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Another Mother for Peace

Reconsidering Maternalist Peace Rhetoric from an Historical Perspective, 1967-2007

This article explores the consequences of maternalist peace rhetoric in women's pacifist groups over the past four decades by juxtaposing a little known group from the Vietnam Era, Another Mother for Peace, against two contemporary examples, CODEPINK *and Cindy Sheehan. While Another Mother for Peace has been largely lost to history, it offers a cautionary example for the contemporary women's peace movement. The congruencies in all three examples' strategies and rhetoric highlight the ways in which maternalist peace rhetoric relies on extra-political activism and emotive arguments to advocate for peace. While motherhood may provide an emotionally resonate call for motivating female peace activists, it undercuts the political efficacy of women working to end war. Instead, I argue that a diffusion of identity-based differences and coalitions that bring together multiple impetuses for opposing war will better serve both the peace movement and female protesters.*

> The so-called power of wives and mothers … is only a *substitute* for power.… It really amounts to nothing politically, [and that] is the reason why all of us attending this funeral must bury traditional womanhood tonight. We must bury her in Arlington Cemetery, however crowded it is by now. For in Arlington Cemetery, our national monument to war, alongside Traditional Manhood, is her natural resting place. (Amatniek)

Kathy Amatniek proclaimed these words in a splinter demonstration that occurred during the Jeannette Rankin Brigade, a march by five thousand women on the Capitol in 1968 to present Congress with a petition to end the war in Vietnam (Rosen). The Brigade, the largest march by women since the last suffrage march in 1913, was organized by a fascinating coalition of historical

relics, such as the Women's International League of Peace and Freedom (1915), established organizations like Women Strike for Peace (1961), as well as newer associations like Another Mother for Peace (1967), and groups like Amatniek's just begin to coalesce into the women's movement.[1] While the March drew on women's traditional roles as wives and mothers to posit them as potential mourners of men lost in war, this small splinter group decried these passive stereotypes and instead called for women "to sacrifice your traditional female roles" (Firestone).

This schism in the Brigade reflected longstanding debates about how women could effectively influence foreign policy, by emphasizing their morally distinct position as reproducers of human life or by positioning themselves as citizens of the state (Abrams). The consequences of maternalist peace rhetoric in women's pacifist groups over the past four decades becomes clearer when one of the little known groups from the Vietnam Era, Another Mother for Peace, is juxtaposed against two contemporary examples, CODEPINK and Cindy Sheehan.[2] The congruencies in their strategies and rhetoric highlights the ways in which maternalist peace rhetoric relies on extra-political activism and emotive arguments to advocate for peace.

Ultimately, while motherhood provides an emotionally resonate call for motivating peace activists, it undercuts the political efficacy of women working to end war. Instead, following in recent analyses of the contemporary peace movement and feminist theories of the gendered citizen, I argue that a diffusion of identity-based differences and coalitions that bring together multiple impetuses for opposing war will better serve both the peace movement and female protesters.

Women and Peace

Although a complete historiography of women's peace activism is beyond the scope of this paper, a brief sketch of the connections between women and pacifism is necessary to contextualize my arguments. The linkage of women and pacifism has not always been an obvious one. For most of American history, religion motivated opposition to war. However, over the nineteenth century, as women became involved in reform movements such as temperance, abolition, and suffrage a "feminist-pacifist consciousness" emerged (Alonso 20). Although many female reformers were committed to principles of non-violence during the Civil War, "very few actually spoke out … against the war" as Harriet Alonso notes in her comprehensive history of women's peace efforts in the United States (41). The horrors of the Civil War and the large loss of life motivated women in the post bellum period to become more vocal in advocating an end to war.

One of the earliest and most explicit linkages of gender and pacifism in the United States occurred in 1870, when Julia Ward Howe published a Mother's Day Proclamation:

> Our sons shall not be taken from us to unlearn
> All that we have been able to teach them of charity, mercy and
> patience.
> We, the women of one country,
> Will be too tender of those of another country
> To allow our sons to be trained to injure theirs.
> (Poiner and Woods 297)

Howe's emphasis on Mother's Day as a day to pursue peace lasted for several decades until the necessities of World War I transformed the good mother into one who willingly sent her son off to defend his country (Zeiger). By World War II motherhood became not a rationale for peace, but a justification for war as soldiers fought for "mom and apple pie." During the Cold War, conservative women used motherhood as a justification for supporting aggressive American foreign policy, although groups like Women Strike for Peace successfully positioned themselves as mothers against the nuclear arms race (Swerdlow). Indeed, the cold war, with its familial rhetoric, backyard bomb shelters, and American way of life as the lynch pin of difference between democracy and communism, provided a unique moment in women's peace activism. Should women as good mothers defend their children from the communist menace or from the very government that purported to do that on their behalf? Into this breach stepped Another Mother for Peace. Founded after Women's Strike for Peace, and with a strikingly different trajectory, Another Mother for Peace was certainly the most obscure member of the coalition that created the Jeannette Rankin Brigade. It has been largely lost to history although it offers a cautionary example for the contemporary women's peace movement.[3]

Another Mother for Peace

In February of 1967, Barbara Avedon, a Hollywood television writer, invited fifteen women to her home to discuss how they could influence public opinion about the conflict in Vietnam. The result was Another Mother for Peace. Appropriately, the first project of Another Mother for Peace was an alternative Mother's Day card with a message that echoed Julia Ward Howe's Mother's Day Proclamation:

> For my Mother's Day gift this year,
> I don't want candy or flowers.
> I want an end to killing.
> We who have given life
> must be dedicated to preserving it.
> Please talk peace ("Mother's Day Card").

