seminary, 22-5 August 1951, San Francisco Archdiocese Records, St. Patrick's Seminary, Menlo Park, CA.

<sup>84</sup> "The Church's Ministry to the Family," *Gospel Broadcaster*, San Jose Bible College, November 1958, William Jessup University Archives, Rocklin, CA.

<sup>85</sup> Marvin Rickard, interview with author, 18 August 2008.

schools. Their support for these two institutions reflected both a belief that parents living according to Christian principles with their children could stave off a rash of divorces and youthful misconduct, and that religious observance in the home bolstered attendance in the church on Sunday. In 1953, the evangelical periodical *The Christian Standard* launched its “Church and Home United” campaign and proclaimed that “broken homes have multiplied to the point where one marriage of every six is doomed to failure. Juvenile delinquency is on the rise... If we would save our homes we must invite Christ into them.”<sup>86</sup> The proponents of the Christian Family Movement hosted bi-monthly meetings in members’ homes and declared that they hoped to foster a communal dynamic “that deals with the fundamental unit of the family, that concerns itself with family problems... and effectively develops a vibrant Christianity in the couples themselves, that colors their homes and spreads into their neighborhoods.”<sup>87</sup> And both mainline and evangelical Protestant periodicals from the period repeatedly assured readers that “The Family that Prays Together Stays Together.”

These efforts to bring the principles of the church into the home sharply paralleled the founding of religious schools in the 1950s. In 1955, James Brown, the superintendent of schools for the San Francisco Archdiocese, singled out the concentration of young children on the Peninsula and in the South Bay to Archbishop John Mitty and he noted that “Santa Clara Co. has a greater gross increase than Alameda and Contra Costa Counties combined (not to mention S.F., which suffered a loss).” A year later Brown’s department reported that it was operating thirty-six elementary and seven secondary

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<sup>86</sup> “Christ and Home,” Church United Campaign, *Christian Standard*, 4 July 1953.

<sup>87</sup> “Summary of the Main Ideas Presented at the Family Apostolate Study Week,” St. Patrick’s Seminary, 22-5 August 1951, San Francisco Archdiocese Records, St. Patrick’s Seminary, Menlo Park, CA.

schools on the Peninsula and in the South Bay.<sup>88</sup> In 1959 a group of South Bay evangelicals founded the small San Jose Christian School, which they described as a “parent controlled school, seeking to raise up good citizens and dedicated Christians, to strengthen home, church, and state.”<sup>89</sup> In the early 1960s, the religious academy advertised itself as a place founded by “Christian parents who want the home and the school to work together in the training of their children. They wish to train their children so that they will be able to fill well their place in church, in home, and in country.”<sup>90</sup>

Although only a relatively small fraction of Peninsula and South Bay students attended classes at Christian institutions, even pupils at public schools received some kind of religious education. Almost every church in San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties operated a Sunday school for children and teenagers. Public education authorities in the 1950s not only allowed time for prayer before class, but they also permitted pupils to leave school once a week to attend hour-long courses at a church of their family’s choosing. From the Second World War II through the mid-1960s the Santa Clara County Council of Churches supported “released time education.”

### **Religious Sex Education**

Discussions, counseling, and instruction on sex played an important part in these programs on family life. Although the subject constituted only a fraction of the total services religious groups offered to help engineer sound marriages with healthy children, all of the major Catholic and Protestant churches expanded sex education programs in the

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<sup>88</sup> School Summary, Department of Education, Archdiocese of San Francisco, San Francisco Archdiocese Records.

<sup>89</sup> San Jose Christian Schools Publicity Chairman, “News Release,” 1 September 1960, San Jose Christian School Records, San Jose, CA.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.



1950s. The dramatic growth of Christian discourses on sex and youth in this period stemmed from two significant, contradictory impulses from the diverse array groups working in San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties. First, most mainline Protestant authorities tended to share the belief of secular psychologists that the homes, schools, and churches needed to work together to prepare young people for marriage, and that ministers played a crucial role in the larger social project of preventing “sexual maladjustment,” divorce, and juvenile delinquency. The Methodist *Pastor’s Manual for Pre-Marital Counseling*, for instance, declared that many “couples are complete marriage illiterates. They have seriously considered little beyond the romantic stages of their love life, know almost nothing about how religion can enrich marriage, about a family spending plan, about marriage law, about child spacing and sex education, and very little about many other matters that pertain to a successful home.”<sup>91</sup> Local mainline Protestant churches on the Peninsula and in the South Bay regularly hosted lectures from state authorities and counseled couples in their congregations to consult many of the same books and pamphlets distributed by local PTAs.<sup>92</sup>

At the same time, the Catholic authorities expanded their sex education programs specifically because they opposed greater involvement in public schools. Their resistance stemmed primarily from the belief that each child needed teaching on this subject in an individualized fashion, and only parents, with the help of the clergy, could provide such instruction. In 1950 an association of American Catholic Bishops declared: “We protest

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<sup>91</sup> No author, *The Pastor’s Manual for Premarital Counseling* (Nashville, TN: The Methodist Publishing House, 1958), 18.

<sup>92</sup> In January 1948, the First Congregational Church of San Jose invited Ralph Eckert to speak to its “Men’s Club” in the homes of one of its members. First Congregational Church, letter to Ralph Eckert, 17 January 1948, First Congregational Church, San Jose, Herbert C. Jones Papers, Sourisseau Academy for State and Local History, San Jose State University.

in [the] strongest possible terms against the introduction of sex education in the schools. To be of benefit, such instruction must be broader than imparting information, and must be given individually.”<sup>93</sup> Even as archdioceses across the country mobilized to keep secular sex education out of public schools, they saw their work as the logical extension, rather than the antithesis, of secular “parent education” campaigns. In 1951 a nun from Milwaukee wrote an article in the Catholic periodical *America*, declaring that “Our Children Need Sex Education,” but she asserted that, “Progressive education stresses individualistic training. It lays great stress on taking the *individual* characteristics of the pupil into consideration... In the matter of sex, however, the bugle call is for *mass* instruction. Is sex not a personal thing?”<sup>94</sup>

Although Catholics and Protestants differed significantly in their understanding of the role of the church and school in sex education, their investment in the topic stemmed primarily from a number of shared impulses. These common traits extended beyond religious groups and united church campaigns on sex and family life with the programs sponsored by state experts. First, all of the religious groups working on the Peninsula and in the South Bay believed the contention of psychologists that family dynamics held the key to preventing divorce, sexual maladjustment and juvenile delinquency. In 1953, for example, *The Christian Standard* published an article entitled “God’s Plan for the Home,” and after calling the home “a sacred institution,” it declared: “Children will follow the works of their elders more readily than their words. When the home surroundings are inadequate, both school and church have problem children with

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<sup>93</sup> Bishops of the United States, issued through the National Catholic Welfare Council, “Not in the School But in the Home,” *Catholic Digest*, January 1951.

<sup>94</sup> Mary Jessine, “Our Children Need Sex Education,” *America*, May 1951, 377.

which to deal.”<sup>95</sup> Discussions of sex, in particular, represented a key site in which both secular and religious authorities believed they could regulate youth and adult behavior. If churches disagreed on who should administer such instruction, they shared a common belief that parents and clerics needed to pay more attention to the subject. In their eyes, the dedication of greater resources to the subject offered the possibility of ameliorating larger social ills. In 1955 *Catholic Educator* editorialized that, “Sex actions do not concern the individual alone but the domestic society of the home and the welfare of the entire nation itself.”<sup>96</sup>

Second, all of the churches underscored the role parents needed to play in the education of their children on this subject. Although they universally shared a greater role for religious figures in the giving of sex education, they insisted that parents needed to do more to make sure that their sons and daughters understood church teachings on the subject. In 1950 pamphlet entitled *Sex-Instruction in the Home*, a Catholic author warned mothers and fathers that “Too many parents ‘leave them to find out for themselves.’ That is not right... It is your duty; and I hope to show you that the task is not beyond your powers.”<sup>97</sup> According to the *Catholic Educator*: “Necessary sex information and instruction are primarily the responsibility of the parents.”<sup>98</sup>

Third, all of these groups shared a skepticism that youth cultures would play a corrupting influence in the sexual development of children and adolescents. In 1951 Sister Mary Jessnine, writing in the Catholic periodical *America* declared that, “Even if a child himself is not physically ready for such information, the fact that he is associating

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<sup>95</sup> Fred Smith, “God’s Plan for the Home,” *Christian Standard*, 17 October 1953.

<sup>96</sup> Paul Campbell, editorial, “Parents and Their Duty in Sex Education,” *Catholic Educator*, March 1955.

<sup>97</sup> Aidan Pickering, *Sex-Instruction in the Home* (London: Catholic Truth Society, 1950), 3-4.

<sup>98</sup> Campbell “Parents and Their Duty in Sex Education.”

with many who have reached the maturing stage cannot be overlooked. It is therefore much more in the teachings of the Church to make *sure* that the child is sufficiently informed with knowledge... and imparted with a Catholic viewpoint, rather than to leave his inquisitive mind exposed to... ‘secret gutter’ talk.”<sup>99</sup> These religious advocates argued that adolescence constituted a particularly sexual, and therefore, potentially sinful period in a life, with the *Christian Standard* declaring: “It is not an easy time... The claims of the flesh are very strong, and the mysterious appeal of man for woman and woman for man, is nearly blind in the eyes of the faith.”

Fourth, both Catholic and Protestant teachings on sex education rested on fundamental assumptions about gender differences between men and women. The Methodist Manual *In Holy Matrimony*, for example, told engaged couples that, “God intended men and women to be different and so perform their functions as men and women. To many, God seems very close in married sex experiences.”<sup>100</sup> The Catholic guide *Sex-Instruction in the Home* offered separate sections for boys and girls to read, and encouraged mothers to speak to their daughters about sex and for fathers to instruct their sons on the subject.<sup>101</sup> Similarly, religious discourses about sex and marriage encouraged a gendered division of labor within married couples. The Methodist Church, for example, discouraged women from working outside the home because it might prevent couples from having children and because “exacting hours in an office, store, or

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<sup>99</sup> Sister Mary Jessnine, “Our Children Need Sex Education,” *America*, 14 July 1951, 377.

<sup>100</sup> The Methodist Church, *In Holy Matrimony: The Marriage Manual of the Methodist Church* (Nashville, TN: Methodist Publishing House, 1958), 75.

<sup>101</sup> Pickering, *Sex-Instruction in the Home*, 8.

shop may make Mary too weary to be an agreeable companion or good wife by the time she gets home.”<sup>102</sup>

And fifth, both Catholic and Protestant authorities perpetuated hierarchies of sexual shame and stigma similar to their secular counterparts. Like the parenting experts at the California Department of Education, almost all religious authorities in the 1950s spoke about sex primarily to preserve the institution of marriage. Although different writers alternately framed masturbation, premarital sex, or homosexuality as matters of sin or mental illness, they nevertheless always cast these practices as “problems” in need of church intervention. This stigmatization of certain kinds of sex originated, in part, on the fundamental belief that the physical desire for the opposite sex constituted core components of healthy men and women. In 1950, Father Leo Treese told the readers of *Commonweal* magazine that, “The true homosexual himself (or herself) is a freak of nature as is the albino or midget, according to medical science. The abnormality is due to an imbalance of the hormones which are found mixed in every human- the male hormones predominating in a man, female ones predominating in a woman.”<sup>103</sup> The Catholic pamphlet *Sex-Instruction in the Home* warned young readers that “God has given our bodies these powers and pleasures, and they are good in their proper place, in marriage... So, until you are married, you must control yourself very strictly in your thoughts and words and acts.”<sup>104</sup>

The common characteristics among faith-based discourses about sexuality in the 1950s also built bridges to non-Christian organizations. Running on parallel tracks,

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<sup>102</sup> The Methodist Church, *The Pastor's Manual for Premarital Counseling* (Nashville, TN: Methodist Publishing House, 1958), 76.

<sup>103</sup> Leo Treese, “Muted Tragedy,” *Commonweal*, 17 February 1950.

<sup>104</sup> Pickering, *Sex-Instruction in the Home*, 16.

religious and secular discussions of sex tended to reinforce rather than contradict one another. Suburban residents often joined both church- and school- based groups and frequently saw their membership in both types of organizations as compatible forms of fellowship and community-betterment. PTA groups, in particular, commonly asked priests and ministers to speak to them about sex education; they sometimes met in church halls; and they even occasionally opened their meetings with prayers. Bertha Mason, the college professor who organized San Mateo's "Sex Education for Parents and Teachers" program, regularly attended services at the First Congregational church in San Jose.<sup>105</sup> A PTA discussion in Santa Clara in 1962 "On How Can Parents Encourage Spiritual Development of Their Youth concluded that, "Teachers should be allowed to teach about religion as the opportunity arises during classroom work."<sup>106</sup>

### **Sex in Schools Revisited: The Controversy in Santa Clara**

This tepid consensus between "home," "church," and "school," however came under severe strain again in the early 1960s for two significant reasons. First, the federal judiciary and local parents began to delineate stronger boundaries between religious and secular education. In 1962 the U.S. Supreme Court decided in *Engel v. Vitale* that the nation's schools could not allow prayer in their classrooms, including non-denominational invocations or ones that allowed students to opt out of participation.<sup>107</sup> A year later, federal justice reaffirmed its policy on religion and public education by ruling

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<sup>105</sup> "Minutes of Meeting," First Congregational Church, San Jose, 24 June 1951, Herbert C. Jones Papers, Sourisseau Academy for State and Local History, San Jose State University.

<sup>106</sup> "Religious Instruction Approved by Parents," *San Jose Mercury*, 17 October 1962.

<sup>107</sup> Joan Delfattore, *The Fourth R: Conflicts Over Religion in America's Public Schools* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004), 76.

that school administrators could not require students to undertake daily Bible readings.<sup>108</sup> Together, these court decisions limited the religious instructions teachers could impart to students and further secularized the nation's public schools. In 1963 the Board of Trustees at the Jefferson High School in Santa Clara attempted to comply with the Supreme Court's rulings by denying a group of local Methodists the right to meet in its classrooms, and they ended the practice of using district school buses to transport pupils to area churches for religious instruction.<sup>109</sup>

When a local newspaper asked people in downtown Santa Clara whether or not educators should teach children about the Bible in 1962, the respondents failed to reach a clear consensus on the subject. Whereas one retired resident told *The Santa Clara Journal* that he believed Bible "instruction would teach children to believe in the law when they're small," several other people indicated that, although they favored the practice, they opposed imposition of religious doctrine on their neighbors. Mrs. Robert Fisher, a housewife confessed to the newspaper, "Everyone doesn't believe in the Bible and those who do can go to church to learn about the Bible. I myself wouldn't object if the Bible became a part of public school courses. But there are people who don't like the idea." Carla Henderson, an employee at the Peninsula Mortgage Company, contended that although "Teaching the Bible has not hurt civilization so far... I believe it up to the discretion of the parents whether the Bible should be taught in public schools."<sup>110</sup>

Second, the voluntary nature of these campaigns and programs convinced many Peninsula and South Bay parents that that others were failing to properly instruct their

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid. 101.

<sup>109</sup> "Religious Issue Hits Jefferson Trustees Again," *Santa Clara Journal*, 20 November 1963. The Methodist Church complained that its membership had "grown too large to meet in private homes and that it was impossible to find a temporary meeting place in the area."

<sup>110</sup> "Inquiring Reporter: Bible Okay in Classroom?" *Santa Clara Journal*, 28 March 1962.

children about sex and marriage, and that only the extension of family life education in public schools could ensure near universal access to information on these subjects. As in the controversy in San Mateo in 1951, PTA programs on sex education throughout the decade mobilized one set of parents and pitted them against an unspecified group of other mothers and fathers. Even as domestic architects gave suburban couples increased privacy from their children and their neighbors in their bedrooms, groups of Peninsula and South Bay residents became increasingly convinced that others were not doing enough in the home to prevent teenage sex, “sex deviance,” or divorce. Their calls for greater instruction on straight family in schools emerged against a backdrop of growing numbers of religious groups who believed such a move would aggravate, rather than ameliorate, those problems.

By the early 1960s, religious and secular discussions of appeared to many suburban residents to be in conflict, and in 1962 the rift spilled out into the open again in the South Bay suburb of Santa Clara. The controversy began in early 1962, when Alberta Rennert, the parent education chairwoman from the city’s council PTA, put together a guest lecture and film showing on “Sane Sex Knowledge” in one of the South Bay suburb’s high schools. The motion pictures, *Human Growth* and *About Your Life*, came from the county PTA’s library on family life education and had circulated among parent study groups in the area for a little less than a decade. In the hour after their showing on February 8th, Richard Bonvechio, a health professor at nearby San Jose State University, led a discussion with 108 area residents, educators, and clergymen, and advised them that sex education for young people should “avoid taboo areas.” “We certainly don’t discuss sexual intercourse, deviations, birth control, or sensational areas,” he assured them. In



the question and answer session following Bonvechio's lecture, 105 audience members voted to petition District Superintendent Wendell Huxtable to develop a formal family education curriculum for students in the elementary, junior, and senior high schools. With Rennert acting as an organizer, community members formed a committee to explore the subject and to conduct an outreach campaign to the rest of the suburb's parents.<sup>111</sup>

In the subsequent month, Rennert's committee gained substantial momentum in its effort to bring family life education to Santa Clara. The suburb's weekly newspaper, *The Santa Clara Journal*, took little time to endorse their efforts and trumpeted its approval with a bold editorial succinctly titled, "Sex Education- Yes." Furthermore, the district's council PTA organization unanimously voted to support the committee's program at the end of February, and put together a delegation of fifteen volunteers to meet with school officials in Hayward to learn more about a program used in parts of the East Bay. Just a few weeks after the first public forum on the subject, Rennert announced that the sheer number of inquiries from eager parents threatened to overwhelm her, and she asked these new volunteers to circulate petitions among their friends and neighbors to further the cause of family life education in Santa Clara. In less than a month, they hoped to organize a larger forum on the subject with speakers from other suburbs who had successfully implemented curricula on sex, marriage, and childrearing into their classrooms. If successful, they hoped to convince the superintendent and board of education to incorporate their suggestions into the local biology, health, and home making curricula. "In school districts across the country," editorialized *The Santa Clara Journal*, "courses enlightening young people on sex have been introduced with much

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<sup>111</sup> "Sane Sex Knowledge Illustrated," *Santa Clara Journal*, 31 January 1962; "Basic Sex Education is Asked Here," *Santa Clara Journal*, 14 February 1962.

success... There would seem no logical reason why similar programs cannot be added in elementary classrooms in the Santa Clara district.”<sup>112</sup>

Although the newspaper enthusiastically approved of her cause, it offered very little in the way of actual explanation of Rennert’s motives. In extensive coverage of her campaign, *The Santa Clara Journal* notably quoted her directly only on two occasions, but her brief declarations underscored two possible conclusions about her intentions. First, Rennert appeared to espouse a spatial worldview that marked some places as desirable sites for the dissemination of information on sexuality and designated other forums as objectionable. As with many of the church- and school-based discourses around straight family life in the early 1960s, the parent education chairman expressed concern about the role peers could play in the sex education of her children. When asked about the genesis of her efforts to change the school curriculum, she bluntly answered: “They’ll learn better there than in the street.”<sup>113</sup> Casting Santa Clara’s homes and schools as appropriate spaces in which adults could discuss sex with young people, grassroots leaders such as Rennert created a parallel mental geography comparable to the “global classroom” first mentioned by Eckert in his book, *Sex Attitudes in the Home*.<sup>114</sup> Believing that children inevitably would learn about the subject, both professional theorists and suburban volunteers designated forums where such conversation should take place, and others in which they should not. If young people stood the risk of learning misinformation on sex in the literal or figurative streets, then many parents believed that

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<sup>112</sup> “Sex Education- Yes,” *Santa Clara Journal*, 21 February 1962; “PTAs Endorse Sex Education,” *Santa Clara Journal*, 28 February 1962.

<sup>113</sup> “Basic Sex Education is Asked Here,” *Santa Clara Journal*, 14 February 1962.

<sup>114</sup> For Eckert’s statement that the entire world constitutes a classroom in which a child may learn about sex, see page 25 of this chapter.

strengthening the role of the school would help prevent the perpetuation of myths about sex and reproduction.

Second, Rennert appeared to share the belief of state authorities that knowledge about sex and marriage constituted important cornerstones in a child's mental development, but she doubted that her fellow parents could accomplish the task alone. When confronted with the argument that the home should bear the sole responsibility of teaching young people about sex, she responded with considerable skepticism. "This would be fine," she told the newspaper, "if most parents did something. But they don't, many of them until it's too late. And it's much harder to undo a wrong impression than plant the right one."<sup>115</sup> Mirroring many of the assertions put forth by the State Department of Education's staff of experts, Rennert's claim recast the debate about sex education as a conflict between parents, with some mothers and fathers performing their roles better than their neighbors. With parent education serving as the primary publicly funded strategy for teaching Californians about sex for over a dozen years, her comments to the *Santa Clara Journal* reflect a certain cynicism that the proper information could adequately trickle down to the young people of her community.

In the following months letters flooded *The Santa Clara Journal's* editorial page, and, support for Rennert's group came primarily from residents who viewed their endorsement of family life education as an extension, rather than a contradiction of their roles as parents. One mother wrote a letter to the newspaper arguing that, given the importance of sex in people's development, schools should play an important role in buttressing the work of parents. "Thanks to Mrs. Rennert and her committee," wrote Laura Smith, a self-described mother of two, "I was impressed and it made me realize

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<sup>115</sup> "Sex Education- Yes," *Santa Clara Journal*, 21 February 1962.

that we need this kind of education... Isn't the purpose of the school to educate the child? Why not educate the WHOLE child?" Similarly, when *The Journal* conducted an informal survey of shoppers in the suburb's downtown, Richard Hackett, an engineering analyst from nearby Los Gatos, shared his belief that the development of a family life education program in the schools would help young people to make responsible choices. "The more informed children are," he declared, "the less apt [they are] to be precipitated into trouble. Basic facts of life, I would rather tell my children myself. But for detailed descriptions of biological facts, this I consider a function of the school education process." Rather than seeing classroom teachers in adversarial roles, parents such as Smith and Hackett, tended to see schools as supplements to sex education primarily administered by them in the home. Even though the two appeared to advance differing childrearing styles, with one seeming to underscore the significance of her sons' personal development and the other appearing to advocate a need for greater discipline, they stood united on the need for greater support from schools.<sup>116</sup>

Many parents, however, responded negatively to Rennert's assertion that area residents were failing to adequately raise their children, and their objections to her proposal took two significant forms. First, several residents composed letters to the editor claiming that a school-based program would undermine work done in the home, rather than supplement it. One writer, for example, echoed many Catholic writings on the subject and declared: "[Sex education] must slightly anticipate the need of each child. Parents alone can meet these individual needs. For schools to take over responsibilities of parents helps parents evade their responsibilities. It is not for schools to take over

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<sup>116</sup> "Inquiring Reporter: Sex Education?" *Santa Clara Journal*, 28 February 1962; Letter, *Santa Clara Journal*, 7 March 1962.

these duties.”<sup>117</sup> This frequent refrain that the school should not compete with the home led to a renewed call from some residents for greater parent education, allowing Mr. and Mrs. William Kelly to contend: “We share [Rennert’s] concern for the children who are getting sex education in the street... Rather than relieve the parents [however] of this responsibility perhaps the parent educator committee, as its name implies, could aid the parents and help them overcome whatever difficulties they may have in talking to their children on this subject.”<sup>118</sup> Rather than cede control over sex education to schoolteachers, residents such as the Kelly’s proposed a revitalization of the current system, in which schools spoke directly to parents about childrearing and marriage.

If many letter writers expressed concern over what they saw as an attempt to eclipse the home, several others complained at the increasing marginalization of a second institution designed to support married people with children: churches. The scandal unfolding in Santa Clara occurred amidst growing restrictions imposed by state and federal courts on religious instruction in schools, and many local mothers and fathers viewed Alberta Rennert’s campaign for family life education within the context of the increasing secularization of California’s public education system. “One cannot preach morality and practice immorality,” noted R. H. Beecher in a letter to the editor. “We must follow the teachings of God if we hope to teach sex right! A school system which will not allow the teachings of God to be taught, how can they teach sex in the right light?”<sup>119</sup> Another writer, R. Janet Beltran, concurred two weeks later, querying: “If in many schools the reading of the Bible- the most common denominator of the Judeo-

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<sup>117</sup> Letter, *Santa Clara Journal*, 7 March 1962.

<sup>118</sup> Letter, *Santa Clara Journal*, 21 February 1962.

<sup>119</sup> Letter, *Santa Clara Journal*, 7 March 1962.

Christian tradition- is said to be unconstitutional, how can teachers inculcate ideas of morality which should be a part of sex education?”

As the date of Rennert’s district-wide forum approached, the mood of the suburb soured considerably on the subject of family life education. Although several parents voiced support for the idea, the dual threat of the schools simultaneously undermining the work of the home and the church shadowed the campaign well into the spring of 1962. District Superintendent Wendell Huxtable, possibly conscious of the flare-up in San Mateo in the previous decade, remained remarkably cool on the subject. Although he promised residents that he would keep an open mind, he professed a serious belief that sex education could “best be left to the parents.”<sup>120</sup> In late March, the guest speakers from the East Bay suburb of San Lorenzo scheduled to appear at Rennert’s forum on family life education told *The Journal* that they feared stirring controversy in Santa Clara, and they requested a formal invitation from Huxtable before they would even appear in his district.<sup>121</sup> Even after the superintendent acquiesced the proposed panel endured several unexplained delays and did not actually come together until the near conclusion of the academic semester on May 14.<sup>122</sup>

This prolonged postponement gave Rennert’s opposition ample time to prepare for a confrontation. The open forum planned by the committee working for family life education effectively brought two competing forms of straight social organization into direct conflict with one another. The council PTA, working within the defined boundaries of the school district, ultimately clashed with the opposition of several area

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<sup>120</sup> “PTAs Endorse Sex Education,” *Santa Clara Journal*, 28 February 1962.

<sup>121</sup> “Sex Education Class Proposed,” *Santa Clara Journal*, 21 March 1962; “Huxtable Gives Approval to Sex Education Panel,” *Santa Clara Journal*, 28 March 1962.

<sup>122</sup> “Sex Education Experts to Speak Here,” *Santa Clara Journal*, 18 April 1962; “New Date Set for Panelists,” *Santa Clara Journal*, 25 April 1962.

churches whose more porous boundaries allowed them to absorb members from all over the county. Although no single congregation or parish could single-handedly outnumber Rennert and her allies, the prolonged newspaper coverage of the issue gave several religious groups the opportunity to pool their opposition. When the lecturers from San Lorenzo finally spoke in Santa Clara High School's cafeteria, approximately 250 people appeared to hear them speak, including over a hundred residents whose children attended classes either in neighboring districts or religious academies. Furious, Rennert charged that the parents of parochial school students stacked the audience, and when they voted three to one to prohibit her family life education program, she attempted to bar their ballots.<sup>123</sup>

*The Santa Clara Journal* later alleged that area church groups, both in and out of the suburb, diligently organized to oppose her campaign, and the fact that several parents peppered the guest speakers from San Lorenzo with questions about religion supported its contention.<sup>124</sup> Even with Rennert's readjustment of the vote total, however, her bid for family life education narrowly lost. Angry that her supporters did not turn out in greater numbers, she resigned her position with the PTA just a few weeks later, and shortly thereafter the organization most dedicated to "bringing the home and school closer together" told a reporter that all discussion of sex instruction would be off limits for the foreseeable future.<sup>125</sup>

## **Conclusion:**

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<sup>123</sup> "Sex Education Vote Questioned," *Santa Clara Journal*, 16 May 1962.

<sup>124</sup> "Ibid.," "Wandering Around with Linn Brown," *Santa Clara Journal*, 6 June 1962.

<sup>125</sup> "Sex Education Ignored; PTAS Shy from Controversy," *Santa Clara Journal*, 9 January 1963.

From beginning to end, the controversy in Santa Clara took approximately five months to unfold. The span from Rennert's initial proposal to the confrontation in the high school cafeteria stretched across just a single academic semester. The origins of the controversy, however, found its roots in the dramatic upswing in the scientifically sanctioned material on sexuality circulating at the grassroots in the previous decade and a half. After all, Rennert's position as parent education representative for the council PTA stood as a crucial bridge with the earlier era of state supported sex instruction for mothers and fathers. Her campaign to implement direct family life education in the school district, however, exposed a crucial contradiction inherent in the work of the previous decade. If knowledge of marriage, sex, and childrearing served as crucial cornerstones of a healthy citizenry, then the very stakes of such a project demanded a more thorough means of implementation than a patchwork outreach campaign for interested parents. As Rennert herself alleged, significant groups of parents would never avail themselves of the resources made available by the state and local education systems. Direct implementation of family life education in schools seemed to threaten the sovereignty of many of the very parents lauded by Ralph Eckert and his allies in Sacramento. As demonstrated first in San Mateo and later in Santa Clara, persistent ambivalence on the subject of sex education ensured that it would continue to appear as a viable alternative to contemporary curricula, but also that it would continue to generate controversy. In the latter incident the threat of its direct implementation threatened to drive a deeper wedge between those parents who favored an expanded role for churches in the raising of their children and those who hoped to strengthen the public school system for the same purpose.



By the early 1960s, the increasingly polarized residents of the Peninsula and South Bay continued to send mixed signals on the subject of sex education. Although the subject would fade from the front pages in the months following the controversial vote in Santa Clara, parents in the surrounding county continued to express interest in family life education. Just four days before Rennert's forum in her high school cafetorium, several women's clubs across the freeway in San Jose hosted a community meeting on the topic with area educators, ministers, and physicians acting as panelists. Noted only briefly within the inner pages of a daily newspaper, the juxtaposition of this largely unheralded event with the headline snagging controversy in Santa Clara suggests that even in the face of growing opposition, family life education continued to garner significant support at the grassroots.<sup>126</sup> In the subsequent decade, the sexual forces first unleashed in policy circles after the war, and then refashioned in local parent teacher associations and women's clubs, would continue to circulate among interested parents, and by the end of the 1960s the conflicts over sex, homes, churches, and schools would step into larger political arenas.

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<sup>126</sup> "Family Life Education Meeting Set Tomorrow," *San Jose Mercury*, 9 May 1962.

## **Chapter 4:** **Bust: Policing and Redeveloping the Postwar Queer City**

### **Introduction**

In the 1950s, “Rebirth” lay on the minds of urban officials at all levels of public service. Massive national suburban growth panicked the business and political leaders of the country’s major cities, and by end of the first decade after the war, the federal government renewed its commitment to urban growth. Few officials led the charge for downtown redevelopment more than James Follin, urban renewal director at the Housing and Home Finance Agency (HHFA). At a lecture he gave to San Francisco’s Commonwealth Club in 1955, he pushed the city’s political and economic elites to redouble their support for building programs and to make use of federal funds made available for them to do so: “I’m thinking of something analogous... to the behavior of living organisms” he told them. “They adapt to surrounding conditions as changes occur, and survive; or else they fail to adapt, whereupon before long their tribe dies out.”<sup>1</sup> The threat posed by suburbanization loomed particularly large to Follin, and, just two months later at the University of Michigan, the urban renewal official made his Darwinian appeal again: “This report is on a disease,” he declared, “This is the disease of slums and blight. Unless checked, it tears at the very foundations of urban life. The family, of course, is the foundation of the Nation and of all enlightened nations... Slums and blight are a

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<sup>1</sup> James Follin, “Community Planning and Urban Renewal” (address given at Commonwealth Club of San Francisco, 29 March 1955).

deadly menace to the families exposed to them. They are, by the same token, a menace to our communities and our Nation.”<sup>2</sup>

Follin’s words reveal more than the persistent power of natal and biological metaphors in postwar planning. They also illustrate the widespread belief of public officials that government resources best served the interests of straight, white, middle-class families. For these authorities, “redevelopment” included both the dramatic economic modernization of downtown and the construction of new neighborhoods to retain this key demographic. In the 1940s and 1950s, an influx of queer migrants and people of color radically remade the demographics of older cities like San Francisco. Meanwhile, postwar suburbs, like those on the Peninsula, steadily concentrated straight, white, middle-class families in new subdivisions. Within a decade of World War II, San Francisco political and business leaders looked out at a growing sexual and racial rift between the metropolitan center and periphery. New policing strategies and federally financed redevelopment projects offered them the possibility of signaling to both consumers and economic investors that the city welcomed them, and their fears that their city would become an enormous “slum” spurred them to crackdown and rebuild on areas they deemed “diseased.”

Postwar redevelopment is best understood as a liberal modernization project designed to use government resources to redesign the city on behalf of business investors and white, middle-class married couples with children. In the past fifteen years, urban historians have told two parallel narratives about life in the postwar city. On one hand, several key scholars have cogently critiqued the role race has played in the

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<sup>2</sup> James Follin, “Slums and Blight... A Disease of Urban Life” (Sandwell Lecture at University of Michigan, 3 May 1955).

redevelopment of older urban areas. From Chicago to Oakland, these historians have aptly demonstrated that white city officials used highway, mass transit, and housing projects to break up longstanding African American neighborhoods.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender scholars have extensively analyzed the wave of crackdowns on queer bars that swept through postwar cities as diverse as Washington, D.C.; Flint, Michigan; and San Francisco.<sup>4</sup> Viewed alongside one another, these parallel developments suggest the ways in which elite assumptions about race, class, and sexuality mutually reinforced one another in the “rebirth” of the postwar city. Both significant tools available to urban mayors, policing and redevelopment represented related disciplinary projects for political and economic authorities to drive out groups they believed threatened the well-being of the larger community.

Like their suburban counterparts, urban mayors, police, and planners believed that cities- like people- passed through stages of evolutionary growth. Deeply indebted to postwar psychology, they viewed “slums” and “blight” as symptoms of a form of metropolitan “arrested development.” In their eyes, slumping neighborhoods not only augured a flagging economy but also helped produce forms of social disorder, and in their search for a remedy these authorities made several related assumptions about the nature of people and urban space. Most significantly, they argued that the visibility of

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<sup>3</sup> For examples see Arnold Hirsch, *The Making of the Second Ghetto: Race and Housing in Chicago 1940-1960* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Thomas Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University, 1996); Robert Self, *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University, 2005); Andrew Highsmith, *America is a Thousand Flints: Race, Class and the End of the American Dream in Flint, Michigan*, doctoral dissertation, University of Michigan, 2009.

<sup>4</sup> For examples see John D’Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of Homosexual Minority in the United States* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983); Brett Beemyn, *Creating a Place for Ourselves: Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Communities* (New York: Routledge, 1997); Nan Alamilla Boyd, *Wide Open Town: A Queer History of San Francisco to 1965* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2004).

deviant groups in public spaces, such as homosexuals, signaled the acceptability of their presence to others. Left unchecked, these marginalized groups would attract new members from around the country, and, in the case of sexual deviants, threaten the mental health of San Francisco's children. Similarly, they accepted the fundamental premise that individuals required physical privacy to ensure their psychological development. Unable to provide their inhabitants with this essential feature, San Francisco's leaders believed that crowded apartments, hotels, and neighborhoods pushed children and teenagers out into streets and bars where they learned deviant behaviors from older role models. In this way, they came to believe that many city residents had taken on the very disorders suburban homes and neighborhoods were designed to ameliorate. They believed that the presence of visible homosexuals, panderers, drug "peddlers" or juvenile delinquents acted as a magnet attracting more homosexuals, panderers, drug "peddlers," or juvenile delinquents, and urban authorities hoped to break the cycle by policing public space and demolishing dwellings that lacked private bathrooms and bedrooms.

If San Francisco's public officials believed that redevelopment would reduce the visibility of deviant groups, however, by the mid-1960s their efforts had clearly produced the opposite effect. The initial postwar suburban building boom had effectively confined large numbers of African Americans, Latinos, Asian Americans, gay men, lesbians, sex workers, transgender people and transsexuals in older cities, and the renewal projects of the late 1950s and 1960s only further concentrated them in older neighborhoods near downtown. With almost all of the housing in the surrounding suburban communities closed to the poor, substantial numbers of queer people, and most African Americans or Latinos, San Francisco offered some of the only available accommodations for the Bay

Area's growing number of disenfranchised groups. By empowering law enforcement authorities to harass queer residents and people of color in public spaces and replacing blocks of older apartments, city elites effectively drove these groups from one area of the city to another. By the end of the 1960s, both parts of their strategy proved fruitless, and their eagerness to rip out the city's low-cost residential hotels ultimately left tens of thousands of poor residents without places to live and helped create a visible red-light district in the Tenderloin neighborhood. Narrating the city's law enforcement crackdown and urban renewal projects together illuminates the ways that multiple agencies worked in tandem to police urban spaces. Their combined efforts reflected the aftershocks of postwar suburbanization and illustrate the ways that intra-metropolitan competition produced organized violence against queer residents and people of color.

### **The Changing City**

As public officials, private developers, and homeowners steadily built communities for straight, white, middle-class families on the Peninsula and in the South Bay, the number of queer residents in San Francisco gradually grew. Although exact numbers are difficult to find, at least one police official speculated that in 1960 that 70,000 to 90,000 gay men and lesbians lived in San Francisco.<sup>5</sup> Urban neighborhoods themselves frequently included internal divisions based on marital status, and the classified sections of the daily newspapers frequently reflected a split real estate market with advertisements for apartments regularly calling for "single" or "married" tenants. Within this bifurcated real estate market an informal network of middle-class gay men and lesbians in San Francisco helped secure housing for one another. The city's

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<sup>5</sup> Nancy Achilles, "The Homosexual Bar," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1964), 3.

homophile organizations provided listings of available apartments to the thousands of queer migrants flooding its older neighborhoods, and gay realtors and landlords frequently referred tenants to one another. Sociologist Nancy Achilles observed in the 1960s: “Some real estate agencies specialize in finding residences for homosexuals, and their employees are fully acquainted with the inhabitants and characteristics of the gay neighborhoods... The homosexual organizations also assist in finding lodging, temporary or permanent, for those in search of them.”<sup>6</sup>

This influx of single people of all races paralleled the growing concentration of both straight and queer people of color in older urban areas. In 1960, approximately two thirds of the Bay Area’s African American and Latino residents lived in either San Francisco or Oakland.<sup>7</sup> Housing segregation within each city further concentrated residents of color in a select number of districts, with the overwhelming majority of San Francisco’s black inhabitants living in the Western Addition, Fillmore or Hunters Point areas and its Latino residents largely confined to the Mission District. Similar to their suburban counterparts, city realtors frequently refused to show African American or Latino renters apartments in all-white or Anglo neighborhoods, and San Francisco officials rigidly segregated the area’s public housing by restricting building tenancy to match the racial make-up of the surrounding area.<sup>8</sup> In 1956, Jacqueline Miles Smith of the city’s Urban League declared: “Although the production of new homes in San Francisco has been tremendous, only a negligible amount has been made available to the

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<sup>6</sup> Achilles, *The Homosexual Bar*, 23.

<sup>7</sup> Wilson Record, *Minority Groups and Intergroup Relations in the San Francisco Bay Area*, (Berkeley, CA: Institute of Governmental Studies, 1963), 7-8.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.* 22-3. See also Daniel Crowe, *Prophets of Rage: The Black Struggle in San Francisco, 1945-1969* (New York: Garland, 2000), 62-7.

Negro. It is therefore not surprising that the Negro has found his major housing outlet in existing structures in older parts of the city.”<sup>9</sup>

San Francisco’s large number of low-income hotels represented one of the residential options open to almost anyone, and many of the city’s new migrants, including gay men, lesbians, and heterosexual people of color, made their first homes there. Largely built to accommodate an industrial and maritime workforce in the late nineteenth century, these lodging houses offered residents both temporary and permanent rates, and frequently served as one of the first sources of shelter for many newcomers to the city. According to a survey conducted at the beginning of the Depression, San Francisco boasted just under 65,000 hotel rooms, or one for every ten people in the city. Approximately 66 percent of those spaces catered to people who lived there on a more or less permanent basis, and at least half of that figure- roughly 25,000 rooms- provided shelter to the transient and day laborers in the lowest tier of the urban workforce.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, in a housing market largely segmented by class and race these hotels represented some of the only accommodations available to low-income residents of color. In his study of San Francisco’s “Manilatown,” historian James Sobredo observed that as Filipino workers passed through the city on their way to the farms of California’s central valley, many of them found permanent homes in North Beach lodging houses on Jackson and Kearny Streets. He estimates that at its height, over ten thousand residents, “mostly Filipino bachelors,” lived in the area.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> “Adjustment to Urban Life,” *San Francisco Sun-Reporter*, 6 October 1956, cited in *Prophets of Rage*, 63.

<sup>10</sup> Paul Groth, *Living Downtown: The History of Residential Hotels in the United States* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 305.

<sup>11</sup> James Sobredo, “From Manila Bay to Daly City: Filipinos in San Francisco,” in James Brook, Chris Carlsson, and Nancy Peters, eds. *Reclaiming San Francisco: History, Politics, Culture* (San Francisco, CA: City Lights Books, 1998), 278.



Sobredo's use of the term "bachelors" suggests how these hotels fostered unique social arrangements that stood in direct contrast to those encouraged by the single family homes of the Peninsula and South Bay. San Francisco's cheap lodging houses occupied the lowest rung of the Bay Area's housing spectrum, and they differed from new suburban houses in both in terms of their residents and physical structure. Members of the lowest rung of the Bay Area's economic pyramid, hotel residents frequently lived outside of marriage or other normative sexual relationships and engaged in what historian Nayan Shah has called "queer domesticity."<sup>12</sup> These inhabitants included gay men, lesbians, bisexual and transgender people, but they also consisted of residents involved in a variety of other erotic and social attachments that deviated from middle-class notions of respectability. Hotels often housed single mothers, male drifters, unattached laborers, sex workers, and all female households. They found shelter in these low-rent tenements both because of sexual, racial, and gender discrimination in the city's housing market and because few of them could afford to live elsewhere. This combination of discrimination, unemployment, and low wages pooled a racially diverse group of residents who lived outside the parameters of middle-class "respectable" marriage in San Francisco's low-cost hotels. According to architectural historian Paul Groth: "From top to bottom cheap lodging houses were home to people largely living outside the family and without access to the rest of the city; lodging houses were the ultimate 'no-family house.'"<sup>13</sup>

Furthermore, hotel residents lived in dwellings that afforded them little to no privacy. In sharp contrast to the seclusion suburban home builders afforded married couples' bedrooms, hotel owners charged rates dependent on tenants' willingness to share

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<sup>12</sup> Nayan Shah, *Contagious Divides: Epidemics and Race in San Francisco's Chinatown* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2001).

<sup>13</sup> Groth, *Living Downtown*, 140.

space with other people. As Groth notes, the price of lodging in these buildings varied considerably based on the privacy they offered the people staying in them. On one end of the scale, owners offered tenants enclosed rooms, soundproof walls and private bathrooms. On the other end, they included mere cubicles separated by chicken wire, shared toilets, or mattresses laid out on the open floor. Groth observed: “The higher the price, the greater the privacy. The lower the price, the more one lived in a group.”<sup>14</sup>

Even as these migrants flooded San Francisco’s cheapest hotels, gay men, lesbians, and bisexual people remade many of the city’s neighborhoods. As many queer residents who lived there in the 1950s recalled, almost any urban space where groups of strangers congregated also served as a possible site for a pick-up or sexual encounter. Parks, streets, the waterfront, beaches, public restrooms, and even department stores all became potential cruising areas in which queer men and, to a lesser extent women found one another. According to long-time San Francisco resident Gerald Fabian: “Well, you know, in the Fifties... The City was much, was much more prone to... cruising. There was the Marina and there was Lafayette Park, all of the parks were active. There was a lot of cruising in and out of the parks, in the bushes and in the tearooms [bathrooms] and what have you.”<sup>15</sup>

Areas that drew large crowds of sailors and naval personnel, in particular, doubled as queer cruising areas, and the many hotels, cafeterias, and bars that catered to transient maritime workers frequently doubled as sites for pick-ups and sexual encounters. The migratory nature of the San Francisco’s seafaring labor force facilitated the growth of an illicit subculture that allowed men passing through the city to engage in homoerotic acts

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<sup>14</sup> Groth, *Living Downtown*, 140.

<sup>15</sup> Gerald Fabian, interview with Jim Breeden, Oral History Collection, n.d. 1995, GLBT Historical Society of Northern California.

but which did not compel them to define their sexuality as “queer” or “gay.” According to historian Allan Berubé: “Along the waterfronts in port cities were complex sexual cultures that incorporated... erotic arrangements between men, often with the threat of danger and violence. On the Embarcadero in San Francisco, for example, before the 1960s were hundreds of cheap hotels, taverns, lunch rooms, cafeterias, union halls, and the YMCA where maritime and waterfront workers and servicemen hung out and interacted with others outside their worlds. By the 1950s, what might have been described as the early gay bars and nightlife in San Francisco might be more appropriately be called the homosexual aspects of waterfront culture.”<sup>16</sup>

This erotic subculture that flourished along the Embarcadero catered to more than just the sailors, dock workers and naval personnel who passed through the city; it also served a variety of men interested in same-sex encounters from across the metropolis. In 1955, for example, the San Francisco police complained that, “Many homosexuals, particularly during Saturday and Sunday mornings, from midnight on cruise the downtown areas in their autos attempting to pick up young servicemen or young civilian men.”<sup>17</sup> Gerald Fabian recalled: “There were some hotels that were very popular [for meeting men] and... there was a cafeteria that was incredibly sleazy on Third Street that was just notorious because it was right, it was right where all the jitneys [cabs] would line up to take sailors back to Hunter’s Point.”<sup>18</sup> Tom Redmon, another long-time San Francisco resident frequented the YMCA along the Embarcadero for similar reasons: “I joined the Golden Gate Y, chiefly to cruise. I wasn’t interested in learning how to

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<sup>16</sup> Allan Berubé, “‘Dignity for All:’ The Role of Homosexuality in the Marine Cooks and Stewards Union (1930s-1950s),” Paper Presented at Reworking American Labor History Race, Gender, and Class Conference, Madison, WI, cited in Rubin, “The Miracle Mile,” 251.

<sup>17</sup> “Police Order Renews Drive on Sex Deviates,” *San Francisco Examiner*, 26 May 1955.

<sup>18</sup> Gerald Fabian, 1995.

swim... But I went down and enjoyed the steam room and what I saw in it and what I got out of it.”<sup>19</sup>

For similar reasons, the commercial district near Powell Street emerged as a secondary, more upscale hub for gay life in the city. Just as the transient nature of work on the waterfront pulled groups of semi-anonymous strangers in and out of San Francisco, the city’s shopping center drew visitors from across the metropolitan region. The coming and going of consumers facilitated the meeting of middle-class gay men and lesbians, and enabled a variety of queer encounters relatively free of official surveillance. Nob Hill resident Steve Tonkovish told an interviewer in the mid-1990s that “Union Square... [in the 1950s] was the one place where people went to get picked up,”<sup>20</sup> and Reba Hudson recalled that The Claridge, a cafe on nearby Maiden Lane, attracted wealthy lesbians, including “all the bisexual married women,” who went there after they shopped downtown.<sup>21</sup>

Few places played a more instrumental role in the development of San Francisco’s queer public life more than bars.<sup>22</sup> The high concentration of single adults living in San Francisco produced demand for a nightlife that catered to both hetero- and homosexual sex. According to the Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control, 792 bars operated in San Francisco in 1964, and, separately, 231 of its restaurants advertised

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<sup>19</sup> Tom Redmon, interview with Len Evans, 17 May 1984, GLBT Historical Society of Northern, Oral History Collections.

<sup>20</sup> Steve Tonkovish, interview with Paul Gabriel, 20 April 1994, GLBT Historical Society of Northern California, Oral History Collection.

<sup>21</sup> Fabian, 1995; Reba Hudson, interview with Jim Breeden, 23 August 1995, GLBT Historical Society, Oral History Collection.

<sup>22</sup> See, for example, Boyd, *Wide Open Town*; John D’Emilio, “Gay Politics, Gay Community: The San Francisco Experience,” in *Making Trouble: Essays on Gay Politics History and the University* (New York: Routledge, 1992).

themselves in the phone book as “cocktail lounges, taverns or nightclubs.”<sup>23</sup> Based on the 1960 census, this number gave the city a ratio of one public drinking place for every 717 people living in San Francisco and one for every 515 residents of legal drinking age. Although San Francisco only had twice the population of Santa Clara County, it had over ten times as many bars as its suburban counterpart.<sup>24</sup>

These bars catered to a variety of groups, but many of them served as gathering places for the city’s disproportionate number of single people, particularly queer inhabitants and the large number of poorer residents who made their homes in low-income hotels. Within the city, the census tracts with the highest percentage of single people also hosted the largest number of public drinking places.<sup>25</sup> A study by the Department of City Planning in 1955 noted that apartments downtown “contain a large number of single-person households- roommates and apartment sharers. The proportion of such single-person households in San Francisco... is much higher than that of the Bay Area as a whole... This large proportion has boosted the number of entertainment, restaurant and hotel facilities in and around the downtown.”<sup>26</sup> Sociologist Sherri Cavan similarly found in the mid-1960s that the census tracts with the highest concentrations of bars in the city also contained higher proportions of unmarried residents, and she noted

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<sup>23</sup> Sherri Cavan, *Liquor License: An Ethnography of Bar Behavior*, (Chicago: Aldine Press, 1966), 23.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid*, 23.

<sup>25</sup> Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control, *Report: Santa Clara County, 1965-66*, Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control, Subject Files, County Activity Reports, California State Archives. Cavan noted that San Francisco had 224 bars in its down area in 1965, with 41 percent of those in the Tenderloin district. Although she did not give the number of bars in North Beach, she singled out the area as a site with a high concentration of bars.

<sup>26</sup> San Francisco Department of City Planning, *Modernizing Downtown San Francisco*, (San Francisco, CA: San Francisco Department of City Planning, 1955), 9.

that several clusters of bars depended upon nearby “apartment houses, resident clubs, and hotels that cater to a relatively permanent clientele.”<sup>27</sup>

Based on her research in the early 1960s, sociologist Nancy Achilles estimated that at least thirty-seven of the city’s bars specifically catered to queer consumers.<sup>28</sup> Although businesses patronized by gay men and lesbians appeared in a variety of neighborhoods, several key clusters of queer liquor-selling establishments emerged in proximity to one another after the repeal of Prohibition along the city’s waterfront, on the base of Telegraph Hill near North Beach and Chinatown, and in the central city Tenderloin district.<sup>29</sup> These businesses frequently drew their customers from a variety of overlapping sources, including locals who lived in San Francisco, tourists from across the country, suburban residents who regularly commuted into the city, and the many sailors, merchant marines, and military personnel who frequently lived temporarily near the waterfront before they went overseas.<sup>30</sup> Long-time San Francisco resident Glen Price, for example, recalled that, “all those merchant seamen, hung out in all the gay bars. They went to all of them. They didn’t miss out on anything.”<sup>31</sup> Speaking about the popular Black Cat drag café, Gerald Fabian later recalled: “Well, it was a bar in which artists hung out... and it was a cross section of people from North Beach and... Longshoremen and workers and dock workers and people from the Embarcadero, because it was in that area where those people often stayed; they stayed in those hotels around there, so it was

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<sup>27</sup> Cavan, *Liquor License*, 28-30.

<sup>28</sup> Achilles, *The Homosexual Bar*, 19.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.* 20. See also Boyd, *Wide Open Town*.

<sup>30</sup> For more on tourism and San Francisco’s queer businesses see Boyd, *Wide Open Town*.

<sup>31</sup> Glen Price, interview, 23 October 1994.

kind of a rough place but it had a kind of working class feeling about it.”<sup>32</sup> Telegraph Hill resident Reba Hudson remembered that, “working-class dykes” and “Peninsula type lesbians” all patronized places in North Beach because “they offered the only real girls’ bars in San Francisco.”<sup>33</sup>

Over the course of the long postwar period these bars helped bring together an increasingly self-aware queer public, and they stood as a crucial counterpart to the new homes, schools, and churches dotting the residential landscapes of the Peninsula and South Bay. During the 1950s and early 60s, gay men, lesbians, bisexual and transgender people forged communities defined by their common transgressive sexual and gender identities. The proliferation of queer drinking establishments after the Second World War gave rise to sense of common purpose among their patrons, and as historian John D’Emilio astutely noted: “Of all the changes set in motion by the war, the spread of the gay bar contained the greatest potential for reshaping the consciousness of homosexuals and lesbians. Alone among the expressions of gay life, the bar fostered an identity that was both public and collective.”<sup>34</sup>

Similar to suburban homes, schools, and churches, the shape and location of these businesses signaled to patrons who belonged there and who did not. Unlike their straight counterparts, however, bars that catered to gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender patrons faced the possibility of legal sanctions or harassment from hostile heterosexual patrons. The managers of these businesses, therefore, entered the real estate market intent upon

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<sup>32</sup> Gerald Fabian, interview with Bill Walker, 20 November 1989, GLBT Historical Society of Northern California, Oral History Collection. See also Boyd, *Wide Open Town*, for more on North Beach’s queer bars.

<sup>33</sup> Reba Hudson, interview with unnamed researcher, n.d. 1981, GLBT Historical Society, Oral History Collection; Hudson, interview, 1995.

<sup>34</sup> John D’Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of a Homosexual Minority in the United States, 1940-1970* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 32.

minimizing their visibility to potentially antagonistic authorities or outsiders. Bar owner Charlotte Coleman recalled choosing a semi-deserted spot for her business on the Embarcadero after a realtor showed her another more prominent commercial space downtown. In a later interview she reflected on the alternative spot by explaining, “here were all these kids with their mothers with their strollers going to the theater, and I thought I can’t open a gay bar on this street (laughs). Because, you know, in those days, like my first one was down in the produce district where nobody was around, you know... so nobody would notice the gay people coming and going too much.”<sup>35</sup> Similarly, sociologists Donald Webster Cory and Sherri Cavin each noted that the gay bars they visited in San Francisco frequently made it difficult for outsiders to find them, with one appearing at the top of a long flight of stairs and another merely presenting an unmarked, windowless façade to the street.<sup>36</sup> Cory observed that the queer businesses he visited relied heavily on personal recommendations, asserting that, “These bars seldom do any advertising. Yet some of them are so crowded, even on week nights [sic] that it is necessary to stand outside in line... Word of mouth is the only means of passing on information about such places. One tells another, who tells another, until the bar acquires a reputation.”<sup>37</sup>

Although the space of San Francisco’s bar culture helped many men and women develop a sense of a growing, common gay or lesbian community, sexual identities

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<sup>35</sup> Charlotte Coleman, Interview with Paul Gabriel, n.d. 1997, GLBT Historical Society of Northern California.

<sup>36</sup> Donald Webster Cory, *The Homosexual and His Society: A View from Within* (New York: Citadel Press, 1963), 106-7.

<sup>37</sup> Cory, *The Homosexual and His Society*, 106. Boyd astutely reads these “spatial defenses” as a form of queer resistance to hostile straight observers. She writes: “Self-policing and spatial defenses became instrumental to the development of gay bars in San Francisco. As the management and staff worked to protect queer public space from police or hostile outsiders, they secured a niche for an evolving queer community.” Boyd, *Wide Open Town*, 127.



remained fluid for many other patrons. Unlike a home mortgage, the purchase of a drink in a nightclub required no paperwork or serious financial investment on the part of the person buying it. Furthermore, unlike membership in a church or school group, people in a bar did not require their fellow patrons to give their names or check to see if they gave false ones. These businesses helped create commercial counter-publics that sat in relation to the spaces that brought together straight people in other parts of the city and out in the suburbs. They both gave some people solid senses of sexual solidarity with their fellow bar-goers, and allowed other anonymous visitors to come and go as they pleased. This fluidity offered patrons the possibility of straddling the sexual line between queer and straight identities. Bar-goers could drink or sleep with openly gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender people, but they could also live married lives in the suburbs. They could define themselves as “gay” or as “homosexuals,” or they could ignore the categories altogether.

Furthermore, bar life blended with the more fluid sexual publics that flourished in the city’s streets, parks, and waterfront. For people unable to afford going to a bar or too young to buy a drink, these spaces offered unique sites for socializing and sex. In the 1950s, working-class and poor residents in San Francisco used the streets, parks and waterfront for both heterosexual and homosexual pick-ups, and the very openness of these venues allowed a mixed class cross-section of men to seek queer sex without requiring them to define themselves uniquely as “gay” or “bisexual.” Although city streets and parks exposed would-be sexual partners to potential surveillance from the police or antagonistic onlookers, they also represented one of the few spaces that allowed the sexual encounters between people of different classes, ages, and races.

## **Public Outrage and the Urban Crisis**

Although specific individuals sometimes had the freedom to engage in gay sex in one place and live a straight life in another, many San Francisco residents expressed deep outrage over the growing visibility of queer life in the city. In many ways, these concerns represented extensions of the sex panic that broke out among parents in the late 1940s. By the mid-1950s, the anxiety about children and queer sex unfolded in a metropolis with rapidly changing demographics. Many San Franciscans expressed an implicit awareness that queer businesses, bars, or sex publics flourished in their city, but not in the surrounding suburbs. Moreover, they understood that the central city disproportionately took up a larger share of the metropolis' poor, elderly, sick, and unemployed residents, and that people of color made up a significant number of the city's newest residents.

These underlying demographic shifts and the subsequent increase in both queer visibility and youth misconduct produced two significant reactions from straight San Franciscans in the mid-1950s and early 1960s. Members of the public repeatedly voiced their outrage over the growing visibility of openly queer residents, gay bars, and the city's red light district. Their complaints in local newspapers and to government officials persistently expressed their belief that the unchecked sale of pornography, the unrestricted sale of alcohol to minors, and the presence of openly queer residents in the city threatened to corrupt young people. The seeming boom in teenage misconduct in the 1950s only appeared to confirm the belief among many San Franciscans that pernicious adults, including the owners of gay bars, encouraged juvenile delinquency.

These indignant grassroots protests simultaneously reinforced the concerns of local political and economic elites over the growth of “urban blight,” which they feared deterred outside investment in their district. By the mid-1950s, intra-metropolitan competition, particularly with the communities of the Peninsula and South Bay, augured declining economic fortunes for many of San Francisco’s businesses, and the city’s elected and commercial leadership understood the increased visibility of queer residents as part of a larger deterioration of downtown. Taken together, this call for reform from the grassroots and the elite driven attempt to pull investment back into the city motivated public officials, most notably Mayor George Christopher, to employ public resources to reorder San Francisco’s sexual landscape.

The straight public’s negative reaction to juvenile delinquency and queer visibility in the city rested on two related assumptions. First, many San Franciscans believed that gay men and lesbians either posed direct physical threats to their children or that their unchecked presence in public places fostered an environment in which young people could themselves engage in taboo sexual practices, including- but not limited to- homosexuality. Furthermore, they attributed the rise in both juvenile delinquency and queer visibility to the failure of the institutions they deemed most directly related to the community’s investment in childrearing: the home, church, and school. Second, many straight San Franciscans held a parallel set of spaces and institutions responsible for the apparent upsurge in teenage misconduct and homosexuality. They linked gay bars and public drinking places that sold alcohol to minors with the peer culture of the “street” to explain what they saw as multiple examples of youthful corruption. In all cases the supposedly negative role of “teen gangs,” bartenders, liquor store owners, and narcotics

“peddlers” had supplanted the supposed positive role played by parents, teachers, and religious leaders.

In May 1954, *The San Francisco Chronicle* told its readers that juvenile delinquency in the city had increased “both in volume and degree.” The cause of the upsurge, it reported, came from a rash of “broken homes” characterized by divorce and marital separation in the predominantly black Fillmore neighborhood and largely Latino Mission District.<sup>38</sup> Just a month later, *The Examiner* complained in an editorial of the “unwholesome condition in San Francisco,” and objected to the dangers gay men and lesbians posed to young people. “The condition,” the newspaper exclaimed, “is marked by the increase of homosexuals in the parks, public gathering places and certain taverns in the city. It is a bad situation. It is a situation that has resulted in extortion and black mail. Even worse, these deviates multiply by recruiting teenagers... Now we need action. We have had enough eye shutting.”<sup>39</sup> A letter from a resident of the city’s Tenderloin district in the same year unwittingly echoed the words of James Follin, bluntly telling the governor: “It is not hard to see that the city is dying.”<sup>40</sup>

Few events spurred public outrage more than the 1954 arrest of two teenage girls at Tommy’s Place, a North Beach lesbian bar. The case touched on the overlapping anxieties among many white, straight parents in the city, as the police alleged that homosexual employees sold beer to the minors and introduced them to Jesse Winston, an African American man, who sold them both marijuana and Benzedrine. Local journalists alleged that Winston, Grace Miller and Joyce Van De Meer, the owners of Tommy’s

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<sup>38</sup> “Delinquents in S.F. Still Increasing,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, 23 May 1954.

<sup>39</sup> “Needed: A Cleanup,” editorial, *San Francisco Examiner*, 28 June 1954.

<sup>40</sup> Maud Heady, letter to Governor Goodwin Knight, 27 March 1954, Goodwin Knight Papers, California State Archives, Sacramento, CA.

Place, ran a “vice academy,” corrupting innocent white, teenage girls with drug addiction, alcohol and “sex perversion.”<sup>41</sup> The city’s newspapers followed the prosecution of Winston, Miller, and Van de Meer with great enthusiasm and they avidly portrayed the story as a case of pernicious adults willfully enabling youthful misconduct. The *San Francisco Examiner* played up the class dynamics of the encounter and told its presumably middle-class readers that one of the teenagers who testified about her time at Tommy’s Place wore a “blue sports jacket pulled over her sweater,” and “might have been the girl next door- or your own daughter.”<sup>42</sup>

Although the police failed to convict the bar’s owner for selling alcohol to minors, the case mobilized parents’ groups from all over the city to demand a crackdown on businesses that catered to “sex deviates.” Just a few days after the arrests, San Francisco School Superintendent Harold Clish made an unscheduled speech before the executive board of the city’s Parent-Teacher Associations, pushing the volunteer organization to demand that state authorities revoke the North Beach bar’s liquor license.<sup>43</sup> In the ensuing week the district PTA joined the city’s district attorney and police chief to denounce the role Miller and Van de Meer allegedly played in creating an environment conducive to juvenile delinquency, and in their letter to liquor authorities in Sacramento they declared: “The shocking disclosures of Tommy’s Place where liquor was sold to juveniles and narcotics equipment was found has demonstrated the need for drastic steps to force the suppression of such establishments.”<sup>44</sup> In the subsequent weeks, individual

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<sup>41</sup> For more on the raids at Tommy’s Place see Boyd, *Wide Open Town*.

<sup>42</sup> “Schoolgirl 17, tells of Buying Drugs, Liquor at ‘Thrill Spot,’” *San Francisco Examiner*, 16 December 1954.

<sup>43</sup> “Clish in Surprise Appearance at P-T-A District Meeting: Asks Members to Back Move to Revoke Two Liquor Licenses,” *San Francisco News*, 23 September 1954.

<sup>44</sup> “PTA Letter Demands Revocation of Licenses,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, 30 September 1954.

PTAs from all over San Francisco sent letters to the state government demanding a revocation of the bar's license, and members of the organization sat prominently in the audience as the state asked the two teenage girls to testify about their ability to buy liquor and narcotics in the North Beach lesbian bar.<sup>45</sup> According to one PTA volunteer who sat in on the proceedings: "As a mother, to me the child's story was sickening. To think that a child... could be induced to frequent these kinds of places and find it exciting. I have no daughters, but if this youngster were my child I would just die of shame."<sup>46</sup>

In the years subsequent to the raid on Tommy's Place local newspapers continued to publish the outraged declarations of residents who believed that the growing presence of homosexuals and "juvenile delinquents," in particular, signaled a decline in the city's fortunes. A letter written to the *San Francisco Examiner* in September 1955 proclaimed: "I do not appreciate being stopped on the San Francisco streets by men every time I walk out the door. The solution to this problem is long overdue... This is fast becoming a nuisance to every young man and child alike."<sup>47</sup> A week later, a second newspaper reader applauded his complaint and echoed his call for action: "My husband and I second the motion made in the "Growing Problem" letter in the Mail Box September 6 that the public should start hollering for action on San Francisco's homosexual immigration."<sup>48</sup> Just three months later a mother told the *Examiner* that her "children were not allowed to go into the park" because of the large number of "sex degenerates" there.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> "PTA Fight on Bar", *San Francisco Examiner*, 4 December 1954; "Schoolgirl 17, tells of Buying Drugs, Liquor at 'Thrill Spot,'" *San Francisco Examiner*, 16 December 1954.

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

<sup>47</sup> Letter, *San Francisco Examiner*, 6 September 1955.

<sup>48</sup> Letter, *San Francisco Examiner*, 12 September 1955.

<sup>49</sup> Letter, *San Francisco Examiner*, 26 December 1955.

In 1956 the *San Francisco Examiner* reported that juvenile authorities from around the Bay Area attributed rampant youth crime, in part, to a combination of “family discord,” a “lack of training,” “parental drinking,” and a “lack of spiritual guidance,” and a probation officer admitted to the newspaper that, “The home has lost its grip.”<sup>50</sup> In 1958 a group of mothers from the Visitacion Valley neighborhood demanded that city authorities step up their surveillance of the “queer characters” who regularly “lurked” in McLaren Park, and Police Detective Kevin Conroy told newspaper reporters, “Public parks, especially those near schools, often act as a magnet for ‘queer characters.’”<sup>51</sup> Fearful of an attack on her children, one mother in 1959 suggested that public officials raze the trees and bushes in the city’s parks in order to protect young people. “In cities of this size where all types of people congregate, sex degenerates are more numerous. So some way of protecting our children must be found. Keeping shrubbery at a minimum in itself would not prevent degeneracy but at least it might provide some form of protection.”<sup>52</sup>

These concerns over the threats posed by homosexuals to young people reinforced a related set of complaints about the role underage drinking played in the city’s alleged juvenile delinquency problem. A state report in 1956 alleged that underage alcohol consumption constituted “one of the major roots of delinquency.” A letter to the *San Francisco Examiner* asserted: “I read with interest the article about the liquor board putting a ban on claw machines and other gambling devices... I would suggest a few other bans, such as putting claws in the man behind the bar who serves a minor... I am

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<sup>50</sup> “Delinquent Youth Flout Many Laws,” 2 April 1956.

