

Sam Binkley:
Introduction

Mediated Immediacy
Living in the Now
(Rough Draft: Do Not Cite)

I started out talking about how to trip, and then I saw that life was a trip. So now I talk about how to live.

Stephen Gaskin,
Founder, The Farm
(quoted in *Catalog of Sexual Consciousness*)

This book attempts to capture a very broad trajectory of social and historical change in a very thin slice of popular cultural history. It looks at the changing ways in which people have fashioned and sustained a sense of self, and how the basis for this self has shifted from the more collective and customary forms proper to traditional societies to the more individualistic and inventive forms of today. An old axiom of the sociological tradition tells the story; where in traditional societies individuals were embedded in relatively stable social networks in which questions of self-identity were resolved by fixed cultural and traditional authorities, in the shaky and changing world of today having largely disavowed these authorities, we find ourselves compelled to answer those questions on our own through daily choices in style of life (Heelas, Lash and Morris 1996; Beck, Giddens and Lash 1994). Where once the moral guidance embodied by religion, the state or the local network was enough to tell each of us who we were, what we should do and why our lives were meaningful, today such answers can only be derived from things we accomplish as individuals in our careers and relationships, or in the way we choose to live. In short, received tradition has been replaced by individual choice. Particularly over the course of the last half of the

20th century identity has become increasingly a matter of choosing, or, to use the current sociological vernacular, identity is *reflexive*: it has come to express the individual's capacity to act back on itself with a constitutive force through choices made from an array of equally valid lifestyle options.

Several factors are cited as the source of this shift: the break up of old affiliations based on class and community has led to the erosion of networks of social capital (Henderson 1978). With the decline of civic involvement and the increased influence of consumer culture over our everyday lives, reflexivity has become central to the way people live, and feel themselves to be agents of their own lives. Such lives are no longer tests of character or expressions of commitment to shared purposes: they are ongoing projects of the person's own doing, feats of self-improvisation in which tradition and collective norms appear not as a moral resources (or what David Reisman called inner gyroscopes), but as remnants of an outmoded personal style, obstacles to be overcome in pursuit of self realization and personal authenticity (Reisman, Glazer and Denney 1950; Sennett 1998). Each of us must break free of tradition and the obligations it imposes in order that we become who we truly are.

In the chapters that follow, the meaning of this monumental sociological trope will be teased from the words and pages of a short-lived publishing fad that flourished in the 1970s, infusing notions of personal choice and style of life into the American cultural fabric. On the heels of the radicalism of the 1960s, a countercultural lifestyle print culture grew from its grassroots origins in the West coast small press movement to assume an influential role in the American book industry and popular culture more generally, reshaping lifestyle patterns and consumption habits for a broad segment of the middle class. From a web of small publishers, bookstores, communes, therapeutic centers, free schools, co-opts and small businesses came volumes of advice and instructional materials on cooking, sexuality, home construction, ecology, cycling, fitness and jogging — ways of shaping a sense of self through styles of life. Such a new discourse described a way of living in which liberation from the constraints of tradition was celebrated as the basis for a life of personal choice and creative self-work, and new modes of reflexivity were insinuated into the ways Americans lived their lives and shaped their identities — and, ultimately, spent their money.

More precisely, in these pages readers were called upon to envision their lives through a potent metaphor that permeated much of the new lifestyle discourse of that time: to live actively and creatively one had to liberate oneself from the imposed constraints of tradition, and in so doing free up a more

impulsive and natural resource of personal vitality, feeling and experience. To participate in the new lifestyle, one had to loosen oneself, to loosen up, to become loose. One had to let oneself go, to permit oneself to be expressive, to overcome inhibitions, to hang loose and go with the flow, to say yes to the richness of life in all of its reality and immediacy, and to release oneself from the abstract schedules of work and leisure into the mundane time of everyday experience. To be loose was to be real, to live in reality and to be oneself, but it was also to choose to be real, to decide to be who one truly was. The ultimate, truth of that choice lay in the choosing practice itself, in the reflexivity of life as a self referential way of living.

