

## CHAPTER 5

### “ADULT DELINQUENCY”: THE NURSERY

World War II entered the homes of America through propaganda and articles that took aim at women and placed a new sense of urgency on their otherwise traditional duties. The war left no room untouched, including the nursery. New strains on marriages such as separation, possible separation, and shorter courtships brought new attention to the decision to have children. Women who wrote for *Ladies' Home Journal* and the women's columns in the *Wilmington Star News* responded to the wartime baby boom with greater numbers of articles on child rearing. The absence of servicemen fathers and the new-found responsibilities of mothers in defense work, sparked a government discourse about juvenile delinquency and the importance of child rearing. These concerns were reinforced on the pages of *Ladies' Home Journal* and the *Wilmington Star News*. Advertisers paid close attention to motherhood during the war and equated caring for children to fighting the enemy and assisting in an Allied victory. As the war neared an end, the discourse on motherhood shifted to a concern for how children would adjust to their returning fathers. Women alone shouldered these new responsibilities in addition to their daily activities of child rearing.

Despite the war, many couples decided to have children. In fact, the birthrate indicated that couples decided to have children because of the war. The national birthrate increased from the Depression era rate of 18.7 per 100 live births in 1935 to a wartime boom of 22.7 per 100 live births in 1943. By 1945, the birthrate had climbed to 24.5 per 100 live births. The prosperous wartime economy allowed more couples at younger ages to have children. Although *Ladies' Home Journal* covered contraception prior to the

war, articles pertaining to the subject of birth control did not appear during the war.<sup>1</sup> One implication of this absence was that with men away, women refrained from sexual intercourse. The other implication was that women would not want to control contraception during the war because they desired children and could afford to begin or expand their families.

The private decision to have a child went public during the war. Women were bombarded with a rhetoric that acknowledged the difficulty of raising children with an absent serviceman father, but still stressed the positive aspects of having a baby. Although the rhetoric acknowledged the concerns of bringing a child into a world that seemed so unstable, pro-child advocates asserted that having children should continue even during a war in order to ensure the country's future.

*Ladies' Home Journal* ran an article written by Paul Popenoe, the Director of the American Institute of Family Relations as part of the series "How America Lives." Popenoe entitled the article, "Now is the Time to Have Children." The article deliberately avoided mentioning couples separated or potentially separated by the war. The writer's assumption was that both parents were together and would remain so. Popenoe acknowledged the uncertain future of a world at war, but dismissed this as a reason to postpone having a family. On the contrary, he argued that the uncertain future was a reason Americans should have children. Such a suggestion implied that starting a family during a time of war was a way to demonstrate faith in the country. The future appeared unstable, but this was a temporary problem. Popenoe supported his argument

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<sup>1</sup> Susan Hartmann, *The Home Front and Beyond: American Women in the 1940s* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1982), 16, 17; Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1988), 59; Dolores Flamiano, "Covering Contraception: Discourses of

for starting a family by citing divorce statistics. Having one child cut the chances of divorce by one-ninth, and the chance decreased by one half with the addition of each child thereafter.<sup>2</sup>

Popenoe encouraged couples to have more than one child and gave two reasons for his position. A child who grew up without siblings did not function as well as children with siblings, and the parents benefited, too. According to studies by the American Institute of Family Relations, family size contributed to the positive disposition of parents. Men with a larger family tended to excel over their childless co-workers. Having more than one child also benefited mothers. Women with several children lived longer than those who had an only child. Popenoe concluded with patriotic fervor by writing, "...parenthood becomes not an accident but a deliberate and voluntary affirmation of faith in this nation's future."<sup>3</sup> Having several children became a way to demonstrate support for a nation at war. Raising a family defied the enemy by showing that Americans continued to prosper and believed that their country would win the war. Americans prepared for the future with new hope that translated into new families.

Ruth Millett also maintained a positive outlook on the topic of wartime babies. According to Millett, people who believe it was inappropriate to have children during wartime were "prophet(s) of defeat".<sup>4</sup> Millett, who usually relied solely on her own opinion, strengthened her point by quoting the director of New York's Maternity Center Association. The director shared Popenoe's sentiments that children provided a reason

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Gender, Motherhood, and Sexuality in Women's Magazines, 1938-1969," *American Journalism* (Summer 2000), 59-87.

<sup>2</sup> Paul Popenoe, "Now is the Time to Have Children," *Ladies' Home Journal*, July 1942, 60-61.

