

SITCOMS AND SUBURBIA:
THE ROLE OF NETWORK TELEVISION IN THE DE-URBANIZATION OF THE U.S.,
1949-1991

By

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My study addresses the links between U.S. network television programming, particularly situation comedies of the Cold War era, and the post-WWII explosion of suburbia. In addition to historical work, I coded the contents of 500 TV sitcoms (1947 to 1995) to determine the setting of each sitcom as urban or non-urban. As various events— such as the USSR’s development of an atomic bomb in 1949, China’s development of an atomic weapon as well as the USSR’s development of a hydrogen bomb in 1955, and the USSR’s launching of Sputnik in 1957— exacerbated a climate of fear in the U.S., the number of TV sitcoms set in the cities noticeably decreased. There also appeared to be an inverse relationship between racial issues, civil-rights events, Supreme Court rulings, etc., and the number of sitcoms set in cities. My study shows that the geography (i.e., the settings) of television entertainment can contain ideological implications.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

The cities will be part of the country; I shall live 30 miles from my office in one direction, under a pine tree; my secretary will live 30 miles away from it too, in the other direction, under another pine tree. We shall both have our own car. We shall use up tires, wear out road surfaces and gears, consume oil and gasoline. All of which will necessitate a great deal of work—enough for all.

—Le Corbusier¹

The “Sitcom Suburbs”

Here comes dashing Ward Cleaver driving home from his office in the city in his shiny, new, Ford Fairlane convertible, tooling down a scenic street in Mayfield, USA. Behind a white picket fence waves Ward’s perky wife, June, in her starched dress and pearls, greeting dad with a smile as he pulls into the driveway. It’s the opening sequence from *Leave It to Beaver*.² This was the Cold War era’s suburban dream, a world where dad is the CEO,³ mom stays home and bakes cookies, “and the kids just don’t understand.”⁴

Fast forward to the 21st century: Traffic is nightmarish, the air has a brownish-yellow haze, water is getting harder to come by, and the planet is getting warmer by the decade. Many Americans rarely go anywhere without driving and barely acknowledge each other’s presence from their steel-and-glass exoskeletons. And the whole system hinged on the availability of

¹ Le Corbusier (Swiss architect-designer Charles-Edouard Jeanneret). *The Radiant City: Elements of a Doctrine of Urbanism to Be Used as the Basis of Our Machine-Age Civilization*. New York: Orion Books, 1967 [1933], 74.

² Bob Mosher, and Joe Connelly. *Leave It To Beaver, The Complete Second Season*. Gomalco Productions/Universal Studios. 2006 [1958].

³ “A new dynamic emerged... one [in which] television families respected authority, modeled conformity and followed social rules.” Judy Kutulas. “Who Rules the Roost?” In Mary M., and Laura R. Linder, eds. *The Sitcom Reader: America Viewed and Skewed*. Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press. Gerard Jones wrote that the new paradigm of the family was one that resembled a corporate board of directors with the father as the chairman and the other family members as directors. The board members had a say, but dad, as CEO, made the final decisions. Gerard Jones. *Honey, I’m Home!: Sitcoms, Selling the American Dream*. New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1992, 4.

⁴ Gerry Goffin and Carole King. “Pleasant Valley Sunday.” Recorded by the Monkees. “Pisces, Aquarius, Capricorn & Jones, Ltd.” Colgems Records, 1967.

cheap oil.⁵ At the end of the 19th century and during the first half of the 20th, U.S. planners designed beautiful, pedestrian-friendly, sociable cities like the ones in Europe, but this art⁶ seems to have been lost after nearly everyone in the U.S. who could afford to leave the city moved to the suburbs to partake in the “new, improved” American dream. It didn’t turn out the way television promised.⁷

The “sitcom suburbs,”⁸ epitomized in such shows as *Leave it to Beaver*, *The Life of Riley*, *Father Knows Best*, and *The Brady Bunch*, were based on the premise that

“the proper residential environment was one in which every family resided in a one-family home with plenty of yard within a locally controlled, homogeneous community... [It] is still embraced by many Americans today, having been incorporated into our common understanding of the American Dream itself.”⁹ Many components of this “new, improved” American dream, as my study will show, are relics of the Cold War era and its accompanying nuclear threat.

⁵ Jane Holtz Kay. *Asphalt Nation*. New York: Crown Publishers, 1997, 270. Also see James Howard Kunstler. *The Geography of Nowhere: The Rise and Decline of America’s Man-Made Landscape*. New York: Free Press, 1994, 109-110, 124. Also see Daniel Lazare. *America’s Undeclared War: What’s Killing Our Cities and How We Can Stop It*. New York: Harcourt, 2001, 221, 223. On current foreign-policy implications of sprawl, petro-politics and terrorism, see Michael Q. Dudley. “Low Densities Are No Answer to the Threat of Terrorism.” *Planetizen*. October 23, 2001. <http://www.planitzen.com/node/30> (retrieved March 19, 2006).

⁶ This was exemplified in the City Beautiful architectural movement that began in Chicago in the 1890s, which borrowed its inspiration from the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris.

⁷ Auto emissions have been recognized as a major cause of “greenhouse” gases. John M De Cicco. “Exploring Greenhouse Gas Reduction Options for Automobiles.” Environmental Defense symposium report. 2003. http://www.environmentaldefense.org/documents/3653_SymposiumReport_final.pdf (retrieved April 2, 2007). Moreover, auto emissions are a leading cause of respiratory and pulmonary ailments. David L Buckeridge, Richard Glazier; Bart J. Harvey, Michael Escobar, Carl Amrhein, and John Frank. “Effect of Motor Vehicle Emissions on Respiratory Health in an Urban Area.” *Environmental Health Perspectives* 110 (3). March, 2002, 293–300.

⁸ The term “sitcom suburbs,” referring to the mass-manufactured developments of William Levitt et al., was coined by architect and scholar Dolores Hayden. Dolores Hayden. “Model houses for the Millions: The Making of the American Suburban Landscape, 1820-2000.” Lincoln Institute of Land Policy. May 31, 2000, 8. http://www.lincolninst.edu/pubs/dl/94_Hayden00.pdf (retrieved March 6, 2007).

⁹ Mary C. Sies. “The City Transformed: Nature, Technology and the Suburban Ideal, 1877-1917.” *Journal of Urban History* 14. November, 1987, 83.