The loosening of the self could take many forms: through one's diet or one's sexual habits, one's embrace of nature, the way one volunteered to share one's feelings with others or through the way one exercised and cultivated one's body — loosening meant becoming an active chooser of a more authentic self. Loosening provided a framework within which one conducted a reflexive project of self-identity: it was a highly individualistic goal to which one devoted oneself, but also a task one approached with the support and guidance of a host of mediators relating expert knowledge on the new lifestyle through a new discourse on the appropriate techniques of self loosening. The purpose of this book is to capture the many ways in which, for readers of these lifestyle tracts as well as for their authors — hippies, freaks, autodidacts, inventors and other self styled entrepreneurs of the new lifestyle — style of life became a problem of loosening in which the constraints of tradition had to be prised open in order that a fuller, more real, less mediated life could emerge.

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Loosening Up

In 1971, Simon and Schuster published *The Underground Dictionary* by Dr. Eugene E. Landy, a clinical psychologist and lecturer at the University of Southern California. Dedicated “to my people,” the book offers itself as a sort of Rosetta Stone of countercultural slang, fashioning a “much-needed communications bridge between the Establishment and the underground culture” through a detailed inventory of the phrases, terms and expressions that were rapidly invading the popular lexicon of American youth. Most of the entries reflected the new technical jargon for drug use and sexual behavior Landy had

picked up in his work at a community health center for young people: “Come” we are told, refers to “male or female ejaculate,” (Landy 1971, 54); “Main squeeze: wife or girlfriend,” (125) and “Coast” is to “feel the effects of a drug” (52). But on more provocative terms, the *Dictionary* imparts a glimpse into the complex meanings and emotional styles inscribed in everyday habits of living and communicating, described through clandestine and restrictive words: “Up tight: in a state of extreme tension of anxiety; worried, disturbed; upset”(192), “Groovy: great, fantastic, joyful, happy” (93), “Cop out: Find an excuse, usually a phony one, to get out of something or a situation” (57).

Landy’s guide to underground slang unfolds a contentious landscape in which people could move and live, combining, refuting and mediating the opposing emotional and personal styles that defined the dispositions of mainstream and counterculture. Indeed, the world of countercultural slang appears to orchestrate a clash between two ways of experiencing the sensual world, and of relating that experience to new modes of self understandings: in the world of hip slang, the blinkered, unknowing, constraining ways of the establishment are undermined by a subterranean new language of feeling and experience — a vernacular for a new hedonism to be sure, but one fashioned on an ambitious program of ethical renewal and a singular commitment to the affirmation of feeling and impulse in daily life. “Float: to be under the influence of drugs;” “Boy: heroin;” “Grip: masturbate;” “Hump: have sexual intercourse;” “Rap: talk compulsively while high on drugs.” By giving voice to a flow of sensation that coursed through everyday interactions and conduct, countercultural slang released the speaker into a realm of feeling outside the anemic and constraining values of mainstream American culture.

More accurately, the world described by hip jargon unfolds a moral universe organized around the opposing values of self constraint and self release. At one end stands a relation of artificially imposed self limitation arrived at through the passive acceptance of an institutionalized norm: “Establishment: Those who hold positions of power and authority, such as politicians, police etc.; the dictators of conventional attitudes and values, and those attitudes and values themselves. The Establishment’s way of life is regarded as undesirable because of the lack of freedom and hypocrisy” (74-75). “Mister Charlie: White man, boss, White establishment man, He is one who lives in suburbia, usually has a white collar job, two to three children, a station wagon, and a compact car and a white picket fence. He has short hair and puts the American flag outside his house on patriotic holidays” (133). And at the other lies its opposite: an

affirmation of a self as an active force in the fashioning of experiences, realized through a release of the self into the flow of natural impulses and desires, and the sensuality and experience of everyday life:

“Flower: The philosophy of the flower comes from the fact that the flower is among the most natural of all things in nature; it is free, needing nothing more than the earth, air and sunshine to live. It is peaceful and beautiful and lives its beauty freely” (80). “Tell it like it is: Be open, honest, straightforward; hold nothing back because of fear of hurting someone’s feelings” (182). “Soul: an awareness and understanding of life, a naturalness of expression, being in contact with the naturalness of life and the environment, understanding yourself and others” (173). The world that this new vocabulary unfolds is one in which states of conformity and self regimentation are undermined, with every utterance, by an awareness and insight into the sensuality and meter of the lived moment — a rupture best conjured with these familiar words: “Hip: Aware, knowledgeable, informed, wise, with a comprehension of; in tune with the times”; “Square: “person with a conventional and provincial attitude” (176).

