

# *Beyond the Fence*

## Family Values Since the 1960s

**A Junior Thesis by Michael Clinton**



# Table of Contents

<b>Table of Contents</b>	<b>1</b>
Introduction	2
<b>Definitions and Literature Review</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>History of the Counterculture</b>	<b>8</b>
Patriarchy and Gender Roles	10
Herbert Marcuse, Critical Theory, and the New Left	10
<b>Relativism and Allan Bloom</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Abortion, Contraception, and the Sexual Revolution</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Marriage</b>	<b>17</b>
Same-Sex Marriage	18
<b>Evaluation</b>	<b>19</b>
Feminism	19
Critical Theory	21
Moral Relativism	22
Abortion and Contraception	23
The Homosexual Movement	24
Same-Sex Marriage	26
Final Evaluation — Evaluation of the Counterculture	26
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>27</b>
References	29

## Introduction

Have you ever heard of “Chesterton’s fence?” The metaphor is commonly quoted as, “Don’t ever take a fence down until you know the reason why it was put up.” However, this was not said by the notable English author G.K. Chesterton himself but rather found in a notebook belonging to John F. Kennedy. The actual quotation comes from Chesterton’s 1929 book, *The Thing*:

There exists ... a certain institution or law; let us say, for the sake of simplicity, a fence or gate erected across a road. The more modern type of reformer goes gaily up to it and says, “I don’t see the use of this; let us clear it away.” To which the more intelligent type of reformer will do well to answer: “If you don’t see the use of it, I certainly won’t let you clear it away. Go away and think. Then, when you can come back and tell me that you do see the use of it, I may allow you to destroy it. (Schluenderfritz & Schluenderfritz 2020)

In the context of this thesis, the fence may represent certain unquestioned ideas about civil society and the role of the family in it, which should not be removed or attacked without reason. Chesterton warns that even well-meaning reformers can cause disastrous outcomes. In the United States, a significant example of this occurred during the counterculture of the 1960s. Many desired to bring about change to traditions that were commonplace in past times. As Mary Eberstadt, an American writer who has published several works in *TIME*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *The National Review*, says, referring to the Sexual Revolution:<sup>1</sup> “Apart from the internet, it is hard to name any other single phenomenon since the 1960s that has reshaped the human race around the planet more profoundly than this metamorphosis” (Eberstadt 31, 2023). The counterculturalists may have been motivated by good intentions; however, good intentions

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<sup>1</sup> The Sexual Revolution was a component of the counterculture of the 1960s characterized by widespread, novel, libertine sexual attitudes. Several events which pertain to the Sexual Revolution are the advent of the contraceptive pill, the Woodstock Festival, and the Summer of Love.

alone can yield negative consequences in any activity.<sup>2</sup> This is especially true when it comes to serious ones like cultural revolutions. One of the institutions the counterculture greatly affected was the American family. The family and the values traditionally associated with it were significantly impacted. Abortion, contraceptives, and many other practices started to become commonplace following the rise of the counterculture. This caused a considerable amount of controversy. Thus, it is important to ask several questions when evaluating the counterculture's effects on American family values. Does the counterculture have a significant impact on debates surrounding traditional family values in the 2020s? Has it positively or negatively impacted the American family? More specifically, did it give people increased freedom to form the kind of families that would benefit them, or did it plunge the family into a state of disarray? My purpose in searching for answers to these questions is to introduce a perspective cautioning against radicalism and to bring awareness to the origins of the recent corrosion of the American family. My research indicates that the counterculture of the 1960s has affected the health and stability of the modern family in the United States in profoundly negative ways. In this thesis, I argue that various problems plaguing the American family today have their roots in the 1960s counterculture and the ideology that fostered it.

## Definitions and Literature Review

In order to inform you about the evolution of American family norms in the latter half of the twentieth century, I must first review several pieces of literature. They explain: 1) how the

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<sup>2</sup> "The road to hell is paved with good intentions" has been a popular proverb used in both literature and speech cautioning against acting solely on the purpose of good intentions, as it is bound to have unintended consequences (Manser 2007, 234)

counterculture came to be; 2) who, in the main, instigated the counterculture; 3) American family life before, during, and after the counterculture; 4) the effects of the counterculture on American family life; and finally, 5) what American family life is and ought to be. On the basis of the literature I review here, I will proceed to explain both how the counterculture has influenced the family today and why those influences are largely negative. My argument will shed light on the roots of the current social division in our country and caution against the further dismantling of our country's moral fabric.

Allow me to first define the counterculture in a concise way: the counterculture of the sixties was a radical social movement that began in America following the Second World War.



More specifically, it opposed traditional Western culture, a way of life that had been tested and upheld by many prior generations. This traditional culture upheld traditional values, a set of values which upheld the social mores of the time including religious

adherence, patriotism, awareness of social structures and hierarchies (*e.g.*, masculinity, femininity, respect for one's forefathers), and lastly family values.

When many think of the counterculture of the 1960s, they think of hippies, Vietnam War protests, civil rights activists, the Beatles, and New Age practices. While they were popular at the time, many of these movements (*i.e.*, the civil rights movement, Vietnam War, drug usage, etc.) are outside the scope of my thesis. On the other hand, movements such as the Sexual Revolution and Second-wave feminism had far-reaching impacts on the American family. Such

transformative movements led to the slow dissolution of traditional family values, or so I will argue.