Cold War History

The Cold War era (1946-1991) is a remarkable period because rarely do historians find so many changes in such a short time frame. Sitcoms, suburbia, atomic ennui, McCarthyism, and the Civil Rights movement are all part of the Cold War culture. A common assumption is that the Cold War began when the Russians blocked access to East Berlin in June of 1948, but Cold War policy was being formulated as early as 1946 if not earlier: both George F. Kennan, a State Department policy planner in the Truman administration, and John Foster Dulles, later to become Eisenhower's secretary of state, had proposed proactive policies against the USSR two years before the blockade.¹⁰ Many historians mark the opening salvo of the Cold War with Winston Churchill's "Iron Curtain" speech given in Truman's home state:

"From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic, an iron curtain has descended across the continent. Behind that line lie all the capitals of the ancient states of Central and Eastern Europe. Warsaw, Berlin, Prague, Vienna, Budapest, Belgrade, Bucharest, and Sofia; all these famous cities and the populations around them lie in what I must call the Soviet sphere and all are subject, in one form or another, not only to Soviet influence but to a very high and in some cases increasing measure of control from Moscow."¹¹

Yet only a year earlier, Churchill had been one of the architects of the Feb. 11, 1945 Yalta plan, along with Roosevelt and Stalin, to divide Europe into occupation zones and had agreed to Stalin's demands for Russian control over Eastern Europe. This understanding evaporated after Roosevelt's death on April 12. Kennan's policy of "containment" of the USSR's sphere of influence was further developed by the president in the form of the Truman Doctrine. Truman's plan, however, advocated more than mere containment. The catalyst had been the

¹⁰ Guy Oakes. *The Imaginary War: Civil Defense and American Culture*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994, 23-29. Of the two, Dulles was by far the most belligerent when it came to foreign policy. While Kennan had proposed mere containment, by 1952, Dulles was urging "massive retaliation." John F. Dulles. "A Policy of Boldness." *Life* 22, May, 1952: 146-160.

¹¹ Winston Churchill. Speech given at Westminster College, Fulton, Mo. March 5, 1946.

postwar battles between Greek communists and monarchists; the administration clearly did not want communists in power anywhere in Europe.

In early 1947, Truman met with several influential Congressmen to drum up support for his intervention plans, plans that would have been considered dangerously internationalist and Wilsonian in scope—so much so that Republican senator Arthur Vandenberg (Mich.) advised Truman that his only hope was to appear before Congress and “scare hell out of the country.”¹² Truman did just that, simultaneously addressing the nation on network radio. He requested \$89 million for interventions in Greece or *anywhere* communist-inspired revolutions might appear (even though some of these turned out to be primarily indigenous nationalist movements, not seriously affiliated with the USSR as U.S. officials had suspected).¹³ The world was dividing into two camps; at least that was the picture Truman and other U.S. officials were painting.¹⁴

In 1949, Cold War fear reached near-hysterical proportions when it was discovered that the USSR had tested its own atomic weapon. Earlier warnings that densely populated U.S. cities had become tempting nuclear targets suddenly took on a new gravity: nuclear physicist Edward Teller called them “death traps.”¹⁵ For four years the U.S. had enjoyed a monopoly on atomic

¹² Congressional Record, 80th Congress, First Session. March 12, 1947, 1980-1981. Quoted in Nelson W. Polsby. *Political Innovation in America: The Politics of Policy Initiation*. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1984, 86. Before being appointed to the Senate (to fill a vacancy) in 1928, Vandenberg had been a newspaper publisher and editor in his hometown of Grand Rapids, Mich. Traditionally a staunch isolationist, he became a supporter of the Truman Doctrine. *United States Senate*. “Arthur Vandenberg: A Featured Biography.” http://www.senate.gov/artandhistory/history/common/generic/Featured_Bio_Vandenberg.htm (retrieved April 27, 2007).

¹³ Lawrence S. Wittner. *American Intervention in Greece, 1943-1949*. *The Journal of American History* 3 (69). Dec., 1982, 759.

¹⁴ The dividing of various segments into two opposing poles, as in “us versus them” or “you’re either with us or against us,” is a false binary and a key indicator of propaganda in action. Ronald B. Standler. “Propaganda and How to Recognize It.” n.d. <http://www.rbs0.com/propaganda.pdf> (retrieved March 1, 2007). There were and would continue to be “nonaligned” countries, such as India.

¹⁵ Jacob Marshak, Edward Teller, and Lawrence R. Klein. “Dispersal of Cities and Industries.” *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* 1, April 15, 1946, 13. Quoted in Matthew Farish. “Disaster and Decentralization: American Cities

energy. To illustrate how serious the federal government was about maintaining its nuclear monopoly: in 1953, four years after the USSR developed its atomic weapon, Ethel and Julius Rosenberg were executed under the 1917 Espionage Act on charges that they had passed atomic secrets to “enemies,” even though the U.S. was not officially at war with the USSR.

The Rosenbergs were the only people ever executed under this law. McCarthyism and its accompanying witch-hunt mentality, abetted by Hollywood and TV executives, prevailed. CBS even instituted loyalty oaths for its employees.¹⁶

With the rampant fear of Russian communists, their suspected fifth-column cohorts, and their new atomic weapon, many city dwellers started packing. It wasn't long before the *New York Times* began reporting the resulting rural real-estate boom. “There's no question about it—people in the cities are scared,” a Kingston, N.Y., real-estate broker told a *Times* reporter two weeks after the Atomic Energy Commission issued its handbook on what to expect in the event of an atomic attack.¹⁷

Truman succeeded in “scaring hell out of the country” and getting his open-ended war against communism. The media dutifully began supporting this new foreign policy. Several mass-circulation magazines followed Truman's agenda. Simulated scenarios of nuclear attacks and their possible results became *de rigueur* in *Time*, *Life*, *Reader's Digest*, and *Collier's*.¹⁸ In

and the Cold War.” *Cultural Geographies*. October, 2003: 125-148. Also see Ralph Lapp, *Must We Hide?* 2nd Edition. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1981 [1949].

¹⁶ William Paley. *As It Happened: A Memoir*. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co, 1979, 281.

¹⁷ Charles Grutzner. “City folks' fear of bombs aids boom in rural realty.” *New York Times*. August 27, 1950, 1.

¹⁸ See, for example, “Naked City.” [Title possibly borrowed from a 1948 noir film by Jules Dassin]. *Time*. Nov. 28, 1949, 66. Also at. <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,856423,00.html>. Also see “The City Under the Bomb.” *Time*, Oct. 12, 1950. <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,813408,00.html> (retrieved April 1, 2007).