Between the hip and the square, then, lay a process of change — of becoming loose. The loosening of the self was a popular narrative told in many ways with many subtle variations, though for most people it spoke of a new livelihood, excavated from the stony edifice of tradition and the routines of conventional life. The looser life promised to release submerged, primordial energies and sensibilities long held in check — energies which when freed up, would empower one with a new capacity to act in and on one’s own life. Loosening invoked the idea of a more authentic, innocent and original source of the self, and promised a way of living that was more primary and immediate, but also more active and creative. Loose people were empowered to make choices over aspects of their lives that other people took for granted. Described with metaphors of eruption, epiphany and release, the loose life was also related with a deep sense of the significance of the textures of daily life and the minutiae of personal experience. It was lived in the immediacy of *the now* — a real life one could really experience: to “be yourself,” “do what was right for you,” to “let it all hang out” was to release a pent up pre-civilizational vitality, to become an artist of oneself and of one’s identity, to assume responsibility and take credit for what one made of oneself through the crafting of a distinctly loose style of life. Indeed, loosening was often related through stories of the dissolution of the boundaries of an artificial, outmoded identity through the unearthing of submerged, subterranean bonds with entities outside the self: ecological consciousness, for example, showed the

continuity between the industrial economy and natural eco-systems; the Human Potential movement shed light on the social substratum linking the self with others, and New Age medicine brought us into touch with the concealed links binding mind to body — each of which asks us to loosen ourselves into these newly uncovered totalities.

Significantly, the loosening metaphor proved immensely popular and infinitely adaptable across a range of lifestyle practices. In millions of American homes food became purer and more natural, clothing more sexual and revealing, home decor more authentic and rustic, sex more orgiastic, relationships more earnest and sincere. Young people increasingly sought more authentic experiences in wilderness trips while a variety of therapeutic programs sprang up to help strip away phoniness and put people in touch with who they really were. Authenticity was increasingly sought in the foods and garments of less uptight, non-Western peoples, while stress was increasingly massaged from tense muscles. Child rearing practices embraced the “permissiveness” associated with Benjamin Spock and the new child psychology while loose, formless bean bag chairs flopped onto lush, shag carpets and creative natural fabric wall hangings and macramé compositions adorned living room walls. In the bedroom, couples strove to overcome their hang ups through open marriages and swinger’s parties, while at the office ties were loosened or disappeared entirely, top buttons came undone, hair was allowed to hang down to shoulders, mustaches drooped, sideburns crept, chest hairs peeked and first names began to replace formal modes of address. Anything whose traditional form could be made to yield to a more impulsive vitality could be worked over and reinvented in a looser way.

There are, of course, sound economic reasons for the ascent of lifestyle as the new basis for identity in the decades following the Second World War, and particularly after the economic crises of the 1970s. Amid inflation, unemployment and economic slowdown, as the old industrial based economies of the postwar period began to wane in their ability to provide security and a stable way of life for the middle classes, many turned increasingly from traditional affiliations with work and employment to new habits in leisure, spending and consuming patterns for a sense of self and social membership (a process variously summarized under processes such as postmodernism, late capitalism or the post-Fordist turn, or, as Michel Maffesoli has termed it, the *Time of the Tribes* (Maffesoli 1996). As advertising, marketing, product design and retailing sought newer ways to connect with an increasingly diverse and unpredictable consumer,

themes of lifestyle provided an appealing template of meanings, easily attached to a variety of products and services. Particularly for a younger generation of professionals more attracted to work in the growing cultural industries (design, communications, services and human relations fields), style of life provided a framework for devising an identity as a member of a new kind of middle class, for whom leisure and taste mattered more than occupational status (Bourdieu 1984, 354-372). Indeed, much has been made recently of the part played by the counterculture in easing in a new culture of consumption and lifestyle through its ridicule of the adult world of work, its valorization of the expressive rebel and its invitation to playfulness in daily life — traits that would come to define the average consumer in the new millennium (Frank 1997).