I have said that these issues impacted American family values, but what exactly are family values? Family values consist of a set of traditional notions of duty and responsibility among parents and children. Certain Christian principles, the sanctity of marriage, the promotion of the nuclear family, gender roles, and responsible actions for child-rearing are all family values. The smallest unit of family life is the nuclear family. The “nuclear” in “nuclear family,” derives from the Latin noun *nucleus* which means “basic or essential part” (Merriam-Webster). Thus, the nuclear family comprises a mother, a father, and one or more children. This contrasts with the extended family, which consists of more distant relatives than parents and children. It also contrasts with the “family of choice,” a non-biological support-group which one chooses to serve *in loco parentis*. The legal, and traditionally religious, contract that binds the two parents together is the institution of marriage.

Among other features of the counterculture, I will argue that several intellectual phenomena contributed above all to the decline of family values: Critical Theory, relativism, and the Sexual Revolution. The *Closing of the American Mind* explains relativism and its role in the 1960s. Written by Allan Bloom in 1987, this profound study examines the novel attitudes of students in higher education. Students were, and still are, vital in the continuation of ideas and belief systems, as they are the next generation of leaders and thinkers. Therefore, gaining and maintaining control over the education system, especially higher education, proved to be vitally important to the 1960s counterculture activists. Once an unconventional belief, relativism now influences American social life and has done so ever since the counterculture. Relativism postulates that morality is not absolute but rather a matter of one’s personal or group values. It

claims that ideas of right and wrong vary across many cultures and nations, so that it would not be fair to make one moral assertion over another.

Relativism is incompatible with Christianity, which affirms moral absolutes. This is seen as self-evident in John 14:6: “Jesus said... ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.’” Christianity has been the most prominent organized religion in the United States ever since its founding.<sup>3</sup> However, since the late 1960s, religious affiliation started to decrease, as there was an increase of “nones” (people not identifying with any organized religion). According to a Gallup Poll conducted in 2022, the amount of Americans with no religious identification has risen and only continues to rise. In 1950, the amount of nones was less than zero percent; however, in 2022, the amount of nones amounted to 21%. The trend of the rising nones began in the mid to late 1960s. I will further elaborate on the religious decline and its effect on family values in the evaluation section of my thesis, because I combine my evaluation with the Biblical view of the family.

Like relativism, feminism and the sexual revolution have also affected American culture in a multitude of ways. Mary Eberstadt has researched this topic extensively and written several books on it, including *Adam and Eve After the Pill* and *Primal Screams*. At a lecture given at Hillsdale College in 2018, Eberstadt elaborates on several of the paradoxes of the Sexual Revolution. Proponents of the Sexual Revolution argued that contraception would lead to fewer abortions and unwanted pregnancies happening nationwide; however, that did not happen. Eberstadt connects support for contraceptives with support for abortion by analyzing the consequences of both. I will further elaborate Eberstadt’s points later in the thesis.

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<sup>3</sup> Although it has faced decline over several decades, Christianity is still the most popular religion with denominations of Protestantism (43%), Catholicism (19%), Mormonism (2%), and Orthodox Christianity (>1%). Other religions include Judaism (2%), Islam (1%), Hinduism (1%), and “other” (3%) (Pew Research Center 2019-20).

Another staple of the counterculture was Critical Theory, which criticized any traditions that it saw as “problematic.” Critical Theory, which has its roots in Marxism,<sup>4</sup> was a belief system that interpreted tradition as a means of upholding oppression and slavery. Thus, Critical Theorists desire to emancipate all “oppressed” people from what they see as enslavement. Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy states that critical theory is unique, as “it seeks human ‘emancipation from slavery’, acts as a ‘liberating ... influence,’ and works ‘to create a world which satisfies the needs and powers of’ human beings (Horkheimer 1972b [1992, 246])” (2005). However, it is unspecified what is meant by liberation and by slavery. This ambiguity only provides a self-serving definition for the Critical Theorists. While all ideologies will inevitably seek to present their ideas in the best light possible, this overtly tendentious definition disguises what Critical Theory *actually* stands for. Critical Theory was propagated by well-known German-American philosopher Herbert Marcuse. Marcuse was credited with being the “father of the New Left” and for good reason. Douglas Kellner, a professor at University of California, Los Angeles says that Marcuse

sketched the outlines of a non-repressive civilization which would involve libidinal and non-alienated labor, play, free and open sexuality, and production of a society and culture which would further freedom and happiness. His vision of liberation anticipated many of the values of the 1960s counterculture and helped Marcuse to become a major intellectual and political influence during that decade. (Kellner 391, 1999)

The significance of Critical Theory to the American family is evident. The idea of open sexuality, sought by Marcuse himself, is not compatible with family life. For example, the

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<sup>4</sup> Marxism is a doctrine created by Karl Marx which advocated for the dismantling of traditions held by a certain regime through violent means. Such traditions include law, morality, and religion, which he called an opium of the masses (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2023). The 1960s counterculture has a plenitude of parallels to Marxist ideology such as the disregard of religion and morality.



responsibility and loyalty needed to uphold a stable nuclear family are best supported by a monogamous marriage, while “open-sexuality” encourages promiscuity and licentious behavior.

## History of the Counterculture

The counterculture of the 1960s was a complicated phenomenon, so tracing a complete history of it would be an arduous undertaking. My thesis will be primarily focused on understanding certain ideas that came to prominence in the sixties and the way those ideas affected subsequent political developments. Nevertheless, a few key historical events can help provide us with a better understanding of and context for the movement. Ideas simply do not arise in a vacuum. Certain ideas are more likely to be accepted in certain cultural environments. Thus, it is useful to have a historical context for the ideas that were promoted in the counterculture.