1948, 20th Century-Fox Films released *The Iron Curtain*, directed by William Wellman.¹⁹ Even evangelist Billy Graham jumped on the bandwagon: “Do you know the area that is marked out for the enemy’s first bombs? New York! Secondly, Chicago, and thirdly, the city of Los Angeles.”²⁰

The Eisenhower administration took the Truman Doctrine and ran with it. Under secretary of state John Foster Dulles’ recommendations, the administration adopted an actively aggressive stance. In 1953, a National Security Council initiative advocated a nuclear response to any “challenge to vital American interests” from any communist nation.²¹ Yet perhaps the fear campaign was working a little too well. The administration did not want the public so terrified that it would become demoralized, or worse, immobilized. So Eisenhower’s civil-defense officials created a program of “emotion management.”²² In 1953, Eisenhower’s chief of the Federal Civil Defense Administration, the equivalent of today’s Federal Emergency Management Agency, used *Collier’s* to issue a dire warning to Americans that their own panic and terror could cause more mayhem than a nuclear attack itself.²³

¹⁹ Philip French. “The Red Scare Goes Hollywood.” In *Cold War: An Illustrated History*. New York: Little, Brown and Company. Excerpt reprinted at *CNN Interactive*. <http://www.cnn.com/SPECIALS/cold.war/experience/culture/film.essay/index.html> (retrieved April 1, 2007)

²⁰ Quoted in Paul Boyer. *By the Bomb’s Early Light*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1985, 14. Graham was voicing a fairly common Southern Baptist (and anti-urbanist) belief that big cities are dens of inequity and sin, modern-day equivalents of Sodom and Gomorrah, and that disaster is a sign of God’s wrath. In 2001, Southern Baptist preachers Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson echoed this sentiment, suggesting the 9/11 attacks were God’s punishment against New York City for harboring homosexuals, atheists, feminists, women who seek abortions, liberals, secular humanists and the American Civil Liberties Union. *700 Club*. Sept. 13, 2001. Gustav Niebuhr. *New York Times*. Late Edition (East Coast): Sep 14, 2001, A18. Database: ProQuest Newspapers.

²¹ National Security Council. NSC 162/2. October 30, 1953. In *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952-1953*, vol. 2, pt. 1, 590. Washington, D.C., Government Printing Office, 1984.

²² Guy Oakes. “Managing Nuclear Terror: The Genesis of American Civil Defense Strategy.” *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society* 5, 1992, 361-403. Also appears as “The Cold War System of Emotion Management: Mobilizing the Home Front for the Third World War.” In Robert Jackall, ed. *Propaganda*. New York: New York University Press, 1995, 274-277. Also see Oakes, 1994.

²³ Val Peterson. “Panic, the Ultimate Weapon.” *Collier’s*. August 21, 1953, 99-105.

Cold War-Suburbia Connection

Several significant events occurred during the period from 1954 to 1957 that might have sent many more urban dwellers packing. On March 1, 1954, the U.S. tested a fusion bomb, 1,000 times more destructive than the fission bomb dropped on Hiroshima, on Bikini Atoll in the Marshall Islands.²⁴ In August, Dulles recommended that Eisenhower use this new weapon against China as a show of force.²⁵ Earlier that year, Dulles made headlines with a speech claiming that the president had the authority to launch a nuclear war without a Congressional declaration if the U.S. or *any of its allies*, such as Nationalist China, were “threatened.”²⁶ Dulles made headlines many more times that year with his atomic saber-rattling.²⁷ Also in 1954 Eisenhower introduced his Interstate Defense Highway bill in his State of the Union Address; these superhighways signaled a new phase of suburban development. Another crucial event was the Supreme Court’s *Brown vs. School Board* decision on May 17, which alerted America that desegregation in public schools was about to take place on a nationwide basis.

In 1955, the USSR developed its own H-bomb. Coincidentally or not, that same year, TV’s *Goldbergs*, a quintessentially urban, Jewish family, left the Bronx for the fictional town of

²⁴ The first hydrogen bomb was detonated by the U.S. on nearby Eniwatak on Nov. 1, 1952; this was announced approximately two months later by President Truman, on Jan. 7, 1953, during his last weeks in office.

²⁵ Dulles tried to convince Eisenhower that it would be advantageous to use the newly developed H-bomb to show the world, as Brands stated, that the U.S. fully intended to “protect American commitments [by] using by using anything in its arsenal.” Dulles considered its use an issue of credibility: “He feared that the longer the U.S. went without using these weapons, the less would be their deterrent value.” In August Eisenhower considered doing so during a dispute with China over “strategically trivial” Nationalist outposts Quemoy and Matsu in the Taiwan Strait. H.W. Brands, Jr., “Massive Retaliation: Credibility and Crisis Management in the Taiwan Strait.” *International Security* 4 (12). Spring, 1988, 124-151.

²⁶ According to an editorial by James Reston of the *New York Times*, Dulles claimed that Congress’s ratification of the 1949 North Atlantic Treaty gave the president this authorization. James Reston. “‘Massive Atomic Retaliation’ and the Constitution.” *New York Times*. June 17, 1954, E8. Database: ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

²⁷ Even Secretary of Defense Charles E. Wilson (former president of General Motors) suggested that the U.S. tone down its “atom-rattling.” Ellie Abel. “Wilson Asserts Too Many in U. S. Are Guilty of Rattling Atom Bomb.” *New York Times*, Feb 3, 1954, 1. Database: ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

Haverville, N.Y. A year later, Eisenhower's Interstate Defense Highways bill would pass through Congress. In early 1957, Lucy and Ricky Ricardo of *I Love Lucy* bolted the city for Westport, Conn., an hour's commute from their former Manhattan home.²⁸ Also in 1957, the fear factor would be ratcheted up several more notches more when the USSR launched Sputnik: Senate majority leader Lyndon Johnson announced that any minute the Russians might start dropping atomic bombs on U.S. cities from satellites in space.²⁹

Suburbia Overview: The “New! Improved!” American Dream

Suburbia, however, wasn't just a Cold War phenomenon. It had been developing for decades, even centuries.³⁰ Americans since colonial days have dreamt of escaping the cities and finding freedom beyond the frontier. This dream is well reflected in American literature.³¹ Suburbs have long been a part of the popular imagination, and the “American dream” of owning one's own house and piece of land has been an ideal since transportation advances made commuter suburbs possible. Until the 1960s, metropolitan (i.e., combined city and suburban) populations were still concentrated in urban areas. But by 1970, the majority of Americans lived in the suburbs (see Fig. A-1 in Appendix). Nowhere was this exodus more apparent than on the television situation comedies of the Cold War era.

²⁸ Desilu Productions. “Lucy Wants to Move to the Country.” Episode 167. *I Love Lucy: The Complete Sixth Season*. Paramount Home Video, 2006 [1957].

²⁹ U.S. Centennial of Flight Commission “Sputnik and the Crisis that Followed.” 2003. On-line. <http://www.centennialofflight.gov/essay/SPACEFLIGHT/Sputnik/SP16.htm>. (retrieved August 15, 2005.)