But the loosening of the self cannot be read off from these changing economic currents as a simple determined effect, or as a prototype of now familiar marketing strategies. It must also be interpreted as a deeply subjective response to these crises, as an effort to come to terms with, by narrating, this cultural and economic breakdown in ways that invested them with purpose and meaning. Loosening was a story designed to allay a certain anxiety: it unfolded a small moral universe in which identity and selfhood was reinforced and stabilized as a meaningful project against the backdrop of traumatic twists and turns which threatened to extinguish meaning in all of its recognizable forms. What Anthony Giddens calls ontological insecurity, the sense of existential meaninglessness that shadows the construction of identity in modern societies, was allayed, however temporarily, in the lifestyle movements of the 1970s. More precisely, the anxiety and disorientation inflicted by the “malaise decade” was woven into reassuring narratives of meaningful growth and personal development — a culture of narcissism in which introspection stood in for the defiled symbols of shared public commitment. Loosening gave narrative form and moral meaning to the self amid a crisis of cultural authority that was, by the 1970s, fast engulfing the American middle classes.

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2. Lifestyle and Mediation

Implicit within the lifestyle print culture of the 1970s was an allegorical lesson related in numberless ways and in many varied combinations: to be loose was to be modern, and to be modern was to tell oneself a story of self-loosening, of a mediated and supervised relaxation of self control and an acquired talent for the immersion of oneself in bodily sensations, impulses and the inevitable flow of daily

events. The loose lifestyle called upon readers to embrace this modernity in dozens of small yet significant ways: to set aside social inhibitions and to express oneself without restraint in groups and relationships; to release oneself from the artificial prohibition on communion with nature enforced by technological civilization and to find oneself in oneness with the Earth and its natural products; to release one's body from the protocols of self presentation by letting one's hair grow or one's jeans to wear through or to cut through sexual mores and pursue one's desires. Indeed, the challenge of properly loosening oneself presented a task of tremendous technical skill and calculation: one had to work on oneself, monitor and supervise the growth of one's new sensibilities, tease out hidden blockages and bottlenecks that prevented one from freely choosing oneself, and becoming who one really was. The new life was lived in an immediate relationship to the everyday, but this immediacy was at the same time heavily mediated.

Within this looser self, then, was a certain animating force, a certain inner contradiction between the ideal of the loose life itself and the specific media through which it was described and disseminated. On the one hand, the new lifestyles asked their practitioners to relinquish self control and embrace the sensuality of the present, while on the other it demanded that they do this through a sustained program of relaxation and feeling that, through careful application, would yield the looser, more open life. The loosening of the self involved an intentional relaxation of the censoring habits imposed by the mental faculties over the body and its sensations and impulses; it demanded a will to lose oneself in the sensuality of the moment, to immerse oneself in the flow of unstructured time, and to permit authentic vital energies and sensibilities to show themselves in unrestrained ways. Efforts to humanize a cold, authoritarian and bureaucratic society would start, for many hippies, beatniks, radicals and others, with the release of the self into the real experiences of everyday life and into the real relations one shared with others, with nature and with one's own body — a great immediacy that promised to enrich the lives of anyone brave enough to take the plunge. Yet on the other hand, one had to *do* the lifestyle: the loosening of the self was something one chose to do and to keep on doing, and all of this required at least some measure of thought and planning.

As such, the new lifestyle was a celebration of the real, the authentic and the immediate, but it was also a technique, a mediated immediacy, something one had to learn to release oneself into. The contradiction between intuition and calculation, or immersion in experiences and the choice and

commitment one made to immersion as a general way of life, would provide an active and curious dynamic within the countercultural lifestyle movement of the early 1970s, particularly as this dynamic was adopted by a wider segment of the middle class and absorbed into the mainstream culture of consumption. The new lifestyle, even as it embraced the immediacy of a more authentic life, was a highly mediated affair, and it is in the cultural history of his mediation (and of the mediators themselves, their texts and their products) that the dissolution of the uptight into the loose can be apprehended.