<sup>51</sup> “Queer Characters Peril Kids in Park,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, 28 March 1958.

<sup>52</sup> Letter, *San Francisco Examiner*, 12 December 1957.

sick of reading about our wayward youth... Let's put the blame where it belongs."<sup>53</sup> In 1958 an outraged woman told the *Examiner's* readers: "Our so-called society allows grown men and women to make fools of themselves by letting them lounge around bars wasting money and time. At the same time these bad characters give a bad example to our teenagers."<sup>54</sup> And in 1962 the San Francisco Grand Jury toured the city's gay bars in the company of law enforcement officials. Their final report that year expressed deep concern about the presence of homosexuals in their municipality, noting with disapproval "the increasing number of places catering to homosexuals in our community."<sup>55</sup>

Although these straight residents believed that life in San Francisco had substantially declined overall, they also repeatedly singled out the stretch of Market Street that passed through the city's Tenderloin District as a particularly egregious eyesore. A police raid on a downtown movie theater in 1955 came after local parents complained of the visibility of teenage prostitution and marijuana use on the boulevard, and called the areas "a breeding place for juvenile crime."<sup>56</sup> One resident told the readers of *The San Francisco Examiner* in 1960: "If San Francisco were the proud, virtuous city it claims to be, then we would have no nudist and immoral moves being shown as a matter of course, especially on Market Street."<sup>57</sup> A fellow reader in 1962 declared: "It is often said that the young are often filled with foolish ideas... We all know just from observation that Market Street is in a bad way in many sections... There is one step we

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<sup>53</sup> Letter, *San Francisco Examiner*, 13 July 1956.

<sup>54</sup> Letter, *San Francisco Examiner*, 17 July 1958.

<sup>55</sup> San Francisco Grand Jury, "Final Report," 31 December 1962; "Homosexual Bars Draw Fire of Grand Jury," *San Francisco Examiner*, 11 January 1963.

<sup>56</sup> "Market Vice Raid; 2 Men 7 Minors Held," *San Francisco Examiner*, 7 September 1955.

<sup>57</sup> Letter, *San Francisco Examiner*, 17 November 1960.



can take to remove the ugliest mar of all. And that is those small Market Street theaters that show immoral pictures as a policy.”<sup>58</sup>

Even as these observers singled out San Francisco’s parks, movie theaters and bars as places that “bred” homosexuality and juvenile delinquency, other residents singled out the institutions they believed had failed to teach young people about responsible behavior. Whereas suburban churches grew in record numbers in the 1950s, many city residents ascribed the changes in urban neighborhoods to the failure of their local religious institutions. “When we put God out of our homes and schools,” asserted one letter in the *San Francisco Examiner* in 1957, “and replace the Bible... with the filth that is being put out in production-line fashion, how can we expect our children to do other than ape their elders?”<sup>59</sup> A month later, another writer contended that juvenile delinquency stemmed from inadequate “love and security,” and that, “The church can provide these things and much more... When children know God, they will find they are never alone.”<sup>60</sup>

Similarly, many San Franciscans found fault with the city’s public education system, with newspaper readers attributing what they saw as an upsurge in juvenile delinquency to the schools’ failure to emphasize “character building” and “respect for human life and property.”<sup>61</sup> In 1958 a judge for the city’s juvenile court told the Board of Supervisors: “The churches and schools must take positive, aggressive action against juvenile delinquency instead of the passive attitude that many now exhibit.” The *San Francisco Examiner*, reported that Judge Cronin, “laid the blame for emotionally

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<sup>58</sup> Letter, *San Francisco Examiner*, 19 November 1962.

<sup>59</sup> Letter, *San Francisco Examiner*, 27 June 1957.

<sup>60</sup> Letter, *San Francisco Examiner*, 9 July 1957.

<sup>61</sup> Letter, *San Francisco Examiner*, 1 December 1958.

disturbed children on the doorsteps ‘of homes that are falling apart from the inside out, and neighborhoods that are breeding criminality at all age levels.’”<sup>62</sup>

For many observers in late 1950s and early 1960s, the visibility of gay men in parks and bars, the apparent rise in “juvenile delinquency,” and theaters that showed “immoral pictures” meant that the city no longer presented a welcoming environment for straight families. San Francisco represented one of the only places on the West Coast to actually lose people in the 1950s, and newspapers from the period repeatedly reported on a yawning “family gap” between city and suburb. As early as 1955 the *San Francisco Examiner* reported with alarm that the city’s marriage rate had dropped to its lowest point since 1941.<sup>63</sup> When census takers at the end of the decade published their report on the divergent population trends within the postwar metropolis, journalists, government officials, and businessmen alike attributed San Francisco’s dip in population to the apparent desire of white middle-class, straight couples to live in the suburbs. In 1960, for example, the public health department reported that every year the city’s hospitals witnesses the births of approximately fifteen thousand babies but that only 40 percent of those children would enroll in the city’s schools five or six years later.<sup>64</sup> “‘Let’s face it,’ said one real estate man in that same year, ‘we are already at the stage where many people don’t think San Francisco is a good place to bring up a family.’”<sup>65</sup>

These persistent expressions of outrage about the state of the city paralleled more elite concerns about the threats queer visibility posed to potential outside investment. As its port gradually declined in importance, and as San Francisco slowly gained in

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<sup>62</sup> “Judge Urges Schools, Churches to Help Fight Juvenile Crime,” *San Francisco Examiner*, 1 December 1958.

<sup>63</sup> “S.F. Marriage Figures Drop,” *San Francisco Examiner*, 4 October 1955.

<sup>64</sup> “SF Housing Problem,” *San Francisco Examiner*, 24 January 1960.

<sup>65</sup> “SF Housing Problem,” *San Francisco Examiner*, 24 January 1960.

significance as a West Coast banking and commercial center, the city's leadership increasingly grew hostile to their home's reputation as a "wide open town." One private consultant, for instance, promised city officials a sunny economic future if they could erase San Francisco's reputation for sleaze: "There was apparently a time when San Francisco was proud of its vice... Now the city has matured, [and] it is rapidly becoming a financial capital and convention city."<sup>66</sup> In 1959 the *Examiner* editorialized that although a high ratio of bars would help San Francisco attract large numbers of tourists and convention-goers, too many liquor-selling establishments could also give the urban center an unsavory reputation. The newspaper conceded that the city deserved to exceed the state standard of one bar for every one thousand residents, but "not the 1,576 bars that it has" now.<sup>67</sup>

The gradual decentralization of Bay Area businesses further compelled the San Francisco's public officials to confront the changing demographics of the city's central business district. In 1956 a group of private urban planners told journalists that the city needed a comprehensive redevelopment plan to remain competitive with its rivals on the Peninsula and in the South Bay, and they called for a long-term strategy to streamline San Francisco's economy. "If this isn't done soon," they warned, "the population will continue to spread out and business will go with it to the suburbs."<sup>68</sup> The pro-business San Francisco Planning and Housing Association also called for a massive urban renewal program, lamenting that in the previous decade, "most growth has taken place in the suburbs." From the heart of San Francisco, they looked longingly at their Peninsula rivals, declaring: "The centers of older cities are being abandoned by people; a substantial

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<sup>66</sup> "Report Urges Shakeup in Vice Units," *San Francisco Examiner*, 17 December 1957.

<sup>67</sup> "Too Many Bars," *San Francisco Examiner*, 14 January 1959.

<sup>68</sup> "S.F. Master Plan or Suburbia," *San Francisco Examiner*, 21 February 1956.

portion of the “shoppers goods” retail business has shifted from the central retail business districts to the suburbs. Industry, too, is on the move seeking the plant and parking space afforded by the suburban areas.”<sup>69</sup>

In a 1957 investigation of the South of Market area, the redevelopment agency remarked that many of the same characteristics that made the neighborhood unattractive to middle-class, straight families, similarly pushed businesses away. “The South of Market,” they remarked, “leaves much to be desired from the point of view of industries that are located there or that under more favorable conditions might be attracted to the area. Narrow alleys, an almost total lack of off-street parking and loading space, the scattering of residential buildings, children playing in the streets, and homeless men stumbling in the gutters, contribute to an industrial environment so poor that many industries have left the city for greener pastures across the Bay or down the Peninsula.”<sup>70</sup> According to wholesaler who owned property South of Market: “The riff-raff winos and bums make the entire area undesirable... We would be better off to have a general office on the Peninsula with perhaps a downtown display and sales office.”<sup>71</sup>

## **Reaction**

Several key theories about the origins of urban blight provided San Francisco’s political leadership with an intellectual foundation from which to approach the crisis. Since the Progressive Era, housing, crime, and poverty experts had proposed several

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<sup>69</sup> San Francisco Planning and Housing Association, *A Report to the Community*, Number One, February 1957.

<sup>70</sup> San Francisco Department of City Planning and the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency, *A Preliminary Plan for a Project in the South of Market Redevelopment Area ‘D’* (San Francisco, CA: The City, 1957).

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

overlapping theories on the relationship between human behavior and the built environment, and their ideas pushed city officials towards using a combination of law enforcement and urban renewal to face the emergency.<sup>72</sup> First, health, planning and law enforcement authorities agreed that the over-concentration of public drinking places or vice-related businesses in the central city aggravated cases of juvenile delinquency and encouraged “sex deviates” to gather in urban neighborhoods. They contended that if any given area had an excess number of bars or nightclubs, the consequent competition between businesses would compel several of them to cater to homosexuals, underage teenagers, or other “deviant” groups. In 1950 the American Public Health Association (APHA) told planning officials across the country that “Where taverns, bars, liquor stores, gambling places, houses of prostitution and other undesirable elements are concentrated and intermixed with residences they present unquestionable moral hazards to adolescents and young people and a disruptive influence on family life.”<sup>73</sup> In 1958 the American Society of Planning Officials issued a special report on “liquor outlets” that warned that, “several kinds of business establishments can be harmful when they are overconcentrated in one section of the city.”<sup>74</sup> And former San Francisco District Attorney and California Attorney General Edmund Brown contended more specifically that an uneven distribution of liquor-selling businesses across cities and neighborhoods created cutthroat competition and compelled many owners to break the law in order to make money. “[The] Over concentration of bars in an area,” he declared in 1954, “makes

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<sup>72</sup> For a history of Progressive Era ideas about poverty and the physical environment see Alice O’Connor, *Social Science, Social Policy and the Poor in Twentieth-Century U.S. History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001).

<sup>73</sup> American Public Health Association, Committee on the Hygiene of Housing, *An Appraisal Method for Measuring the Quality of Housing: A Yardstick for Health Officers, Housing Officials and Planners, Part III, Appraisal of the Neighborhood Environment*, 1950, 8.

<sup>74</sup> American Society of Planning Officials, *Liquor Outlets*, (Chicago: American Society of Planning Officials, 1958).

it difficult for a number of owners to realize a legitimate profit. The marginal operator is often encouraged to engage in illicit activities, such as bookmaking, narcotics, [or] prostitution... Over-issuance and over-concentration of bars have a direct relation to our police, economic, and welfare problems.”<sup>75</sup>

Second, mental health and law enforcement authorities viewed certain forms of social deviance, such as homosexuality and juvenile delinquency, as learned behaviors. They alleged that if these aberrant activities persisted uncontested, they attracted other adherents, and allowed illicit subcultures to flourish in urban areas. They contended that the more visible queer groups became, the more likely that they would find other new adherents to perpetuate them. In a casebook distributed to police officers across the country in the late 1950s criminologist James Melvin Reinhardt alleged that the increasing visibility of gay communities in major cities did not justify a parallel growth in tolerance of them because “the statistical chances that one’s own brother or son may become a homosexual increases with the number of homosexuals in the community. The dangers are further multiplied if, as shown, a considerable portion of homosexuals in any large community are preoccupied with attempts to convert young boys to homosexuality.”<sup>76</sup> Authorities such as Reinhardt worried that gay men might physically harm children and that young people might inadvertently witness queer acts in public places and try to emulate them. In this sense, the city streets and bars appeared as parallel classrooms in the sex education of young people.

Since officials saw homosexuality as a mental disorder, they also believed that it predisposed individuals to commit other deviant acts. Reinhardt noted that, “Perverts

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<sup>75</sup> Edmund Brown, *Report of Attorney General on Liquor Law Enforcement in California*, 1954, 14, California State Library, Sacramento.

<sup>76</sup> James Reinhardt, *Sex Perversions and Sex Crimes* (Springfield, IL: Thomas, 1957), 21.

arrested for sex offenses are sometimes guilty of a variety of other types of crime... This appears true, partly because the perversion tension predisposes the individual to other criminalities, and also because the perversions tend to push the individual into or hold him in 'crime-committing' situations."<sup>77</sup> He added that the regular patrons of queer bars also demonstrated a "pattern of joblessness, shiftless shifting detachments, depression, and deterioration."<sup>78</sup> Since authorities like Reinhardt applied this logic not only to homosexuals but also to an entire host of potential child predators, including queer men, drug "peddlers," and gangs of juvenile delinquents, San Francisco's law enforcement officials concluded that they needed to aggressively police areas in which children might congregate in order to protect them from deviant role models who wish them harm. They relied heavily on undercover police officers and frequently employed the state's sweeping "vagrancy" laws that specifically allowed them to detain "any person who loiters about any school or public place at or near which children attend or normally congregate."<sup>79</sup>

And third, health and planning officials across the country believed that overcrowding in housing and a subsequent lack of privacy contributed substantially to social deviance, particularly juvenile delinquency and sexual misconduct. Middle-class reformers, intent upon explaining what they saw as deviant behavior among the poor, frequently cited the ways that small apartments exposed small children prematurely to adult activities, such as sex, or subjected residents of all ages to the personal lives of their neighbors. This lack of privacy, in their estimation, threatened the "normal" psychological development of young people and left older ones unable to forge healthy

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid. 11.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid. 13.

<sup>79</sup> "S.F. Judge Voids Vagrancy Law," *San Francisco Examiner*, 23 July 1961.

connections with others. In 1950 the APHA noted that, “Crowding in bedrooms makes the sexual life of the parents very apparent to children who have not yet the maturity or capacity to understand this aspect of the living of their parents... Parents are forced to make the sexual function furtive and guarded rather than fully satisfying as more likely would be if completed in the freedom of privacy.”<sup>80</sup> In 1959 urban planning professor Charles Abrams alleged that, “living in a single room deprives the parent of the opportunity for family discipline and drives the child into the street where he seeks his own associations.” Time in “the street” subsequently left children exposed to a variety of negative peer and adult influences, independent of parental control, and Abrams contended that it should come as no surprise that “slums with a “high population density” correlated statistically with “high juvenile delinquency rates,” “low marriage rates” and a “high rate of sex offenses.”<sup>81</sup>

Although these theories traced their origins to the Progressive Era, they found new life amidst the growing urban crisis gripping San Francisco in the mid-1950s. State and local authorities relied heavily on the established literature on blight and sexuality in their attempts to appease public outrage and elite concerns about financial investment downtown. San Francisco Assemblyman Caspar Weinberger led the first official attempt to reform the changing city when he conducted an investigation of California’s liquor licensing laws in 1954. Although the state government launched the inquiry to investigate specific allegations about corruption in Los Angeles and San Diego, Weinberger broadened his committee’s focus to determine if the “over concentration” of

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<sup>80</sup> American Public Health Association, *Planning the Home for Occupancy*, Public Administration Service, 1.

<sup>81</sup> Charles Abrams, “‘J.D.’- Symbol of a Larger Disorder,” *Community Planning Review*, December 1959, 117. See also Anthony Wallace, “Planned Privacy: What’s Its Importance to the Neighborhood,” *Journal of Housing*, Volume 13, January 1956, 13.



bars in urban areas had attracted criminal elements to California's major cities. In its final report, his Subcommittee on Alcoholic Beverage Control reported that, "Too many bars have been licensed in concentrated areas. This adds to the enforcement and policing problem and endangers the public welfare since many bars become resorts for narcotics peddlers, prostitutes and underworld characters."<sup>82</sup> To deal with the crime it associated with public drinking places, Weinberger's subcommittee created a new Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control, with a broad mandate to revoke the liquor licenses of businesses that served as "a resort for narcotics peddlers or addicts, prostitutes, panders or sex deviates."<sup>83</sup>

Although police harassment of gay businesses preceded the raid on Tommy's Place, the letter-writing campaigns of parents' groups after the arrests of Miller, Sullivan, Van de Veer, and Winston, pushed authorities in the newly created Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control to devise new enforcement strategies for deterring the operation of homosexual bars. Since the Second World War, the armed forces had marked businesses frequented by gay men as off-limits to service personnel stationed in San Francisco. In December 1954, in the wake of the backlash over the raid on Tommy's Place, state liquor officers attempted to use the military's prohibitions against certain public drinking places as a justification for revoking the licenses of gay bar owners. Their legal advisors, however, counseled that California's Alcoholic Beverage Control laws bound them to a different standard than the armed forces: "It is generally found that the reasons for Out of Bounds orders [from the military] do not constitute grounds for disciplinary action under the ABC Act, and the military order is given upon opinion

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<sup>82</sup> Subcommittee on Alcoholic Beverage Control, *Alcoholic Beverage Control in California*, Special Report to the California Legislature, 8 February 1954.

<sup>83</sup> "Knight Signs Bill to Fight Vice in Bars," *San Francisco Examiner*, 24 June 1955.

rather than evidence... It is evident that the methods of determining a cause of action employed by the military differ greatly from those of civilian agencies, and the results achieved by those methods do not always coincide.”<sup>84</sup>

In January 1955, representatives of the Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control in San Francisco turned to the city’s police department to build stronger cases against businesses that catered to homosexuals. Concerned that California’s major cities had cultivated too many public-drinking places, the state agency specifically sought to trim the number of bars in urban areas. The legislature’s revisions of the Alcoholic Beverage Control Act gave law enforcement authorities broad powers to revoke the licenses of bar owners, and in the spring of 1955, both state and local law enforcement officials conducted sweeping raids of public drinking places patronized by gay men and lesbians.<sup>85</sup> In March of that year, the authorities in Sacramento appointed Frank Fullenwider, a lawyer who made his career prosecuting organized crime in Los Angeles, liquor director for Northern California. Fullenwider, who lived in the Peninsula suburb of Atherton, pledged to cooperate closely with San Francisco’s police to close bars that catered to “prostitutes or homosexuals,” and enlisted local newspapers to support the state’s efforts. After mass arrests at four gay bars in Oakland, San Francisco and San Jose in June 1955, he issued a news release, telling reporters, “the Accusations cover a wide range of violations of law. However, all of them include allegations of the occurrence on the premises in plain view of the proprietors, their bartenders or employees, and of members of the public, of various lewd and lascivious acts of a

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<sup>84</sup> Don Marshall, letter to E.J. Clark, 13 December 1954, Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control Records, California State Archives, Sacramento, CA.

<sup>85</sup> “New Drive on Vice,” *San Francisco Examiner* 11 May 1955; “Police Order Renews Drive on Sex Deviates,” *San Francisco Examiner*, 26 May 1955; “State Set to Accuse Four Deviates’ Bars,” *San Francisco Examiner*, 8 June 1955; “9 Men Held as Vagrants,” *San Francisco Examiner*, 19 June 1955.

homosexual nature.”<sup>86</sup> In an internal memo to his superiors in Sacramento, Fullenwider declared: “The newspapers were after a story so I got this out. I did it this way so no one could claim an advantage.”<sup>87</sup>

Few changes in administration made a bigger difference than the 1956 election of George Christopher as San Francisco’s mayor. A Republican, prominent businessman, and member of the board of supervisors, Christopher campaigned on a promise to “clean up” the city. In a moment of symbolic confluence, he declared his intention to run for mayor on the same day that the state Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control announced the revocation of the liquor license for Tommy’s Place. Although he and his wife did not have children themselves, Christopher never missed an opportunity to stage publicity shots with young people, and he allegedly hung a picture of orphans above his desk.<sup>88</sup> In December 1955 he promised voters that he would reform the police department, that he would crack down on “vice” in the city, and that “San Francisco [would] remain a closed town.”<sup>89</sup> Just after entering office in February 1956, Christopher reorganized the city’s law enforcement, pushing undercover vice units to conduct independent investigations of organized crime and illegal bars, directing district captains to conduct surveys of conditions in their jurisdictions, and creating an “intelligence unit” that gathered broad information about sex-related businesses and gambling in San Francisco.<sup>90</sup> A few weeks later, he orchestrated a meeting with Fullenwider of the

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<sup>86</sup> Frank Fullenwider, “Statement to the Press,” 9 June 1955, Department of Alcoholic Control Records, California State Archives, Sacramento, CA.

<sup>87</sup> Frank Fullenwider, memo to Russell Munro and Malcolm Harris, 9 June 1955, Department of Alcoholic Control Records, California State Archives, Sacramento, CA.

<sup>88</sup> George Dorsey, *Christopher of San Francisco* (New York: Macmillan, 1962).

<sup>89</sup> “Christopher Reveals Plan to Improve Police,” *San Francisco Examiner*, 23 December 1955.

<sup>90</sup> “Ahern Maps New Shakeup to Fight Vice,” *San Francisco Examiner*, 2 February 1956; “Vice Squad Gets Broad Powers in New Shakeup,” *San Francisco Examiner*, 15 February 1956; “Ahern to Form Own Elite Vice Intelligence Unit,” *San Francisco Examiner*, 21 February 1956.

Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control, requested more law enforcement aid from Sacramento, and pledged even closer cooperation between city police and the liquor agency.<sup>91</sup>

In a strategy that would foreshadow later redevelopment, between 1955 and 1965 city and state officials employed an enforcement strategy that simultaneously sought to thin the number of bars in designated “problem areas” and stepped up police surveillance of public places. In September 1955, San Francisco Police Chief George Healy told *The Examiner* of his intention to block the issuance of any new liquor licenses in the “neon belt of Turk, Mason and Eddy Streets,”<sup>92</sup> and shortly after Christopher’s inauguration in 1956, the Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control singled out the Tenderloin, North Beach- “International Settlement” area, and the South of Market district for special attention.<sup>93</sup> In each of these districts they worked to limit the number of establishments with liquor licenses through the denial of new permits and stringent enforcement of the code violations of those already there. From 1955 through 1957, the ABC reported that it had either suspended or revoked 62 liquor licenses in the Tenderloin District alone.<sup>94</sup> And in 1957, Fullenwider met with San Francisco School District Superintendent Harold Spears and, at the education chief’s request, promised to deny the issuance of a liquor license to any establishment within 200 feet of a school around the city.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> “State, S.F. Police to Join in Crackdown on Bars,” *San Francisco Examiner*, 2 March 1956; “Ahern Tightens Up Liquor Enforcement,” *San Francisco Examiner*, 18 March 1956.

<sup>92</sup> “Healy Moves to Curb Bar Licenses,” *San Francisco Examiner*, 17 September 1955.

<sup>93</sup> “State Maps Drive on Three S.F. Night Life Areas,” *San Francisco Examiner*, 23 February 1956.

<sup>94</sup> Malcolm Harris, letter to William Gilliss, 5 May 1958, Governor Goodwin Knight Records, Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control, California State Archives, Sacramento.

<sup>95</sup> Frank Fullenwider, Letter to Harold Spears, 19 April 1957, Department of Alcoholic Control Records, California State Archives, Sacramento. In a follow-up investigation of its work in 1957, the Weinberger Committee noted: “One of the first tasks the new department undertook was to clean up the alcohol beverage control problem areas that existed in many of the large metropolitan centers. This was accomplished in two ways: first, no licenses were issued... in heavily saturated areas; and second...

Even as the Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control and the Christopher administration tried to limit the number of liquor licenses in parts of the city, they also deployed dozens of out-of-uniform officers after dark to monitor its parks, schools, and bars. Their reliance on undercover investigations allowed them to develop a parasitic relationship with San Francisco's illicit nightlife. Strangers streamed in and out of the city and the police hoped to use the same anonymity that allowed a patron to enter a gay bar or to solicit sex in park relatively safely, to their own advantage. In 1957 a police commissioner told *The San Francisco Examiner*: "In a big city, with a floating population, the police are justified in picking up persons of whom they are suspicious. A policeman has the security of the city in his hands."<sup>96</sup> In 1956 Police Chief Ahern announced that his department would increase its surveillance of parks and playgrounds after dark and that it would break up groups of three or more teenagers who congregated in the street after 8 pm.<sup>97</sup> A year later, the Christopher administration launched "Operation S," an initiative designed to periodically "saturate" high crime areas with plainclothes policemen late at night. Between August and October of that year, police arrested 209 people for behaving "suspiciously," and beginning in 1959, they compiled "interrogation cards" for "suspicious persons" whom they stopped but did not officially arrest.<sup>98</sup>

The undercover detectives who worked on "Operation S" frequently detained residents for transgressive gender or sexual behavior, including a local high school

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disciplinary actions were taken against existing licensees who were in continual violation of the law." California Assembly, Interim Committee on Government Organization, *California's New Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control* (Sacramento: California Assembly, 1957).

<sup>96</sup> "ACLU Clashes with Police on Vagrancy Arrests, 'Waterholes,'" *San Francisco Examiner*, 21 May 1957.

<sup>97</sup> "Ahern Opens War on Armed Teen Hoodlum Gangs," *San Francisco Examiner*, 23 June 1956.

<sup>98</sup> "10 More Arrested in City Cleanup," *San Francisco Examiner*, 3 October 1957.

teacher for having sex in a Golden Gate Park restroom in 1957 and three women college students for wearing slacks in a bar in 1959.<sup>99</sup> When the *Saturday Evening Review* profiled San Francisco's "S Squad" in 1962, its reporter, Dean Jennings, cheerily detailed the arrest of a man in the Tenderloin for wearing women's clothing and noted that the arresting officers complained that, "The town's full of homos lately, most of them from back east."<sup>100</sup> Jennings applauded their efforts because he believed that homosexual or cross-dressing prostitutes enabled other crimes, and he made sure to publish the San Francisco detective's assertion that "These transvestites often make a play for some legitimate guy- a drunk maybe- and the next thing he wakes up in an alley with a bump on his head and his wallet's gone."<sup>101</sup>

Just as they mapped out areas of the city for stepped up licensing enforcement, city officials took note of places that attracted congregations of queer residents and deployed out-of-uniform officers to monitor them. Sociologist Nancy Achilles noted: "Certain areas of the city are known to both the [gay community] and the police as settings for male sexual contacts. Parks, benches, specific street corners and sidewalks, and the Turkish baths are the 'cruising areas,' and the places where the homosexual underworld of the 'hustler' and his client conduct their business."<sup>102</sup> Deputy Police Chief Al Nelder showed each of the plain clothes detectives a map of the city with red dots scattered across it, and he promised the *Saturday Evening Post* that, "these were the

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<sup>99</sup> "Schoolteacher Arrested on Morals Charge," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 30 June 1957; "Police 'Operation S:' Secret Crime Patrol Expands," *San Francisco Examiner*, 14 March 1959. ACLU Clashes with Police on Vagrancy Arrests, 'Waterholes,' *San Francisco Examiner*, 21 May 1957. The teacher subsequently lost his state credentials and his job.

<sup>100</sup> Dean Jennings, "A Night with the S Squad," *Saturday Evening Review*, 21 April 1962, 36.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.* 38.

<sup>102</sup> Achilles, *The Homosexual Bar*.

saturation zones of crime, and tonight, as on many other nights... they would be saturated with these specially trained undercover cops.”<sup>103</sup>

“Operation S” and the larger deployment of undercover officers notably increased police harassment of non-white residents and elicited protests from local civil rights groups. In 1956 a fifteen year old African American boy contended that a policeman beat him “without provocation” for loitering on a playground in the predominantly black Portrero District. In 1958, Otis Rauls, a 38-year old black insurance agent, reported that police beat him after arresting him outside a jazz club early in the morning, and a year later the city’s only African American newspaper stated that officers assaulted another unnamed black man after handcuffing him in front of a group of school children.<sup>104</sup> In 1958, the *San Francisco Chronicle* reported that 55 percent of the 2,500 vagrancy arrests in the city in the previous year involved African Americans. In 1957 the American Civil Liberties Union alleged that the San Francisco Police Department committed “lawless enforcement of the law,” by effectively kidnapping civilians they suspected of drug use or soliciting sex in a public place, fingerprinting them, and then releasing them without a charge.<sup>105</sup> A year later, California’s courts sided with the civil liberties group and ordered the city to revise its treatment of “vagrants,” but the police continued their practices well into the 1960s.<sup>106</sup>

Despite such criticism, the Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control and Christopher administration also relied on the use of undercover police officers in their

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<sup>103</sup> Jennings, “A Night with the S Squad,” 36.

<sup>104</sup> “Police Brutality in San Francisco,” *Sun-Reporter*, 7 June 1958 and “School Children See Police Beat Negro,” *Sun Reporter*, 21 November 1959. Daniel Crowe, *Prophets of Rage*, 84.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>106</sup> “S.F. Vagrancy and Arrest Procedures Due for Overhaul,” *San Francisco Examiner*. See also Jennings, “A Night with the S Squad.”

cases against gay bars. Since 1951, a state court decision based on police harassment of a San Francisco gay bar had limited the ability of law enforcement authorities to raid businesses simply on the presumption that they catered to homosexuals. The judiciary's ruling in the case, *Stoumen v. Reilly*, compelled police to demonstrate that illegal sex acts took place in a bar before they could bring sanctions against its owner. This requirement placed an extra burden on government officials, but it also reinforced the cultural tenet that visible sex acts had the power to corrupt the young.

Amendments made to the Alcoholic Beverage Control Act in 1955 allowed city officials to revoke the licenses of bars that catered to “narcotics peddlers,” “prostitutes,” or “sex deviates,” and in 1957 the state Court of Appeals upheld the right of city officials to limit places that served as “resorts for sex perverts,” even when sex did not actually take place on the premises.<sup>107</sup> The judiciary, however, required police to demonstrate that bar management knowingly allowed “criminal elements” to meet on their premises, and the Christopher Administration and Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control relied almost exclusively on reports from undercover agents to prove this point. Although the California Supreme Court would later rule the state law invalid, and again demanded that police demonstrate that specific illegal sexual activity had taken place in a given bar before revoking its license, the seven years between this reversal and the state's amendment of its liquor laws gave San Francisco officials an opportunity to close businesses they deemed detrimental to the public welfare.<sup>108</sup>

Just as members of the nighttime “Operation S” unit frequently swept through streets and parks out of uniform to try to catch criminals off-guard, the undercover

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<sup>107</sup> “License Ban on Sex Deviate Bars Upheld,” *San Francisco Examiner*, 30 November 1957.

<sup>108</sup> Boyd, *Wide Open Town*, 181-182.



officers who monitored queer public drinking places worked diligently to “blend in” with their environments. In 1961, *The San Francisco Examiner* reported that state and local law enforcement routinely recruited young detectives to perform undercover investigations and noted that older liquor agents instructed “them on what to look for, and how to act and dress while in ‘gay’ bars.”<sup>109</sup> Law enforcement officials similarly demonstrated a familiarity with appropriate sexual conduct in a bar and they sought to use the physical layout of the businesses to their advantage. Although they frequently worked in teams of three, agents for the Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control almost always entered the city’s nightclubs and taverns separately and acted as if they had come alone.<sup>110</sup> Once inside officers almost universally selected seats near the bar, stood in the open area just beyond where drinks were sold, or leaned on jukeboxes near the rear of the building. These choices reflected not only their desire to remain visible to fellow agents but also an understanding that their physical positions broadcast to other patrons their availability for conversation. In his 1960 statement about staking out the Tenderloin’s Silver Dollar Officer Robert Eckstein told the Alcoholic Beverage Control Appeals Board that just before a visibly intoxicated “elderly gentleman” offered him a “French massage all the way down to [his] cock,” he “sat at a bar stool approximately fifteen feet from the entrance.”<sup>111</sup> Investigating the same bar two months later, Officer Donald Cavanagh reported that two men made advances on him after he stood “at the bar rail, which [was] located at the rear of the bar.”<sup>112</sup> And in an account of his undercover

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<sup>109</sup> “Special Cops for ‘Gay’ Bars, *San Francisco Examiner*, 12 October 1961.

<sup>110</sup> See also, for example, the testimony of ABC Agent Ronald Lockyer, who explained that once he entered a bar he “sat at a stool” and then “continued to observe the premises and observe fellow-agents that were in the premises.” Leo Orrin dba The Handlebar, 64.

<sup>111</sup> Robert Thompson dba Silver Dollar, March 24-25, 1960, 25-6, Alcohol Beverage Control Appeals Board Case Files, California State Archives, Sacramento, CA.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.* Robert Thompson dba Silver Dollar, 11.

work in The Handlebar, Officer Jay Caldis reported that after he stood near the jukebox, “a male approached [him] and asked [him] for a cigarette.”<sup>113</sup>

Agents such as Caldis understood that their placement within a bar played an essential role in their ability to solicit conversations with other patrons and to steer the discussion towards sexual topics. In their testimonies before the Appeals Board the undercover police working for the city and Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control undoubtedly told numerous exaggerations or outright lies. Not only did queer patrons and business owner frequently see through officers’ disguises, but also their official accounts of bar behavior frequently sounded unlikely or even completely bizarre. At times, for example, their accounts bordered on the pornographic as officer after officer reported on sexual excesses they alleged the bar’s management should have averted. In their testimonies before the Alcoholic Beverage Control Appeals Board they repeatedly recounted how they solicited detailed and graphic explanations from their fellow bar patrons of the sexual acts they wished to perform. Officer Robert Eckstein contended that when he told a man in the Silver Dollar that, “sex has many meanings,” the customer bluntly replied: “I will kiss you and suck you and I will do the 69 to you.”<sup>114</sup> Similarly, Officer Jay Caldis of the ABC told the appeals board that when he asked a man in the Handelbar to clarify what he meant by the term “make love,” that the other patron “started to rub his hands over [the liquor agent’s] arms and [his] legs and [his] buttocks, and he bent over and kissed [him] on the cheek and on the neck.”<sup>115</sup> And after hearing yet another graphic description of drunken men wantonly asking police officers for sex,

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<sup>113</sup> Leo Orrin dba The Handlebar, 7.

<sup>114</sup> Robert Thompson dba Silver Dollar, 35.

<sup>115</sup> Leo Orrin dba The Handelbar, 8.

one defensive bar owner sarcastically told an ABC agent: “You must have been very popular at that bar.”<sup>116</sup>

These extravagant accounts of the alleged advances made by gay patrons proved central to the cases put forth by the city and the state. Without them, the mayor and ABC could not successfully convince a court to revoke an owner’s license. Although the statements made by officers such as Eckstein or Caldis might suggest that undercover work in San Francisco’s bars offered some of the liquor agents the opportunity to act on some of their own forbidden desires, their testimonies more significantly underscored the crucial role the state played in these encounters. No matter how individual officers may have felt about their specific roles in these stakeouts, the pressure exerted by the Christopher Administration and administrators in Sacramento in essence demanded that officers engage in these erotically charged encounters and worked to bring them into being. Rather than merely repressing certain forms of sexuality, the ABC and police department compelled officers to flirt, solicit sexual advances, and then detail them at great length at legal proceedings. The fact that the department probably exaggerated or fabricated many of these accounts only further implicated state officials in the circulation of erotic discourses that documented and perpetuated the very acts they set out to prosecute. Although lawyers from both sides would litigate disputes over whether or not the actions of law enforcement authorities constituted “entrapment,” public officials relied on the ability of agents, such as Eckstein or Caldis, to navigate the sexual landscape of individual bars and to engage with allegedly queer men long enough to prove their case in court. Without their willingness to solicit the advances of patrons or their readiness to share detailed, exaggerated accounts of those encounters with other

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<sup>116</sup> Robert Thompson dba Silver Dollar, 38.

men, the city and state would have lacked a legal argument to compel the closing of a bar.

The combined use of restrictions on liquor licenses and undercover work proved only marginally effective. In 1959 the *San Francisco Examiner* reported that “Operation S” had effectively lowered the local crime rate, and, a year later, at the end of Christopher’s first term it cheerily observed that at least half of the city’s gay bars faced the threat of losing their licenses.<sup>117</sup> In 1961, in the largest raid of the Christopher era, the police arrested 103 patrons at the Tay-Bush Inn, a public drinking place near the downtown financial district. The scale of these raids, however, failed to limit the number or visibility of the city’s queer commerce. In 1965 San Francisco boasted as many gay bars as it had in 1960. Even though a substantial number of the city’s straight residents resented the presence of their openly queer neighbors, the Christopher administration’s policing strategy proved insufficient to wipe out San Francisco’s gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender-related businesses. Whenever public officials succeeded in closing one bar, another one opened elsewhere in the city, sometimes under the same management. In 1963 a group of gay activists derided the Mayor’s strategy in its monthly magazine, calling the efforts of the ABC and city detectives “a game of musical chairs.”<sup>118</sup>

Several factors ultimately hampered the mayor and his allies from accomplishing their attempted “clean up” of San Francisco. First, civil rights groups, the ACLU, and queer business owners successfully sued the city over its policing strategies. Second, the city’s police department represented one of the most notoriously corrupt outfits in the country. Ironically, the Christopher administration’s desire to rely almost exclusively on

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<sup>117</sup> “S.F. Crime Drops from 1958 Peak,” *San Francisco Examiner*, 18 February 1959; “Half of S. F. Deviate bars Face License Loss,” *San Francisco Examiner*, 29 May 1960.

<sup>118</sup> “Guided Tours of S.F. Gay Bars,” *Mattachine Review*,” February 1963.

undercover work fostered an environment in which individual detectives could easily solicit bribes from bar owners in exchange for protection. Rather than closing the city's queer bars, the strategy effectively helped shield corrupt officers from public oversight. Some evidence even suggests that the Christopher administration initially sought out an alliance with state officials in the mid-1950s as a means of overcoming widespread corruption in the San Francisco Police Department. In 1955, San Francisco Police Chief George Healy told the *Examiner* that although the ABC could always call on his department for additional resources, he "preferred [that] the police not know advance where a raid might be."<sup>119</sup> As early as 1957, *The San Francisco Examiner* reported that law enforcement authorities offered the owner of a gay nightspot in North Beach the opportunity of "fixing" his licensing problems in exchange for payment.

Most notoriously, police corruption significantly embarrassed the Christopher Administration in 1960 when a grand jury indicted seven detectives for extorting bribes from queer business in the Tenderloin and along the Waterfront. The so-called "gayola scandal" that year not only underscored the inability of the Christopher Administration to enforce its crackdown across the city, it also suggested that the very reliance on individual undercover officers to implement that strategy worked against the overall goal of trying to close gay bars. Rather than restricting the licenses of owners who sold to queer patrons the department indirectly empowered its detectives to solicit kickbacks and effectively helped shield queer businesses from prosecution.<sup>120</sup>

Third, and finally, the city's ability to attract tourists hinged, in part, on its reputation as a "wide open town" with liberal attitudes towards sex, alcohol, and drug

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<sup>119</sup> "Joint Liquor Control," *San Francisco Examiner*, 4 June 1955.

<sup>120</sup> For more on the "Gayola" scandal see Boyd, *Wide Open Town*, 207-210.

use. Over the course of the 1950s, San Francisco emerged as a leading commercial center and a popular convention destination for business travelers from across the country. A 1955 study by the Department of City Planning ranked “entertainment, including eating and drinking” second only to finance in economic importance to the city.<sup>121</sup> A study conducted by urban planners at the University of California concluded in 1958 that San Francisco ranked third in the nation in both terms of convention visitors daily per capita spending and the length of their stays.<sup>122</sup> This reliance on out of town visitors for economic growth gave city leaders an incentive to ease off an indefinite crackdown on public drinking places that appealed to travelers with disposable incomes, allowing historian Nan Alamilla Boyd to note: “With business interests cognizant of the benefits of a healthy tourist economy. San Francisco’s tourist industry wrapped a layer of protection around clubs... that obviously catered to a tourist clientele.”<sup>123</sup>

Throughout the 1950s and 1960s San Francisco’s authorities attempted to navigate a narrow path between making the city attractive to vacationing tourists, eager to let loose away from home, and ensuring that large financial firms, such as Wells Fargo, would find it respectable enough for them to host conventions there or to relocate their headquarters along Montgomery Street or the Embarcadero. In order to strike an appropriate balance between the two competing needs public officials often made declarations that conflicted with an inconsistent crackdown on the city’s vice businesses. Police Chief Thomas Cahill, for example, proclaimed: “If somebody says this is a cosmopolitan city, a seaport, a convention city, and it brings visitors here who want an

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<sup>121</sup> San Francisco Department of City Planning, *Modernizing Downtown San Francisco*, , 9.

<sup>122</sup> Carlos Gardona, et al. *Excerpts from the San Francisco Central District Study*, University of California, Berkeley, Fall 1958.

<sup>123</sup> Nan Alamilla Boy, *Wide Open Town*, 81.

open town, I say let such visitors roll in the gutters of their own cities, and not come here.”<sup>124</sup>

Despite stern rhetoric from authorities such as Cahill, the city’s leadership did not seek a return to Prohibition. They understood that a vibrant nightlife constituted one of the principal attractions to outside visitors, and they only sought to curb the growth of liquor-selling establishments or sex-related businesses they believed unfairly burdened the city’s law enforcement. In a speech at a Lions Club dinner, Mayor Christopher argued that he did not intend to close down every bar or tavern but that he needed to demonstrate to outside investors that he could run an “honest city.” According to the *San Francisco Examiner*: “San Francisco’s booming business climate is threatened by people who want to make the city a so-called ‘open town,’ Mayor Christopher charged yesterday. ‘The issue is not an open town versus a closed town,’ the Mayor said, ‘it’s an honest city administration versus a dishonest one.’”<sup>125</sup> If San Francisco’s leadership could not demonstrate an ability to curb the excesses of its vice districts, he contended, corporate executives considering moving their firms to the West Coast or hosting an annual convention would steer clear of it and bring potential jobs and tax revenues elsewhere.

The most significant factor in mitigating the police sweeps lay in the gaping spatial mismatch between city and suburb that concentrated sex districts, gay bars, and, to a large degree, openly queer residents in declining, urban neighborhoods. Despite the hostile rhetoric of the mayor and the police department, the rapid sprawl of the Bay Area had stripped the urban core of many of its middle-class, white straight families. The

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<sup>124</sup> “‘Closed Town’ to Continue, Cahill Says,” *San Francisco Examiner*, 11 October 1958

<sup>125</sup> “‘Open Town Drive’ Cited by Mayor,” *San Francisco Examiner*, 10 June 1959.

ability of newer suburbs to restrict sex and alcohol-related businesses gave entrepreneurs in older urban neighborhoods an incentive to open bars, nightclubs, brothels or pornographic movie theaters that catered to people from the entire metropolis. No purely local strategy, particularly those dependent solely on law enforcement, could reverse a decades-long trend set in motion by the redistribution of resources by the federal government and by suburban zoning. Even public financing for urban renewal could not outweigh the tremendous pull set in motion by FHA and VA programs that pushed development and businesses out of central cities. By the early 1950s, the neighborhoods adjacent to San Francisco's downtown represented one of the few places available to single people, including gay men and lesbians, and no amount of official harassment could change that fact. Every time the city succeeded in closing one bar, another opened to meet the high demand.

The inability of the police to rid the city of "sex deviates" and the businesses that catered to them crept steadily into local politics. Unable to halt the trend, the subject of queer visibility grew increasingly controversial, giving electoral opponents a heated topic with which to accuse one another. When Christopher ran for re-election in 1959 his opponent, tax assessor Russ Wolden, made sexuality an explicit campaign issue and he told a radio program a month before voters cast their ballots: "I say San Francisco is not a closed town. And it is not a clean town! And I charge that conditions involving flagrant moral corruption do exist here which still revolt every decent person."<sup>126</sup> In a follow-up investigation, the sympathetic *San Francisco Progress* appeared to substantiate Wolden's claims by alleging that the city, under the Christopher administration, had become "the national headquarters for sex deviates in the United States." In its front-page article, the

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<sup>126</sup> "Wolden in 'Smear' Campaign," *San Francisco Examiner*, 8 October 1959.



*Progress* declared: “The number of sex deviates in this city has soared by the thousands... while other communities in this area have virtually eliminated them. Under the regime of Christopher, his police commission and police chief, the number of tenderloin bars [sic] and other establishments that cater exclusively to homosexuals also has increased enormously.”<sup>127</sup> In the subsequent weeks, Wolden enlisted parents’ groups to support his campaign, sending direct mailings to PTA members and church groups in the city.<sup>128</sup>

The Mayor’s response that “in a blind drive for office my opponent has degraded our city” demonstrated that hostility to queer residents crossed the political spectrum.<sup>129</sup> Christopher not only termed his opponent’s allegation a “smear,” he launched a competing rumor that Wolden secretly aspired to make San Francisco an “open town” for vice interests with ties to the tourism industry.<sup>130</sup> Meanwhile, the *Progress*’s assertion that Christopher had allowed “sex deviation” to flourish in San Francisco “while other communities in this area have virtually eliminated them” suggested that the apparent differences between city and suburb had spurred pressure on the local government to crack down on visibly queer residents. The “closet” federal housing policies had draped across the postwar metropolis had left small openings in older urban centers, like San Francisco, and the sexual mismatch between fringe and center encouraged organized violence against any perceived threat to white, middle-class children in the city, including gay men and lesbians.

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<sup>127</sup> “Sex Deviates Make S. F. Headquarters,” *San Francisco Progress*, 7-8 October 1959.

<sup>128</sup> “Wolden in ‘Smear’ Campaign,” *San Francisco Examiner*, 8 October 1959.

<sup>129</sup> “‘Plant’ Revealed in Wolden’s Smear Drive,” *San Francisco Examiner*, 9 October 1959.

<sup>130</sup> “Wolden Launches His Campaign for Mayor,” *San Francisco Examiner*, 2 September 1959.

## **Urban Renewal**

Even as city and state officials stepped up their law enforcement efforts in San Francisco's bars, parks, and streets, the Christopher administration set in motion a massive redevelopment program. The projects involved several mutually reinforcing agendas. Christopher and his allies first worked to make the city more economically competitive in the newly suburbanized metropolis. This meant the construction of an elaborate transportation system with freeways and rapid transit that connected outlying communities to San Francisco's downtown, and the expansion of the city's commercial center to make room for financial firms eager to establish headquarters on the West Coast. In order to clear space for this new infrastructure, urban renewal officials also systematically uprooted the low-income hotels and tenements that housed much of the city's poor. They targeted these areas because they both hoped to repopulate parts of San Francisco with white, middle-class straight couples, and because they believed that older housing, with insufficient provisions for privacy, aggravated social disorder in the city. Eager to make room for the massive freeways and corporate headquarters that would define San Francisco's postindustrial economy, city leaders made decisions about where to locate redevelopment projects based on their desire to eradicate "blighted" neighborhoods and "seedy" hotels.

Although historians would remember Christopher as the "urban renewal mayor," the massive construction projects undertaken during his administration built upon plans drafted during his tenure as a city supervisor and extended into the terms of his successors Jack Shelley and Joseph Alioto in the late 1960s. As early as the late 1940s, commercial and public officials singled out the lack of privacy available to residents in

the predominantly black Western Addition District around Fillmore Street as a justification for tearing much of it down. In 1948 the San Francisco Planning and Housing Association, a group composed of leading business leaders, looked at the neighborhood and bluntly noted: “There isn’t much privacy in the Geary-Fillmore District.” Decrying its crowded apartments, they borrowed from postwar psychologists to conclude that a lack of privacy compelled children to learn about sex in the street: “It is only a step from home in the Geary-Fillmore,” they observed, “to a store, a market, a bar, a gambling joint or a house of prostitution.”<sup>131</sup> A few years later, the San Francisco Department of City Planning expressed concern that more than half the apartments in the district lacked private baths or toilets.<sup>132</sup>

In their studies of the Western Addition district, San Francisco’s planners pledged to remake the district so that it would provide more privacy to residents and free children from the allegedly negative influences of nearby bars. In a 1947 study of the area public officials promised to build a neighborhood in which “no families live in murky cubicles, damp basements [or] rooms that are hardly more than closets... Gone are the disreputable joints... the ‘hotels,’ and pool hall hangouts known to the police.”<sup>133</sup> In the new neighborhood, planners followed the same community models employed by their suburban counterparts, and they pledged to steer motorists away from the heart of residential areas and to provide more schools and better educational facilities. In their study of the area in 1952 they asserted that, “Exclusion of through-traffic from each

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<sup>131</sup> San Francisco Planning and Housing Association, *Blight and Taxes* (San Francisco, 1947), 7.

<sup>132</sup> San Francisco Department of City Planning and San Francisco Redevelopment Agency, *Replanning the Geary Area in the Western Addition* (San Francisco: San Francisco Department of City Planning, 1952), A-4.

<sup>133</sup> Mel Scott, *New City: San Francisco Redeveloped* (San Francisco, CA: San Francisco Department of City Planning, 1947).

neighborhood is an important objective,” and that “neighborhood boundaries [should] consist of major streets.”<sup>134</sup> After uprooting the potentially dangerous pool halls, hotels, and bars in the area, the planning commission committed to placing schools and parks at the center of the new Western Addition, contending that, “Each ‘community...’ [should be] composed of residential neighborhoods grouped around major service facilities such as a high school, junior high, community playfield, large park and major shopping center.”<sup>135</sup>

Even as these officials sought to replace the “blighted” structures in the Western Addition with ones they deemed more conducive to straight family life, they also aspired to build an entirely new neighborhood to help the city compete for straight, white, middle-class residents with its suburban neighbors. In their initial plans for the project on hilly ground in the center of San Francisco, city planners noted: “By bringing Diamond Heights into a well-conceived use, San Francisco would gain more housing... It would mean more people who work in San Francisco could live here too, instead of in one of the mushrooming suburbs.”<sup>136</sup> Just a year later, the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency (SFRA) argued that construction in Diamond Heights could play an ameliorative role in housing people displaced from the demolition of buildings in the Western Addition. Although their primary interest lay in providing homes to “middle-income families,” they believed that the addition of hundreds of new units to the city’s dwindling residential supply would stave off another housing crisis. Their plan called for shifting people within the city, allowing residents of means to move up to Diamond Heights which

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<sup>134</sup> San Francisco Department of City Planning and Redevelopment Agency, *Replanning the Geary Area in the Western Addition*, B-4.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

<sup>136</sup> San Francisco Department of City Planning and Redevelopment Agency, *A Report to the Board of Supervisors: Redevelopment in Diamond Heights* (San Francisco, CA, March 1950).

would in turn free up space in older neighborhoods for poor people displaced by other renewal projects. In 1951 the SFRA promised to begin new construction in the neighborhood “in sufficient time to make housing available, both directly and indirectly, for many families displaced by slum clearance in the proposed Western Addition project.”<sup>137</sup>

Although San Francisco evaluated these renewal proposals in the early 1950s, both the attempt to clear the Western Addition and the endeavor to build a neighborhood for “middle income families” in Diamond Heights languished in the early part of the decade. Lax leadership, a lack of funding, and litigation over property rights in the second project combined to slow the city’s initial urban renewal efforts. Two significant events related to concerns about the family revitalized the prospects for redevelopment in the city. First, in order to address what it saw as the root causes of “social maladjustment” the federal government passed a greatly expanded version of its postwar housing act in 1954. In the same year that the California Legislature created the Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control to police public drinking places, Congress passed a law that enabled local municipalities to use federal financing to redevelop, rehabilitate, or conserve neighborhoods in need on behalf of straight families. The new Housing Act explicitly sought to address the problems of juvenile delinquency and sexual deviancy by requiring cities to develop a “workable program” to replace slums and blight “with well-organized residential neighborhoods of decent homes and suitable living environment for adequate family life.”<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> San Francisco Department of City Planning and Redevelopment Agency, *Diamond Heights: A Report on the Tentative Redevelopment Plan* (San Francisco, CA: November 1951), 42.

<sup>138</sup> Housing and Home Finance Agency, *Urban Renewal Provisions of the Housing Act of 1949, As Amended Through August 1955 and Excerpts from Other Federal Laws Authorizing Federal Assistance to*

In the immediate aftermath of public outrage over the raids at Tommy's Place in 1955, Follin of the Housing and Home Finance Agency addressed San Francisco's economic elites at the city's Commonwealth Club, and pushed them to begin "restoring blighted areas to sound physical condition, thus eliminating unfit dwelling accommodations, enhancing property values, reducing the cost of municipal services, and improving the living standards of people." Follin further contended that if San Francisco used federal financing to remake its neighborhoods, they would create "a better living environment for American families and a higher quality of American citizenship."<sup>139</sup> The *New York Times* in 1957 reported that federal officials like Follin were criss-crossing the country to bolster support for redevelopment project because "As the movement to the suburbs gained, city neighborhoods faded. Now the cities are in a desperate race with the slums."<sup>140</sup>

The election of Mayor Christopher a year later provided the second crucial catalyst for urban renewal in San Francisco, and throughout his eight years in office, he worked diligently to expand the downtown business district and to induce white straight couples with children to relocate to the city. In 1957, Christopher sought to annex the northern portion of San Mateo County, asserting that, "an artificial line of demarcation has long maintained a barrier between our economic, social, and cultural activities," but relinquished the plan after legal advisors explained that such a move would require a general referendum on the issue from all of the residents living on the Peninsula.<sup>141</sup> In

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*Slum Clearance and Urban Redevelopment and Urban Renewal* (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Administrator, Housing and Home Finance Agency, 1955).

<sup>139</sup> James Follin, "Community Planning and Urban Renewal," March 1955.

<sup>140</sup> "Cities and Suburbs in Race Against Spreading Slums," *New York Times*, 31 January 1957.

<sup>141</sup> "Mayor Gets Answer on Annexation," unknown newspaper, 15 October 1960, clippings file, George Christopher Papers, San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library. See also "Christopher Woos Peninsula," *San Francisco Examiner*, 27 July 1960.

the wake of the census' official conclusion that San Francisco had lost over thirty thousand residents since 1950 the mayor revived plans for joining the two counties, and he told the city's Junior Chamber of Commerce in 1960 that he would continue to "campaign for that happy marriage" because he believed that "'suburban slums, far worse than our city slums' would soon appear 'in certain San Mateo areas,' and they could best be avoided through joint planning."<sup>142</sup>

Christopher's eagerness to use federally sponsored urban renewal projects to remake the city mirrored his use of the police to try to close queer bars. In 1958, he notably selected Assemblyman Caspar Weinberger, former chair of the legislative committee that created the Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control, to head San Francisco's urban renewal agency.<sup>143</sup> Although the legislator eventually refused the position due to a financial conflict of interest, Weinberger later joined the executive board of SPUR, the citizens' advisory group on urban renewal, and told local newspapers "that many suburban areas have been designed for modern living, and said that 'similar modernization is something cities have to have.'"<sup>144</sup> When Christopher took office for his second term in 1959, he paired urban renewal with crime abatement by promising the public, "We have rehabilitated not only buildings and areas in San Francisco- we have rehabilitated men and women.... That's how Skid Row was cleaned up and we're going to continue our same policy."<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> "Christopher Woos Peninsula," *San Francisco Examiner*, 22 July 1960.

<sup>143</sup> "Alioto Job to Weinberger," *San Francisco Examiner*, 8 August 1958.

<sup>144</sup> "Slum Clearance Key to City's Problems, Says Weinberger," *San Francisco Examiner*, 11 August 1958; Chester Hartman, *City for Sale: The Transformation of San Francisco* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2002), 17.

<sup>145</sup> "Redevelopment Tops Mayor's Project List," *San Francisco Examiner*, 8 November 1959.

Christopher's decision to appoint Justin Herman, a former head of the San Francisco Office of the Housing and Home Financing Agency, to lead the Redevelopment Agency in Weinberger's place proved a crucial turning point for urban renewal in the city. Under Herman's leadership the city revived its plans to demolish portions of the Western Addition and to build a suburban-style neighborhood in Diamond Heights. Herman, in close consultation with the Mayor's office and downtown business leaders, launched three new redevelopment projects on the Waterfront, South of Market, and in the Hunters Point areas. Although term limits and ambitions for higher office forced Christopher out of City Hall in 1964, many of the plans formulated during his mayoralty came to fruition under Herman by the end of the decade. During the latter's tenure as head of the Redevelopment Agency, the amount of office space in downtown San Francisco doubled, and the number of low-income hotels in the city plummeted. According to urban planner and critic Chester Hartman, "Under Justin Herman's leadership the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency became a powerful and aggressive army out to capture as much downtown land as it could: not only the Golden Gateway and the South of Market, but Chinatown, the Tenderloin, and the Port. Under the rubric of 'slum clearance' and 'blight removal,' the Agency turned to systematically sweeping out the poor, with the full backing of the city's power elite."<sup>146</sup>

The push for urban renewal under Christopher and Herman represented not only a class-based move to free up space for corporate growth at the expense of low-income residents but also an attempt to remake the sexual make-up of the city. Officials at the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency regarded the substantial number of "single" people in the city largely as a transient group without roots in their neighborhoods. In

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<sup>146</sup> Hartman, *City for Sale*, 19.



their deliberations about where to direct resources for urban renewal, San Francisco's authorities almost always targeted areas frequented by large numbers of unmarried adults. In their preliminary evaluations of the Western Addition district, the Redevelopment Agency declared that 2,100 "single people" and 2,680 "families" lived in the neighborhood. In 1952 the renewal authority noted that 30 percent of the families in the Western Addition moved every year, and it helped justify rebuilding it "to the fact that the area serves to a great degree as a reception area for many residents when they first come to San Francisco until better housing can be located."<sup>147</sup>

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, the SFRA focused its attention on areas with large numbers of "single people" for two significant reasons. First, federal officials applied different standards for the relocation of people displaced by urban renewal projects based upon their family status. Like their local counterparts across the country, the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency promised to offer financial assistance to residents pushed out by highway, commercial, or residential construction in exchange for the loans and grants it received from the national government. Federal guidelines required that local redevelopment agencies offer "families" forced out of their homes by renewal projects \$200 to assist with moving costs, but they did not require any payments for "single people" similarly displaced. Since the government defined "families" as "two or more persons living together related by blood, marriage, or adoption" the federal government gave financial incentives to city redevelopment authorities to encourage the removal of unmarried people without children.<sup>148</sup> These guidelines further allowed the

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<sup>147</sup> San Francisco Redevelopment Agency, *The Effect of Redevelopment on Residents and Property Owners in Western Addition Project Area Number One* (San Francisco, CA: 1952), 4.

<sup>148</sup> No author, "Skid Row Gives Renewalists Rough, Tough Relocation Problems," *Journal of Housing*, August-September 1961, 327. For a definition of "family" see Housing and Home Finance Agency, Urban

redevelopment agency to deny responsibility for relocating “transient” residents, or people who had not lived at their address for longer than ninety days.<sup>149</sup>

Second, in the wake of the 1960 census, the Christopher administration hired an outside private consultant to evaluate what the city could do to bolster its declining population, and the advisor, Arthur Little, Inc. contended that sexuality loomed large in San Francisco’s looming urban crisis. “The family,” the planning firm wrote, “felt by most to be the cornerstone of society is leaving San Francisco, to be replaced by unrelated individuals- the widow or widower, the bachelor (temporary as well as perennial), the working girl.”<sup>150</sup> The consultant’s study noted that already two out of five San Franciscans were single, and that the percentage of unmarried people in the urban core would grow in the coming decade. Moreover, Arthur Little, Inc. warned the Christopher administration that these shifts in family patterns paralleled a sharp shift in the racial and age demographics of the city, with “non-white families” comprising one-fifth of the population in 1960 and the number of people over 65 growing by a quarter in the previous ten years.<sup>151</sup> These changes augured serious problems for the urban core, the firm warned, because “in contrast to the families they replace, the newcomers are more likely to rent than buy [a home]; less able to have a permanent interest in the maintenance of the City’s values... more likely to require City services, such as health and welfare benefits; and generally of lower incomes.”<sup>152</sup>

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Renewal Administration, *Local Plans for Residential Redevelopment and Family Relocation: Continental United States Through December 1954* (Washington, D.C.: Housing and Home Finance Agency, 1954).

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

<sup>150</sup> Arthur D. Little, Inc. *A Progress Report to the Department of City Planning of the City and County of San Francisco*, August 1963, 3, George Christopher Papers.

<sup>151</sup> Arthur D. Little, Inc. *A Progress Report*, 4.

<sup>152</sup> Arthur Little, Inc. *A Progress Report*, 4.

A year later Arthur Little, Inc. counseled the Mayor and Board of Supervisors that the city should work to maintain its current level of “middle-income families with children” in order to avoid further decay of its central core and that urban renewal constituted one of the most effective means of achieving that goal.<sup>153</sup> Therefore, even as the Christopher administration deployed the police to sweep San Francisco’s parks, streets, and bars, the SFRA looked to modernize the city’s economy by pushing construction projects to neighborhoods populated by large numbers of single people of all races and both straight and queer communities of color. In 1958 the redevelopment agency began buying up residential tracts in the predominantly black Western Addition neighborhood, and a year later, when the agency could not negotiate prices with owners fast enough, it began using its powers of eminent domain to seize properties in the district.<sup>154</sup> In 1961, Palo Alto based Eichler Homes broke ground on 122 apartments in the area, and two years later the *San Francisco Examiner* reported that Herman and his allies had cleared close to seven hundred buildings there.<sup>155</sup> By the end of 1960 these construction projects had displaced over four thousand people, 20 percent of which were “single” and almost 70 percent of which were “non-white.”<sup>156</sup>

A second, larger renewal initiative in the area in 1965 pushed out another 13,500 people, including many of those evicted by the first round of demolition in 1959. A study undertaken by the SFRA before the start of this project noted that its new target area included 63 percent of the African Americans living in the district and 76 percent of the

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<sup>153</sup> Arthur D. Little, Inc. *Community Renewal Programming: A San Francisco Case Study* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1965), 55.

<sup>154</sup> San Francisco Redevelopment Agency, *Progress Report to Mayor George Christopher*, 5.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.* 6 ; “What are Needs of S.F. Housing?” *San Francisco Examiner*, 14 April 1963.

<sup>156</sup> Bay Area Council, Bay Area Real Estate Research Committee, *Bay Area Real Estate Report*, 1960, 84, Institute of Governmental Studies.

Asian Americans. These groups made up the vast majority of the “families” evicted from the redevelopment zone, and the study noted that the much smaller number of white residents in the neighborhood were overwhelmingly unmarried and elderly. According to the report 86 percent of the whites in the second redevelopment area were “single,” and at least a third of them were over the age of sixty.<sup>157</sup>

In the same period, most of San Francisco’s elites understood that the city’s days as a shipping hub had ended, and they paired plans to expand the central business district with redevelopment of the port facilities along the Embarcadero. In 1959 the *Examiner* reported that demand for space downtown had put an end to the infamous “Barbary Coast” red light district along Pacific Avenue between Montgomery and Kearny streets, as private developers bought up the bars and strip clubs in “San Francisco’s notorious sinkhole” and replaced them with showrooms for expensive household goods.<sup>158</sup> In that same year, Christopher and the Port Authority announced a dramatic renovation of the city’s waterfront north of Market Street. As the harbor declined as a transportation hub, the mayor and his allies turned the area over to real estate developers in the 1960s who built “a unified complex of hotels, convention halls, sidewalk cafes, office buildings and other nonmaritime facilities,” along the Embarcadero from the Ferry Building to the Aquatic Park in the Marina District.<sup>159</sup>

Even as private firms bought up real estate near the waterfront, the city seized land at the base of Market Street in order to put-together its “Golden Gateway” redevelopment project. Under Herman’s direction the SFRA hoped to ease the eastward

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<sup>157</sup> The Project Service Company, Prepared for the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency, *The Population of Western Addition 2, San Francisco, California: A Sample Survey of the Residents and Their Relocation Needs*, April 1962.

<sup>158</sup> “Fabulous Barbary Coast Gives Way to Redevelopment,” *San Francisco Examiner*, 18 January 1959.

<sup>159</sup> “Spectacular Plan for New ‘City’ on Waterfront,” *San Francisco Examiner*, 3 February 1960.

expansion of the Montgomery Street central business district, and it planned to pair the Embarcadero Center, a combined office and hotel complex, with new luxury apartments on the edge of the Bay. The agency began acquiring sites in the area at the end of 1959 and, in the following year, it invited proposals from architectural firms for skyscrapers in the redevelopment site. By 1963 the *Examiner* reported that the SFRA had cleared ninety-four buildings in the Golden Gateway Redevelopment Area. These construction projects displaced approximately 200 single men but only forced out two dozen “families” from the waterfront district.<sup>160</sup>

A few years later the redevelopment agency continued its push to expand the central business district south of Market Street. As early as 1958, with city approval, private developers began purchasing old hotels in the area, evicting their tenants and putting up new office buildings in their place.<sup>161</sup> These buildings offered the largest source of housing for low-income inhabitants and unmarried residents. In 1967, the SFRA greatly magnified the downtown redevelopment project it began with the Golden Gateway Redevelopment Project. Its plans for the South of Market area encompassed an 87-acre parcel of land between Market and Folsom Streets, and they anchored scores of new office buildings with a convention center and hotel complex.

Although the agency chose the site for its proximity to the Montgomery Street central business district, it also designated the area for demolition in order to displace the high number of poor, single men who lived there. As one Del Monte executive later told the *San Francisco Examiner*: “You certainly can’t expect us to put up a 50 million dollar building in an area where dirty old men will be going around exposing themselves to our

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<sup>160</sup> San Francisco Department of City Planning, *Issues in Housing, Housing Report II*, 1969 in Hartman, *City for Sale*, 63.