³⁰ The first suburb in what is now the U.S. was Brookline, Mass., originally called Muddy River Hamlet, built in the 1630s. Town of Brookline. “History of Brookline.” n.d. <http://www.town.brookline.ma.us/towninformation>. (retrieved August 15, 2005.)

³¹ Leo Marx. “The Puzzle of Anti-Urbanism in Classic American Literature.” In Michael C. Jaye, and Ann C. Watts, eds. *Literature and the Urban Experience: Essays on the City and Literature*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1981. Also see Leo Marx. *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964. Also see Morton White, and Lucia White. *The Intellectual Versus the City*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press and MIT Press, 1962.

Suburbanesque characters began appearing in the newspaper comics in the early 1930s with Dagwood and Blondie Bumstead and family.³² Similar characters appeared on radio, such as *The Aldrich Family* (NBC, 1939) and Chester A. Riley and family on *The Life of Riley* (CBS, 1941). Explicitly suburban settings began appearing in movies after World War II (*Miracle on 34th Street*, 1947; *Mister Blandings Builds his Dream House*, 1948). Similar characters appeared on early television shows (*The Hartmans*, NBC, 1949; *The Ruggles*, ABC, 1949-1952; and *Life with the Erwins*, ABC, 1950-1955). Still, there were plenty of characters, including families, who lived in the city. Some, such as the Goldbergs (of *The Goldbergs*), the Ricardos (of *I Love Lucy*), and the Kramdens (of *The Honeymooners*), lived modestly; others such as the Williamses (of *Make Room for Daddy*), the Albrights (of *My Little Margie*), and Jack Benny were well-heeled, lived in luxurious apartments and had servants. From 1949 to 1954, TV sitcoms were evenly distributed among urban and small-town settings. In 1951, the city was the setting in nearly 70% of the most popular TV sitcoms.³³

In 1954, however, urban settings began to disappear, and by the last part of the 1965-1966 season, they were gone entirely. This and other drops coincide with events associated with the Cold War; they also coincide with the emergence of the Civil Rights movement, particularly the 1954 *Brown v. School Board of Topeka* decision. All of these events and more would contribute to the explosion of suburban development.

³² Blondie Boopadoop, as originally conceived by the strip's creator, Chick Young, was a single, city-dwelling "flapper" (i.e., a rebellious young woman). But in 1933, Young made the decision to have her settle down with her boyfriend, Dagwood Bumstead, a disinherited playboy, and the pair moved to the suburbs to raise two children and a dog. "Blondie Gets Married." U.S. Library of Congress. n.d. <http://www.loc.gov/loc/lcib/0006/blondie1.html> (retrieved August 15, 2005).

³³ The sample size from 1948 is negligible, and information about these shows is practically impossible to obtain because they were broadcast live, not recorded on film. There were only four domestic sitcoms on network television: *Mary Kay and Johnny* (DuMont), *The Growing Paynes* (DuMont) and *The Laytons* (DuMont); *The Hartmans at Home* (NBC). At least two of these were set in urban apartments. Only one of these, *Mary Kay and Johnny*, set in the city, survived into the next season.

The city would return to TV sitcoms, not once, but twice. At the dawning of *détente* in the 1970s, urban settings began reappearing, and the city experienced a new “golden age.” Then came busing. In the 1980s, Ronald Reagan’s “evil empire” rhetoric, aimed at the USSR, signaled the resurrection of the Cold War, and the city once again began disappearing from sitcoms. After busing started winding down and the USSR collapsed in 1991, the city would return to television, stronger than ever (*Seinfeld*, *Friends*, *Sex and the City*, et al.).

Gender Roles, the Cold War, and Suburbia

Gender roles were also dictated by Cold War planners: In the civil-defense establishment’s view, responsible, patriotic women were not to hold jobs; women were expected to take care of the home front so their husbands would be free to do outside rescue and rebuilding work in the aftermath of a nuclear attack.³⁴ Yet this pressure to return to the home came only a few years after the government had encouraged women to join the work force with its “Rosie the Riveter” ad campaigns. The concept of a woman’s “place” being in the home was strongly reinforced Cold War domestic sitcoms. There were a few working-women sitcoms in the 1950s, such as *Our Miss Brooks* (CBS, 1952-1956), *Private Secretary* (1953-1957, switching from CBS to NBC and back again), *It’s Always Jan* (CBS, 1955-1956), *The Gale Storm Show* (CBS, 1956-1959; ABC, 1959-1960), and *The Ann Sothern Show* (CBS, 1958-1961). These shows didn’t so much glorify working women as mock them. Many if not most of these characters were portrayed as lonely and pathetic, in other words, as losers.³⁵ Ten years before Friedan published *The Feminine Mystique*, Lucy Ricardo (Lucille Ball) on *I Love Lucy* (the title itself suggests the show is seen from the husband’s point of view) was obviously bored,

³⁴ Kristina Zarleno. “Civilian Threat, the Suburban Citadel, and Atomic Age American Women.” *Signs*, 24 (4), Summer, 1999, 939-941.

³⁵ This was still the case even as late as 1988’s *Murphy Brown* (CBS, 1988-1998).

unfulfilled, and dissatisfied with her role as a housewife and homebody. Many episodes of the show deal with what happens when Lucy fails to “know her place” and tries to get work outside the home. For example, in the show’s first season, Lucy found a job as a TV-commercial huckster pitching a product called Vitameatavegemin. Not knowing the product contains alcohol, she cheerily gulps down the elixir on-camera, but she has to do so many takes to get it right that she winds up ridiculously drunk, and of course, Ricky (Desi Arnaz), her husband has to come to take her home. Naturally, Lucy learns her lesson, until next time.³⁶

In another example, from *The Dick Van Dyke Show* (CBS, 1961-1966), Laura Petrie (Mary Tyler Moore), a former dancer, sometimes seemed annoyed with her role as a passive housewife. A 1961 episode (predating the release of Friedan’s study by two years) revolved around how her husband, Rob (Dick Van Dyke), might try to contain Laura’s anger and her ambitions. Laura had gotten an offer to dance on *The Alan Brady Show*, the show for which Rob served as head writer. If Laura took the offer, it would have threatened the order of the household as well as Rob’s self-image. The episode ends on a predictably happy note when Laura decides, “I don't want to be a dancer, I want to be your wife.”³⁷ On another episode, Rob again feels his role as breadwinner as well as his masculinity is challenged when Laura publishes a children’s book.³⁸

Unlike Lucy and Laura, portrayed as rebellious and childlike, June Cleaver (Barbara Billingsley) certainly knew her role and nearly always deferred to her authoritarian husband, Ward (Hugh Beaumont). *Leave It to Beaver*’s format was nearly an exact replica of *Father*

³⁶ Desilu Productions. “Lucy Does a Commercial.” Episode 30. *I Love Lucy: The Complete First Season*. Paramount Home Video. 2005 [1951].