The following are various historical events taking place in the sixties and seventies that provide more context for the counterculture’s various effects on the family. In 1960, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved “the pill,” a contraceptive pill with a 99% efficacy rate. This means of birth control would allow people to engage in sexual intercourse without having to confront a major consequence, pregnancy. On February 19, 1963, Betty Friedan published *The Feminine Mystique*. The book, a feminist novel, criticized the idea that woman’s duty in the family was homemaking, child rearing, and maintaining the marriage<sup>5</sup> (Churchill 2020). It argued that women should instead pursue politics, higher education, and careers in the workforce. In 1965, the Supreme Court permitted contraception to the national populace through

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<sup>5</sup> However, it was and still ought to be the man’s duty to maintain the marriage as well.

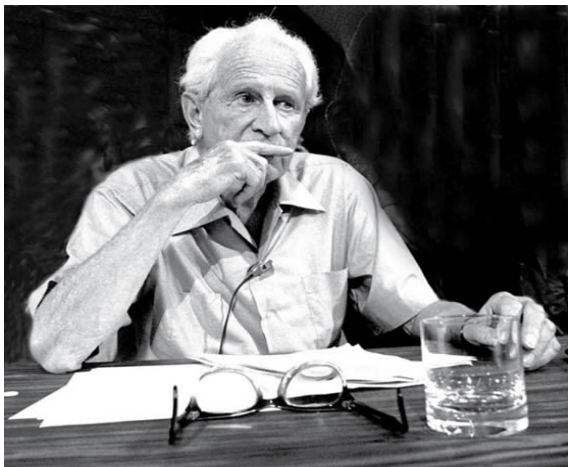
the case *Griswold v. Connecticut*. Before *Griswold*, state laws could bar people from accessing contraceptives, but once the decision (and a subsequent one) was made by the Court, people could use contraceptives nationwide. In the summer of 1967, the Summer of Love, a social phenomenon known for hallucinogenic drugs and free love, took place. According to Oxford Languages dictionary, free love is “the idea or practice of having sexual relations according to choice, without being restricted by marriage or long-term relationships.” On June 18, 1969, the Stonewall Riots took place, which was one of the first major gay rights uprisings. This initiated the LGBT rights movement, which would only evolve further and still affects contemporary political and social debate. Later in August, the Woodstock Festival occurred, similar to the Summer of Love; it was known for psychedelic drug usage and public sexual intercourse. In this respect, it shared many characteristics with the Summer of Love. In January 1973, the Supreme Court ratified abortion in all fifty states by means of *Roe v. Wade*. Before the ratification, state laws were the determinant for whether abortion is a legal practice.

Advocates of the counterculture say the causes of the movement are “patriarchy, racism, injustice, and imperialism” (Suri 2009, 46). Additionally, “sexual liberation and the social uses of new drugs [were] identifying characteristics for these cultural groups” (*ibid.*). The counterculture was “an era of change in identity, family unit, sexuality, dress, and the arts. It was a time when youth rejected social norms and exhibited their disapproval of racial, ethnic, and political injustices through resistance, and for some subgroups, revolt” (Bousalis 2021, 1). While dress, art, and drug use were more prominent during the peak years of countercultural defiance, the term “sexual liberation” is within the scope of my thesis. While racism, injustice, and imperialism were undoubtedly relevant in the 1960s counterculture, in my thesis, I will discuss “sexual liberation” and patriarchy as it directly pertains to family values.

## Patriarchy and Gender Roles

The term patriarchy derives from the Greek *patriarkhēs*, “male chief or head of a family” (Douglas). The term’s meaning has been recorded since the 1630s to mean “system of society or government by fathers or elder males of the community” (*ibid.*). However, the term patriarchy has been appropriated in recent times. In the 1970s, Second-wave feminists took hold of the term and gave it another definition: “a system of male domination that oppressed women” (Fitzpatrick 2013, 987). The *International Encyclopedia for Social Policy* further elaborates on how women were supposedly oppressed. It states that two strands of feminism, Marxist and radical,<sup>6</sup> answer this question in the following way: women were treated as second class citizens and were unequal when they were in the workforce or when they were housewives, as they had to be dependent on men. I will address the validity of this claim in the evaluation part of my thesis.

## Herbert Marcuse, Critical Theory, and the New Left



Critical Theory played a major role in shaping the 1960s counterculture. Critical Theory, as stated before, was promoted heavily by German-American philosopher Herbert Marcuse. Marcuse was one of the most prominent members of the Frankfurt School “or The Institute for Social Research (Institute für Sozialforschung)” (Farr 2019). The Frankfurt School was a school of Marxist critical and social thought. It was first established during

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<sup>6</sup> Which seems to be a redundant distinction.

the Weimar Republic in 1922 but moved to the United States in the early 1930s after facing Nazi persecution. From then on, the school had an enormous impact on philosophy and sociopolitical theory (*ibid.*).

Herbert Marcuse has been called the “Guru of the New Left” because of his prominent role during the 1960s; however, he rejected that title because he claimed to be learning from those movements as well. Nonetheless, he was strongly influential in this time period and towards the 1960s counterculture. In his speech “Repressive Tolerance,” Marcuse advocated for the repression of those who “oppose a progressive social agenda” (Stanley 2017):

Tolerance is extended to policies, conditions, and modes of behavior which should not be tolerated ... This sort of tolerance strengthens tyranny of the majority against which authentic liberals protested ... Liberating tolerance, then, would mean intolerance against movements from the Right and toleration of movements from the Left (Marcuse 1969, 82).