So who were these mediators of the immediate? And through what media did they operate? The loosening of lifestyle was communicated in a body of instructional lifestyle literature that boomed in the decade following the 1960s — a publishing category and a genre of writing I call the countercultural lifestyle print culture, wherein a new way of talking and writing about lifestyle demonstrated an entirely novel kind of lifestyle expertise.

Countercultural Lifestyle Print Culture

In the early 1970s, as the counterculture of the 1960s turned its focus from mass mobilization to more innocuous lifestyle issues, a small publishing genre rose to prominence in the American book market: books on food, gardening, home construction, ecology, health, spirituality and relationships, often produced by small offbeat presses mostly located on the West coast, without large distribution deals or production budgets, amateurish and rough in their production quality, brandishing advice on such matters as food preparation, the construction of dwellings, home provisioning, sexuality, collective living, athletics and health, recycling, solar and wind power, exercise, massage, ecology, cycling, jogging, crafts, meditation and spirituality, hair and clothing. What started in the Bay Area as a small network of countercultural presses, bookstores, authors and critics developed, by the early 1970s, into a powerful presence on the American book market with the success of several distinctly Californian titles rocketing to the height of national sales (though largely through the efforts of East coast distributors). One book industry commentator attributed the success of the new Western presses to their unique engagement with more tangible problems of daily life: “Indian lore, Esalen-type therapeutics, ecological alarm, the occult explosion, sex experiments, the counterculture, and various forms of the New Life itself are what readers nationwide are buying” (Diehl 1973, 38). And such a new life, lived in the immediate, tangible and real

domain of stripped down everyday needs, demanded, curiously, the mediation of an instructional and pedagogical discourse which the new lifestyle experts were well poised to supply.

Lifestyle has, of course, always been a topic of reflection and expert advice, and a broad national market has always existed for books offering instruction on such diverse realms as cooking, sexual behavior, crafts, health and fitness, home decoration and travel. Yet there was something distinctive about the countercultural discourse on lifestyle that distinguished it from its forbearers and that that enabled it to speak directly to the experiences and anxieties gripping the American middle classes in the early part of the 1970s. A century of lifestyle discourse had premised itself largely on the authority of a non-practitioner expert, whose detachment from the actual practice of lifestyle was assumed. Lifestyle experts from Hoover to Nader wrote as detached specialists whose knowledge was not experiential, but abstract, and whose discourse was fundamentally managerial in spirit: it assumed a specific division of labor between conception and execution, and described techniques of living in a manner that distinguished them from the inner meaning they might hold for the practitioner in daily life. For a rebellious middle class consumed by crisis and increasingly suspicious of institutional experts in general, a more trustworthy source of lifestyle discourse was needed. For a middle class for whom everyday choices were called upon to supply greater measures of reassurance, meaning and ontological security, lifestyle and its discourses had to be “thickened” in the sense used by anthropologist Clifford Geertz: made heavier and richer with human stories and personal meanings.

In a countercultural discourse, the detached objectivity and authority of the expert was called into question and a new, more intimate voice was crafted, one capable not only of prescribing techniques and skills, but of investing personal significance in lifestyle as a meaning bestowing practice. At a time of broad cultural and moral crisis, in which the minutiae of daily life were enlisted in a reflexive practice of lifestyle, a new discourse on consumption and leisure would shed its detached tone and take on the intimacy and warmth of one who cares and lives according to the methods of the same life on which he advises. The countercultural discourse on lifestyle, as it exhorted the embrace of immediacy in daily life, itself embodied a more immediate voice: it spoke less of proper methods and techniques and more of the individual choices of the practitioners, and the suitability of these choices to one’s distinctive inclinations

and identities. Through a more intimate, reflexive discourse on personal need (a new mode of “soft” expertise), individual choice was celebrated as a meaning bestowing feature of daily life.