³⁷ Calvada Productions. “To Tell or Not to Tell.” Episode 11. *The Dick Van Dyke Show: The Complete Series, 1961-1966*. Image Entertainment, 2005 [1961].

³⁸ Ibid. “See Rob Write; Write, Rob, Write.” Episode 138.

Knows Best (1954-1963, appearing at various times on all three networks): occasionally the mother chided the father figure or questioned one of his decisions but neither she nor the children ever challenged his authority. These professional-dad shows were quite unlike earlier, bumbling-dad shows such as *Life of Riley* (NBC, 1949-1950 with Jackie Gleason as Riley; returned on NBC with William Bendix in the lead role from 1953-1958), in which the father is portrayed as inept and his “authority” given mere lip service.³⁹ This image, a holdover from an earlier era (*Riley* made its debut on radio in 1944), would become obsolete with the coming of Civil Defense: dad’s authority, both real and symbolic, was presented by civil-defense officials as a matter of life or death.⁴⁰ June, content in her proper place, seemed perfectly happy at home with her modern appliances, vacuuming floors wearing a starched dress, pearls and high heels. Unlike the petulant Laura Petrie, June never complained about being stuck in the house, despite the fact that family had only one car and Ward took it to work every day, leaving her virtually stranded. Perhaps the most obedient housewife of all was Joan Stevens On *I Married Joan* (NBC, 1952-1955; again the title suggests the husband’s point of view). In one episode, Joan (Joan Davis) feels she had let her husband, Judge Brad Stevens (William Backus), down as his helpmeet because she can’t play golf. She wants to accompany him on the course so they can socialize with the “right” people. As a housewife and a cook, however, Joan is impeccable.⁴¹

Even some of the men felt trapped by the rigid gender roles of the Cold War. In a 1955 episode of *Our Miss Brooks* (CBS, 1952-1956), gender roles as well as their relationships to the Cold War are addressed simultaneously. High-school principal Conklin (Gale Gordon) intends to

³⁹ Stupid-dad shows would be revived on the Fox Network in 1987 with *Married... With Children*, followed by *The Simpsons* in 1989.

⁴⁰ Zarlengo, 1999, 941.

⁴¹ Joan Davis Productions. “Country Club.” Episode 33. *I Married Joan Collection, Vol 1*. Alpha Video, 2006 [1953].

demonstrate his bravery by jumping from the school's fourth floor into a fireman's net. This publicity stunt, as teacher Connie Brooks (Eve Arden) calls it, is presented as part of a Cold War civil-defense drill. The issue gets complicated, in gender terms, when fellow teacher Mr. Boynton (Robert Rockwell) remarks, "It's only natural that in matters of bravery, men should rate above the weaker sex." Naturally, the wimpy, egg-headed principal chickens out; he tries to pressure Miss Brooks into substituting for him. The conflict is finally resolved when it is shown that both men and women are understandably afraid. No one seems even the least aware of the inherent absurdity of their jumping off a roof in an effort to show their unquestioning support for Eisenhower's civil-defense programs.⁴²

Definition, Origins and Aesthetics of Anti-Urbanism

Anti-urbanism appeared as contempt for cities and their negative features; rarely did it acknowledge the cities' positive contributions to U.S. culture. Anti-urbanism assumes rural ways were intrinsically better than city life and that pastoral people were somehow more authentic, as noted by several film scholars, including John O'Leary and Rick Worland :

American populism championed the supposed purity and authenticity of small-town and rural life over the dangers and anomie of the big city; its essentially Jacksonian vision extolled the superior virtues of the common man over the urban sophisticate, [who is] usually depicted as an elitist and ultimately proven to be foolish or corrupt.⁴³

Anti-urbanism often appeared as a nostalgic longing for better days and simpler times. It could be construed largely as a reaction against modernity, one that resists changes to the social

⁴² Desilu Productions. "The Big Jump." Episode 98. *Our Miss Brooks*. TV's Greatest Comedies: 1950s. Falcon Pictures Group, 2002 [1955].

⁴³ John O'Leary, and Rick Worland. "Against the Organization Man: The Andy Griffith Show and the Small-Town Family Ideal." In Mary M. Dalton and Laura R. Linder. *The Sitcom Reader: America Viewed and Skewed*. Albany, N.Y: State University of New York Press, 2005, 79. Many observers would argue that this vision is essentially Jeffersonian; however, Jackson's philosophy was in many ways an extension of Jefferson's with a populist spin.

order that were created by the Industrial Revolution.⁴⁴ Focusing on the negative aspects of the cities, anti-urbanists can build a good case. The city's notoriety during the industrial era was well deserved. However, its problems were not insurmountable, as Henry Ford implied they were. Declaring, "The city is doomed," Ford suggested, rather than investing money in fixing the city's problems, that Americans simply abandon their cities altogether.⁴⁵ Ford, of course, had every incentive for advocating this position, since his product was to be the vehicle by which Americans made their escape.

Anti-urbanism has a crucial philosophical significance in the U.S. It is a pervasive concept that can be found throughout American as well as British literature, our mass media and even in our Constitution. Founding Father Thomas Jefferson was vigorously anti-urban; he and fellow Southern planter James Madison attempted to structure the U.S. Constitution in ways that would protect and insulate the feudal South against competition from the urbanized North.⁴⁶ Another pillar of American anti-urbanism is Jefferson's ideal of "rugged individualism," that the freedom of the individual matters more than the welfare of society. As film scholars Michael Ryan and Douglas Kellner explained:

"The exaltation of the male individual in conservative thought is always linked to nature... . The privileging of male rights in nature is a noticeably conservative concept in that it *eschews social responsibility altogether* [emphasis added]. The more 'natural' Sunbelt [i.e., "red states"] is thus a metaphor for the conservative ideal of individual freedom, the exaltation of individual rights over collective responsibility."⁴⁷

⁴⁴ By "modernity" I do not mean to imply either positive or negative results; it often comprises both.

⁴⁵ Quoted in Lazare, 2001, 131.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 12, 20, 53.

⁴⁷ Michael Ryan, and Douglas Kellner. *Camera Politica: The Politics and Ideology of Contemporary Hollywood Film*. Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1988, 91.