Marcuse was clear about his political ambitions; he was acting to further the agenda of the New Left and that entailed liberating oppressed people from the intolerance of the Right.<sup>7</sup> In modern times, Leftism has been associated with socialist countries such as the Soviet Union and Communist China. However, the ideology which Marcuse and other 1960s counter cultural revolutionaries professed was the New Left. The distinction between New and Old Left mainly pertains to social and cultural issues. Unlike orthodox Marxist philosophy which heavily emphasized class, the New Left puts greater pressure on social issues such as race and gender (Davis 2023). Nevertheless, the general ideas of Marxism still remain the same: to divide society

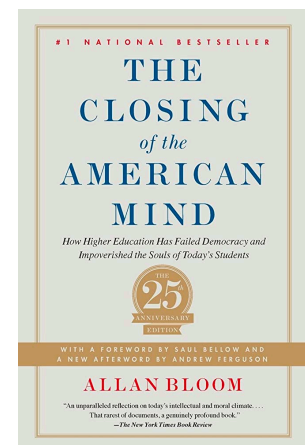
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<sup>7</sup> The distinction between Right and Left originates from the National Assembly during the French Revolution. Those who sat on the left side of the National Assembly tended to support more radical ideas such as revolution, while those who sat on the right side of the National Assembly tended to support more traditional ideas of loyalty to the monarchy and conservatism. From then on, left and right have been used to describe political distinctions between traditionalists and radicals.

based on a distinction between groups of victims and oppressors. This reinvention of new groups of victims and oppressors directly relates to the Marxist perception of the family. In this concept, women are seen as victims, and men (or the so-called patriarchy) as oppressors. In this Marxist view, the family is seen as an oppressive construct which furthers intolerance and impedes women's desires for self-fulfillment. Furthermore, these cultural revolutionists seek to empower more unconventional forms of love by placing a special focus on "free-love" and homosexuality.

## Relativism and Allan Bloom

In his classic, *The Closing of the American Mind*, Allan Bloom discusses at great length the influence of relativism and the indoctrination of students during the counterculture. Bloom eloquently explains the student attitudes about history, namely "that all the world was mad in the past; men always thought they were right, and that led to wars, persecutions, slavery, xenophobia, racism, and chauvinism. The point is not to correct the mistakes and really be right; rather it is not to think you are right at all" (Bloom 1987, 26). This was and still is a common belief held by moral relativists. They say that validation of beliefs as objective truth leads to profound devastation. Bloom criticizes the ideological fanaticism of the student activists in the 1960s by comparing them to the German students<sup>8</sup> in the 1930s. He further states that the professors have succumbed to this irrational behavior on part of the students and lack conviction (*ibid.*, 313). Using relativism, it is very easy to see how the activists were able to impact traditional family values. If relativists argue that



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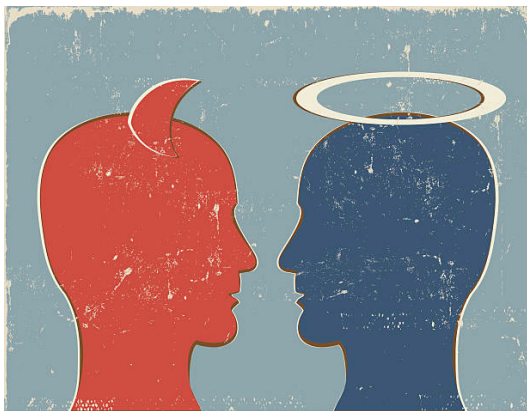
<sup>8</sup> Influenced by National Socialism (Nazism).

one's moral views are equal to another's moral views and that there exists no universal moral view, then they could easily say the same thing about marriage, sexuality, and family structure.

Bloom says in his chapter on *Culture*, “the progress of culture provides the link between inclination and duty” (*ibid.*, 186). In other words, he says that advancement will create a connection between what one ought to do and what one feels like doing. He elaborates on his point of “inclination and duty” by talking about man's duties toward a family versus his sexual desires. He continues, paraphrasing Emmanuel Kant:

Naturally man has the desire to have sexual intercourse and hence procreate. But he has no desire to care for his children or educate them, even though the growth of their faculties requires prolonged maintenance and training. So the family is necessary. But natural desire does not point to the family. Desire is promiscuous and inclines man toward freedom. So desire is repressed. Man is commanded to abandon his desire. (*ibid.*, 186)

Bloom further states that “The free choice of marriage and the capacity to stick to it, not merely outwardly but also inwardly, is a proof of culture, of desire informed by civility. It is also the proof of human freedom, of the overcoming of nature for the sake of morality, without making man unhappy” (*ibid.*). In other words, he is saying that the extrinsic and intrinsic motivations of



marriage are an example of a culture. He says that freedom enables man to pursue morality while not feeling restricted. This is key in connecting family values with morality, as man ought to physically restrain himself from the disorderly sexual desires of human nature. Instead, he should raise and maintain a

beautiful and loving family. In this way, man will feel accomplished as his independent, responsible choices led directly to the creation of the family. Otherwise, children will be devastated and the concept of a family will be history.

In many cases, this is already happening, as almost one fourth of families in the United States are supported only by a single mother (Census Bureau 2022). The increase in the percentage of births to unmarried women started in the late 1950s and early 1960s according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2014). The same point which applies to men also applies to women, if women pursue their sexual desires over their moral compass, then they will end up being with many partners and either live the rest of their life a single mother or engage in controversial practices such as contraception and abortion.