<sup>161</sup> Hartman, *City for Sale*, 66.

secretaries.”<sup>162</sup> A study of the South of Market Area by the SFRA in the mid-1960s concluded that 94 percent of the residents in the area were unmarried, and that 57 of them made less than \$5,000 a year. Although the same study concluded that over 90 percent of the people living in the overall neighborhood were white, the smaller section marked for demolition by the SFRA included a majority of the area’s residents of color.<sup>163</sup>

At each step, the SFRA not only targeted areas populated by large numbers of unmarried residents and non-whites, it also specifically tore down large numbers of the city’s low-income hotels. Public officials had discouraged the construction of new residential hotels since the Second World War, and by the late 1950s they turned their attention to eradicating the longstanding homes of some of San Francisco’s poorest residents, allowing historian Paul Groth to call the city’s renewal decade a long period of “hotel removal.”<sup>164</sup> The eradication of these residential structures accompanied the larger state-sponsored project to eliminate spaces such as queer bars that the authorities believed fostered social disorder. As early as 1956 officials at the SFRA called for the power to “acquire and raze, one at a time, the ancient hotels and flophouses” in the South of Market district.<sup>165</sup> A few years later, John Hurtin of SPUR advocated redeveloping the same area out of consideration for the suburban white collar workers who passed through it on their way to work downtown, and he told newspaper reporters: “Some attention must be given to the commuters who use Third Street to get to the [train] depot. Why should they walk past a nearly continuous line of saloons, dilapidated hotels and marginal stores to be panhandled and accosted by prostitutes?” Although planning documents

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<sup>162</sup> Ibid. 54.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid. 60.

<sup>164</sup> Groth, *Living Downtown*, 277.

<sup>165</sup> “Pockets of Blight,” editorial, *San Francisco Examiner*, 13 November 1956.

from the period frequently cited the city's open air produce market as the primary victim of the Golden Gateway Redevelopment Project, the expansion of the central business district razed several residential hotels, including the "Terminal Hotel" on the Embarcadero, the "Bay Hotel" on Sacramento Street, and the "Portuguese Hotel" on Clay Street. The waterfront redevelopment project directly forced out at least one gay bar, and, by remaking the waterfront, it had helped deprive the remaining queer businesses in North Beach a substantial portion of their customer base.<sup>166</sup>

Even as the city cleared buildings it deemed "blighted," the redevelopment agency worked diligently to put together houses and apartments that it believed would appeal to white, middle-class straight families. In 1960 *The Examiner* promised that the SFRA in the Western Addition had "laid down conditions assuring that the apartments will appeal to families with children. There'll be good-sized rooms, play areas, landscaping, open spaces and similar amenities."<sup>167</sup> Most notably, the development of Diamond Heights unfolded rapidly in the early 1960s. Having successfully won the lawsuits that had mired its construction plans since the mid-1950s, the SFRA began selling lots for the building of single-family homes, apartments, and townhouses in 1961. In that same year the agency awarded the Peninsula-based firm Eichler homes the winning bid for 216 sites in Diamond Heights, and it auctioned off three spaces for churches in the hilly neighborhood.<sup>168</sup>

The attention the press paid to development in Diamond Heights belied an emerging housing crisis. The destruction of the city's low-cost residential hotels, in particular, left San Francisco's poorest residents with a dwindling number of places to

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<sup>166</sup> Charlotte Coleman, interview, 1997.

<sup>167</sup> "Housing Promise," editorial, *San Francisco Examiner*, 22 March 1960.

<sup>168</sup> "Eichler Big Diamond Hts. Buyer," *San Francisco Examiner*, 25 April 1961.

live. Since the renewal projects in the Western Addition, on the Embarcadero, and south of Market disproportionately displaced African American residents and people living in a variety of queer domestic situations, they unleashed large groups of people screened out of most residential areas into a retracting housing market. A review of the SFRA's work in the Western Addition District by the federal Comptroller General's Office (CGO) in 1959 concluded that the local redevelopment agency had failed to assist families displaced by redevelopment to find inadequate housing. CGO officials reported that the SFRA had given inaccurate statements about the relocations of people in the Western Addition, and it contended that substantial families pushed out of the area had relocated into nearby, substandard buildings. Although Justin Herman's agency reported successfully assisting almost all of the people forced out by their construction projects, the HHFA alleged that the SFRA had failed to "properly supervise and discharge its relocation functions."<sup>169</sup>

The investigation by the CGO failed to disclose the disproportionate burden redevelopment placed on residents of color and people living outside of straight marriage. This omission by the reviewing agency reflected, in part, the federal government's own skewed relocation policies that required local authorities to offer displaced "families" money for the costs of moving, but not "single" people. Moreover, the Comptroller General Office's report presented a "race neutral" depiction of events in the Western Addition and failed to note that the urban renewal project there uprooted large numbers of African Americans. A study conducted a year later by the Bay Area Council, a regional chamber of commerce, concluded that non-white residents pushed out of the

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<sup>169</sup> U.S. Comptroller General, *Review of Slum Clearance and Urban Renewal Activities of the San Francisco Regional Office, Housing and Home Finance Agency, October 1959* (Washington, D.C.: Comptroller General, 1960), 37-42.



district frequently relocated to areas very close to their old homes, with at least half of them staying within the Western Addition. The subsequent increased concentration of black residents and unmarried white adults within one of the few neighborhoods in which they could find housing produced a dramatic upsurge in their average rents. The Bay Area Council noted that over 80 percent of all people pushed out by redevelopment in the Western Addition paid more for their apartments following their displacement, and that unmarried people, particularly the elderly, disproportionately bore the brunt of these increases. The group's study concluded that whereas "single" people in the district had paid approximately nineteen percent of their incomes for rent before renewal, they paid on average over half of their yearly pay for shelter after their relocation.<sup>170</sup>

In the next few years, the housing crisis spurred harsh criticism of the SFRA from civil rights groups who attempted to fight redevelopment in the courts. In 1963, the Council for Civic released a public statement condemning Herman and his colleagues for steadily eliminating the city's dwindling supply of low-cost housing. In a public statement entitled *Among these Rights*, the group told journalists that "the amount of available low-moderate cost rental housing has been reduced, not only by redevelopment clearance, but by code enforcement, highway construction and private conversion into commercial use." The Council charged that this shift accompanied the almost exclusive construction of new housing for white residents, such as those in Diamond Heights, and it contended that all the "housing replacements have largely been beyond the financial reach of the great majority of non-white San Franciscans. As a result, neighborhoods that

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<sup>170</sup> Bay Area Council: Bay Area Real Estate Research Committee, *Bay Area Real Estate Report*, San Francisco, 1960, 82. The report also noted that the sharpest increase in rents actually came for white residents displaced from the Western Addition since black residents already paid disproportionately higher rents than whites in the city.

were once substantially integrated are being re-occupied by whites; and non-whites who are displaced, particularly Negroes, have tended to concentrate within a few neighborhoods.”<sup>171</sup> In that same year the Congress for Racial Equality led a civil rights coalition in the Western Addition to found a tenants’ union to agitate against further redevelopment of the area.<sup>172</sup>

With the support of Mayor Christopher and his successors, John Shelley and Joseph Alioto, the SFRA went ahead with its plans for demolition, in spite of several lawsuits brought by tenants’ associations. The agency’s unwillingness to replace the low-cost hotels and apartments left a growing pool of largely unmarried and non-white residents in the city without obvious places to live. If restrictions on suburban housing had pushed the renters at the bottom of the Bay Area’s housing market into older cities, redevelopment in the 1960s further concentrated them in specific neighborhoods. In 1963, an assessment provided by the SFRA’s own consulting firm pointed out the growing gap between San Francisco’s population and its housing supply. “Undoubtedly, there is a strong general demand for low rent housing for single persons in San Francisco. The 1960 census shows there were about 124,400 primary individuals (those living alone or with non-relatives) in the city... On the other hand the supply of low rent units has been diminishing.”<sup>173</sup> The report later noted that the contraction of low-cost apartments alongside the upsurge in demand of unmarried people, particularly from the young and elderly, was pushing up rents among the few remaining residential hotels in the city. When landlords raised the rents on many of the buildings in the Tenderloin area

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<sup>171</sup> Council for Civic Unity, *Among These Rights*, May-June 1963, Institute for Governmental Studies.

<sup>172</sup> John Mollenkopf, *The Contested City* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983), 186.

<sup>173</sup> Roy Wenzlick and Company, *Market Analysis and Land Utilization Study, San Francisco, California* (St. Louis, MO: Roy Wenzlick and Company, 1963), 87-8.

downtown, many of the city's residents most in need of low-income housing suddenly found themselves unable to afford the rents.<sup>174</sup>

Although the SFRA understood that its policies were creating a housing shortage at the base of the rental market, the desire of city officials to eliminate the low-cost residential hotels dotting the waterfront and South of Market outweighed their efforts to provide alternatives. Most significantly, the SFRA saw the lack of privacy afforded to residents in these old structures as a serious impediment to their rehabilitation. Roy Wenzlick and Company, the same group of outside consultants that warned the agency about the looming housing shortage, ultimately concluded that the city should not try to save the hotels in the South of Market because at least half of the rooms in them did not provide inhabitants with a "private bath" and "most have less than this." Their report called their rehabilitation "economically unfeasible" and noted that "a private bath room is not absolutely necessary but is desirable and is found in most hotels in where rehabilitation has been undertaken."<sup>175</sup>

By the mid-1960s, the shortcomings of San Francisco's redevelopment spurred disparagement from several liberal critics. In 1964, University of California urban planner Catherine Bauer Wurster not only tied the living space shortage to urban renewal but also to the larger sprawl of the suburbs. Redevelopment programs, she argued in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, "require comprehensive housing programs. The increasingly critical problems of old cities cannot be solved without a larger supply of low-priced open-housing in outlying areas. It is the rising limitations of the suburban housing market... which force ever larger proportions of low-income and minority families to live

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<sup>174</sup> Ibid. 87-88.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid. 89.

in San Francisco, Oakland, and Berkeley. This is why the shortage of older homes in San Francisco steadily worsens.”<sup>176</sup> By 1965, even the newly elected mayor, John Shelley, belatedly admitted that “not enough dwellings are being constructed for persons of low and moderate incomes.”<sup>177</sup>

## **Conclusion**

Although Shelley’s admission reflected a sharp departure from Christopher’s indifference to the consequences of urban renewal, he did very little to abate the crisis during his one term in office. By the end of the 1960s, the housing shortage represented the ultimate consequence of San Francisco’s decade-long redevelopment processes. A 1969 study conducted by the Citizens Emergency Task Force for a Workable Housing Policy, an advocacy group for low-income housing, blamed the SFRA for all but completely eliminating affordable rentals in the city. It concluded: “San Francisco’s housing crisis is not an accident” because “the city’s own public actions, which should have ameliorated the problems have instead greatly exacerbated the crisis.”<sup>178</sup> The group went on to declare that the SFRA had destroyed five thousand more low-income units than it had produced, and that affordable apartments in San Francisco had a vacancy rate of zero percent. Despite the Redevelopment Agency’s assurances that tenants could find housing if they looked for it, the task force alleged that the vacancy rate for residential hotels was actually lower than that for individual apartments in the rental market.

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<sup>176</sup> Catherine Bauer Wurster, letter to *San Francisco Chronicle*, cited in Elizabeth Kendall Thompson, “San Francisco Report: No Easy Road to the More Handsome City,” *Architectural Record*, September 1965, 156.

<sup>177</sup> John Shelley, “A Mayor Proposes A Housing Program to Meet the Needs of His City,” *Journal of Housing*, 6 November 1964, 303.

<sup>178</sup> Citizens Emergency Task Force for a Workable Housing Policy, *The Shame of San Francisco*, 1969, 1-2.

“Constant pressure on the poor, the elderly, racial minorities has not dispersed San Francisco’s “unwanted citizens” to other communities,” they declared. “Its effect has been rather to force overcrowding in previously viable areas and create situations in which it is in the economic interests of owners to charge high rents and not maintain rents.”<sup>179</sup>

The city’s redevelopment, particularly along the waterfront, dovetailed with its repression of queer businesses. Although the police had failed to substantially stem the number of gay bars in San Francisco, the combination of their crackdown with the physical remaking of large portions of the urban core pushed queer sites farther into the city. By the end of the 1960s, gay bars relocated to neighborhoods in the central part of San Francisco, and their move to new areas reflected a growing class divide. On one hand, a number of seedy, queer, “dive” bars followed many of the people displaced by urban renewal projects and opened in the increasingly overcrowded Tenderloin District just north of central Market Street. On the other hand, a number of businesses set up shop just up the hill from the Tenderloin in the area that would eventually become the “Castro District.” As early 1963, gay bars, such as the Missouri Mule, opened on the upper end of Market Street as many of the older Irish-Catholic residents of the “Eureka Valley neighborhood moved out to the suburbs. By the mid-1960s the two neighborhoods stretched less than a mile from one another along Market Street, but represented two divergent branches of queer life in San Francisco.

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<sup>179</sup> Ibid. Citizens Emergency Task Force, 9.

## **Part 2: The Right to Privacy**

### **Chapter 5**

#### **Red Light: The Tenderloin, Queer Resistance, and the State**

##### **Introduction**

In 1964, *Life* magazine announced that homosexuality was more visible than ever before and that straight Americans were struggling to explain it. Although they admitted that queer people participated in all segments of society, *Life* journalists that year also specifically characterized it as an urban phenomenon. “Homosexuality,” noted reporter Paul Welch, “exists all over the U.S. but it is most evident in New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, San Francisco, New Orleans and Miami.” On a visit to San Francisco, Welch walked readers through a series of gay spaces, divided by neighborhood and class. These included “cruising” night clubs South of Market with “young men in tight khaki pants” looking for sex; hotel lobbies and cocktail lounges frequented by “local businessmen and out of town visitors;” and the “bottom of the barrel bars” of the city’s red-light district, the Tenderloin. With visibly gay consumers and residents fanning out across the nation’s major cities, *Life* reported that straight attitudes towards homosexuality appeared to sit at a crossroads. Of course, “parents are especially concerned,” Welch declared, and he pointed out that urban police departments were aggressively trying to “deter homosexual activity in public.” Several legal and religious groups, however, seemed turned off by

such measures, and Welch reported with surprise that some were asking “for more social and official tolerance for homosexuals.”<sup>1</sup>

*Life*'s detailed coverage of urban gay subcultures in 1964 came on the cusp of a crucial turning point for American cities, politics, and sexuality. Two decades after World War II, suburbanization, urban renewal, and police harassment prompted the rise of new types of urban neighborhoods and spurred new political responses to the state's enforcement of the closet. Metropolitan development had created a sexual “spatial mismatch” between urban centers and the suburban periphery.<sup>2</sup> By the mid-1960s, suburban growth had not only confined queer and unmarried people to the central city, it had also concentrated most explicitly sexual commerce near the metropolitan core. This distillation process slowly gave rise to both middle-class gay neighborhoods and an impoverished red-light district. It also spurred more intensive scrutiny from local police and provoked a counter reaction from gay activists and straight liberals who hoped to transform the disciplinary state into a more tolerant one. By the end of the 1960s these calls for a universal “right to sexual privacy” would resonate with many public officials and growing portions of the straight public.

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<sup>1</sup> Paul Welch, “The ‘Gay World’ Takes to the City Streets,” *Life*, 26 June 1964, 66-74. In the article Welch makes several observations about the class differences and life styles of different types of gay men. These included a “suburban husband” who anonymously cruised for sex in a park on Chicago's North Side, a closeted junior advertising executive in San Francisco, motorcycle-riding sadists and masochists, and men who loitered in front of cheap movie theaters in New York's Times Square. Welch made almost no references to lesbians. For more on *Life*'s influence on gay and lesbian communities in San Francisco see Martin Meeker, *Contacts Desired: Gay and Lesbian Communications and Community, 1940s-1970s* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006).

<sup>2</sup> I borrow the term “spatial mismatch” from sociologists who have argued that suburbanization moved most economic growth away from residential areas populated by workers in search of low skill employment. I use it to refer to the fact that in the 1960s urban centers bore a disproportionate amount of sexual commerce in metropolitan areas such as the Bay Area. See William Julius Wilson, *The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, the Underclass, and Public Policy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).

Although the notion of sexual privacy would later emerge as one of the most dominant discourses about gay rights in American politics, in San Francisco in the mid-1960s it represented only one part of a larger set of debates about homosexuality, poverty and the state. In the same year that *Life* published its article, a set of middle-class gay activists and liberal ministers forged an important alliance and launched a number of projects that helped reshape public debates over sex in the city. The Council on Religion and the Homosexual (CRH), an organization meant to create dialogue between Protestant Christianity and queer people, represented one important product of their collaboration. Beginning in 1964, this association served as a powerful voice denouncing police violence, calling for the de-criminalization of homosexuality, and encouraging churches to express tolerance for gay men and lesbians. Just two years later, a second set of ministers and queer activists, many of them members of the CRH, created a federally sponsored Central City Community Action Program (CCCAP) in the Tenderloin as part of the national “War on Poverty.” Their efforts included similar calls for tolerance of homosexuality, but they also involved a more assertive relationship to the state, including a demand that public officials meet the needs of queer citizens as well as straight ones. Both groups sought to reform the political system, not overthrow it. Yet by the end of the 1960s the CRH’s call for tolerance would have lasting appeal among many straight voters, while the more forceful demands of the CCCAP would provoke a government backlash.

Most recent scholarship on the War on Poverty has largely focused on the limits and possibilities of federal programs in ameliorating social conditions in urban black communities. Some of the best work on the subject has argued that although the national



government offered inadequate solutions to larger structural inequalities in the economy, its call for “maximum feasible participation” from low-income residents helped generate new kinds of local African American politics.<sup>3</sup> Although the Central City Community Action Program mostly focused on providing social services to poor people and did not create a mass movement based around queer sexuality, it similarly paved the way for gay demands into local, state, and national institutions just a few years later. No mere offshoot of the black freedom struggle or the Stonewall Riot in New York, queer politics across the country grew out of a set of complex interactions between people at the grassroots and the state. In the Central City, the War on Poverty offered gay activists and their straight allies an opportunity to reform public institutions and make them more responsive to queer needs.

In the mid-1960s, the postwar closet cracked open even wider in cities like San Francisco. Viewing the CRH and the CCCAP alongside one another reveals the limits and possibilities of queer activism in a moment of significant urban and political change. The fact that the CRH’s call for tolerance had a more enduring legacy than the CCCAP’s demands underscores the outer boundary of acceptable discourses about sex in the mid-1960s. On one hand, the War on Poverty in the Tenderloin ended with federal cut backs and a veto from California Governor Ronald Reagan, who disliked the fact that San Francisco activists did not approach homosexuality and drug use in an adversarial manner. On the other hand, the CRH’s call for the decriminalization of private sexual

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<sup>3</sup> Historian Thomas Jackson argues that one of the dominant legacies “of the Great Society expansion of social services for the black community was the incorporation of middle-class blacks into urban politics.” Jackson, “The State, the Movement, the Urban Poor: The War on Poverty and Political Mobilization in the 1960s,” in *The Underclass Debates: View from History*, Michael Katz, ed. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), 421. See also Robert Self, *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005).

conducts between consenting adults subsequently entered into the mainstream of state and national politics. The legacy of both forms of activism would live on the “culture wars” of the late twentieth century, but queer experiences with public institutions in the mid-1960s would shape gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender politics in subsequent decades.

### **Middle-Class Gay Neighborhoods and the Red Light District**

Over the course of the 1960s, the suburbanization of the Bay Area and the redevelopment of downtown scattered gay businesses to new parts of the city and accentuated class differences between queer communities. Although San Francisco police and renewal authorities in the early 1960s had sought to contain or eliminate queer businesses, their efforts could not keep pace with the larger patterns of metropolitan development. Suburbanization pulled many long-time residents out of the city, and over the course of the 1950s and 1960s several neighborhoods west of downtown lost both commercial investment and straight families. As rents dropped, gay professionals and businesses migrated away from the waterfront and the expanding central business district. Redevelopers and police, in effect, merely drove queer residents and bars from one part of the city to another, struggling to keep pace with the centrifugal trends of metropolitan growth which increasingly sifted people based on their sexual, racial, and class characteristics. Within the city itself, redevelopment accelerated a similar distillation process, with downtown construction pushing the most affluent queer residents into older areas undergoing dramatic demographic transitions. By the end of the 1960s, the Eureka Valley neighborhood, once primarily populated by working-class, church-going families,

would emerge as the Castro District, one of the nation's most well known concentrations of middle-class gay men.

Suburbanization and redevelopment also further concentrated queer poverty near downtown. Discrimination in the metropolitan housing markets along with the destruction of much of San Francisco's residential hotels left the Tenderloin District the only neighborhood with significant numbers of low-rent tenements. Within walking distance of Eureka Valley, the central city emerged as the Bay Area's most visible commercial sex and drug marketplaces. By the end of the 1960s, the Castro and the Tenderloin represented two different types of queer neighborhoods, separated by class and space. Born of the same processes, the middle-class gay enclave and the red light district both came of age alongside one another.

In the wake of redevelopment, businesses that catered to middle-class gay men and lesbians appeared in a diverse number of settings away from the waterfront. During the 1960s, upper Polk Street attracted a number of businesses that catered to affluent gay men. The area north of Civic Center developed a reputation as a hangout for queer professionals who worked in the central business district, which historian Josh Sides would dub a "meeting spot for downtown's white-collar gay workforce."<sup>4</sup> Sides cites one former San Franciscan who remembered the area as a place "gay men would come home from work... toss off their Brooks Brothers suits and polished cotton shirts, slip out of their wing tips... and go for an evening stroll."<sup>5</sup> Similar processes, meanwhile, allowed a collection of lesbian bars and coffee shops to open in the Mission District, Haight-Ashbury area and Cole Valley. According to Sides, when several bars closed near the re-

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<sup>4</sup> Sides, *Erotic City*, 103.

<sup>5</sup> Dennis Conklin, "Polk Street: What Lies Ahead?" *Bay Area Reporter*, 21 June 1990.

made waterfront, “a rising number of lesbians abandoned the North Beach and downtown areas and followed gay men, hippies and other sex radicals westward across the city.”<sup>6</sup>

The most dramatic shift in queer demographics, however, emerged in the Eureka Valley neighborhood west of downtown. Over the course of the 1950s and 1960s, this area lost many of its predominantly working-class, white straight families to the suburbs. Whereas almost 73 percent of the people who lived in the area in 1960 were married or under the age of 18 in 1960, that figure dropped to just 56 percent a decade later.<sup>7</sup> Elderly couples made up the largest portions of these remaining residents. San Francisco journalist Randy Shilts reported that during the 1950s and 1960s, while “some of the older people stayed” in the neighborhood, most of the younger generations “moved to subdivisions near San Jose, buying into the ranch houses of the new American Dream.”<sup>8</sup> Mary Ragison O’Shea, a former Eureka Valley resident, recalled that during the 1950s and 1960s most of her friends, family and neighbors took advantage of the G.I. Bill and bought new homes in the East and South Bay suburbs. “My sisters, as they got married,” she recalled, “they all followed. It was what was happening, and... everybody was buying homes.”<sup>9</sup> Sharon Johnson, another former resident, similarly remembered that she and her husband moved to the Peninsula in 1966 because she believed that the

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<sup>6</sup> Sides, *Erotic City*, 113. Sides argues that whereas many queer women occupied gender-mixed spaces in the 1960s, a decade later the popularity of “cultural feminism” prompted the creation of lesbian-only sites in the Mission.

<sup>7</sup> Statistics derived from looking at census tracts adjacent to Castro Street business district. U.S. Bureau of the Census, *1960 Census*, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1961). N5A, N5B, N6, N11; 1970 Census 205, 206, 211, 212. Statistics presume that no one under 18 was married.

<sup>8</sup> Randy Shilts, *The Mayor of Castro Street: The Life and Times of Harvey Milk* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1982), 82.

<sup>9</sup> Mary Ragison O’Shea, interview, *The Castro*, film, Peter Stein, director (San Francisco: KQED-TV, 1996), transcript, GLBT Historical Society of Northern California. See also Sides, *Erotic City*, 107-8.

suburbs offered a better community for young families. “As a young married person,” she contended, “with our first child... there was no way to live in San Francisco.”<sup>10</sup>

Although the neighborhood, later re-dubbed the Castro, would emerge as a major hub for gay life in the 1970s, the area initially began attracting queer businesses and residents in wake of the urban renewal projects of the 1960s. The Missouri Mule, the district’s first gay bar opened on Market Street in 1963. Josh Sides suggests that the mere presence of this business served as an anchor, setting the foundation for the immigration of new gay residents, and after 1965 he contends that, “the trickle of gay men had turned into a stream. In a process similar to upper Polk Street, several new restaurants and bars opened in the second half of the decade to specifically cater to queer patrons.”<sup>11</sup> David Valentine, for example, a gay printer who migrated to the neighborhood in 1968, recalled that the Missouri Mule’s presence reassured him that he could live safely in the area: “One of the reasons I moved my business up here,” he later reminisced, “was [that] there was a gay bar across the street.”<sup>12</sup>

The influx of new residents like Valentine spurred resistance from several long-term inhabitants of the neighborhood, particularly teenagers. According to historian Timothy Stewart-Winter, “Straight residents fought back against the gay onslaught using strategies familiar to many urbanites... including violence, which took the form of gay-bashing and vandalism.”<sup>13</sup> In 1961, three local teenagers beat a gay man and then killed him by pushing him under a moving trolley. “We hate [queers],” the murderers told a local newspaper. “You can’t go anywhere anymore- downtown, to a show, or just when

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<sup>10</sup> Sharon Johnson, *ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> Sides, *Erotic City*, 109.

<sup>12</sup> Valentine cited in Timothy Stewart-Winter, “The Castro: Origins to the Age of Milk,” *Gay and Lesbian Review World Wide*, January-February 2009, 13.

<sup>13</sup> Stewart-Winter, “The Castro,” 14.

you're walking home."<sup>14</sup> Later in the 1960s, high school students attacked queer men in nearby parks and yelled slurs into gay bars.<sup>15</sup> A columnist for a gay newspaper noted in 1972 that, in addition to police harassment in the area, "roving gangs of youth (possibly taking their cues from their parents) are beating up gay guys on their way home at night."<sup>16</sup>

In addition to differences in age and sexuality this violence also reflected class divisions between new and long-term residents. Gay migrants who moved to Eureka Valley in the 1960s tended to have attained higher levels of education and to work more in white-collar professions than the people who previously lived there. Although the area remained overwhelmingly white in the 1960s, several indicators suggest an influx of wealthier inhabitants.<sup>17</sup> During that decade the number of residents with college degrees doubled, moving from under 20 percent to almost 40 percent by 1970. The 1960 census reported that the largest segments of Eureka Valley dwellers worked in blue-collar trades, including clerical positions and craftsmen. Ten years later, 20 percent of residents held "professional" or similar positions and one out of ten of them specifically worked in the banking, real estate, or insurance industries.<sup>18</sup>

Despite this relative affluence, the vast majority of these residents rented, rather than owned, their homes. In sharp contrast to the communities of the Peninsula and

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<sup>14</sup> Unnamed teenagers cited in Donal Godfrey, *Gays and Grays: The Story of the Gay Community at the Most Holy Redeemer Church* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2007), 9-10.

<sup>15</sup> Sides, *Erotic City*, 109-10. In at least one instance the conflict between gay residents and students from a local Catholic school was serious enough that the archbishop of San Francisco intervened to put a stop to it. Godfrey, 11.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.* 14.

<sup>17</sup> U.S. Bureau of the Census, *1960 Census*. The census listed the area's population as 97.3 percent white, including 9.8 percent with "Spanish surnames."

<sup>18</sup> U.S. Bureau of the Census, *1970 Census*, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1971).

South Bay, 68 percent of Eureka Valley inhabitants leased their apartments.<sup>19</sup> In addition to the number of liquor-selling businesses, this ratio of renters to homeowners represented one of the key differences separating middle-class gay neighborhoods from the postwar suburbs. Stewart-Winter, citing political scientist Robert Bailey, writes that, “the single best predictor of gay residential concentration in U.S. cities is the concentration of renters in an area.”

By the mid-1960s, these pockets of relative gay affluence along Polk Street, in the Mission, or Eureka Valley slowly formed a loose half-circle around the concentrated poverty and highly visible sex-related commerce of the Central City. As in these neighborhoods, redevelopment projects on the Waterfront, South of Market, and in the Western Addition dramatically reshaped the area just west of the central business district. According to historian Susan Stryker: “The physical destruction of these important black and working-class neighborhoods in the 1960s left the Tenderloin the last remaining enclave of affordable housing in downtown San Francisco.”<sup>20</sup> Many of the people unable to secure residences in other parts of the city, much less the suburbs, made their homes in the string of hotels that lined Turk, Jones, and Ellis Streets, or slept in the neighborhood’s alleys and sidewalks. A study of the district in the 1970s remarked that the area had “became the dumping ground for those displaced by urban renewal in the Western Addition and Yerba Buena” and that a flood of African Americans evicted by city demolition projects in the 1960s turned much of Eddy Street into a predominantly black neighborhood by the end of the decade. Meanwhile, the study noted that a slate of teenage “runaways,” “draft dodgers,” and poor people pushed out of other neighborhoods

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<sup>19</sup> U.S. Bureau of the Census, *1970 Census*. Stewart-Winter, “The Castro,” 15.

<sup>20</sup> Susan Stryker, *Transgender History* (Berkeley, CA: Seal Press, 2008), 69.

by rising housing prices poured into the Tenderloin, and “rented the old resort hotels, now infested with rats, piled high with garbage, ventilated by broken windows and plagued with faulty plumbing.”<sup>21</sup>

The urban renewal projects that leveled large swathes of the city’s poorest neighborhoods effectively concentrated low-income residents to a greater degree than ever before in the Tenderloin. Sex workers, transgender people, transsexuals, queer runaways, older residents with low incomes, and, to a lesser extent, poor, straight people of color all found refuge in the Tenderloin. Although census takers have notoriously had difficulty recording the presence of transient or poor residents, statistics hint at some of the important transformations underway in the district in the 1960s. According to one estimate, approximately 21,118 people lived in the Tenderloin in 1960, and although in the subsequent decade the number of people living there dipped slightly, the characteristics of those making their homes there changed dramatically.<sup>22</sup> Residents of the Central City were more apt to be over the age of 60 or in the young adult category than ever before. As early as 1960, in sharp contrast to the suburbs down the Peninsula, the area represented an area almost completely devoid of children. According to the census that year only 2.1 percent of the population consisted of residents under the age of 14. In the same period the number of men in the area increased, and the percentage of black and Asian American residents, although still relatively small, skyrocketed.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Tenderloin Ethnographic Research Project, *Final Report* (Central City Hospitality House: 1978), 43-4.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.* 59-66.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.* In 1960 men made up approximately 54 percent of all the residents and by the end of the decade, they made up over 60 percent. In 1960 the census reported that 96 percent of the Tenderloin was white, but over the next decade, the number of black residents climbed to just over four percent and those listed as “other,” including Asian Americans jumped to 9 percent.



The most important characteristics of the Tenderloin ghetto were the area's high proportion of "unmarried" people and its poverty. Between 1950 and 1970 the ratio of "single" people to those living "in families" shifted decisively. Although the Tenderloin had long welcomed unmarried residents, by the end of the 1960s the number of "unrelated" individuals exceeded those in "families" by more than two to one.<sup>24</sup> In 1960 the census reported that only a quarter of the neighborhood's residents over the age of 14 were "married," labeling the remainder "single," "widowed," or "divorced." A decade later, it reported that the number of "single" people in the Tenderloin had climbed to 41 percent, while the ratio of married people living with their spouses had dipped to just under twenty percent.<sup>25</sup>

By the end of the 1960s, the Tenderloin represented one of most impoverished neighborhoods in San Francisco. In the mid-1960s, 99 percent of official residents in the Central City rented their apartments, and the area had the highest officially tabulated rate of unemployment in the city.<sup>26</sup> Forty-one percent of the "families" living in the Tenderloin or in the South of Market area made less than the official poverty line of \$4000 a year, and an analysis of the 1970 census noted that residents spent an average of 37 percent of their monthly incomes on rent alone.<sup>27</sup> That same report revealed that

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<sup>24</sup> Tenderloin Ethnographic Research Project, *Final Report* (Central City Hospitality House: 1978), 59-66. According to the report 13,453 "single" people lived in census tracts 122, 123, 124, and 125 in 1970. In the same period and in the same tracts only 6,663 people in "families" lived there. The report estimated that approximately 20,116 people lived in the Tenderloin in 1970, but only 431 of them were under the age of 14.

<sup>25</sup> U.S. Bureau of the Census, *1960 Census*; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *1970 Census*. For the purpose of this study the five census tracts that overlap with the Tenderloin include A-17, A-20, A-21, A-22 and A-23 in 1960 and 117, 122, 123, 124 and 125 in 1970.

<sup>26</sup> Tom Ramsey, Untitled Report to Central City Target Area Board, n.d. 18, Don Lucas Papers, GLBT Historical Society of Northern California, San Francisco, CA.

<sup>27</sup> According to one report: "Discrimination because of race or age, lack of education, jail records, psychological instability, difficulties in getting into unions... these are some of the many factors that operate to keep the people of the Central City out of work." Central City Citizens' Council, *Program for Community Organization*, n.d. Don Lucas Papers. Official records of "unemployment," of course, did not

people living in the Tenderloin experienced greater rates of illness, fire, and crime, but described health care in the district as “a pattern of crisis medicine lacking any semblance of continuity of care.”<sup>28</sup>

Capitalism demands that city dwellers make urban space productive, and although the Tenderloin emerged as a demographic cul de sac for inhabitants who could not live elsewhere, its central location gave several groups of businessmen and sex workers an economic advantage. The neighborhood had long served as a vice district, hosting a variety of queer bars, gambling houses, and brothels since the late nineteenth century. In addition to demolishing scores of residential hotels, San Francisco’s postwar urban renewal campaigns reshaped and expanded its sexual economy in two crucial ways. First, the Redevelopment Agency remade the waterfront, pushing many of its working-class, alcohol-related businesses deeper into the city. By the early 1960s, the Tenderloin not only provided some of the only remaining low-income housing in San Francisco, it also steadily emerged as one of the only remaining neighborhoods with a high concentration of low-end bars and nightclubs.<sup>29</sup>

Second, the completion of the regional interstate system in the late 1950s placed the end of the Bayshore freeway just a few blocks from the edge of downtown. The Tenderloin’s proximity to the highway reoriented the city’s queer businesses away from the waterfront, thus making the federal and state governments unwittingly complicit in

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factor in the underground economy, including sex work and the drug trade, in which most Tenderloin residents worked. Tenderloin Ethnographic Research Project, *Final Report* (Central City Hospitality House: 1978), 68.

<sup>28</sup> Tenderloin Ethnographic Research Project, *Final Report*, 71.

<sup>29</sup> Citing the unpublished work of several members of the GLBT Historical Society of Northern California, Gayle Rubin contends: “As gay sites were driven out of the lower Market and Waterfront, gay occupation in the Tenderloin and Polk areas increased... Police action and redevelopment have had substantial impact on San Francisco’s gay (and sexual) geographies.” Gayle Rubin, “The Miracle Mile: South of Market and Gay Male Leather,” in *Reclaiming San Francisco: History, Politics, Culture*, James Brook, Chris Carlsson, and Nancy Peters, eds. (San Francisco, CA: City Lights Books, 1998), 253.

the growth of the metropolis' largest sex district. In 1966, the *San Francisco Chronicle* suggested that the district's high number of hotels and proximity to the freeway had changed the nature of how prostitutes plied their trade: "The girls, searching for clients, no longer simply walk the streets. They stand in the doorways of hotels and cafes, and solicit auto drivers who stop for red lights."<sup>30</sup>

The Redevelopment Agency's massive projects in the late 1950s and 1960s dramatically helped concentrate San Francisco's low-end sex trade in the Central City, but in the mid-1960s a series of judicial decisions changed its visibility and character. Beginning in 1965 a series of landmark California and United States Supreme Court decisions effectively liberalized rules governing the sale of sexually explicit literature, films, and entertainment, making it difficult for district attorneys to prosecute defendants for violating local obscenity laws.<sup>31</sup> In the wake of these rulings, businessmen across the country opened a plethora of massage parlors, movie theaters, bookstores that brazenly advertised sex-related commerce in vice districts. In his book *Erotic City*, historian Josh Sides contends that in 1965 there were approximately thirty-five to forty topless clubs in San Francisco and nine stores that sold pornography near the financial district.<sup>32</sup> In the wake of the courts' rulings on obscenity, sex-related businesses in the city "became more publicly visible than ever before, displaying 'hard-core pornography in store front windows, hiring 'barkers' to describe in lurid detail, the entertainment housed inside, and installing neon signs that vividly described sexual acts."<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> "100 Girls Seized in Tenderloin Raids," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 14 October 1966.

<sup>31</sup> Sides, *Erotic City*, 51, 57-9.

<sup>32</sup> Sides, *Erotic City*, 48.

<sup>33</sup> Sides, *Erotic City*, 48.

This sex-related commerce, along with the drug trade, provided some of the only stable sources of employment for many people living in the Tenderloin. According to one history of the neighborhood: “The cigar stores, pool halls, cleaners and other business which often made more by business under the counter than what they sold above, were replaced [in the 1960s] by businesses which engaged openly in much of the same commerce. Thus, the porno shops, massage parlors, ‘escort’ businesses, pimps, hustlers prostitutes and other sexual entrepreneurs came out into the open.”<sup>34</sup> In 1967, a group of social workers, ministers and Tenderloin residents estimated that in the fourteen-block area encompassing Ellis, Market, Leavenworth and Powell Streets, 14 percent of all people between the ages of 12 and 28 sold sex to make a living.<sup>35</sup> In that same year the *Los Angeles Times* reported that “the Tenderloin is not particularly sinister by day, but at night its bars and eating places entertain more than their quota of prostitutes, pimps, racetrack hangers-on, motorcycle riders, homosexuals, and assorted other types who are generally not invited into polite society.”<sup>36</sup>

In sharp contrast to the people who could not find housing or employment outside the Tenderloin, patrons who visited these commercial sex sites came from across the metropolis and came and went as they pleased. The construction of the interstate at the base of Market Street, in particular, gave middle-class or affluent consumers easy access to the neighborhood. A study of pornography in San Francisco in 1970 reported that adult movie theaters structured their film showings around the after-work commutes of people employed downtown, and it concluded that the most frequent patrons of sexually-explicit cinemas, bookstores, and arcades were male, married, white collar professionals

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<sup>34</sup> Tenderloin Ethnographic Research Project, *Final Report*, 45.

<sup>35</sup> The Tenderloin Committee, *Youth in the Tenderloin*, March 1967, Don Lucas Papers.

<sup>36</sup> “Nearer My Church to Me,” *Los Angeles Times*, 22 October 1967.

between the ages of 26 and 45.<sup>37</sup> City resident Gerald Fabian recalled that after the city began remaking its waterfront, armed forces personnel passing through the West Coast began “to gravitate more towards Turk Street and the Tenderloin and that part of town.”<sup>38</sup> Similarly, Tom Redmon recalled visiting the Old Crow, a bar at the corner of Market and Turk Streets, and he contended that, “just because you went to the Old Crow, didn’t mean you were a Tenderloin-type person. I’ve seen people in there dressed in a suit and tie and three-piece suits.”<sup>39</sup>

This concentrated zone of sex and poverty attracted significant amounts of attention from law enforcement authorities. In the mid-1960s, the growth of the Tenderloin accelerated police raids and sweeps. In 1965 they temporarily closed down the Chukker Club, a bar that attracted both black and white patrons and which was popular with a large number of transsexuals, sex workers and drag queens who worked in the neighborhood. In one night, authorities forced out 200 patrons and arrested 56 of them for disorderly conduct and for “impersonating women.”<sup>40</sup> In 1966 the police swept through the neighborhood and detained more than a hundred sex workers, including several transgender residents, between Powell, Geary, Leavenworth, and Turk Streets.<sup>41</sup> These raids, however, only hinted at the level of police involvement in the neighborhood. As historian Susan Stryker has demonstrated, during the 1960s San Francisco police not

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<sup>37</sup> Harold Nawy, “The San Francisco Erotic Marketplace,” *Technical Report of the Commission on Obscenity and Pornography*, Volume IV, 211. Nawy writes in his discussion of the erotic marketplace: “It would appear that only members of the middle-class have either the time or the money necessary to maintain regular access to outlets of erotica, whose working hours are organized around the leisure potential of the middle-class businessman.” 221.

<sup>38</sup> Gerald Fabian, interview with Bill Walker, 20 November 1989, Oral History Collection, GLBT Historical Society of Northern California, San Francisco, CA.

<sup>39</sup> Tom Redmon, interview with Len Evans, 17 May 1984, Oral History Collection.

<sup>40</sup> “Biggest S.F. Raid on Homosexuals,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, 14 February 1965.

<sup>41</sup> “100 Girls Seized in Raids,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, 14 October 1966.

only used extra legal violence to control people living in the Tenderloin, they frequently extorted area sex workers and collected payments in exchange for providing safety.<sup>42</sup>

### **The Council on Religion and the Homosexual and Calls for Tolerance**

Metropolitan development may have pulled queer communities physically apart, but it also brought new political groups together. In the early 1960s, conditions in the Tenderloin District attracted the attention of both middle-class gay activists and a set of liberal Protestant ministers. In 1964 the two groups created an organization called the Council on Religion and the Homosexual, and they both urged public authorities to decriminalize homosexuality and pushed religious groups to express greater tolerance for gay men and lesbians. Their alliance arose at a time when mainline Protestant churches were deliberating about how to create new ministries for urban areas and when straight liberals around the country were increasingly expressing disillusionment with the official persecution of homosexuals. Even as ministers in nearby San Mateo and Santa Clara counties put together programs specifically to meet the needs of middle-class, straight families, the CRH emerged as a prominent voice calling for authorities to recognize a fundamental “right to privacy” for all Americans. Its efforts to compel public authorities to observe this privilege specifically came out of its members’ first-hand observations of police harassment in San Francisco. In subsequent years, however, the group’s requests would join calls from other sets of liberal reformers to slowly erode official discrimination against gay men and lesbians in a variety of official forums.

Although the CRH provided an important vehicle for the promotion of this discourse, it built off some of the work performed by gay and lesbian activists in the

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<sup>42</sup> *Screaming Queens: The Riots at Compton Cafeteria* (KQED-TV, 1995).

previous decade. In the wake of the imposition of the closet, activists in major cities across the country had organized civil rights groups, known as “homophile societies,” in order to attempt to shield queer people from state repression. During the mid-1950s two of the largest of these organizations, the mostly male Mattachine Society and the predominantly lesbian Daughters of Bilitis, made their headquarters in San Francisco. Members of both groups spoke out against police harassment, fought censorship of gay-related topics in the mass media, published their own magazines and newsletters, and enlisted the support of scientific experts such as Alfred Kinsey to prove that homosexuality did not represent a mental disorder or character flaw. Due to their outspokenness on these issues, homophile societies frequently garnered hostile attention from the FBI and local police.<sup>43</sup>

State repression compelled homophile groups to develop a very narrow set of politics built around middle-class notions of “respectability” and an individual’s “right to privacy.” As historians such as John D’Emilio and Nan Alamilla Boyd have argued, activists in these groups generally promoted the assimilability of gay men and lesbians into mainstream American society and sharply differentiated between “public” and “private” behavior. In order to gain legitimacy in the eyes of straight authorities they frequently distanced themselves from sexual and gender transgressive behaviors, such as drag. During the 1950s, activists in the Mattachine Society and the Daughters of Bilitis worked diligently to portray gay men and lesbians as law-abiding citizens and as “typical” middle-class Americans. These claims to normalcy allowed them to make limited demands that straight people should tolerate, if not accept, homosexuals and that

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<sup>43</sup> Boyd, *Wide Open Town*; D’Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities*; Martin Meeker, *Contacts Desired: Gay and Lesbian Communications and Community, 1940s-1970s* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006).

the state should not police private sex acts between consenting adults. According to Boyd, during the 1950s, “Homophile activists worked to integrate themselves into mainstream institutions seeking acceptance and understanding from outsiders. Underlying this assimilative program was a firm commitment to individual civil rights based on the right to privacy.”<sup>44</sup>

For most of the postwar period, these activists labored in relative isolation from major straight institutions.<sup>45</sup> In the early 1960s, however, they found sympathetic allies in a group of liberal Protestant clergy who would specifically support their calls for tolerance and sexual privacy. This alliance emerged in direct response to metropolitan development. Suburbanization and urban renewal not only concentrated queer residents in greater numbers in city neighborhoods, the rapid decline of urban churches in the period spurred concerned from major religious organizations across the country. Even as most Christian groups clamored to build new congregations in the booming suburbs, national discussions about the possibilities of urban redevelopment renewed Protestant hopes that they could build two different types of churches, one at the metropolitan center and one at its periphery. A decade after the end of World War II, Ross Sanderson, chief of the National Council of Churches “Department of the Urban Church,” argued that Christians held a moral obligation to rebuild older congregations, now that “less privileged persons have moved into the inner city.” He claimed that leaving urban areas,

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<sup>44</sup> Boyd, *Wide Open Town*, 160. D’Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities*. D’Emilio argues that homophile groups adopted this politics of respectability after a brief period of relative radicalism in the early 1950s. State repression, however, blunted their more radical beginnings. It is important to point out that the Daughters of Bilitis first came together specifically to offer middle-class women a social outlet apart from bars. From the very beginning, homophiles debated the importance of public and private displays of sexuality.

<sup>45</sup> Homophile activists did, however, forge close relationships with several scientific experts, including Alfred Kinsey and Evelyn Hooker.



particularly poor neighborhoods, without religious guidance “no longer leaves the denominational conscience free.”<sup>46</sup>

In the late 1950s and early 60s, Protestant church planners undertook surveys of urban areas around the country, and they specifically observed with concern the mass exodus of middle-class straight families. In their 1958 study, *Urban Church Planning*, for example, Walter Kloetzli and Arthur Hillman noted that in older downtowns across the country, “There is a relative low proportion of ‘familiness,’ - that is, many people are living completely alone, apart from any other family member.”<sup>47</sup> Unable to imagine congregations without large numbers of married couples with children, planners like Kloetzli and Hillman contended that the newfound concentration of poor groups of people with “social problems” posed a serious challenge to postwar church builders. In their view the mass migration of married couples with children out of the city aggravated urban conditions, reinforcing antisocial behavioral patterns. They declared: “Spreading from the center even into the outlying reaches and following in the wake of the expanding metropolis... [is] blight and physical decay. While the impact of families on the move may be felt by churches across the city, it is in the inner city particularly that the effects are grave indeed for the urban church.”<sup>48</sup>

Methodist leaders, in particular, sought creative solutions to what they saw as a widening gap between cities and suburbs, and their “National Young Adult Project” played an important role in San Francisco’s sexual politics. Lewis Durham, a minister and researcher, reported to Methodist leaders that many older cities were witnessing an

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<sup>46</sup> Ross Sanderson, *The Church Serves the Changing City* (New York: Harper Brothers, 1955), 18.

<sup>47</sup> Walter Kloetzli and Arthur Hillman, *Urban Church Planning: The Church Discovers Its Community* (Philadelphia, PA: Muhlenberg Press, 1958), 37-8.

<sup>48</sup> Kloetzli and Hillman. 16.

influx of teenagers and young, unmarried adults, and he called for the specific creation of a “ministry to older youth and young adults... involving a highly mobile group which has concentrated in large numbers in certain [urban] areas.”<sup>49</sup> In 1961, the national Methodist Church made San Francisco one of several target areas for youth-oriented programs and approved the redistribution of resources to congregations there for the development of innovative ministries for new urban inhabitants.<sup>50</sup> In that same year the Glide Foundation, a Methodist philanthropy in the Tenderloin District, specifically hired Durham to initiate new forms of ministry directly in response to these larger deliberations. In 1963, Methodist leaders asked Ted McIlvenna, a Protestant elder and family counselor in the East Bay suburb of Hayward, to lead a youth-oriented ministry in San Francisco’s downtown.<sup>51</sup> Together, Durham and McIlvenna provided an important nucleus for a new group of liberal ministers, who all sought innovative strategies for bringing religion to non-traditional churchgoers. After their arrival in San Francisco, Durham and McIlvenna recruited about a dozen other clergy from across the country, and they quickly forged alliances with liberal pastors from other denominations in San Francisco opening similar urban ministries. These allies included an intern from Southern California named Ed Hansen, Presbyterian minister Don Stuart, and Lutheran pastor Chuck Lewis.<sup>52</sup>

The Methodist Glide Memorial Church in the Central City, and its philanthropic arm the Glide Urban Foundation, played an important role in supporting their efforts.

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<sup>49</sup> Lewis Durham, *A Local Church Survey of Older Youth-Young Adult Groups*, (Nashville, TN: Division of the Local Church, General Board of Education of the Methodist Church, 1962).

<sup>50</sup> The Methodist Church, *Metropolitan Young Adult Ministry: San Francisco* (Nashville, TN: Division of the Local Church, 1966). Dallas and Wilmington, DE were also designated as target areas for the new program.

<sup>51</sup> Ted McIlvenna, interview with author, 20 April 2009.

<sup>52</sup> Donald Stuart, *I’m Listening as Fast as I Can: The Night Ministry in San Francisco* (Claremont, CA: Regina Books 2003).

During the 1960s, the two organizations nurtured a creative exchange of ideas about the nature of the urban crisis in the Tenderloin and the ways in which Protestant ministers could best address it. Founded in the nineteenth century, Glide benefited from an endowment left by an oil baron in the 1920s, and its trust gave its staff significant freedom to undertake experimental or potentially controversial projects. These funds, along with financing provided by the National Methodist Church's Young Adult Project, gave Durham, McIlvenna, and their allies secure financial footing with which to begin innovative urban programs. As late as 1962 the Glide Foundation donated substantial amounts of money to fund the creation of new churches in the suburbs, but after Durham's arrival, the Church's board concluded that it should redirect those funds to pay for projects in San Francisco's inner city, including those "which were experimental in nature."<sup>53</sup> Durham later told the Methodist magazine *Together* that the support of the Glide Foundation gave him a unique "freedom to experiment" and the ability to try an "ecumenical approach" to urban problems.<sup>54</sup>

Although national church leaders initially sought to rebuild urban congregations stripped of their straight, middle-class constituents, Durham, McIlvenna, and their allies largely focused their attention on the enormous social problems facing inner city residents. Their evangelism gradually gave way to a community-building mission, and they pioneered a series of un-orthodox ministerial strategies that soon brought them into contact with large numbers of gay men, lesbians, transsexuals and other residents adversely affected by the city's urban renewal projects. Ted McIlvenna later told the National Methodist Church that he thought of his work as a "ministry by penetration," in

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<sup>53</sup> Lewis Durham, *Glide Foundation: From 1962 Through 1967*, Glide Memorial Church Archive, San Francisco, CA.

<sup>54</sup> Carol Muller, "Engaging the City- With Love," *Together*, May 1965, 18.

which he and other clergymen moved to find young adults in need in the streets of San Francisco. The former family counselor and his allies believed that too often religious groups hid behind church walls, waiting for congregants to come to them. By contrast, McIlvenna argued that clergy needed to address the fundamental needs of the people around them, and this called for a literal, physical movement into the streets of the inner city. “I simply went wherever there were people congregating,” he later related. “I have saturated myself with the city... I learned to be quiet. I learned to listen.... I forced myself to go places where I was frightened to go. When I got there I found that I was often caught up in the action.”<sup>55</sup> When he first arrived at Glide in 1965 intern Ed Hansen, similarly walked “the meatrack,” a strip in the Tenderloin “populated by homosexuals, transvestites and prostitutes” in order to better understand the people living downtown.<sup>56</sup> In 1967 Glide minister Donald Kuhn asserted that this new generation of clergy “try to go where the people are, the people who are hurting. We want to help the people find out what they want, to support basic indigenous democracy, humanity if you will, which is basically the gospel.”<sup>57</sup>

At times this “ministry by penetration” represented an example of middle-class straight paternalism that reaffirmed superficial differences between Tenderloin residents and the clergy who came to minister to them. More often, however, the ministers moving through the central city represented an important set of liberal allies who challenged the social stigmas that created downtown red light districts in the first place. As suggested by Donald Kuhn’s reference to “basic indigenous democracy,” many of the ministers

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<sup>55</sup> Lewis Durham, *Glide Foundation: From 1962 Through 1967*, Glide Memorial Church Archive. See also Methodist Church, *Metropolitan Young Adult Ministry: San Francisco*.

<sup>56</sup> “Glide Church- A Bold Path to the Fringes of Society,” *San Francisco Examiner and Chronicle*, 10 September 1967.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

working in the Tenderloin in the early 1960s gradually adopted a new understanding of sex and society. Rather than offering moral judgments of what they may have deemed socially deviant behavior, they instead turned their attention to the ways in which mainstream institutions ostracized certain people based on their sexuality, class or race. John Moore, a pastor at the Glide Church in the mid-1960s recalled that McIlvenna, Durham, and Hansen helped him see homosexuals for the first time as people deserving basic rights, rather than social deviants requiring treatment: “What was new in my thinking,” he declared in an autobiographical essay about the 1960s, “was my recent encounter with gay and lesbian human beings. I could not ignore the power of my own experience... What I did know was that the way our society related to gays and lesbians was contrary to the way of Jesus.”<sup>58</sup> McIlvenna similarly told *Together* magazine: “Traditional Protestant moralism is still one of our biggest problems. Oh, if only we could hear the last of these time-honored sayings, ‘A bad apple spoils the barrel,’ and ‘You don’t have to climb into a cesspool to know it stinks.’ Wouldn’t it be lovely to recognize that people are neither apples nor cesspools?”<sup>59</sup> The sympathetic views of McIlvenna and his allies soon attracted many gay men and lesbians to services at Glide, and in 1967 San Francisco newspapers reported that when ministers spoke about sexual equality “homosexuals packed the church, in drag and all.”<sup>60</sup>

These changes at Glide coincided with a gradual transformation of gay and lesbian politics in San Francisco. After almost two decades’ worth of official repression, several gay men and lesbians in the city moved to form newly assertive political organizations in the early 1960s. In 1961, for example, well-known North Beach drag

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<sup>58</sup> John Moore, untitled autobiographical essay, 30 June 1966, Glide Memorial Church Archives.

<sup>59</sup> Muller, “Engaging the City- With Love,” 18.

<sup>60</sup> “Glide Church- A Bold Path to the Fringes of Society,” *San Francisco Sunday Examiner and Chronicle*.

performer Jose Sarria and journalist Guy Strait created the League of Civil Education (LCE), a group designed to combat police harassment, secure housing for queer residents, and offer gay men and lesbians employment referrals. In that same year, Sarria ran a citywide campaign for the Board of Supervisors as an openly gay man. The former singer garnered fewer than 6,000 votes but his open candidacy signaled to many of the city's queer residents that they could successfully use their growing numbers in San Francisco to attain some level of political power. Sarria's run provided some evidence that gay men, lesbians, bisexual and transgender residents could unite into a single voting bloc, and when the LCE folded in 1964 due to financial difficulties, most of its members helped charter the Society for Individual Rights (SIR), an even more aggressive political organization. Partially modeled after black civil rights groups and the Free Speech Movement across the Bay, SIR aggressively recruited queer members and promised to use their strength at the ballot box to end official harassment.<sup>61</sup> In the first issue of its newsletter, *Vector* the group declared: "There should be an end to dismissals from our jobs; an end to police harassment, and the interference of the state with the sanctity of the individual within his home. To assure these reprisals cease, we believe in the necessity of a political mantle guaranteeing to the homosexual the rights so easily granted to others."<sup>62</sup>

Even older, more cautious homophile groups, such as the Mattachine Society and Daughters of Bilitis, underwent a transformation in the early 1960s. For the largely middle-class, white gay men and lesbians who made up these organizations, the arrival of clergymen sympathetic to the problems of the inner city meant a potential alliance

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<sup>61</sup> Boyd, *Wide Open Town*, 221-31.

<sup>62</sup> "SIR's Statement of Policy," *Vector*, December 1964.

between queer and straight groups. Ted McIlvenna recalled that within a few months of his arrival in San Francisco members of the Mattachine Society approached him and asked him to help a gay teenager beaten by the police in the Tenderloin.<sup>63</sup> Chuck Lewis, a Lutheran minister from North Beach, remembered walking in the central city when two gay men came up to him and said: “Hey look if you guys are going to be working the streets of the Tenderloin and other places where there are gay people, you have to know what's happening.”<sup>64</sup> Almost all of the ministers working out of Glide, particularly McIlvenna, found the spectacle of police abuse in the central city particularly appalling, and the homophiles hoped that a group of sympathetic clergymen would give them a set of partners capable of speaking to mainstream straight institutions relatively free of sexual stigma. In the September 1964 issue of the magazine, *The Ladder*, Del Martin, one of the founders of the Daughters of Bilitis, declared that the arrival of Protestant leaders “opened unexpected avenues of communication and cooperation between the two groups.”<sup>65</sup>

In May 1964, McIlvenna addressed the Daughters of Bilitis and told them that mainstream society’s undue concern for “conformity” led people to distrust homosexuals, and that he hoped to help change those attitudes. A month later, he invited key member of all the major gay and lesbian groups in the city to a conference with representatives of several mainline Protestant groups from across the country. The Lutheran, Episcopal, and Methodist pastors and journalists who attended the gathering came from as far away as Chicago and Nashville, and McIlvenna and a group of homophiles led them on a tour of gay bars in the city and took them to a drag show. The roughly thirty representatives

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<sup>63</sup> Ted McIlvenna, interview with author, 21 April 2009.

<sup>64</sup> Charles Lewis, interview with Paul Gabriel, 8 February 1997.

<sup>65</sup> Del Martin, “The Church and the Homosexual: A New Rapport,” *The Ladder*, September 1964.

of the homophile groups and religious organizations then gathered for a retreat across the Golden Gate Bridge in the small town of Mill Valley to discuss the ways that churches could address the problems faced by homosexuals. At this conference the homophile groups challenged the Protestant leaders to reconcile the systematic persecution of queer people with Christian principles of forgiveness and tolerance, and a member of the Daughters of Bilitis demanded that the ministers, “tell me which one of the Ten Commandments the homosexual, just by being homosexual... which commandment has he broken?”<sup>66</sup> Similarly, McIlvenna told the assembly that “homosexuals are not a lesser order of being, that they are not all unhappy or immature, and that they are not without God,” and pushed them to tell their congregants back home that, “the Church must say [we] are all sharers in humanity.”<sup>67</sup>

If the Mill Valley conference showcased the sympathy of religious authorities like McIlvenna, it also demonstrated the outer limits of liberal tolerance in the mid-1960s. Most of the ministers and religious journalists reacted cautiously to the demands of the gay men and lesbians at the conference. Although they met with members of the gay organizations in small groups, the ministers largely insisted on approaching homosexuality as an individual problem, rather than as an issue of social justice. B.J. Stiles, the editor of the Methodist magazine *Motive*, told the larger assembly that his group had mostly “focused on getting to know each other as persons” and that there “was a sustaining ministering to each other.”<sup>68</sup> One of the discussion sections at the conference made a statement that “homosexuals should have all the same rights as other citizens,” yet none of the visiting ministers agreed to support a project that could serve as

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<sup>66</sup> Del Martin, “The Church and the Homosexual: A New Rapport,” *The Ladder*, September 1964.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.



an “encouragement of homosexual behavior.”<sup>69</sup> Even more significantly, none of the Christian magazines at the conference published reports of the Mill Valley meeting. When one of them merely mentioned the conference in an article almost a year later, several readers across the country reacted by writing denunciations of the ministers for “protecting” gay men and lesbians from the police.<sup>70</sup>

The most important outcome of the conference lay in the cementing of a new alliance between the San Francisco’s homophile activists and the ministers working at Glide. Subsequent to the meeting in Mill Valley, McIlvenna and several other pastors joined the leaders of the Mattachine Society, the Daughters of Bilitis, the Society for Individual Rights and other groups to create an umbrella organization known as the Council on Religion and the Homosexual (CRH). Over the next several years, the members of this organization worked together to address the legal repression and social isolation of gay men and lesbians. Between the Mill Valley Conference in 1964 and the early 1970s, the CRH served as forum for dialogue between San Francisco’s homophile associations and the liberal wing of mainline Protestantism. Representatives of both groups provided the leadership on a number of service-oriented projects designed to confront the social and political repression of homosexuals. Even when they did not work directly in the name of the CRH, most of the group’s founding members initiated projects together and found common cause with one another in other forums. For the homophile activists who worked on the CRH, their affiliation with an official church

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> “Engaging the City- With Love,” *Together*, May 1965. One letter writer told the magazine: “In regard to the article dealing with homosexuality, I must say that I was deeply shocked not only to find such an article in a so-called family magazine but also at the slanted treatment of the subject. I do not want any future issues of *Together* to come into my house. Kindly cancel my subscription.” Letter, *Together*, July 1965. The magazine did receive a receptive letter as well.

gave them respectability in the eyes of the mass media and many public officials, and for the ministers an alliance with the Daughters of Bilitis or the Mattachine Society helped give them insight into the problems faced by homosexuals in the inner city.

All of the Council's members found common ground on the need to decriminalize homosexuality and on a desire for greater tolerance towards gay men and lesbians from straight institutions. In the mid-to late 1960s, the group's members saw the social isolation and legal repression of queer people as mutually constitutive problems, and they employed two overlapping strategies to try to address them. First, the Council called for an end to discriminatory laws and policies against gay men and lesbians, including the runaways and prostitutes of the Tenderloin. They demanded that the police halt their harassment of queer people and the official surveillance of their meeting places, and called for an end to the dismissals of homosexuals from the federal civil service, the military, teaching positions, or employment in the private sector. The CRH denounced "official discriminatory policies and practices directed against homosexuals wholly because of their sexual orientation," and in the mid-1960s it sent official requests to the state Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control, the California Legislature, the Department of Defense, the United States Civil Service, and Veterans' Administration demanding that the agencies revise or revoke their prohibitions against gay conduct.<sup>71</sup>

Second, the Council served as an educational organization, dedicated to speaking to the larger society about the need for greater acceptance of homosexuals. Members such as McIlvenna argued that honest dialogue between straight people and openly gay men and lesbians could potentially help end legal discrimination. The Council, therefore,

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<sup>71</sup> Council on Religion and the Homosexual, *CRH: 1964/1968*, (San Francisco, CA: The Council on Religion and the Homosexual, 1968).

launched a campaign aimed at “convincing society to accept the homosexual as a human being who should be judged on his own merits rather than his sexual orientation or practices.”<sup>72</sup> Their outreach program incorporated many of the sexual knowledge networks put in place in the two decades after the Second World War, and specifically targeted church and parent groups. In March 1965 the group of ministers and homophiles convinced the Episcopal Diocese of California to initiate a “broad sex education program, including the subject of homosexuality” for both clergy and laity.<sup>73</sup> Phyllis Lyon of the DOB helped coordinate a “speakers bureau” in May of that year, and Canon Bob Cromey spoke before a “mental health class” at San Jose State College and to various women’s groups in San Leandro and San Bruno.<sup>74</sup> Mattachine President Don Lucas later recalled that he “ran a regular tour of the Tenderloin and gay bars taking groups of straight people from out of town to all the gay bars... At the same time I would have these sessions in homes or in churches bringing a group of gay, lesbians and homosexuals [sic] and then we would meet with a straight group and just inter-react [sic].”<sup>75</sup>

In its efforts to de-criminalize homosexuality and to encourage greater tolerance of gay men and lesbians, the CRH frequently promoted the idea that all Americans had a “right to privacy.” In their use of the term, the group’s members specifically sought to end official surveillance and harassment of queer people. In the wake of a police raid at a Council event in 1965, for example, group members issued a manifesto that alleged: “The excessive concern of some Americans over what are essentially areas of personal expression in sexual behavior, exercised between adults in private, can result in our

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<sup>72</sup> Council on Religion and the Homosexual, *CRH: 1964/1968*, 1968.

<sup>73</sup> Council on Religion and the Homosexual, *CRH: 1964/1968*, 1968.

<sup>74</sup> Council on Religion and the Homosexual, Meeting Minutes, 4 May 1965, Lyon-Martin Papers, GLBT Historical Society of Northern California.

<sup>75</sup> Don Lucas, interview with Paul Gabriel, 30 December 1996 through 28 February 1998.

becoming a nation of professional snoopers and privacy invaders.”<sup>76</sup> At a Glide symposium in 1968 the group similarly argued that “laws governing sexual behavior should be reformed to deal only with clearly anti-social behavior involving youth or violence,” and that, “The sexual behavior of individual adults by mutual consent in private should not be a matter of public concern.”<sup>77</sup>

As they made these pronouncements, the CRH joined a growing chorus of liberal voices around the country that endorsed similar ideas about tolerance and sexual privacy in 1960s. As early as 1961 the American Law Institute, an advocacy group that sought to simplify the nation’s legal system, encouraged individual states to follow Great Britain’s example and de-criminalize homosexuality. In a public statement the organization argued that, “What two or more consenting adults do sexually in private should not be governed by statute law.”<sup>78</sup> In 1965 a writer in the *Saturday Review* similarly argued that, “In the case of the homosexual, his personal morality is a question for his conscience... But the use of coercion to force his conformity, except where it involves the transgression of another’s rights, should be abandoned.”<sup>79</sup> In 1966 *Time* declared that the “most telling argument” for repealing bans on queer sex “is that the present statutes are unenforceable as long as the homosexual acts are performed in private.”<sup>80</sup>

As a discourse meant to limit official harassment and extra-legal violence, calls for the “right to privacy” held obvious advantages. It offered a libertarian politics that could potentially appeal to people across the political spectrum. By framing the issue

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<sup>76</sup> Council on Religion and the Homosexual, *A Brief of Injustices: An Indictment of Our Society and Its Treatment of the Homosexual* (San Francisco, CA: Council on Religion and the Homosexual, 1965), 11.