The women printed one thousand copies of this card to be sent to President

Johnson. A first printing quickly sold out, as did a second of 5,000. Eventually 200,000 cards were sold. The message of the card and indeed of Another Mother For Peace for its entire history privileged the maternal relationship, and tied it inexorably to an anti-war stance, as evidenced by the sentiment "[w]e who have given life must be dedicated to preserving it." The use of the collective "we" implied that all mothers had a vested interest in peace, an idea echoed in the name of the group, *Another* Mother for Peace which suggested the existence of other mothers already supporting the cause.

After its initial card campaign, Another Mother for Peace continued to capitalize on Mother's Day as a date for rallying women to the cause of peace. If the 1967 Mother's Day card echoed Howe's 1870 sentiments, her influence is even stronger in the Pax Materna, a pledge revealed at the 1969 Another Mother for Peace Mother's Day Assembly in Los Angeles ("Pax Materna").

> I join with my sisters in every land
> in the pax materna—
> a permanent declaration of peace
> that transcends our ideological differences.
> In the nuclear shadow, war is obsolete.
> I will no longer suffer it in silence
> nor sustain it by complicity.
> They shall not send my son
> to fight another mother's son.
> For now, forever, there is no mother
> who is enemy to another mother.

The credo, translated into seventeen languages, appeared on cards and posters distributed widely by Another Mother for Peace. While their original Mother's Day card spoke from the voice of the individual mother with a universal commitment to peace, the Pax Materna postulated motherhood as a transcendent bond. All mothers "suffer in silence" the fear of losing a son in war, and thus "there is no mother who is enemy to another mother." All mothers become not just supporters of peace, but potentially grieving mothers who must then pursue "a permanent declaration of peace."

In keeping with this essentially conservative message, Another Mother for Peace positioned itself as part of mainstream America. In an era dominated by public, and increasingly confrontational, demonstrations, Another Mother for Peace purposefully crafted an oppositional protest image. Avedon recalled that Another Mother for Peace wanted to emphasize to politicians that "we were not bearded, sandaled youths, wild-eyed radicals or dyed in the wool, old line freedom fighters" ("Primer"). Repeatedly Avedon stressed that the moral suasion of Another Mother for Peace supporters rested on that representation: "We wanted them [Congress] to know we would not be stowed away by any of the … clichés used to describe protesters at the time" ("Primer"). To do so,

Avedon argued, they needed “to change a little the image of the people who are opposed to the war” (“Peace by Christmas”). Thus Another Mother for Peace members were drawn from and depicted as the “nice lady next door” as Avedon so succinctly put it (“Peace by Christmas”).

This image drove Another Mother for Peace’s programming and strategies. Two stereotypes, the idealized housewife and Miss America, offered an iconic version of American womanhood who campaigned for peace. Celebrity members of Another Mother for Peace, Donna Reed, for whom Avedon had worked on her eponymous show, and Bess Myerson, former Miss America, were the most visible spokeswomen for the organization. Donna Reed became co-chair of Another Mother for Peace and Bess Myerson, then the commissioner of Consumer Affairs in New York City, headed up “You Don’t Have to Buy the War Mrs. Smith,” a consumer boycott launched in 1970 at the WORLD Mother’s Day assembly in San Francisco (Krieger). Mrs. Smith, the salutation Another Mother for Peace employed to address their prototypical member again points to Another Mother for Peace’s reliance on that mythical “nice lady next door.” Another Mother for Peace supporters were just American housewives, each anonymous and virtually interchangeable with any other. Who better to assuage their fears that Another Mother for Peace might verge into the radicalism of the feminist peace movement than Donna Reed and Bess Myerson, who represented all that Mrs. Smith aspired to be?[4]

Similarly, the best-known slogan of Another Mother for Peace, from the piece *Primer*, reflects this desire to mainstream the image of the war protester. The yellow poster featured a child like drawing of a flower along with the slogan “War is not healthy for children and other living things” in what appeared to be childish printing.[5] Created by Avedon’s friend Lorraine Schneider, *Primer* became one of the most famous political graphics of the anti-war era. *Primer* served as Schneider’s own “personal picket sign” and reflected her own anxieties about the possibility of her teenage son being drafted (Schneider). When considered as a recruiting tool for an activist organization, *Primer* becomes problematic. The slogan is profoundly vague. It names neither the war in Vietnam, nor mothers and instead focuses on the outcomes of war for children. The child-centered message of the piece is reflected in the way it was used. On posters, for example, a child and a medallion of *Primer* are fully shown, while the mother depicted is effectively decapitated with only her torso cradling the child. She is either everywoman or no one, depending on your perspective. Furthermore, at best the slogan worked by implication, and while that left a lot of room for different people to interpret it as they wanted, its vagueness reflects an aspect of Another Mother for Peace that hampered the organization’s effectiveness. What exactly was the viewer supposed to do with the irrefutable truth that war is not healthy for children or other living things?