## Abortion, Contraception, and the Sexual Revolution

Abortion is a controversial issue, and Americans have a wide variety of opinions on it. It has been a point of contention among feminists and religious people alike, as it pertains to very serious and consequential matters. The definition of abortion in and of



itself is a widely disputed topic, but for the sake of argument, here is a definition of abortion: “the termination of pregnancy before the fetus is viable” (National Institute of Health 2022). Pro-choice activists mostly argue that abortion should not be restricted, as it is a woman’s right to choose whether or not she should continue with the pregnancy and have a child. Ultimately, she is in control of her own body and if she chooses to have an abortion and instead pursue a career, she is in her right to do that. Likewise, pro-life activists argue that abortion is an immoral and horrid practice that terminates the life of the fetus, killing a living human being. They argue that the mother as any person has a right to choose in this country, but that choice should not impede

the fetus' unalienable right to life. Thus, pro-life activists argue for abortion to be heavily restricted or illegal. From 1980 to 2019, 29.7 million<sup>9</sup> abortions have been committed. The abortion debate was largely ignited by the ratification of Supreme Court decision *Roe v. Wade* in 1973. *Roe v. Wade* ultimately changed the legal status of abortion from being a matter of state jurisdiction to federal law. *Roe v. Wade* made it federal law to legalize a vast majority of forms of abortion and make it illegal for any state to pass their own laws restricting abortion.

Thereafter, the religious right and the secular left took sides on the matter, mostly on the pro-life and pro-choice positions respectively. Conservatives mostly appeal to morality and religion when arguing against abortion, while liberals typically appeal to feminism when supporting abortion. Recently however, *Roe v. Wade* was overturned, once again provoking the abortion debate. In the 2022 case *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Department*, the decision was once again returned to the states. This allowed traditional and conservative states (*i.e.*, red states) to pass any abortion restriction they wished, while liberal and progressive states (*i.e.*, blue states) could continue to allow unrestricted access to abortions. The Supreme Court had justified abortion by way of the Due Process Clause implied in the Fourteenth Amendment:

The Due Process Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment protects against state action the right to privacy, and a woman's right to choose to have an abortion falls within that right to privacy. A state law that broadly prohibits abortion without respect to the stage of pregnancy or other interests violates that right. Although the state has legitimate interests in protecting the health of pregnant women and the "potentiality of human life," the relative weight of each of these interests varies over the course of pregnancy, and the law must account for this variability. (Oyez, Acc. 2023)

The Supreme Court prioritized the implied right to privacy in the Fourteenth Amendment over the potentiality of human life of the fetus. This undermines the individuality of the fetus and places the woman as the one who decides whether the unborn fetus lives or dies, thus affirming

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<sup>9</sup> The sum of the abortions committed each year (1980-2019) from the CDC Abortion Surveillance System.



the aforementioned pro-choice position. The pro-choice belief, which states that the woman, upon pregnancy, may choose whether she wants to terminate the pregnancy and pursue her career or raise a family instead, is directly tied with Second-Wave Feminism. The traditional belief would put the family at utmost importance, but feminism “empowers” women by compelling them to pursue careers, ultimately deprioritizing or even neglecting the family.

Contraception has a similar legal history. According to the Oxford Languages dictionary, contraception is “the deliberate use of artificial methods or other techniques to prevent pregnancy as a consequence of sexual intercourse.” It comes from the Latin prefix *contra-* meaning “against” and the English word “conception,” which relates to the action of conceiving a child. Contraception has not been as controversial as abortion, but it still poses some concerns with respect to family values. Contraception allows couples to engage in sexual relations without having to deal with the consequences of pregnancy. This allows for people to pursue pleasure rather than be focused on raising a family. As Bloom said, man is naturally inclined to follow his sexual desire and not necessarily for the purpose of raising a family; thus he must restrain that desire to pursue more responsible undertakings such as raising a family. Contraception, therefore, enables people to follow the desire of sex without the need to worry about whether they ought to raise a family. Similarly to *Roe v. Wade*, *Griswold v. Connecticut* (1965), made contraceptives legal nationwide through the use of the implied right to privacy:

In a 7-2 decision authored by Justice Douglas, the Court ruled that the Constitution did in fact protect the right of marital privacy against state restrictions on contraception. While the Court explained that the Constitution does not explicitly protect a general right to privacy, the various guarantees within the Bill of Rights create penumbras, or zones, that establish a right to privacy. Together, the First, Third, Fourth, and Ninth Amendments create the right to privacy in marital relations. The Connecticut statute conflicted with the exercise of this right and was therefore held null and void. (Oyez, Acc. 2023)

The nationwide ratification was intended for married couples; however, it established precedent for a later case, *Eisenstadt v. Baird* (1972), which stated a right to birth control for unmarried couples using the Equal Protection Clause. This evidently displays the shortfall of good intentions. Even so, if contraceptives were made legal before abortion was, then why does there even need to be a *Roe v. Wade* in the first place, as preventing unwanted pregnancy should be less of an issue? This question will be answered in the evaluation.

## Marriage

The institution of marriage has existed for millennia, and it is understandable why. A binding contract that connects two together for the stability of the family is necessary in any culture across the world. The counterculture has had a significant impact on marriage. Ideas stated previously of open sexuality and free love give way to the disregard of marriage. The consequences of this are twofold: more are marrying at a later age and more are filing for divorce.