Starting in the late 1960s and expanding throughout the ‘70s, a lifestyle publishing trend injected this unique tone and distinct quality in the broader discourse on lifestyle. Hundreds of titles from little known authors offered personal advice from lay practitioners in various fields of everyday endeavor, sharing their counsel on the techniques of a lifestyle considered more authentic, more autonomous from the solutions of the mass market, and more suited to the uniqueness of the self-choosing individual. Beginning perhaps with the success of the *Whole Earth Catalog*, an ad hoc collection of product reviews, commentaries and ecological screeds gathered from hundreds of lifestylists and experimenters, by the mid ‘70s the book market was inundated with titles like *What Color is Your Parachute*, *Living on the Earth*, *Rainbook*, *The Moosewood Cookbook*, *Our Bodies Ourselves*, *The Massage Book*, *Domebook*, *Be Here Now*, *Tassajara Bread Book* and many others (Binkley 2002).

The “book as tool” philosophy espoused by the *Whole Earth* and adopted by other titles in this category attracted huge readerships and served many purposes: for former activists it steered the radicalism of the 1960s away from the barricades into safer, more innocuous realms of health, diet and other pursuits, while for millions in the middle class with little taste for political dissent it allowed an easy and comfortable liaison with an influential movement of activists, artists and intellectuals, without having to take any serious risks (Binkley 2003b). Yet these lifestyle specialists succeeded in establishing a new and independent voice on issues of personal wellbeing and daily conduct which set in motion a pattern of change that would extend to the remotest regions of middle class culture and everyday life. Many of these books were put together by communal groups, small circles of autodidacts, experimenters, visionaries and the occasional crackpot, often without publishing production experience, often circulated through networks of like-minded hippies, back-to-the-landers, and lifestyle entrepreneurs. A handful were picked up and promoted by large publishing houses based in the East, achieving national celebrity and selling out several editions, while many more circulated only in small editions.

The contradiction at the heart of the loose lifestyles was thus reproduced in the very media through which it was disseminated. Caught in an awkward role as mediators of lived immediacy, the strain of this contradiction gave this literature its distinct character. A roguish refusal of the authority of the traditional

expert manual with its objective tone of detached scientific specialization shaped an intimate and informal mode of advice. Amateurish typographic and formal qualities betrayed the grassroots economic and professional networks from which these books emerged, and the ad hoc production methods by which they were produced testified to a desire to evade the text-as-usual distance from the object conveyed in traditional lifestyle and other literary publications. They were in this sense, loose books relating advice on the loose life in the voice of loose expertise — in transition from uptight conventions of publication and instruction to livelier, more expressive and experiential advisory texts. Indeed, the reflexive mode of identity to which these publications spoke was more than advised in the words and pictures that filled their pages: it was tangibly practiced in the binding, the printing and the layouts that characterized the immediacy and tangibility to which they spoke.

But these mediators were not the only or the last ones to administer a discourse on the looser lifestyle. An important part of this story involves the absorption of certain features of the new discourse on lifestyle into the changing rhetorics of advertising and marketing, or into the rhetorics of health professionals, therapists and other administrators of mainstream discourse on lifestyle. As Madison Avenue underwent its own moral crisis in the 1970s, and as consumers increasingly turned away from the duplicitous and insincere voices of national advertising for more “real” sources of advice, new research methodologies like the Values and Lifestyles approach steered marketers toward a greater sensitivity to the intimacies of everyday consumer lives, and encouraged them to speak reflexively, in the language, not of the detached expert, but of the collegial co-practitioner. The new intimate mode of address characteristic of the countercultural *cum* middle class lifestyle expert was soon integrated into the warp and woof of consumer culture itself, and remains a seminal feature of the way millions of Americans shape their lifestyles into meaningful practices every day. What in a countercultural discourse on lifestyle had been an injunction to act creatively in the realization of personal authenticity, became, in the lifestyle consumption patterns of the 1980s and beyond, an injunction to spend on goods and services whose creativity and authenticity were defined in advance.