Anti-urbanism has a decidedly populist appeal, Ryan and Kellner added: “Populism appears in U.S. culture as a celebration of the virtues of the common man, resistance to large, impersonal institutions and a privileging of nature, rurality, and simplicity over urban, cosmopolitan modernity.”⁴⁸ Images of America have always been linked to the myth of the lone individual’s escape from archaic or oppressive institutions.⁴⁹ Perhaps nowhere could this ideology of individual freedom and escape from *civitas* be better exemplified than in the peculiar genre of the American Western, which, coincidentally or not, was one of the biggest popular entertainments on television during the Cold War. The Western genre began around the turn of the 20th century with what was called “dime novels” and later became extremely popular in film. By the time it landed on television, it was practically an institution.⁵⁰

Escape is a common theme in American literature, and escapism as entertainment works well in movies and television.⁵¹ Perhaps this is because the U.S. was settled by separatist Puritans who wanted to escape the established social order.⁵² Americans’ longing for escape from urban decadence and decay seems strange for a people who have always been a city-building sort. Still, it is a common theme, from Hester Prynne’s plan to run off into the

⁴⁸ Ibid., 313.

⁴⁹ Marx, 1981, 63-80.

⁵⁰ A partial list of TV Westerns that were hits during the Cold War era would include *Sugarfoot*; *Have Gun, Will Travel*; *Bonanza*; *Wagon Train*; *Rawhide*; *The Virginian* (based one of the first Western novels); *High Chapparral*; *The Big Valley*; *Maverick*; *Gunsmoke*; *Northwest Passage*; *Texas John Slaughter*; *Laredo*; *The Lone Ranger*; *Daniel Boone*; *Riverboat*; and many others. By 1965, however, the genre had pretty much run its course on television. In 1977, film director George Lukas combined America’s obsessions with the frontier and space flight, creating the blockbuster hit *Star Wars*, which spawned an entire series of movies.

⁵¹ Neil Postman. *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business*. New York: Penguin, 1985, 5.

⁵² An element British and American anti-urbanists had in common is a Calvinist-rooted belief that cities are places of sin and inequity. Puritans and people with Victorian-type values thought it too easy to commit adultery or fornication in anonymous cities populated by apartments. Such sins would be less likely in neighborhoods consisting of single-family homes, where neighbors can keep an eye on each other. The detached house made it easy for self-appointed moral arbiters to monitor their neighbors’ comings and goings. Kenneth Jackson. *Crabgrass Frontier*. New York: 1985, 90. Also see Kunstler, 2001, 16.

wilderness with her lover in Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* (1850) to Jack Kerouac's rambling adventures in *On the Road* (1957). It is indeed peculiar that anti-urbanism should be so profuse in American and British literature, because both cultures are highly urbanized. But, as Kenneth Jackson points out, the U.S. and the U.K. are "of two minds" when it comes to cities: On one hand, cities are engines of capitalism and upward mobility; on the other, they are hotbeds of filth, pollution, decay, poverty and crime, not to mention moral turpitude.⁵³

This ambiguity is also apparent in modern film, especially in regard to the city of New York: for example, Martin Scorsese's *Taxi Driver* (1976) depicts Manhattan as a filthy, corrupt place full of psychopaths, yet a year later in *New York, New York* (1977), the same director paints the city as colorful, cultured, and charming. Anti-urbanism in Hollywood film is rife. The detective/crime genre, descended from "pulp fiction" novels of the 1940s and 1950s and usually referred to as *film noir* because of its dark, shadowy *mise en scene*, is inherently anti-urban. Such films embraced a harsh look designed to evoke the "mean streets" of the city. Mutations of *noir* also include the generally anti-urban, violent-crime subgenres such as "psycho" and "slasher" films.⁵⁴ Nearly all the disaster movies of the 1970s and 1980s are set in urban locales.

In the 1970s, Hollywood turned its fear tactics on Los Angeles in these "disaster flicks," the most notable of which were *Towering Inferno* and *Earthquake* (both 1974), both of which dealt with tall buildings in downtown Los Angeles.⁵⁵ One of the most blatantly anti-urban disaster flicks is John Carpenter's *Escape from New York* (1981) in which the entire island of

⁵³ Jackson, Kenneth. *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1985, 12.

⁵⁴ Tim Dirks. "Film noir." *Filmsite.org*. 1996. <http://www.filmsite.org/filmnoir.html> (retrieved Sept. 12, 2005).

⁵⁵ *Internet Movie Database*. "Towering Inferno, 1974." n.d. <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0072308/> (retrieved April 1, 2007). Also see "Earthquake, 1974." n.d. <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0071455/> (retrieved April 1, 2007).

Manhattan has been turned into a maximum-security prison.⁵⁶ Anti-urbanism even appeared in George Lucas' 1977 blockbuster, *Star Wars*, which resembled a Western set in a distant galaxy. "[T]he city is depicted as a site of vice where monsters gamble, kill and listen to jazz."⁵⁷

Suburbia as an Ideal

The suburbs have existed for as long as cities.⁵⁸ In Europe's ancient fortified cities, the areas outside the walls were the province of the homeless and the unwanted. In Europe today, central-city areas are reserved for the well-heeled, while outlying areas are left to the less fortunate, the reverse of the model seen in the U.S. after the Cold War. In Amsterdam, for example, public housing is on the outskirts of the city, necessitating mass-transit commutes for masses of immigrant workers, while the core areas are highly desirable and prohibitively expensive. A similar situation prevails in Paris as well.⁵⁹

In England, as in the U.S., things evolved differently. This stems partly from the tradition of English nobles to preserve their manorial estates as status symbols.⁶⁰ England's powerful anti-urban streak might stem from simple nostalgia for the feudal tradition, along with an added aversion to the blight, pollution, and overcrowding created in the cities by its Industrial Revolution.⁶¹ England's difficult and often reluctant transition to modernity is depicted in

⁵⁶ Ibid. "Escape from New York, 1981." n.d. <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0082340/> (retrieved April 1, 2007).

⁵⁷ Ryan and Kellner, 1988, 231.

⁵⁸ Jackson, 1985, 12-19, 25.

⁵⁹ On the suburbs as the original slums, see Jackson, 1985, 12-19. On the modern geography of Paris, see Clay Risen. "Don't Blame Le Corbusier for the French Riots." *The New Republic*. Nov. 29, 2005. <http://www.tnr.com/doc.mhtml?i=w051128&s=rise112905> (retrieved April 2, 2007).

⁶⁰ Raymond Williams. *The Country and the City*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973, 48-49.