<sup>77</sup> The Council on Religion and the Homosexual, “The Life Style of the Homosexual,” symposium, 24-27 October 1968, The Glide Foundation, San Francisco, CA.

<sup>78</sup> Robert Woetzel, “Do Our Homosexual Laws Make Sense?” *Saturday Review*, 9 October 1965, 23.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.* 25.

<sup>80</sup> “The Homosexual in America,” *Time*, 21 January 1966.

primarily as a matter of personal freedom, groups sympathetic to gay men and lesbians, such as the CRH, hoped to attract moderate and conservative voters who already favored a reduced role for government. In 1964, American Civil Liberties Union lawyer David Carliner told *Life* that the criminalization of homosexuality “puts the government in the position of being a Big Brother in passing judgment on other people’s behavior. It is a rather awesome power to pass on someone’s morality.”<sup>81</sup> In addition to these moral arguments about the role of the state, decriminalization appealed to some liberals because they believed it might allow the police to address other problems and reduce crime in general. Several writers, for example, specifically argued that since state laws tended to stigmatize homosexuality, reforming them might keep gay men from having sex in public. “Laws and social taboos against homosexuality,” wrote Robert Woertzel in the *Saturday Review*, have not only tended to mar the personalities of many homosexuals but have also encouraged criminal behavior. There seems to be no other alternative for many homosexuals than to seek their satisfaction in some anonymous place like a public lavatory where they can explain their presence if challenged.”<sup>82</sup>

Discourses about an individual “right to privacy,” however, failed to take into account larger collective and structural problems created by the closet. Most notably, they left unaddressed the class-based question of access to private spaces. For the teenage runaways, homeless people, and sex workers living in the Tenderloin, calls for a “right to privacy” offered only a token change in their relationship to the police. People who could not afford to have their own bedrooms or who needed to sell sex for a living fell outside its limits. It further left out the larger question of equality, allowing voters to

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<sup>81</sup> David Carliner in Welch, “The Gay World Takes to the Streets,” *Life*, 74.

<sup>82</sup> Woertzel, “Do Our Homosexual Laws Make Sense?” 23.

merely “tolerate” queer people while keeping in place a social hierarchy that distinguished between queer and straight relationships. Although it might facilitate dialogue, the “right to privacy” did very little to rectify past wrongs or address the needs of people disadvantaged by discrimination.

Just as significantly, the term specifically rested on the acceptance of undisclosed sex acts taking place between consenting adults. For queer teenagers, the promotion of a “right to privacy” failed to address a crucial gap in the circulation of available knowledge about sex and relationships. A close examination of the Council on Religion and the Homosexual’s history reveals ongoing debates about this very problem. From the very outset of the alliance, the problems of queer teenagers presented chronic and pressing challenges to the group’s members. With thousands of young people moving to the city each year, the Tenderloin District represented a highly visible collection of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender youth amidst a growing metropolis designed primarily for straight families. In a lecture given at a 1964 conference at Glide, Del Martin of the Daughters of Bilitis summed up those problem when she declared that countless young gay men and lesbians were “seeking a self identity, sometimes even sanity, in a world where they considered illegal, immoral and sick.”<sup>83</sup> In 1965 the CRH reported that it had uncovered a case where a Bay Area teenager had attempted suicide after enduring “the brutal abuse of his schoolmates who found him to be bookish, a bit different, and therefore implicitly ‘queer.’” The group spoke out against “situations where parents have disowned their children when they discovered they were homosexuals,” and decried that

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<sup>83</sup> Del Martin, untitled lecture, “The Young Adult and Sexual Identity,” Western Regional Study Conference on the Young Adult in the Metropolis, Glide Memorial Church, 5-9 October 1964, Lyon-Martin Records.

fact that “when a homosexual’s sexual orientation is exposed the result usually is instant and overwhelming social condemnation.”<sup>84</sup>

The CRH tied the increasingly visible male prostitutes and gay runaways on the streets of the Central City to the inability of parents to accept their children’s homosexuality in the home and the unwillingness of institutions, such as the school or church, to promote tolerance of all people. Legal restrictions and social taboos governing the interaction of adults with young people on the subject of sex- not to mention gay men and lesbians- greatly impeded the ability of the CRH to develop a coherent plan to address these concerns. As early as the 1964 meeting in Mill Valley, several participants declared that “since the homophile groups may not legally deal with minors, the group proposed that an educational program be started at the parish level so clergymen could deal knowledgeably with the teen-age homosexual.”<sup>85</sup> Several of the Protestant participants, however, refused to take part in anything resembling an approbation of homosexuality, and they kept the group from adopting a formal policy on the subject. In July 1965 Phyllis Lyon proposed that the CRH create a youth group for homosexuals under 21 years old under the direction of a minister and his wife, but Evander Smith, an attorney with the Society for Individual Rights, protested because he believed that the press and “sanctimonious people” would accuse the group of “proselytizing and recruitment” of impressionable teenagers into the homosexual lifestyle.<sup>86</sup> The fear of controversy forced the Council to set the idea aside at first, but Don Lucas “suggested that those concerned keep thinking about the problem, [and] that it was a serious one that

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<sup>84</sup> Council on Religion and the Homosexual, *A Brief of Injustices: An Indictment of Our Society in Its Treatment of the Homosexual*, (San Francisco, CA: Council on Religion and the Homosexual, 1965), 4.

<sup>85</sup> “The Church and the Homosexual,” *The Ladder*, September 1964.

<sup>86</sup> Council on Religion and the Homosexual, meeting minutes, 13 July 1965, Lyon-Martin Papers.

must be faced.”<sup>87</sup> Lucas later confessed that even though he counseled individual teenagers in the Tenderloin, “legally it was doom to be associated with minors in any context. I worked with a lot gay minors but I never had any problem from it... But it was a very dangerous area. All the attorneys would advise me constantly to be extremely careful in how I did it.”<sup>88</sup>

Although the CRH moved cautiously when it formulated programs designed to help queer youth, the organization successfully initiated several small projects designed to help gay teenagers. In almost every case, the ministers from Glide took the most public role, and they limited their efforts to helping young people develop healthy peer relationships, rather than offering sex-related guidance themselves. In 1965, for example, Glide minister Cecil Williams and sociologist Pat Gumrucku declared: “A recent study in homosexuality [sic] in San Francisco pinpoints the fact that many young people coming into the city fail to establish healthy identities and form appropriate peer group relationships. Obviously, the person leaving his primary family group needs considerable support and discipline of rarefied sort in his emancipation into adult life.”<sup>89</sup>

As they formulated plans to help young people in the Tenderloin, ministers such as Williams kept their intentions oblique and carefully avoided any overt public declaration that might have indicated an intention to counsel teenagers that homosexuality constituted an acceptable lifestyle. As early as February 1964, however, they gave young adults in the city a “directory to community resources” that listed social services and residential options available to teenagers San Francisco, and they included

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Don Lucas, interview, 30 December 1996 through 28 February 1998. It is possible that Lucas conducted these meetings as a part of his role in the Central City Community Action Program. See below.

<sup>89</sup> Pat Gumrucku and Cecil Williams, *Specialized Housing for Young Adults: The Establishment of Social Therapies As a Service-Directed Program in Co-Operation with the Community*, 1965, ii.



the Mattachine Society's address for those with questions about homosexuality.<sup>90</sup> Beginning in 1965 they put together a series of programs that brought queer teenagers together as a means of fostering what the ministers saw as a healthy form of community for young people in the central city. Chuck Lewis, John Moore, and a few other pastors helped open coffee houses in the Tenderloin to offer teenagers, particularly gay ones, places to spend time away from the neighborhood's bars and nightclubs.<sup>91</sup> They invited local musicians to perform for free, and they offered homeless teenagers free non-alcoholic beverages.

In that same year intern Ed Hansen helped organize teenage sex workers into a youth group called "Vanguard," and he hosted dances and social hours for them at Glide.<sup>92</sup> Mattachine President Don Lucas recalled joining Lewis and Don Stuart at one of the church-sponsored coffee houses and remembered going to "counsel with these young people to try to get them to go home. And that's when, of course, I'd find out a lot of them couldn't go home because they'd been kicked out."<sup>93</sup> In order to help ameliorate the situation Lucas encouraged teenagers to bring their parents in to meet with him so that he could provide a form of informal family counseling, "to get the parents to understand and accept their son for who he was."<sup>94</sup>

These ministers performed their most significant work by helping to create a series of "halfway houses" for people in need of shelter living in San Francisco. Just as with its coffee houses, the Glide Foundation avoided any potentially stigmatizing

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<sup>90</sup> "Short Notes," *Mattachine Review*, February 1964.

<sup>91</sup> "Engaging the City- With Love," *Together*, May 1965, 16.

<sup>92</sup> "Conversation on Teen Age Homosexuals," *Vector*, January 1966; Ed Hansen, interview with author, 21 June 2009.

<sup>93</sup> Don Lucas, interview, 30 December 1996 through 28 February 1998.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*

references to homosexuality, but it made these residences open to a number of different groups living in the Central City in need of a place to stay. Working with the Park Presidio Methodist Church, Ted McIlvenna, Cecil Williams and Pat Gumrukcu opened a halfway house in 1965 for people returning from mental hospitals on the outskirts of the Western Addition. They told an editor of *Together* magazine that when it came to the people who stayed there, “Some have no families; while for others, family conflict is at the base of their troubles.”<sup>95</sup>

In 1967, amidst the Summer of Love in the Haight-Ashbury district, the Glide Foundation joined with the Methodist Regional Young Adult Project and the San Francisco Council of Churches to fund “Huckleberry House,” a residence specifically for young runaways. They intended the house to serve as a means to offer teenagers a forum for dealing with conflicts within their families, and for keeping them out of the criminal justice system. Since the police tended to treat all homeless minors, particularly queer ones, as juvenile delinquents, the shelter offered a form of reconciliation that avoided punishment and condemnation. According to Larry Beggs, one of the ministers who ran Huckleberry House: “The central thrust of the service involved our ability to be used by the runaway to get into his family crisis situation with reconciling adults,” and he noted that, “The emphasis at juvenile hall is primarily upon lawbreaking and punishment- and not the family conflict that led the teen-ager to run away as the only type of communication that would be taken seriously.”<sup>96</sup>

## **Sex and the War on Poverty**

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<sup>95</sup> “Halfway House, San Francisco,” *Together*, May 1965, 21.

<sup>96</sup> Larry Beggs, *Huckleberry’s for Runaways* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1969), 11, 38.

Just a few years after the creation of the Council on Religion and the Homosexual, a related set of activists specifically demanded greater state action to address inner city poverty and to assist queer youth. In 1966 a second group of homophiles and Glide-related ministers formed the “Tenderloin Committee” and worked to use the national government’s declaration of “War in Poverty” in the mid-1960s to leverage public assistance for people living in the Central City. In a federally sponsored community action program from 1966-1968, they frequently promoted many of the same principles as the CRH, including a call for greater tolerance and the decriminalization of homosexuality. Unlike the older organization, however, the Tenderloin Committee and Central City Community Action Program rarely spoke about a person’s “right to privacy.” Instead, they argued that the state had a fundamental obligation to support all its citizens, and they sought to use public resources to build neighborhood institutions specifically responsive to local needs. Although they had limited resources and their efforts included a significant amount of middle-class paternalism, the Tenderloin Committee and the Central City Community Action Program moved beyond the “right to privacy” to argue that government institutions had a moral obligation to meet the needs of queer citizens.

The leaders of the Central City Community Action Program may have offered a more assertive politics than their counterparts at the CRH, but they hardly constituted radical or revolutionary ideas. Overwhelmingly middle-class, most of them did not live in the Tenderloin, and they exhibited tremendous faith in the ability of professional experts to bring about social change. Even small efforts to provide direct aid and social services for people residing in the Central City, however, invited hostile interventions

from public authorities. Repeatedly, between 1966 and 1968, government officials attempted to limit or shut down their work, especially regarding their work with queer youth. If calls for a “right to privacy” represented a limited form of politics, it also represented a path of least resistance for activists facing disciplinary surveillance and potential imprisonment. The work of the CCCAP demonstrated the outer boundaries of straight tolerance for queer activism in the mid- to late 1960s.

Some of these limits emerged out of the very ways in which national leaders had conceived of the War on Poverty. In the mid-1960s, most social scientists understood poverty primarily in behavioral terms, and, like their counterparts in education, they frequently argued that family dynamics played a key role in determining a person’s ability to develop a serious work ethic later in life. Rather than focusing their attention on job creation or other structural issues in the economy, experts from the era contended that poor people adapted to their condition by developing a way of living which they passed on from generation to generation. They characterized this “culture of poverty” with a long list of traits that deviated from middle-class norms, including a “lack of impulse control” and “sexual confusion.”<sup>97</sup> When President Lyndon Johnson and Congress created the Office of Economic Opportunity in 1964, they set in motion a wide range of reforms that included measures primarily designed to address the psychology of poor people. For example, Operation Head Start, one of the most famous programs

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<sup>97</sup> Alice O’Connor, *Poverty Knowledge: Social Science, Social Policy, and the Poor in Twentieth-Century U.S. History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 117-123.

associated with the War on Poverty sought to counteract the allegedly detrimental home environments of poor children by bringing them into school at a young age.<sup>98</sup>

In the same year that the federal government created the Office of Economic Opportunity, Washington D.C. police arrested one of Johnson's key aides, Walter Jenkins, for having sex with another man in a public restroom. Taking place on the cusp of a presidential election, the arrest set off a minor scandal that threatened to derail the Democrats' chances of retaining control of the White House. Although public authorities had formally banned gay men and lesbians from federal employment in the late 1940s and 1950s, the Jenkins affair specifically heightened government surveillance of homosexuality and the War on Poverty.<sup>99</sup> Just a few weeks after the scandal broke, *The New York Times* reported that one of the Office of Economic Opportunity's job training programs would screen male all applicants for "homosexual tendencies."<sup>100</sup>

At the local level, however, many gay activists and their allies saw the War on Poverty as a new opportunity for breaking apart the postwar closet. In 1965, a group of homophile organizations from around the country held a conference in New York on "The Homosexual Citizen in the Great Society," inspired by Johnson's promise that every American citizen deserved "to share the dignity of man."<sup>101</sup> The Daughters of Bilitis reported in their newsletter *The Ladder* that one speaker at the conference declared: "Two years ago it was just enough to talk about homosexuality. Now that's

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<sup>98</sup> Michael Katz, *The Undeserving Poor: From the War on Poverty to the War on Welfare* (New York: Pantheon, 1989), 21. For more on the War on Poverty at the national level see James Patterson, *America's Struggle with Poverty in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000).

<sup>99</sup> David Johnson, *The Lavender Scare: The Cold War Persecution of Gays and Lesbians in the Federal Government* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 197-199. For more on the Jenkins affair see Michael Beschloss, ed. *Reaching for Glory: Lyndon Johnson's Secret White House Tapes, 1964-1965* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2001).

<sup>100</sup> "Federal Job Corps to Exclude Youths with Police Records," *New York Times*, 21 November 1964.

<sup>101</sup> "The Homosexual and the Great Society," *Ladder*, January 1966.

now longer the case.” Don Lucas told the readers of the Society of Individual Right’s newsletter *Vector* that the Great Society offered one opportunity to show the larger public that “the homosexual is being denied his civil rights and due process.”<sup>102</sup> In November Mark Forrester, a member of both SIR and the CRH, approvingly cited community organizer Saul Alinsky’s advice in *Vector* that “the real way to attack problems of poverty, inadequate schools, civil rights and prejudice is through the development of resources for the minorities concerned, both in terms of leadership and money.”<sup>103</sup>

When the War on Poverty came to San Francisco, however, government authorities largely ignored the problems of the Tenderloin. In 1964 the organization authorized to distribute federal assistance in the city, the Economic Opportunity Council (EOC), designated four “target areas” for new poverty programs, including the largely Latino Mission District, the predominantly African American Hunters Point and Western Addition neighborhoods, and Chinatown. Although these sections contained over 100,000 poor residents, including almost 80 percent of San Francisco’s African American population, they included less than half of the total number of low-income people living in the city.<sup>104</sup>

Beginning in 1966, several homophile groups and members of the CRH created the Tenderloin Committee, an organization designed to make the Central City a fifth poverty target area.<sup>105</sup> The group initially faced stiff opposition from the leaders of the

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<sup>102</sup> “Scanning the Conference,” *Ladder*, January 1966; Don Lucas, “Social Policy on Homosexuality Developing,” *Vector*, August 1965. Lucas paired the conference on the subject with an ACLU investigation of police entrapment in Southern California and the Episcopal Diocese’s decision to support a study of homosexuality in the same year.

<sup>103</sup> Mark Forrester, “Alinsky Says ‘Act,’” *Vector*, November 1965.

<sup>104</sup> Ralph Kramer, *Participation of the Poor: Comparative Community Case Studies in the War on Poverty* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hill, 1969), 27-9.

<sup>105</sup> Ed Hansen, interview with author, 21 June 2009. The Tenderloin Committee largely consisted of middle-class professionals who did not live in the target area; the Central City Citizens’ Council was the

four neighborhoods originally designated for government assistance, but after they appealed their exclusion to federal authorities and picketed the War on Poverty's main San Francisco offices, the EOC accepted their application in May 1966.<sup>106</sup> By July 1966 the Central City Target Area had elected a temporary governing council, and its leadership largely included members of the Council on Religion and the Homosexual and local homophile organizations.<sup>107</sup> Mark Forrester, for example, headed the group's community outreach programs and enjoyed memberships in the CRH and SIR. Don Lucas, who served as a key administrator in the Central City was one of the founding members of the Mattachine Society and a prominent member of the CRH. Ed Hansen worked on the project until he returned to Southern California in 1967, and Methodist minister and fellow CRH supporter Fred Bird joined the group. In 1966 Harold Call, the president of the Mattachine Society boasted that support for the Central City poverty program largely came from two sources: "From leaders of Urban Center of the Glide (Methodist) Foundation on the one hand, and from leaders from the Mattachine Society on the other."<sup>108</sup> Only Calvin Colt, who crossed over from the community action program in the Mission District, and the leaders of several downtown charities, like the Salvation Army, led the project but did not have deeper roots in Glide or an organization like the Mattachine Society.<sup>109</sup>

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official name of the body that requested federal assistance, and it included neighborhood residents. Nevertheless, the members of the Tenderloin Committee played the largest role in later deciding the direction of the War on Poverty downtown.

<sup>106</sup> This fight took a great deal of effort. For more on the fight between the target areas see Kramer, *Participation of the Poor*, 54; "Another Ruction in Poverty War," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 8 May 1966.

<sup>107</sup> Kramer, *Participation of the Poor*, 54. See also Calvin Colt, Central City Citizens Council, letter to the Economic Opportunity Council of San Francisco, 29 April 1966, Don Lucas Papers.

<sup>108</sup> Harold Call, "Involvement," *Mattachine Review*, July 1966, 6.

<sup>109</sup> The organization forged contacts with people from a diverse array of social agencies, but the leadership primarily came from Glide and the homophile organizations. For a complete list of people and organizations involved in the Community Action Program in 1966 see The Tenderloin Committee, A

Given these connections, it should come as no surprise that the Central City Community Action Program espoused many of the same principles as the homophile groups and the CRH. They frequently stressed the fundamental humanity of gay men and lesbians, and, as they developed programs to serve queer people, Tenderloin activists argued that outside authorities should not attempt to reform or change them. In a 1967 report entitled that *The Tenderloin Ghetto*, Mark Forrester, Ed Hansen, and Fred Bird argued that as the War on Poverty came to the Central City, “it will have to be recognized that many of these young people are homosexuals who either will not or cannot change their sexual orientation. This must not become a barrier to a helping relationship.”<sup>110</sup> They similarly spoke directly to religious institutions, declaring that “it is time that the churches also became known for love, concern, forgiveness, and acceptance. This love should include persons in spite of their way of living.”<sup>111</sup>

The program’s leaders asked for more than just tolerance, as they also stressed the state’s obligation to alleviate inner city poverty. In addition to working to end discrimination, they also sought a measure of redistribution. In a funding proposal to the EOC, the Tenderloin Committee called for the use of tax money to provide services to the central city, particularly the young runaways and homeless people who lived there. In a manner differing sharply from the CRH’s calls for a “right to privacy,” they declared that “it is our contention that the problems of these young persons are the problems of all

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*Funding Proposal for the Tenderloin Project*, n.d. Office of Economic Opportunity, California Counties Project Files, San Francisco County, California State Archives, Sacramento, CA.

<sup>110</sup> Edward Hansen, Mark Forrester, Fred Bird, *The Tenderloin Ghetto: The Young Reject in Our Society* (San Francisco: Glide Urban Center, 1967), 21, Institute of Governmental Studies, University of California, Berkeley.

<sup>111</sup> Edward Hansen, Mark Forrester, Fred Bird, *The Tenderloin Ghetto*, 21.



citizens in the community, particularly parents.”<sup>112</sup> In another proposal, the Tenderloin Committee contended: “We are not here to condemn, or to force people to conform to our way of living or believing. We are here to help these young people find themselves... and... to provide a fair share of the services required in this process which are presently being given to other segments of society, but which are denied these people.”<sup>113</sup> And in April 1966 Hansen spoke before the San Francisco Board of Supervisors and alleged that, “Many youths in our city are being left to a process of self-destruction, without so much as a murmur.... The rest of the city, the elected representatives, members of the economic opportunity council concerned with human poverty, and all others turn their backs on these people and say ‘You haven’t got any political muscle so we will ignore you.’”<sup>114</sup>

From the very outset, relations with straight authorities required the Tenderloin Committee to stake out a narrow path between soliciting assistance for queer people and appearing to condone homosexuality or prostitution. As they sought outside assistance, the group frequently framed the problems of the Central City as a consequence of mainstream society’s failure to tolerate social differences. They repeatedly depicted the Tenderloin as a kind of dumping ground, in which a variety of “rejects” gathered. In their proposal to the EOC, Hansen and Forrester similarly alleged that “our society has long held a massive fear of those who are ‘different,’” and that this “pervasive effort to restrict, cast out and even destroy those who do not conform to the ‘ordinary patterns of

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<sup>112</sup> The Tenderloin Committee, *Funding Proposal for a Community Center and Clinic Facility*, n.d. Office of Economic Opportunity, California Counties Project File.

<sup>113</sup> Harold Kiely cited in The Tenderloin Committee, *A Funding Proposal for the Tenderloin Project*, vi, Don Lucas Papers.

<sup>114</sup> “Reverend Hansen Speaks on Redevelopment,” *Vector*, April 1966.

behavior' of the majority is more apparent than ever." They contended that, "In no place is it more powerfully effective than in ghettos such as San Francisco's Tenderloin."<sup>115</sup>

This condemnation of society's intolerance did not represent a call for a sharp break with middle-class norms or the state. Instead, it stood as a liberal attempt to reform straight institutions and make them more responsive to the needs of queer people. In order to garner outside support and to explain the Central City's poverty, Tenderloin activists frequently inverted the logic in many contemporary psychological treatises on sex education and family life. If environmental factors played a key role in a young person's sexual development, then the nation's failure to provide adequate role models, loving families, or understanding institutions obligated public officials to provide some sort of support for queer youth. In *The Tenderloin Ghetto*, Forrester, Hansen, and Bird argued that while "most youth in America have a good family environment... We see hundreds who are rejected by their families and by society in general."<sup>116</sup> Drawing on contemporary psychology, they argued that whereas "all youth go through the struggle of determining their identity as persons," they declared, the youth of the Tenderloin "are forced to turn to each other as role models."<sup>117</sup> In a separate report they labeled the young people of the Central City "victims of an environment which they had no hand in creating."<sup>118</sup>

This reliance on psychological theories prompted the Tenderloin Committee and the CCCAP to view the causes of poverty through a narrow, paternalistic lens. In

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<sup>115</sup> The Tenderloin Committee, *Proposal for Confronting the Tenderloin Problem: An Answer to Emotional Needs*, 2, n.d. Office of Economic Opportunity, California Counties Project File.

<sup>116</sup> Edward Hansen, Mark Forrester, Fred Bird, *The Tenderloin Ghetto: The Young Reject in Our Society*, 5.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.* 5.

<sup>118</sup> The Tenderloin Committee, *Proposal for Confronting the Tenderloin Problem: An Answer to Emotional Needs*, 6.

essence, these organizations hoped to reclaim or rehabilitate lost youth, who, if accepted by mainstream society, could behave in a more socially acceptable manner. Although the members of these organizations may have pushed back against the criminalization of homosexuality, they also made their own distinctions between “healthy” or “good” types of sex and negative ones. Mark Forrester and Ed Hansen, for example, told the Economic Opportunity Council that “self-destructive sexual expression may result from over-exposure to individuals who have already developed a distorted or damaged pattern of sex behavior.” In their eyes, these damaged adults bore the real responsibility for much of the promiscuity, prostitution, and drug use in the Tenderloin, and they promised authorities that young people there “might otherwise have developed along more-socially acceptable lines.”<sup>119</sup> In another study of the Central City, Forrester and Hansen argued that “because in most instances a full and stable home life is lacking, youth with no other alternatives engage in varied antisocial conduct. Unwanted pregnancies, abortions, and venereal disease are rampant.”<sup>120</sup>

The degree to which Hansen, Forrester and their colleagues subscribed to the paternalism of some of these documents is unclear. The fact that the Tenderloin Committee and Central City Poverty Action Program appeared to both affirm the need to accept people’s sexuality without judgment and a desire to reform teenagers living in the district suggests ideological tensions within the groups and possible concerns about conflict with powerful outside authorities. This seeming contradiction may have reflected some of the growing divisions among gay activists in the mid-1960s as the more conservative approach of the homophile groups slowly evolved into more assertive calls

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<sup>119</sup> The Tenderloin Committee, *Proposal for Confronting the Tenderloin Problem: An Answer to Emotional Needs*, 2.

<sup>120</sup> Mark Forrester and Edward Hansen, untitled report, n.d. Don Lucas Papers.

for liberation and equality.<sup>121</sup> Their frequent descriptions of queer youth as aimless wanderers proved controversial enough that at least two members of the CRH denounced their writings for “failing to understand the nature of the Tenderloin rebel.”<sup>122</sup>

Furthermore, the CCCAP depended almost entirely on funding from potentially hostile outside authorities. While many of its members may have subscribed to contemporary psychological ideas about the dangers of poor adult role models and childhood environments, they also may have deployed those theories to shield their actions from unfriendly critics. When Hansen, Forrester, and their colleagues made a plea on behalf of the “troubled youth” of the Tenderloin, they inverted the arguments of authorities who argued that sex education in the home would cancel out lessons learned on the street. Deprived of the guidance of a loving parent, the Tenderloin Committee seemed to argue, young people had developed numerous sexual problems, and they had moved in large numbers to the streets of San Francisco.

Although the exact views of Hansen, Forrester, and the Tenderloin Committee remain unclear, some of the internal debates among their allies in the Mattachine Society may illuminate some of the complex thinking behind their words. Supportive of the CCCAP, the homophile group proffered a supplementary proposal to the EOC, which reiterated some of the more controversial claims of reports like *The Tenderloin Ghetto*. Similar to Hansen, Forrester and their allies, the Mattachine Society told federal officials: “Promiscuous homosexual behavior may result from indoctrination by other individuals who have already developed this particular pattern of sexuality, including their peers.”

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<sup>121</sup> See Boyd, *Wide Open Town*.

<sup>122</sup> CRH minutes, Years later McIlvenna refused to comment on the actions of the Tenderloin Committee, but he mentioned significant disagreements with their approach to the problems of the central city. Ted McIlvenna, interview with author, 21 April 2009.

These experiences may help confirm a patterning of behavior which might otherwise develop along more socially acceptable lines.”<sup>123</sup> In order to deal with the crisis, the Mattachine Society proposed a “Big Brother approach” in which members of their organization would counsel young people and encourage them to seek the “development of good life values, responsible sexual behavior... and the establishment and maintenance of meaningful inter-personal relationships.”<sup>124</sup> The homophile group further promised federal officials that if they thought a teenager demonstrated some “fear of the opposite sex” they would help prevent “a confirmed homosexual orientation” and push them to resolve their issues with the help of social workers, psychologists or ministers.<sup>125</sup>

This last point proved especially controversial among many of Mattachine’s members, who worried that a “Big Brother approach” invited criticism that the group intended to “indoctrinate children into their lifestyle” and who objected to the document’s claim that people should “prevent homosexuality.” In a letter to the entire organization, leaders Don Lucas and Hal Call reassured them that, “Our wording was carefully chosen to state a posture for the purpose of getting the proposal across- a practical political expedient.... So don’t get hung up on some of the stated concepts- they are purposefully stated as they are at this time.”<sup>126</sup> They suggested that they knew that they faced potentially hostile federal and city officials in the EOC, and they contended that several civil rights groups had successfully compromised with government guidelines so that

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<sup>123</sup> Mattachine Society, *Proposal for Confronting the Tenderloin Problem: A Proposal Submitted to the Economic Opportunities Council*, Don Lucas Papers. Emphasis in original.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> Mattachine Society, Inc. letter to organizations in the homophile movement, 21 March 1966, Don Lucas Papers.

“the benefits to the people that are proposed in the program actually filter down to where they DO help the poor.”<sup>127</sup>

Although it’s unclear if the Tenderloin Committee underwent a similar internal debate, the group went out of its way to use its church affiliations to give its proposal the appearance of respectability. As with the CRH’s work with queer youth, Hansen and Forrester made sure to give their projects at least the veneer of religious outreach. They promised in *The Tenderloin Ghetto* that “we propose that churches in or near the Tenderloin area of San Francisco discuss way they can work together to meet the spiritual needs of the youth and the single young adults of the Tenderloin. The churches, perhaps more than any other institution in society, represent morality [and] judgment about right and wrong...”<sup>128</sup> Furthermore, the Tenderloin Committee worked primarily out of Glide, and told EOC officials that they intended to ask Jewish, Catholic, and Protestant leaders to serve as youth counselors downtown.<sup>129</sup> They solicited financial support and a public endorsement from the CRH before they distributed their reports, and they worked closely with a number of charities with religious affiliations including the Salvation Army and the Y.M.C.A.<sup>130</sup>

The issuance of a new set of federal policy guidelines in 1966 proved that the community action program needed to take such precautions. In March of that year officials in Washington D.C. reminded local programs across the country that all federally funded organization needed to restrict employment to people of “good character

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<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> Hansen, Forrester, Bird, *Tenderloin Ghetto*, 19. The minister and the activist went on to reproach religious groups for not doing enough to teach acceptance and love for everyone, and called for congregations to address the gap between themselves and the people of the central city.

<sup>129</sup> Hansen, Forrester, and Bird, *The Tenderloin Ghetto*, 21.

<sup>130</sup> Hansen and Forrester, *A Funding Proposal for the Tenderloin Project*, ii.

and reputation.” Their directives went on to specifically assert that “recent conviction of a crime involving moral turpitude shall be considered strong evidence as failure to meet these standards.”<sup>131</sup> Since the CCCAP primarily dealt with gay runaways, sex workers, and drug dealers, this directive conflicted with the “maximum feasible representation” clause of the Economic Opportunity Act. Mainstream conceptions of “good character” frequently did not include the behaviors of many of the people living in the Tenderloin or working on the War on Poverty there. Many of the CCCAP’s leaders, for example, had played significant roles in potentially controversial groups, such as SIR or the Mattachine Society, which had spent considerable time and energy trying to overturn discriminatory policies of this nature.<sup>132</sup>

The distribution of the guidelines spurred a number of conflicts between the San Francisco Economic Opportunity Council and Washington officials. Federal authorities threatened to withhold funding for all projects unless the local organization complied with the standards.<sup>133</sup> San Francisco poverty officials essentially ended the conflict by agreeing to comply with the guidelines, while also electing to disregard them. In August 1966 Calvin Colt reported to the Central City Community Action Program that its interim board had decided to accept the directives “under protest,” and that they intended to actually ignore them in practice. This move left them vulnerable to future accusations that they violated federal rules and they risked losing their funding. Colt argued that

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<sup>131</sup> “EOC Position on CAP Memos #23 & #24,” *The Journal*, September 1966, Institute of Governmental Studies. These guidelines also included prohibitions against supporting candidates for public office.

<sup>132</sup> A document listing “applicant characteristics” from the Central City Poverty Program office in October 1967, for example, indicated that 57 of the 467 job applications they had received came from people with arrest records. 7 of them indicated “drug problems” and 16 indicated “alcohol problems.” The form also lists 16 transsexuals who applied for positions in a separate category. “Applicant Characteristics- Central City,” October 1967, Don Lucas Papers.

<sup>133</sup> “A Deadlock in Poverty Fund Battle,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, 27 July 1966; “Local Poverty Fighters Yield,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, 28 July 1966.

since Washington officials had “left some discretion to the local CAP agency... in defining what constitutes poor character, bad reputation and moral turpitude,” they could make their own exceptions and lodge appeals when necessary. He cautioned, however, that, “the enemies of our program now have open to them the same right of interpretation and challenge of our definitions. It has all become clouded and murky.”<sup>134</sup>

Even without direct federal intervention, the Central City Community Action Program faced limited resources. In addition to potentially hostile scrutiny from local and federal authorities, the Tenderloin activists worked under the same constrained conditions as poverty projects across the country. Limited middle-class enthusiasm for income redistribution and the escalating costs of the War in Vietnam ensured that all projects spun out of the 1964 Economic Opportunity Act across the country would receive relatively little support in subsequent years. According to historian Thomas Jackson, as early as 1965, “in the eyes of many of its critics the War on Poverty had become scarcely more than a skirmish.”<sup>135</sup> Furthermore, the total budget for San Francisco-based projects did not expand when the Central City joined the Economic Opportunity Council. This budgetary cap essentially compelled different groups of poor people to fight over limited resources, and although the Tenderloin represented one of the poorest areas in the city, it only received approximately \$210,000 for its expenses in 1966.<sup>136</sup> This number would represent an all time high for the program, since in

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<sup>134</sup> Calvin Colt, letter, no title, 16 August 1966, Don Lucas Papers. See also Minutes of the Central City Interim Board Meeting,” 26 July 1966, Don Lucas Papers.

<sup>135</sup> Jackson, “The State, the Movement, and the Urban Poor,” 417.

<sup>136</sup> “Tenderloin Claims Poverty War Bias,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, 11 May 1966. This figure represents the number the EOC conditionally released in May of that year.



subsequent years, like similar programs around the country, the Central City Community Action Program faced increasing budget cuts.<sup>137</sup>

Despite these limitations, from 1966 to 1968 the Central City Community Action Program created an important set of projects. Most notably, this included the deployment of “street workers” to counsel residents of the Tenderloin and to refer them to federal and local social services. Reflecting the mixture of paternalism and respect of the activists who planned it, this project included both an attempt to help Central City residents gain access to public resources and to facilitate their re-entry into middle-class society. Similar to McIlvenna’s “ministry by penetration,” the Community Action Program hired counselors to walk the streets of the Tenderloin to offer on the spot counseling and information about social services to homeless teens and queer runaways living in the district. Activists such as Mark Forrester and Ed Hansen hoped that these workers would both encourage young residents to improve the neighborhood and provide middle class role models for them. In an explanation of their projects, Forrester and Hansen argued that these counselors could serve as “trustworthy friends” and an alternative to the drug dealers and pornographers who worked in the Central City. In *The Tenderloin Ghetto* they called them “acceptable adult role models to turn to for advice, guidance and advice.”<sup>138</sup>

Although it is unclear if Tenderloin residents themselves sought new “role models,” this outreach program specifically sought to address the failure of straight institutions to speak to queer youth. In a survey of area health needs, the Tenderloin

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<sup>137</sup> Kramer, *Participation of the Poor*; Patterson, *America’s Struggle Against Poverty in the Twentieth Century*; Katz, *The Undeserving Poor*; Jackson, “The State, the Movement and the Urban Poor.”

<sup>138</sup> The Tenderloin Committee, *Proposal for Confronting the Tenderloin Problem: An Answer to Emotional Needs*, 2.

Committee noted that teenagers living downtown frequently asked for sex information, and poverty activists referred them to medical doctors or clinics such as Planned Parenthood. Meanwhile, the Mattachine Society offered to help gay teenagers “hung up on their sexuality” to accept their erotic desires as natural and acceptable parts of their being. In a supporting statement to the Tenderloin Committee’s application to the EOC the homophile group pledged to “not treat homosexuality... as a disease,” but rather “as one of many aspects of behavior” which could in some circumstances create conflict with the larger society.<sup>139</sup> Although these street workers undoubtedly carried their own set of distinctions between “good” and “bad” types of sex, the fact that they encouraged acceptance of queer sexuality represented a radical departure from the sex education carried out in Bay Area homes, schools, and churches.

Similarly, the activists working in the Central City understood that hospitals tended to treat queer patients as mentally ill, and, therefore, they worked to bring medical and psychological professionals who held less stigmatizing views to the area. They also knew that elderly and poor patients had difficulty reaching treatment or paying for it. In *The Tenderloin Ghetto*, Forrester and Hansen noted that although the downtown target area exhibited high rates of sexually-transmitted diseases, malnutrition, and drug-related health problems, most of the neighborhood’s inhabitants refused to go to city-run hospitals or clinics.<sup>140</sup> In an undated letter about his work with the War on Poverty, Don Lucas contended that the majority of Tenderloin residents “were either unable or reluctant to go to any central location for needed [medical] help.”<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>139</sup> Mattachine Society, *Proposal for Confronting the Tenderloin Problem*.

<sup>140</sup> Forrester and Hansen, *The Tenderloin Ghetto*, 13-15.

<sup>141</sup> Don Lucas, letter to Whom it May Concern, n.d. Don Lucas Papers.

The staff of the Central City Poverty Program, enlisted the help of sympathetic health professionals and attempted to make them more accessible to the low-income, transient, and homeless people living in their target area. In 1966 they brought in liberal City Health Department official Joel Fort to create the “Center for Special Problems,” which dealt with transgender identity, homosexuality and transsexuality in a non-judgmental fashion. Fort joined the Tenderloin Committee that same year, and at a national homophile conference in San Francisco he issued a public statement on homosexuality which read: “Laws governing sexual behavior should be reformed to deal only with clearly anti-social behavior, such as behavior involving violence or youth. The sexual behavior of individual adults by mutual consent in private should not be a matter of public concern.”<sup>142</sup> In 1968 he echoed Lucas’ concerns when he declared: “In a sense the whole poverty program is a criticism of medical and public health program- they are not reaching the people. There is a gap in health and social service.”<sup>143</sup>

From 1966 to 1968, Fort and the Central City Poverty Board sought to pull medical professionals outside of their home institutions, bringing them closer to the people they intended to serve. In June 1967 they hosted a street fair with live music at the corner of Seventh and Folsom, complete with booths from the City Health Department’s “venereal disease clinic,” Planned Parenthood, and SIR.<sup>144</sup> In that same year they opened a “multi service center” with a medical clinic near the Mattachine Society’s central offices at Mission and Third Street. In their funding proposal to the EOC, the Tenderloin Committee contended that a downtown health office with resources

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<sup>142</sup> Joel Fort, “Public Policy Statement on Homosexuality,” National Homophile Conference, San Francisco, CA, 1966, Don Lucas Papers.

<sup>143</sup> “Mobile Health: Van for Central City,” *San Francisco Examiner*, 9 August 1968.

<sup>144</sup> “Something for All at Street Fair,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, 26 June 1967.

from Fort's Center for Special Problems could better meet the "specialized" needs of the people living there, that a clinic could provide emergency care to sick patients, and that it could offer better basic medical services to area residents than the city's major hospitals.<sup>145</sup> A year later, Fort and Lucas took their approach a step further by setting up a mobile health unit out of a Dodge Camper, which they then used to give the Tenderloin's more transient inhabitants access to screenings from a registered nurse, information about malnutrition, birth control, and sexually transmitted diseases, and vaccinations for common illnesses.<sup>146</sup>

At the same time, the poverty board set up a recreational center for teenagers living in the Central City in 1967. Dubbed "Hospitality House," the site extended the coffee houses and social events begun by the Glide Foundation and San Francisco Council of Churches in 1965. Disturbed by the seeming ease with which teenagers in the Tenderloin engaged in prostitution or used drugs, the center's organizers hoped that if they provided a safe alternative to life in the red light district, they could encourage young people to return to school or find "legitimate" employment. Sister Betsy Hague, a nurse who volunteered at Hospitality House recalled that the site "was planned as a recreation center where [young people] could feel welcome and accepted" and where they could "come to get off the streets."<sup>147</sup> She recalled meeting with a variety of gay men, lesbians, bisexual, transgender and transsexual persons, and in an article she wrote for the *American Journal of Nursing*, Hague spelled out the logic behind the counseling

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<sup>145</sup> Tenderloin Committee, *Funding Proposal for a Community Center and Clinic Facility*, n.d. Lyon-Martin Papers, GLBT Historical Society. See also "Health Center: New Plan for Tenderloin," *San Francisco Progress*, 1-2 February 1967.

<sup>146</sup> "Mobile Health: Van for Central City," *San Francisco Examiner*, 9 August 1968. The EOC gave Fort and Lucas a budget of \$15,000 for the unit.

<sup>147</sup> "In San Francisco's Tenderloin," *American Journal of Nursing*, October 1969, 2180.

services Hospitality House staff made to them: “Because homosexuals are often discriminated against in employment, they are often forced into seeking illegal methods of support.... These youths need many supports. They did not know how to study, nor did they have places conducive to study, to say nothing of fitting... into a society from which they had been alienated.”<sup>148</sup> To remedy the situation, staff workers like Hague attempted to discourage the young people who came to the center to stop using drugs, such as marijuana or LSD, and counseled them to adopt gender-appropriate behavior.

Although the paternalism of staff members such as Hague may have alienated some teenagers, the center attracted significant support from many young people in the Tenderloin. Rather than radically altering the sexual and moral landscape of the Bay Area, the center remade it to carve out a welcome space for queer youth. In 1968, Charles Clay, the director of Hospitality House, told *The San Francisco Chronicle*: “This place is a substitute for a family- and it’s kind of like a common living room.”<sup>149</sup> The solidarity that Hospitality House helped engender among the young people who used proved its most successful accomplishment. Hague even remembered debating with several of the people she attempted to counsel about whether or not they needed to change their sexual or gender behavior. She wrote: “To these young people belief in the life style they had adopted was crucial to their self image.” Although Hague would insist that queer teenagers needed her help to change their behavior, the people she encountered at the center frequently challenged the judgments implicit in her counsel, and she indignantly recalled an occasion where “a Butch (the masculine figure in the lesbian

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<sup>148</sup> Ibid. 2182.

<sup>149</sup> “A Street for the Pariah, But No Carnival of Crime,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, 11 July 1968.

couple) told me that homosexuality was a matter of genes, and could she help it if God gave her more male chromosomes that he gave me?”<sup>150</sup>

The resistance volunteers such as Hague encountered at Hospitality House may have stemmed from the fourth significant step the Central City Poverty Program adopted to ameliorate conditions in the Tenderloin. Several of the key members of the target area board took the OEO’s directive to foster “maximum feasible participation” from the poor as a mandate to organize low-income residents into political coalitions that could demand a greater share of resources from city elites. Most notably, Mark Forrester saw the War on Poverty as an opportunity to help the people of the Tenderloin to challenge the Mayor and Board of Supervisors to better serve the neighborhood. As the EOC debated the Tenderloin Committee’s petition to receive federal funding, he composed a letter to the editors of SIR’s newsletter *Vector*, calling for an alliance between the homophile groups and the poor residents of the downtown neighborhood: “In the North and South of Market, or what is called the Central City, there exists a body of unorganized power mostly in the form of votes which may very well be the fulcrum upon which whole elections turn. The groups which organize this power will be in an excellent position to bargain when decision making time rolls around.”<sup>151</sup>

Although his largely middle-class colleagues at SIR largely declined to work with him in the Tenderloin, Forrester found allies in the Central City Poverty Program. In February 1967 he put together a meeting at the Glide Church between representatives of the city police and community residents. Several people at the encounter demanded an end to official harassment of sex workers and minors living in the Tenderloin, and

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<sup>150</sup> Hague, “In San Francisco’s Tenderloin,” 2181.

<sup>151</sup> Mark Forester, letter, *Vector*, May 1966.

Charles Clay of Hospitality House demanded a police review board.<sup>152</sup> Later that year Forrester worked with Glide's Cecil Williams to set up a service called Citizens Alert that would monitor police actions in the Tenderloin.

The Central City Poverty Program's efforts to empower Tenderloin residents included the provision of legal services. They staffed both their multi-service center and Hospitality House with volunteers from Legal Aid. In 1967, board director Calvin Colt and the Central City EOC tried to convince San Francisco's law enforcement to decriminalize prostitution in the Tenderloin, and in the summer of that year they enlisted the San Francisco Legal Assistance Foundation, a War on Poverty program, to help end police sweeps of sex workers in the Tenderloin. Herb Donaldson, chief counsel for the Central City Law Office replied: "[We] are aware that your office for some time has attempted to arrive at a new proposal dealing with prostitution as a social problem, rather than a violation of the law. It is our firm opinion that the policy of deterring prostitution by mass arrests and longer sentences in the County Jail is completely negative in nature... No matter how long these people are held in jail, at such time as they are released the condition of poverty which forced them to the streets will still exist."<sup>153</sup> Donaldson went on to promise Colt that he would support greater efforts to provide "street walkers" with counseling, rehabilitation, and job skills and training.<sup>154</sup> A month later the Police-Community Relations Unit reported that the San Francisco Hotel Association and Chamber of Commerce had offered to "employ street workers made up of ex-prostitutes and pimps" to offer "health counseling, basic education, training in

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<sup>152</sup> "Minutes- Central City Police Community Relations Committee," 14 February 1967, Glide Church, Don Lucas Papers.

<sup>153</sup> Herb Donaldson, letter to Calvin Colt, 28 August 1967, Don Lucas Papers.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid.

skills, and religious counseling” to sex workers in the Tenderloin. William Popham, the head of the Police-Community Relations unit, concluded that, “This will not stop prostitution, but if it takes care of forty or fifty prostitutes a year it will justify funding.”<sup>155</sup>

Taken together, these efforts represented merely a modest effort to ameliorate living conditions in the Tenderloin, and they reflected the CCCAP’s larger goal of attempting to make government institutions more responsive to the needs of queer people. Nevertheless, in the late 1960s, they proved controversial enough to attract hostile attention from California Governor Ronald Reagan, who moved to cut state and federal support for the programs.

From the moment he entered politics, the former actor demonstrated a willingness to uphold the legal and political boundaries of the closet. When he ran for governor in 1966, he alleged that the University of California had harbored “homosexuals and communists” during the Free Speech Movement, and he challenged the school’s regents to conduct a thorough investigation of its faculty and student body.<sup>156</sup> His attitudes towards queer sexuality, however, differed very little from those of his predecessors. In fact, he won office by competing against two of California’s staunchest supporters of the closet. In the Republican primary in 1966, he defeated San Francisco Mayor George Christopher, and in the general election that year he beat former San Francisco prosecutor

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<sup>155</sup> “A Plan to Reduce Prostitution in the Central City Area,” *News and Views*, September 1967, Don Lucas Papers.

<sup>156</sup> “Reagan Hits Choice of Regents for UC Inquiry,” *Los Angeles Times*, 22 May 1966.



and state Attorney General Edmund “Pat” Brown. The issue of homosexuality did not surface in either campaign.<sup>157</sup>

In 1967, however, Reagan himself became embroiled in a sex scandal that would renew his public commitment to policing queer sex. Almost three years after the Jenkins case embarrassed Lyndon Johnson, syndicated columnist Drew Pearson alleged that Reagan had harbored a pair of homosexuals in his administration and had shielded them from disciplinary action for six months. According to the writer, an internal investigation launched by the governor had revealed “a tape of a [homosexual] sex orgy which had taken place at a cabin near Lake Tahoe leased by two members of Reagan’s staff.”<sup>158</sup> A follow-up report from the *New York Times* confirmed that former actor’s press secretary, Lyn Nofziger, had told a group of at least six journalists at the National Governors’ Conference in October that he had dismissed the two gay men from his staff.<sup>159</sup> As the scandal steadily unfolded around him, Reagan first reacted angrily, denied the rumors, and lashed out at Pearson, telling the columnist that he should stop using a typewriter because “he’s better with a pencil on outbuilding walls.”<sup>160</sup>

Just two months after the scandal, Reagan lodged an official complaint with the regional office of the federal Office of Economic Opportunity about some of the programs underway in the Tenderloin District. Newspaper explanations for the governor’s action provided only vague explanations for the move, yet they did suggest that Reagan objected both on fiscal and moral grounds. Gubernatorial spokesman Paul

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<sup>157</sup> For more on Reagan’s campaigns see Lisa McGirr, *Suburban Warriors: The Rise of the New American Right* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000).

<sup>158</sup> “Reagan Denies Report by Drew Pearson of Homosexual Ring Involving Staff,” *New York Times*, 1 November 1967; Rowland Evans and Robert Novak, “Reagan’s Denial of Staff Problems Seen as First Serious Political Error,” *Washington Post*, 5 November 1967.

<sup>159</sup> “Reagan Rebutted on Aides’ Ouster,” *New York Times*, 5 November 1967.

<sup>160</sup> “Reagan Denies Report by Drew Pearson of Homosexual Ring Involving Staff,” *New York Times*, 1 November 1967.

Beck singled out Community Action Program's use of street workers in a public statement on the issue, calling their efforts to form a rapport with Central City residents "too vague in concept and direction." Beck went on to argue that, in addition to serving no clear purpose, the project "lacked adequate safeguards" to keep street workers "from involvement in compromising situations."<sup>161</sup> Paul Zimmer, deputy director of California's Office of Economic Opportunity, criticized the activists' stated goal of "mingling with narcotics addicts and homosexuals, aiming to rehabilitate them by setting a good example," and he argued that the governor needed to veto the program since it "could turn out to be quite inflammatory."<sup>162</sup>

The scandal unfolded against a growing national conservative backlash against President Johnson's War on Poverty, particularly the use of public resources to mobilize groups of low-income residents in the target areas. As early as 1965 former state senator Caspar Weinberger lashed out at San Francisco Mayor Jack Shelley for ceding control of the EOC to neighborhood groups, and in a column in the *Los Angeles Times* the San Francisco Republican asserted that radicals intended to use "anti-poverty money to form the poor into a large, vocal pressure group to demand more of what they felt to be their due in the present economy."<sup>163</sup> Reagan harbored his own disapproval for the War on Poverty, criticizing it as "the biggest pork barrel and political patronage we've ever seen" and terming it a "failure."<sup>164</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> "Reagan Veto of VISTA in Tenderloin," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 4 January 1968.

<sup>162</sup> "Reagan Veto of VISTA in Tenderloin," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 4 January 1968; "Reagan Vetoes Poverty Fund for Program in S.F." *Los Angeles Times*, 4 January 1968.

<sup>163</sup> Caspar Weinberger, "Poverty Funds Aimed at Getting More Funds," *Los Angeles Times*, 29 December 1965.

<sup>164</sup> "Poverty War Big Pork Barrel, Reagan Says," *Los Angeles Times*, 13 March 1967; "Reagan Calls War on Poverty Spending in the State a Failure," *Los Angeles Times*, 24 September 1967.

As early as 1966, political opposition weakened Congressional support for the Office of Economic Opportunity, and with the election of Republican President Richard Nixon in 1968, federal funding for its programs slackened considerably. Although it is unclear how its leaders reacted to the budget cuts, the CCCAP laid off some of its staff in 1969. In the early 1970s, the larger San Francisco Economic Opportunity Council similarly cut many of its workers, and eventually disbanded in 1973.<sup>165</sup> A year later, the Nixon administration disbanded OEO in Washington, and reassigned many of its functions to other parts of the federal government.<sup>166</sup>

## **Conclusion**

In subsequent decades, the Tenderloin not only remained the Bay Area's most visible red light district, it also witnessed increasing rates of poverty and violent crime. In the 1970s and 1980s living conditions in the area deteriorated. In the mid-1970s, the *Los Angeles Times* called the neighborhood "a place of prostitutes and pimps, muggers and thieves."<sup>167</sup> In 1976, one-time CCCAP activist Mark Forrester organized Vietnam veterans to escort elderly residents on the street to deter robberies.<sup>168</sup> In 1980 Glide remained one of the few institutions to offer social services in the neighborhood, and minister Cecil Williams told a journalist: "What all of us are trying to do is plug away at some of the problem areas, and relate to the needs of the people... The role of the church is to be in the world, among the people."<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>165</sup> "Results of the City's War on Poverty," *San Francisco Sunday Examiner-Chronicle*, 4 February 1973; "More Firings to Save OEO Here," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 28 February 1973.

<sup>166</sup> Patterson, *America's Struggle Against Poverty in the Twentieth Century*, 143.

<sup>167</sup> "Convoy Duty in Bay City Tenderloin," *Los Angeles Times*, 13 February 1976.

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

<sup>169</sup> "San Francisco's Hangover Square," *Los Angeles Times*, 23 June 1980.

If the CRH and the CCCAP failed to ameliorate social conditions in the Tenderloin, some of the key elements of their efforts would live on in the “culture wars” of the late twentieth century. Reagan’s veto not only foreshadowed his handling of the AIDS crisis in the 1980s, it also marked the outer limits of public officials’ tolerance for queer activism in the 1960s. In subsequent years, the calls to decriminalize homosexuality made by CRH would find growing support among lawmakers, the courts, and portions of the straight public. Just sixteen months after Reagan’s veto, San Francisco Assemblyman Willie Brown sponsored a bill in the California legislature legalizing private sex acts between consenting adults. Although it did not pass, his gesture signaled the increasing acceptance of both public officials and many voters that citizens deserved a fundamental “right to sexual privacy,” free from state surveillance. Support for this principle grew even as groups of suburban parents pushed officials to expand programs on marriage, sex, and family life education. Even as the state grew increasingly willing to decriminalize queer sex behind closed doors, California’s schools simultaneously taught students tolerance for homosexuals and continued to insist that straight marriage represented the most mature form of sexual relationship.

## **Chapter 6**

### **Tolerance: Pornography, Sex Education, and Consenting Adults**

#### **Introduction**

In 1970 the United States Commission on Obscenity and Pornography signaled the emergence of a new liberal set of attitudes on sex. Initially created by Congress to uncover solutions for what lawmakers called growing “national concern” over sexually-explicit materials, the group of former legislators, judges, and clergy who made up the commission released two significant conclusions in their final report. First, the group pushed all public authorities to repeal prohibitions against the private sale or consumption of pornography. “Society’s attempts to legislate for adults in the area of obscenity have not been successful,” the commission declared, and it contended that “empirical research” had failed to indicate that “exposure to explicit sexual materials” played a major role in the “causation of delinquent behavior.” Second, the commission interpreted the spread of erotic books stores, pornographic movie theaters, and topless bars in the nation’s metropolises in the 1960s as a sign that many parents had failed to speak about sex to their children. “Sexual information is so important,” it noted, “that if people cannot obtain it openly... from legitimate sources... they will seek it through whatever channels and sources are available.” The commission, therefore, called for a “massive

sex education effort” in the nation’s homes, schools, and churches, in order to better “provide a sound foundation for our society’s basic institutions of marriage and family.”<sup>1</sup>

In the five years before the commission made its recommendations, straight liberals across the country formulated a pair of strategic responses to the sexual revolution of the 1960s. In this period, a growing number of judges, lawmakers, and middle-class straight voters simultaneously advocated the decriminalization of several forms of queer sexuality and championed classroom-based sex education as a tool for improving marriage and straight family life. These strategies reflected an increasingly popular liberal belief that the state’s treatment of homosexuality and pornography was both ineffective and inhumane, and they signaled growing new concerns among many parents about teenage sex and drug use. In the late 1960s, a large number of lawmakers, judges, and straight voters believed that decriminalization offered the possibility of using police resources more effectively, and many family life experts and parents hoped that classroom-based sex education could offer a more comprehensive, compassionate solution to the problem of sexual deviance. Their ultimate success meant that state repression of queer sexuality dropped at the same time that rhetorical support for straight relationships actually increased. Rather than a purely egalitarian moment, the late 1960s represented an era in which the connection between the state and sexuality shifted. Taken together, decriminalization and classroom-based sex education constituted both a liberalization of the postwar closet and a reinscription of a social hierarchy that promoted heterosexual marriage above all other types of relationships.

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Commission on Obscenity and Pornography, *Technical Report*, Volume 9 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1970), 47-55.

In San Mateo and Santa Clara counties, support for the two moves grew out of the changing dynamics of metropolitan space. On one hand, suburbanization in the late 1960s appeared to insulate most Peninsula and South Bay residents from the most visible forums for commercial sex. Distance from the Tenderloin and the visible gay communities of San Francisco allowed some straight voters to express a limited tolerance for queer sexuality. On the other hand, large numbers of San Mateo and Santa Clara county teenagers traveled to countercultural enclaves in San Francisco and Berkeley and brought new attitudes about sex and drugs back with them to their hometowns. At the same time, several adult-related businesses opened near San Jose's aging downtown and along the South Bay's major freeways. At the grassroots level, classroom-based sex education re-emerged as a middle-class strategy to manage an upsurge in teenage premarital sexuality, drug use, and suburban businesses offering adult entertainment. For the first time since the Second World War, large numbers of straight voters worried that they had lost control of their children and their surrounding communities. Beginning in the mid-1960s liberal national groups such as the Sex Information and Education Council of the United States (SIECUS) encouraged local school districts across the country to promote tolerance for deviant sexual practices such as homosexuality and reinforce classroom instruction on marriage. In the wake of the sexual revolution a few years later, their ideas garnered growing support from parents in San Mateo and Santa Clara counties, and straight voters increasingly turned to public education to reform wayward youth.

Viewing classroom-based sex education and growing straight tolerance for pornography and homosexuality as interrelated processes can help scholars rethink two

significant historiographical trends. First, most histories of sex education have struggled to reconcile the seemingly conservative support for marriage of groups like SIECUS with their apparent unwillingness to condemn premarital sex or pornography.<sup>2</sup> This confusion primarily stems from the inability of many historians to recognize that a new enduring relationship between the state and sexuality first emerged in the late 1960s. Liberal groups such as SIECUS did not merely bridge a repressive past with a liberated future. Instead, they carved out a new sexual hierarchy that separated queer relationships from both straight marriage and violent acts such as rape. If American had previously only distinguished between normative marital sexuality and deviant criminal ones, in the 1960s groups like SIECUS promoted a new middle category for which they espoused tolerance but not full acceptance. This cultural gray area included premarital sex, pornography, homosexuality, and a variety of other private, consensual acts between adults. Rather than “vestigial moralism,” their strong emphasis on the importance of straight relationships ensured that pieces of the postwar closet would endure in subsequent decades, even as their support for de-criminalizing queer sex would help to liberalize it.

Second, viewing calls for tolerance and for sex education as interrelated processes helps shift scholarly attention away from the rise of the New Right in the 1960s. In the past twenty years, political histories of sex education have suffered from an excessive scholarly interest in the conservatives who opposed classroom instruction on marriage

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<sup>2</sup> Jeffrey Moran, *Teaching Sex: The Shaping of Adolescence in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000); Janice Irvine, *Talk About Sex: The Battles Over Sex Education in the United States* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2002).



and family life.<sup>3</sup> Focusing exclusively on the New Right, however, has obscured the fact that the overwhelming majority of middle-class parents supported classroom-based sex education and has diverted attention away from the fundamentally normative nature of the subject itself. Since World War II significant majorities of Americans had viewed sex education as an important tool for strengthening straight marriage and family life. Support for the issue has largely crested during periods of high sexual turmoil, during which large numbers of straight voters have worried about youthful misconduct. During the upheaval of the late 1960s, overwhelming numbers of middle-class parents supported changes in curricula to contain what they saw as the excesses of the counterculture. If nothing else, debates over sex education in the period demonstrate that the overwhelming majority of Americans sought the best tools for promoting straight relationships. Interest in state support for heterosexual marriage in the twentieth century has always transcended the boundaries of the New Right. The fact that conservative activists ultimately failed to keep sex and family life education out of California's public schools not only signals that their concerns did not speak to a majority of voters but also that historians have largely missed the opportunity to explore the normative sexual politics of the broader center.

In subsequent decades, tolerance- but not acceptance- of queer sexuality would dominate mainstream middle-class discourses in the culture wars of the late twentieth century. The battles over sex education, pornography, and homosexuality in the late 1960s not only established an enduring antipathy between conservative and moderate

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<sup>3</sup> For books that focus on controversies over sex education to explain the New Right see William Martin, *With God on Our Side: The Rise of the Religious Right in America* (New York: Broadway Books, 1996); Lisa McGirr, *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University, 2000); Janice Irvine, *Talk About Sex*. Kristin Luker's work provides a notable exception to this trend. She describes the controversies over sex education in the 1960s as a key conflict that gave rise to both "sexual conservatives" and "sexual liberals." Kristen Luker, *When Sex Goes to School: Warring View on Sex Education Since the Sixties* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2006).

parents, they also foreshadowed later battles over gay rights. In the same years that federal and state courts concluded that all Americans had a fundamental “right to privacy,” a majority of straight voters moved to strengthen the normative curricula of the public education system.

### **Family Life Education’s Consolidation and Shift in Philosophy**

In the second half of the 1960s, sex and family life experts across the nation continued to promote several key arguments that they had first developed after the Second World War and proponents of parent education continued to organize forums at the local level, on the subject for interested mothers and fathers. In academic journals and popular magazines, scientific authorities on straight family life continued to argue that sex education represented a form of character development that began with birth. In a 1968 article in *The Family Coordinator*, family life education professor Luther Baker contended that “sex education at its best focuses on human relationships and is concerned about *all* ways men and women relate to one another.” A year later, Alan Guttmacher trumpeted the triumph of parent education in an editorial in *Parents’ Magazine and Better Homemaking* by declaring: “Parents [today] are aware that children’s feelings about sex are influenced by their own attitudes, and by their relationship to each other and to their children. They know also that sex education must include an appreciation of human relations and human values- and any sense of values has its beginnings in the home.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Alan Guttmacher, editorial, “Sex Education in the Schools,” *Parents’ Magazine and Better Homemaking*, April 1969, 40.

Furthermore, these experts continued to view sexual and child development as a place-based process. Conscious that an individual's psychology stemmed from environmental factors such as peer groups and parenting, their discourses on sexuality crafted a social geography composed of "healthy" and "dangerous" locations for young people. Guttmacher's reference to the importance of the "home," for example, echoed several decades' worth of writings from scientific authorities on the subject. In a 1966 essay in *The PTA Magazine*, family life professor F. R. Wake argued that "sex education will be learned in many places, no matter where it is taught. The child grows up in a particular atmosphere, which is to a great extent a family atmosphere. From it he absorbs a thousand impressions never deliberately taught him..."<sup>5</sup>

In the mid-1960s, in Santa Clara County school districts and parents adopted programs on sex and family life education programs on piecemeal basis as they had in the 1940s and 1950s. Groups such as the PTA frequently brought in outside speakers to address mothers and fathers on the importance of early discussions with their children, and, in some cases, they asked education authorities to screen films on the subject for area students. In 1963, for example, Betty Rogway, a PTA coordinator from Palo Alto, asked an audience of volunteers at a conference on parent education in San Francisco: "The assumption is that children should have sex information. Children will have it, but will it be the kind that we want them to have?" She pushed her colleagues to organize film showings on sex, human growth, and family life, to encourage parents to meet with medical experts, and to distribute books and pamphlets on the subject to local libraries. Echoing the middle-class, scientific consensus of the last twenty years, she told them:

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<sup>5</sup> F. R. Wake, "Are Parents the Best Sex Educators?" *The PTA Magazine*, November 1966, 8.

“We must help parents to understand normal development in the young child’s ‘bathroom talk.’”<sup>6</sup>

As they had during the long postwar period, middle-class, married women like Rogway continued to turn out in large numbers to discuss sex education at the grassroots level. In the mid-1960s, local PTAs in the South Bay continued to sponsor group discussions and public forums on the subject. In 1964, Santa Clara’s Jefferson Junior High PTA organized a four part series on “What to Tell Them,” after the unit’s members overwhelmingly demanded more information on the subject. Pat Hardel, the group’s president, told the *Santa Clara Journal*: “We’re only supposed to be [at the meeting] for half an hour, but we haven’t gotten out in under two hours yet. I keep telling them the janitor has to mop, but it doesn’t do much good.”<sup>7</sup> Phylliss Burdick, the chairwoman of a similar group across town at the Briarwood School PTA reported: “One of the most rewarding things is to hear someone verbalize a problem you’ve had. You say, ‘Gee, that’s the same thing I’m going through,’ and it helps.”<sup>8</sup>

Over the course of the 1960s, proponents of classroom-based sex education underwent two significant organizational and ideological shifts. First, groups invested in the subject consolidated their efforts, formed new groups to promote their cause, and expanded across school districts, counties, and states. Although sets of middle-class parents had long asked for classroom-based sex education, in the mid-1960s many of supporters formed new advocacy organizations specifically dedicated to the issue in order to better make their case to public officials. Between 1964 and 1966 these groups

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<sup>6</sup> California Bureau of Parent Education, *Report and Proceedings: San Francisco Workshop in Parent Education, San Francisco, CA, 18-27 July 1963* (Sacramento, CA: California Department of Education, 1963).

<sup>7</sup> “PTA Groups Face Topical Issues,” *Santa Clara Journal*, 23 December 1964.