<sup>3</sup> Popenoe, 60.

for soldiers to continue the fight against the enemy while also stabilizing the home front.<sup>5</sup> Children gave hope to the future. The family unit not only continued to be important during the war, but was stressed with a new patriotic fervor.

Millett approached the topic of motherhood for war wives with more caution. Millett stressed two factors that mothers, single for the duration, had to consider. The best situation for the child was a financially secure family with a mother who did not work. A working mother faced a difficult balancing act that worked to the child's disadvantage. Millett also stressed the importance of the maturity of the women.<sup>6</sup> She made the distinction between age and emotional maturity, perhaps because the average age at marriage dropped from pre-war statistics. While no clear answer to starting a family existed, a formula for success was outlined in the article. War wives would bear the full responsibility for having children and the responsibility had to come before their careers and social obligations.

As the war progressed, the rhetoric aimed at women shifted from the decision to have children, to new mothers and their young children. A 1943 article in *Ladies' Home Journal* used the phrase "baby boom" to describe the elevated birthrate that had occurred since the onset of the war. The author, J.C. Furnas, identified three possible factors that may have led to the increase in births: higher wages allowed more people to start families, some young men pushed for a child to avoid the draft, and as more young couples married, they started their families earlier. He concluded that the reason for the birth rate increase was more than likely some combination of these factors and many

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<sup>4</sup> *Wilmington Star News* (Wilmington, North Carolina) 24 April 1942.

<sup>5</sup> *Wilmington Star News*, 24 April 1942.

others as well, but that the real importance of the baby boom was not why it occurred, but rather how the government was responding to it.<sup>7</sup>

A forward thinking Furnas called for subsidized prenatal classes and food for expectant mothers and young babies, as well as maternity leave for new working mothers. Government assistance in these areas would make the difference between couples having a baby or deciding that they could not afford a child. Furnas perceived the baby boom as positive force in American life and vital for the nation's future. The government, he stressed, should make having a child possible for people of all economic backgrounds and not just for middle and upper classes.<sup>8</sup>

As the war progressed, Millett also focused on motherhood. In October 1943, she took aim at the duty of single mothers. She made no mention of single mothers who worked outside their homes. Instead, she portrayed single mothers as heroic figures and called for their courage to be honored with the same accolades given to soldiers. Millett cited the brave tasks single mothers performed in their husbands' absence: arranging doctors' appointments, going to and from the hospital, and caring for the child while recovering from delivery.<sup>9</sup> New mothers lucky enough to have their husbands present still performed these duties without male assistance. New mothers traditionally relied more on their mothers, sisters, and friends than their husbands. Millett's message was more about boosting the morale of new mothers and encouraging them to continue their traditional duties without complaint even though the war disrupted family life.

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<sup>6</sup> *Wilmington Star News*, 24 April 1942.

<sup>7</sup> J.C. Furnas, "New Americans by the Million!" *Ladies' Home Journal*, February 1943, 36, 74-76.

<sup>8</sup> Furnas, 36, 74-76.

Clearly, the war altered the routine of motherhood. Some mothers took defense jobs and had to balance the double duty of working with being the sole parent. Other women raised children alone while their husbands served in the war overseas or trained in distant parts of the country. Even women who did not work outside the home and had husbands stateside still conducted the task of raising children during an unnerving time. The war did nothing to minimize the needs of children. On the contrary, children probably required more attention from their mothers. Blackouts and sirens, the absence of fathers, working mothers, and relocation placed new stresses on children that their mothers felt.<sup>10</sup>

For the most part, women's articles and columns ignored these new responsibilities of women. One article offered advice to mothers on calming nerves and adjusting children to the wartime climate. In an article in *Ladies' Home Journal*, Leslie B. Hohman, M.D. provided advice about keeping children calm during the inevitable disruptions of war. Instead of concentrating on a child's fear, parents should redirect this emotion by encouraging a child to support the war effort by collecting scrap or gardening. In addition, parents should keep their conversations upbeat when children were present.<sup>11</sup> While this advice seemed reasonable and necessary, it did not get conveyed in the *Wilmington Star News*. Although Wilmington, a coastal port city with a booming defense industry, conducted blackouts and air-raid sirens, Millett never mentioned the subject.

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<sup>9</sup> *Wilmington Star News*, 28 October 1943.