In keeping with their image, throughout the late 1960s and early 1970s, Another Mother for Peace relied on the persuasive power of women. Calling women the “aye sayers,” they rallied their members to support “the men who

speak courageously against the war and for peaceful solutions" although it should be noted that the 90th congress (1967-1969) had eleven women in the House and one woman in the Senate (Another Mother for Peace, "Newsletter"). The many card campaigns conducted from inside individual women's homes fit perfectly with Another Mother for Peace's message that women's patriotic duty was simply to make their voices heard. However since women's "voices are gentle, …[they] must continue to speak in unison" ("Peace Card Kit"). An even stronger indicator of their belief in the persuasive power of women came in the form of letters addressed to the wives of political men. From 1969 until 1972, Another Mother for Peace mounted numerous letter-writing campaigns to congressional wives, for example, asking then of Congressional Hawks to convince their husbands to change their political positions. They also petitioned first ladies to exert their influence over presidential foreign policy and offered support to the wife of Daniel Ellsberg, who leaked the Pentagon Papers. They also launched a letter-writing campaign based on women's role as consumers aimed at companies that profited from the war in Vietnam (Bender). As Kreiger notes, in one of the few academic studies of the group, the failure of the group to focus on a single company or to mobilize a significant number of letter writers, hampered its effectiveness.

The one time Another Mother for Peace deviated from lobbying on the sidelines, they were not particularly successful. Rather than run themselves as peace candidates, Another Mother for Peace raised funds for male peace candidates via The Invest in Peace campaign launched in 1969. They did not seek big contributions, although many of the founders had connections to the wealthy Hollywood entertainment industry. Instead they asked supporters to send in one dollar a month to support candidates who opposed the war. A flyer about Invest in Peace included in the Another Mother for Peace newsletter offered a quote from a presumably representative member, "a mother in San Bernardino" who saved a little from her grocery budget to support the cause ("A Grand Total"). While that image fit well with their overall perception of who supported Another Mother for Peace, that mythical Mrs. Smith, it proved ineffective in actually influencing elections. The campaign raised only $53,000 by 1970 and that rather negligible amount was distributed among many candidates, further diluting its influence.[6]

While lobbying on the sidelines may not have rendered Another Mother for Peace particularly influential, although the founders were invited to testify before Congressional subcommittee hearings twice, their strategy of emphasizing women's position as mothers, as "gentle persuaders" and as "ladylike protesters" proved remarkably popular. By 1970 between over 400,000 people subscribed to its newsletter (Another Mother for Peace, "Finding Guide"). That number is the sole indicator of the group's size as it kept no membership records and refused to organize chapters or other local initiatives. In the early 1970s when the war in Vietnam began to wind down, the organization turned its attention to other political issues such as the impeachment of Nixon, and the arms race.

By 1979 it ceased daily operation although it continued to put out an annual Christmas newsletter. The group officially closed in 1986.[7]

CODEPINK

While at first glance, CODEPINK appears to be diametrically opposed to Another Mother for Peace, closer investigation reveals that while their image is radically different, their rhetoric and strategies are quite similar. CODEPINK, founded in 2002, describes itself as "a women-initiated … movement working to end the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan" ("About Us"). Despite the explanation that "[w]omen are not better or purer or more innately nurturing than men," CODEPINK's historicized explanation that "the men have busied themselves making war, so we are taking the lead for peace" makes little sense ("About Us") since women have supported wars, just as men have opposed them. However CODEPINK's website offers further insights into why the founders of the group believe that women support peace. This explanation rests on a connection between gender and pacifism that harkens back to the rationale for Another Mother for Peace.

> Because of our responsibility to the next generation, because of our own love for our families and communities, it is time we women devote ourselves — wholeheartedly — to the business of making peace. … we understand the love of a mother in Iraq for her children, and the driving desire of that child for life. ("About Us")

Despite efforts to eschew an essentialist position that equates "nurturing" i.e. motherhood, with womanhood, CODEPINK still relies on "our own love for our families" which leads to understanding "the love of a mother in Iraq for her children." Thus, maternalism, albeit a broadly construed love of all women "for the next generation" rather than individual women's love for their own sons, still plays a critical role in justifying women's peace activism (Simone). In her quantitative analysis of CODEPINK communications between 2004-2007, Cynthia Deitch argues that the maternalist frame has varied over time and never constituted more than a quarter of the CODEPINK communications; however, Kristen Goss and Michael Heane found that one third of the gendered symbols and metaphors in CODEPINK texts from 2002-2008 were maternal. In either case, the use of maternalistic rhetoric is still strong in CODEPINK official writings and, as Maria Simone has argued, is even stronger in the writings by members on the CODEPINK website.

Like Another Mother for Peace, CODEPINK also makes strategic use of Mother's Day to motivate supporters and garner attention for the cause. The group launched on Mothers Day in 2002. In 2006, CODEPINK began national commemorations of Mother's Day sponsoring a 24- hour vigil in Lafeyette Park across from the White House. The event's slogan "Declare Peace on Mother's

Day" could have been lifted from an Another Mother for Peace publication, as could the banner "Mothers say no to war" that stretched across the sidewalk in front of the White House. Both of these events, which included mothers as well as women without children, relied on a similar construction to that of Another Mother for Peace, all women as potential mothers oppose war.