<sup>8</sup> “PTA Groups Face Topical Issues,” *Santa Clara Journal*, 23 December 1964.

successfully enlisted federal support for the creation of pilot programs on sex and family life education in individual school districts and convinced local education authorities in Santa Clara County to change their curricula. Second, professional experts in the period began promoting tolerance for multiple forms of non-marital sexuality, including homosexuality and pornography, even as they offered increased rhetorical support for straight marriage. Their efforts extended the ideas of groups like the Council on Religion and the Homosexual and disseminated them to a broader audience. As more districts in the Bay Area began adopting sex and family life education programs in the mid-1960s, therefore, they increasingly created new curricula that downplayed the need to restrict queer sexuality and advanced the importance of marriage.

No organization proved more emblematic of these shifts than the Sex Information and Education Council of the United States (SIECUS). Founded by former Planned Parenthood director Mary Calderone in 1963, the group brought together a liberal coalition of psychologists, Protestant ministers, and long-time family life educators such as Lester Kirkendall to promote classroom-based sex education. After two decades' worth of debates at the grassroots level, SIECUS emerged to play an important role in circulating professional expertise about sex and marriage to local groups in its monthly newsletter, serving as a clearinghouse for the development of new curricula, and providing individual school districts with private consultants.<sup>9</sup>

In 1966, at the request of groups like SIECUS, the federal government began offering small grants to school districts interested in developing sex and family life education curricula. During a visit to San Francisco that year, Katherine Brownell Oettinger, chief of the federal Children's Bureau, promised to help promote the subject

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<sup>9</sup> Kobler, "Sex Invades the Schoolhouse," 27; Moran, *Teaching Sex*, 161-2.

across the country. She proclaimed: “Sex education in the public schools is now an official policy of the United States Office of Education.”<sup>10</sup> Although it did not flood schools with financial support, the national government’s decision to fund new programs renewed the state’s commitment to use public aid to support programs that promoted marriage and straight family life for the first time since World War II. Federal funding helped spur interest in the subject among local school administrators, but it did not prompt a revolution in classroom programs. In 1967, the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare awarded a total of \$1.5 million to just thirteen school districts across the country.<sup>11</sup>

At the same time, an assortment of local parents, clergy, and academics founded the Family Life Education Association (FLEA) in Santa Clara County in 1964 in order to centralize the efforts of the disparate groups already pushing for school-based sex education in the South Bay. Their push for consolidation grew out of the frustrated efforts of local volunteers to expand “parent education” programs to include all area residents. Helen Hansen, the executive secretary of Santa Clara County’s Catholic Social Services, helped found the FLEA because she believed that the South Bay’s massive postwar growth had exposed the inherent weaknesses in the area’s patchwork of voluntary parent education programs and counseling services. She later recalled that “with all these tract homes being built and the county’s population doubling in ten years, our professional staff knew there would never be enough counselors to meet the needs of all the people who had family problems.”<sup>12</sup> Similar to some of the senior members in the state Bureau of Parent Education in the late 1940s, Hansen specifically worried that the

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<sup>10</sup> “U.S. Policy on Sex Education,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, 20 September 1966.

<sup>11</sup> Kobler, “Sex Invades the Schoolhouse,” 26.

<sup>12</sup> “Family Life Education Not About Sex Alone,” *San Jose News*, 29 May 1969.

Sunbelt migration of married couples with children left them without their longstanding support networks back east. The *News* reported that “Mrs. Hansen said family life education was viewed as a function of the ‘extended family’ many of the newcomers had left in other parts of the country when they moved to California. ‘These people had left behind the older generation to whom they could have turned for help in crisis situations in the family- which happens in all families,’ she said.”<sup>13</sup>

To address this need, Hansen secured funding from the local branch of the United Way, and she invited new educators to help promote discussions of sex and straight family life in the South Bay. In 1964, Dorothy Dyer, a family life educator from Palo Alto, joined Hansen, and a year later, the two women recruited David Treat, a doctor from Flint, Michigan, to move to Santa Clara County to set up a clearinghouse on sex and family life education for area professionals. Together, Hansen, Dyer, and Treat united approximately twenty different groups in the South Bay interested in expanding education on marriage and childrearing, including Planned Parenthood and the Catholic Archdiocese, and they enlisted the support of several experts on the subject from nearby San Jose State, such as Professors Howard Busching and Richard Sheehan. With the creation of the new organization, several of these other groups abandoned their independent efforts to promote sex education. In the same year that Dyer and Hansen created the FLEA, the mainline Protestant Santa Clara County of Churches discarded its own program on the subject and encouraged its member congregations to contact Dyer for help developing new programs on sex and family life education.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> “Family Life Education Not About Sex Alone,” *San Jose News*, 29 May 1969.

<sup>14</sup> Santa Clara County of Churches, “Christian Family Life,” Annual Report, 1964, Santa Clara Council of Churches Records, San Jose, CA.

Although the creation of groups like SIECUS and FLEA signaled the growing consolidation of multiple organizations interested in promoting the issue, it also reflected a subtle change in philosophy. Beginning in the mid-1960s, many national experts gradually moved away from advocating the legal repression of most forms of non-marital sex between consenting adults. Instead, they increasingly turned towards educational strategies that would “empower” young people to make “responsible” decisions about their bodies and relationships. As Jeffrey Moran and other historians have noted, sex and family life education authorities in the second half of the 1960s steadily refused to condemn premarital sex, homosexuality, or “deviant sex” outright. He notes that “[Mary] Calderone and her allies claimed that sex education’s purpose was not to force sexual standards on anyone but merely to make information available to help young people and adults reach their own decisions.”<sup>15</sup>

This change in ideology led to the creation of new teaching methods. In the mid-1960s, experts like Calderone and Kirkendall specifically encouraged educators to empower their students to make sexual and family-related decisions by offering classes that featured discussion-based, rather than lecture-centered, curricula. Mirroring their refusal to directly proscribe appropriate sexual conduct to teenagers, these experts similarly argued that teachers should allow their pupils to make their own choices about relationships based on scientific evidence. Those decisions would evolve from a lengthy process of role playing and testing different hypotheses in the classroom. In 1964, longtime sex educator Curtis Avery published an essay in the *Family Coordinator* that called for programs that gave students “scientific” information about reproduction and birth control, male and female roles in society, the meaning of families, and the nature of

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<sup>15</sup> Moran, *Teaching Sex*, 162.



love, and allowing students to choose how to handle them. Ideally, he proposed that students would discuss how to handle potentially hazardous situations later in life as a group, and Avery argued that:

Sex information, the free opportunity and encouragement to make discuss sex problems, the mitigation of abysmal sex ignorance and misconceptions are as vitally important as they ever were- but where prevention of premarital intercourse, pregnancy and VD are concerned, let's take off the rose-colored glasses and view the situation in black and white. When we do so, we see that these decisions... on which prevention now rests, are arrived at by a long process operating from infancy to- and perhaps through adulthood- involving education *in toto* not in particular.<sup>16</sup>

Similarly, in a 1968 issue of the *Family Coordinator*, Steve Scarvele argued that since classes on sex almost always touched upon deeply personal and varied religious and social beliefs, educators needed discussion-based curricula to encourage students to think about the meanings of those traditions themselves. He wrote: "Values develop through thinking and through reasoning. How can children intelligently and rationally discuss relationships with others and 'right' and 'wrong' acts without being aware of what they themselves hold as value? Discussion can serve as a catalyst in the growth of value systems."<sup>17</sup>

The development of this more open system, nevertheless, co-existed with the longstanding disciplinary tendencies at the heart of most sex and family life education. Although they did not want to dictate value judgments to their students, instructors primarily saw their mission as an attempt to preserve straight family life. If they did not favor direct condemnations of queer or premarital sexuality, they nevertheless continued to extol heterosexual marriage as the most mature and healthy human relationship. In

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<sup>16</sup> Curtis Avery, "Sex Education Through Rose Colored Glasses," *Family Life Coordinator*, October 1964, 89.

<sup>17</sup> Steve Scarvele, "Before Sex Education- A Groundwork of Values," *The Family Coordinator*, July 1968, 189.

1966, for example, Calderone warned in *The PTA Magazine* that “the act of sexual intercourse is of great significance in itself. It is part of the most important relationship we know, that between a man and a woman who choose each other as husband and wife... Experimenting carelessly with the sexual relationship is evidence of immaturity.”<sup>18</sup>

This tolerance for previously stigmatized sexual behaviors and relationships helped repeal of draconian laws that penalized people for sex acts outside of straight marriage. SIECUS members frequently argued that legal prohibitions rarely deterred people from having queer or straight sex outside of marriage. They asserted that the state should repeal laws restricting private acts between consenting adults. In a booklet on homosexuality in 1967, SIECUS member Isadore Rubin argued that “it is generally agreed that laws against homosexual acts do not significantly control the proscribed behavior.”<sup>19</sup> SIECUS member James Moore told educators and counselors in an essay on “Problematic Sexual Behavior” in 1969: “The fact of the matter is that we could not eradicate homosexuality in the next generation if we wished. We do not have either the skills or resources to identify, isolate, or provide treatment for homosexuals. Society, therefore, must learn to live humanely with homosexual behavior.”<sup>20</sup>

These calls for tolerance in the late 1960s did not mean that family life experts believed that queer sexuality deserved equality. Instead, they drew a sharp, hierarchical distinction between straight marriages and other relationships. James Moore, for example, argued that “one of the greatest advantages of heterosexuality is marriage and

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<sup>18</sup> Calderone, “Sex Education and the Very Young Child,” 18.

<sup>19</sup> Isadore Rubin, *Homosexuality* (New York: SIECUS, 1967), 16.

<sup>20</sup> James Moore, “Problematic Sexual Behavior,” in *The Individual, Sex, and Society* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1969), 362.

the knowledge that one is loved according to a stable model of affection within a socially acceptable and legitimate relationship.”<sup>21</sup> Moore alleged that gay men and lesbians could never develop these unions because they disrupted the traditional gendered division of household labor, suffered from emotional “narcissism,” and tended to see their partners purely as sexual fantasies rather than real people. “The average married person,” he noted, “would be hard put to imagine the unhappy, lonely life that such homosexuals lead.”<sup>22</sup>

As the supporters of classroom-based sex and family life education steadily broadened their organizational strength, this ambivalence about non-marital sexual relationships trickled out through new school curricula. Journalistic presentations of these programs, such as the one in San Mateo, reveal that they frequently focused extensively on the heterosexual “problems” of sex before marriage or becoming better husbands or wives. In 1968, Calderone told *The Saturday Evening Post* that teachers should offer children between the ages of 10 and 13 classes on marriage, family responsibilities, and the different feelings of boys and girls; in the first years of high schools she recommended discussions of the “family within society” and the “individual within marriage.”<sup>23</sup> A profile of FLEA member David Treat’s former Michigan district in *Parents Magazine and Better Homemaking* revealed that students there learned about human reproduction at the elementary level, and that in the tenth grade, “sex education

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid. 354.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid. 354.

<sup>23</sup> John Kobler, “Sex Invades the Schoolhouse,” *Saturday Evening Post*, 29 June 1968, 26.

centers around boy-girl relationships, dating, premarital sex and its relationship to individuals, families, and society as a whole.”<sup>24</sup>

The hierarchical nature of this worldview often manifested itself in the lists of “deviant” practices that students learned about in their classrooms. Seemingly a small portion of the overall curricula, the cataloguing of social problems, such as alcoholism and homosexuality, helped buttress the normative elements of the more extensive discussions of heterosexual dating, marriage, or reproduction. Calderone, for example, recommended that for high school seniors, “Due attention be paid to alcoholism, drug addiction, promiscuity, venereal diseases, broken homes, homosexuality... the techniques of dating and courtship and ‘the whole panorama of marriage.’”<sup>25</sup> Treat’s old program in Michigan asked teachers to speak to eighth graders about “masturbation, the sex drive, homosexuality, and venereal disease.”<sup>26</sup>

The listing of subjects like homosexuality apart from the more normative elements of sex and family life education programs reveals that authorities actually handled those issues differently than questions about marriage or premarital sex in the classroom. Rather than presenting them in the increasingly popular discussion-centered learning of the era, teachers segregated them into separate lectures on health and citizenship. A national survey of sex education programs in 1968, for example, concluded that, “It is unusual for a high school syllabus to provide for discussions of sexual outlets like masturbation, homosexuality, premarital relations, or of standards for sexual conduct except in very general terms. When these subjects are included, the

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<sup>24</sup> Beatrice Gotthold, “The Controversy Over Sex Education,” *Parents Magazine and Better Homemaking*, October 1966, 134.

<sup>25</sup> Kolber, “Sex Invades the Schoolhouse,” 64.

<sup>26</sup> Gotthold, “The Controversy Over Sex Education,” 134.

objectives and the relation of content to the objectives see particularly diffuse or limited.”<sup>27</sup>

Throughout the second half of the 1960s, FLEA played a crucial role in disseminating this new hierarchy that both tolerated and denigrated non-marital sexuality to school officials, clergy, and parents in Santa Clara County. In this period, they sponsored numerous public forums, speakers’ series, additional parent education classes, and an annual institute to encourage stronger marriages.<sup>28</sup> FLEA’s supporters shared a common belief that if parents did more to teach their children about sex, marriage, and childrearing, they could specifically reduce the county’s divorce rates and the number of out-of-wedlock births. In an interview with the *San Jose News*, Richard Sheehan explained “We believe that the basic values of our society are taught in the family,” and he argued that, “Heretofore there has been little concentrated effort in preparing individuals for the most important interpersonal relationship of their lives- marriage.”<sup>29</sup> The doctor later told the newspaper that between 1955 and 1966, “illegitimate births” had grown 874 percent in the county, and he warned that 75 percent of all cases of juvenile delinquency and half of adult crime came from “broken homes.”<sup>30</sup> The key to solving these problems, Sheehan argued, lay in teaching young people to communicate better and to treat their partners with “Care, concern, respect and responsibility.”<sup>31</sup> In his estimation, better understanding and communication would foster stronger marriages, lower the number of divorces, and diminish teenage pregnancy rates.

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<sup>27</sup> James Malfetti and Arlene Rubin, “Sex Education: Who is Teaching the Teachers?” *The Family Coordinator*, April 1968, 111.

<sup>28</sup> “Family Life Education Not About Sex Alone,” *San Jose News*, 29 May 1969.

<sup>29</sup> “Illegitimate Births Soar in County,” *San Jose News*, 30 May 1969.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

Although Sheehan and his allies encouraged parents to speak to their children about these issues directly, they also specifically asked administrators to develop family life education programs in the county's public and parochial schools. Their outlook almost directly replicated the ideas of the family life education's champions in the previous two decades. They valued the work of individual parents, but they almost universally argued that many mothers and fathers failed to speak to their children about sex and marriage, and, therefore, only the schools could convey important information on this subject to a wide enough population to make a difference. Helen Hansen, for instance, told the *San Jose News*: "There is a need for this in schools. Anyone who has counseled families in trouble finds that many people feel completely inadequate in handling family problems."<sup>32</sup> At a 1964 conference on juvenile delinquency at St. Martin's Church in Sunnyvale, Dorothy Dyer argued that, "Courses in family life training should be ranked in importance with those in science. While the ideal means of gaining self-identity is through the family, if this fails, it becomes the responsibility of the community to offer supplementary training."<sup>33</sup>

Recruiting and mobilizing sympathetic parents represented one of the most crucial roles played by the FLEA. Beginning in 1965, the group offered an eight-part training course to enlist the support of volunteers, and it encouraged them to ask their local school districts to develop their own sex and family education programs. In May 1965 the *Santa Clara Journal* reported that in the previous two years approximately 3000 people had participated in some sort of study class or discussion group on family life education in the

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<sup>32</sup> "Family Life Education Not About Sex Alone," *San Jose News*, 29 May 1969.

<sup>33</sup> Dorothy Dyer, Workshop on Family Life Education, Proceedings of the First Countywide Conference on Delinquency Prevention and Youth Welfare, Sunnyvale, CA, 31 May 1964.

South Bay.<sup>34</sup> Hansen recalled that, “People came from all over. They were school people and PTAers. They were mainly just people interested in helping to preserve and strengthen family units.” She later called them “a grass roots movement of people who were concerned about the family and who saw all these problems of modern society.” Hansen saw the FLEA’s forums and discussions as crucibles in which groups of like-minded people found one another to address their common problems. She argued that these volunteers “believed that if people sit around a table and talk about their mutual concerns they gain strength from each other.”<sup>35</sup>

Not surprisingly, the state, district, and local PTAs served as FLEA’s most important allies. In 1966 the California Congress of Parents and Teachers re-issued a formal endorsement of classroom-based sex and family life education. Its declaration reaffirmed the need for mothers and fathers to teach their children about marriage, sex, and childrearing in the home, but it concluded “that for a variety of reasons, not every family is able to do this. The school is the only public agency that reaches most children over a long period of time.” The group, therefore, called for state support for teacher education on the subject, for expanded adult classes in local communities, and for more university courses on sex and family life. It encouraged public schools to “consider incorporating family life education in the curriculum at elementary and secondary levels,” and, most significantly for PTA districts and units to promote the subject in their neighborhood schools.<sup>36</sup>

In just a few years, the mobilization of the FLEA and the PTA on behalf of family life education steadily convinced public officials that parents were not doing enough to

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<sup>34</sup> “‘Family Life’ Session is Due,” *Santa Clara Journal*, 19 May 1965.

<sup>35</sup> “Family Life Education Not About Sex Alone,” *San Jose News*, 29 May 1969.

<sup>36</sup> “PTA Details Why Its Supports Sex Education,” *San Jose News*, 31 May 1969.

speak to their children about sex and marriage. In the mid-1960s their efforts steadily spurred subtle changes in the curricula of Santa Clara County's public schools. Reflecting the fragmented nature of California's educational system, their efforts produced shifts on a piecemeal basis, district by district. In 1964, the Cupertino Board of Education put together a special committee of parents, teachers, and school officials to determine if educators should show films, such as *Human Growth and Development*, to their pupils.<sup>37</sup> In that same year, Los Gatos High School began offering a six-week family life education program to its sophomores and a four-week course to its seniors. The school's principal later told the *San Jose News*: "I think sex education should be taught in the home by parents, but it is not being taught there. The church, family doctors and the home are not being involved to any appreciable extent. Students are getting their sex information from their peers. And they get as much misinformation from other students."<sup>38</sup> And in 1965 a local newspaper reported that the Mountain View Elementary School District used films as early as fourth grade to introduce pupils to the concepts of growth, development, and straight family life.<sup>39</sup>

The PTA and FLEA's biggest coup occurred when San Jose, the South Bay's largest municipality, opted to encourage the school districts within its borders to develop programs on the subject. Possibly intending to take advantage of aid from the U.S. Department of Health, Welfare, and Education, a special committee from San Jose's city council in September 1966 offered twelve school district leaders \$890,000 to jointly design new curricula on marriage, sex and family life for use in their classrooms. FLEA founder Helen Hansen told the council that "the number of unwed mothers [had]

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<sup>37</sup> "Two Showings for School Sex Films," *Sunnyvale Daily Standard*, 12 February 1964.

<sup>38</sup> "Sex Education Varies," *San Jose News*, 3 June 1969.

<sup>39</sup> "PTA Promotes Sex Education," *Los Altos News and Guide*, 21 January 1965.



increased 300 per cent in recent years.”<sup>40</sup> Echoing the rhetoric of FLEA members, such as Sheehan, the council’s principal advisor on the issue argued that the city needed such a program because “while many families provide adequate education, there are a growing number of children from broken homes who were not getting it.”<sup>41</sup> K. F. Shildt, a from the Santa Clara County Council of Churches and a member of the FLEA, argued that sex education in schools would support the work of parents, declaring: “I assure you there is no evil in the truth. The family is headed for destruction in this increasingly pressurized society unless we do bolster the family.”<sup>42</sup> And San Jose State biology professor Charles Bell noted: “I firmly believe in the precept of sex education in the home. However, I also firmly believe that the majority of parents don’t teach their children the facts of life properly or at the proper time.”<sup>43</sup>

During the fall semester San Jose’s political leadership approved a bill offering financial support for the development of curricula that moved progressively from the elementary level through high school, and that explained human sexuality in a hierarchical manner. The *Examiner* reported that the city schools explain “menstruation and the birth process” in the fifth grade; “the reproductive system,” a year later; “puberty, homosexuality, venereal disease, the effects of smoking, alcohol, drugs,” in the seventh and eighth grades; the “problems of dating and unwed mothers,” to freshmen and sophomores; and, finally, “marriage... child care and human sexual needs” to high school seniors<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> “Sex Teaching Approved for 4<sup>th</sup> Grade,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, 27 September 1966.

<sup>41</sup> “School Sex Project OKd in San Jose,” *San Francisco Examiner*, 22 September 1966.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> “Sex Study Program Gets Tentative OK,” *San Jose Mercury*, 22 September 1966; “School Sex Project OKd in San Jose,” *San Francisco Examiner*, 22 September 1966. See also “Sex Teaching Approved for 4<sup>th</sup> Grade,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, 27 September 1966.

## **The Counterculture: Sex and Drugs**

Within the first two years of its existence, FLEA helped encourage incremental changes in individual school districts in Santa Clara County. By the end of the decade, however, two crucial changes in the South Bay's sexual cultural and legal climate spurred even greater support for their efforts. The steady trickling out of countercultural attitudes about sex and drugs from urban enclaves, such as the Haight-Ashbury, and court rulings relaxing the rules governing obscenity, made sexuality a much more public concern than ever before. After 1966 teenage sex, drug use, and adult-oriented businesses caught the attention of middle-class residents in Santa Clara County even when they did not have children enrolled in the South Bay's schools. The implementation of classroom-based family life education programs in area classrooms helped expand the total number of discourses on the subject in Santa Clara County, but in the late 1960s they also represented an explicit attempt to temper some significant shifts in the ways that suburban residents treated sex. As middle-class adults steadily came into contact with the counterculture and sex-related businesses, they increasingly asked the school systems to teach young people about proper behavior.

As early as 1966, large numbers of white, middle-class teenagers from the Bay Area suburbs traveled to San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury District and Berkeley's Telegraph Avenue. They went to visit friends and to participate in the vibrant youth culture that had grown up around the inner city counterculture and campus protests. Although some of these migrants permanently settled in the countercultural enclaves, many more of them returned to their hometowns and brought new attitudes towards drugs

and sex with them. Eric Schneider, a historian focusing specifically on the distribution of heroin, argues that suburban experiments with marijuana, LSD, and other drugs swelled out of bohemian vice districts in older urban centers in the late 1960s: “Drug use in San Francisco created a ripple effect,” he writes, “as youths in other locations wanted to try what had been popular in San Francisco six to eighteen months earlier. As young people returned to their local communities across the country from their stay in the nation’s drug capitals, they brought their drug experimentation home with them.”<sup>45</sup>

Although the Haight-Asbury and Berkeley stood as national symbols of youth-in-revolt, the physical proximity of the Bay Area suburbs to the two enclaves enabled a large number of local teenagers to participate in the 1967 “Summer of Love” or the demonstrations around People’s Park in 1969. According to one survey, approximately 12 percent of the people living in the Haight-Ashbury in the late 1960s came from other parts of the Bay Area.<sup>46</sup> In 1967, a San Francisco policeman complained to a journalist that teenagers were having sex in Golden Gate Park, and he called many of them “‘plastic hippies’ ... high schools kids that come over just on weekends.”<sup>47</sup> In that same year, the *Santa Clara Journal* tartly observed that the counterculture had not only reached “the suburban ranch houses” of the hippies’ parents, but also had spread through their neighborhoods “by psychedelic advertising, psychedelic posters reproduced in mass magazines... and psychedelic jewelry.”<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Eric Schneider, *Smack: Heroin and the American City* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania, 2009), 155.

<sup>46</sup> David Smith and John Luce, *Love Needs Care: A History of San Francisco’s Haight-Ashbury Free Medical Clinic and its Pioneer Role in Treating Drug Abuse Problems* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1971), 218-9.

<sup>47</sup> Dave Felton, “Hippies Merely a Nuisance, SF Police Officer Insists,” *Los Angeles Times*, 10 April 1967.

<sup>48</sup> “The Flower Children- Fad or Fantasy?” *Santa Clara Journal*, 6 September 1967.

Observers in the affluent East Bay suburb of Pleasant Hill noted a dramatic change in behavior among local teenagers after the Summer of Love in 1967. G. Thomas Gitchoff, a sociologist working with the town's Youth Commission, noted in a formal study on juvenile delinquency that Pleasant Hill teenagers adopted sexual and drug-related patterns of behavior approximately six months after their peers first popularized them in the Haight-Ashbury. He concluded that, "The use of drugs by suburban youth had been a rarity in pre-1967 Pleasant Hill... During the summer months [of 1967] the use and abuse of various drugs had become fashionable among many youths: straight or hip. Most, of course, were curious first time users, generally trying marijuana."<sup>49</sup> More in-depth interviews with local teenagers by the sociologist revealed that many middle-class teenagers in the late 1960s traveled relatively frequently to centers of the counterculture to acquire drugs. A discussion with one Pleasant Hill high school student named Sam, for example, revealed that "He discovered his new thrills in Berkeley and became a frequent visitor to Telegraph Avenue" to acquire LSD.<sup>50</sup>

In the years following the "Summer of Love" in 1967 drug use among middle-class teenagers in the Bay Area skyrocketed. In an examination of crime rates across the country, the United States Department of Commerce chronicled a meteoric rise in narcotics-related arrests in Santa Clara County between 1960 and 1970. Whereas local police had arrested only 6 juveniles for "drug violations" at the start of the decade they had arrested 1,892 a ten years later.<sup>51</sup> In 1967 alone, the number of juvenile narcotics

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<sup>49</sup> G. Thomas Gitchoff, *Kids, Cops, and Kilos: A Study of Contemporary Suburban Youth* (San Diego, CA: Malter-Westerfield Publishing, 1969), 60-62.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.* 92.

<sup>51</sup> A.Z. Beard, American Justice Institute, *Santa Clara County Criminal Justice Trends, 1960-1970* (Washington, DC: National Technical Information Service, 1972), Institute of Governmental Studies, University of California, Berkeley.

arrests tripled, with over half of those cases involving the possession of marijuana.<sup>52</sup> Arrest rates, however, only hint at the larger picture of teenage drug use since most young people either escaped official notice or the police warned teenagers without actually detaining them. Willis Ellison, for instance, a County Juvenile Probation Officer, estimated in the *Santa Clara Journal* that 10 to 50 percent of all high school students in the area had smoked marijuana, used LSD, or taken speed, and he contended that, “the more affluent the community surrounding the school, the higher the percentage of drug use.”<sup>53</sup>

In addition to bringing drugs back with them, Bay Area teenagers also imported new attitudes about sex and marital relationships to their suburban neighborhoods. Beginning in the mid-1960s, growing numbers of straight, white, middle-class Americans began delaying the age at which they married. As the median age of new brides and grooms gradually moved upward, a significant percentage of them had sex before their weddings. In their book *Intimate Matters*, historians Estelle Friedman argue that, “By the late 1960s, the sexual iconoclasm of the counterculture appeared to reach beyond the small enclaves of disaffected youth,” stretching into suburban neighborhoods and mainstream popular culture.<sup>54</sup> In Pleasant Hill Gatchoff noted that most teenagers had discarded older norms, including a reliance on formal dates and introductions to parents, and that they now “would meet the opposite sex at various ‘happenings’ or hangouts and rather boldly and bluntly make arrangement for private entertainment.”<sup>55</sup> Instead of viewing sex as an act that should only take place between husbands and wives, Gatchoff

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<sup>52</sup> “Juvenile Narcotics Arrests Triple in Year,” *San Jose Mercury*, 16 January 1968.

<sup>53</sup> “Youthful Drug Abuse Common Says Advisory Committee,” *Santa Clara Journal*, 23 October 1968.

<sup>54</sup> John D’Emilio and Estelle Friedman, *Intimate Matters: A History of Sexuality in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 307-8.

<sup>55</sup> Gatchoff, 62.

observed that among most Pleasant Hill teenagers, “sexual activity was no longer considered something to be saved until marriage” and that they celebrated sex as “fun.”<sup>56</sup>

Teenagers transformed the social geography of the Bay Area suburbs by selling and using drugs in areas in which groups of young people traditionally congregated. Gratchoff, in his study of Pleasant Hill, noted that “contacts to purchase various drugs included the high schools, parks, hangouts and private homes. Many of the youth acted as suppliers and preferred to work out of their homes when parents were known to be away for the day or weekends.”<sup>57</sup> In 1969, angry residents in Santa Clara complained that the police were failing to adequately enforce the suburb’s curfew, and they submitted a petition to the city council alleging that packs of young “hoodlums” were drinking alcohol in a nearby park, smoking marijuana, and throwing debris at groups of Campfire Girls.<sup>58</sup> In April 1969, Alex Michaelis, a detective in the Sunnyvale police department, told a group of concerned parents at the First Methodist Church that students in the suburb’s three high schools could “freely purchase marijuana, LSD, speed and sometimes heroin on campus.”<sup>59</sup>

At the same time, many suburban residents marveled at what they saw as San Francisco’s degeneration and worried that a similar fate awaited the Peninsula and South Bay. In 1967, a Santa Clara resident expressed shock with the way the sexual revolution had transformed San Francisco. Theodore Scott contended that “the Hippies, Weirdos and Beatniks have about ruined the business district,” and he argued that “the homosexuals parading about the Turk and Taylor district would shock most Santa

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<sup>56</sup> Gatchloff, 95.

<sup>57</sup> Gratchoff, 81.

<sup>58</sup> “Hoodlums Assault Campfire Girls in SC Park,” *Santa Clara Journal*, 28 May 1969.

<sup>59</sup> “Drugs Readily Available in High Schools, Detective Says,” *San Jose Mercury*, 26 April 1969.

Clarans.”<sup>60</sup> Just a few months later, the city of Santa Clara closed a dance hall after parents alleged that its owners allowed teenagers to engage in a “love-in” during a rock concert by The Doors. Residents at a city council meeting complained that young spectators had lain on the floor “in passionate embraces” during the show, and councilman William Kiely, Jr. remarked: “I don’t think this sort of thing belongs in Santa Clara or in any city in America. The morality of the whole thing is bad.”<sup>61</sup>

These complaints to South Bay city councils hint at the growing anxiety of many middle-class parents across the country about the ramifications of premarital sex and drug use among young people. *Time* magazine alleged in 1968 that despite evidence of widespread recreational pot smoking, “the discovery that their own kids are smoking marijuana still leaves most parents incredulous.”<sup>62</sup> Confronted with a youthful sexual revolution in 1969, a writer in the *New York Times* alleged that, “most American parents fail to do an adequate job in sex education.” In order to close the generation gap, he advised mothers and fathers to speak to rebellious children about how sex can “contribute to a loving and lasting marriage.”<sup>63</sup>

In Santa Clara County Probation Officer Ellison complained to the *San Jose Mercury* that South Bay parents were failing to teach their children about the negative consequences of drug use. He suggested that adults had bred “disrespect for the law right in the home. This fact is basic to the drug problem that confronts us... Some kids are using drugs but wouldn’t if their parents took a strong stand against it.”<sup>64</sup> Later that year, Ellison reported to the County Board of Supervisors that, “Many parents... discovered

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<sup>60</sup> Theodore Scott, letter, *Santa Clara Journal*, 29 March 1967.

<sup>61</sup> “Teen ‘Love-Ins’ Spark Closure of Ballroom,” *Santa Clara Journal*, 15 November 1967.

<sup>62</sup> “The Family: Pot and Parents,” *Time*, 30 August 1968.

<sup>63</sup> Millard Bienvenu, Sr. “Why They Can’t Talk to Us,” *New York Times*, 14 November 1969.

<sup>64</sup> “Parents Aiding Drug Abuse,” *San Jose Mercury*, 21 January 1968.

their kids using drugs and simply ignored it, in hopes that it would go away.”<sup>65</sup> Detective Michaelis concurred by telling the *San Jose Mercury* that parents and law enforcement needed to “work together to make the use of drugs ‘socially unacceptable.’”<sup>66</sup>

Middle-class concerns about drug use in the South Bay rested on an unequal set of expectations for white and non-white teenagers. In 1968 *Time* magazine warned readers in 1968 of a “new and rapidly growing of drug users” among straight, middle-class, white teenagers, and it cited a Los Angeles-area minister who counseled parents that they could not determine their children’s habits based solely on their appearance, and he confessed that he had witnessed marijuana smoking among some “real straight arrows” in his affluent hometown. “They’re intelligent. Good-looking,” said Melvin Knight, a pastor from Palos Verdes, CA. “Good at sports, popular at school. They have all the characteristics of the old-style campus hero. But they also take and perhaps push drugs: marijuana, pills of all sorts.”<sup>67</sup> According to *Time*, youth, class, and audacity made this “new wave” of drugs users so surprising, and it reported without elaboration that “Cub Scouts in San Francisco discuss the pros and cons of pot with savvy, and in nearby San Rafael a marijuana sale took place right in front of an astonished teacher.”<sup>68</sup>

The public statements made by police and probation officers in the late 1960s suggest that they expected working-class African Americans or Chicanos to use drugs, but they saw the upsurge in use by white, middle class teenagers as a crisis. In his report to the County Board of Supervisors, Ellison argued: “Drug use in the past has often been associated with the underdog, lonely insecure, degenerates, alienated, unwanted and

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<sup>65</sup> “Youthful Drug Abuse Common Says Advisory Committee,” *Santa Clara Journal*, 23 October 1968.

<sup>66</sup> “Drugs Readily Available in High Schools, Detective Says,” *San Jose Mercury*, 26 April 1969.

<sup>67</sup> “The Family: Pot and Parents,” *Time*, 30 November 1968.

<sup>68</sup> “Ibid.



economically deprived... Many [wealthy] youths... at this time use drugs as a means of escape, but their escape tends to be not from hopelessness... but from boredom.”<sup>69</sup> The county probation officer found the possibility that middle-class or wealthy white junior high students had begun smoking marijuana particularly disturbing, and he reported to County Supervisors that drug use in the South Bay was “going downward in age levels and upward in social class.”<sup>70</sup>

### **The Courts, Pornography, Homosexuality and the Right to Privacy**

Even as experts on sex and family life gradually promoted a more tolerant view of deviant sexuality, state and federal courts issued a series of rulings that broadly loosened legal restrictions on obscenity and homosexuality. These verdicts not only made it harder for authorities to convict people for engaging in deviant sexual conduct in general, but they also specifically argued that American citizens possessed a fundamental “right to privacy.” These court rulings, which have received disproportionate blame for producing a conservative backlash, actually produced an ambivalent reaction from moderate and liberal voters.<sup>71</sup> In the second half of the 1960s, a vast majority of Californians expressed concern over what they deemed an upsurge in visible pornography and deviant sex. Yet, at the same time, large numbers of them opposed government intervention to restrict them. A sizable minority of conservative activists mobilized in the period to restore the state’s police power, but they faced significant resistance from the majority of liberals and moderates who favored education-based

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<sup>69</sup> “Youthful Drug Abuse Common Says Advisory Committee,” *Santa Clara Journal*, 23 October 1968.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> For histories that credit the U.S. Supreme Court’s rulings on obscenity for generating conservative backlash see McGirr, *Suburban Warriors*, 226-27; Josh Sides, *Erotic City: Sexual Revolutions and the Making of a Modern San Francisco* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 53.

remedies to what they deemed the excesses of the sexual revolution. None of these groups argued that homosexuality or pornography themselves represented public goods. Instead, they differed over how to best use government resources to address them.

From 1966 through 1969, state and federal courts made several key decisions related to pornography and homosexuality, which generally fell into two categories. First, several courts limited the ability of local authorities to curtail the public sale of sexually explicit texts or entertainment. In 1966, the United States Supreme Court ruled against the Massachusetts Attorney General in a case involving a ban on an eighteenth century novel about a London prostitute. In their final decision, the justices argued that a text needed to utterly lack “redeeming social value” before officials could censor it, even if it contained graphic sexual content.<sup>72</sup> Similarly, in 1968 the California Supreme Court ruled that topless entertainment merited constitutional protections. Following logic close to the federal justices’ ruling in the Massachusetts obscenity case, the state judges argued that erotic dancing constituted a form of communication, and, therefore, potentially possessed redeeming social value.<sup>73</sup> In both instances, the court’s rulings made it more difficult for local prosecutors to convict businesses for marketing and selling sexually explicit texts or entertainment.

Second, between 1965 and 1969 federal and state judges issued several significant verdicts related to private sexual conduct in the home. Most famously, the United States Supreme Court ruled in *Griswold v. Connecticut* that states could not limit married couples’ access to contraception. In their 1965 decision the justices argued that government restrictions on birth control specifically intruded upon married couples’

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<sup>72</sup> *A Book Named John Cleland’s Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure, et al. v. Attorney General of Massachusetts*, 383, U.S. 413 (1966).

<sup>73</sup> *Albert J. Giannini, et al. on Habeus Corpus*, 69 Cal. 2<sup>nd</sup> 563 (1968). See also Sides, *Erotic City*, 51.

fundamental right to a “zone of privacy.” They rhetorically asked: “Would we allow the police to search the sacred precincts of marital bedrooms for telltale signs of use of contraceptives? The very idea is repulsive to the idea of privacy surrounding the marital relationship.”<sup>74</sup> Similarly, in 1969 the United States Supreme Court ruled in an Atlanta case involving pornography that Americans had a constitutional right to “read dirty books or look at dirty movies in the privacy of their own home.”<sup>75</sup> In the court’s official decision, Justice Thurgood Marshall argued that “there appears to be little proof that exposure to obscenity leads to deviant sexual behavior or to crimes of sexual violence.” Therefore, the judge concluded: “Whatever may be the justifications for other statutes for regulating obscenity, we do not think they reach into the privacy of one’s own home.”<sup>76</sup>

Although these cases largely encompassed judicial leniency towards cases of previously stigmatized heterosexual conduct such as pornography, in 1969 the California Supreme Court issued an important decision related to gay teachers. Its verdict both upheld the principle of sexual privacy and sustained a hierarchy between queer and straight conduct. In *Morrison v. State Board of Education* the court ruled that isolated, private homosexual acts alone did not justify an instructor’s dismissal. The case offered a limited example of a male public school teacher who, after separating from his wife, engaged in a single sex act with another man. The court argued that since the incident took several years to come to his employer’s attention, that it did not involve a public arrest, and that it failed to adversely affect his conduct in the classroom, the State Board of Education had failed to prove that he was “unfit to teach.” In their decision, the majority argued: “The power of the state to regulate profession and conditions of

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<sup>74</sup> *Griswold et al. v. State of Connecticut*, 381 U.S. 479 (1965).

<sup>75</sup> “Court OKs Obscenity in the Home,” *San Jose Mercury*, 8 April 1969.

<sup>76</sup> “Court Oks Obscenity in the Home,” *San Jose Mercury*, 8 April 1969.

government employment must not arbitrarily impair the right of the individual to live his private life, apart from his job, as he deems fit.”<sup>77</sup> The court’s verdict, however, rested largely on procedural grounds, and it reaffirmed the state’s power to terminate gay teachers, if their sexuality became widely known to their students or fellow employees: “We do not,” the court argued, “hold that homosexuals must be permitted to teach in the public schools of California... [We] require only that the board properly find... that an individual is not fit to teach.”<sup>78</sup> The ruling, therefore, held that the state could dismiss queer teachers only if they failed to adequately conceal their relationships from their students and peers.

These rulings created an ambivalent legacy among straight voters at the grassroots. Since the late 1940s, zoning practices and alcohol regulation had limited the number of bars and liquor-selling businesses in San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties. By the mid-1960s, San Francisco continued to lead the Bay Area in terms of its alcohol-related businesses, and the Tenderloin possessed the region’s largest share of adult entertainment. Federal and state rulings on obscenity in the period did not create demand for pornography, and it did not upset the unequal metropolitan distribution of sexual commerce. It did, however, enable businesses on the Peninsula and in the South Bay to begin selling adult entertainment, including a handful of topless bars and pornographic movie theaters.<sup>79</sup> This liberalization spurred an angry reaction from a vocal minority of conservative homeowners and religious groups who specifically mobilized to limit an

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<sup>77</sup> *Marc Morrison v. State Board of Education*, 1 Cal. 3d 214 (1969). See also “Homosexual Ruling is Overturned,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, 21 November 1969.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>79</sup> Historians Estelle Freedman and John D’Emilio argue that, “As the Supreme Court in the 1950s and 1960s shook the legal edifice that kept sexual imagery within certain limits, the capitalist impulse seized upon sexual desire as an unmet need that the marketplace could fill.” Freedman and D’Emilio, *Intimate Matters*, 327.

upsurge in “obscenity.” Most straight Californians, however, offered a more conflicted and ambiguous response to the issue. The court’s rulings on obscenity shifted the center of middle-class political discourses so that even though most suburban voters expressed their disapproval of pornography, they also supported the idea that Americans had a fundamental right to sexual privacy. Their ambivalence on the issue prompted local and state officials to limit- but not abolish- most forms of adult related entertainment.

At the state level, conservative grassroots opposition to liberalized obscenity laws first came together in California in 1966. That year, San Diego Republican Assemblyman Richard Barnes sponsored Proposition 16, a statewide ballot initiative designed to facilitate convictions in cases involving sexually explicit materials. If passed, the proposal would have eliminated the need for prosecutors to prove to a jury that an allegedly obscene text lacked “redeeming social importance.” By placing the issue directly before the voters, the initiative’s proponents hoped to circumvent the legislature and strengthen the state’s laws on the issue. Barnes justified Proposition 16 and criticized his fellow lawmakers by arguing: “Parents and concerned Californians have been caught between an inadequate law and a legislature that won’t act.”<sup>80</sup> Proposition 16, however, directly contradicted the U.S. Supreme Court’s ruling on pornography that same year, and, therefore posed certain constitutional problems at the national level. The proposal, nevertheless, garnered significant support from conservative politicians and religious groups. Republican gubernatorial candidate Ronald Reagan championed it as a

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<sup>80</sup> “Obscenity Proposition Raises Stormy Dispute,” *Los Angeles Times*, 6 October 1966.

signal that voters wanted to limit obscenity, and regional leaders of the National Association of Evangelicals called it “a mandate for decency in our society.”<sup>81</sup>

At the local level, opposition to topless bars and adult theaters from conservative homeowners and religious leaders similarly spilled out into planning and city council meetings all over the South Bay. In 1968, Santa Clara residents turned out to protest a request from the owners of the “Banana Ranch” bar when they asked for a permit allowing topless dancers on their premises. The business’ attorney, Robert Maynard, told the city planning commission that he felt “a little like an Arab at a Spanish Inquisition” when two dozen parents “appeared at a meeting to consider the proposal. Mrs. Louis Arenas, one of the bar’s neighbors, told the commission that she had called the police several times since the Banana Ranch had opened, and she alleged that bar patrons were repeatedly “‘screaming in the middle of the night’ and otherwise relieving themselves on the back of the building.”<sup>82</sup> On a later occasion, she brought photographs of the bar’s rear entrance, and she alleged that when its staff left it open she could see “kids standing at the door gaping inside.”<sup>83</sup> Carl Bahr, one of thirty residents to submit a petition protesting the topless entertainment use permit, called the establishment “not a community asset” and complained that the change “would have a bad effect on neighboring children.”<sup>84</sup> Another unnamed resident simply complained: “Our property values are at stake.”<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> “Reagan Backs Prop. 16, ‘Anti-Obscenity’ Measure, *San Francisco Chronicle*, 16 October 1966; “Evangelical Unit Backs Obscenity Amendment,” *Los Angeles Times*, 5 November 1966.

<sup>82</sup> “‘Tired Blood’ the Winner in Banana Ranch Denial,” *Santa Clara Journal*, 21 January 1968.

<sup>83</sup> “No Go on Go-Go at Bar,” *Santa Clara Journal*, 3 April 1968.

<sup>84</sup> “‘Tired Blood’ the Winner in Banana Ranch Denial,” *Santa Clara Journal*, 21 January 1968.

<sup>85</sup> “No Go on Go-Go at Bar,” *Santa Clara Journal*, 3 April 1968.

A year later, a Catholic priest and several parents in Mountain View protested their city council's decision to approve the construction of a bar with dancing off El Camino Real. Reverend Leonard Rose of St. Althanasius Church objected to the new business since a parochial school lay less than a mile away, and he told council members that its arrival did not "lie in the best interests of people living in the area."<sup>86</sup> Edmund and Marilyn Harris, owners of an apartment complex across from the bar's site, asked council members "whether you would wish to reside across the street from such a situation," and they declared in exasperation: "It seems ridiculous that a planning commission which has earned the reputation of being ultra-conservative and 'hard-nosed' regarding zoning plans could even think of allowing such a use permit in the middle of what gives promise of being a fine residential area."<sup>87</sup> Mary Martindale, a nearby storeowner, voiced concern "for the welfare of children and teen-agers in the neighborhood," by declaring: "Certainly the majority of residents would not benefit or have need of this type of neighborhood business."<sup>88</sup>

These local protests successfully limited the availability of sexually explicit texts or entertainment, but they did not abolish it. By the end of the 1960s, almost every city in Santa Clara County had adopted new rules regulating topless or nude entertainment. In February 1968, for example, the city of Santa Clara required any business that sought to hire topless dancers or "go-go girls" to pay a \$175 fee and mandated that they post a sign warning minors not to enter.<sup>89</sup> Santa Clara Councilman William Kiely, Jr. told the Banana Ranch's owners: "If you people think this is what the community is in dire need

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<sup>86</sup> "Plan to Open M.V. Bar Protested by Residents," *San Jose Mercury*, 12 April 1969.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>89</sup> "S.C. Acts to Curb Topless Shows," *San Jose Mercury*, 1 February 1968.

of, you people see that I'm not elected to office because I am going to fight you all the way down the line. Moral fiber doesn't just break all of a sudden. It unravels little by little."<sup>90</sup> A year later, Campbell passed an ordinance banning semi-nude dancers, and in that same month Palo Alto's city council tried to block the transfer of a bar's liquor license to a new owner on the grounds that it sanctioned nude shows.<sup>91</sup> In July 1970 the California Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control required all waitresses in the state to "have the tips of their breasts covered as well as their pubic and anal regions" if they served customers food or drinks. Dancers could perform topless, but the new regulations required them to cover their pubic regions.<sup>92</sup>

Vocal opposition helped restrict adult entertainment, but it did not translate into broader support for conservative politics. Although most straight voters indicated that they disliked pornography, they also tended to support an individual's "right to privacy." The campaign over Proposition 16 indicated the ambivalent views of most Californians on the issue. In a poll before the referendum, over three quarters of people in the state indicated that they favored more stringent restrictions on obscenity.<sup>93</sup> Nevertheless, large numbers of moderate and liberal voters turned out to oppose Proposition 16. In November 1966 it lost by a sizable margin, and several prominent organizations denounced it. San Francisco Methodist Bishop Harvey Tippett asserted that Proposition 16, with its broad powers, could possibly inhibit the distribution of Shakespeare and the Holy Bible.<sup>94</sup> The Northern California-Nevada Council of Churches called Proposition

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<sup>90</sup> "No Go on Go-Go at Bar," *Santa Clara Journal*, 3 April 1968.

<sup>91</sup> "Topless Shimmy 'Busted,'" *San Jose Mercury*, 3 May 1969; "Council Approves Protest Against Topless Nightclub," *San Jose Mercury*, 26 March 1969.

<sup>92</sup> "Fig Leaf's Now a Bar Nude's Must," *San Jose Mercury*, 10 July 1970.

<sup>93</sup> United States Commission on Obscenity and Pornography, *Technical Report of the Commission on Obscenity and Pornography*, Volume 4 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1970), 186.

<sup>94</sup> "Obscenity Proposition Raises Stormy Dispute," *Los Angeles Times*, 6 October 1966.



16 “appalling” and a form of “sweeping censorship.”<sup>95</sup> The *San Francisco Chronicle* warned that Proposition 16 “contains such serious dangers to liberty that we have no choice but to oppose it.”<sup>96</sup>

At the local level, Santa Clara County residents frequently affirmed their dislike for sexually explicit material at the same time that they promoted tolerance for it in limited forms. One mother observing the debates over the Banana Ranch told a local newspaper: “Of course we don’t want this in our schools, but it brings more business to Santa Clara. That’s what we want to see- Santa Clara grow and improve ourselves.”<sup>97</sup> Similarly, in the wake of the Supreme Court’s *Stanley* decision, the *San Jose Mercury* conducted an informal survey of people at the Valley Fair Shopping Center to see if they agreed with the ruling. All of respondents expressed their disapproval of pornography while endorsing the principal that people should have the freedom to possess explicit material within the confines of their homes. Buzz Pulsifer, a salesman from San Jose answered: “I’m against pornography but what a person does in his own home is his own business. If that’s how they get their kicks, it’s all right.”<sup>98</sup> Cheryle Evanoff, a student in San Jose, concurred: “People shouldn’t be put in jail for doing what they want. They shouldn’t be able to come into your home and arrest you.”<sup>99</sup>

The respondents overwhelmingly singled out pornography as a danger to children, and they drew a distinction between “adult entertainment” privately consumed and “public obscenity” that risked drawing the attention of young people. Evanoff told the

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<sup>95</sup> “Faults in Clean Initiative,” editorial, *Los Angeles Times*, 22 June 1966. In a sign that moderate voters and institutions could oppose both Proposition 16 and sexually explicit material, the church leaders opposed the measure on pragmatic ground, noting that, “sweeping censorship has been known to enhance rather than limit the appeal of pornography.”

<sup>96</sup> “The Fatal Defects in Prop. 16,” editorial, *San Francisco Chronicle*, 25 September 1966.

<sup>97</sup> “No Go on Go-Go at Bar,” *Santa Clara Journal*, 3 April 1968.

<sup>98</sup> “Pornography OK in the Home?” *San Jose Mercury*, 14 April 1969.

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

*Mercury*: “This type of literature should be kept from little kids. In San Francisco they have a whole street of stores that sell nothing but dirty books. They should have a sign posted saying no one under 21 allowed.” Another student from San Jose, Linda Wright, agreed, declaring: “People have the right to do and say what they want. But that stuff shouldn’t be sold out on the streets where it can influence children.” Josephine Augsbury contended: “If it’s purely adults doing it, fine. But many of these families bring in teenagers and I don’t think teenagers have the sophistication to decide what is or what is not obscene.” And Sharon Larsen, a housewife from Milpitas, replied: “People should be able to read what they want to read. But dirty movies shouldn’t be shown in public places because younger kids can see them. An older person knows and can go by his own judgment. But a seven or eight-year old is just learning and that kind of stuff could distort his judgment.”<sup>100</sup>

Tolerance on the issue of homosexuality, however, lagged significantly behind a willingness to de-criminalize heterosexual pornography or birth control. In the wake of the Supreme Court’s ruling in the *Stanley* case, San Francisco Assemblyman Willie Brown authored a bill in the California legislature to legalize private anal and oral sex acts conducted between consenting adults. Brown declaring that he declared that “what consenting adults do in private is their business and ought to be left to be their business.”<sup>101</sup> Although Brown’s bill failed to pass, an informal poll taken by a politician

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<sup>100</sup> “Pornography in the Home?” *San Jose Mercury*, 14 April 1969.

<sup>101</sup> “Brown Says Everyone Can Enjoy His Sex Bill,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, 17 April 1969.

in Northern California just a few years later indicated that 42 percent of respondents in his district favored repealing state laws against private homosexual conduct.<sup>102</sup>

### **A Boom in Sex and Family Life Education**

The steady growth of a suburban youth culture that revolved around sex and drugs and the rapid dissemination of sexually explicit material in the South Bay strengthened public support for classroom-based sex and family life education. Although many moderate and liberal voters believed in a fundamental right to privacy, they, nevertheless argued that schools should teach young people socially acceptable attitudes towards sex and marriage. In 1967 Paul Friggens, an education journalist, told the readers of *The PTA Magazine* that “we are now reaping the fruits of ‘sexual revolution’ in America,” and he argued that parents should not leave their son or daughter’s sex education to the counterculture, the adult-entertainment industry, or the mass media more generally: “While our so-called ‘sophisticated’ teenagers have been bombarded with sexually oriented films, books, articles, and advertising,” he declared, “probably no generation has been kept so ignorant of the true meaning of sex and sexuality.”<sup>103</sup> In 1970 columnists Dorothy Nowack and Margaret Conant wrote in *The PTA Magazine*: “Although there are no statistics to prove it... children come to school today knowing more about sex than previous generations did- if only because they can’t escape the constant barrage of sexual publicity and innuendo that the adult world discharges around them.”<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> “Poll in California Shows Half Against Legalizing Gay Sex,” *Advocate*, 20 December 1972. The poll took place in Santa Cruz, San Luis Obispo, San Benito and Monterey counties. 50 percent of respondents opposed repealing the state’s laws.

<sup>103</sup> Paul Friggens, “Shameful Neglect of Sex Education,” *The PTA Magazine*, May 1967, 4.

<sup>104</sup> Dorothy Nowack and Margaret Conant, “Sex Education- K Through 6,” *The PTA Magazine*, November 1970, 7.

Although some sex and family life educators had gradually begun promoting tolerance of premarital sex in the mid-1960s, the explosion of teenagers refusing to wait until marriage after the Summer of Love pushed many of them to revise their reservations on the subject completely. With an overwhelming number of middle-class young people beginning to marry later in life and having sex sooner, these experts mixed the philosophical argument that people could have meaningful emotional connections outside of wedlock with a pragmatic response to the fact teenagers were already ignoring their warnings to abstain. In the *Saturday Evening Post*, for example, John Kolber called Calderone “no absolutist” when it came to sexual morality, and he noted that the SIECUS head believed that, “‘Do’s’ and ‘don’ts’ cannot be imposed on the young by fiat. They simply won’t accept them.”<sup>105</sup> In 1968 Dan Cannady, assistant director of Cleveland’s Family Health Association, told *The PTA Magazine* that, “it is no longer realistic or desirable to have sex control as our primary goal.” He argued that sex educators should strive to teach young people to seek out a middle-ground between repression and promiscuity: “However important control may be in certain temporary situations it is not a big enough goal, nor is it worthy of our best energy.”<sup>106</sup>

In 1969 the *San Jose News* interviewed four of FLEA’s volunteers and asked why they supported family life education in the public school system. All mothers from the south county suburb of Morgan Hill, they included Bonnie Simonsen, a former elementary school teacher; Mary Lu Lopez, a former health worker for the South Bay’s Economic Opportunity Council; Bonnie Leonetti, a member of Catholic Social Services; and Helen Doak, a former teacher and a full-time housewife. In their interview, several

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<sup>105</sup> Kolber, “When Sex Invades the Schoolhouse, 64.

<sup>106</sup> “Facts About Sexual Freedom...” *The PTA Magazine*, April 1968.

of the women stressed what they say as the volatile cultural climate in which their children were growing up. Leonetti, for example, told the *News*: “Three years go we as individuals felt concerned about what was happening to all aspects of family life. Young people were getting caught up in drug use... The incidence of unwed mothers was increasing... And the divorce rate kept going up, up, up.”<sup>107</sup> Doak declared: “Human relationships are the prime movers. We felt somehow kids aren’t picking this up outside of schools. There has been a breakdown somewhere and the whole subject of human relationships was being understood by our young people.”<sup>108</sup>

In its 1966-67 yearbook, the Sixth District, Santa Clara County PTA reported that its members called the organization’s programs on drug abuse “an eye opener,” and the group called for family life education to deal with a number of problems, including LSD use, pornography, and juvenile delinquency.<sup>109</sup> In 1969, Elizabeth Hendryson, president of the National Congress of Parents and Teachers, reiterated her organization’s support for classroom-based sex education by citing a developmental psychologist who argued: “In words and pictures, our children are exposed to sex that is often lurid and vulgar. Our streets are a ceaseless source of misinformation. Smut sellers never hesitate to share sex ‘facts’ and feelings. Precocious peers willingly tell of experiences real and imagined.”<sup>110</sup> Hendryson reaffirmed her commitment to helping parents speak to their children about sex and marriage, but she asked: “What about the millions of children who for various reasons are either denied such education or receive miseducation on the subject? Where but at school can we be sure of reaching these children and enabling

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<sup>107</sup> “Women Explain FLE Development,” *San Jose News*, 4 June 1969.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>109</sup> Sixth District PTA, “Sixth District Highlights, 1966-67,” Sixth District PTA Records, San Jose, CA.

<sup>110</sup> Elizabeth Hendryson, “The Case for Sex Education,” *The PTA Magazine*, May 1969, 21.

them to gain the... information on human sexuality that should be an essential part of every person's education?"<sup>111</sup>

Linked by the counterculture, drug and family life education appeared alongside one another as parallel disciplinary projects. Similar to the work performed by the FLEA, local and state officials hoped to educate mothers, fathers, and their children about the dangers of marijuana, LSD, and speed, and in 1969 Santa Clara police began speaking in area high schools on the subject. In July, Police Sergeant Dick Barry told the local newspaper that his department's efforts did not end at the edge of campus, declaring: "We try not only to educate the young, but also local PTA, service clubs and church groups. We've found that parents are more ignorant about narcotics than their children... What we need are more concerned parent groups. The parents we should be reaching are sitting home in front of their TV sets or in some bar."<sup>112</sup> In December 1969 Santa Clara High School held a teacher-training day on drug education with Al Bellizio, a former volunteer at the Haight-Ashbury free clinic, and Rex Macer, a local police officer.<sup>113</sup>

In the second half of the 1960s, concerns about teenage sex, pornography, and drugs united parents across California. Since the beginning of the decade, groups such as FLEA had sprouted in affluent suburban areas across the state, and in the face of the sexual revolution they sought support from legislators in Sacramento. After consulting with PTAs in his Beverly Hills district, for example, Assemblyman Alan Sieroty joined San Francisco Senator Phil Burton to sponsor a bill that would require all California high

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<sup>111</sup> Hendryson, "The case for Sex Education," 20. Hendryson also argued: "The goal of sex education, we believe is to develop responsibility in human relations- relations between boys and girls, husband and wife, parents and children."

<sup>112</sup> "Juvenile Drug Arrests Drop, Marijuana Rising," *Santa Clara Journal*, 9 July 1969.

<sup>113</sup> "School Approaches to Drugs Told," *Santa Clara Journal*, 3 December 1969.

schools to teach students about “human reproduction.”<sup>114</sup> Their effort initially failed to garner enough support from their colleagues, but their justification for their proposal clearly reflected the influence of middle-class grassroots organizations such as the PTA. Burton told the Associated Press: “Students should be given formal instruction about human reproduction ‘so they are not learning it in back alleys.’”<sup>115</sup> In that same year, a group of parents from Los Angeles, calling themselves “The Citizens’ Committee for Family Life Education,” asked the California Board of Education to develop a model curriculum on the subject for districts across the state. They proposed helping schools offer programs that would not only cover “growth and reproduction” but also “the emotional and psychological phases of human development” and “parental responsibility.”<sup>116</sup>

Although they failed to convince the State Board of Education to issue those guidelines, a year later Burton, Sieroty and their allies succeeded in passing Senate Bill-1 (SB-1), which they dubbed the “magna carta of education” in California. The act loosened state requirements, and gave individual districts considerably more freedom to develop curricula. It also required every school in California to offer a “study in health, including instruction in the principles and practices of individual, and community health,” which opened the door for proponents of classroom-based sex education to lobby their local schools to include the subject as they revised their programs to comply with the new guidelines.

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<sup>114</sup> The *Los Angeles Times* reported that 77.8 percent of voters in Sieroty’s district favored sex education in public schools. “Sieroty Surveys District,” *Los Angeles Times*, 26 December 1968.

<sup>115</sup> “Assembly Bill Seeks School Sex Courses,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, 9 February 1967.

<sup>116</sup> “Sex in School: Parents Urge Start from Kindergarten to Senior,” *San Francisco Examiner*, 15 December 1967.

In the wake of SB-1, local education authorities across the state revisited their curricula to include sex education. The San Francisco Unified School District, for example, put together a pilot program on the subject for a limited number of schools just before the bill passed the Senate, and it expanded it citywide in the 1968-69 academic year. The district's program moved from kindergarten through the twelfth grade and it covered "intimate human relationships, reproduction, family roles and social roles."<sup>117</sup> Similar to the values espoused by SIECUS founder Mary Calderone, San Francisco's sex and family life educators advocated the sharing of "scientific" knowledge, discussion-based learning, and empowering students to make their own decisions in accordance with their church and family's value systems. Frances Todd, the administrator responsible for designing the program, promised that "hypocritical or rigid stands on pre-marital relations or marriage roles will be avoided, but that children will be encouraged to develop standards with full awareness of the consequences of their actions."<sup>118</sup> The *San Francisco Progress* observed that "birth control, homosexuality, sex drives, abortion, coitus and scores of hitherto avoided subjects will be included in the courses in the upper grades."<sup>119</sup>

Anticipating the passage of SB-1, the Santa Clara County Board of Education sponsored a study to see how administrators and teachers could integrate instruction on sex and family life into its other curricula, and it encouraged local districts to offer formal classes on the subject.<sup>120</sup> County Superintendent Glenn Hoffman later told the *San Jose*

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<sup>117</sup> "Sex Education in Schools," *San Francisco Progress*, 9 November 1967.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>119</sup> "Sex Education in the Schools," *San Francisco Progress*, 9 November 1967. See also "S.F. Schools Ready Pilot Program on Sex Education," *San Francisco Sunday Examiner and Chronicle*, 12 November 1967.

<sup>120</sup> Deloria Feak, in "Sex Education Foe Airs Objections," *San Jose News*, 28 May 1969.



*News* that the principal goal of these programs “is to develop effective, responsible parents.”<sup>121</sup> Echoing a quarter century of advice from child developmental psychologists, the school chief justified the need for family life education on the important role mothers and fathers played in modeling behavior for their children. “Whether we like it or not, the mother and father are the first teachers in the lives of their own children. The damage or enhancement of the human personality has already been established by the time the youngster begins formal schooling.”<sup>122</sup>

Like FLEA founders Helen Hansen and Richard Sheehan, Hoffman believed that parents should play the most significant role in instructing their children on sex and family life, but he believed that too few of them actually performed that task: “I’m personally convinced that the teaching of important values and notions about sexuality should be done in the home. But the facts today indicate that a good share of our students in school are not receiving [that] kind of instruction from their own parents... Therefore, the school must become involved.”<sup>123</sup> He hoped that if teachers supplemented the work of the home, the need for such instruction “might vanish in a generation.”<sup>124</sup>

Six years after Alberta Rennert failed to change her children’s school policies, the city of Santa Clara began developing its own curriculum on sex and family life education in the wake of SB-1. Dennis Carmichael, the district’s assistant superintendent on curriculum, announced that he had begun considering new courses on the subject for area students. In two limited surveys in 1968 and 1969 school authorities determined that between 76 and 87 percent of Santa Clara residents approved of classroom-based sex

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<sup>121</sup> “Parents are the First Teachers,” *San Jose News*, 2 June 1969.

<sup>122</sup> “Parents are the First Teachers,” *San Jose News*, 2 June 1969.

<sup>123</sup> “Parents are the First Teachers,” *San Jose News*, 2 June 1969.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*

education.<sup>125</sup> Carmichael called the change a “transition of responsibility which was thought to be that of the home and church, now being shifted to the schools.”<sup>126</sup> Board of Education Trustee Ruth Frey added: “We must be sure that parent, church and schools are all working at the same level. We don’t want to let the home and church abdicate their responsibilities completely.”<sup>127</sup>

### **The New Right: Opposition to Sex Education**

Although South Bay schools steadily added sex and family life education to their curricula after 1964, they did so at a very slow pace. Schools officials such as Hoffman, perhaps with earlier battles in Chico, San Mateo, and Santa Clara fresh in their memories, approached the topic of sex and family life education cautiously. In many cases, administrators attempted to pre-empt controversy by enlisting the support of sympathetic clergy and PTA members to suggest topics for classroom instruction, and they sponsored open forums in which local residents could preview books and films the district planned to use in its courses. In addition to forming a special committee of teachers and parents to select new materials on the subject, the Cupertino Board of Education also required that “those films that are approved by the newly-formed screening committee will be shown publicly for all interested parents in the district prior to their being used in the classroom.”<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> Senate Bill One Committee, Dean Inglis, chair, *Final Report*, 1970, Santa Clara Unified School District Records, California State Archive, Sacramento, CA.

<sup>126</sup> “Family Life Classes Considered for District School Curriculum,” *Santa Clara Journal*, 31 January 1968. Carmichael later warned: “It’s apt to be controversial, and when we do get into sensitive areas we will need the support of the community.” “Family Life Course Set,” *San Jose Mercury*, 9 February 1968.

<sup>127</sup> “Family Life Classes Considered for District School Curriculum,” *Santa Clara Journal*, 31 January 1968.

<sup>128</sup> “Two Showings for School Sex Films,” *Sunnyvale Daily Standard*, 12 February 1964. In that same year, the Northern California city of Chico reinstated its family life education program, seventeen years after

Although classroom-based sex education had elicited controversy since its early days in the Progressive Era, the late 1960s witnessed the new mobilization of a significant group of political conservatives who opposed its implementation in local schools. Recent historians have frequently underscored American fears of communism in their explanations of the origins of the New Right. In her book *Suburban Warriors*, historian Lisa McGirr argues that the construction of defense-oriented suburbs in the American South and West, such as those in the South Bay or in Orange County near Los Angeles, facilitated the meeting of conservatives in the 1960s. Their hard stance on communism and their mobilization at the grassroots efforts in the early part of the decade helped make New Right champion Barry Goldwater the Republican presidential candidate in 1964.<sup>129</sup>

Many of the organizations that first emerged as anticommunist groups in the early 1960s opposed sex and family life education at the end of the decade. For many conservatives, the U.S. Supreme Court's ban on school prayer in 1962 and the later development of sex education programs represented two parallel developments that augured a disturbing secularization of the nation's public education system. Without religious instruction, many of them worried that American families would collapse and that classroom-based discussions of sex closely approximated the indoctrination found under authoritarian regimes. In 1968, for example, the Christian Crusade, a Tulsa based religious and anticommunist group, circulated an anti-sex education pamphlet across the county. The tract, *Is the Schoolhouse the Proper Place to Teach Raw Sex*, allegedly sold more than 90,000 copies within the first three months of its publication, and it accused

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State Senator Jack Tenney had called its textbooks "pornographic, immoral, and totally unfit for high school students." "Sex is Back in Chico," *San Francisco Examiner*, 28 January 1968.