<sup>10</sup> These themes occurred during the oral interviews.

<sup>11</sup> Leslie B. Hohman, M.D., "How Should Children be Trained for a War Situation?" *Ladies' Home Journal*, April 1942, 110-111.

Most articles pertaining to motherhood during the war focused on working mothers. The War Manpower Commission made it policy not to hire women in defense jobs if they had children under fourteen years of age. By 1943, however, the labor pool of single women, and women without children was exhausted. Census Bureau figures indicate that 2.75 million working women had a total of 4.5 million children under the age of fourteen in 1944.<sup>12</sup> Clearly, these women did not or could not wait to enter the labor force until 1943. Even before then, mothers took jobs for a variety of reasons.

Articles that appeared in women's magazines in 1942 supported working mothers and commiserated with their lack of support in childcare. In its April issue, *Ladies Home Journal* featured a working mother interviewed by Dr. Leslie B. Hohman. Dr. Hohman highlighted the good behavior of the children and concluded that children who acted out while their mothers took war jobs "...were orphans before the war."<sup>13</sup> Children who misbehaved did so because their mothers probably did not pay enough attention to them before taking a war job. A war job in and of itself did not make otherwise good mother into neglectful mothers. Children who behaved badly while their mothers worked behaved badly before their mothers worked. Prior to accepting these jobs, these mothers had already done a disservice to their children.

Articles that appeared on the society pages of the *Wilmington Star News* also focused on the duties of working mothers. One article written by Millett called for a tax deduction for working mothers that would ease the burden of childcare. Millett believed

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<sup>12</sup> Maureen Honey, *Creating Rosie the Riveter: Class, Gender, and Propaganda during World War II* (Amherst, Massachusetts: University of Massachusetts Press, 1984) 27; Karen Anderson, *Wartime Women: Sex Roles, Family Relations, and the Status of Women during World War II* (Westport Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1981), 124; Hartmann, 85.

<sup>13</sup> Leslie B. Hohman, M.D., "Can Women in War Industry be Good Mothers?" *Ladies' Home Journal*, October 1942, 100-101.

that working mothers performed a difficult task and she favored the idea of shared childcare and called on women to support each other in this endeavor. Millett encouraged group childcare organized by women in their neighborhood. In another column, she suggested that grocery stores construct a small play area so women who struggled with childcare could shop with greater ease.<sup>14</sup> Holding a job and raising well-adjusted children seemed possible according to optimistic articles published in the local newspaper. Although her advice columns were sympathetic toward working women, Millett expressed some misgivings about working mothers before these articles. Her previously mentioned comments in April warned that the situation created by working mothers did not usually benefit their children. Perhaps her contradictions existed because Wilmington employed many working mothers in defense work. Millett may have compensated for her previous harsh comments by adopting a more sympathetic tone to encourage working mothers to continue their domestic duties.

Authors of women's articles and advice columns veiled their criticism of working mothers behind an apprehension about childcare. In reality, childcare was a not a new concept for the country. The government funded childcare before the war under the Works Progress Administration. During the war, childcare shifted from the needs of the working class to the needs of the working and middle classes. While the federal government's support for daycare was not a new phenomenon, the national reaction to it was new. A new urgency came with the new need for childcare.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> *Wilmington Star News*, 7 September 1943; *Wilmington Star News*, 7 July, 1942; *Wilmington Star News*, 22 September 1943.

<sup>15</sup> Hartmann, 59; Rose M. Kundanis, "Rosie the Riveter and the Eight Hour Orphan: The Image of Child Day Care in World War II," in M. Paul Holsinger and Mary Anne Schofield, eds., *Visions of War: World War II in Popular Literature and Culture* (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Press, 1992), 138-148.



During the first year of the war when a majority of articles supported working mothers an article in the July 1942 issue of *Ladies' Home Journal* sounding a warning by stressing that child care remained the priority of mothers, even if they took war jobs. Writer Dorothy Thompson acknowledged that many mothers had to work if the government was to maintain an adequate labor force. However, working mothers remained responsible for the care of their children. "...this work (childcare) needs to be done on such a scale that it is not possible for private organizations (to) effectively finance and perform it. Neither should it be done by the federal Government [sic], which has its hands full anyhow."<sup>16</sup> Women were mothers first and workers second. All mothers were told to place the needs of their children above all else. Although war work disrupted motherhood, women received no leniency when it came to the primacy of their role as mother.