In 1950, the average age of the first marriage between the respective sexes was 22.8 (male) and 20.3 (female). In 2022, the average age for a man's first marriage was 30.1 and for women, it was 28.2. Furthermore, the increasing rate of marriage ages per year began following the 1960s (U.S. Census Bureau 2022).

A report on the divorce rates since World War II shows that “the fraction of females living with a male fell by 16 percentage points between 1960 and 2000. From this angle, the model captures about 75% of the decline between 1950 and 2000,” and “that the number of unmarried couples living together before 1960 would have been small and can be safely ignored”

(Greenwood & Guner 2008). The graphs listed in the study show that the divorce rate for women started to increase in the mid to late sixties.

The prior information on marriage is not the only effect the counterculture has had on marriage. The same-sex marriage debate, stemming from the homosexual movement that started in the sixties has also had a consequential impact.

## Same-Sex Marriage

The counterculture was the start of the first “LGBTQ” movements, originally called the gay liberation movement. Like other countercultural movements, the gay liberation movement did not simply dissipate after the counterculture—rather it evolved and further grew its aims and ambitions. Many believe that the “Stonewall Riots happened once upon a time, but now gays and lesbians have fought their way into democratic processes of rights-based legislation and have made real social gains” (Ashley 2015, 28). Similar to feminism, “the LGBT/Q liberation movement sought more than political and institutional inclusion. Rather they asserted that ‘complete sexual liberation for all people cannot come about unless existing social institutions are abolished,’ and they mobilized around such claims” (*ibid.*).

In the United States, marriage was defined according to English Common Law<sup>10</sup> as a contract based on a private agreement between a man and a woman to become a husband and a wife (Legal Information Institute). However, this definition was changed recently. In 2015, the Supreme Court case *Obergefell v. Hodges* redefined marriage to include same-sex couples throughout all 50 states. Furthermore, the denial of same-sex couples to be included in the new definition has been declared unconstitutional (*ibid.*). This development was controversial at the

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<sup>10</sup> The traditional basis for American law.

time, but now is less so, with 61% of Americans saying same-sex marriage is a net positive (Borelli 2022).

## Evaluation

For this section of my thesis, I evaluate the preceding chapters, in which I stated that certain events had a considerable impact on traditional American family life. I will explain, as proposed originally in my thesis statement, why these incidents and beliefs had a profound detrimental impact on our social life in general and the family in particular. After I evaluate all of these specific matters, I will conclude with one final evaluation of the counterculture as a whole, compiling the phenomena and their impacts.



## Feminism

For my evaluation of feminism, I have used several comments stated by liberal author Peter Schwartz in the chapter “Gender Tribalism,” of the book *Return of the Primitive: The Anti-Industrial Revolution*:

All forms of collectivism rest on a certain metaphysics. The collectivist tenets...all stem from a deeper premise: that the individual is impotent to cope with reality. The individual, on this premise, cannot sustain his life on his own, and must depend upon the group for survival. This viewpoint, as applied to women, is what feminism essentially promulgates. Of all the supposedly demeaning views of women for which feminists condemn our “patriarchal” society, none is remotely as denigrating as that held by feminism itself. It is today, uniquely feminists who depict women as congenitally helpless, endlessly “victimized” creatures. (Rand & Schwartz 1999, 205)

He argues that feminism has the adverse effect of limiting women because it insists women can not succeed through merit, such that they ought to receive social welfare programs and benefits from affirmative action policies (*ibid.*, 205-206). While this point is certainly true, it misses a vital fact: the importance of the family. Feminism has undoubtedly been harmful because of its Marxist interpretation of men as oppressors and women as victims, which degrades women by deeming them incapable. Conversely, the traditional American family combines men and women's best strengths in order to form a cohesive unit which serves a greater purpose than their own lives.

You should remember that one of the counterculture's main concerns was with sexual liberation. I will now address this misnomer. The term "sexual liberation" implies that there was a preceding sexual slavery or authoritarianism. That was simply not the case. Apologists for the counterculture would cite patriarchy as a counterargument to this claim; however, even that claim is flawed.

The modern definition of patriarchy, where women were dependent on men, is a half-truth: in the traditional family unit specifically, women were dependent on men, but also vice versa. In contemporary times, gender roles are considered shocking and offensive. However, gender roles simply mean a division of labor in order to foster a stable and functional family. Traditionally, while men were working outside, women would be tending to the home and the children. This is not an oppressive construct, but rather a simple division of labor. In no way was being employed superior to tending to the home, as many men did not find purpose in their jobs (or find them enjoyable for that matter). Rather they found joy in what their jobs allowed them to do, namely provide financial support for their families. Furthermore, if a war were to break out, many men would be the first ones to see the miserable and horrifying brutalities of such a

conflict. Men would be the providers and protectors of the family, while women would be the caretakers of the family.

Men are on average more disagreeable, while women are more agreeable (Peterson 2019). Similarly, women are more interested in people, while men are more interested in things (*ibid.*). That is why there is an overwhelming number of women who are kindergarten teachers, receptionists, and nurses, as they are more skilled in handling people. Likewise, men tend to work jobs that are less social and more tactile (stonemasons, heavy vehicle mechanics, engineers, information technology, *etc.*) as they are by nature physically stronger and possess more interest in such things. Statistically, men tend to work longer hours (2015) on average than women, likely because of their psychological tendency to be less disagreeable, and consequently competitive, tough-minded, and stubborn attitude (*ibid.*). These scientific attributes allow for the emotional and social mothers to be better able to care for their children (especially of younger age) and respond accurately to all of their needs, while allowing the tough-minded and competitive fathers to work ambitiously and diligently to earn a living for the family. Thus, the female–caregiver and male–breadwinner method for the family makes the most sense and has been tested through time and various psychological collections.<sup>11</sup> Both roles are equally important and equally essential, and the family would not be able to survive without the other.