<sup>129</sup> McGirr, *Suburban Warriors*.

SIECUS of disseminating pornography and communist propaganda.<sup>130</sup> Gordon Drake, the pamphlet's author, argued that the United Supreme Court's ban on school prayer and the implementation of courses on sex and family life represented two examples of the increasingly secular nature of public education. He contended that, "sex education should be eliminated since 'it cannot be taught within a Christian framework' because God and the Bible have been kicked out of the schools."<sup>131</sup>

Similarly, in 1969 the John Birch Society, an anti-communist group founded by jam manufacturer Robert Welch, established the Movement to Restore Decency (MOTOREDE), a branch specifically dedicated to turning back the liberalization of obscenity laws and opposing classroom-based sex education. As early as 1965 the John Birch Society saw the implementation of courses on sex and family life as steps towards exposing children to homosexuality. Referring specifically to the Council on Religion and the Homosexual in San Francisco and groups like the FLEA, the Society alleged that for "Protestant clergymen to give public parties for known homosexuals borders on insanity," and it condemned the practice of high schools promoting "pornography under the guise of sex education."<sup>132</sup> In wake of the *Morrison* decision, MOTOREDE warned its members that the California Supreme Court had ruled that "Homosexuals May Teach Your Children," and it approvingly cited State Senator John Schmitz's declaration that: "Our laws require children to attend school. Though the law provides that they cannot be compelled to go to school in *unsafe buildings*, according to this court decision they can

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<sup>130</sup> Moran, 179-182; Irvine, 44-51.

<sup>131</sup> Irvine, 47.

<sup>132</sup> The John Birch Society, "Foreword," *Bulletin*, March 1965, Margaret Meier Collection of Extreme Right Ephemeral Materials, Stanford University Special Collections, Stanford University, Palo Alto, CA. In 1968 Reed Benson the Society's official spokesman declared: "One of the first major projects of that movement is to get sex education out of the schools and into the home where it belongs." "Sex Education Attack," *Santa Clara Journal*, 28 May 1969.

be required to be exposed to teachers with a history of homosexual incidents- who may even be teaching sex-education classes...”<sup>133</sup>

Although groups such as the John Birch Society helped bridge anxiety about sex education with earlier concerns about communism, the mobilization of the New Right in the late 1960s stemmed as much from the collapse of postwar liberalism as it did from the Cold War. As indicated by Schmitz’s outburst over the *Morrison* decision, the repeal of longstanding rules forbidding sex outside of marriage played a great role in motivating conservatives to turn against classroom-based sex education. Rather than merely opposing governmental activism, they specifically called for state support for heterosexual marriage and for bans on other forms of sexual expression. Although classroom-based sex education’s champions clearly framed straight marriage as the most important sexual relationships people could share, de-criminalization of pornography and homosexuality stirred the ire of many New Right conservatives. Their opposition to sex and family life education, therefore, emerged alongside a much wider set of concerns about deviant sex.

The New Right, however, held onto more than just the legal restrictions of the postwar era. Conservative opponents of sex and family life education in the 1960s also represented one of the first sets of voters to argue for a “right to privacy.” Worried that classroom discussions on the subject would potentially humiliate their children in front of their peers or contradict teachings they had imparted in the home, many supporters of the New Right argued that the new curricula represented an unfair intrusion into their affairs. These declarations grew out of the now-widespread middle-class expectation that

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<sup>133</sup> Motorede, “News/ Action,” Official Bulletin, Volume 3, Number 1, December 1969, Margaret Meier Collection of Extreme Right Ephemeral Materials.

Americans could expect to own homes with secluded bedrooms and bathrooms, but they also eerily echoed the recent *Griswold* and *Stanley* Supreme Court decisions. Several historians have commented on how conservatives after the 1960s appropriated the language of the black freedoms struggle.<sup>134</sup> In the battles over sexual politics, many of the supporters of the New Right similarly claimed a “right to privacy” to make their own claims on the state.

Just as significantly, conservative adversaries of sex and family education frequently justified their opposition with a logic similar to that of their counterparts in the PTA. Both sides of the debate saw a crisis in parenting, and they differed over whether or not curricula designed by scientific authorities such as Mary Calderone, could help ameliorate that emergency. Although national groups such as MOTOREDE helped disseminate literature on classroom-based sex education, opposition to the subject primarily came from suburban parents at the grassroots. The two sides possessed similar organizational structures with national groups, such as the PTA or MOTOREDE, disseminating literature and helping to coordinate campaigns in different parts of the country, and both groups paired large numbers of mothers with male professionals and clergy. These battles broke out primarily at the local level, and, although those controversies preceded the emergence of the counterculture and the liberalization of pornography laws, both developments energized conservatives just as much as it did their moderate counterparts.

The first controversy in the Bay Area since Alberta Rennert’s efforts broke out after the San Jose City Council approved the design of a new curriculum for adjacent

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<sup>134</sup> See for example Matthew Lassiter, *The Silent Majority: Suburban Politics in the Sunbelt South* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University, 2006).

school districts. The governmental body's decision came just before the vote on Proposition 16, and it sparked resistance from the body's only female representative, Virginia Schaffer. A self-described "New Right conservative," Schaffer telephoned area parents who opposed the idea of sex instruction of any kind in local schools. At her behest, 250 members of a group called "Citizens Who Do Not Approve" submitted a petition to the committee criticizing the use of public funds for family life education. Gloria Bumb, a Catholic mother and wife of a prominent eastside merchant, supported Schaffer, and she asked the council: "Who set themselves up as an authority that the schools need help from the city in the field of sex education? This proposal would expose the children at too early an age to the facts of life... increasing the temptation to experiment. It's too closely tied to religious and moral issues to be taught in the schools."<sup>135</sup> Schaffer argued the proposal would "not supplement the influence of parents but would supplant it."<sup>136</sup>

Preceding the youth counterculture and the growth of adult-related businesses in San Jose, Schaffer's protests augured similar struggles in other Bay Area districts. One of the most contentious arguments over the issue broke out when the San Mateo County Board of Education approved its new curricula in the wake of SB-1. The Peninsula school authorities had made their changes with the sanction of "county educators from San Luis Obispo to Petaluma" and the "approval of many religious leaders." Under the supervision of Superintendent Reverend Bernard Cummins, San Mateo Catholic schools began using similar materials in its programs that same year.<sup>137</sup> When the Board of Education sent out a survey to twenty of its school districts, over 80 percent of

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<sup>135</sup> "Sex Study Program Gets Tentative OK," *San Jose Mercury*, 22 September 1966.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>137</sup> "Growing Debate on Sex Education," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 20 August 1968.

respondents approved the changes. Many of the Peninsula residents who spoke out in favor of the Board's decision saw school-based family life education as an extension of the work they performed as parents in the home. For example, Mrs. John Farrell, a Menlo Park mother of seven children, told the *Chronicle* that the courses and film series "merely supplemented what I and my husband give our children. It's better than picking it up in the streets."<sup>138</sup> Mrs. Harry Lowenstein, a Palo Alto parent, praised the films "for presenting its needed information 'within the context of marriage and family love.'"<sup>139</sup> And Virginia Shahrock, a gynecologist and a mother of three children, applauded the county's move as a much needed remedy for "the soaring divorce rate, illegitimacy and delinquency."<sup>140</sup>

The shift, however, provoked outrage and anger from a significant minority of parents in the Peninsula suburbs. Even with four out of five parents reporting support for the proposal, a vocal faction of mothers and fathers saw the new curricula as a potentially corrupting influence on their children. As the San Mateo County Board of Education deliberated whether or not it should show a set of controversial sex education documentaries to elementary and junior high schools in the fall semester of 1968, these parents sought to keep the films out of the public education system altogether. They first spoke out at the Board's meeting in August, and when the trustees elected to approve the course, they submitted a formal protest to conservative California School Superintendent Max Rafferty and filed a lawsuit in state court. At the same time, some of their supporters in Redwood City threatened to withdraw their children from the Peninsula

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<sup>138</sup> "Stormy Session: "San Mateo OK Sex Education," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 22 August 1968.

<sup>139</sup> "Sex Education Controversy: The Difficult Questions," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 21 August 1968.

<sup>140</sup> "Stormy Session: San Mateo OKs Sex Education," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 22 August 1968.



suburb's public schools if they adopted family life education curricula.<sup>141</sup> Mrs. Gordon Vore, a leading member of the Citizens' for Parental Rights, told the *San Francisco Chronicle* that she forbade her family from seeing the film, but "even still the children in the neighborhood were bringing up those disgusting subjects in the schoolyard and at the dinner table."<sup>142</sup> Her husband accused family life education of "turning pupils from their parents and preventing teachers from being judgmental about dirty words and other areas of sexual conduct."<sup>143</sup>

Similar to debates about sex education in the 1940s and 1950s, opponents of school-based instruction contended that "explicit" material threatened the mental development of young children and encouraged deviant behavior. For example, Rhoda Lorand, a child psychiatrist and member of the Citizens' for Parental Rights, contended that, for young people, *The Time of Your Life Series* "is very likely to lead to sex difficulties in later life."<sup>144</sup> Within the context of the crisis in parenting of the late 1960s, the opponents of sex and family life education alleged that school-based programs on the subjects were responsible for a tide of youthful misbehavior. In 1969 several San Mateo parents submitted a report entitled, *Sex/ Family Life Education and Sensitivity Training- Indoctrination or Education*, denouncing the KQED series and the county's curricula. They cited a half dozen psychiatrists, like Lorand, who claimed that discussions of sex in school would encourage teenage misconduct. Karl Brenner of the Orange County Medical Association in Southern California decried the "sharp increase each year in sex crimes, teenage illegitimacy, teenage venereal disease and teenage divorce." He accused

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<sup>141</sup> "Sex has Peninsula in a Dither," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 13 September 1968.

<sup>142</sup> "Sex Education Controversy: The Difficult Questions," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 21 August 1968.

<sup>143</sup> "Stormy Session: San Mateo OKs Sex Education," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 22 August 1968.

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

sex educators of failing “to see that in freeing children from God-fearing self-control they have enslaved them to the jailor of their own lust,” and he rhetorically asked that if health textbooks described sexual intercourse, “Would you believe that children thus directed to dwell upon the sex with no moral or spiritual emphasis will be able to keep their emotions in check until marriage?”<sup>145</sup>

In San Mateo, conservative adversaries of the new curricula specifically couched their opposition as a question of “parents’ rights,” and they framed school-based sex education as a form of public exhibitionism that invaded the “private” lives of mothers, fathers, and their children in the home. Alice Weiner, a mother from Belmont, called San Mateo County’s family life education programs “an invasion of family privacy.”<sup>146</sup> In *Sex/ Family Life Education and Sensitivity Training- Indoctrination or Education*, opponents argued that efforts by teachers to foster classroom discussions with their students about marriage, parenting, and growing up would inevitably label certain families as “dysfunctional” and would probably contradict values and ideas expressed in the home. They derided these discussions with teachers and fellow students as “sensitivity training,” and they alleged that they constituted a “diminution of a sense of modesty and privacy.” In their submission to the State Board of Education, they argued: “The effect of public confession and criticism is to destroy the attitudes and opinions of the individual, de-sensitize him and then subtly instill a planned group-attitude... Thus, the entire sex/ sensitivity program is designed to breakdown the attitudes instilled by the

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<sup>145</sup> Citizens for Improved Education, *Sex/ Family Life Education and Sensitivity Training- Indoctrination or Education?* (San Mateo, CA: Citizens for Improved Education, 1969), 53.

<sup>146</sup> “Growing Debate on Sex Education,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, 20 August 1968.

family, to remove modesty and inhibition in the area of sex and replace them with more permissive attitudes and opinions.”<sup>147</sup>

In September 1968 the Citizens’ for Parental Rights filed a lawsuit against the San Mateo County Board of Education, alleging that the school system had deprived them of their right to privacy, established a new “humanistic” religion, and denied them their right as parents to teach their children about marriage, sex, and family life. Their complaint charged school authorities with violating their right to privacy by “compelling” students “to reveal their innermost thoughts, conversations or facts that relate to the personal and intimate lives of their families.” They contended that the county’s family life education program established “new or different religious practices and beliefs” by treating subjects, such as contraception or divorce, as matters of relative, personal belief, rather than unchanging biblical law. And they argued that the school system deprived them of their freedom of speech and right to liberty and pursuit and happiness, by exposing their children to points of view on sex, marriage, and childrearing that potentially contradicted their own teachings in the home.<sup>148</sup>

In 1969, the controversy over the “Time of Your Life” series spilled into the South Bay. Margaret Scott and the Citizens for Parental Rights forged alliances with other opponents of sex and family life education in Santa Clara County. In February, Scott joined Gloria Bumb, who had spoken out against San Jose’s program in 1966, to put together a meeting entitled “Family Life Education- To Uplift of Corrupt?” in San Jose.<sup>149</sup> A month later, Santa Clara school officials told the local newspaper that the “Citizens for Parental Rights” had undertaken a door-to-door campaign in the suburb to

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<sup>147</sup> Citizens for Improved Education, *Sex/ Family Life Education and Sensitivity Training*, 6.

<sup>148</sup> Citizens for Parental Rights v. San Mateo County Board of Education, 51 Cal. App. 3d, (1975).

<sup>149</sup> “Sex Education Discussion Set,” *Santa Clara Journal*, 5 February 1969.

rally support for a state bill prohibiting sex education without the consent of mothers and fathers. Superintendent Lawrence Curtis denied that his district offered courses similar to those on the Peninsula, and he complained: “We can’t be responsible for courses taught in San Mateo County. Our schools are not offering these courses and parents of our students know we aren’t. Citizens without students in school should take time to check before believing the wild claims of San Mateo County political activists.”<sup>150</sup> Curtis’ outcry possessed only a degree of truth. Although it did not include the controversial “Time of Your Life” series, the Santa Clara Unified School District had offered film viewings on sex education to students since the mid-1960s. Even more significantly, his office was participating in a larger review of curricula on the subject undertaken by the County Office of Education.

### **The Controversy Escalates to the State Level**

These controversies in San Mateo and Santa Clara counties mirrored similar disputes in suburban areas all over California. Even as the Citizens for Parental Rights mobilized on the San Francisco Peninsula, opponents of sex and family life education in Orange County, near Los Angeles, and in Sacramento launched an attack on changes in curricula on those subjects in their local schools.

In early April 1969 Alan Sieroty sponsored a bill that would give state financial support to school districts interested in developing curricula on sex and family life education. The Beverly Hills Democrat argued that the measure would “train teachers and assure parents that local schools provide worthwhile and effective family life and sex education programs,” and he asked the State Board of Education to draw up guidelines

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<sup>150</sup> “Anti-Sex Ed Literature Distributed,” *Santa Clara Journal*, 2 April 1969.

and suggested curricula for individual districts who sought to comply with SB-1's health requirement.<sup>151</sup>

Beginning in November 1968, the Board had begun conducting an investigation of the different sex and family life education programs in the state. In February 1969 the Board's Educational Programs Committee singled out the curricula used in San Diego's public schools since the Second World War as worthy of emulation by other districts in California. At one of its meetings, John Ford, a doctor from San Diego, reported that his hometown used a traveling committee of six experts on family life to teach its program, and that it did not rely "on the average teacher to give the instruction." He declared: "It is most important to note that most of their time is spent with the psychological and emotional and moral attitudes involved- very little time is spent on the anatomical and actual reproduction per se.... A lot of what is being presented [in other schools] is nothing but pornography and this is what the parents want to avoid."<sup>152</sup>

On April 10, 1969, the California Board of Education complied with Sieroty's request and issued a set of guidelines on instruction on sex and family life. The Board held five hours of contentious hearings on the subject, and it justified its new recommendations on the California constitution's call for the public schools to instill the state's children with "moral improvements."<sup>153</sup> The guidelines declared that "a family life and sex education program should be provided for California children from kindergarten through high school," but they left it up to individual school districts to

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<sup>151</sup> "Sex Class Program Proposed," *San Jose Mercury*, 5 April 1969.

<sup>152</sup> Educational Programs Committee of the California State Board of Education, *Family Life and 'Sex Education' Programs in California Schools*, Report of the California State Department of Education, meeting minutes, 12 February 1969, Assembly Education Committee Records, California State Archives, Sacramento, CA.

<sup>153</sup> "Sex Course Urged for Every School," *San Francisco Examiner*, 10 April 1969. John Ford, a doctor from San Diego, invoked the school's responsibility to teach children about "morality."

decide what to include in their curricula. The Board moved cautiously, but its careful choice of wording clearly echoed the writings and proclamations of the state's Parent-Teacher Associations and other champions of classroom-based sex education. Its guidelines proclaimed: "The primary responsibility for sex education is that of the home. However, the school, along with the church, has a secondary role in supporting and supplementing the home's responsibility."<sup>154</sup>

The Board reinforced the idea that sex educators required special characteristics and qualifications different than other teachers, and it called for instruction from "qualified personnel," including doctors. It encouraged the involvement of the entire community, and it encouraged the creation of "citizens' committees" made up of teachers, clergy, parents, and family life experts, such as those used in Cupertino, should determine the shape and content of local programs. Its guidelines required that any parents who did not want their children to attend classes dealing with sex had the right to withdraw them at any time. And, most significantly, the Board argued that curricula should emphasize the "harmful effects of premarital sex" and that "a code of morals be emphasized with no derogatory instruction relative to religious beliefs and ethics, and to parents' beliefs and teachings. Emphasize the family unit and especially moral values."<sup>155</sup>

The dissemination of these guidelines did not settle the debate over sex education in the state legislature. Grassroots opponents of sex education found their legislative champion in Orange County Republican and John Birch Society member, John Schmitz. A state senator from Tustin near Los Angeles, Schmitz failed to block the Board of

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<sup>154</sup> "State Unit OK's Sex Education," *San Jose Mercury*, 11 April 1969.

<sup>155</sup> "State Unit OK's Sex Education," *San Jose Mercury*, 11 April 1969.

Education's endorsement of sex education, but he succeeded in garnering support for several laws that restricted its implementation in California. In May 1969, he sponsored a bill requiring all public schools to place sex education programs on hold until the legislature could study the issue. He also authored a bill that month that allowed parents to view materials taught in any sex education class and to withdraw their children from any course on the subject. Schmitz told the California Senate that a mother in his suburban district had told him "that her daughter was taught in detail about homosexuality and sex change operations."<sup>156</sup> A year later, he garnered enough support in the senate to pass a bill that he called "an anti-invasion of privacy bill," forbidding any teacher from asking students questions that dealt with "parents' sex lives, or the family's morality or religion."<sup>157</sup>

Schmitz's bills provoked a sharp reaction from his opponents. Assemblyman Alan Sieroty, accused the Orange County Republican and his allies of secretly "wishing for sex itself to go away' so their children wouldn't be tempted by it." The liberal legislator from Beverly Hills argued: "We are living in a culture in which sex is all around us. On what basis do we expect our young people to react to all of this stimuli- on the basis of facts given in an objective manner or on information picked up in the streets?"<sup>158</sup> Anaheim Superintendent Paul Cook, already embattled by Schmitz's supporters in his home district, accused his adversaries of "blatantly ignoring the confused, dishonest, immoral and often pornographic view of sex our children are getting every day on the streets."<sup>159</sup> San Francisco State Senator George Moscone charged Schmitz with

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<sup>156</sup> "Parent Approval on Sex Education Voted," *Los Angeles Times*, 8 May 1969.

<sup>157</sup> "A Bill on Sex Life and Schools," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 21 May 1970.

<sup>158</sup> "State View of Education," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 11 April 1969.

<sup>159</sup> "State View of Education," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 11 April 1969.

orchestrating a “calculated campaign to at least frighten parents of many children.”<sup>160</sup>

And Ralph Eckert, now president of the Southern California Council on Family Relations, criticized Schmitz and his allies, declaring, “The distortion has really frightened me. The most immoral things I’ve seen done lately are by the opponents of [sex education.]”<sup>161</sup>

These debates in Sacramento, particularly those surrounding the Board of Education’s guidelines and Schmitz’s bills, further polarized public opinion in San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties. In 1969 the *San Jose Mercury*’s “Inquiring Reporter” asked shoppers at the city’s GEM Discount Department Store if they believed schoolteachers should impart sex education to students. Lynn Amaral, a housewife from San Jose replied: “Definitely. I have a sister in the eighth grade... and last year, one of her girl friends had a baby. The father turned out to be a 26-year-old-man. If kids were taught more about sex, they would think twice about doing anything.”<sup>162</sup> Loretta Reeves, another housewife from San Jose, answered: “I think so. If they get the right answers in school, they won’t be quite as apt to get the wrong ones here and there and get themselves into trouble. It should start in the fifth or sixth grade, and the teacher should be somebody who knows more about it than just the regular school instructor.”<sup>163</sup>

Several school authorities in the South Bay reacted negatively to the new requirements passed by Schmitz, particularly the exemption for the children of unwilling parents. In reaction to complaints from opponents of school-based sex education, the Santa Clara Unified School District cancelled attempts to revise and expand its

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<sup>160</sup> “Senate Vows to Restrict Sex Classes,” *San Jose Mercury*, 8 May 1969.

<sup>161</sup> “Bill Would Freeze Sex Education,” *Sunnyvale Standard*, 17 April 1969.

<sup>162</sup> “Inquiring Reporter: Sex Education in Classroom?” *San Jose Mercury*, 28 March 1969.

<sup>163</sup> “Inquiring Reporter: Sex Education in Classroom?” *San Jose Mercury*, 28 March 1969.



curriculum on the subject. Board of Education Trustee Ruth Frey declared that “parents do not prepare their children. They do not know how or they are too embarrassed to talk to their children,” and she added that, “any teacher in the district could give better instruction in sex education than most parents and that the parents who are most vocally opposed to sex education are the ones most embarrassed to talk to their children.”<sup>164</sup>

Irving Wilcox, a fellow board member, argued that “A significant number of parents do default in this area,” and he contended that teachers needed “the freedom to counteract playground and back alley’ information on sex.”<sup>165</sup>

A month later, the SCUSD held an open forum on sex education films used in the district’s classrooms, and an overwhelming number of audience members indicated that they had a “favorable” or “very favorable” opinion of the five motion pictures shown in its junior and senior high schools. The only two movies that received any negative reactions were the SIECUS produced films “Becoming a Woman” and “Becoming a Man” because they suggested that “A girl can be sure that masturbation is a normal phases in her development” and that, “it is normal for a young girl to get a ‘crush’ on some older female.”<sup>166</sup> The town’s newspaper editorialized that “none of the films we saw would be considered pornographic,” but it argued that “some of the attitudes and statistics expressed in the SIECUS materials particularly conflict with contemporary community standards and it might be wise to eliminate [them] from the public school curriculum.”<sup>167</sup>

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<sup>164</sup> “Board Retains Old Health Ed Plan,” *Santa Clara Journal*, 1 October 1969.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>166</sup> “Parents Review, Remark on Sex Ed Films,” *Santa Clara Journal*, 26 November 1969.

<sup>167</sup> “Sex Education Films,” *Santa Clara Journal-News*, 26 November 1969.

In a report issued at the end of the 1969-70 academic year, the SCUSD noted that an overwhelming majority of local residents favored the inclusion of sex education in the district's schools. After sorting through 946 questionnaires delivered by mail from her office, volunteer Pearl Ribardo that 87 percent of respondents believed that "sex education should be a part of the curriculum."<sup>168</sup> This still left over one in ten people in the district opposed to the practice, and Eileen Davis, one of the volunteers who helped craft the report that she objected to the teaching of young people of sex without "moral instruction." "Moral instruction," she told the local newspaper, "is made difficult by court rulings against teaching religion in schools. 'If you can't teach morality, and can't teach immorality, you are left with amorality.'"<sup>169</sup>

The debates in Sacramento brought national media attention to the controversy over sex education, and as legislators such as Schmitz and Moscone battled over the issue in the California Legislature, groups mobilized back in the Bay Area at the grassroots to oppose the development of new curricula in the local districts. Most significantly, in March 1969 Saratoga resident Deloris Feak and Mary Thompson of Campbell put together an umbrella organization called the Santa Clara County Citizens Actions Committee to Oppose Family Life Education (SCCCACOFLE). Both mothers with school-age children, the two activists first came together as volunteers working on Max Rafferty's failed bid to join the U.S. Senate in 1968. Thompson recalled that as they tried to turn out support for the state superintendent's senatorial campaign, several area parents came into his Santa Clara County headquarters, complained about family life education in area schools, and collectively resolved to oppose it.

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<sup>168</sup> "School Report Calls for Changes," *Santa Clara Journal*, 24 June 1970.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*

The California Board of Education's approval of curriculum guidelines on sex and family life education brought a great deal of attention to the issue, and its decision helped galvanize conservatives at the grassroots level. Since SB-1 allowed each school district to develop its own sex and family life education curricula, SCCCACOFLE's founders saw their organization as a clearinghouse for local information on the subject, and they encouraged different groups of parents to organize against the issue in their communities.<sup>170</sup> In the wake of the California Board of Education's decision of curriculum guidelines on sex and family life education in the state's public schools in 1969, Thompson and Feak began putting together "coffee klatches" and lectures to speak out on the subject.<sup>171</sup> They gathered materials used in family life education programs from sympathetic parents and teachers, and they put together the "FLE Biter," a newsletter that summarized their activities.<sup>172</sup>

Only loosely allied with San Mateo's Citizens for Parental Rights, SCCCACOFLE's members nevertheless came to oppose family life education for similar reasons. First, they argued that school-based instruction on the subject infringed upon "parents' rights" to teach children about their family's religious and marital traditions in the home. In a letter to the *West Valley Times*, for example, Judy Ruscigno and the Campbell Citizens for Preservation of Family Rights in Education wrote that, "F.L.E. basically usurps the God-given parental responsibility to raise one's children according to personal religious beliefs and moral codes."<sup>173</sup> Second, like their allies in San Mateo, many of them argued that sex education programs violated a family's "right to privacy."

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<sup>170</sup> Deloris Feak, "Suggestions for Organizing Your Own 'Community Action' Group," letter to George Miliias, George Miliias Papers, California State Archives, Sacramento, CA.

<sup>171</sup> "Anti-Family Life Education Group Tells Aims," *Santa Clara Journal*, 16 April 1969.

<sup>172</sup> Mary Thompson, e-mail to author, 4 May 2008.

<sup>173</sup> Judy Ruscigno, letter, *West Valley Times*, 1 September 1969.

Many parents argued that the development of large classroom discussions about sex and family life, encouraging students to express their family's views on those topics, brought personal matters unfairly into a public setting. In August 1969, Cathy Weik wrote a long letter in the *San Jose News* calling family life education "an invasion of the privacy of the home," and declaring: "I have found that in the classroom students are encouraged to discuss family life. Of course, the only real basis a child has for such a discussion is his own family.... Once details of one's family life have been discussed in the classroom they have ceased to be confidential."<sup>174</sup>

Third, this accusation that classroom-based sex education programs invaded the privacy of individual families co-existed uneasily with the open resentment of many conservatives about legal proscriptions banning school prayer. Riscigno's invocation of a "God given parental privilege" alluded to the opposition of many parents to the teaching of sex education in schools without prayer or religious instruction. Marilyn Hillyer, for example, wrote: "A 'God-loving' person finds it impossible to instruct sex matters without paralleling and intertwining the two subject- God and sex. Our teachers cannot mention God without breaking the law."<sup>175</sup> Fourth, similar to opponents of family life education in the 1940s, SCCACOFLE's supporters contended that programs designed to discourage drug use and premarital sex actually aggravated the problems they sought to ameliorate. After several South Bay junior high schools sent letters to students' homes complaining that pupils lacked a proper "respect for authority" and of widening drug use, Feak and Thompson wrote in the March 1970 issue of their newsletter: "At least partly responsible for [these problems] are the drug programs permeating the child's school day.

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<sup>174</sup> Cathy Weik, letter, *San Jose News*, 27 August 1969.

<sup>175</sup> Marilyn Hillyer, letter, *West Valley Times*, 30 April 1969.

Reality shows these programs compound the problems they're trying to solve, by focusing the child's attention on them. Now wait till the sex programs hit full stride!!!<sup>176</sup>

Fifth, and finally, they spoke not only as parents but also as taxpayers, and since they opposed the development of family life education in public schools, they frequently couched their criticism in the language of "taxpayers' rights." SCCCOFLE's supporters saw their conservative political leanings as extensions of their identities as mothers and as consumers in a market economy. In April 1969 the *Santa Clara Journal* reported that Feak "indicated that FLEA may be receiving federal funds for its promotion work and that she disapproves of such expenditures." The Saratoga mother bristled when her adversaries accused her of holding radical views, and she told the *Journal* that her group represented "housewives, mothers and taxpayers who have long been interested and involved in civic and political affairs. None are 'Birchers,' nor do they consider themselves 'extremists.'"<sup>177</sup>

Throughout the spring semester of 1969, letters from constituents concerned about sex education and ethnic studies flooded the office of Santa Clara County State Assemblyman George Milias. Saratoga's Mrs. Kenneth Close, for example, called family life education "plain filth" and she accused the architects of Cupertino's black studies program of only presenting a "one sided point of view" and "changing facts to suit their purpose."<sup>178</sup> Mrs. W. B. Jones from Sunnyvale called family life education and black studies "socialistic and deteriorative," and she told Milias that "concerned parents are forming committees all over Santa Clara County, in an effort to stop the progress of

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<sup>176</sup> SCCCOFLE, *Fle Biter*, March 1970, courtesy of Mary Thompson.

<sup>177</sup> "Anti-Family Life Education Group Tells Aims," *Santa Clara Journal*, 16 April 1969.

<sup>178</sup> Mrs. Kenneth Close, letter to George Milias, 11 March 1969, George Milias Papers.

whoever or whatever is trying successfully to implant unethical, immoral, and unpatriotic ideas in the minds of our children.”<sup>179</sup> The West Valley Republican Women’s Club sent the assemblyman a copy of their resolution against family life education, which accused the subject’s defenders of possibly “undermining the family- the basic unit of society” and potentially leading “to the corruption of traditional Judeo-Christian morality.”<sup>180</sup>

In May 1969 over 300 opponents of sex education in parochial and public schools met at the Sveden House in San Jose. Hugh Fine, a father of nine children from Santa Clara County, told the crowd that, “one priest teaching a grade school class, in which one of his children was present, drew obscene hand gestures on the black board as part of a sex education program.” F.G. Cummings, a gynecologist from Los Gatos alleged that people had passed around bomb making plans before the Watts riot, and he contended: “Instructions in how to engage in sexual activities would no more prevent promiscuity and the spread of venereal disease than handing out instruction on making Molotov cocktails to prevent their use.” For Cummings and his allies, sex education exposed young minds to information that encouraged them to deviate from social norms, and the doctor told the group of concerned parents: “Sex education programs generally include instruction in sex acts that many people consider perversion” and he alleged that “such instruction would encourage experimentation.”<sup>181</sup> When an audience member asked what the speakers at Sveden House would do if they could not stop the implementation of sex education programs in their local schools. Margaret Scott of the Citizens’ for Parental Rights replied: “We’ll take our children out of the schools if necessary, even if they

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<sup>179</sup> Mrs. W.B. Wiley, letter to George Milias, 31 March 1969, Milias papers.

<sup>180</sup> Mrs. Vernon Pearce, West Valley Republican Women, letter to George Milias, Milias papers.

<sup>181</sup> “Throng Attends Sex Education Meet,” *Santa Clara Journal*, 14 May 1969.

threaten us with jail. We don't frighten easily any more, these are our children they're talking about."<sup>182</sup>

## **Resolution**

Although Scott, the Citizens for Parental Rights, SCCCOFLE, and their allies garnered significant media attention for their opposition to sex and family life education, the most enduring legacy of their activism lies in their almost complete failure to keep the subject out of California's public schools. With the exception of Schmitz's compromise bill that allowed parents to pull their children out of sex and family life education, the conservative voters who made up the New Right insurgency over schools notably fell short in almost all of their attempts to defeat efforts to change school policy on the issue.

By the late 1960s, too many suburban residents believed that parenting and straight family life was in crisis, and in the spring of 1969, the intense journalistic interest in the opponents of FLE itself produced a new backlash from parents who favored the expansion of the subject in South Bay classrooms. In March 1969, Santa Clara School Board President Maryanne Brooks accused the Citizens for Parental Rights of spreading misleading information, and she told the *San Jose Mercury* that she saw material from the group distributed in area churches and subdivisions, which she found "so pornographic I wouldn't send it through the mail."<sup>183</sup> A few weeks later, Shirley Miller, a reader of the *San Jose Mercury* wrote a letter to the editor which asked: "Why are the dissenting parents really objecting? Perhaps they are the remains of a traditionally generation, laced up with an unrealistic image of man... Let's not fill this new generation with half-truths.

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<sup>182</sup> Ibid.

<sup>183</sup> "No Sex Class- Protests, Anyway!" *San Jose Mercury*, 26 March 1969.

Give them the facts. Let them learn to make intelligent decisions. Give them proper terms. [And] eliminate the need for bathroom talk.”<sup>184</sup>

Later that month, Mr. and Mrs. G.V. Horton wrote to the *Santa Clara Journal*, and they challenged the belief that family life education in schools would create more sexual delinquents in the suburbs: “There is certainly proof that LACK of sex education causes tragedy. Far from ‘dangling sex before children for 13 years of their school life,’ Family life Education is designed to help children cope with the sex stimulation that is thrust at them practically every time they look at a magazine, newspaper, advertising billboard, movie or comic book.... [Young people] need to understand their own bodily functions and feelings and prepare them to establish more successful homes than our disgraceful divorce rates indicate we now have.”<sup>185</sup> Mrs. Jo Anne Hansen, concurred: “I’m afraid that these parents opposing the school sex education programs are the very reasons why we must have the classes... Until these parents can discuss these things... then we must have professionals... to introduce our children to life’s beautiful and intricate details.”<sup>186</sup>

In April 1969 a group of conservative parents who opposed family life education attempted and failed to block Santa Clara County’s Sixth District PTA from endorsing the teaching of the subject in South Bay schools. A month later, in her editorial support of classroom-based sex education, PTA President Elizabeth Hendryson accused conservatives of failing to recognize that parents and religious leaders alone could not adequately reach all of the nation’s children. She declared: “They ignored the fact that many churches provide no sex education or that if they do they want reinforcement from

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<sup>184</sup> Shirley Miller, letter, *San Jose Mercury*, 4 April 1969.

<sup>185</sup> Mr. and Mrs. G. V. Horton, letter, *Santa Clara Journal*, 30 April 1969.

<sup>186</sup> Mrs. Jo Anne Hansen, letter, *Santa Clara Journal*, 30 April 1969.



the school. They also ignored the fact that many homes provide no sound sex education whatever and that many of these homes, like many churches, are eager for the schools to share this task.” Most significantly, Hendryson alleged that conservative opponents of sex education failed to see the broad support for the subject. “Rather than rushing into the sex education field,” she proclaimed in exasperation, “the schools entered into it only after long and careful consideration. The truth is that public schools regard sex education not as their exclusive responsibility but as a responsibility shared with parents, religious institutions, and youth agencies.”<sup>187</sup>

In December 1969, Santa Clara County convened a grand jury investigation of family life education in the South Bay to offer parents an independent assessment of the program. The jury’s Education Committee met with County Superintendent Glenn Hoffman, San Jose State Professor Richard Bonvechio, Viola Owen from the County Office of Education, and Helen Hansen and Richard Sheehan from the FLEA. The Grand Jury ultimately commended Hoffman’s office for developing family life education programs, and it expressed fundamental agreement with the county’s goal of “contributing to the formation of effective, responsible parents by helping students understand basic concepts in child growth and development.”<sup>188</sup> Daniel Hoffman, a guest columnist for the *Santa Clara Journal* quickly applauded the Grand Jury’s decision, calling it “a major public service.” He specifically praised Superintendent Hoffman’s assertion that “a good share of our students are not receiving the kind of instruction from

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<sup>187</sup> Hendryson, “The Case for Sex Education,” 21.

<sup>188</sup> Santa Clara County Grand Jury, *Final Report 1969*, (San Jose, CA: 1969), 28-9.

their parents that will help them in making some of the crucial decisions in their lives. Therefore, the school must become involved.”<sup>189</sup>

By the early 1970s, almost every San Mateo and Santa Clara County school district offered sex and family life education programs. In some cases, they offered minor revisions to the curricula to appease conservative parents, even as they kept the larger courses intact. One Bay Area superintendent later told the *Los Angeles Times* that jettisoning *The Time of Your Life* series helped deflect some residents’ criticism, while affecting his district’s sex and family life education program very little. “Parents were definitely lifting parts of the script out of context, and we knew it was unfair,” he reflected. “But since the series was never an integral part of our program, it was no great sacrifice to forget it.”<sup>190</sup> Whatever the shortcomings of individual sex and family life education curricula, by the early 1970s more schools than ever had comprehensive programs on the subject, similar to the one in San Mateo. In 1970 the California Department of Education released guidelines for “health education” that included preparation for marriage, information on the dangers of drugs, and material on emotional “disorders.”<sup>191</sup> In 1970 the *Los Angeles Times* estimated that 25 to 50 percent of California’s 1,200 school districts had “true sex education” programs, and that the subject “had been introduced in schools in almost every part of the nation.”<sup>192</sup>

Surveys conducted across the country at the end of the decade supported Hendryson’s claim that broad segments of the population favored a greater role for

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<sup>189</sup> Daniel Hoffman, “Grand Jury Report on FLE Called ‘Public Service,’” *Santa Clara Journal*, 21 January 1970.

<sup>190</sup> “Battle Lines Being Drawn in California Over Sex Education,” *Los Angeles Times*, 23 December 1968.

<sup>191</sup> California Department of Education, *Framework for Health Instruction in California Public Schools: Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve* (Sacramento, CA: California Department of Education, 1970).

<sup>192</sup> “Sex Education Gains Across Nation Cited,” *Los Angeles Times*, 19 March 1970.

schools. In 1970, a Gallup poll found that 72 percent of American parents with students in the public schools said they favored sex education in their children's classrooms, with only 22 percent saying that they opposed it.<sup>193</sup> Similarly, mothers and fathers believed that classroom-based instruction should include explanations of how to use birth control by almost a two-to-one margin.<sup>194</sup> In 1972, the California Department of Education reported that only 5 percent of parents in the state had exercised their option to withdraw children from classes on sex.<sup>195</sup>

In 1970 a presidential commission on pornography put together by the Nixon administration articulated the now firmly cemented societal consensus on sex and family life. On one hand, it concluded that “despite assumptions to the contrary, evidence indicates that exposure to pornographic material does not induce criminal or deviant behavior.” It called for the repeal of all state and local laws that limited adults' access to sexually explicit materials. On the other hand, however, it noted that young people were increasingly coming into contact with pornography, and it called for a national campaign on sex education to mitigate an “interest in pornography and the ‘potentially undesirable effects of exposure to it.’”<sup>196</sup> Its final report declared: “The commission, believing that education rather than isolation is the main road to morality, recommends ‘a massive sex education effort’ by family, school, and church. The purpose of such an education should be ‘to contribute to healthy attitudes and orientations to sexual relationships so as to

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<sup>193</sup> Stanley Elam, ed. *The Gallup Polls of Attitudes Towards Education, 1969-1972* (Bloomington, IN: Phi Delta Kappa, 1973), 76.

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.* 76.

<sup>195</sup> “More Family Planning, Sex Education Urged,” *Los Angeles Times*, 20 September 1972.

<sup>196</sup> “Americans Need Sex Re-Education,” *San Jose Mercury*, 23 August 1970.

provide a sound foundation for society's basic institution of marriage and the family."<sup>197</sup>

The PTA, however, forcefully resisted the commission's call for the legalization of all sexually explicit materials, rejecting its claim that exposure to pornography did not harm children's mental development. The same Gallup Poll that found that 71 percent of Americans approved of classroom-based sex education also found that 85 percent of them favored greater legal restrictions on the sale of pornography.<sup>198</sup> PTA members, like a growing share of Americans, did not object to the consumption of sexually explicit materials in the privacy of one's home, but they did oppose the sale of books, magazines, or films in places that might attract young people. According to the organization's magazine: "To make pornography available to adults and at the same time inaccessible to children and youth is an impossible feat. To most PTA members, we think, it would seem most unwise and imprudent to remove the restraints that now exist on adult access to obscenity. Most PTA members, we think, will endorse the commission's recommendations for legislation to protect the young from pornography, to prohibit the public display of erotic materials, and to ban unsolicited advertising from their mails."<sup>199</sup>

The lawsuit brought by the Citizens for Parental Rights dragged on until 1976, and ended only when the California Supreme Court refused to hear their case. Both the Superior Court of San Mateo County and the state's Court of Appeals rejected all of the group's arguments, with the latter noting in 1975 that the Schmitz rule allowing parents to withdraw their children from classes on the subject completely robbed the plaintiffs of their legal standing. The Court of Appeals denied that the schools were requiring

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<sup>197</sup> "Light on the Darkness of Pornography," editorial, *The PTA Magazine*, November 1970.

<sup>198</sup> "The Gallup Poll: Americans Favor Stricter Smut Laws," *Los Angeles Times*, 22 June 1969.

<sup>199</sup> "Light on the Darkness of Pornography," editorial, *The PTA Magazine*, November 1970, 17.

students to reveal private material against their wills, and it admonished the Citizens for Parental Rights in its decision by declaring: “The Constitution of the United States does not vest in objectors the right to preclude other students who may voluntarily desire to participate in a course of study under the guise that the objector’s liberty, personal happiness or parental authority is somehow impaired or jeopardized. To adhere to such a concept would use judicial constitutional authority to limit inquiry to conformity, and to limit knowledge to the known.”<sup>200</sup>

By the mid-1970s Margaret Scott’s promise to “take our children out of the schools if necessary” proved more prophetic than hyperbolic. Following the decision of most public school districts to adopt sex and family life education programs of some sort, a significant minority of opponents of sex education withdrew their children from the public education system. Mary Thompson, one of the leading members of Santa Clara County Citizens Opposed to Family Life Education, recalled: “About 1970 some parents, including my husband and I who were affiliated with congregations of Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod began working toward starting a school, K-8 for our own children. Apostles Lutheran School opened in time for our daughter to attend 8<sup>th</sup> grade there. About the same time, [Deloris Feak] placed her children in San Jose Christian School.”<sup>201</sup> When the San Jose diocese adopted its own sex and family life education program in 1970 Gloria Bumb and several other parents formed their own parochial school in a spare room in her family’s business.

## **Conclusion**

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<sup>200</sup> *Citizens for Parental Rights v. San Mateo County Board of Education* (1975).

<sup>201</sup> Mary Thompson, e-mail to author, 4 May 2008.

The withdrawal of these conservatives from the public school system symbolized a crucial rupture of postwar liberalism's consensus on sex, marriage, and straight family life. Over the course of the next decade, ideologically conservative middle-class parents flocked to the New Right in battles over abortion, gay rights, and feminism. In their analyses of this process, however, most historians have confused the sexual left with the center. The battles over sex and family life education in the late 1960s reveal that a growing number of moderate voters favored the de-criminalization of certain forms of sexual conduct involving consenting adults, even as they reinforced straight marriage as a cultural norm. The spread of sex and family life education programs across California and the nation in the early 1970s not only helped bolster public support for the repeal of legal restrictions on pornography or homosexuality, they also expanded the state's rhetorical support for straight family life. Several gay rights advocates from the period understood the implications of this move, and Jeffrey Moran notes that in 1970 a Hollywood group "declined to support sex education in the schools, justifiably fearing that sex education would become a vehicle for antihomosexual information."<sup>202</sup> The New Right's mobilization demonstrates that many Americans opposed even a minor revision to a sexual hierarchy that promoted straight marriage.

Homosexuality represented only one of the issues at stake in these debates over school curricula, with teenage premarital sex and pornography occupying the minds of most parents in the late 1960s. Over the course of the next decade, however, the issue took on a new prominence as gay rights groups in places like San Francisco pushed for queer-friendly sex education curricula, and a handful of gay men and lesbians sought to integrate into the religious life of the Peninsula and South Bay. During the 1970s queer

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<sup>202</sup> Moran, 187.

voters would seek to challenge the state's restrictions on homosexuality, particularly in education, and ultimately compelled a new clash between the straight right and center.

## Chapter 7

### Culture War: Gay Rights, the Religious Right, and a Moderate Right to Privacy

#### Introduction

In the late 1970s, America's "culture wars" broke out into the national spotlight. Between 1975 and 1980, major media outlets around the country narrated contentious clashes between Gay Liberation and the Religious Right. *Newsweek*, for example, proclaimed 1976 the "Year of the Evangelical," and a year later, highlighted the looming nationwide "Battle Over Gay Rights." *The Nation* predicted a "Coming Struggle" over gay rights in 1977, and *Time*, unable to resist the play on words, cited pollster George Gallup, Jr. who asked: "Isn't it time for us to bring our religious feelings out of the closet?"<sup>1</sup> Buried beneath the headlines about evangelical Christians and gay activists, however, lay hints alluding to an ambivalent political center that tolerated homosexuality but failed to accept it as a set of relationships equal to straight marriage. *Newsweek*, for instance, framed the culture wars as a perplexing dilemma for lawmakers: "How to protect the civil rights of homosexuals without suggesting approval of a practice that most Americans still consider deviant."<sup>2</sup> In 1978, theologian Martin Marty similarly told *Time*: "The American people have had... a growing tolerance for homosexual expression.

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<sup>1</sup> "Gays on the March," *Time*, 8 September 1975; "Battle Over Gay Rights," *Newsweek*

<sup>2</sup> "Battle Over Gay Rights," *Newsweek*, 6 June 1977, 17.



But there is a big difference between a growth in tolerance and a willingness to legislate homosexuality as a normative alternative.”<sup>3</sup>

Although controversies over gay rights first attracted national attention in the 1970s, they broke out due to the enduring legacy of the postwar closet and the sifting sexual patterns of metropolitan growth underway since the 1940s. The evangelical churches and middle-class gay neighborhoods that anchored Gay Liberation and the Religious Right represented an extension of the sorting of people based on their common sexual, racial, and class characteristics that first began with the early days of the Baby Boom. Three decades into this distillation process urban-based gay activists arose to challenge the most repressive elements of the closet, and a newly visible Religious Right built around networks of suburban churches rose to challenge them. By the 1970s, openly gay ministers broke into the clerical ranks of several Protestant denominations; gay teachers challenged the discriminatory policies that kept them out of classrooms; and gay activists demanded sex education in public schools that treated homosexuality as a set of relationships equal to heterosexuality. At the same time, religious conservatives petitioned for the rollback of California’s “consenting adults” sex law, banned same-sex marriage in the state, and insisted upon the expulsion of openly queer teachers from its classrooms.

In the midst of the debates over these issues stood large numbers of middle-class straight voters who objected to both homosexuality and the strident rhetoric of the Religious Right. Beginning in the 1970s these self-described “moderates” attempted to stake out a middle path between the two social movements by promoting a universal “right to privacy.” First used by liberal activists in the 1960s to limit police harassment

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<sup>3</sup> “Voting Against Gay Rights, *Time*, 28 May 1978.

of queer people, groups of middle-class straight voters deployed it at the outbreak of the culture wars as a limiting discourse meant to contain both Gay Liberation and the Religious Right. Rhetorical support for a “right to privacy” allowed moderates to espouse a seemingly libertarian sexual politics, accepting the inevitability of deviant behaviors behind closed doors while simultaneously shutting down public support for them. As a middling strategy, it opened up a limited space for gay rights advocates to push back the most repressive forms of political and social discrimination, but it also circumscribed larger debates about equality and social justice. Similar to the “color-blind” discourses used by many white voters in the same time period, calls for sexual privacy rested on a claim to historical innocence and a refusal to remedy past wrongs.<sup>4</sup> From World War II through the 1970s, the state not only repressed queer relationships, it also helped normalize straight ones through publicly funded sex and family life education campaigns. Calls for sexual privacy not only ignored this history, they also left in place public support for a sexual hierarchy between straight and queer relationships and continued to privilege heterosexuality.

Many historians, however, have insisted upon narrowly explaining the controversies over homosexuality that erupted in the 1970s through the limited prism of a religious “backlash” against Gay Liberation and Feminism. Scholars interested in the rise of the “New Right,” in particular, have tended to view battles over gay rights principally as a product of the sexual revolution of the 1960s and the mobilization of

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<sup>4</sup> For an analysis of “color-blind populism,” see Matthew Lassiter, *The Silent Majority: Suburban Politics in the Sunbelt South* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006).

social conservatives at the grassroots level.<sup>5</sup> This approach not only obscures the important role played by the state in the postwar period, it also overlooks the deep ambivalence towards homosexuality felt by the vast majority of straight voters who never joined groups like the Moral Majority. One of the central failings of the recent literature on the New Right has been its inability to grasp that most Americans can hold deeply heterosexist positions on gay rights while still distancing themselves from the most bigoted views of many social conservatives. Although motivated evangelical Christians have played a huge role in Republican partisan politics, they not only do not represent a majority of Americans, but their ideas have frequently alienated many moderate middle-class voters. Most suburban residents never joined conservative churches, but they almost universally viewed straight relationships as superior to queer ones, and they have shied away from supporting any position that might condone homosexuality.

Historians can better understand America's "culture wars" by reintegrating analyses of mega-churches and evangelical growth back into the metropolitan contexts in which they first emerged. During the 1970s, the Bay Area, like regions across the country, boasted a series of interlocking communities, fragmented by sexuality, class, race, and space. When State Senator John Briggs sought to ban gay teachers in California's public schools in 1978 he not only sought to re-instate prohibitions against sexual conduct first put in place in the 1940s, he also specifically appealed to voters concentrated in conservative suburban churches. He faced opposition not only from an urban-based gay liberation but also growing numbers of suburban moderates and liberals who believed his initiative violated a person's fundamental "right to privacy." The

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<sup>5</sup> See for example, Lisa McGirr, *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001) Janice Irvine, *Talk About Sex: Battles Over Sex Education in the United States* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2004).

Briggs proposal's defeat at the polls, however, did not usher in a new era of equality for queer people. In the years after its failure, both the Religious Right and gay activists continued to compete for the support of straight moderates. The culmination of several decades' worth of state-sponsored education on sexual normalcy and community building, the "culture wars" of the 1970s emerged not only as a "backlash" against gay liberation, but as an ongoing attempt by middle-class straight voters to publicly distinguish between normative heterosexual relationships and queer ones.

In the late 1960s and 1970s, San Francisco and the South Bay developed new types of neighborhoods and social organizations. In this period, the Castro District emerged as the most prominent middle-class gay neighborhood in the country, and Santa Clara County witnessed the gathering of small groups of openly gay men and lesbians. These communities played an important role in challenging restrictions on queer people in local schools and churches. In the early and mid-1970s, gay activists in San Francisco successfully challenged the city's treatment of homosexuality in its family life education program, and a predominantly gay religious congregation in San Jose successfully gained admittance to the Santa Clara County Council of Churches. This last move fractured the alliance of mainline Protestants at the same time that their evangelical rivals were adding large numbers of married couples with children as members. When, in the late 1970s, conservative leaders Anita Bryant and John Briggs launched campaigns denouncing homosexuality, these evangelical churches served as their key supporters. By the time voters faced Proposition 6 in 1978, members of the Religious Right, straight moderates, and gay activists sat in a triangular relationship, reflecting differing concentrated sexual communities in a sprawling metropolis.

## **Structural Changes in the City and Suburban Housing Markets**

By the early 1970s, the metropolitan trends in motion since the Second World War enabled the creation of new types of communities and politics. In the decade after the end of redevelopment, San Francisco emerged as a banking and corporate headquarters. Between 1960 and 1980 the amount of available office space in the city doubled, and between 1960 and 1970 the number of positions in finance, insurance, and real estate increased by just over 30 percent.<sup>6</sup> Within the city, the Castro emerged as a middle-class, gay neighborhood, fully distinct from the red-light district, and as a leading center for gay politics. At the same time, the South Bay changed from a collection of bedroom communities loosely tied to San Francisco, to an independent, multinucleated, postsuburban region.<sup>7</sup> In 1970 Santa Clara County's population surpassed a million people, and its housing, neighborhoods, and commercial centers evolved to reflect its growing sexual and political diversity. Within the sprawling South Bay, pockets of different sexual communities clustered around common housing types and communal gathering spots built around the region's freeways.

In the decade after San Francisco's tumultuous urban renewal, queer life in the city straddled two key neighborhoods. Throughout the 1970s, the Tenderloin and portions of South of Market continued to serve as the city's primary red light district and a low-end residential area for queer residents in the city. In an interview with journalist Randy Shilts, gay rights activist Cleve Jones later recalled that after running away from

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<sup>6</sup> Manuel Castells, *The City and the Grassroots: A Cross-Cultural Theory of Urban Social Movements* (London: Edward Arnold, 1983), 100.

<sup>7</sup> Robert Kling, Spencer Olin, and Mark Poster, *Postsuburban California: The Transformation of Orange County Since World War II* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1991).

Arizona in 1973, he made his first social connections in San Francisco's Central City and that he shared a room with "a half dozen other seventeen- and eighteen- year old hustlers" in the neighborhood's Grand Hotel.<sup>8</sup> At the same time, vacant buildings and falling rents along Folsom Street attracted a number of leather bars, sex clubs, and gay bathhouses to the South of Market area.<sup>9</sup>

Just up Market Street, the Castro District emerged as the most visible center for middle-class gay politics in San Francisco. Although the process first began unfolding in the previous decade, the neighborhood gentrified at an accelerated rate during the 1970s. At the end of the 1960s, Randy Shilts recalled that near the intersection of Market and 18<sup>th</sup> Streets, "stores went out of business" and "houses stood vacant."<sup>10</sup> Just a few years later, large numbers of gay professionals, many of them working in the city's new postindustrial economy, rented or bought homes in the district's aging Victorians. Shilts noted that the sudden increase in demand spurred a surge in local property values: "Between 1973 and 1976, prices of many of the solid old homes quintupled," he observed. "Real Estate speculation created similar conditions in all parts of San Francisco, but in no area was the explosion as marked as in the Castro where thousands were willing to pay any price to live at last in a neighborhood where they would not be different."<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Randy Shilts, *The Mayor of Castro Street: The Life and Times of Harvey Milk*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1982), 85.

<sup>9</sup> Gayle Rubin, "Elegy for the Valley of the Kings: AIDS and the Leather Community in San Francisco, 1981-1996," *In Changing Times: Gay Men and Lesbians Encounter HIV/AIDS*, Martin Levine et al. eds. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 106-107.

<sup>10</sup> Shilts, *The Mayor of Castro Street*, 82.

<sup>11</sup> Shilts, *The Mayor of Castro Street*, 119. Historian Timothy Stewart-Winter, however, astutely observes that most of the Castro's new residents were renters not buyers. Home prices may have gone up, but the gay men who lived there did not necessarily profit from the spike. Stewart-Winter, "Castro: Origins to the Age of Milk," *Gay and Lesbian Review Worldwide*, January-February 2009, 15.

According to maps put together by geographer Manuel Castells, by 1975 the census tracts that straddled the intersection of Market and Castro Streets boasted the highest concentration of multiple male households in the city and hosted at least eleven bars and social clubs that catered to this relatively privileged group of queer residents.<sup>12</sup> The neighborhood was overwhelmingly white, and although it lay less than a mile from the predominantly African American Fillmore District, less than five percent of the residents living in the five census tracts at Market and Castro Streets were black. Although that percentage remained constant through the 1970s, the ratio of Hispanic to non-Hispanic residents in the same area actually dropped by 10 percent as white, Anglo newcomers displaced long time Latino residents.<sup>13</sup>

The growth of these inner-city neighborhoods paralleled the diversification of San Mateo and Santa Clara counties housing markets. In the late 1960s, manufacturing in Santa Clara County's aerospace, electronics, and defense industries boomed. The Vietnam War spurred demand for military-related goods, and between 1965 and 1968 South Bay employers with ties to the armed forces added 37,200 jobs to the area.<sup>14</sup> A study conducted by the Santa Clara County Planning Department in 1967 concluded that the San Jose Metropolitan Area had the greatest concentration of aerospace related employment in Northern California, trailing only Los Angeles and Orange counties for

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<sup>12</sup> Manuel Castells, *The City and the Grassroots*, 148. Castells further argues that high ratios of homeowners and children under the age of 18 correlated negatively with the presence of gay men in San Francisco's neighborhoods. "In other words, he wrote, property and family were the major walls protecting the 'straight universe' from gay influence." Castells, *The City and the Grassroots*, 151.

<sup>13</sup> U.S. Bureau of Census, *Census 1970*, available at [www.socialexplorer.com](http://www.socialexplorer.com). Ibid. Census 1980, census tracts 169, 170, 203, 205, 206.

<sup>14</sup> Federal Housing Administration, Department of Housing and Urban Development, *An Analysis of the San Jose, California Housing Market*, (Washington, D.C. Federal Housing Administration, 1972), 8.

the lead in the state.<sup>15</sup> As the Vietnam War wound down, many of these firms transitioned to producing electronics for civilian use, and during the 1970s, the Peninsula and South Bay, renamed “Silicon Valley” emerged as a world leader in high tech manufacturing.<sup>16</sup>

This booming regional economy pushed Santa Clara County’s population to over a million people by 1970, and it subsequently compelled the diversification of its housing market. By the early 1970s demand for single-family homes on the Peninsula and in the South Bay had slackened considerably. After almost two decades’ worth of the nearly exclusive construction of detached, low-density residences, developers had come close to nearly saturating the available housing market. In 1972 the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development noted that the housing market around San Jose “was in a state of reasonable demand supply balance.”<sup>17</sup> Later in the 1970s, *Time* reported that the “sky-high” cost of South Bay single-family homes was hurting the ability of high-tech firms to recruit new workers.<sup>18</sup>

In response to the mellowing demand for home sales, local builders began erecting apartments in the area in record numbers. In the city of Mountain View, housing development lagged behind that of neighboring suburbs, and between 1961 and 1974, 88 percent of all new residential construction there consisted of multi-family housing.<sup>19</sup> In

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<sup>15</sup> Santa Clara County Planning Department, *A Study of the Economy of Santa Clara County, California*, Part 1, 1967.

<sup>16</sup> Margaret O’Mara, *Cities of Knowledge: Cold War Science and the Search for the Next Silicon Valley* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), 97-141; M. Gottdiener and George Kephart, “The Multinucleated Region: A Comparative Analysis,” *Postsuburban California*, 40-42.

<sup>17</sup> Federal Housing Administration, *An Analysis of the San Jose, California Housing Market*, 7.

<sup>18</sup> “Recruiting in Silicon Valley,” *Time*, 7 August 1978.

<sup>19</sup> Mountain View Planning Department, *General Plan Data Book*, (Mountain View, CA: Mountain View Planning Department, 1974). In 1970 only 44.6 percent of all housing units were single-family detached homes. This percentage of apartments made Mountain View an exception to Santa Clara County’s predominance of single-family homes in residential areas. Even in a period of housing diversification,



1966 the designers of the “Redwood Shores” neighborhood in the Peninsula suburb of Redwood City, anticipated that “unrelated individuals” would make up approximately 10 percent of its population in the coming decades, and they told local planners that they projected “an increasing proportion of multi-family construction in future years.”<sup>20</sup> The Department of Housing and Urban Development reported in 1970 that the South Bay’s electronics industry had sparked demand for more flexible residential options and that “there has been a concentration [of rental units] in areas near employment centers in San Jose, Santa Clara, and Sunnyvale.”<sup>21</sup>

This upsurge in apartment construction in the South Bay not only reflected the region’s booming economy, but also the changing sexual relationships among area residents. The new tendency of young people to delay marriages into their late 20s and early 30s and California’s recent legalization of “no-fault” divorce in 1969 created a growing residential market of “single” people who did not want or could not afford to purchase their own home. The Department of Housing and Urban Development observed that the “most recently built units have been designed for that segment of the rental market without young children with restrictions placed upon occupancy to achieve that end.”<sup>22</sup> An aggressive developer on the Peninsula advertised a set of Sunnyvale

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government officials around the area considered the city “the undisputed apartment capital of the Midpeninsula.” See Deborah Daro, “Where Will Dick and Jane Live? The Impact of Local Government Policy Making on Young Families with Children,” Childhood and Government Project Working Paper, Earl Warren Legal Institute, University of California, Berkeley, 1976, 56-7.

<sup>20</sup> Leslie Properties, Inc. *Redwood Shores: Part of Greater Redwood City*, (1966).

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 7, 10. HUD estimated that in the previous year 6,700 units in “multifamily structures” had gone on the market, representing almost twice as many single-family homes for sale in the area.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.* 7.

condominiums by bluntly asking in a newspaper advertisement: “Where do you live if you’re divorced?”<sup>23</sup>

This apartment construction boom facilitated the growth of small middle-class queer communities in San Mateo and Santa Clara counties. Although gay men and lesbians had always lived in the Bay Area suburbs, restrictions placed on mortgage lending and the shortage of available rental apartments limited the types of people who could live there. Moreover, the high percentage of straight families, police surveillance and almost complete lack of bars of any type, meant that those queer residents who lived in the area prior to 1970 had few available social outlets. The addition of significant numbers of “multifamily housing” in the 1970s, however, created growing pockets of unmarried tenants, and, according to one gay San Jose resident in 1977: “Many homosexuals manage to keep their ‘gay life’ invisible by living in large apartment complexes.”<sup>24</sup>

Although residents may have kept their sexuality “invisible” to potentially hostile neighbors or landlords, their growing presence in the sprawl of the South Bay spurred the creation of several commercial outlets that catered to queer patrons. Beginning in the late 1960s, several gay bars and bookstores opened near San Jose’s downtown and off the freeway exits in the surrounding suburbs.<sup>25</sup> Between 1960 and 1979 over two-dozen gay bars opened in Santa Clara County, although no more than eight of them existed at any given time.<sup>26</sup> Two of the South Bay’s earliest gay bars, the Crystal Saloon and the

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<sup>23</sup> “Where Do You Live If You’re Divorced,” advertisement, *San Mateo Times*, 6 January 1973. The ad went on to declare: “So if you’re divorced, live alone or there’s just two of you, there’s no sense in renting when you can own. And no sense in owning a big old family homes when you don’t need one.

<sup>24</sup> “San Jose Pastor Understands Pressure on Gays,” *San Jose Mercury*, 12 September 1977.

<sup>25</sup> Ted Sahl, *From Closet to Community: The Story of Santa Clara County’s Gay and Lesbian Communities* (Campbell, CA: Ted Sahl Gallery, 2002).

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

Piedmont, opened in an older part of central San Jose, as the area surrounding the central business district slowly evolved into a smaller version of San Francisco's red light district in the 1960s. A decade later, Johnie Staggs and Rosalie Nichols, two gay women, opened Ms. Atlas Press, a downtown bookstore on West San Fernando Street, and they began publishing "Lesbian Voices," a literary magazine. In the 1970s, several bars that primarily catered to middle-class gay men such as a Tinker's Dam in Santa Clara and Desperado's in Palo Alto opened in commercial strips off the region's major interstates.<sup>27</sup>

These businesses frequently served as communal nodes in which queer residents found one another in the otherwise anonymous sprawl of the South Bay. Looking back on the 1960s and 1970s, long-time Santa Clara County resident Wiggys Sivertsen recalled that gay men and lesbians needed apartment parties, private meetings in living rooms, and visible commercial establishments, like bars and bookstores, in order to recognize themselves as a group: "I see our community as a series of tiny veins that spread out into the Santa Clara Valley. It's not like San Francisco," she noted, "where you can point to Noe Valley or the Castro, and say, this is where gay people live. For the most part, we gays in the South Bay live and work amongst heterosexuals so the sense of community in a geographic sense does not exist. Instead, we gather together at various places and events to support each other."<sup>28</sup>

Apartment construction, however, did not spread universally across the South Bay and did very little to assist low-income renters. Most cities on the Peninsula and in the South Bay still refused to create a public housing authority, and in 1970 the Santa Clara County Planning Department called efforts to alleviate the shortage "sporadic and

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Wiggys Sivertsen, in Sahl, *From Closet to Community*.

piecemeal.” Apartment construction took place primarily in the cities closest to the valley floor, such as Mountain View, San Jose, Santa Clara, and Sunnyvale, and the more exclusive suburbs in the area, including Monte Sereno, Los Altos Hills, and Los Gatos, all vigorously enforced zoning regulations that kept out multi-unit housing. Between 1966 and 1970 local developers opted to further segment the real estate market by confining new construction in those towns to increasingly expensive single-family homes. In 1970 the County Planning Department reported that the upward trend in housing prices had trickled over into the rental sector, with over half the landlords in the area raising their monthly rates in the same period. These trends not only meant that poor people could not find housing in most residential areas in the South Bay, but also that rising costs were creating a divide between wealthy neighborhoods on the periphery and middle-class ones near the center.<sup>29</sup>

These shifts in housing types paralleled an even more significant transformation in the types of people living on the Peninsula and in the South Bay. Whereas many of the suburbs that stretched from San Mateo to west San Jose had once boasted almost exclusive numbers of straight families, between 1970 and 1980 many of these communities emerged as areas where the majority of adults did not have children. This shift, in part, mirrored national trends towards smaller families, but it also reflected the aging of the suburbs and the growing trend towards multi-family housing. By the early 1970s the children of residents who had moved there during the postwar Baby Boom had grown up and moved away, and the new apartment complexes in the area tended to attract unmarried people or couples without offspring. Between 1970 and 1980, the

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<sup>29</sup> Joint Cities-County Housing Element Program, *The Cost to Occupy Housing: Santa Clara County*, (San Jose, CA: County of Santa Clara Planning Department, 1970).

percentage of children under the age of 18 living in San Mateo and Santa Clara counties dropped by almost 10 percent.<sup>30</sup> In a 1970 survey of neighborhoods in Los Altos, almost half of the residents indicated they no longer had children living under the age of 18 living with them. Just six years later, a second poll found that 58 percent of the households in the same city consisted exclusively of adults.<sup>31</sup>

These countywide statistics, gloss over the crucial role local developers continued to play in building new developments of single-family homes specifically for married couples with children. In the growing suburban metropolis around San Jose, for example, the sexual gap between the central city and periphery grew tremendously in the 1970s. Although the number of married people dropped in every tract in Santa Clara County during the decade, the areas near town centers at the northern end of the valley saw the largest declines. Whereas almost 85 percent of the residents living around Sunnyvale and Mountain View's downtowns were married in 1970, only 37 percent of them were in 1980.<sup>32</sup> By contrast, in 1980 over 85 percent of the adults living on Saratoga's Westside, on San Jose's southern tip, and in the fledgling suburbs near Morgan Hill were married.<sup>33</sup>

## **1972 San Francisco Gay Sex Education Scandal**

These structural divisions within the city and suburbs facilitated the growth of new kinds of sexual communities and politics. Over the course of the 1970s, the Bay Area's schools and churches hosted several political contests that tested the boundaries of

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<sup>30</sup> U.S. Bureau of the Census, *1970 Census*; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *1980 Census*.