Just like Another Mother for Peace, CODEPINK used Mother's Day to promote a peace pledge. In 2005, their version invoked Howe's legacy and recalled the *Pax Materna.*

> Now is the time to wake up the conscience of our nation. Now is the time to take seriously the words of Julia Ward Howe:
> *We women of one country will be too tender of those of another country to allow our sons to be trained to injure theirs. From the bosom of the devastated earth a voice goes up with our own. It says, "Disarm, Disarm!"*
> This Mother's Day, let's make Julia proud of us.
> (CODEPINK ALERT 4 May, 2005).
>
> Of the ten action ideas below, I pledge to pursue one of them during the coming year:
> 1. Educate myself about countries the U.S. government calls "Evil";
> 2. Pressure the media to be more truthful;
> 3. Become a more effective communicator/organizer;
> 4. Hold elected leaders accountable;
> 5. Help us kick our oil addiction;
> 6. Build your local peace coalition;
> 7. Support members of the military who are speaking out;
> 8. Protect civil liberties and oppose the backlash against immigrants;
> 9. Support the creation of a Department of Peace;
> 10. Teach Peace to Youth.
> (CODEPINK, "Take the Peace Pledge To Honor Mother's Day")

Some suggested activities rely on women's traditional roles, such as teaching youth and supporting members of the military, while others move women directly into the political realm: suggestion number eight presumably references *The Patriot Act*. Still other possibilities are so vague as to be meaningless, as in "help us kick our oil addiction." Particularly interesting is their ninth suggestion, to create a Department of Peace, which further connects them to Another Mother for Peace, which worked on the same cause during the Vietnam Era.

Like Another Mother for Peace, CODEPINK positions itself as a non-partisan group, as required by its nonprofit status. However, they also function, like Another Mother for Peace, as an essentially single-issue group, targeting elected officials solely based on their position on the current war. This tendency becomes most clear when examining a major conundrum for CODEPINK, consecutive female Secretaries of State, both of whom support the war in Iraq

and Afghanistan. While Condoleezza Rice and HillaryClinton represent the two major political parties, their backing for the war in Iraq and Afghanistan challenges the linkage of gender and peace. Interestingly, Clinton has been a larger target of CODEPINK, perhaps because she is a mother, or because she represents the more liberal presumably anti-war Democrats. Furthermore, the protests against Rice have been markedly gender free, with CODEPINK protesters interrupting her public appearances with shouts of "war criminal" ("Demand Accountability") or accusations that she "has blood on her hands" (Press Release). However, CODEPINK's Listen Hillary campaign, a protest begun during Clinton's senatorial tenure and continued during her reign as Secretary of State, reveals the slippage noted in the mission statement of CODEPINK, one that resists the idea of women as innately more pacifistic, while using that rhetoric at times. CODEPINK, for example, exhorted "Hillary don't Buy Bush's War" and at another event, demanded "Hillary Be a Woman for Peace" (DC Resistance Media). The slogan about "Bush's war" suggests that war belongs to the men alone, why not Rice's war, for example? Similarly, "be a woman for peace" implies that women should be for peace in the face of evidence to the contrary—all women, including Clinton, are not for peace. While CODEPINK has stopped short of implying Clinton is an uncaring mother because she does not support peace, they do use Clinton's long history as an advocate for children in their protests. For example, CODEPINK transforms the title of Clinton's book, *It Takes a Village And Other Lessons Children Teach Us*, into a taunting chant "It takes one bomb to raze a village" (Action Toolkit). As Maria Simone notes in an excellent analysis of CODEPINK rhetoric, the supporters of CODEPINK often express even more overtly essentialist positions. One woman, who titles her letter to Hillary on the CODEPINK Website, "Listen to What Women Want!" argues, "As a woman you have a mandate to create a way of doing politics differently. Mothers and Fathers are asking for the killing to stop and yet you continue to keep the end of this war off your agenda" (Silvestro).

While their protest strategies are similar, the image used by CODEPINK could not be more different than that of the respectable ladies of Another Mother for Peace. CODEPINK founders are self-styled "outrageous" women (Benjamin and Evans 233) and CODEPINK trades on the very ideas of femininity around which Another Mother for Peace formed their image (Simone). Although it plays off the color-coded terrorist alert system, the name CODEPINK also pokes fun at and simultaneously uses pink as the emblematic marker of womanhood. CODEPINK describes itself as a "feisty" organization that uses "love, humor and spirit" to confront "the warmongers" ("About Us"). While Another Mother for Peace relied on persuasive tactics, CODEPINK takes a disruptive approach, by engaging in "daring acts of public protest" and often adopting the very tactics of the youthful protesters so disdained by the founders of Another Mother for Peace. (Moghadam 83) In fact several of the original members of CODEPINK were themselves youthful protesters during the Vietnam Era. This disruptive "outrageous" approach leads CODEPINK to push familiar strategies of the women's

peace movement further. For example, while CODEPINK also uses the tactic of writing letters to wives of powerful men, it makes those personal letters public, trading on the transgressive notion of exposing something private. In 2006, CODEPINK participants attending the 2006 Mother's Day Vigil were asked to "write letters to Laura Bush to appeal to her own mother-heart, and read them aloud" (CODEPINK Alert 12 May, 2006). At other times, CODEPINK uses the very same strategies of the youthful protesters so disdained by Another Mother for Peace.