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<sup>11</sup> World famous clinical psychologist and professor Jordan B. Peterson collected data that show the Scandinavian gender paradox. The paradox is that despite the Scandinavian countries' egalitarian and liberal policies of trying to remove any limitations of gender inequalities in the workforce, men and women still choose fundamentally different occupations of their gender roles (Peterson 2019).

## Critical Theory

For evaluating Critical Theory, I use a passage from conservative author and historian Michael Walsh in his book *The Devil's Pleasure Palace*:

So no wonder why the relationship between the sexes and the hard-won morality attending such congress was one of the focal points of the attack by the Frankfurt School and their fellow travelers in politics, academe, and the media. The “transgressive” assault on Western culture started somewhere, and it started with the idea of the nuclear family. The first step was to mock it..., then to accuse it of various crimes against humanity (particularly the newfound charge of “patriarchy”), then to illustrate that there were “really” other sorts of families, just as good, just as loving, just as valid as the traditional two-parent, opposite sex nest. Finally, the nuclear family was dispensed with altogether, as behavior considered acceptable in the underclass, where sexual license had always just barely been suppressed, percolated into the higher culture. (Walsh 2015, 75-76)

Critical Theory has had a noxious effect on American culture. While free speech and questioning authority are principles of a free and democratic people Critical Theory's destructive and ubiquitous criticism was not in good faith. As I mentioned, there were certain unquestioned ideas that had existed as the backbone of our republic, the ones discussed being America's traditional family and moral fabric. One may support freedom of speech and expression, while maintaining that to question certain ideas is harmful and naïve.

New Leftists, however, have abused the notions of individual freedom and liberty that have been affirmed throughout Anglo-American history with documents such as the *Magna Carta Libertatum*, Declaration of Independence, and the U.S. Constitution. When one uses one's given freedoms to destroy the very institution that gave one the freedoms in the first place, then we ought to question where the limit must be. Free speech is not absolute if there is a clear and present danger, and the counterculture of the 1960s led to dangerous consequences and violence that still affects us at the present day. Its ideologues distort the notions of freedom in order to create moral confusion and promote moral relativism, which further contributes to disjointed

families. I am not advocating for the curtailment of speech for advocates of the counterculture. Instead I believe we should do our best to remove Marxism and similar radical beliefs from the Overton Window<sup>12</sup> of American political discourse.

## Moral Relativism

Cultural revolutionaries have relied on a half-truth when arguing moral relativism. It is technically true that those who furthered xenophobia, racism, persecutions, etc. all believed that they were right; however, that does not entail that believing in moral objectivism necessarily creates those atrocities. While Adolf Hitler and his Nazis believed that they were right, the valiant Jewish resistance fighters against his totalitarian regime in turn believed that the Nazis were wrong and they themselves were right. Similarly, drug cartels involve themselves in highly immoral and heinous acts, so they cannot be put on the same level as those who bust them. It is not the traditional concepts of good and evil that create atrocities. The lack of universal objective morality and the relativistic attitudes allow evil to thrive. Therefore, in order for one to condemn such heinous and unjust actions, one must concede that certain moral statements are true. Saying that there is no right and wrong, or that “my truth is equal to your truth” actually justifies atrocities perpetrated in the past and present and promotes inaction. After all, “The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing.”<sup>13</sup> Leftists, paradoxically, implicitly affirm objective morality by saying that those who say they are right cause morally wrong things (*i.e.*, war, persecution, slavery, xenophobia, racism, and chauvinism).

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<sup>12</sup> The Overton Window is a political concept which identifies certain practices and ideas commonly accepted or casted out from society. An idea which is outside of the Overton Window is one which is considered repulsive by the majority of the populace. Likewise, an idea which is at the center of the Overton Window is implemented as policy in legislature and execution.

<sup>13</sup> Attributed to Edmund Burke.



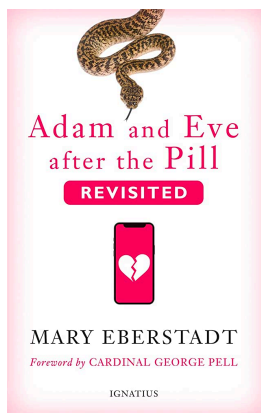
## Abortion and Contraception

When I concluded the first part of my thesis on “Abortion, Contraception, and the Sexual Revolution,” I presented a question: if contraceptives were made legal before abortion was, need there be a *Roe v. Wade*? Here, I will answer it. Eberstadt states that “the empirical record since the 1960s overrules this common conjecture: rates of contraception, abortion and out-of-wedlock births all skyrocketed simultaneously” (Eberstadt 2023, 35). She explains that contraception led to more pregnancy and abortion because it undercut the idea that men are responsible for unplanned pregnancies and ought to respond to them with marriage. She quotes Nobel Prize winner George A. Akerlof:

Today women are free to choose, but men have afforded themselves the comparable option. ‘If she is not willing to have an abortion or use contraception,’ the man can reason, ‘why should I sacrifice myself to get married?’ By making the birth of the child the physical choice of the mother, the sexual revolution has made marriage and child support a social choice of the father (Akerlof 1996). (*ibid.*)

These arguments posed by the counterculture, have created a slippery slope, justifying more and more radical ideas and policies over time. This is evidenced in the Supreme Court decision

*Griswold v. Connecticut*, which legalized contraceptives nationwide in 1965, preceding *Roe v. Wade*, which legalized abortions in 1973.