Working mothers were unable to depend completely on government funded childcare to ease their burdens. The government did not fund childcare for defense workers until 1943. Even then, the money, which was allocated from the 1942 Lanham Act that provided for wartime facilities, granted only \$400,000 to establish childcare facilities. Problems plagued the established facilities. Hours of operation conflicted with factory hours and the cost was not cheap. For most mothers, childcare facilities provided by the government were financially impossible, as some centers charged as much as \$2.50 per week per child. Ninety percent of working mothers had to make other arrangement for their children. During the 1943 childcare peak, 130,000 children

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<sup>16</sup> Dorothy Thompson, "Children of Working Mother," *Ladies' Home Journal*, July 1942, 6.

attended 3,000 centers. Many variables from one state to the next greatly hindered private day-care facilities.<sup>17</sup>

By 1943, discourse on motherhood in women's articles and advice columns more closely resembled Thompson's July 1942 article than those articles which had sympathized with working mothers. Responsibilities of motherhood did not diminish during the war. On the contrary, as the war progressed and more babies were born, women faced the same disruptions in the home with arguably more emotional distress. However, as early as 1943, a shift in perspective by writers of women's articles and columns suggested a growing lack of support for working mothers when they began attacking their parenting skills. Writers who once referred to working mother as heroic, now labeled them "adult delinquents". The children of working mothers also were depicted differently. Previously, the writers stated that children of working mothers found their mothers more interesting presumably because they worked; now the discourse emphasized a perception of devious behavior appearing in the children of working mothers.

The topic of juvenile delinquency received new found attention during the war. A sampling of eighty-three courts showed an increase in juvenile delinquency cases from 65,000 in 1940 to 75,000 in 1942. Although these numbers indicated an increase, working mothers actually had little to do with the rise in the number of delinquent children. Juvenile delinquency peaked in 1943, while the employment of working mothers peaked in 1944 and 1945. A study of Boston area delinquents and non-delinquents alike showed that both groups had the same rate of working mothers.

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<sup>17</sup> Anderson, Chapter 4; Martha Mary Thomas, *Riveting and Rationing in Dixie: Alabama Women in the Second World War* (Tuscaloosa, Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1987), 67-72.

Juvenile delinquency rates rose during the war, but working mothers were not entirely to blame.<sup>18</sup>

The focus on juvenile delinquency among the writers of women's columns was simply more propaganda to mobilize women in the total war. During the earlier years of the war (the first year and a half) when women were eager to take defense jobs, working mothers were portrayed in a positive light. As victory approached, women needed to be reminded of the temporary nature of their positions as the government and industry prepared to push women back into their traditional gender roles.

In the May 1943 issue, on the same page as an article on juvenile delinquency written by a school teacher, the *Ladies' Home Journal* took a stance against childcare. "The *Journal* believes that this (caring for children) is the biggest war job any mother of small children can do." Beatrice Blackmar Gould questioned what would become of the latch-key children who were left to their own devices while their mothers worked. She praised women who did not work outside of the home for their singular efforts in child rearing.<sup>19</sup> Staying at home and tending to the needs of children remained the ideal for the magazine's middle class audience.

The society pages of the *Wilmington Star News* also devoted articles to the topic of juvenile delinquency, most of which were associated with working mothers. Millett referred to women who worked outside of their homes, thus leaving their children either unattended or with inadequate care as "delinquent parents" and "adult delinquency".<sup>20</sup> If

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<sup>18</sup> D'Ann Campbell, *Women at War with America: Private Lives in a Patriotic Era* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1984), 203-204.

<sup>19</sup> Beatrice Blackmar Goul, "For 40,000,000 Reasons," *Ladies' Home Journal*, May 1943, 33.

<sup>20</sup> *Wilmington Star News*, 6 February 1943; *Wilmington Star News*, 26 May 1943; *Wilmington Star News*, 12 December 1943.

the behavior of children was unacceptable, it was because adults, especially women, neglected their parental responsibilities. One article cited the president of the American Legion Auxiliary who criticized women who took war work while their children were young.<sup>21</sup> The assumption was that women who engaged in such work could not tend their children appropriately. This perceived child neglect was considered “adult delinquency”.