In particular they exploit the very gendered tropes that Another Mother for Peace used to craft their image. In CODEPINK's most infamous protest action, the pink slip relies on violating gendered stereotypes, and deploys a sly sarcasm as opposed to the earnest respectful voice employed by Another Mother for Peace. In these guerilla actions, CODEPINK supporters confront unsuspecting politicians and present them with a literal "pink slip," a "sexy bit of pink underwear" (Cockburn 64). At other times, CODEPINK has created giant banners in the shape of a slip, or supporters have appeared at demonstrations clad only in slips. While CODEPINK members do not have the power to fire these officials, as "the pink slip" represents, they can provoke embarrassment and garner attention for their opposition by violating gendered norms for public behavior through public display of undergarments. While Another Mother for Peace used Miss America to garner attention for their group, CODEPINK's tactics are more closely related to the protests of women's liberation groups who protested Miss America. While a bra was never burned publicly, the myth of the bra burner offered a telling lesson for the CODEPINK protesters. The more outrageous activism becomes, the more it risks becoming spectacle rather than powerful political protest, as I discuss in my conclusion.

Cindy Sheehan and Gold Star Parents for Peace

Cindy Sheehan emerged into the public arena at almost the same time as CODEPINK and has collaborated frequently with the group. Sheehan, whose son was killed in Iraq, gained widespread attention when she began protesting President George W. Bush's refusal to meet with her. Sheehan attracted numerous supporters and eventually co-founded the organization Gold Star Families for Peace in early 2005. While the use of families rather than mothers seems to imply a non-gendered approach, the group is virtually synonymous with Sheehan, who draws on her position as the mother of a dead soldier to protest the United States' involvement in Iraq.[9]

Like Another Mother for Peace and CODEPINK, Sheehan has made frequent use of Mother's Day to draw attention to her cause. The title of her 2006 essay, "A Perfect Mother's Day Gift," implies, just as Another Mother for Peace's card had decades earlier, that all mothers are pacifists who would love peace in lieu of a present for Mother's Day. In an essay "A Sad Mother's Day for Some" she uses her own situation to imagine all women as potentially grieving mothers,

just as Another Mother for Peace did in the *Pax Materna*.

> I have a feeling our mis-leaders … probably never even think about the moms in this world that their insanely reckless policies have destroyed. It never enters their wicked brains that they have ruined Mother's Day for so many families.

She demands "an end to the occupation of Iraq before too many more Cindy and Casey Sheehan's are produced" and proclaims "*We mothers and children of the world … demand that our government not … kill any chance for a peaceful world.*" The implication that "mothers and children of the world" will suffer most from the lack of "peaceful world" is repeated in the closing line of her appeal: "work with us in the months ahead as we build a movement of *mothers and others* powerful enough to stop this war—and the next one" (emphasis added). Thus while the language sounds inclusive, the event, on Mother's Day, and Sheehan's remarks in particular, privilege the position of the mother, and postulate all mothers as the grieving mother that she so powerfully represents.

Just like Another Mother for Peace and CODEPINK, Sheehan offers a peace pledge for her supporters that harkens back to Howe's legacy. Sheehan links Howe's "enduring legacy of Mother's Day" with contemporary efforts to end the war in Iraq and Afghanistan ("A Perfect Mother's Day Gift"). Sheehan asks her supporters to create another "Mother's Day of Peace" by signing another pledge, the Voters Pledge. She explains "This May 14th on Mother's Day, I am going to sign a Voters Pledge committing myself to not voting for any candidate who does not publicly vow to bring a rapid end to the Iraq occupation and to preventing future wars, like Iran" ("A Perfect Mother's Day Gift").

Although Sheehan's strategies for advocating peace are reminiscent of the tactics used by Another Mother for Peace, the image she uses to motivate supporters differs. While Another Mother for Peace members were meant to be "all nice ladies," distinct from the angry young anti-war protesters, Sheehan is most almost always pictured wearing jeans and a t-shirt, which over the decades that separate her from Another Mother for Peace has ceased to be the uniform of young people and has become accepted garb for the soccer mom set ("Not One More"). In this way, Sheehan represents herself a kind of everywoman, a self-described "'normal' mom" whose life transformed her (Peace Mom xi). As Sue Grand notes in her analysis of Sheehan "she was no one … and then, in her vigil, she became every soldier's Mother" (60).

Still, while the image of Sheehan might be different than the hatted and begloved ladies of Another Mother for Peace, she relies on a similar strategy to recruit mothers, appealing to them as potentially grieving mothers themselves. In a 2005 essay, Sheehan describes her supporters as "a mom (I always think of the moms first) shopping for groceries, driving home from a long week of work, or maybe even planning her soldier's homecoming party" ("Name Withheld, Pending Notification" 20). This hypothetical mom is like Sheehan, just

going about her daily life, but is compelled to get involved in politics due to her love for her child.