⁶¹ For a history of these themes in English literature, see Williams, 1973. For a discussion of these in American literature, see Marx, 1964, and Marx, 1981. For a discussion of these themes in movies, see Allison Kaufman. "Escape From Modernity? Suburb/City in Urban Theory and Film." *Critical Sense*, Winter 2001, 121-152. Also see Ryan and Kellner, 1988, 91.

literature by Daniel Defoe, Charles Dickens, Jane Austen, William Booth, Jack London, Thomas Hardy, E.M. Forster, and many more. These same struggles can still be seen in such moderns films as Roman Polanski's adaptation of Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1979), in James Ivory's (1992) adaptation of Forster's *Howard's End* (the title is a reference to Ebenezer Howard's design), and in Robert Altman's *Gosford Park* (2001).

The British proclivity for anti-urban themes and English culture's glorification of the suburbs may be a legitimate reaction to the squalor, disease, and pollution created by its Industrial Revolution. In the 1800s, English peasants began leaving the manors, where they were often mistreated, for job prospects in the city. But life in the city may have been even worse. The resulting degradation and misery for these displaced workers who had nowhere to go but the slums was perhaps best illustrated in the fiction of Charles Dickens. Anybody who could afford to wanted to get away from the city, even if only for a while. The development of rail lines and the passage of the Cheap Trains Act in 1883 made commuting economical and within the reach of the middle classes. The earliest planned suburbs were conceptualized as idyllic, simulated villages and often had the word "park" or "village" in their names. The first of these was Eyre Estate in St. Johns Wood outside London, designed by John Nash in 1820. Planned suburbs appeared in the U.S in the form of Alexander Jackson Davis's Llewellyn Park in West Orange, N.J., in 1852 and Frederick Law Olmsted's Riverside, outside Chicago in 1868. In 1898 Ebenezer Howard provided the prototype "garden suburb" in Letchworth.⁶² Howard's "Garden

⁶² Ebenezer Howard. *Garden Cities of To-morrow*. London: Faber, 1946 [1902], 55. Howard, who was living in Chicago when Olmsted's Riverside was being built, may have borrowed ideas from Olmsted and brought them to England when he returned in 1876. Howard was not an architect by trade.

City” model was considerably more elegant than the cheap, mass-market version William Levitt created in the U.S. by borrowing manufacturing techniques from Henry Ford.⁶³

Suburban living for many represented an escape from citizenship and its responsibilities. Before urban renewal, improving the cities was not an option. This was reflected by the fact that the FHA would only guarantee loans for *new* houses, not to improve old houses in old neighborhoods. As Lazare noted, “[I]n the U.S., the problem of rebuilding older urban areas still tends to be solved by running away from them.”⁶⁴ Or as Ford himself declared, “We shall solve our city problem by leaving the city.”⁶⁵

Development of the Automobile and its Effects

Ford had every incentive to promote this view, since his main product, the cheap auto, would be the primary means of escape. It is no exaggeration to say that Ford’s creation literally changed the face of the entire country. Autos had been around since the 1880s but had been hand-made, expensive luxury items. Reasoning that if he could drop prices, he could more than make up in volume what he lost in price per unit, Ford expanded the market downward to the point where nearly any working person could afford one. He did this through use of efficiency experts, always searching for faster and easier ways to build autos and by finding ways to simplify manufacturing processes that did not require intensive skills, thereby reducing labor costs. In 1908, Ford introduced his Model T at the phenomenally low price of \$825

⁶³ Jackson, 1985, 236, 239.

⁶⁴ Marion Clawson. “Land Use Trends.” In Hawley, Amos H. and Sara Mills Mazie, eds. *Non-metropolitan America in Transition*. Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1981, 648.

⁶⁵ Quoted in Lazare, 2001, 131. Also see Vince Carducci, and Phaedra Robinson. “D-Town Three-for-All: The Secret Life of Suburbia.” *Metro Times*. Sept. 29, 2004. <http://www.metrotimes.com/editorial/story.asp?m=6786> (retrieved April 2, 2007).

(approximately \$17,000 in 2006 dollars); in 1916 he was able to cut it to \$345 (approximately \$6,300 in 2006 dollars).⁶⁶ This was within the average workingman's budget, and sales took off.

Ford brought the auto to the people, but the unintended consequences of his accomplishments are staggering: traffic jams, road rage, air pollution, lung disease, enormous subsidized health costs, sprawl, strip malls, loss of rain runoff due to too much pavement, cities holding in heat due to too much pavement, and *47,000 people per year killed on American highways*, not to mention the millions maimed and seriously injured.⁶⁷

Purpose of Study

My study will demonstrate that a marked change in network television's attitudes toward cities appeared at a precise period in time, specifically, the hottest years of the Cold War. It will examine the role of the U.S. mass media, particularly network television, in fostering anti-urbanism. It will show that, like rings on a tree or layers of geological sediment, the landscape of TV sitcoms from 1947 to 1995 mirrors important events in the history of the Cold War. There are indications that this landscape reflects events in the Civil Rights struggle as well.⁶⁸

First, it will offer a definition and history of anti-urbanism and the ideals it embodies, along with examples of its depictions in English and American literature and mass media (see Appendix B). Secondly, it will explore the role of the mass media in supporting these ideals and examine the question of whether the media *actively* promoted or merely reflected these ideals.

⁶⁶ Kunstler, 1993, 89.

⁶⁷ Over the course of 60 years, the number Americans killed on the highways would equate to a veritable holocaust in the millions. Kay, 1994, 103. Yet the exorbitant death tolls from auto accidents rarely seem to make news. Barry Glassner. *The Culture of Fear: Why Americans Are Afraid of the Wrong Things*. New York: Basic Books, 1999, passim.

⁶⁸ Borstelmann and Dudziak have drawn a direct link between the Cold War and the Civil Rights movement. Thomas Borstelmann. *The Cold War and the Color Line*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001. Also see Mary Dudziak. *Cold War Civil Rights*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000.

Finally, it will quantitatively analyze U.S. television sitcoms in an attempt to ascertain whether and how the prevalence of urban images in situation comedies correlates with events of that era.

My study offers several possible explanations for the disappearance of urban settings on TV sitcoms. There are many explanations; none seems to be a single causative factor. The result probably comprises a confluence of factors, and my study will attempt to examine as many of these as possible. The headings below will describe the factors that might have spurred the exodus to the suburbs and the resulting changes in the geography of network television.