By the end of 1943, Millett had begun speaking out against working mothers, by unrealistically calling for mothers to return to their homes and their children. Millett was especially critical of what she perceived as the inadequacies of childcare. She compared children in daycare to orphans. Working mothers were portrayed as abandoning their children rather than leaving them for a matter of hours. Instead of calling for childcare reform, Millett called for its elimination by suggesting that mothers renounced employment opportunities. In another column, Millett again called on women who did not depend on their wages to support of their families to quit their jobs. She also took the call to return home a step further by suggesting that women with small children refrain from volunteering, as this act sometimes resulted in small children returning from school to an empty house. She acknowledged that volunteering was important work, but if such work resulted in latch-key children, then volunteerism caused more harm to society than good.<sup>22</sup> Even during a national crisis that required both paid and volunteer services by women, rhetoric aimed at women stressed the primacy of mother’s role.

Some articles in magazines and the society page stressed the importance of mothers tending to their children without mentioning working mothers. Even among

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<sup>21</sup> *Wilmington Star News*, 26 May 1943.

women who never took a war job, the war's disruption on motherhood was great enough to produce a new urgency about the topic. *Ladies' Home Journal* included an article on mothers who developed local summer play groups because so many children could not experience summer camps since, "...that money is needed for war bonds."<sup>23</sup> Millett criticized parents who left child care to the maid. She found it appalling that the sole upbringing of a child was left to anyone other than his or her parents.<sup>24</sup>

Along with the new attention placed on motherhood and child rearing, the federal government and advertisers created a new sense of urgency about mother's responsibilities. Government propaganda conjured up images of protective and caring mothers to encourage cooperation with the war effort at home. As discussed in previous chapters of this work, government propaganda focused on images of mothers and their children to encourage participation in war bond drives and to comply with rationing. Some advertisers depicted mothers as the barrier between germs and their children, while others focused on motherhood as an American institution and stressed the importance of "motherly" duties in the battle against the nation's enemies.

Reckitt Benckister, the manufacturer of Lysol Disinfectant, ran advertisements in the November 1942 issue of *Ladies' Home Journal* depicting mothers diligently cleaning their homes. One advertisement pictured an obviously concerned mother holding a baby in one arm while hugging another child with her other arm. The headline read, "WARNING! Invaders on the march! No army can keep them away from your door-

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<sup>22</sup> *Wilmington Star News*, 11 January 1944.

<sup>23</sup> *Ladies Home Journal*, June 1944.

<sup>24</sup> *Wilmington Star News*, 1 April 1944; *Wilmington Star News*, 8 July 1944.

those vicious blitzkriegers- Infection and Disease.”<sup>25</sup> The rhetoric of war- enemies, invaders, march, army, and blitzkrieg- conjured up images urging women to enlist in the fight. Such advertisements compared the mother figure to that of Uncle Sam, a symbol of a nation in a time of war. Their supposed alliance in the fight against germs meant that mothers who kept a clean home fought for their country, too.

Another Lysol advertisement ran in the December 1943 issue of *Ladies' Home Journal*. This one stressed the need for mothers, especially those with newborns, to keep their homes as clean as possible. Mothers obviously cleaned their homes during peacetime, but during the war, Reckitt Benckister attached a new sense of urgency to cleanliness.<sup>26</sup> Obviously women did not need to be told how to rid their homes of dirt; this was hardly a new task for women. What was new, however, was the link between the war and cleanliness. Cleaning the home and the baby's nursery demonstrated that womens' fight against germs was also a fight against America's enemies.

The *Wilmington Star News* ran a national article on a survey taken by American soldiers stationed at Fort MacArthur. The servicemen were asked what person most inspired them to fight. Mother was their most popular answer.<sup>27</sup> This article ran three days before Mother's Day and exemplified the attempt by authors of women's articles and advertisers to emphasize motherhood as a uniquely American institution. A full-page advertisement sponsored by local businesses a week before Mother's Day boasted the headline, "America's Sweetheart, Mother" above a picture of Uncle Sam with his arm around a woman, who was presumably a mother. Next to the picture the caption read,

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<sup>25</sup> *Ladies' Home Journal*, November 1942, 83.

<sup>26</sup> *Ladies' Home Journal*, December 1943, 55.

“she’s the mainstay of the nation- the inspiration to children growing up and to sons already grown to serve their country...”<sup>28</sup> Motherhood and the responsibilities that came with it were vital to the country because mothers not only raised children, and thus provided a fighting force, but were also loving and compassionate. These traits made mothers an inspiration for America’s fighting forces. Even while the country was engaged in war, mothers’ domestic concerns remained unchanged. However, because the government and women’s articles tied motherhood to the nation’s security, a new sense of urgency was placed on mothers’ responsibilities.