Despite her reliance on the "ordinary mom" trope, Sheehan frequently violates gendered expectations for public discourse. While Another Mother for Peace offered respectful critiques, and CODEPINK attempts "humor and love," Sheehan often speaks in a highly confrontational, angry or sarcastic voice, which becomes most clear in her use of the open letter. The idea of the open letter was familiar to 1960s protesters from Martin Luther King, Jr.'s use in the civil rights movement, but Sheehan single-handedly revived the tactic of the open letter and has used it most effectively in the current peace movement. While her most famous letter was to the President himself, she has authored additional letters to his female relatives, recalling the efforts of Another Mother for Peace. In an "Open Letter to George Bush's Mama" she addresses her "mother to mother" and asks her "Can you make him stop? Do it before more mothers' lives are needlessly and cruelly harmed" (80). In a letter to his wife, Laura Bush, Sheehan pointedly asks:

> Can you feel the cries of the mothers around the world in your soul, Laura? … We mothers of sons and daughters ask you to look into your mother's heart and urge George to step down for peace and for the mothers of the world. ("Open letter to the wife of the 'President'")

Sheehan's open letters recall the "outrageousness" of CODEPINK, but there is no spectacle. Instead, the intense pathos of her appeals comes through as she begs powerful women to aid the cause of peace by pressuring their spouses and sons.

Like CODEPINK Sheehan must grapple with female politicians who support the war, and she does so by using the formula of a mother asking a mother for help. In an open letter to Hillary Clinton during her bid for the presidency, Sheehan writes "As a mom, as an American, as a patriot: I implore you to have the strength and courage to lead the fight for peace. … I want to support you, I want to work for you, but like many American moms, I will resist your candidacy with every bit of my power and strength unless you show us the wisdom it takes to be a truly great leader." Sheehan has argued that Clinton's gender should make her anti-war: "I think she needs to say I don't have to act like a man to be a good leader.… She needs to act like a woman and be against the war" (Thrush). Sheehan counters the expectation that she as a woman will support the female candidate for president, with a similarly unwarranted expectation, that mothers will support peace. Sheehan takes the notion of women speaking in gentle murmurs of dissent and blows it wide open. There is no pretense to a private letter read aloud in public as in the CODEPINK effort. Sheehan harnesses the power of the epistolary format to speak from personal experience, but the letters are clearly crafted and meant for public dissemination.

Similarly, Sheehan has taken a far more confrontational position on partisan politics. Unlike CODEPINK and Another Mother for Peace, Sheehan has entered directly into the political fray. She has moved from intense anger at politicians to an actual bid for elected office by challenging Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi for her seat in Congress. These increasingly intense attacks at politicians that at times spills over into vitriol is as likely to provoke outrage as it is sympathy. She has come a long way from the "gentle persuaders" of Another Mother for Peace and not surprisingly, Sheehan has faced far more criticism than their supporters, who worked quietly from the home. As Meghan Gibbons notes, the power of the protesting mother relies on her distinctive position outside the world of politics. Sheehan was untouchable so long as she remained the grieving mother, however once she delved into partisan politics, she became a target, not for her position on the war in Vietnam, but because she dared take a position at all. Her argument that, as Casey's mom, she was well-qualified to speak on his behalf, incensed her critics who transformed the debate into one not about U.S. foreign policy, but about the appropriate behavior of a (good) grieving mother, as I discuss further in my conclusion.

The Motherhood Problem

In the remainder of this essay I want to sketch out, albeit briefly, the major lessons to be learned from the past forty years of maternalist peace activism and make some suggestions for future organizers. Patrice DiQuinzio has explored in far greater depth than I can here, the ways in which gendered concepts of the citizen and essentialist constructions of motherhood hamper women's ability to protest as mothers. She notes that the political subject is construed "in terms consistent with traditional western conceptions of masculinity" (xii) and that an anti-individualist "essential motherhood," which depicts all women as natural and inevitable mothers and "articulates femininity in terms of motherhood" (xiii) is central to conceptions of western femininity. When combined with the prevalent western split between public and private lives, Sharon Meagher and Patrice DiQuinzio argue that "the exclusion of women from the pubic sphere … follows from abstract individualism and essential motherhood" (4). Thus female social activists enter the fray already burdened with a long ideological legacy working against them. When they attempt to harness some of the aspects of essential motherhood, as outlined above for three examples of peace activism, they are hampered even further.

Although a complete analysis of press coverage is beyond the scope of this paper, a short exploration of the treatment of the three examples offers some insights into the consequences of maternalist activism for the peace movement. Using the crudest form of measurement, how many articles appeared in three major news outlets, the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post* and the *Wall Street Journal*, important aspects of media treatment of dissident groups dovetails

with gendered protest groups to create a telling picture. For Another Mother for Peace, which hewed most closely to the ideals of essentialist motherhood, the consequence was "mass media disregard" as Jules Boykoff terms it, in *Beyond Bullets: The Suppression of Dissent in the United States* (247). The group was quite literally treated as not newsworthy, as the small number of articles in major news outlets reflects. Extensive press coverage of Another Mother for Peace was limited to the local Beverly Hills and minor Los Angeles papers. For the most part, it was the entertainment industry connections that garnered Another Mother for Peace activities press. Instead, the major media outlets covered the more controversial demonstrations of the young protesters, rather than the anonymous, emotionally laden letter-writing campaigns and Mother's Day conventions of Another Mother for Peace.