Ultimately, the purpose is the same: to help women avoid the responsibility of motherhood. She also argued that the feminist movement, which was aimed at liberating women, actually had the unintended consequence of liberating men from responsibility. Essentially, a man prior to the 1960s would be obligated to marry a woman if he were in a sexual

relationship. After the 1960s, with the advent of abortion and contraceptives, he could just argue

that she should get an abortion or should have used birth control in order to absolve the responsibility of child-rearing.

## The Homosexual Movement

Homosexuality has been a controversial issue in America and the world (although more accepted over recent years). Specifically, I will discuss its pertinence to the counterculture and family. Homosexuality, or LGBTQ+<sup>14</sup> as it is commonly referred to in the West, has been defended and supported since the 1960s. The explosive Stonewall Riots mark the primary event during the counterculture which started the homosexual movement. The movement has also come to include transgender persons. Transgenderism is the belief that gender is malleable and if a man possesses more feminine behaviors, they can “transition” into a woman and the greater society *has to* accept this person as a woman. Not only is this biologically untrue, but it also undermines the traditional notions of masculinity and femininity which have established and supported families. It was once apparent that people were male and female and they ought to possess respective masculine and feminine qualities, but that unquestioned idea was questioned. The fence was breached.

In Paul’s *Epistle to the Romans*, sexual degeneracy and homosexuality are seen as a byproduct of a godless culture:

For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things. Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator,

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<sup>14</sup> Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, and anything else that does not constitute as heterosexual. LGBT and LGBTQ are also commonly used terms.

who is blessed forever! Amen. For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error. (Rom. 1:22-27).

While we ought to treat our fellow human beings with kindness and understanding, the widespread acceptance and promotion of such practices, especially when influencing minors to embrace them, is a byproduct of the prominent moral relativism and decreasing faith in our culture today. The LGBT movement does not have a positive impact on the traditional American family. If a family is a unit that consists of children, then it must be composed of a mother and father in order to support that self-evident truth. Otherwise, it is not a family and simply a union of sorts. However, in recent times, the LGBT movement tried to imitate the closest union of family exclusively between a mother and father: marriage.

## Same-Sex Marriage

Despite popular support for such practices, the interpretation of same-sex marriage as constitutional raises several questions. Firstly, the original writers and supporters of the constitution in the time of Colonial America (*i.e.*, the Founding Fathers) would have never written the constitution in order to include same-sex couples in the legal definition of marriage (Cohn 2003). A marriage's main goal is to provide family stability, as marriage is the antithesis to licentious relationships. Therefore, the children will know who the father in the relationship is, as he and the mother ought to be the primary providers for the children. Marriage prevents this promiscuity, and thus if a marriage's main goal is to provide family stability, then permitting same-sex couples is oxymoronic. Same-sex couples are physically incapable of bearing children, this is simply a matter of human biology. A counterargument that might arise is that same-sex

couples still have the ability of raising children if they adopt. However, there is one major shortfall in that argument: even if same-sex couples still choose to adopt, they are still dependent in a sense on heterosexual couples, as they are adopting children that have been born.

## Final Evaluation — Evaluation of the Counterculture

The counterculture of the 1960s proved to be a great detriment to American family values. The events that I have listed have all been harmful to the promotion of family values. Feminism sought to dismantle gender roles. Critical Theory criticized various traditions of American social life and culture and called for open sexuality, an idea entirely adverse for the family. Moral relativism undermined the moral fabric which the country once respected, thus instilling confusion and instability among the populace. Abortion, a morally questionable practice which is a great tragedy for the mother and the infant, and contraception, a practice which further delays marriage, have proven to be maleficent for the family. Lastly, homosexuality and same-sex marriage only seek to imitate and distort the family. On the whole, with respect for family values, the sixties were a time of great turmoil and instability that brought about minimal positive changes and created disastrous consequences that later generations would have to endure.

## Conclusion

The counterculture of the 1960s negatively impacted the traditional American family in numerous ways. I have investigated the problems plaguing the family which stem from the counterculture. Firstly, I have provided definitions of my major terms (*i.e.*, family values, 1960s counterculture). Next, I recounted the history of the counterculture to better understand the

context of the situation. Afterwards, I introduced how various points related to the counterculture had their impact on the family. Finally, I evaluated all of them as largely negative consequences.

Although my thesis pertains to negative topics, I caution you away from negative thinking, if you are interested in supporting family values. As stated in my thesis, *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* (2022) was a prime example of a positive development vis-à-vis family values. This could just be a start<sup>15</sup> to restore and revive these values. The fence may have been trampled over, but it can always be rebuilt if enough people see value in it. Thus, I conclude with a call to action, to peacefully and civilly demonstrate support for values that are conducive to producing more stable and functioning families. The family represents the most basic and essential structure for past, present, and future generations of our society. Thus, it is imperative that the family be maintained now and for the future to come, because fostering family values is a way to find personal fulfillment and deeper meaning, to benefit our nation, to set an example for the world, and to honor God.

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<sup>15</sup> As of writing this, the Supreme Court has yet to decide on the legitimacy of *Obergefell v. Hodges* and *Griswold v. Connecticut*.

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