The following year, local businesses ran another full-page advertisement in the *Wilmington Star News*. The headline read, “For Distinguished Service on the Home Front, We Honor Mother.” The same caption from the previous year was now placed next to a picture of a middle-aged mother proudly displaying her blue star necklace, which symbolized a son in the armed services.<sup>29</sup> This associated mothers with an American inspiration to keep fighting the enemy. The headline and the picture also conjured up a new association with the concept of motherhood: mothers served their country on the home front.

For the most part, mothers’ responsibilities remained unchanged during the war. Certainly those who worked outside the home completed their domestic tasks in less time than before the war or left some tasks undone. The responsibility for these tasks, however, remained theirs and theirs alone. While mothers faced disruptions during the war, they remained responsible for the well being of their children. The new emphasis on

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<sup>27</sup> *Wilmington Star News*, 7 May 1942.

<sup>28</sup> *Wilmington Star News*, 3 May 1942.

their tasks created an urgency not previously experienced. Mothers remained responsible for raising, feeding, and teaching America's next generation. These duties continued unchanged, but the connection between the country's future and adequate mothering skills was a creation of propaganda by a nation at war.

War wives faced the obvious disruption of serving as single mothers during the war. Less obvious was the responsibility of introducing fathers to children that they may not have met or had not seen in years. Millett wrote one such column about a daughter who had corresponded with her father asking for his advice. Actively engaging fathers in the lives of their children was an excellent way to keep fathers connected to the home front. Millett pointed out that mothers who solved problems at home and simply wrote to fathers about these decisions took away an opportunity for men to interact with their children.<sup>30</sup> Even with husbands thousands of miles from home, wives remained responsible for nurturing the relationships between children and their fathers.

The responsibilities of mothers grew as the war neared an end. Millett recommended that women ease their husbands' return to their children. Millett quoted a doctor who suggested women leave broken toys aside for their fathers so children could begin to rely on their fathers again.<sup>31</sup> Another column spoke volumes with the title alone. "Heartache in Store for Dad Unless Wife Plans Tactful Reunion with the Children." Mothers should gradually ease fathers back into the daily routines of their children. The theme in these columns echoed the responsibility of mothers in the reunion of fathers and children. Although Millett did not give specific advice about what wives should suggest

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<sup>29</sup> *Wilmington Star News*, 2 May 1943.

<sup>30</sup> *Wilmington Star News*, 9 June 1944.



to their husbands, she offered no instructions for men. Her message was clear: the entire responsibility for reunification of the family unit rested with women.

The war disrupted motherhood making some mothers single parents either temporarily or permanently, working parents, or both. Children experienced disruptions in their lives with the absence of their fathers, when their mothers took war jobs when the family relocated, and blackouts and air-raid sirens sounded. Some of the recollections of women in Wilmington pointed to these disruptions, while others recalled these events, but did not interpret them in a negative light.<sup>32</sup>

Two women who were interviewed stated that raising children was difficult because of rationing. Hannah Block stated, “I had a son and a husband, and it got to the point that we couldn’t buy the food that we wanted.”<sup>33</sup> While her family had enough to eat during the war, her concern was for getting the food the family wanted. Perhaps she would not have remembered this as an inconvenience had she not been responsible for purchasing food and preparing meals for her child. This emotion surfaced when she was asked about her son, not about rationing. Her connection between the two indicated that she remembered her inability to meet her child’s expressed needs.

Two school teachers during the war, remembered their students in very different ways. When Caroline Swails was asked if her students seemed nervous or agitated during the war she responded with, a resounding “no!”<sup>34</sup> She remembered her students as

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<sup>31</sup> *Wilmington Star News*, 7 March 1945.

<sup>32</sup> It should be noted that of the 14 women interviewed only three had children during the war. One of which delivered a baby during the war. Two other women taught school during the war and they were asked about their students. One woman interviewed was between the ages of 8 and 11 during the war. She was asked to comment about her experience as a child.