For CODEPINK, the strategy of violating the prescriptive femininity inherent to essential motherhood has yielded mixed results. While some scholars have celebrated CODEPINK for being "famous, or infamous, for pulling off surprisingly daring deeds," Boykoff's analysis of coverage of CODEPINK offers a cautionary tale about relying on "that invigorating combination of sugar and spice." As Boykoff outlines, over the course of its history CODEPINK has moved from the front page to coverage in the style section, the modern version of the "woman's page" (258). Its laudable efforts to aid the cause of women in Iraq and Afghanistan are lost in the "giant pink slips" and "bloody hands" of its better-known protests. Finally, their audacious behavior may have had an unintended consequence of reifying gendered notions of the citizen by showing women relying on emotions to protest war, as occurred on their annual mother's day events, their public appeals to First Ladies, and their gendered attacks on female politicians.

Finally Sheehan, who proved most successful at attracting press coverage, suffers from yet another of Boykoff's media tendencies, personalization. As Boykoff notes, the mainstream press likes "to personalize social issues, focusing on the individual claims-makers" rather than "concentrating on power, context, and process" (250). Sheehan has attracted considerable scholarly attention, which supports Boykoff's contention. While initially Sheehan successfully used the media frame of motherhood to attract attention, when she violated the tenets of essential motherhood, becoming increasingly political in her attacks and ultimately engaging in partisan politics, she became a political target herself. These attacks, however, did not focus on Sheehan's foreign policy objectives, but rather as Laura Knudson argues "Sheehan's antiwar activism—conflated as it was with her motherhood—… [was] attacked and invalidated by attacking her mothering and thereby invalidating her status as a good mother" (167). Public opinion polling on Sheehan reveals the consequences of this public debate about her. Following her well-publicized encampment in Crawford, Texas, Sheehan enjoyed approval ratings of 31 percent in September of 2005. By the summer of 2007, after she attacked politicians directly on both sides of the aisle and publically discussed plans to run for office, her ratings dropped

to 21 percent, despite decreased public support for her cause, ending the war in Iraq *(Rasmussen Report).*

Where then does this leave the female anti-war protester? The maternal relationship is a powerful and resonate one. However as I have endeavored to explain here, history cautions that it must be deployed strategically. As Myra Marx Ferree has argued, existing discourses limit the choices social movements have in framing their dissent. In the late nineteenth century Howe's maternalist activism worked. By the time of the Vietnam war, however, changing social norms, evolving gender roles and new social movement tactics meant that understandings of motherhood had changed as well. In the 1960s the options were fairly stark. Women could embrace an emerging feminist identity represented by the activist New Left movements, as Women Strike for Peace and Women's International League of Peace and Freedom eventually did, or they could cleave to older ideas of womanhood, which Another Mother for Peace did. What proved effective for Women Strike for Peace just years earlier in the anti-nuclear movement—respectable mothers protesting—went relatively unnoticed. At the very least, Another Mother for Peace and other maternalist activists of that era helped "to bring to light the totality of war, that is, the pervasiveness of its impact" (Moon 171). Similarly, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, the changed status of women contextualized the linkage of gender and peace. As the second war in the Gulf broke out, the presence of mothers voluntarily serving in the military in combat areas and female politicians who supported war offered a powerful counterpoint to arguments of essential motherhood. When groups like CODEPINK or individuals like Cindy Sheehan attempted to make use of gender, the tactic could frequently lead to dismissal or backlash.

As Lynne Woehrle, Patrick Coy, and Gregory Maney have noted in their recent analysis of identity based peace movements, the contemporary women's peace movement has attempted to leverage women's outsider position in the political sphere in order to "challenge traditional stereotypes of women's social role and to further construct women as offering an approach to foreign policy … because they are insightful and politically adept." (127) However, when that "outsider" position is combined with emotive and sometimes personalized appeals, it can be easily misunderstood or misconstrued. The personal voice risks being misheard as individualized expression of emotion. It threatens to push the debate about foreign policy deep into the realm of the emotional, which is not acceptable in American political discourse. Male politicians who express extreme emotion suffer dire consequences, recall Howard Dean's rapid fall after his well-publicized outburst (Woehrle, Coy, and Maney 77). However, the combination of emotion plus femininity yields even more disastrous political results because women are seen as protesting, not from a position of realpolitik, but out of fear and anxiety. Historically, women's exclusion from politics rested on a belief in women's innate characteristics, such as emotionality, which rendered them too irrational. When women invoke the bonds of woman-

hood, when they speak from their personal grief, even when they read protest letters in public, they do not become politically efficacious acts. These forms of extra-political activism and emotive arguments run the risk of reinforcing a limited conception of women's participation in the public sphere and reifying the notion that women's true influence lies in persuading men. Instead they reinscribe women's position as firmly on the margins of the political.

Peace activists must consider the best ways to utilize gender as a strategy. Ironically it may be emotionality that helps women's peace groups to recruit large numbers of supporters and perhaps provides the greatest meaning for participants. As Woehrle, Coy, and Maney suggest "there is meaning and even satisfaction in honoring one's principles" in social movements (121). In a society where the majority of women bear children, focusing on the maternal relationship may make peace work significant to many women. How then can motherhood be recouped for the peace movement? DiQuinzio ends her discussion of how the Million Mom March reaffirmed notions of essentialist motherhood by pointing out that for some women emotionality becomes a springboard to analyses of power. She argues that "the possibility of transforming emotion along these lines suggests a connection of emotion and reason that individualism does not recognize" and suggests that it is worth "considering how reason and emotion, knowledge and passion, self and other, agency and power, are thoroughly connected" (243). In their study of the Million Mom March and CODEPINK, Goss and Heany offer a combination of maternal, equality, and expressive feminist strategies as a potential resoluton for the "historic tensions between maternalism and egalitarianism" (27). In her discussion of contemporary women's anti-war activism, Rachel Kutz-Flamenbaum suggests "critiquing the relationship between militarism and patriarchy" to better "integrate gender into popular representations of the anti-war movement" (90).