<sup>31</sup> Daro, "Where Will Dick and Jane Live?" 23.

<sup>32</sup> U.S. Bureau of the Census, *1970 Census*, tracts 5087.01 and 5092. 9,286 people lived in these census tracts in 1970; US. Census 1980, tracts 5087.1, 5092.1, 5092.02. 9,099 people lived in these census tracts in 1980.

<sup>33</sup> U.S. Bureau of the Census, *1980 Census*. Census tracts 5072.02, 5076, 5119.06, 5123.02

straight tolerance for queer sexuality. Several of these battles took place over California's sex and family life education curricula, which upheld straight norms. Already a focus of political controversy, the state's instructional programs attracted the attention of gay activists in San Francisco in 1972 who sought to teach young people to tolerate homosexuality and to provide counseling for queer youth. Their efforts garnered significant resistance from straight voters and the state, but, ultimately, they helped reshape local sex education programs in San Francisco. Similar to the national controversy over the subject that erupted in the 1940s, activists' attempts to make schools more gay friendly in the 1970s differed from place to place. Because local districts have had the greatest control of their curricula, the content of sex education programs has almost always corresponded to the sexual make-up of the surrounding communities. The outbreak of a controversy over gay rights and classrooms in 1972 reflected these divisions and demonstrated the limits and possibilities of queer activism built around individual school systems.

The battle over sex and family life education emerged out of the larger social and political context of Gay Liberation in the late 1960s. In her 2002 book, *Forging Gay Identity*, sociologist Elizabeth Armstrong argues that in this period queer activists in San Francisco refashioned the relationship between homosexuality and the issue of privacy. Whereas most homophile groups in the 1950s understood seclusion and invisibility as important protective shields for gay men and lesbians, new groups in the late 1960s produced a deliberate strategy for expressing one's sexuality in public, a process later dubbed "coming out." Armstrong writes: "In the context of the New Left, privacy came to be understood as dishonest and psychologically unhealthy. Combined with the belief

that social change was accomplished from the bottom up through the aggregation of individual acts... this emphasis on authenticity produced the definitive contribution of gay liberation: the political strategy of ‘coming out.’<sup>34</sup>”

This desire to make queer sexuality a public concern pushed activists to confront the straight authorities that policed the boundaries of sexual speech, particularly in schools. Although few sources on the program exist today, beginning in the late 1960s San Francisco’s Society of Individual Rights created a speakers’ bureau for the city’s family life education program. Similar to the guest lectures given by the Council on Religion and the Homosexual in the mid-1960s, the “Gay Counseling Service” sought to offer public school students the opportunity to ask questions about homosexuality and to present pupils with a set of role models who differed from those presented in the official textbooks and curriculum.<sup>35</sup> The San Francisco Mental Health Association formally recommended the group for classroom discussions in the early 1970s, and it worked with the consent of the San Francisco school administration. In 1972, Gene Huber, the city district’s director of family life education, told *The San Francisco Examiner* that he “recognizes the need for discussion of various lifestyles,” and that he hoped discussions of sensitive topics would supplement the work done by “the home, the church and community at large.” He declared: “We feel that since [adolescents] come into contact with people of all sexual orientations outside of school hours, we have a moral obligation,

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<sup>34</sup> Elizabeth Armstrong, *Forging Gay Identities: Organizing Sexuality in San Francisco 1950-1994* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2002), 57.

<sup>35</sup> In the August 1972 issue of *Gay Sunshine*, a gay liberation periodical, a group calling itself the “Gay Counseling Service” placed a small announcement, declaring: Gay counseling service, an outreach of the San Francisco Gay Rap Program, came into existence so that gay people would have the opportunity to seek out counseling services if so desired and not be told that the reason you are hassled is that you are gay. Gay people like everyone else have hassles that have nothing to do with their sexual orientation.” “Gay Counseling Service,” *Gay Sunshine*, Number 14, August 1972.

if not a legal one, to provide the educational experiences each child needs to live in today's society."<sup>36</sup>

Huber and his colleagues did little to publicize their use of gay and lesbian speakers in their program, and they limited their appearances to classes in which individual teachers specifically asked for their services. In May 1972, however, *San Francisco Examiner* columnist Guy Wright published a story about a confrontation between white speakers from the Gay Counseling Service and the students at the predominantly black Roosevelt Junior High School. The journalist alleged that "some students asked needling questions" and that the guest lecturers "in a pique, began giving blunt answers." Wright contended that two lesbians publicly embraced one another on the corner outside the school as a form of retribution to the students' taunts, and that "when parents learned what had been going on, the roof fell in on the school principal, Walter Nolan." The writer reported that the students' families registered "formal protests" with the school administration, and he sarcastically concluded that the district administration would "have to serve notice that the [Gay Counseling Service] would have to send a higher class of homosexuals to spread its gospel in the classroom."<sup>37</sup>

Just four years after California required all public schools to offer some kind of sex education, Guy Wright's column briefly reopened the state's contentious discussion of the issue, and it placed San Francisco's emergent Gay Liberation movement at the center of the debate. The Roosevelt School PTA requested that the State School Board conduct an investigation, but it reaffirmed that "the PTA was in full support of the

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<sup>36</sup> "S.F. Class Probe Asked," *San Francisco Examiner*, 8 June 1972.

<sup>37</sup> Guy Wright, "The Sex Teachers," *San Francisco Examiner*, 28 May 1972.



[larger] family life education program.”<sup>38</sup> One Roosevelt Junior School parent wrote in to the *Examiner* to declare: “I am not starting a campaign against homosexuality- let them do their thing- but they don’t belong in a school program on family.”<sup>39</sup> Lillian Cirelli, an opponent of sex education, wrote in to Wright to argue that this scandal confirmed her worst suspicions about the program, and she alleged: “In Cranston, RI a pimp and a prostitute spoke to high school students as part of the Family Life Education program. In San Francisco homosexuals are invited. Yet those of us who could see ahead and oppose this program... were labeled kooks, Birchers, and whatever they could throw at us.”<sup>40</sup> And Alice Weiner, a member of the Peninsula anti-sex education group, Citizens for Parental Rights, told Wright: “The introduction of homosexuals to the junior high classrooms in San Francisco... was not a one-time aberration. It was proclaimed as necessary by the sex education coordinator of San Francisco schools... The only expert in this matter is the individual parent in respect to the moral attitudes he wishes his child to hold.”<sup>41</sup>

A week after the publication of Wright’s column, Gene Ragle, a Reagan appointee to the California Board of Education, demanded that the state investigate possible abuses in local sex education programs. He raised the issue after learning about the confrontation at Roosevelt Junior High, and he sarcastically asked: “My respected associates on the board, is there any one of you who had this kind of thing in mind when you initiated the sex education program?”<sup>42</sup> Ragle further alleged that a history course at Redwood High School in the North Bay town of Larkspur had “turned into a complete

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<sup>38</sup> “Uproar Threatens School Programs,” *The Advocate*, 5 July 1972.

<sup>39</sup> Guy Wright, “Homosexual Lessons,” *San Francisco Examiner*, 5 June 1972.

<sup>40</sup> Guy Wright, “Homosexual Lessons,” 5 June 1972.

<sup>41</sup> Alice Weiner, letter, *San Francisco Examiner*, 3 December 1972.

<sup>42</sup> “S.F. Class Probe Asked,” *San Francisco Examiner*, 8 June 1972.

course in copulation in three weeks,” and he called for an “ad hoc committee” to investigate the possible “injection of illicit sex instruction and perversion into the Health and Family Life program.”<sup>43</sup> He then threatened to revoke the credential of any teacher who had violated the state’s rules on sex education.<sup>44</sup> Ragle expressed further outrage in late June after learning that a pair of teachers in the North Bay town of Novato had asked two speakers from San Francisco’s Society for Individual Rights to address their classes at San Marin High School, only to have local education officials block their visit.<sup>45</sup>

In mid-July, however, the rest of the State Board declined to discipline teachers or administrators in any of the schools involved in the dispute. Ragle called for citizens’ committees in every district to review the materials used in their local educational systems, and he demanded stricter limits on who could speak in courses on sex and family life. The *San Francisco Examiner* reported that, “He said Christian ministers were not able to advocate their religion in classrooms and he could not see why homosexuals should have ‘free license to exercise their missionary efforts.’”<sup>46</sup> Five months later, the other members of the State Board acceded to some of Ragle’s requests and passed resolutions allowing superintendents to exercise veto powers over family life education curricula in their districts, requiring citizens committees across the state to review programming on sex in their local schools, and mandating formal training for instructors who sought to teach classes on the subject. A report given by Henry Heydt, a special assistant to the Board, denied that the Society for Individual Rights or any of the

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<sup>43</sup> “S.F. Class Probe Asked,” *San Francisco Examiner*, 8 June 1972; “Furor on Sex and Schooling,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, 9 June 1972. Unclear what this phrase means. At the June 8-9 1972 meeting of the State Board of Education Ragle presented Wright’s column from the *Examiner* as evidence that sex education needed a California wide investigation. State Board of Education, meeting minutes, 8-9 June 1972, California State Archives.

<sup>44</sup> “A Probe of Sex Education Classes,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, 10 June 1972.

<sup>45</sup> “School Challenged to Hear Gays,” *The Advocate*, 11 October 1972.

<sup>46</sup> “State Tries to Downplay Sex,” *San Francisco Examiner*, 14 July 1972.

teachers at Redwood, San Marin, or Roosevelt Junior High Schools had violated any laws, and, therefore, left legal room for future visits from openly gay speakers in public high schools.<sup>47</sup>

Gene Ragle's vocal dissent to San Francisco's decision to allow openly gay lecturers to address the city's family life education classes reignited the statewide debate about educators' role in teaching about sex, but it also refocused straight parents' concerns specifically on the alleged dangers of queer instructors. Ragle told the *San Francisco Sunday Examiner and Chronicle*: "I am absolutely and unalterably opposed to having homosexuals lecture in the classroom. No matter what they say, their conduct has proven that they are in the classroom for one purpose and one purpose only. They are there to recruit and we're just not going to have that in the California schools."<sup>48</sup> When the scandal first broke out, the *San Jose Mercury* asked South Bay school officials if they would ever invite gay speakers into their classrooms, and all of them vehemently spoke out against the practice. Nicholas Montesano, superintendent of the Campbell Union District in Santa Clara County, told the newspaper: "I can't believe that [homosexual speakers] would happen in public schools. Our district would welcome any investigation." Vernon Trimble, director of special programs in the Los Gatos Union High School District, concurred by saying: "No controversial speakers are invited as guest lecturers... 'We invite only medical doctors.'"<sup>49</sup>

The controversy notably also inspired several queer teachers and journalists to speak out on the importance of teaching about the validity of homosexual relationships in public schools. Don Cavallo, a columnist for the *Bay Area Reporter*, a gay newspaper,

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<sup>47</sup> "Tighter Controls in Sex Education," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 13 December 1972

<sup>48</sup> "They Call Him Mr. Sex," *San Francisco Sunday Examiner and Chronicle*, 31 December 1972.

<sup>49</sup> "No Controversial Speakers," *San Jose Mercury*, 9 June 1972.

asked, “Is it better for our young people to learn about sexual life styles, whether they by hetero or homo or whatever, in whore houses, motion picture balconies, parks or some lonely beach?” He called for more open discussions of gay sex since “a great many young people have had difficult periods of adjustment relating to any kind of sexual identity, at times tragic leading them to drugs or alcohol.”<sup>50</sup> An unnamed former speaker for the Council on Religion and the Homosexual similarly sent Wright a letter, telling him: “I’m not impressed by whatever point you were trying to make in your column regarding homosexuality and its discussion in the classroom.” The writer then bluntly shared his or her experiences when students had asked about the mechanics of gay sex: “I told them frankly and no one dropped dead.”<sup>51</sup>

Most significantly, Ragle and his allies failed to dissuade San Francisco officials from continuing to let gay speakers address family life education classes in individual classrooms. In an interview with a local newspaper, Gene Huber spoke at length about his belief that schools needed to prepare individual students to develop their own attitudes on sex and relationships. He admitted that he had been personally “very strongly anti-homosexual” until he reached his position atop the district’s family life education program. “Now,” he admitted, “I’m not saying that all schools in California ought to do this, but certainly in San Francisco, as an emerging social issue, we have to face up to it that kids in our society are encountering people in our society of all sexual persuasions.”<sup>52</sup>

### **Churches in a Divided Metropolis**

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<sup>50</sup> Don Cavallo, “Commentary,” *Bay Area Reporter*, 28 June 1872.

<sup>51</sup> F.H. letter, *San Francisco Examiner*, 12 June 1972.

<sup>52</sup> “They Call Him Mr. Sex,” *San Francisco Sunday Examiner and Chronicle*, 31 December 1972.

Even as the 1972 scandal underscored differences between Bay Area school districts, sexual divisions within the metropolis enabled the rise of new sets of religious communities. Two decades after the massive suburban church-building boom of the 1950s, and less than ten years after the experimental urban ministries at Glide, religious groups across the region helped further concentrate people by sexuality, class, and race. These divisions, in part, reflected the larger residential fragmentation of cities, suburbs, and neighborhoods, and the desire of individual members to find communities made up of “like-minded” members. They also, however, emerged as a reaction to the complicated sexual politics of the 1970s. Most notably, the increasing willingness of mainline Protestant churches to tolerate, but not celebrate, openly homosexual members sparked deep divisions within their memberships. By the end of the decade, large numbers of congregants shed old affiliations at the local level and moved over to fast-growing evangelical “mega-churches” that denounced homosexuality and stressed the importance of straight marriage. Church membership, therefore, accelerated the distillation of communities built around like-minded social characteristics, and played a crucial role in the outbreak of the nation’s “culture wars” over gay rights.

One of the most impressive examples of this sorting process lay in the growth of the predominantly gay Association of Metropolitan Community Churches (CCC). During the 1970s the group included some of the fastest growing congregations in the United States, and the presence largely correlated with the larger sexual divisions within the postwar metropolis. Troy Perry, a former pastor at a conservative Pentecostal congregation near Los Angeles, founded the MCC in 1968. Perry began his new ministry in the middle-class gay neighborhood of West Hollywood after his old church in

suburban Orange County expelled him for refusing to renounce homosexual relationships. The previously married, conservative pastor contended that gay men and lesbians needed their own congregations since most established congregations had explicitly rejected them, even though many gay Protestants still sought Christian fellowship. Specifically speaking of the approximately 100,000 gay men and lesbians in the San Francisco Bay Area, Perry asserted that, “Many of these people have not been to church for years,” and he contended that he could offer them “a new religious denomination for the man and woman who have been rejected by other churches.”<sup>53</sup>

In 1970 Perry joined Pastor Howard Wells to open a Metropolitan Community Church in San Francisco’s Polk Gulch area. Wells organized the first meeting of the congregation in a North Beach bar, and over the course of the next decade, the group changed locations several times before eventually settling on a site near the Castro neighborhood.<sup>54</sup> In 1973 almost five hundred people attended services at the church, and by 1982 San Francisco boasted seven more congregations affiliated with Perry’s MCC.<sup>55</sup> These churches joined the Glide Memorial Church as some of the only religious groups to serve the city’s burgeoning population of gay men and lesbians. Unlike the Tenderloin church, they catered primarily to relatively affluent queer residents. A profile of Perry’s church in West Hollywood, described the congregation of almost 700 people as an assortment of straight-laced gay professionals and middle-class countercultural hipsters,

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<sup>53</sup> “Church of the Homosexuals,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, 12 December 1969; “A Church for Homosexuals,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, 14 September 1970.

<sup>54</sup> Metropolitan Community Church of San Francisco, “History: From Nomadic Tribe to the Home for Queer Spirituality,” website accessed 3 December 2009, <http://www.mccsf.org/history.html>

<sup>55</sup> Jean Caffey Lyles, “What’s Good for the NCC,” *The Christian Century*, 1 December 1982.

including “middle-aged businessmen,” “women in assorted pants or skirts,” and “a few boys in rainbow-hued bellbottoms.”<sup>56</sup>

In 1973 a group of San Franciscans opened a chapter of “Dignity,” a national organization of gay Catholics, in the Mission District. Although the larger Catholic hierarchy officially condemned homosexuality, several Bay Area priests and parishioners brought together a community of worshipers that sought to reconcile the beliefs of the larger church with the personal relationships of many of its members. As early as 1971 Thomas Fry, a former priest, founded a special counseling service sympathetic to gay Catholics with the support of 60 Bay Area priests. In an interview with *The Chronicle*, Fry described Dignity as “an educational and social organization for gay Catholics and priests who support gay rights.” Although the Archdiocese of San Francisco did not officially recognize the group, Archbishop Joseph McGucken allowed Fry to organize a Bay Area-wide conference on homosexuality at St. Patrick’s Seminary in Menlo Park, and Monsignor James Flynn, a priest at St. Peter’s in the Mission District, invited the group to meet in his parish hall.<sup>57</sup>

Although most of the nation’s MCCs opened near middle-class gay enclaves, such as West Hollywood or the Castro, they also responded to the growing suburbanization of queer groups. In the early 1970s, Pastor Bill Chapman, with Troy Perry’s support, founded a Metropolitan Community Church in Santa Clara County. Chapman, a former bank employee in San Jose, first held services in his apartment living room, and, when interest in his project grew, he moved his congregation temporarily to A Tinker’s Dam, a windowless bar off the expressway in Santa Clara. Jim Hoch, an early member of the

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<sup>56</sup> “Hope for the Homosexual,” *Time*, 13 July 1970. *Time* also observed that the congregation was relatively racially diverse, and it included: “Whites, blacks, Orientals, Chicanos.”

<sup>57</sup> “Catholic ‘Dignity’ for Gays,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, 21 January 1973.

church, recalled that the “music from the bar soon became too disruptive,” and the gay-friendly congregation began temporarily renting space at San Jose State’s Campus Christian Center. In subsequent years, the MCC occupied a series of sites near San Jose’s central business district, frequently sharing space with other mainline Protestant groups.<sup>58</sup> As it occupied these spots near the city’s downtown, the small, gay-friendly congregation helped fill a void left by many straight churches in the 1950s. Its location on North First Street lay just four blocks from the site previously occupied by the First Congregational Church of San Jose in 1951. By 1975 the MCC had approximately 75 regular members and had created its own youth and singles groups.<sup>59</sup>

Although small in size, the founding of San Jose’s MCC would ultimately spur a significant realignment in the religious communities of the South Bay. In 1974 Chapman and his congregation asked the Santa Clara County Council of Churches, the area’s largest organization of mainline Protestants, for admittance to their group.<sup>60</sup> The request sparked vigorous internal debate within the Council, and it took over a year before its executive board placed the subject before its members for a vote. During those twelve months, Kenneth Bell, the executive director of the South Bay Protestant group, corresponded frequently with the National Council of Churches office in New York City,

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<sup>58</sup> Sahl, *From Closet to Community*.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> The request came at a controversial moment for the Santa Clara County of Churches; not long before the MCC applied for membership one of the ecumenical group’s member congregations had a gay sex scandal in which a staff member at a local church allegedly slept with five church participants. In a phone call to Rev. Nathan Vanderwerf at the National Council of Churches, Kenneth Bell confessed that the scandal made the decision to accept the MCC much more difficult: “To make it even more complex, one of our \_\_\_\_\_ churches had a very difficult situation where the pastor has employed a staff person of a more fundamentalist approach, whom he thought was great. The person was homosexual, and involved five of their members. This was the second incident within the past few months... People came and said, ‘You are going to have to deal with this.’ This means that in some sense, from their perspective, we are worsening their situation, as they had to fire this man, and it is already a very divisive issue in the congregation. They are very likely to withdraw also, and they are very good [financial] supporters of the Council.” Kenneth Bell, “Phone Conversation with Rev. Nathan Vanderwerf, 29 December 1975, Santa Clara County Council of Churches Records, San Jose, CA.



organized a special debate on the Bible's view of homosexuality for concerned congregants, and cynically asked Chapman whether his application was a ploy "basically to gain status and recognition for the MCC."<sup>61</sup> Despite these reservations, the Santa Clara County Council of Churches agreed to admit the MCC by a vote of 35 congregations to 14 in December, and the decision soon led to a dramatic schism within the ecumenical group. Just a week after the vote a number of member congregations demanded a second vote, and when they failed to oust the gay-friendly church in a second referendum in February 1976, seven of them broke away from the council.

In letters to Bell and local newspapers, the defecting churches all argued that the Bible condemned homosexuality, and, therefore, the MCC's welcoming of open same-sex couples constituted an endorsement of sin. In their view, the Council's acceptance of the gay-friendly church sanctioned that transgression even further. The MCC's opponents, almost universally distinguished between accepting closeted gay people at their churches and endorsing their relationships as valid expressions of Christian love. The United Presbyterian Church of the West Valley, and its 1200 members broke away from the Council that year because it "believed homosexuality was 'a sin against God,'" because the practice "is an act of will which becomes habit through practice, and, like any habit, which becomes natural, it becomes a life style, which one assumes to be natural."<sup>62</sup> The Blossom Hill Baptist Church told Bell that it stood "committed to exercising a loving ministry in Christ to homosexuals and others involved with problems for which society is irresponsible, insensitive and cruel, but we cannot agree that the gay

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<sup>61</sup> Chairman of the Membership Committee, "Statement Regarding the Metropolitan Community Church Application for Membership in the S.C. County Council of Churches, 1 October 1975, Santa Clara Council of Churches Records.

<sup>62</sup> "Gay Church Revolt in San Jose," *San Jose News*, 16 December 1975.

life style is an acceptable alternative to heterosexuality.”<sup>63</sup> And Aahmes Overton, the Trinity Presbyterian Church’s pastor, told the *San Jose Mercury News* that he felt the admission of an “avowedly homosexual church has the effect of endorsing or at least of institutionalizing a sin.”<sup>64</sup>

The dramatic loss of seven congregations created tensions within the Council and seriously threatened its ability to meet its financial commitments in 1976. Although they remained affiliated with the Council, several other member churches, including the Grace United Methodist Church in Saratoga, curtailed their donations to the organization to protest the MCC’s admission. In response, Bell and his allies argued that the admittance of the gay-friendly church did not mean that they condoned homosexuality. In a phone conversation with an official in the National Council of Churches home office, Bell lamented that “nearly everyone is either for or against, but it is such a complex issue. We did not vote to embrace homosexuality, but that’s the way it’s interpreted.”<sup>65</sup> In a letter to the Council’s Executive Committee, one senior official declared that, “The receiving of the Church was according to our constitution,” since the MCC accepted “Jesus Christ as divine Lord and Saviour” [sic] and it assured them that it would not use the ecumenical organization for “advocating a homosexual lifestyle.”<sup>66</sup> Fred Hillier, the Council’s president, told *The San Francisco Chronicle* that he had doubts about the future of the group because “the decision to admit a predominantly homosexual church would give people a ‘distorted picture.’”<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> “2<sup>nd</sup> Church Quits Council Over Gay Church Admission,” *San Jose News*, 30 December 1975.

<sup>64</sup> “Council Explains Gay Church Decision,” *San Jose Mercury News*, 14 February 1976.

<sup>65</sup> Kenneth Bell, “Phone Conversation with Rev. Nathan Vanderwerf,” 29 December 1975, Santa Clara Council of Churches Records.

<sup>66</sup> Author unknown, “Statement to Members of the Executive Committee, 9 January 1976, Santa Clara Council of Churches Records.

<sup>67</sup> “A Gay Church Offends Brethren,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, 18 December 1975.

Several of the Council's other 87 members argued that excluding the MCC would represent a fundamental contradiction in their Christian beliefs. Although they almost universally refused to acknowledge homosexuality as a set of relationships equal to heterosexuality, a number of sympathetic churches contended that they welcomed a dialogue with the members of their gay-friendly counterpart. G. Arthur Casaday of Palo Alto's First Congregation Church told the *San Jose News* that even though the move evoked "mixed feelings on the part of some members," his executive committee recognized that a "simple moralistic judgment that homosexuality is, per se, wicked and sinful is difficult to support."<sup>68</sup> In the wake of the dramatic schism, an unspecified number of other congregations told the *San Jose News* that they intended to donate more money to the Council that year "in an effort to make up some of the loss in revenue caused by the resignation of the seven churches."<sup>69</sup> And Sunnyvale's Congregational Community Church told the Council's board of directors that although its own executive council remained conflicted about the MCC, it called the withdrawal of the other churches a "mini blackmail approach to imposing minority wishes for majority action" and promised to "endorse" and "support" the larger group's programs.<sup>70</sup>

Just as significantly, several lay members from area congregations voiced their support for the ecumenical group's decision. Shortly after the public announcement of MCC's admission, V. Crim, a Campbell resident, wrote to the Council and declared: "I am delighted to see Santa Clara County recognizing [its gay] minority and taking definite

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<sup>68</sup> "Religious Leaders Face Dilemma Over Gay," *San Jose News*, 13 December 1975.

<sup>69</sup> "Methodists Quit Council Over Gay Admission," *San Jose News*, 17 April 1976.

<sup>70</sup> Ted Carlson, Congregational Community Church, Letter to Santa Clara Council of Churches, 16 March 1976, Santa Clara Council of Churches Records.

steps to eliminate this discrimination.”<sup>71</sup> A few days later, Patty Cummings, a lay member of one of the Council’s member churches, pledged that she and her friends would donate \$5 a month for the next year to “commend” the group’s “courageous stand.”<sup>72</sup> In January 1976, nine members of Palo Alto’s First Presbyterian Church told the larger Council: “We are disturbed that there should be such strident criticism of this action by some of our fellow Christians. We want you to know of our unqualified support for this action.”<sup>73</sup> And in April 1976, a group of worshippers from the defecting First Methodist Church of San Jose sent a petition to the Council declaring that they believed their congregation’s decision to leave the larger Protestant group represented “a step backward from united efforts of Christians to bring about the Kingdom of God on earth; and, in so doing, the church itself sustains the greater loss.”<sup>74</sup>

This rift within the Santa Clara County Council of Churches helped fuel the growing popularity of evangelical and non-denominational Christian congregations that explicitly denounced homosexuality and promoted the importance of straight marriage and families. As early as 1968 the *San Jose Mercury-News* noted a “New Religious Awakening” in the South Bay, and throughout the 1970s attendance in suburban, conservative churches boomed. The *Mercury-News* reported that Protestant church attendance followed population shifts, and that in “the West Valley’s rapidly growing suburban areas, church strength is gaining.”<sup>75</sup> The 1974 creation of the Greater San Jose Association of Evangelicals, a local branch of the NAE, further signaled the changing

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<sup>71</sup> V. Crim, Letter to Santa Clara County Council of Churches, 17 December 1975, Santa Clara Council of Churches Records.

<sup>72</sup> Patty Cummings, letter to Kenneth Bell, 23 December 1975, Santa Clara Council of Churches Records.

<sup>73</sup> Sarah Johnson, et al. Letter to Fred Hillyer [sic], 8 January 1976, Santa Clara Council of Churches Records.

<sup>74</sup> Joy Wilson, et al. Letter to G. A. Casaday and Santa Clara Council of Churches, 3 April 1976, Santa Clara Council of Churches Records.

<sup>75</sup> “New Religious Awakening Dawns,” *San Jose Mercury-News*, 28 January 1968.

tenor of Christian politics in the South Bay. The churches that created the new organization specifically sought to take on a newly public role in Santa Clara County, and David Rupert, the group's president, promised a local newspaper that "the organization would attempt to put forward a cooperative voice in city government, in moral issues, cooperative support of Greater San Jose Sunday School Association, as well as provide support for chaplaincy ministry at the jail."<sup>76</sup>

The growth of these churches in the Bay Area mirrored processes underway in suburbs across the country. Although Southern California's Melodyland Christian Center and Crystal Cathedral dwarfed their counterparts in Santa Clara County, Bay Area evangelical churches similarly grew at astonishing rates and vastly exceeded their local, mainline Protestant rivals in size and attendance. These conservative congregations did not encompass a majority of the South Bay's Christian worshippers, yet they grew at astonishing rates. San Jose's Calvary Community Church, for example, boomed from 365 members in 1970 to almost 5,000 a decade later. Kenny Foreman, a pastor who garnered the support of the Northern California Evangelistic Association to found a new church in the South Bay in 1965, boasted a congregation of 3,000 people in 1980.<sup>77</sup> When Minister Marvin Rickard joined the Los Gatos Christian Church in 1959, it had only 83 members, but by the end of the 1970s it boasted over 6,000. And the North Valley Baptist Church in Santa Clara, which began with only 50 people in 1975, boasted a tenfold increase in just three years.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> "New Evangelical Group Elects Leader," *San Jose News*, 23 November 1974. The GSJAE replaced an older group, the Evangelical Ministerial Association of Santa Clara County.

<sup>77</sup> "Evangelism in Bloom," *San Jose Mercury*, 27 January 1980.

<sup>78</sup> "Pastor Lures Parishioners with Helicopter, Brahma Bull," *San Jose News*, 16 October 1978.

Some of these ministries, such as Rickard's LGCC or Foreman's Faith Temple found their roots in the church building booms of the 1950s. Others, such as the North Valley Church, only came into existence amidst the larger national religious revival of the 1970s. Regardless of their origins, all of the evangelical, Pentecostal, and fundamentalist churches that boomed in the decade owed their rise in membership to the ability of their pastors to deftly navigate the religious market of the South Bay. Enterprising evangelical ministers frequently patterned their churches after the region's popular shopping malls, locating them near busy freeways, using billboard-sized signs to attract the attention of passing motorists, and advertising on Christian television and radio networks. These strategies paralleled efforts by gay businesses to advertise in queer publications and to locate off the interstates, and they stress important similarities between queer and evangelical Christian social groups. Like the gay communities described by South Bay resident Wiggy Sivertsen, conservative straight congregations in the 1970s stretched out across the area around the South Bay like a series of "veins" and "arteries" centered around central churches. Jack Trieber, the pastor of the North Valley Baptist Church planted his congregation in a residential area that backed onto the county's Montague Expressway. Gerald Fry, minister for the Calvary Community Church, choose a site for his church within easy reach of the Alamedan Expressway in San Jose. And Marvin Rickard, pastor at the Los Gatos Christian Church, recalled that "several hundred active members came from areas serviced by specific freeways."<sup>79</sup>

The most significant reason for the growth of these churches lay in their affirmations of straight family life. A 1967 Gallup Poll, for example, found that three out of four American nationwide believed that organized religions were losing control over

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<sup>79</sup> Marvin Rickard, "Church Planting- It Can Be Exciting," *Christian Life*, January 1982.

sexual morality.<sup>80</sup> Eager to cope with shifts in sexual attitudes over the previous ten years, evangelical pastors in the 1970s frequently marketed their congregations as a means of strengthening ties between husbands, wives, and their children. One San Jose minister explained that “a phenomenon in our area has been a moving towards independent churches, big super churches, where people come as families, where the churches attempt to minister to the whole family.”<sup>81</sup> In an advertisement in the *San Jose Mercury* in 1969, Pastor Marvin Rickard specifically targeted straight parents by asking would-be worshippers: “Do you have children? Do you have high school students? Want to help change the world? You are invited.”<sup>82</sup>

In addition to presenting programs on marriage, childrearing and Christian sex education, these churches offered worshippers relatively homogenous communities of like-minded straight families. In an influential book on congregation-building, evangelist and missionary Donald McGavran told ambitious ministers around the country that if they wanted to boost attendance at their services, they needed to respect the “undeniable fact” that “people like to become Christians without crossing racial, linguistic, or class barriers.”<sup>83</sup> He counseled them to see society as a collection of “homogenous units,” and he argued that they should not compel potential congregants to socially integrate with people radically different from them: “To attempt to plant congregations in several homogenous units at once, arguing that Christian ethics demand this, and insisting on

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<sup>80</sup> “Gallup Poll Reveals 74 Per Cent Feel Religion Losing Influence Over Morals,” *Santa Clara Journal*, 15 November 1967.

<sup>81</sup> “Evangelism in Blossom,” *San Jose Mercury*, 27 January 1980.

<sup>82</sup> Los Gatos Christian Church, advertisement, *San Jose Mercury*, 12 April 1969.

<sup>83</sup> Donald McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990), 163.

integration first, whether the church grows or not, is a self-defeating policy and, with rare exceptions, contrary to the will of God.”<sup>84</sup>

Although it is unclear if South Bay ministers specifically read McGavran’s work, they undoubtedly followed a similar pattern of stratification in their church building. In his memoir *Let It Grow* Marvin Rickard recalled arriving at the Los Gatos Christian Church in 1959 and noticing the dearth of young couples with children. He noted: “My wife and I lamented the lack of young couples our age,” and that in a group of 180 people, there were only four other married people under the age of thirty. To remedy the situation, the Rickards invited the handful of other young married congregants to their home, where Marvin confronted them with a proposition: “Look,” he said, “we need to reach young couples for Christ and the church. You are all we have so far, but there are hundreds of others out there.... We need a Sunday school class for young couples... We’ll have a Bible lesson and some social activities and some fun. When couples visit to worship, we can invite them back to visit the class.”<sup>85</sup> Rickard went on to remake the LGCC’s nursery and asked his wife, Joyce, to serve as musical director for the congregation. These moves made both of the Rickards public figures within the church, and helped make it a more attractive congregation to young parents.

In addition to catering primarily to straight couples with children, the Los Gatos Christian Church offered worshippers a community homogenous by race and class. Similar to many of Santa Clara County’s real estate developers, Rickard believed that social heterogeneity bred strife within the church, and he self-consciously attempted to build a congregation of people with similar backgrounds. In *Let It Grow*, he advised

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid. 177.

<sup>85</sup> Marvin Rickard, *Let It Grow: Your Church Can Chart a New Course* (Portland, OR: Multnomah Press, 1984), 27-30.



other pastors: “When a church is stratified economically, ethnically or racially, all others feel a little less than welcome. It isn’t that they aren’t fully welcome. It’s just that one group finds it awkward to communicate with another strata of society and after the brief handshake they turn back to those with whom they feel more comfortable.”<sup>86</sup>

As mentioned in Chapter 3, Rickard frequently evangelized in new subdivisions, welcoming new residents to the area with an invitation to worship at his church. Over the course of the 1960s and 1970s, he expanded the personal recruitment networks, and he asked several members of his congregation to form a “calling club” to visit families who had come to Sunday services. Rickard and his assistants invited potential worshippers to their homes for evenings “organized around a planned potluck with all those making visits taking turns with bringing a main course dish, butter rolls, salad, or dessert.”<sup>87</sup> This strategy not only introduced the minister to neighborhoods populated primarily by straight families, it also meant that the racial segregation inherent in the South Bay’s development allowed him to forego the predominantly black and Latino neighborhoods above US 101 and on San Jose’s Eastside. Moreover, once the LGCC emerged as a relatively homogenous congregation of white middle-class straight families, it catered to an increasingly narrow collection of self-selecting worshippers. Studies of evangelism conducted in the 1970s demonstrated that personal networks of friends and relatives provided the most significant factor in congregants joining new churches.<sup>88</sup> Without visible working class, Latino, or African American members, Rickard and his assistants

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid. 40.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid. 41. Rickard further counseled avoiding Monday nights, if possible, because of the popularity of Monday Night Football.

<sup>88</sup> McGavaran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 165.

did not have to make awkward decisions about excluding congregants, since the visible racial and class homogeneity of the church itself screened out many potential visitors.<sup>89</sup>

The phenomenal gains of churches like Rickard's largely came at the expense of their mainline Protestant counterparts, such as the Santa Clara County Council of Churches, who struggled to accommodate shifting gender and sexual attitudes in their congregations. Across the country, mainline Protestant congregations lost millions of worshippers to their evangelical rivals in the 1970s. Between 1970 and 1985 Methodist, Congregationalist, Episcopal, and Presbyterian churches lost 15 percent of their members nationwide. As early as 1968 the *San Jose Mercury-News* noted declining attendance among some local, mainline Protestant churches. Methodist District Superintendent Arthur Schuck, for example, sadly told the newspaper that several of the 47 churches within his South Bay jurisdiction had membership rolls that were "falling off in some areas and holding its own in others." He declared: "It's a change from the 1950s, when there was a greater enthusiasm for the church as an established spiritual center."<sup>90</sup>

In 1972 the United Methodist Church's Department of Research and Survey published a report on "Suburban Churches in Trouble," and it specifically singled out the tribulations of a South Bay congregation to illustrate the dangers facing mainline

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<sup>89</sup> On one hand Rickard argued that class and racial homogeneity made more coherent congregations. But, on the other hand, his desire to evangelize to as large a population as possible no doubt brought him into contact with groups of people he initially sought to exclude. In *Let It Grow*, he briefly mentions that worshippers came "from various social and racial backgrounds" and at one point in 1975 the LGCC welcomed a group of Vietnamese refugees who came to the South Bay after the US military evacuated them from Saigon before the Communist takeover. The LGCC was no more segregated than the more liberal mainline Protestant churches in the South Bay or the gay-friendly MCC. Almost all of the churches in the South Bay demonstrated considerable degrees of racial and class homogeneity.

<sup>90</sup> "New Religious Awakening Dawns," *San Jose Mercury-News*, 28 January 1968. Schuck did express optimism that young people would return to the Methodist fold in greater numbers: "People today, especially the young, are questioning the ultimates. But I think that in the next decade we will go forward. I think the church is adjusting itself. It is good for us to question and probe; we'll come out stronger for doing this." See also Paul Boyer, "The Evangelical Resurgence in the 1970s," in *Rightward Bound: Making America Conservative in the 1970s* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 2008).

Protestantism across the country. The national organization noted that in the previous seven years the Santa Clara Methodist Church had incorrectly predicted membership growth for the foreseeable future, and had taken on significant debt to finance its expansion. When Sunday attendance actually dipped at the end of the decade, the church stood on the cusp of financial ruin. The Department of Research and Survey noted that the Santa Clara United Methodist Church had taken out loans to put together a new sanctuary at a new location in 1966, and that its leadership had incorrectly “assumed that with the new building and with the dedication of new members the future growth of the church was unlimited.”<sup>91</sup>

Without a doubt, however, the shift in membership from liberal or moderate, mainline churches to more conservative, evangelical ones, hinged significantly on the era’s sexual politics. In a 1979 study of national trends, for example, religious sociologist Dean Hoge noted that people who reported the strongest religious affiliations also proclaimed having deep opposition to “premarital sex, extramarital sex, homosexuality, abortion, divorce, and pornography.”<sup>92</sup> Meanwhile, Hoge observed that by the early 1970s most Americans had generally adopted more liberal attitudes towards those subjects, but rather than joining mainline Protestant congregations that held similar views, they tended to drop out of religious organizations altogether. “The value shift,” he concluded, “seems to conduce people to no church participation at all, not to participation in liberal churches.”<sup>93</sup> This meant that Christian groups across the theological and political spectrums competed for a shrinking percentage of worshippers. As moderate

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<sup>91</sup> Ezra Earl Jones, *Suburban Churches in Trouble* (New York City: Methodist Church, National Division of the Board of Missions, 1972), 4.

<sup>92</sup> Dean Hoge, “National Contextual Factors Influencing Church Growth,” *Understanding Church Growth and Decline, 1950-1978* (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1979), 105.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.* 121.

churches shifted incrementally on issues such as gay rights or divorce, they not only failed to attract new members, they tended to shed more conservative congregants who frequently sought out fundamentalist churches with views that correlated more closely to their own beliefs. Hoge noted: “The strongest church commitment recently among educated young adults is more often in conservative churches, who oppose the individualism and freedom of the value shift, than in liberal ones who affirm it.”<sup>94</sup> Looking back on the 1970s the *San Jose Mercury* reported in 1980: “Abortion, homosexuality, the role of women, and Scripture were the big issues on the American religious scene during the decade, and they took a toll among the ‘mainline’ denominations- the United Methodist, United Presbyterian, and Episcopal Churches.”<sup>95</sup>

The changes in sexual attitudes, however, also correlated with the shifting demographics of housing in major metropolises. Church planners noted congregational growth in the suburbs with the highest concentration of white, middle-class, straight, families well into the 1970s. In a study of mainline Protestant churches near Albany, New York, for example, church planner Douglas Walrath observed that in residential areas along the interstate highway system, where “housing has been purchased by younger middle-aged couples with children,” Christian groups continued to expand or had stabilized.<sup>96</sup> An examination of mainline churches in 1967, however, observed that several religious organizations, such as the Methodists and Presbyterians, had failed to dedicate new resources to new congregation building. According to one observer: “Since

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid. 121.

<sup>95</sup> “Evangelism in Bloom,” *San Jose Mercury*, 27 January 1980.

<sup>96</sup> Douglas Walrath, “Social Change and Local Churches, 1951-75,” *Understanding Church Growth and Decline*, 255-7. Walrath divided the Albany metropolitan area into 11 different types of urban development. Between 1951 and 1975 churches in “inner urban neighborhoods” declined sharply and areas he designated as “metropolitan suburbs,” “fringe village,” and “fringe settlements,” all boomed. His graphs, however, also showed a slight dip in these congregations after 1975.

the American population is constantly moving and new suburbs and towns are always being developed, any denomination failing to keep up with population shifts in new church development will fall behind.”<sup>97</sup> Many of Santa Clara County’s Churches may have neglected to dedicate new resources to the fast-growing communities south of San Jose, offering new opportunities to their evangelical rivals.

### **Anti-Violence Campaign, P-FLAG, and the Gay Teacher and School Worker’s Coalition**

By the mid 1970s, the San Francisco Bay Area witnessed the creation of new neighborhoods, churches, and bars that helped further concentrate people based on their sexuality and ideology. In subsequent years, these communities would play an instrumental role in waging and deciding the period’s culture wars over gay rights. These patterns mirrored national trends, and as queer activists contested their social and political marginalization, conservatives across the country mobilized to restore the postwar closet. In cities and suburbs across the country, queer and conservative straight activists appealed for the support of moderate voters. In the context of the new culture wars, heterosexual centrists promoted a discourse built around the “right to privacy,” which sought to contain both Gay Liberation and the Religious Right. By the time of the Briggs Initiative in 1978, almost all debates over homosexuality would revolve around this central concern and both social movements framed their arguments in order to satisfy this new litmus test.

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<sup>97</sup> Dean Hoge, “A Test of Theories of Denominational Growth and Decline,” *Understanding Church Growth and Decline*, 181. Hoge cites Lyle Schaller, “The Coming Crisis in Church Development,” Report #40, Regional Church Planning Office, Cleveland, Ohio, 1967.

For gay activists, one of the most important steps towards convincing heterosexual moderates to support their cause came when they convinced the American Psychiatric Association (APA) to stop defining homosexuality as a mental illness in 1973. By removing same-sex desire from its list of disorders, the organization effectively legitimized the claim made by many gay men and lesbians that their sexuality constituted an immutable orientation. For many straight moderates, the APA's decision allowed them to think of homosexuality as more akin to a race or a disability, rather than a freely chosen lifestyle. Psychiatrists' newfound reluctance to treat some forms of queer sex as an illness, therefore, helped legalize private sex acts between consenting adults in California and led to the creation of parents' groups, such as the Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (P-FLAG) in 1972, that publicly advocated for an end to straight violence and employment discrimination. Most significantly, it opened the door for gay teachers in San Francisco to demand their right to work in the city's public schools without fear of termination and for changes in the city's school district to drop all derogatory references to homosexuality from its sex education program.

In December 1973 the APA's leadership voted to reclassify homosexuality as a "disturbance," rather than a "disorder," due to pressure from gay activists and thanks to new research that downplayed the importance of environmental factors in determining a person's adult sexuality. Robert Spitzer, who helped write the group's resolution on the subject, declared: "We were prompted by the homosexuals' pressure, but what we are doing is psychiatrically sound. We decided that a medical disorder either has to be association with subjective distress... or general impairment in social functioning.

Homosexuality is not regularly associated with either.”<sup>98</sup> The change meant that psychiatrists only needed to treat same-sex desire as a problem if a patient asked for help. Their resolution on the subject urged the decriminalization of private sex acts between consenting adults and declared: “Homosexuality, in and of itself, implies no impairment in judgment, stability, reliability, or vocational capabilities.”<sup>99</sup> The decision appeared to reverse almost fifty years’ worth of psychiatric and psychological thinking on the subject. Yet the APA’s decision to categorize homosexuality as a “disturbance” continued to mark it as an abnormal condition, and even that move provoked significant controversy among the organization members. A few months later, a group of psychiatrists who disapproved of the decision to reclassify same-sex desire forced a referendum on the leadership’s verdict, and 37 percent of voters disapproved of it.<sup>100</sup>

Despite the negative reaction of some of its members, the APA’s determination to remove homosexuality from its list of disorders freed some mental health professionals to argue that it represented a “naturally” occurring phenomenon comparable to heterosexuality. Spitzer, for example, told the *New York Times* that the “animal kingdom suggests that we... come in with an undifferentiated sex response. As a result of experience, although there may be genetics involved, most of us become heterosexual and some of us become homosexual.”<sup>101</sup> Over the course of the 1970s, mental health experts revised their explanations about the causes of queer desire, and they gradually moved away from stressing the importance of adult role models in their explanations. In

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<sup>98</sup> “Doctors Rule Homosexuals Not Abnormal,” *Washington Post*, 16 December 1973.

<sup>99</sup> “Psychiatrists Change View on Subject,” *Los Angeles Times*, 16 December 1973.

<sup>100</sup> This referendum represented the first time in 129 years that the American Psychiatric Association’s membership forced a decision by its Board of Trustees to a larger vote. “Psychiatrists Vote to Remove Stigma of Homosexuality,” *Los Angeles Times*, 8 April 1974. See also Neil Miller, *Out of the Past: Gay and Lesbian History from 1869 to the Present* (New York: Vintage, 1995), 256-7.

<sup>101</sup> “The Issue is Subtle, the Debate is Still On,” *New York Times*, 23 December 1973.

1978, Hans Hessedahl, a Danish researcher, told the *Los Angeles Times*, that when it came to homosexuality, “you have a predisposition to it, and when the circumstances are right, you will become a practicing homosexual unless you deny your sexual feelings altogether.”<sup>102</sup> Joshua Golden, the head of UCLA’s human sexuality program clinic, similarly argued that “studies suggest familial or genetic influences but not adult role modeling.”<sup>103</sup>

The growing tendency among mental health professionals to emphasize natural “predispositions” for homosexuality specifically paved the way for psychologists sympathetic to Gay Liberation to reframe the ways in which parents understood the subject. These authors almost universally sought to reshape discussions about homosexuality to include the ways in which individuals and institutions discriminated against gay men and lesbians. As early as 1972 George Weinberg, a member of New York City’s Gay Activists Alliance, wrote *Society and the Healthy Homosexual*, in which he argued that gay men and lesbians were not inherently sick and that, “in a truly great society there is room for all who do not infringe on the rights of others.”<sup>104</sup> Weinberg specifically went on to contend that, “were it not for the mental health experts, millions of parents would be making independent decisions about their children’s homosexuality, and many would decide that our national customs and laws here are unduly punitive.”<sup>105</sup> He advised them to listen to their children in an accepting manner, to refrain from giving

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<sup>102</sup> “Homosexuals, Many Types, Many Causes,” *Los Angeles Times*, 1 November 1978.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>104</sup> George Weinberg, *Society and the Healthy Homosexual* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1972), preface.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.* 93.



them unsolicited advice, and to “remember that if you ever bring pressure against a son or daughter for engaging in homosexual acts, you yourself are being unethical.”<sup>106</sup>

In 1977, psychologist Charles Silverstein wrote *A Family Matter: A Parents' Guide to Homosexuality* after considering the needs of “Parents, brothers and sisters, grandparents, friends- people who want to understand someone they love.” In this manual for parents with gay children, Silverstein stressed the need of family members to work together to overcome whatever negative attitudes they might hold about queer life. He told the close relatives of gay men and lesbians, “in our society the homosexual is likely to be attacked for his or her sexual preference by friends, employers, the police, and much of organized religion. The family is one place where a gay person most needs to be accepted. They hope their parents, the people who know them best, will see that they're the same person they've always been.”<sup>107</sup>

Offered the sanction of some of these mental health experts, several groups of liberal parents and churches formed their own grassroots network of support groups in the mid-1970s. Loosely patterned after Parent-Teacher Associations and Al-Anon, these organizations encouraged mothers and fathers to accept homosexual children and worked to promote tolerance in the nation's homes, schools, and churches. In 1972 Jeannette Morana founded the organization that would become Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (P-FLAG) in New York specifically in response to the violence endured by gay men and lesbians. In 1974 the Council on Religion and the Homosexual held “a symposium for parents of homosexual people” at Glide, which featured both a panel of straight mothers and fathers and one made up of openly gay men and lesbians who spoke

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid. 120-1.

<sup>107</sup> Charles Silverstein, *A Family Matter: A Parents' Guide to Homosexuality* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1977), 8-9.

about their relationships with their immediate family members.<sup>108</sup> And a P-FLAG member in Southern California told a local newspaper that her group's first goal involved giving parents emotional support, to "show them that they are not alone." Pat Paddock, of suburban Orange County, told the *Los Angeles Times*: "I want to tell parents, 'This happened to me. This can happen to you. You have no choice over it, you have no control over it... How would you treat your child if he or she shared with you [the fact] that they are gay? Would you be able to tell that child that you loved them anyway?'"<sup>109</sup>

Liberal ideas about how gay children and their families could overcome together trickled out very slowly into broader discussions about homosexuality and parenting in the 1970s. In 1974, *Parents' Magazine and Better Homemaking* published an article, entitled "Homosexuality Today: What Parents Want to Know," which cited the APA's recent decision and advised readers that "homosexuality is a fact that must be acknowledged and that should be handled intelligently." The essay's author, Louis Sabin, advocated tolerance for gay men and lesbians but argued that easing parents' fears of homosexuality differed significantly from accepting it as a valid outcome of their childrearing. "At the least," he concluded, "it cannot be wrong to hold a humane and non-judgmental view of those who, unlike most of us, do not follow the normal sexual pattern. This does not mean that we wish our children to grow up other than normally, but relinquishing our scorn and our fears about homosexuals can only help us guide our children to successful maturity."<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> "Symposium for Parents of Homosexuals," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 5 August 1974.

<sup>109</sup> "Parents Seek to Understand," *Los Angeles Times*, 8 May 1983.

<sup>110</sup> Louis Sabin, "Homosexuality Today: What Parents Want to Know," *Parents' Magazine and Better Homemaking*, March 1974.

In their analyses of homosexuality, most authors in parenting periodicals, such as Sabin, continued to present same-sex desire as a problem mothers and fathers could prevent through their relationship with their children. In his 1974 article, Sabin contended: “The causes of homosexuality are mainly environmental... parents should be aware of what they can do to help their children develop normally.”<sup>111</sup> In a 1977 article in *Parents’ Magazine and Better Homemaking*, sociologist Jane-Burgess Kohn told readers that “with young people talking today so casually about being ‘straight’ or ‘gay,’ parents naturally want to know what really causes homosexuality... how widespread it is... [and] what they can do to safeguard their children.”<sup>112</sup> To ensure normal development, she advised them to “try to avoid specific obstacles to sex-role identification” and pushed them to remember that “because parents serve as role models for the child’s developing personality... they also need to be aware of the positive things they can do to strengthen their child’s sense of self, and to increase, therefore, the likelihood that the children will make the appropriate sex-role identifications.”<sup>113</sup>

Despite the persistence of these beliefs, in 1975 the California Legislature took up the APA’s encouragement to de-criminalize homosexuality. Sponsored by San Francisco Assemblyman Willie Brown and supported by San Francisco Senator George Moscone, the bill legalized private sex acts conducted between consenting adults. The move repealed the state’s prohibitions against oral and anal sodomy, and codified the growing straight consensus about an individual’s “right to privacy.” San Jose Assemblyman John Vasconcellos declared: “I don’t need the government to tell me how to live my life or

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> Jane Burgess-Kohn, “Why parents Worry About Homosexuality,” *Parents’ Magazine and Better Homemaking*, January 1977.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

how to express my sexuality.”<sup>114</sup> The *Los Angeles Times* similarly editorialized that the new rules applied a “commonsense standard” to sex, and “eliminated unwanted and unwarranted intrusion by the state into... private lives.”<sup>115</sup>

The passing of California’s “consenting adults” law provoked the mobilization of straight conservatives in the South Bay, who argued that the legislation represented a move towards acceptance of homosexuality. In the same year that the Santa Clara County Council of Churches fragmented over its willingness to admit the MCC, a group of San Jose-area religious groups created the “Coalition of Christian Citizens” to reinstate laws against gay sex. Claude Fletcher, the organization’s spokesman, told the *San Jose Mercury* that he feared “the [new] law could lead to homosexuals promoting their way of life to school children in sex education classes,” and he condemned the legislature for trying to “set the moral standards for the entire state.”<sup>116</sup> The group sent 12,000 petitions to churches around California, and the *San Francisco Chronicle* observed that “even those parents who might ordinarily support an individual’s right to privacy... are signing the petition because they are fearful that the decriminalization might free homosexual teachers to openly glorify homosexuality in the classroom.”<sup>117</sup>

In San Francisco, the APA’s decision and the passage of the consenting adults law made it easier for gay activists to formally enter politics and to make public demands. In 1977, voters in the Castro neighborhood elected the first openly gay candidate to run for public office in California, Harvey Milk, to the city’s Board of Supervisors. In many ways, Milk’s career represented the culmination of the nation’s sexual metropolitan

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<sup>114</sup> “Assembly OK’s Homosexual Bill of Rights,” *Los Angeles Times*, 7 March 1975.

<sup>115</sup> “Sex: A Commonsense Standard,” editorial, *Los Angeles Times*, 30 April 1975.

<sup>116</sup> “Bible-Citing Group Seeks Repeal of New Sex Law,” *San Jose Mercury*, 16 July 1975. See also “The Sex Bill Furor,” editorial, *San Francisco Examiner*, 21 May 1975.

<sup>117</sup> “Political Storm Over the Sex Bill,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, 21 June 1975.

development over the previous three decades. A native of suburban Long Island, the future supervisor had his first closeted homosexual experiences with other men in New York City's parks or at the Metropolitan Opera House. His political victory in 1977 not only reflected the changing demographics between San Francisco and its suburbs, but also between urban neighborhoods. Milk ran for office on three occasions, but he only won a seat on the Board of Supervisors after his adopted home town switched from citywide to district elections, distilling many middle-class, gay voters into a single precinct centered on the Castro District.<sup>118</sup>

In the 1970s, activists in San Francisco drew the attention of the local media to hate crimes against gay men and lesbians, and they successfully pushed growing portions of the larger straight public to oppose violence against homosexuals. In July 1973 *The Chronicle* reported that, in that year alone, arsonists had burned four Metropolitan Community Churches across the country, including two in San Francisco. The newspaper's coverage of the incidents included interviews with local clergy and politicians who spoke out against the attacks. The Reverend Ray Broshears, the leader of San Francisco's Gay Activists' Alliance, told *The Chronicle* that someone had recently left a sign at his group's community center in the Tenderloin that read: "Kill the Queers, You're Next." City Supervisor Diane Feinstein called the attacks on San Francisco's church "part of a kind of bigotry," and she earned a standing ovation when she told the church's congregation: "It's an old and tried fascistic technique of another time and another country, and we're not going to stand for it in San Francisco." Supervisor John Molinari told MCC members: "This is reminiscent of things that have happened that have happened through the centuries to people of different races and colors... Don't despair.

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<sup>118</sup> Shilts, *The Mayor of Castro Street*, 170-85, 3-6.

San Francisco wants you. San Francisco needs you. Don't judge all of San Francisco by this act."<sup>119</sup>

The growing concern of some parents for the safety of gay people helped garner support for limited rights for queer teachers and students in the public schools. By the early 1970s school districts across California operated in a legal limbo when it came to homosexuality and their staffs. The 1969 *Morrison* decision had directed administrators to tolerate teachers who had slept with members of the same sex in isolated incidents as long as they kept knowledge of their "private" acts out of their classrooms and the surrounding community. Just a few years later, however, the California judiciary reaffirmed the state's commitment to demanding that teachers keep the non-normative sex acts of teachers from the wider public when it ruled against a heterosexual, female teacher who allegedly attended a party, "orally copulated with three men," and then "described her activities on television." In its decision, the State Supreme Court called a public school teacher "an exemplar whose words and actions are likely to be followed by the children coming under her care or protection," and proclaimed that in the immediate case, the instructor's "indiscrete actions disclosed her unfitness to teach in elementary schools."<sup>120</sup> A 1972 case in which the police arrested a male teacher masturbating with another man in a public restroom similarly reaffirmed in the State Board of Education's policy that homosexual acts visible to other people, including undercover police officers, demanded the revocation of the offender's credentials.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> "Arsonists Burn S.F. Church," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 28 July 1973; "Gays Worship as Guests," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 30 July 1973.

<sup>120</sup> "Gay, Gifted Yet Closeted in City's Classrooms," *San Francisco Examiner*, 12 June 1975.

<sup>121</sup> Chester Nolte, "From Closet to Classroom," *American School Board Journal*, July 1973.

These legal requirements for sexual discretion enforced a double standard for queer teachers. Whereas straight instructors did not endure police surveillance, or need to conceal their out-of-work relationships, gay, lesbian, and bisexual teachers, and all other school employees whose sexuality deviated from normative heterosexuality worked under the constant threat of losing their positions. When it came to workplace violence and harassment, school workers found few alternatives to silence, since an official complaint would potentially represent a public declaration of their queer sexuality and could potentially lead to their dismissal. According to the *Examiner*, the San Francisco Unified School District in 1975 employed an “unspoken but consistent policy” to “ignore sexual preference as long as the teachers are “discrete.”<sup>122</sup>

In that same year a group of gay teachers led by Hank Wilson and Tom Ammiano worked to revise what they called the district’s “ostrich-like” policy on gay rights. In 1975 they came together to create a “Gay Teachers and School Workers Coalition” (GTSWC) in order to protest “physical violence towards gay teachers, school workers, and students within the school system.”<sup>123</sup> The group initially met resistance from many of San Francisco’s senior administrative staff, which refused to allow Wilson, Ammiano and their allies to post flyers on campuses. A city principal later wrote a letter to Guy Wright’s column in the *Examiner* deploring a poster on a teacher’s bulletin board in his school which advertising “a group of gay women” who sought to form “a younger women’s rap group.” The San Francisco official aired his disapproval by declaring, “As a school principal I refused to post the enclosed announcement of a lesbian meeting on

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<sup>122</sup> “Gay, Gifted Yet Closeted in City’s Classrooms,” *San Francisco Examiner*, 12 June 1975.

<sup>123</sup> Gay Teachers and School Workers Coalition, newsletter, August/ September 1977, Volume 1, Number 1, Hank Wilson Papers, Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Historical Society of Northern California, San Francisco, CA.

the teachers' bulletin board, for young students to see while picking up the teacher's mail."<sup>124</sup>

In the spring semester of 1975, the GTSWC began lobbying the city's Board of Education for an official declaration of protection for queer workers in San Francisco's schools. On June 3, 1975, the San Francisco Board of Education adopted an affirmative action policy for the city system that prohibited discrimination on the basis of "race, religion, sex, color, ancestry, and place of birth" but which, on the advice of counsel, deliberately left out "sexual orientation."<sup>125</sup> Tom Ammiano wrote a letter to the *San Francisco Chronicle* challenging the city Board of Education's refusal to include "sexual orientation" in its non-discrimination policy, declaring: "The number of gays teaching is large. They will not go away by exclusion. Gay teachers do not convert children to their lifestyle and do not molest students. These are myths and slander."<sup>126</sup> Just a day after the newspaper published Ammiano's letter, seventy teachers staged a demonstration outside the San Francisco School Board's meeting on Fell Street and demanded that the city's education authorities reconsider their decision to leave "sexual orientation" out of its affirmative action, non-discriminatory policy.<sup>127</sup>

After a second protest a week later the ambivalent board reversed its position and re-included "sexual orientation" in its affirmative policy. To the great surprise of activists such as Wilson, even the most conservative members of the Board of Education endorsed the new guidelines. Thomas Reed, a Catholic priest, admitted at the June 18 meeting: "I think it was unfortunate that the Board of Education took the stand that it did

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<sup>124</sup> Anonymous, letter, *San Francisco Examiner*, 6 June 1977.

<sup>125</sup> "Board Accepts Gay Teachers," *San Francisco Examiner*, 18 June 1975.

<sup>126</sup> Tom Ammiano, letter, *San Francisco Chronicle*, 10 June 1975.

<sup>127</sup> "School Board to Explain to Gay Teachers," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 11 June 1975.



on the matter of sexual orientation... As we all know, our whole religious orientation is that gay men and women are our brothers and sisters.” Reed expressed considerable regret that homosexual teachers had endured violence and official harassment while working in the public education system, and he shared with the mostly gay audience that when he had previously worked as principal at a parochial school in San Francisco, “he had discovered a ‘Queer Haters Club,’” and he “described an incident in 1961 in which a group of boys beat up a teacher they thought was gay, and left him on the street car tracks where he was run over and killed.”<sup>128</sup>

In the two years following their victory with the Board of Education, the members of what would become the Gay Teachers and School Workers’ Coalition made the harassment of queer students, faculty, and education employees one of the key issues they brought to the larger public. In an interview on National Public Radio in April 1976, for example, Ammiano related how he addressed one of his students who asked him if he was a “fag:” “And I said, ‘Well, that’s a word I don’t like. I’m gay, and that’s a word I like better than ‘fag,’ and also, I’m your friend. I’ve been your friend for a long time.’ That was it. It took care of that direct need- because he had to ask the question. And, then, he went on to something else.”<sup>129</sup> On another occasion, Jo Daly from the city’s Human Rights Commission alleged that the public schools abetted “queer patrols” organized to commit violent acts against gay people, and Ammiano confessed to a local

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<sup>128</sup> “Board Accepts Gay Teachers,” *San Francisco Examiner*, 18 June 1975.

<sup>129</sup> “Homosexuality Goes to School,” *Options in Education*, National Public Radio, Washington, D.C. 19 April 1976.

newspaper: “I’d like to see gay students and teachers walk down a hall in school and not hear ‘faggot’ yelled at them.”<sup>130</sup>

The GTSWC and their allies understood that, although the wider public expressed ambivalent attitudes towards homosexuality, a large majority of moderate, straight voters specifically opposed the use of violence in schools. They connected the routine use of the term “faggot” or the threat of physical intimidation to larger policies and social attitudes in the district. A few weeks after Ammiano’s interview with NPR the Coalition joined the city’s Human Rights Commission to pass a resolution that charged the school district with insufficiently safeguarding the wellbeing of queer employees and pupils. The *Examiner* reported that the two groups alleged that “the school district has the responsibility to portray all lifestyles and to protect the rights and safety of all students and staff. And it says that schools have an obligation to help in the ‘demystification and correction of misinformation concerning gay people.’”<sup>131</sup> In 1977 the Gay Teachers and School Workers Coalition pressed the San Francisco school district to replace negative references to homosexuality in its family life education with more affirmative ones. The *Examiner* reported that year that the district’s textbook had two derogatory references to gay sex, including one which called homosexuality “a threat to ‘optimal physical-mental-emotional-social health’” and one which “distinguished homosexuality from ‘the normal and desirable close relationships between people of the same sex.’”<sup>132</sup>

In May 1977 the GTSWC and their allies at the Human Rights Commission met with considerable success. The Board of Education voted unanimously to establish an

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<sup>130</sup> “S.F. Schools Set Study on Gay Life,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, 26 May 1977; “School Board Walks Curriculum Tightrope,” *San Francisco Examiner*, 8 June 1977.

<sup>131</sup> “Gay Students’ Rights Might Be School Issue,” *San Francisco Examiner*, 30 April 1976.