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Plan of the Present Study

In the pages that follow, the countercultural lifestyle print culture of the 1970s will be read in a holistic manner that takes in all facets of this culture, both material and symbolic. Against the backdrop of a broad historical sketch of the 1970s, and framed by a discussion of the changing status of expert discourse on matters of lifestyle and identity, dozens of countercultural lifestyle publications will be considered (though a few will be selected for careful review) in a manner that takes into account all their qualities as both narrative texts but also as material things, whose unique formats and design features often tell stories as valuable as the written messages they convey. On a broader institutional level, the social and economic networks through which these publications were produced and distributed to readers both within restricted countercultural circles and to wider national audiences will enter in as part of the overall account. All the elements that compose this lifestyle discourse as a print culture, in the widest sense, will figure into the present study: employing Robert Darnton's conception of what he terms the "communications circuit," all the various facets of the production, distribution and reception of printed matters will contribute to this analysis. This is, however, a study of lifestyle discourse, as over and against one of lifestyle practice. A selected emphasis will fall, therefore, on the texts themselves, as narratives of self transformation and prescriptive texts on the development of the self through lifestyle practices. A rounded approach more faithful to traditions of cultural studies might include a greater stress on the ground level reception of these texts and the extent to which they informed real practices. While such ends are worthy in themselves, for the sake of the economy of my argument I have chosen to pursue an inquiry into the narrative content of this print culture at the expense of such a more inclusive approach.

Nonetheless, there is throughout this study an effort to interpret this culture *as* a culture, that is, as a realm of meaningful conduct and interaction drawn together around salient symbols, metaphors and stories. A more thoroughgoing study of the institutional, economic and social networks that supported this print culture will be left for other authors: what is significant here is the ways in which such networks reproduced and represented the cultural and symbolic logic of this print culture itself — how the production techniques, the connections between various bookstores and publishers and the entrepreneurial styles of lifestyle writers themselves all participated in a world of meaning that shared in the same symbolic universe conveyed in the texts. In short, rather than subscribe to a view that places economic and social

infrastructure on one side, and cultural and symbolic superstructure on the other (often with a deterministic relation leading from the former to the latter), this study attempts to look at the two as sharing a common metaphoric function: while countercultural lifestyle publications espoused an immersion in the spontaneity of daily life, in trust, authenticity, a rejection of institutional expertise and mind numbing machinations of “the system,” the social and economic networks enacted these same injunctions through the way publications were written, produced, sold and disseminated. If countercultural lifestyle discourse espoused a loosening of the control mechanisms imposed on the self, then the micro-economic infrastructure through which this discourse was produced and disseminated, and the very publications as material objects themselves, also functioned as symbols of this lifestyle ethic. The lifestyle print culture’s way of doing business was analogous with, and served as a metaphor for, the content of its lifestyle message: the manner in which these books were produced and circulated illustrated the appeal of the message itself — a fact that is emblazoned on the surface of each of its products in the form of rough layout and amateurish (if more “real”) production qualities.

In what follows, heroic accounts of achieved unconstraint will be interpreted through stories of personal loosening and the print artifacts through which they were related — a loosening of self control that pointed toward a new style of life and a new way of construing identity. The plan of this book will pursue the study of these loosening discourses according to an agenda that first establishes a theoretical and historical framework, and moves on to a series of interpretive, descriptive cases. In Part I, *Middle Class in the Maelstrom*, three chapters provide a general understanding of the scope of the historical predicament in which a discourse of lifestyle emerged, of the freedoms and anxieties to which it was addressed, and the specific modes of expertise and the distinct media through which it operated. In Chapter 1, *Of Swingers and Organization Men*, the fundamental problem of lifestyle is discussed as a personal mediation of the transformations of late modernity as experienced through the erosion of middle class cultural authority. Calling principally on David Harvey’s thesis on the post-Fordist turn and Anthony Giddens’ treatments of lifestyle as a characteristic of late modernity, the case is made for a study of loosening as a specific response to a crisis in middle class cultural authority in the 1970s and the increasing conditions of individualization in American culture. A consideration of some classic formulations of the changing patterns of self constraint and self release provided by American sociologists maps out the shifting

conditions which produced a broader openness to experience and embrace of lifestyle in the early '70s, leading up to an appropriation and codification of lifestyle as a mainstream mode of consumption in the 1980s.