Focusing not on the human relationships, but on the ideological relationships that underpin war, which are not limited to patriarchy, may be the greatest lesson to be learned from the examples discussed here. By shifting the focus from gender to power, female peace activists may arrive at a "diffusion of identity discourses across the movement [which] may in time help shape a peace movement that can appeal to a broader base of society" (Woehrle, Coy, and Maney 138). Cynthia Cockburn's ambitious work, which examines women in twelve different countries, attempts to do just that by integrating race, class and gender in her analysis of the relationship between "war, women's activism and feminist analysis," to quote the subtitle of her book. That will however require a careful parsing between "women's activism and activism *for* women" as Judith Stadtman Tucker notes in her case for "a distinction between women's coordinated efforts to wage peace or promote the general welfare and feminist activism."

If women use motherhood to mobilize their supporters against war, then they need to blunt the gendered aspects of this appeal by creating coalitions with others who oppose war for political, religious, economic or other reasons.

Furthermore, these maternalist groups should eschew the usage of the mother voice as a public rationale for opposing war, as that personalization of a political issue will ultimately work to their detriment. While leveraging a position, that of the grieving or potentially grieving mother, maternalist peace activists should make clear that war is opposed for multiple reasons, not only because an individual mother's child may die.

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[1]Rankin, the first woman elected to Congress, was the only person to vote against U.S. involvement in both World Wars.
[2]The most elaborate theoretical exploration of maternalism and pacificism is Sara Ruddick's now classic *Maternal Thinking.* Cynthia Enloe's seminal work on women and militarization, which explores various female tropes includes the military wife, but not the military mother. Micaela Di Leonardo charts the relationship of the "Moral Mother" to various threads of scholarship about women and war concluding that the trope has proven a double-edged sword for activists. Ruth Rosen similarly explores the consequences of maternalism from Vietnam through the 1980s. For an excellent recent review, see Abrams.
[3]Overviews of women's peace activism include a few descriptive sentences about Another Mother for Peace (Alonso). Ironically, this erasure of Another Mother for Peace in the historical record mirrors its invisibility during the 1960s. As Elisabeth Armstrong and Vijay Prashad note, young activists overlooked concurrent examples of women's anti-war organizing by older women. For a recent review of literature about women in the Vietnam-era peace movement, see Schneidhorst.
[4]The irony was that Reed was not a housewife but a television star portraying a housewife. Furthermore, she was unusual in Hollywood as a woman who controlled her own television show. Similarly, Myerson was the first and to date only Jewish Miss America.
[5]Due to copyright restrictions the image cannot be reprinted in this article. It can be seen at <www.anothermother.org>.
[6]Because the FEC was not established until 1975 it is difficult to find data about expenditures in congressional elections during this time period. However, according to data collected by the Campaign Finance Institute, in 1974 the mean expenditure for a Congressional race was around $53,000 and a successful challenger needed around $100,000.
[7]In 2003 the children of the original Another Mother for Peace founders revived the group to protest the war in Iraq and to protect the copyright of *Primer*. In one of the more interesting confluences of history, like Sheehan and CODEPINK they also asked supporters to write letters to Laura Bush, but still relied on the private, pre-scripted letter strategy of their mothers.

[8]According to Sheehan, jealousy at her prominence led to the demise of the group (*Peace Mom* 91-92).
[9]I selected the *New York Times* as the most standard liberal paper of record, the *Wall Street Journal* as the most conservative newspaper of record and the *Washington Post* as the largest newspaper in the Capitol where many of the anti-war protests occurred. Using Lexis Nexus for the period 1967 to 2007 yielded the results summarized in the table below:

	New York Times	**Washington Post**	**Wall Street Journal**
Another Mother for Peace	10	6	1
CODEPINK	47	20	11
Cindy Sheehan	172	175	38

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Another Mother for Peace. Finding Aid. Swarthmore College Peace Collection, Records of Another Mother for Peace Collection.

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LEIGH HERRICK

child of the

child of the missing limb   the heart of
of the world now missing   the child
of the missing garden   the roots of the child
now missing the child of the river
running
the child of the river   broken into sides
into banks   into nightmares the child cannot
                                                            climb

who says
            now i can't sleep   i try to forget
            i have such difficulty feeling anymore

who is the child of misvisions   who knows
bombs among spring flowers   who is the powerless
child of wishes   of fathers   of mothers
of wanting warm-and-safe-at-home   not
the child of the burning cloud   not
the child of mistrials or freely the large stone
flung one afternoon when thought was simple and
looking up there was only blue   no   no stone

nothing thrown or born into the heart of the child
who forgot the sound of laughter
who remembers friends
who says which live
             which are dead
who says
            i am speaking to you   will the waiting be long?

Italicized lines are from a 1993 UNICEF publication, I Dream of Peace: Images of War by the Children of Former Yugoslavia*, and are used with permission.*