<sup>132</sup> “School Board Walks Curriculum Tightrope,” *San Francisco Examiner*, 8 June 1977.

advisory committee on establishing a new family life education curriculum. School Superintendent Robert Alioto acknowledged that although some teachers already hosted discussions with their students on homosexuality, the district could do more to foster positive attitudes on the subject. The *San Francisco Examiner* reported that the education chief “hoped the new advisory committee would ‘sharpen the focus in the curriculum guide so all students would learn about gay life styles, particularly since there are a large number of gays in San Francisco.’” He ended his statement to the newspaper on a more cautious note, however, warning that the new program “would be an attempt to sensitize without advocating- in the same manner that we teach a religion or a political party.”<sup>133</sup>

### **The Aftershocks of the Anita Bryant Campaign**

In June 1977 Anita Bryant, a former beauty queen, Florida orange juice spokeswoman, and born-again Christian successfully led a campaign in metropolitan Miami to revoke Dade County’s rule banning discrimination against gay men and lesbians. Although her efforts only affected residents in South Florida, observers across the nation heralded her work as the front end of a great backlash against gay rights. Bryant herself defined her campaign as piece of a larger religious revival that called for narrowly defined straight “family values” that year, and in the wake of her victory, she declared: “All America and all the world will hear what people have said, and with God’s

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<sup>133</sup> “S.F. Schools Set Study on Gay Life, *San Francisco Chronicle*, 26 May 1977. In a press release that same year the GTSWC declared: “We are a group committed to humanistic change in our monolithic educational system. We are especially concerned with the accurate portrayal of Lesbian and Gay lifestyles in appropriate curriculum areas, and an end to verbal and physical violence against Lesbian and Gay students, teachers, and school workers.” Gay Teachers and School Workers, Press Release, n.d. Hank Wilson Papers.

continued help, we will prevail in our fight to repeal similar laws throughout the nation, which attempt to legitimize a life style that is both perverse and dangerous.”<sup>134</sup> Bryant proved prophetic in the immediate aftermath of her victory in metro-Miami, as social conservatives in Wichita, Kansas; St. Paul, Minnesota; and Eugene, Oregon all successfully eliminated similar local ordinances in their hometowns.

Just a day after Bryant’s victory in South Florida, the *San Jose Mercury* interviewed openly gay residents in Santa Clara County. Jackie Harris, a priest in San Jose Metropolitan Community Church, told the newspaper: “My knees are weak and I feel sick. I think we underestimated the power of the fundamentalist churches.” Most observers, however, agreed that Santa Clara County would never revoke its antidiscrimination ordinances. Eladio Guerrero, executive director of the South Bay’s Gay Task Force, contended: “People in Santa Clara County are fairly liberal and see things a bit different than folks in southern Florida. People out here have a totally different attitude toward lifestyles in the gay community- they have a more open mind. Harris, concurred with Guerrero that a mass repeal of local antidiscrimination ordinances seemed unlikely, but she alleged that some local communities might balk at passing new ones, noting: “It’s the smaller cities that will feel it.”<sup>135</sup>

Although most journalists in the South Bay saw the conflict in Miami as the opening battle in a long “culture war” between gay activists and social conservatives, the struggle over antidiscrimination laws struck at a deep conflict among straight voters that stretched back several decades. Ordinances protecting gay men and lesbians from unfair treatment in the workplace specifically raised the question of whether or not openly

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<sup>134</sup> “Anita Wins; Miami Kills Pro-Gay Law,” *San Jose Mercury*, 8 June 1977.

<sup>135</sup> “Miami’s Vote Shock’s Valley Homosexuals,” *San Jose Mercury*, 8 June 1977.

homosexual teachers had the right to teach in the public schools. In an article about the Florida vote, the *San Jose Mercury* framed the battle over employment protections laws by asking: “Who should have the final say on what is discrimination in hiring teachers for private schools? Parents... Or the local government?”<sup>136</sup> A day later, the newspaper editorialized: “Stripped to its essence, it is probably accurate to say most Americans want gays to stay in the closet. Rightly or wrongly, most Americans don’t want homosexuals serving as role-models for the young, and this antipathy conflicts head on with antidiscrimination against homosexuals in employment, public accommodations and the like.”<sup>137</sup>

Bryant’s campaign evoked such strong reactions from Santa Clara County residents that the newspaper dedicated several of its letter-writing forums exclusively to the subject. In the weeks that followed the referendum in South Florida, letters flooded the *Mercury* that supported the newspaper’s editorial stance and specifically singled out gay teachers as unworthy beneficiaries of employment protection laws. An unknown number of residents from the Peninsula city of Aptos submitted a petition to the newspaper calling for laws that would “prohibit homosexuals from teaching students and should be discriminated against in housing.”<sup>138</sup> Barbara McGuire, from an unspecified town, asserted: “Don’t unleash the gays to come out in freedom. There are still plenty of straight teachers to hire and always a room available somewhere with another gay. Don’t move into my neighborhood.”<sup>139</sup> Nancy Durnya contended: “I certainly don’t want a gay

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<sup>136</sup> “Florida Gays Tabbed Tuesday Losers,” *San Jose Mercury*, 6 June 1977. The newspaper cited an anonymous Dade County official who declared: “What it comes down to is this: are we ready to say that our children should be taught by out-in-the-open homosexuals?”

<sup>137</sup> “Little Gaiety in Gay Rights Fight,” *San Jose Mercury*, 9 June 1977.

<sup>138</sup> John Maxine MaCaulay, letter, *San Jose Mercury*, 25 June 1977.

<sup>139</sup> Barbara McGuire, letter, *San Jose Mercury*, 25 June 1977.

person teaching my child. I don't think they are capable of teaching when they don't even know the difference between male and female." Ruth Van Norman wrote: "I am definitely against any rights for homosexuals. I do not want them teaching my children or living in my neighborhood. They are a degrading influence on society and if they choose to live such a life, they should do it as secretly as possible."<sup>140</sup> And Tony Di Leonardo asserted: "What people do in private is their business. But we do not have to approve or accept a life style that is abnormal to us. We don't want them in our homes. We will tolerate them, but never glorify or approve a life style alien to ours."<sup>141</sup>

Although Di Leonardo spoke out against gay rights, his passing reference to sexual "privacy" struck at the core of the issue for many straight voters. Most heterosexual parents opposed what they saw as an unnecessary state intrusion into the bedrooms of individual citizens, but they passionately disagreed on whether or not openly gay schoolteachers represented cases of "private" behavior invading public schools. Even as writers such as Di Leonardo flooded the *Mercury's* letterbox with statements against allowing homosexuals in the classroom, a second set of South Bay residents saw Bryant's campaign as an attempt to arbitrarily exclude people from schools based on their "private" behavior. Peter Hull in Cupertino argued: "I'd prefer a homosexual teaching my child any day or night over a religious fanatic who hates passionately in the name of common sense love."<sup>142</sup> G. Edward Hallett sarcastically asked: "Homosexuals in the

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<sup>140</sup> Ruth Van Norman, letter, *San Jose Mercury*, 25 June 1977.

<sup>141</sup> Tony Di Leonardo, letter *San Jose Mercury*, 25 June 1977. Janet Barone also contended: "Whatever I do deeply influences the lives of those around me. Should homosexuals be given equal rights and become a recognized minority they will be aided by law to obtain various jobs. Occupations such as school teachers will have a direct influence on the lives of innocent children." Marjorie Apel proclaimed: "Certainly 'gays' should have the same rights as straight people. Their lifestyles should not be held against them in any way except one: they shouldn't be allowed to hold positions where they might influence children."

<sup>142</sup> Peter Hull, *San Jose Mercury*, 25 June 1977.

schools? What's new about that...? It sounds like one more excuse for parents to try and put the blame for how their children turn out onto some other group of people.”<sup>143</sup> L. B. Gonter in Sunnyvale distinguished between firing gay teachers and “validating” their sexuality: “I don’t believe that most people ever wanted to abuse or castigate homosexuals. I have always felt that they should have the right to education and employment as long as they conducted themselves in an unassuming manner.”<sup>144</sup> And Ann Henry in Cupertino told the readers of the *Mercury*: “I wish those who would vote against housing and employment for homosexuals would be required to produce a record of the number of times a homosexual has infringed upon their rights or caused them trouble of any sort.”<sup>145</sup>

### **Gay in School: Rethinking Family Life Education and the Briggs Initiative**

Bryant’s campaign drew significant national media attention, pushed gay rights groups to demand more legal protections, and rallied fellow conservatives to fight any legal measure that might public endorse homosexuality. *Time* magazine reported on the growing number of pride parades in cities like Chicago and Atlanta, and it warned that “the increasing [gay] militancy is undoubtedly offensive to many ‘straights’ and it could produce a backlash against them.”<sup>146</sup> Politicians in California grew cautious in the changing national climate, and they waited to see if heterosexual voters would push back against protections for queer residents. On the heels of Bryant’s success in Florida, for

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<sup>143</sup> G. Edward Hallet, letter, *San Jose Mercury*, 25 June 1977.

<sup>144</sup> L. B. Gonter, letter, *San Jose Mercury*, 25 June 1977.

<sup>145</sup> Ann Henry, letter, *San Jose Mercury*, 28 June 1977. John Kaufmanne from Los Altos Hills, contended that sexuality was a “natural” phenomenon, and therefore should not affect the ability of homosexuals to teach in schools: “It has been scientifically concluded that all people know their sexual preference by age three. Gays are not going to teach homosexuality to students in a classroom because of this reason.” John Kaufmanne, letter, *San Jose Mercury*, 18 June 1977.

<sup>146</sup> “Causes: The Band Gets Bigger,” *Time*, 11 July 1977.

example, San Francisco Assemblyman Art Agnos withdrew a bill protecting gay men and lesbians from employment discrimination after his fellow lawmakers turned away from the idea.<sup>147</sup>

In the middle of Bryant's campaign, conservative Assemblyman Bruce Nestende from suburban Orange County near Los Angeles helped amend California's civil code to specifically declare that the government would only recognize heterosexual marriages between a man and woman.<sup>148</sup> In April 1977 the *San Francisco Chronicle* reported that local efforts by same-sex couples to secure marriage licenses in the city had prompted the conservative legislator's efforts. That month, Nestende told the newspaper: "It's my conviction that the family unit is the basis of Western civilization, and I'm not willing to extend the definition of family unit." He further argued that the official sanction of gay unions would inevitably lead to revisions in the state's sex educational curricula, and he cracked: "Are we going to go ahead and have 15 minutes for heterosexual marriage and 15 minutes for homosexual marriages? Where will it end?"<sup>149</sup>

Nestende's fears almost came to fruition a month later in the Bay Area. For most of the 1970s, the San Francisco school district only discussed homosexuality at the high school level, and its curricula continued to portray gay men and lesbians as socially deviant or mentally ill. Building off their successes in the fight over employment discrimination, the Gay Teachers and School Workers Coalition pushed school officials in 1977 to delete the stigmatizing references to same-sex relationships in the curriculum,

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<sup>147</sup> "Relax- Now Take a Deep Breath," editorial, *San Francisco Examiner*, 10 June 1977; "Gay Rights Bill Loses Out for 1978," *San Francisco Examiner*, 28 June 1978.

<sup>148</sup> "Anti-Gay Backlash Predicted in State," *San Francisco Examiner*, 9 June 1977.

<sup>149</sup> "A Heated Debate on Gay Marriages," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 15 April 1977. Rev. Frida Smith of the Metropolitan Community Church compared the ban on same-sex marriage to prohibitions against interracial marriages. Fred Clef, a Democrat from Long Beach, also supported the measure, saying that, "marriage is for procreation of mankind."



to include depictions that presented them as comparable to heterosexual ones, and asked for discussions of “gay lifestyles” at the elementary level. In preparation for an expanded sex education program the group also produced a new speakers’ bureau to provide guest lecturers at the request of individual teachers.<sup>150</sup> Tom Ammiano justified the changes by arguing in the *Examiner* that parents’ had often passed along their prejudices towards gay people, and that curriculum revisions could help ease hostility towards queer faculty, staff, and students. “Faggot is the byword,” he declared, “You hear it everywhere. ‘Kill the faggots’ is written on the bathroom walls in the high school. Parents who lecture their kids not to say ‘nigger’ or ‘spic’ don’t blink at the word ‘faggot.’ But they come from the same ignorance and more education is needed to eradicate prejudice.”<sup>151</sup>

Just a few weeks before Bryant’s victory in Florida, the San Francisco Board of Education approved the creation of a committee to revise the district’s curricula on sex and family life.<sup>152</sup> Although School Superintendent Robert Alioto cautioned that the changes would not constitute “advocating” homosexuality as a valid set of relationships for children, the proposed alterations sparked outrage from parents both in San Francisco and across California. The city’s PTA reported receiving angry phone calls over the issue, and several area ministers formally expressed their disapproval to the superintendent.<sup>153</sup> Lee Heinz, a San Francisco resident, sarcastically told the readers of the *Examiner*: “I noticed last week that our Board of Education has added the study of gay life styles to the curriculum. It’s interesting to note that the board can add this, yet

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<sup>150</sup> “First for S.F. Schools: A Gay Studies Program,” *San Francisco Examiner*, 25 May 1977; “S.F. Set Study on Gay Life,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, 26 May 1977.

<sup>151</sup> “Gay Teachers, Susceptible Kids,” *San Francisco Examiner*, 10 June 1977.

<sup>152</sup> “First for S.F. Schools: A Gay Studies Program,” *San Francisco Examiner*, 25 May 1977; “Schools Set Study on Gay Life,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, 26 May 1977.

<sup>153</sup> “School Board Walks Curriculum Tightrope,” *San Francisco Examiner*, 8 June 1977.

can't provide the study of religion or Christianity... We can teach everything else in our public schools except that which could be most beneficial to the family, parents, and their children."<sup>154</sup> Aurora Pierce and Agnes Durham asked columnist Guy Wright: "Before time and money are spent teaching children about homosexuality, shouldn't a lot more be done to educate our children in the Three Rs, where the effect is so evidently needed?"<sup>155</sup>

In response to the hostile reactions from parents and religious leaders, members of San Francisco's Board of Education downplayed the importance of their decision and back away from their earlier support for the changes. Wedged between straight parents' ambivalence on gay rights, the backlash against changes to the family life education curriculum presented school authorities with a serious dilemma. Similar to the Santa Clara Council of Churches' response to the controversy over San Jose's Metropolitan Community Church, board members struggled to both convince parents that they wanted to protect faculty, staff, and students from harassment and to refrain from making statements that might appear to endorse same-sex relationships. Myra Kops, Second District PTA President, told a newspaper that she supported the idea in principle because "In San Francisco... we have a lot of gays [and] we cannot hide this from our kids." She expressed concern, however, about "what age should a child be taught about the subject and can the student comprehend that it is information and not propaganda?"<sup>156</sup> Board of Education member Peter Mezey, a proponent of the change in curriculum, assured the *Examiner*: "the portion that will deal with homosexuality will be a very tiny portion of the whole curriculum. The major purpose of the change... is to avoid stereotyping and

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<sup>154</sup> Lee Heinz, letter, *San Francisco Examiner*, 2 June 1977.

<sup>155</sup> Aurora Pierce and Agnes Durham, letter, *San Francisco Examiner*, 6 June 1977.

<sup>156</sup> "Quiet Reaction to Gay Studies in School," *San Francisco Today*, 22 June 1977.

name-calling homosexuals.”<sup>157</sup> Eugene Hopp, who initially opposed including “sexual orientation” in the Board’s affirmative action policy, told the newspaper that “he agrees that derogatory language and harassment of gays should cease, but that’s a long way from teaching elementary school children the benefits of homosexuality.”<sup>158</sup>

The San Francisco School Board’s cool attitude towards revising the sex and family life education curriculum unfolded amidst a much wider mobilization of California conservatives against gay rights. Anita Bryant’s Dade County campaign had attracted the attention of members of the state’s nascent Religious Right, and her success appeared to signal that straight voters across the county wanted to repeal even the most cursory legal protections for gay men and lesbians. Just weeks after newspapers reported on the controversy over the San Francisco School Board’s decision, Orange County State Senator John Briggs launched a campaign to reinstate California’s ban on openly gay teachers. Early that year he had traveled to Florida to support Bryant’s campaign, and when he returned to Sacramento, he asked the state senate to pass a resolution commending the former beauty queen for her “courageous stand to protect American children from exposure to blatant homosexuality.”<sup>159</sup> In August he applauded the legislature’s decision to restrict marriage to heterosexual couples, calling it an effort “to restore some sense of morality to the state of California.”<sup>160</sup>

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<sup>157</sup> “School Board Walks Curriculum Tightrope,” *San Francisco Examiner*, 8 June 1977.

<sup>158</sup> “School Board Walks Curriculum Tightrope,” *San Francisco Examiner*, 8 June 1977. The *Examiner* also reported two days later: “Recently, some San Francisco parents have said they fear the proposal to revise the public school teaching guide to sensitize students to accept- or at least tolerate- gay lifestyles as just another way of living might judge their kids into adopting those very lifestyles.” “Gay Teachers, Susceptible Kids,” *San Francisco Examiner*, 10 June 1977.

<sup>159</sup> “Anti-Gay Backlash Predicted in State,” *San Francisco Examiner*, 9 June 1977; “Anita Bryant Fan Fails,” *San Jose Mercury*, 22 June 1977.

<sup>160</sup> “Gay Marriage Ban Gets an OK,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, 12 August 1977.

During the summer of 1977, Briggs announced that he planned to run for governor the following year, and he sponsored a bill in the legislature to ban openly gay teachers in the state's schools. In August, the attorney general, also a gubernatorial candidate, warned journalists that the bill had "constitutional problems" and the Senate refused to pass it.<sup>161</sup> Briggs elected to take the issue directly to California voters, and he vowed to place it on the statewide ballot as a proposition during his campaign in 1978. The *San Francisco Examiner* quoted the conservative legislator's vow to bring Bryant's crusade to the West Coast, citing his promise: "I feel Anita would come to California to campaign for the initiative. I told her that I may have to have her help in saving our children in California."<sup>162</sup>

In 1977, Briggs had considerable reason to believe that a ban on gay teachers would arouse public interest and could potentially buoy his run for governor. The conservative legislator clearly saw the controversy over San Francisco's new family life education program as a sign that even liberal voters would not support gay rights if it threatened their children. He proclaimed his proposal just two weeks after the district announced it would change its treatment of homosexuality, and he told the *Examiner*: "I don't think the average person in San Francisco shares the views of the gays. People are just sick and tired of them flaunting it."<sup>163</sup> A national Gallup poll in 1977 found that most Americans believed that "homosexuals should, in principle, have equal rights, job opportunities, but at the same time balk[ed] at the hiring of homosexuals for certain positions, such as elementary school teaching and the clergy."<sup>164</sup> A survey taken a few

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<sup>161</sup> "Gay Teacher Bill has Problems," *San Francisco Progress*, 10 August 1977.

<sup>162</sup> "Anti-Gay Backlash Predicted in State," *San Francisco Examiner*, 9 June 1977.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>164</sup> "Gallup Poll on Homosexuality," *San Francisco Examiner*, 24 July 1977.

weeks later in California found that only 17 percent of state residents thought that gay people should be “approved of by society and allowed to live their own homosexual lifestyles.” 43 percent of people polled, replied that they should be “tolerated, but only if they don’t show their way of life.”<sup>165</sup> The same survey found that 59 percent of Californians opposed same-sex marriage and a narrow majority favored banning gay teachers.<sup>166</sup>

In May 1978, Briggs and his supporters succeeded in placing the proposed ban on the November ballot, threatening to remove any teacher “who engages in public homosexual activity and/ or public homosexual conduct direct at, or likely to the attention of schoolchildren or other school employees.” Their efforts made California the first state in the nation to hold a referendum on gay rights, and the vote represented a significant call from New Right conservatives for a return to one of the central concerns of postwar liberalism: state support for the institution of marriage and the privileging of straight relationships. In October 1977 Briggs published an editorial in the *Los Angeles Times*, and in what would be the most extensive published version of his ideas, he argued for a relationship between the state and straight families that had shaped life in California for a quarter century.

Similar to many postwar psychologists, the senator saw gay people as psychologically immature, noting that “homosexual relationships, by definition, cannot fulfill necessary social functions. The individuals involved do not form stable social units and do not create or nurture children.”<sup>167</sup> Briggs notably refrained from using religious justifications for his initiative in the editorial, and instead he invoked the

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<sup>165</sup> “Sharp Split on Gay Issues,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, 12 August 1977.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>167</sup> John Briggs, editorial, “Deviants Threaten the American Family,” *Los Angeles Times*, 23 October 1977.

welfare of children, particularly their mental development, as the primary reason for his ban. “The family,” he argued, “transmits values from generation to generation. This continuity of values, combined with the strength of the family unit itself, largely determines whether succeeding generations will be neurotic, unstable and a threat to society, or if they will be progressive, emotionally strong and spiritually anchored.”<sup>168</sup>

Although the senator’s initiative focused on the problem of openly gay teachers, the larger logic behind the proposed ban grew out of the same debates over sex education, children, and the state that had concerned Californians for the previous three decades. Similar to the arguments made by public officials in the immediate postwar period, Briggs contended that teachers, like parents, served as role models for children. Their presence in schools would potentially encourage students to develop gay relationships and it would signal public acceptance of homosexuality. He argued:

A teacher who is a known homosexual will automatically represent that way of life to young, impressionable students at a time when they are struggling with their own choice of sexual orientation. When children are constantly exposed to such a role models, they may well be inclined to experiment with a life-style that could lead to disaster for themselves and, ultimately, for society as a whole. Make no mistake about it: Accepting homosexual teachers will put society’s stamp of approval on homosexuality.<sup>169</sup>

The logic, therefore, rested on both on the belief that all teachers unconsciously shape the sexual identities of their students and the idea that employment protections for gay workers explicitly told young people that homosexuality was equal heterosexual marriage.

Finally, Briggs asserted that although the state had previously understood the significance of teaching children about the importance of straight relationships, Gay

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<sup>168</sup> Ibid.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid.

Liberation and the sexual revolution of the 1960s threatened to reverse that order. He singled out the 1975 passage of California's Consenting Adults Law as a mistake that would encourage gay teachers to "come out" to their students, and he underscored recent events in San Francisco as a potential bellwether for where the state might go. Just a few years ago, he declared, "an intense lobbying effort by homosexual activists forced San Francisco to adopt an ordinance banning discrimination based on homosexuality in the hiring of teachers. Now, in response to political pressure from homosexuals, the San Francisco school system plans to revise its sex-education curriculum to include the study of homosexuality as an acceptable alternative to heterosexuality." Briggs conceded that society should tolerate gay people, but he objected to the school district's decision because, "Now, all children in that city will be taught that homosexuality is an approved way of life."<sup>170</sup>

If the senator's campaign represented a push to recreate the straight regime that had first emerged in the wake of World War II, it also notably reflected some of the significant shifts in Americans' thinking about sexuality in the previous twenty years. Similar to debates over sex education in the 1960s, Briggs conceded that the state should not regulate "private" sexual behavior, and he worked diligently to convince voters that his proposal would not jeopardize this "fundamental American right." Unlike his predecessors in the 1940s, he tried to draw a sharp line between the "public classroom" and the "private bedroom." In his editorial in the *Los Angeles Times*, he contended: "I believe the specific sexual acts homosexuals carry on in private should not be subject to legislative action. But when that aberrant behavior... becomes acceptable conduct for our children, or even when an attempt is made to force society to go beyond

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<sup>170</sup> Ibid.

compassionate tolerance of it, then homosexuality stops being a private matter and becomes a public concern.”<sup>171</sup> A year later, he told *The San Francisco Examiner*: “My issue says if you want to be a private homosexual, fine. But if you want to brag about it, we say no. It puts a role model in the classroom and we don’t want those people in the classroom.”<sup>172</sup> And at a San Diego rally just before Halloween in 1978, Briggs shouted to a cheering crowd: “What teachers do in private is their business. But what they do in California’s classrooms is our business.”<sup>173</sup>

These calls for tolerance of “private” behavior and restrictions on “public” employment reflected the almost universal belief of Americans in the postwar period that sex belonged “in the bedroom” away from children. Briggs and his supporters themselves represented a crucial offshoot of the postwar period, a suburban grassroots insurgency that called for greater state regulation of sex and family life. The conservative senator made the sexual divisions within the postwar metropolis a recurring trope in his public speeches, and he routinely singled out San Francisco as a symbol of California’s moral decline. In October 1977, he attempted to speak at a meeting of the San Francisco Board of Education in order to protest its decision to oppose his initiative before his supporters had even successfully placed it on the state ballot.<sup>174</sup> On another occasion Briggs alleged that “one-third of San Francisco’s teachers are homosexuals. I assume most of them are seducing young boys in toilets.”<sup>175</sup> And upon attaining the requisite number of signatures to place his initiative on the November ballot, he filed the necessary paperwork at a state office in San Francisco, and told the *Chronicle* that the

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<sup>171</sup> Ibid.

<sup>172</sup> “Briggs’ Wild Rumors About Gay Teachers in the City,” *San Francisco Examiner*, 3 October 1978.

<sup>173</sup> “Prop. 6 Will ‘Draw a Moral Line’- Briggs,” *Los Angeles Times*, 31 October 1978.

<sup>174</sup> “Anita Supporter Shut Out Here,” *San Francisco Examiner*, 12 October 1977.

<sup>175</sup> “Briggs’ Wild Rumors About Gay Teachers in the City,” *San Francisco Examiner*, 3 October 1978.



city represented “the moral garbage dump of homosexuality in this country,” and “it’s time to get rid of those people who want to lead an openly immoral life and expect a 21-gun salute every time they go past.”<sup>176</sup>

Briggs’ derogatory remarks about San Francisco unfolded amidst renewed anxiety among Bay Area residents about the urban crisis and the number of white, middle-class, straight families living near downtown. One of the initiative’s supporters justified banning gay teachers because it symbolized a step towards restoring the moral authority parents had allegedly lost in the 1960s, and she told the *San Mateo Times*: “As parents, we see the symptoms of moral decay all around us- children hooked on drugs, sex and violence glorified in the mass media, gang wars, casual and premarital sex among teenagers, and all the rest.”<sup>177</sup> The 1970 census had indicated that in the previous decade San Francisco had lost another 30,000 residents to the suburbs, particularly middle-class, married couples with children. In 1977 City Supervisor Diane Feinstein held a meeting with city department heads on developing strategies to “stabilize” San Francisco, and echoing debates from the Christopher mayoralty, Feinstein lamented that housing in the city would continue to only attract “elderly people, single people and transients.” She told the *Chronicle*: “the key to stabilizing the city’s middle class working population is the family,” and she called for new types of housing, better schools, and a crackdown on crime.<sup>178</sup>

A day later, the *Examiner* endorsed Feinstein’s efforts in an editorial entitled, “A City without its Children,” and approvingly cited the words of Glynn Custred , a resident of suburban Walnut Creek, who advised Feinstein:

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<sup>176</sup> “Briggs Files Anti-Gay Initiative,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, 2 May 1978.

<sup>177</sup> “Prop. 6 Deals with a Hot Issue,” *San Mateo Times*, 9 October 1978.

<sup>178</sup> “Feinstein’s Move to Halt Flight to the Suburbs,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, 28 September 1977.

Parents... depend on some kind of standard in a community to bring up children... Obviously San Francisco is not willing to share this responsibility with parents. Instead, it has opted for the role of haven for those who openly disdain the values necessary for this central task... If San Francisco is indeed interested in getting people back from the suburbs... it should come up with a more realistic approach to what individual liberty really means, and how that differs from license and excess.<sup>179</sup>

In a remarkable echo of Briggs' condemnations of San Francisco, Custred's words reinforced the idea that suburbs offered white, middle-class parents different advantages for raising their children. The chronic condemnations of the city as a site for "license" and "excess" not only discouraged affluent straight families from settling there, they also fueled the grassroots religious insurgency in the suburbs that saw urban sex districts and gay neighborhoods as signs of national moral decline.

In the Bay Area, Briggs' campaign tapped into the growing social networks of conservative straight churches and Christian media. In August 1977, Marvin Rickard of the Los Gatos Christian Church, Emanuele Cannistraci of the Church of the Crossroads, and Jim Coffaro of the San Jose Chapter of the Full Gospel Businessmen's fellowship asked sympathetic pastors in the South Bay to support Proposition 6, the ban in gay teachers. In a letter entitled "They are Here," the three ministers told their peers: "With God's help, and the courageous Christian leadership of Anita Bryant, the campaign to repeal the immoral law in Florida was successful. In California, we are faced with a task equally important and which will prove to be just as difficult, for the evil forces that were defeated there must be boldly and decisively dealt with here."<sup>180</sup> In October 1978, Briggs spoke at the North Valley Baptist Church in Santa Clara, as part of a lecture on "God and

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<sup>179</sup> "A City Without Its Children..." editorial, *San Francisco Examiner*, 29 September 1977.

<sup>180</sup> Marvin Rickard, et al. letter, California Save Our Children, 29 August 1977, Ted Sahl Papers, San Jose State University, San Jose, CA.

Country,” and to promote Proposition 6.<sup>181</sup> Just three days before the referendum, the Liberty Baptist Church and a group of South Bay Christian schools took out an advertisement in the religious section of *San Jose Mercury*, telling readers to, “Preserve Parents’ Rights to Protect Their Children from Teachers who are Immoral and Who Promote a Perverted Life Style.”<sup>182</sup>

Just a few days before the vote, the *San Jose Mercury* published a special forum of letters from its readers on the issue, and several proponents of the measure argued that homosexual teachers could adversely affect children’s personal development. San Jose’s Jan Swanson, for example, wrote: “As a mother of two children, I realize how children idolize their teachers. A teacher can do no wrong in their eyes... The Bible... says there will be no homosexuals in Heaven. If [God] doesn’t want them in Heaven, then I don’t want them teaching my kids.”<sup>183</sup> Mr. and Mrs. George Roucayrol told the newspaper: “We believe laws that attempt to legitimize or accept homosexuality are wrong and a danger to children, impressionable young people, and the family... Children have rights also to be raised in a moral and decent community.”<sup>184</sup> Santa Clara’s La Verne Hutchinson concurred by declaring: “Children look up to their parents, teachers, and leaders. We set examples for our children. If we keep on relaxing our laws, our nation will end up like the Roman Empire, which died of immorality.”<sup>185</sup> And Harriet Bell from Cupertino complained that San Francisco had become “a notorious refuge for those who flaunt their private peculiarities publicly.” She argued that, “If Proposition 6 goes down

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<sup>181</sup> “Senator Briggs Speaks at Baptist Church,” *Santa Clara Sun*, 3 October 1978.

<sup>182</sup> “Protect Our Children,” Advertisement, *San Jose Mercury*, 4 November 1978.

<sup>183</sup> Jan Swanson, letter, *San Jose Mercury*, 2 November 1978.

<sup>184</sup> Mr. and Mrs. George Roucayrol, letter, *San Jose Mercury*, 4 November 1978.

<sup>185</sup> La Verne Hutchinson, letter, *San Jose Mercury News*, 4 November 1978.

to defeat, much of California, both inside and outside of schools, will become as ludicrous as San Francisco.”<sup>186</sup>

### **Gay Backlash and Straight Moderation**

The launch of Proposition 6, and the voices of voters such as Bell, spurred a counter-mobilization from gay rights groups, and motivated large numbers of moderate straight voters to turn out against the initiative. In San Francisco, City Supervisor Harvey Milk emerged as the most visible opponent of Briggs and his ideas. At the Gay Pride Parade on Market Street in June 1978, the Castro politician argued that the best way for gay men and lesbians to fight the Briggs Initiative lay in “coming out” to the families, friend, and co-workers so that more straight Californians would know that queer people played significant roles in their lives: ““You must come out to your parents,” he declared. “I know that it is hard and will hurt them but think about how they will hurt you in the voting booth! Come out to your relatives. I know that is hard and will upset them, but think about how that will upset you in the voting booth... come out to your friends, if indeed they are your friends... come out to your co-workers.”<sup>187</sup> In the months preceding the vote, Milk challenged Briggs to a series of televised debates, and in October and November the San Francisco Supervisor faced off against his opponent from Orange County in a series of forums in schools and community centers. At a public meeting with Briggs in the Los Angeles suburb of Garden Grove, Milk told the audience that too many religious people “are willing to teach... children that hatred of some people

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<sup>186</sup> Harriet Bell, letter, *San Jose Mercury News*, 4 November 1978.

<sup>187</sup> Shilts, *The Mayor of Castro Street*, 368.

is more important than the love of Christ. Go to church and preach your religion, but don't legislate it. You want to legalize and constitutionalize bigotry, and I say no."<sup>188</sup>

Not surprisingly, gay teachers rallied to speak out against the initiative. In 1977 the Gay Teachers and School Workers Coalition warned its members about Briggs' attempts to ban queer educators. In a newsletter the group called on readers to bring up the issue of gay school employees through their personal associations with friends, family and co-workers. "If you're not able to come out," the writers argued, "there are ways of doing this without stating your own sexual preference, i.e. 'Did you read about the Briggs Initiative in the paper?' It's important that as many people as possible know what's happening."<sup>189</sup> Milk, Ammiano, and Wilson also successfully convinced the American Federation of Teachers to support their cause, and in April 1978 San Francisco's union local editorialized against the initiative, "not only because it would violate the teacher's right to privacy but also because it could be the first step in destroying the other rights we have won so slowly and painfully."<sup>190</sup>

Although Briggs's evangelical supporters garnered significant attention from journalists at the time, the gay churches founded in the previous decade served as one of the key components of the proposition's opposition. In his memoir, *Don't Be Afraid Anymore*, Troy Perry remembered criss-crossing the country that year to solicit donations from gay-friendly churches in Atlanta, Dallas, and Fort Lauderdale.<sup>191</sup> David Farrell, the pastor of an MCC in San Diego took out radio commercials in opposition to the

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<sup>188</sup> "Teacher Role Crux of Debate," *Anaheim Bulletin*, 3 November 1978.

<sup>189</sup> Gay Teachers and School Workers Coalition, "Briggs Goes Bananas," newsletter, August/ September 1977, Volume 1, Number 1, Hank Wilson papers.

<sup>190</sup> "Briggs' Plan Threatens All," editorial, *San Francisco Teacher*, April 1978.

<sup>191</sup> Troy Perry with Thomas Swicegood, *Don't Be Afraid Anymore: The Story of Reverend Troy Perry and the Metropolitan Community Church* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990), 156-162.

proposition, and Perry debated Briggs on television.<sup>192</sup> Michael Mank, a San Mateo school teacher and MCC worshipper, served as one of the founding members of the Bay Area Committee Against the Briggs Initiative, the region's largest group opposed to the proposal.<sup>193</sup> But, most importantly, Perry recalled that worshippers at Metropolitan Community Churches across California solicited support from their parents and close relatives, and he recalled that they "went to our kinfolk and said, 'All right, it's time, now or never, for you to stand up and speak for us!'" And many families did."<sup>194</sup>

The efforts of gay churches to solicit the support of parents, friends, and co-workers represented the first step in a broad mobilization of moderate straight voters against the Briggs Initiative. Although many Californians found the idea of gay teachers distasteful, its conservative supporters irritated many of them, and in the months immediately preceding the vote, large numbers of moderates spoke out against the proposal as a step towards a "police state" and an unnecessary "violation of privacy." The same California poll that revealed that large numbers of voters believed that society should "tolerate" homosexuality as long as gay men and lesbians kept their sexuality private also found that at least half the respondents disagreed with Anita Bryant. Nearly equal numbers of people in the poll reported strongly supporting or objecting to her politics, with a substantially larger percentage of respondents in the Bay Area indicating that they "disagreed strongly" with her stance on homosexuality. And, just as significantly, slightly less than half of the Californians surveyed revealed that they

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<sup>192</sup> Ibid. 167-9.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid. 152.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid. 167.

personally “knew someone who is a homosexual,” with three fifths of that group endorsing acceptance of the “homosexual lifestyle for men or women.”<sup>195</sup>

The most significant group of straight opposition came from mainline Protestant and some Catholic leaders who saw Proposition 6 as an attempt by evangelicals to impose their values on the state’s legal system. In the fall of 1978 a number of moderate religious leaders spoke out against the issue because they believed it would violate constitutional protections. Bishop R. Marvin Stuart of the United Methodist California-Nevada Conference, for example, urged congregations in the northern part of the state to vote against the Briggs Initiative because “there is no convincing evidence that homosexual teachers impose their lifestyle on their students. But Proposition 6 invites people who are critical of teachers for a variety of reasons to attack them with irrelevant... accusations of homosexual conduct.”<sup>196</sup> Richard Norberg of San Mateo’s Congregational Church called the proposition a “witch hunting measure” in a local newspaper, and he succinctly declared: “It’s broader than the homosexual issue. It’s a question of rights.”<sup>197</sup> C. Kilmer Myers, Episcopal Bishop of California, warned the Anglicans in the state: “We have been ‘nice’ to the fundamentalists. We have been polite and tolerant long enough... This political farce operating under the cloak of a distorted Christianity could lead to fascism American-style.”<sup>198</sup>

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<sup>195</sup> “Sharp Split on Gay Issue,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, 12 August 1977. 45 percent of respondents agreed with Bryant, and 45 percent of them did not. 40 percent of Bay Area residents reported “strongly disagreeing” with her politics. 49 percent of Californians said they knew someone who was a homosexual, with 60 percent of bay Area respondents indicating that knew a gay man or woman.

<sup>196</sup> “A Surprising Split on Proposition 6,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, 28 October 1978. Catholic Archbishop John Quinn said: “The proposed initiative is ‘perilously vague,’ and ‘would tend to violate and would wrongly limit the civil rights of homosexual persons’ if it passes.”

<sup>197</sup> “Peninsula Clergy Oppose Propositions 6, 7,” *San Mateo Times*, 28 October 1978.

<sup>198</sup> “Bishop Myers Blasts Prop 6 Fundamentalists in Farewell,” *San Jose Mercury*, 4 November 1978.

Similar to the struggle over the MCC's admission to the Santa Clara Council of Churches most moderate, straight religious leaders framed their opposition as a matter of protecting an individual's right to privacy, and they stopped short of endorsing homosexuality as a valid set of relationships. Rabbi Jacob Traub of Congregation Adath Israel in San Francisco's Sunset District confessed: "Orthodox Judaism is not at all in favor of homosexuality... But that is not what Proposition 6 says... I have no doubt that there have been homosexual school teachers [sic] throughout the ages who have been able to discharge their duties in a competent way. Proposition 6 will not change this one bit."<sup>199</sup> John Kelly of St. Mark's Catholic Church in Belmont added: "Prop. 6 doesn't uphold the purity of heterosexuality. It doesn't do away with homosexuality. It sets up a dangerous form of policing individual lives in a frightening way. There are two separate issues. One is the initiative, which deals with the rights of people. The second issue is what to say about homosexuality in and of itself."<sup>200</sup>

The divisions among Christian groups broke out into the open when Briggs personally campaigned for his initiative in Santa Clara County. In September 1977 the state senator and his ally, Lou Sheldon of Anaheim's Melodyland Christian Center, brought together a group of seventy conservative, straight ministers from the Peninsula and South Bay to a restaurant in Mountain View to promote Proposition 6. Santa Clara County's Council of Churches learned of the meeting, and the *San Jose Mercury* reported that approximately twenty mainline Protestant ministers went to the gathering without invitations to protest the plans of their evangelical counterparts. The confrontation between the two groups of clergy represented just the latest chapter in an ongoing

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<sup>199</sup> "A Surprising Split on Proposition 6," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 28 October 1978.

<sup>200</sup> "Peninsula Clergy Oppose Propositions 6, 7," *San Mateo Times*, 28 October 1978. See also "Many Church Leaders Oppose Prop. 6," *Los Angeles Times*, 3 November 1978.



struggle over the relationship between sexuality, family and religion in America, and Presbyterian pastor Peter Koopman used the meeting's question and answer session to announce that the local Council of Churches opposed the Briggs Initiative. "Whenever people try to deny civil rights to any group of people," he declared, "we believe that Christians should 'in the name of Christ,' say no." Bruce Kohfield of San Jose's Memorial Baptist Church rebutted by reasserting his position as a parent: "This gentleman speaks of civil rights. As it stands I do not have the choice under civil rights to allow my daughter not to be educated by a homosexual. Where are my civil rights?"<sup>201</sup>

Proposition 6 spurred defensive reactions from large numbers of parents who expressed discomfort with homosexuality but who also found the rhetoric of its conservative supporters distasteful and believed the measure constituted an unfair violation of an individual's "right to privacy." Six weeks before the vote, Mervyn Field a pollster in the state, told the *San Francisco Examiner*: "The public can't be happy about making this decision. They really don't want to make it, except for segments on both sides. The broad middle group, 50 to 60 percent, is in conflict. It's the kind of issue where there is some instinctive feeling, but the feeling is that it's highly discriminatory and not the way to do it."<sup>202</sup> In a letter to the *Mercury*, J. E. S. Tyson of Los Gatos reported: "As a heterosexual person, I view this measure as an invasion of privacy and an attempt to arbitrate a very elemental aspect of an individual's make-up... I am certainly not condoning public flaunting of one's sexuality, homo- or hetero-... [but] A sexually stable teacher, gay or not... should pose no threat to any student, gay or not."<sup>203</sup> Frank Gells of Half Moon Bay wrote: "Since adequate laws against promoting or practicing a

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<sup>201</sup> "Briggs Drive on Homosexuals Takes on Religious Zeal," *San Jose Mercury*, 16 September 1977.

<sup>202</sup> "Briggs' Wild Rumors About Gay Teachers in the City," *San Francisco Examiner*, 3 October 1978.

<sup>203</sup> J.E.S. Tyson, letter, *San Jose Mercury*, 4 November 1978.

‘gay’ lifestyle on school campuses are already on the books, Prop 6 must be viewed as a blatant attempt to create a climate of fear in the schools... It has little to do with homosexuality and a lot to do with freedom of speech and teachers’ rights.’<sup>204</sup>

By the fall of 1978 every major newspaper in the state advocated a vote against the Briggs Initiative, and several of California’s leading political figures came out against it. In every case, they voiced their opposition as a stand for sexual privacy, rather than an affirmation of homosexuality. The *San Francisco Examiner*, for example, editorialized: “The prevailing- although by no means unanimous- attitude in the straight community is to accept those of the homosexual persuasion as long as they indulge their bent in private... [The Briggs Initiative] would trample on the rights of many citizens whose public conduct gives no cause for offense and whose private conduct is not public business. It will not solve the ‘problem’ of the homosexual teacher to whatever arguable extent a problem exists.”<sup>205</sup> The *Chronicle* said that the measure “offers very troublesome implications and possibilities for witch-hunting” and noted that the state already afforded school boards broad enough powers “to cope with Senator Briggs’ ‘coalition of homosexual teachers and their allies’ without further legislative attention.”<sup>206</sup> Just thirteen months after he signed the state’s first ban on same-sex marriage into law, Governor Edmund “Jerry” Brown, Jr., spoke out against Proposition 6 by declaring that “the right to privacy is a very important protection, and I think it ought to be very vigorously enforced at all levels.”<sup>207</sup> Former governor, Ronald Reagan,

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<sup>204</sup> Frank Gells, letter, *San Jose Mercury*, 2 November 1978. In a column on the Briggs Initiative the *San Mateo Times* sited an unnamed opponent of the measure who declared: “This Law will require school boards to invade the privacy and threaten the careers of thousands of teachers and school personnel.” “Prop. 6 Deals with Hot Issue,” *San Mateo Times*, 9 October 1978.

<sup>205</sup> “The Dangers in Proposition 6,” *San Francisco Examiner*, 12 October 1978.

<sup>206</sup> “‘No’ on Briggs’ Proposition 6,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, 30 October 1978.

<sup>207</sup> “Prop. 6 Vote to Mark Milestone in Homosexual Controversy,” *The Register*, 27 October 1978.

alleged that the proposal had “the potential of infringing on basic rights of privacy, and perhaps even constitutional rights... Proposition 6 is not needed to protect our children.”

By the fall of 1978 a bipartisan consensus emerged in opposition to Briggs and Proposition 6. The newspaper editorials and statements from Reagan, and Brown gave voters who opposed homosexuality encouragement to vote against the measure. When Californians went to their ballots to decide the issue on November 7, 1978, they overwhelmingly rejected it. Approximately 3.9 million voters, or 58 percent of the total, opposed Proposition 6, while only 2.8 million, or 42 percent of the total, supported it.<sup>208</sup> Every major metropolitan area turned it down, including Briggs’s home district in Orange County. San Franciscans rejected it by a three to one margin, while voters in Santa Clara County defeated it by a narrower margin, with 53 percent of South Bay voters opposing it.<sup>209</sup>

## **Conclusion**

Histories of gay life in San Francisco have frequently chronicled the fight over the Briggs Initiative. Just two weeks after the vote, Dan White, another San Francisco supervisor, assassinated Harvey Milk, and almost all of the accounts of his life have portrayed the battle over Proposition 6 as the first openly gay politician’s most important achievement before his martyrdom on November 26<sup>th</sup>. Few historians of the New Right in California, however, have elaborated on the measure, preferring instead to leap over the disastrous proposal to narrate former Governor Ronald Reagan’s sweep into the White House two years later.

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<sup>208</sup> “Briggs to Try Antigay Move Again in 1980,” *Los Angeles Times*, 9 November 1978.

<sup>209</sup> “Briggs Crushed,” *Bay Area Reporter*, 9 November 1978.

The battles over the Briggs Initiative, however, reveal several deep tensions at the heart of America's "culture wars" of faith, family and sexuality. First, analyses of either the Religious Right or Gay Liberation alone miss the shared roots of both groups. The two social movements emerged in the 1970s as a result of pro-growth, government housing policies that simultaneously helped create inner city red-light districts, middle-class gay neighborhoods such as the Castro, and affluent "family friendly" communities on the metropolitan fringe. They stand as the two most significant offspring of an era in American political history in which straight sexuality became an active component of citizenship, and they both reflected a desire to create separate institutions capable of reforming the nation's laws and social mores. In the 1970s, mega-churches, such as the Los Gatos Christian Church, and gay-friendly congregations such as the Metropolitan Community Churches, both included some of the "fastest growing congregations" in the country.

Second, histories that pay undue attention to the Religious Right not only miss seeing the parallel evolution of Gay Liberation but also mis-categorize the majority of straight voters. Social conservatives in California, as in other major metropolitan areas around the country, are best seen as a social movement that stands in opposition not only to queer activists, but also groups of moderates that view figures, such as Anita Bryant as borderline fascists. Beginning in the 1970s most straight voters have expressed deep discomfort with open discussions of homosexuality, but they have also found the rhetoric of conservatives such as Briggs repellent. An analysis of Proposition 6 reveals that most heterosexual Californians struggled to occupy a middle ground between what they see as "discrimination" against gay men and lesbians and the complete acceptance of

homosexuality as a valid set of relationships equal to their own. Since the 1970s, straight voters have repeatedly supported laws to shield gay men and lesbians from vigilante violence, antidiscrimination protections in the workplace, and efforts to turn back repressive measures sponsored by the Religious Right, including the Briggs Initiative. These sympathetic heterosexual allies have tacitly endorsed the idea that the United States is a meritocratic, free society, and that government regulations should not override an individual's "right to privacy." The simultaneous desire of these voters to avoid "prejudice" and to keep people from "flaunting" their sexuality has imposed a difficult burden on both gay rights activists and social conservatives. Moderates might construe any policy towards sexuality as either a form of "discrimination" or an "endorsement" of homosexuality, and any social movement that tries to bring an issue to their attention must prove that it does not violate the "privacy" of any individuals involved.

And, third, the Briggs Initiative revealed a deep homophobia at the heart of straight Americans' conceptions of parenting. Both opponents and proponents of the measure believed that the state should help foster heterosexual relationships, and the two sides shared an understanding that if teachers could steer students towards gay sexuality that the government should prevent it. Many of the moderate straight voters who turned down the Briggs Initiative did so with the belief that individual sexual identities stemmed from biological or deep-seated psychological processes that role models could not alter by the time children entered school. Their willingness to oppose social conservatives rested entirely on the assumption that the shaping of sexual desire lay beyond their control, but if they could mold its development then the state would actually have an interest in banning gay teachers. In its editorial against Proposition 6, for example, the

*San Francisco Chronicle*, argued that “until such time as there is some evidence of a link between association with a person of homosexual tendencies and a development of homosexual tendencies on the part of children- and so far a link is merely *presumed* by Briggs... we take the position that the removal of the basic rights of homosexuals is a greater affront to the laws of this country.”<sup>210</sup> A sharp departure from the longstanding belief that teachers could unconsciously expose students to queer desires, the *Chronicle*’s editorial nevertheless reinforced the idea that the preservation of straight relationships lay within the realm of acceptable government action.

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<sup>210</sup> “‘No’ on Briggs’ Proposition 6,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, 20 October 1978.

## **Conclusion**

### **The Legacy of the Right to Privacy**

In the first decade of the new millennium, events in San Francisco appeared to reignite the nation's culture wars over gay rights. When the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court legalized same-sex marriage in November 2003, San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom boldly tested California's ban on the subject by presiding over the weddings of over 4,000 gay and lesbian couples. In the lead-up to the 2004 presidential election, his defiant move attracted national media attention and polarized many voters. *Newsweek* played off San Francisco's bohemian past, calling December 2003 the beginning of the "Winter of Love," and *People* magazine labeled Newsom's action "the moment that launched a thousand weddings."<sup>1</sup> Although some expressed concern about a straight backlash, many gay rights groups celebrated the San Francisco weddings, and in 2004, *The Advocate* made Newsom one of its "People of the Year."<sup>2</sup> Social conservatives condemned the move, with groups across the country pushing Congress and state legislatures to ban the practice.<sup>3</sup> Meanwhile, large numbers of straight voters offered an ambivalent response, appearing to simultaneously tolerate gay "civil unions" and rejecting the legalization of same-sex "marriage." In a letter to *USA Today*, New Yorker Marge McMillen asked: "Why should gays care what these unions are called...?"

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<sup>1</sup> "Outlaw Vows," *Newsweek*, 1 March 2004; "The Marrying Man," *People*, 29 March 2004.

<sup>2</sup> "People of the Year," *The Advocate*, 21 December 2004.

<sup>3</sup> "Voters in 10 of 11 States," Seen as Likely to Pass Bans on Same-Sex Marriage, *New York Times*, 23 September 2004.

Stop fighting over semantics and accept what has been offered. In private, consider yourself ‘married.’”<sup>4</sup>

In the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, the right to privacy dominated almost all political debates over sexuality and gay rights. In the wake of the 1970s, the concept framed subsequent discussions on the AIDS crisis, gays in the military, and same-sex marriage. As a tool for achieving equality, the “right to privacy” left queer activists with an ambivalent legacy. By the new millennium, many social conservatives accepted the notion that government officials should not investigate the sex lives of American citizens. Yet in most cases, politicians and voters deployed the discourse as a means to contain more radical claims to equality. During his 2004 re-election campaign, for example, Republican President George W. Bush told journalists: “What they do in the privacy of their house, consenting adults should be able to do. This is America. It’s a free society. But it doesn’t mean we have to redefine traditional marriage.”<sup>5</sup> Time and time again, voters and political figures have attempted to navigate a narrow course between persecuting and endorsing queer sex.

In the 1980s, the Reagan administration infamously suffered a crisis of leadership during the AIDS crisis out of fear that a large government response might give voters’ the illusion that federal officials were taking a soft stand on homosexuals and drug users. Almost twenty years after he blocked War on Poverty funding for Tenderloin activists in San Francisco, Reagan cut taxpayer support for the nation’s health centers early in his presidency and did not speak publicly about the crisis until 1987.<sup>6</sup> The White House’s slow reaction to the epidemic, in part, reflected a desire to appease religious

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<sup>4</sup> Marge McMillen, letter, *USA Today*, 19 February 2004.

<sup>5</sup> “Winning While Losing,” *New York Times*, 15 July 2004.

<sup>6</sup> Film, *The Age of AIDS, Part 1*, Frontline, 2006.



conservatives who had turned out in large numbers to vote for the President. It also, however, represented an attempt to develop a strategy that spoke to straight moderates, who disliked homosexuality and drug use but who did not approve of any policy that left Americans exposed to the lethal disease. In an internal White House document, socially conservative advisors Gary Bauer and John Klenk counseled the president to adopt a five-point sex education plan for the nation's students. The plan called for schools to develop curricula which "should *not* be neutral between heterosexual and homosexual sex. Homosexuals should not be persecuted- but heterosexual sex within marriage is what most Americans... consider the proper focus of human sexuality."<sup>7</sup> In 1987 President Reagan endorsed a federal plan to sponsor classroom-based sex education that stressed "responsible sexual behavior within marriage" and taught children to "avoid sex."<sup>8</sup> In that same year, the Senate passed an AIDS treatment bill by a wide margin that forbade local agencies from using national funds for outreach programs that could appear to endorse homosexuality.<sup>9</sup>

The federal government's response to the AIDS crisis compelled many gay rights groups to adopt strategies designed to signal to other Americans that gay men and lesbians could adhere to middle-class, "straight" norms.<sup>10</sup> In the early 1990s, organizations such as the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force and the Lambda Legal Defense Fund pressured newly elected President Bill Clinton to issue an executive order

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<sup>7</sup> John Klenk and Gary Bauer, memo, cited in Jennifer Brier, *Infectious Ideas: U.S. Political Response to the AIDS Crisis* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 92.

<sup>8</sup> "Reagan to Back AIDS Plan Calling for Nation's Youth to Avoid Sex," *New York Times*, 26 February 1987.

<sup>9</sup> Jesse Helms, letter, "Only Morality Will Effectively Prevent AIDS from Spreading," *New York Times*, 23 November 1987.

<sup>10</sup> For a critique of this strategy see Michael Warner, *The Trouble with Normal: Sex, Politics, and the Ethics of a Queer Life* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999).

overturning the military's ban on queer service personnel.<sup>11</sup> A national poll in 1992 indicated that while 80 percent of Americans believed gay men and lesbians should not suffer employment discrimination, only 38 percent called homosexuality "an acceptable lifestyle."<sup>12</sup> Facing pressure from religious conservative, military elites, and many centrist straight voters, Clinton adopted a compromise that spoke directly to moderates' belief in the "right to privacy." His "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy allowed gay men and lesbians to serve in the armed forces, so long as they did not publicly disclose their sexuality. Simultaneously denying that the government discriminated and applying two separate standards to queer and straight people, Clinton's strategy charted a middle course between advocating the dismissal of gay personnel and repealing the ban entirely.<sup>13</sup>

In the wake of the contentious debates over homosexuality and the military, liberal policymakers and intellectuals began arguing that endless discussions about gay rights needlessly divided voters, and that politicians, particularly those in the Democratic Party, might best serve the country by not mentioning them at all.<sup>14</sup> In 2004, for example, liberal historian Thomas Frank marveled at the seemingly everlasting and foolish nature of the culture wars, calling them an odd "species of derangement" on which the "entire social order rests."<sup>15</sup> In order to win national elections, Frank argued

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<sup>11</sup> "Gay Official has Look Of Apple Pie and the Outlook of a Revolutionary," *New York Times*, 24 April 1993

<sup>12</sup> "Difficult First Step," *New York Times*, 15 November 1992. See also "U.S. Split on Gay Life," *New York Times*, 5 March 1993.

<sup>13</sup> For more on the military's ban on gay service personnel see Aaron Belkin and Geoffrey Bateman, *Don't Ask, Don't Tell: Debating the Gay Ban in the Military* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Reiner Publishers, 2003).

<sup>14</sup> "Political Shifts on Gay Rights Lag Behind Culture," *New York Times*, 29 June 2009.

<sup>15</sup> Thomas Frank, *What's the Matter with Kansas? How Conservatives Won the Heart of America*, (New York: Basic Books, 2004), 3. For a book that similarly argues that liberals should abandon "divisive" cultural issues see Todd Gitlin, *The Twilight of Common Dreams: Why America is Wracked by Culture War* (New York: Holt, 1996).

that Democratic politicians should focus on the class-based issues such as health care or job creation that appeared to unite, rather than split, American voters. As groups of social conservatives sought to pass bans on gay marriage at the state and federal levels, even some gay organizations adopted an evasive language on the issue. Five months after Gavin Newsom presided over same-sex marriages in San Francisco, Matt Foreman, the executive director of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force notably avoided proposing that straight Americans should embrace the issue as civil right. Instead, he argued that social conservatives wasted their resources by trying to ban gay marriages, since “other issues are far more important to most Americans... like the economy, jobs, health care, the war in Iraq.”<sup>16</sup>

At the grassroots level, many straight voters have adopted similarly evasive attitudes towards issues like the military’s “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” policy and same-sex marriage. In the new millennium, older discourses about the “right to privacy” overlapped with new complaints that debates over sexuality distracted the electorate from the concerns that “rightfully” ought to concern them. In the wake of the legalization of same-sex marriage in Massachusetts, readers of popular magazines and newspapers offered numerous condemnations of gay activists, social conservatives, and occasionally the media for “manufacturing” conflict. In the lead up to the 2004 presidential election, Mark Fullerton from Mesa, Arizona told *Time* magazine: “It is time for the War on Terror, the economy, our kids’ future, and other priority issues to come to the forefront of the debate. Janet Jackson’s wardrobe malfunction [and] gay marriage... must take a backseat in the clowncar where they belong.”<sup>17</sup> When President George W. Bush spoke

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<sup>16</sup> “Backers of Gay Marriage Ban Find Tepid Support in Pews,” *New York Times*, 16 May 2004.

<sup>17</sup> Mark Fullerton, letter, *Time*, 29 March 2004.

out against same-sex marriage in a speech in 2006, Liz Eisenhauer from Maine sarcastically told *USA Today*: “[After the president’s address] I prioritized my list of national concerns. Homosexuality and marriage didn’t make the cut... Pick up any issue of the newspaper, and there are more pressing issues to be concerned with than who is sleeping with whom or who wants to get married.”<sup>18</sup>

This ambivalence reflects, in part, the enduring pressure from members of the Religious Right who have staked out the outer boundary of acceptable discourse on the issue. Since the 1970s, conservative activists have played an significant role in the Republican Party, affecting primary results and funding new candidates. Their mobilization has helped make explicitly antigay discourses an ongoing part of the country’s electoral process. In 1992, conservative speechwriter Patrick Buchanan urged the Republican National Convention to wage “cultural war” against Gay Liberation and Feminism, calling the struggle “as critical to the kind of nation we will one day be as was the Cold War itself.”<sup>19</sup> In the early twenty-first century, evangelical pastor and radio host James Dobson served as one of the most outspoken critics of same-sex marriage. In 2004, he pushed leading Republican officials to support a constitutional amendment banning the practice, and in that same year he launched a direct-mail campaign to over two million people to encourage voters to participate in local elections. In a letter to his supporters, Dobson warned: “The homosexual activist movement is poised to administer a devastating and fatal blow to the traditional family. And sadly, very few Christians in positions of responsibility are willing to use their influence to save it.”<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Liz Eisenhauer, letter, *USA Today*, 26 January 2006.

<sup>19</sup> Patrick Buchanan, Address to the 1992 Republican National Convention, 17 August 1992, <http://factonista.org/2008/12/20/pat-buchanans-culture-war-speech>. Last accessed 30 June 2010.

<sup>20</sup> “Conservatives Using Gay Unions as a Rallying Tool,” *New York Times*, 8 February 2004.

Conservative anti-gay rhetoric, however, has consistently met with an ambivalent or cool response from most straight Americans. In 1992, for example, *Time* magazine, called Buchanan's speech "family values in the bully's mode" and "an appeal to visceral prejudices not American ideals."<sup>21</sup> In 2004, *Time* columnist Joe Klein denounced James Dobson as an "oleaginous telecharlatan," even as he called for Democrats to speak more about "moral values."<sup>22</sup> A year later, the National PTA rejected the request of a conservative group that sought to sponsor an exhibit on helping parents overcome and treat homosexuality in their children at a national convention. By contrast, the PTA allowed P-FLAG to present a workshop about bullying at the same conference. The organization of parents and teachers justified its decision to exclude the conservative group by explaining: "From what we saw in the application, it seemed more of an agenda than a resource for parents."<sup>23</sup>

This moderate hostility to the Religious Right has often failed to translate into substantial policy changes, particularly in the nation's schools. In 2001, Human Rights Watch conducted a study of the American educational system and argued that authorities at all levels of government had condoned or supported entrenched social prejudice against queer youth. The organization concluded: "The social regime in most schools is unforgiving... [Students'] peers enforce the rules through harassment, ostracism, and violence. School officials condone this cruel dynamic through inaction or... because they, too, judge gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender youth to be undeserving of

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<sup>21</sup> "Family Values," *Time*, 31 August 1992.

<sup>22</sup> Joe Klein, "The Values Gap," *Time*, 22 November 2004.

<sup>23</sup> "The Battle Over Gay Teens," *Time*, 2 October 2005.

respect.”<sup>24</sup> Human Rights Watch observed that in most school-based sex education programs across the country, teachers either explicitly provided students with misleading information about queer sexuality or omitted discussions of it all together. In 2004 education officials in the South Bay suburb of Morgan Hill settled a 1.1 million dollar lawsuit filed by former middle school students, who alleged that teachers and administrators had failed to respond to reports of antigay harassment and violence. The outcome not only required the school district to pay damages to the plaintiffs, it also mandated that authorities teach pupils and employees about discrimination based on sexual orientation.<sup>25</sup>

The liberalization of the postwar closet, therefore, has left an ambivalent legacy for most queer Americans. The state’s slow response to the pressing demands of Gay Liberation has reflected the chronic unwillingness of most straight Americans to acknowledge a need to rectify past wrongs. Since the 1970s, the majority of straight voters have expressed tolerance for same-sex relationships but not full acceptance of them. In the wake of the federal government’s malignant neglect of the AIDS crisis, middle-class gay activists have increasingly sought to appeal to these moderates by making conservative claims to access mainstream American institutions, including the armed forces and marriage. President’s Clinton’s “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” policy and Californian’ legalization of same-sex “civil unions,” but not gay marriages, exemplifies the outer limits of straight “tolerance at the start of the twenty-first century. In both cases, public officials and voters simultaneously liberalized restrictions against homosexuality and reinscribed a boundary between queer and straight relationships.

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<sup>24</sup> Human Rights Watch, *Hatred in the Hallways: Violence and Discrimination Against Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Students in U.S. Schools*, (New York: Human Rights Watch, 2001), 174.

<sup>25</sup> “Schools Settle Gay-Bashing Suit,” *San Jose Mercury*, 7 January 2004.

The maintenance of this dividing line has been one of the defining features of straightness since the Second World War. Its persistence reflects the enduring role of the state and the sexual fragmentation of metropolitan space. Breaking it down will require affirmative steps, such as queer-friendly sex education in public schools and the repeal of laws governing the circulation of sex-related speech including pornography. It also will depend on the creation of new government institutions that take discrimination based on sexuality seriously and that address the needs of marginalized queer Americans. For almost six decades the state has supported straight sexuality, only a similar public effort can ameliorate past wrongs.

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Archdiocese Historical Records

Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, CA

California State Archives, Sacramento, CA  
Alcoholic Beverage Control Appeals Board  
Assembly Education Committee Records  
John V. Briggs Papers  
Commission of Credentials Records  
Department of Alcohol and Beverage Control Records  
Department of Education Records  
Department of Mental Hygiene Records  
Goodwin Knight Papers  
Earl Warren Papers  
Office of Economic Opportunity Records  
Santa Clara Unified School District Records

California State Library  
Santa Clara County Collection

Environmental Design Library, University of California, Berkeley, CA  
Rare Book Collection

Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Historical Society of Northern California, San Francisco, CA  
Don Lucas Papers  
Phylliss Lyon and Del Martin Papers  
Hank Wilson Papers

Glide Memorial Church  
Glide Memorial Church Archive

History San Jose, San Jose, CA  
*San Jose Mercury* clippings file  
Santa Clara County Board of Education Meeting Minutes

Institute of Governmental Studies, University of California, Berkeley, CA  
California and Local Public Documents Collection

San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library, San Francisco, CA  
George Christopher Papers



Second District PTA Records  
San Francisco Unified School District Records

San Jose Christian School, San Jose, CA  
San Jose Christian School Records

San Jose State University Special Collections and Soursisseau Academy for State and  
Local History  
Herbert C. Jones Papers  
Ted Sahl Papers

Santa Clara Council of Churches, San Jose, CA  
Santa Clara Council of Churches Historic Records

Santa Clara Public Library, Santa Clara, CA  
Heritage Pavilion/ Local History Collection

Sixth District Parent Teacher Association, Santa Clara County Board of Education  
Library, San Jose, CA  
Sixth District PTA Records

Stanford University Library Special Collections, Stanford University, Palo Alto, CA  
Margaret Meier Collection of Extreme Right Ephemeral Materials

Sunnyvale Public Library, Sunnyvale, CA  
Local History Collection

William Jessup University, Rocklin, CA  
San Jose Bible College Papers

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*America*  
*American School and University*  
*Anaheim Bulletin*  
*Architectural Record*  
*Aviation and Space Technology*  
*Bay Area Reporter*  
*Business Week*  
*California Parent Teacher*  
*California Real Estate Magazine*  
*California Journal of Secondary Education*  
*Catholic Educator*  
*Christian Century*  
*Christian Life*

*Christian Standard*  
*Clearing House*  
*Collier's*  
*Commonweal*  
*Educational Leadership*  
*Gay Sunshine*  
*Geographical Review*  
*House and Home*  
*Journal of the American Institute of Planners*  
*The Ladder*  
*Life*  
*Los Altos News and Guide*  
*Los Angeles Times*  
*Mattachine Review*  
*The Methodist Story*  
*Motive*  
*National Parent Teacher* (later *The PTA Magazine*)  
*New York Times*  
*Newsweek*  
*Orange County Register*  
*Parents' Magazine and Better Homemaking,*  
*Progressive Architecture*  
*San Francisco Call-Bulletin*  
*San Francisco Chronicle*  
*San Francisco Examiner*  
*San Jose Mercury*  
*San Jose News*  
*San Mateo Times*  
*Santa Clara Journal*  
*Saturday Evening Review*  
*Sunnyvale Daily Standard*  
*Sunset*  
*Time*  
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