In chapter 2, *Experts Unbound*, the problem of loosening is applied to the more specific conditions of expert discourse, and of the changing status of lifestyle expertise through its incorporation of experiential knowledge, particularly for counterculturals. Recalling the expansion of the service sector and particularly the fields of health and human services in the 1970s, the case is made here that the changing status of expert discourse enabled a unique mode of exhortation and advice on the topic of lifestyle, one that was capable of instilling daily life choices with ethical and personal significance. In short, newly sensitized loose experts advised on the proper form of the loose lifestyle. Moreover, as popular attitudes toward mass consumption became increasingly skeptical, such empathic modes of address were appropriated into new marketing discourses, espousing a new sensitivity to the values and lifestyles of consumers. In Chapter 3, *Book as Tool*, the evolving status of the lifestyle expert is traced to the emergence of a countercultural print culture. This emerging publishing category is examined in relation to the changing American book market of the 1970s, and the rising interest in small, grass roots publishers on the West coast. Clashes between advocates of this emerging market and the loose lifestyle message it embodied, and the guardians of the more traditional uptight American book trade based in the larger Eastern houses are read as expressions of a tension between expressive and repressive, or loose and tight, cultural styles. Throughout, the ethic of looseness is examined as a broadly applied metaphor in this literature, governing the business practices in the loose network of California publishers, and the rough, informal techniques of printers and typesetters.

Part II, *Caring Texts*, undertakes a concerted interpretive study of countercultural lifestyle print discourse and of the loosening metaphor divided into three broadly distinct areas: ecology and nature; home and interpersonal life, and self and the body. In each of these chapters, a set of lifestyle concerns provides a framework wherein loosening is related through a distinct metaphor of attained unconstraint, or mediated immediacy, described through a specific binary construction which contrasts vitality, immediacy and expressiveness on the one hand, and convention, remoteness and constraint on the other. In Chapter 4, *We're All One*, to become loose is to free oneself of the technological constraints that separate the civilized

self from nature. In ecologically inspired lifestyle publications, one releases oneself into the wholeness of the Earth through a way of living that is authentic and in touch with the cyclical flows of large ecological systems and the inclusive natural processes that integrate the planet. Several ecological journals are discussed, including *Rainbook* and the *Whole Earth Catalog*, which variously describe a style of life premised on a freer, more intimate relationship with nature, contrasted with the exploitive mentality of industrial society. In Chapter 5, Getting Back Together, the task of loosening is discovered in the injunction to release oneself into the Other. Here lifestyle involves learning to let go of egoistic pretenses and to immerse oneself in spontaneous and unconstrained social communion and group membership. Trust, as a learned attitude toward social life, is here mediated through a discourse on collectivity and sharing, often defined in opposition to the competitive and instrumental relations typical of the straight world. Beginning with an investigation of the new sexual ethics of the 1970s (typified by the *Catalog of Sexual Consciousness*), books on communal life (*Celery Wine, Communities*), on geodesic dome construction (*Domebook, Shelter*) describe the loosening of the self as an intrinsically social problem, involving the affirmation of the self in collective everyday life. The chapter closes with a reflection on the incorporation of loosening into business practices through a study of one countercultural business network (*Briarpatch Book*). And in Chapter 6, Let it All Hang Out, loosening comes to refer to the release of the self into the body and its natural sensations. In the literature on “body work,” myriad techniques of relaxation and alternative fitness offered training in the immersion of the mind into the meter and sensuality of the body — a goal that is set in contrast to the regimes of competitive sport and military discipline which seek only to subordinate the body to the demands of the rational will. Loose forms of embodiment are described in a classic compendium of feminist body work techniques called *Getting Clear*, in several collections on massage and Rolfing, and in a new discourse on jogging and athletics, in which competition itself is redefined as an inward practice of personal identity. This configuration of the athlete, originally the product of countercultural discourse on fitness, ultimately becomes seminal to new forms of lifestyle consumption in the 1980s.

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