<sup>33</sup> Hannah Block, interview by author, 4 April 2002, Wilmington, North Carolina, tape recording.

unaffected by the war. Sallye Crawford taught at Lake Shore School near Moffit Village, a housing development shipyard workers called home. Most of the children she taught were new to the area because their parents had relocated to Wilmington for war work. She recalled her students as “undisciplined.” “They were pitiful, not all of them, but most of them. They were so displaced.”<sup>35</sup> While it is plausible that the children who relocated to Wilmington had a more difficult time during the war, this may not explain the striking difference between the memories of the two teachers. More than likely, the students who attended Lake Shore School had working mothers. Thus, it is possible that Ms. Crawford perceived her students to be unruly because she expected such behavior from children whose mothers worked.

Two interviewees were wartime mothers and they remembered their experiences in a positive light. Both women had husbands in the service. Estelle Edwards gave birth to her first child while her husband was overseas. She returned home to Wilmington to have the baby and remained there with her parents for six weeks until she was well enough to return to Greenville, South Carolina where her husband was stationed. When asked about child rearing during the war, she recalled the home that she shared with a serviceman’s wife and her young child. Ms. Edwards made no mention of any negative aspects of child rearing even though she was a temporary single mother.<sup>36</sup>

Evalina Williams recalled raising her four young children while her husband was in the army. When asked if she had any help with the children she responded, “No, God helped me a lot. I had to take the kids wherever I went...people were always very nice to

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<sup>34</sup> Caroline Swails, interview by author, 12 December 2002, Wilmington, North Carolina, tape recording.

<sup>35</sup> Sallye Crawford, interview by author, 14 January 2003, Wilmington, North Carolina, tape recording.

me. Taking them on the buses, someone would always be there to help me get on the bus, or get off the bus. That was a nice thing.” She did not work outside the home.<sup>37</sup> Certainly it was difficult to raise four young children by herself, but Ms. Williams remembered this time with her children as pleasant. Her recollection stressed the kindness of strangers. A spirit of a community pulling together, as if battling an enemy together, was a common thread running through these recollections. As a mother who did not work outside the home, her husband’s absenteeism may not have affected her performance as a mother. Prior to the war, when her husband worked, she did not have childcare, so running errands and negotiating domestic tasks with young children was not a new experience.

Perhaps the most poignant recollection of raising children during the war came from a woman who was a child during the war. Lethia Hankins remembered the war as a frightening time, although her parents tried to shield her from its many disruptions. She recalled a general fear that the war was going to “uproot everything.” Her recollections of blackouts and air-raid sirens were most vivid. “...it was scary, just plain scary to me. I had just decided that we were getting ready to be blown off the face of the Earth. I remember them, and as I said they were scary. And then after it was over, things went back to normal.” She remembered that her mother calmed her down. Her condensed recollection of many different instances indicated the overall impact of these experiences on a wartime childhood.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Estelle Edwards, interview by author, 11 November 2002, Wilmington, North Carolina, tape recording.

<sup>37</sup> Evalina Williams, interview by author, 11 December 2002, Wilmington, North Carolina, tape recording.

<sup>38</sup> Lethis Hankins, interview by author, 25 November 2002, Wilmington, North Carolina, tape recording.

Ms. Hankins' memories also indicated a transference probably from her parents. She internalized conversations she heard during and after the war as part of her memory. She recalled financial problems during the war, but commented that she had everything she needed. What she remembered about her parents' financial situation probably came from overheard conversations, as her parents never discussed financial matters in her presence. Whatever financial burdens the war placed on her family were not self-evident, "...I seemed to have gotten the things I needed."<sup>39</sup> Her recollections of financial difficulties during the war were probably not her actual recollections, but rather recalled concerns expressed by her parents.

Mothers faced new responsibilities during the war. The national crisis brought many mothers into the workforce because their labor force was needed to boost production for the nation and also because these jobs offered an opportunity to earn a decent income. Women also endured difficult pregnancies without their husbands. Many women also found themselves in new towns far away from their families and friends in order to be closer to their husbands. Children experienced the stresses of relocation, blackouts, and air-raid sirens. Mothers received relatively little support from women's articles about negotiating these new responsibilities. While articles and columns published during the early years of the war praised working mothers, these accolades quickly turned to scorn once it became clear that the war would soon be over. Mothers were forced to face new responsibilities pertaining to child-rearing and continued with their routine tasks even as a new urgency about motherhood emerged. Sixty years later, women in Wilmington recalled such disruptions, but many cast their experiences in a positive light.

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<sup>39</sup> Lethia Hankins.