- A. The suburbanization movement: This had been developing for generations and was beginning to shift into high gear during the Great Depression but had been postponed by WWII. It was boosted by Fordist advances in housing manufacturing and a pent-up demand caused by the war. Various media played a role in supporting this movement, including mass-market magazines, novels, plays, movies, radio, and, finally, television.
- B. Economic stimulus: These manufacturing methods came along at the same time hundreds of thousands of WWII veterans were returning and needed jobs, and housing was in short supply. U.S. leaders were afraid the Depression might return as well.⁶⁹ Building and construction trades, car culture, consumerism, commuterism, mortgage banking: all these were stimulated by the promotion of suburbia, which had not been possible on such a grand scale until the development of modern mass media, particularly television.⁷⁰
- C. Deconcentration: An elaborate proposal was devised by planners to move workers and “productive citizens” out of the cities in light of the new Russian bomb threat. African Americans and immigrants, deemed the most likely to espouse left-wing or socialist tendencies, were consciously left behind.⁷¹
- D. Race/class relations: The civil-rights movement, protests, riots, white backlash, white flight, busing and the intrinsic impulse of Americans to segregate by income all contributed to the urban exodus. The people left behind in the cities often found

⁶⁹ Jackson, 1985, 248. Also see Kunstler, 106.

⁷⁰ When Jones said sitcoms were “selling the American Dream,” he meant it both literally and figuratively. Jones, 1992.

⁷¹ Farish, 2003, 130. Also see Alexander Von Hoffman. “Why They Built Pruitt-Igoe.” Taubman Centre Publications. A. Alfred Taubman Centre for State and Local Government at Harvard, University, 2002. Also in Bauman, et al., eds. *From Tenements to the Taylor Homes*. University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000, 180-205.

themselves jobless, desperate and angry. Their outbursts, in the form of riots, created a backlash and “white flight” that led to more isolation for them as well as the “symbolic annihilation” of African Americans from film and television.⁷² Recurring African American characters on network television shows reached a nadir in the years 1957 to 1960.⁷³

- E. Developments in the industry: Broadcast licenses, which had been confined to big cities from 1948 to 1952 by the FCC’s “freeze,” were expanded into small towns after the moratorium on new licenses was lifted. This caused changes in the demographics of television audiences, and TV’s new geography reflected this expansion. This was best exemplified by the “hayseed comedies” of the 1950s and 1960s. Also a change in TV’s business model from single sponsors to “spot” ads gave the networks more control over their own content and eventually broke the stranglehold sponsors had over content.
- F. The power of television: Many developments occurred during the television era that may not have been possible before. TV proved to be an irresistible force in society, one that has the power to set norms. As shown by Gerbner et al., for heavy viewers, television images can sometimes seem more real than reality. Therefore, if most characters on television are seen living in the suburbs, heavy viewers may come to see this as the “normal” place to live and to perceive other lifestyles as deviant or weird.⁷⁴

Another purpose of my study is to situate anti-urbanism on television in historical-literary context. Because anti-urbanism has deep roots in both U.S. and British culture, suburbia has always been an easy sell, but never as easy as when it became presented nightly on network TV as the “normal” way to live. Many studies of anti-urbanism have posed the question, “Where did our cities go?” Too few have asked, “What are the philosophical and psychological underpinnings that got us here?” My study will examine several possible explanations as to how

⁷² The term “symbolic annihilation,” attributed to Gaye Tuchman, et al., was originally employed by feminist scholars to describe women’s banishment from the public sphere, but it also applies to minorities such as African Americans, Asian Americans, Native Americans, gays, lesbians and others. See Gaye Tuchman, Arlene K. Daniels, and James Benét. “The Symbolic Annihilation of Women by the Mass Media.” In *Hearth and Home: Images of Women in the Mass Media*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978, 3-38.

⁷³ Michael R Fitzgerald. “The Era of ‘Non-Recognition’: How U.S. Advertisers Contributed to the Virtual Elimination of African Americans from Entertainment Television, 1953-1960.” Unpublished paper. April 20, 2007

⁷⁴ George Gerbner, and Larry Gross. “The Scary World of Television’s Heavy Viewer.” *Psychology Today*. April 1976, 41-45.

and why suburban settings came to dominate U.S. network sitcoms during the Cold War. It will also assess the power of signs and symbols (i.e., semiotics), particularly television images, in shaping U.S. geography as well as our culture. Television has both been shaped by U.S. geography and has, in turn, helped shape it. Another goal is to question whether there was a *purpose* for creating this deluge of idealized but utterly fake imagery, and if there were a meta-narrative or some type of overarching theme tying together these messages, whom might it benefit?

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Urbanism, Anti-Urbanism and Urban Design

The geography of any civilization, including the symbolic geography of its fiction, will reflect its ideology. There are dozens of studies on the history of the suburbs, how they were shaped by the automobile and by mass-production techniques and how they have, in turn, shaped U.S. society and people's interactions with their neighbors (or lack thereof). Both Daniel Lazare and James Howard Kunstler point to suburbia's dependence on the automobile, which in turn creates an intense demand for cheap oil along with concomitant foreign-policy complications.¹ Jane Holtz Kay put it bluntly: "Washington defended cheap oil in its international military policy and subsidized homes and highways in its domestic ones."² Widely considered the definitive work on suburbanization, Kenneth Jackson provided a well-rounded history of the suburbs, focusing on the suburban building boom of the Cold War years. He also traces the historic roots of the racial and class divide between the city and the suburbs.³ Jane Holtz Kay and Dolores Hayden look at suburbia from an architectural/design view; they also explain architecture's effects on people's lives as individuals and as citizens.⁴ Hayden called the suburban dream home "the least suitable housing imaginable for employed housewives and mothers."⁵

Anti-urbanism's effects on Anglo-American arts and literature has been examined by many scholars as well. Leo Marx, and Morton and Lucia White have addressed the history of

¹ Lazare, 2001, 221, 223. Kunstler, 1994, 109-100.

² Kay, 1997, 270.

³ Jackson, 1985.

⁴ Kay, 1997. Also see Dolores Hayden. *Redesigning the American Dream: Gender, Housing, and Family Life*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1986.

⁵ Hayden, 1984, 50.

anti-urbanist ideals in American literature, from Henry David Thoreau to Jack Kerouac.⁶ Several scholars, such as Mark O'Steen, Allison Kaufman, and Edward Dimendberg, have examined the close relationship between the city, the atomic bomb, and urban paranoia in film noir.⁷ In the 1970s, Raymond Williams conducted an in-depth historical survey of the ways in which the pastoral ideals of feudalism managed to remain vital in 18th- and 19th-century England, an aesthetic that migrated to the agricultural and rural regions of the U.S. The passing of village life in England was being lamented even as early as the Middle Ages, Williams noted.⁸ In the 1960s, urbanist Lewis Mumford examined the relationship between city life and *civitas* and how that fabric was being torn apart by highways and suburbs.⁹

Deconcentration

Interest in urban-vulnerability policies is a fairly recent trend among Cold War historians. “Historians have paid little attention to policymakers’ fear of atomic attack as a significant factor in population dispersal,” wrote Kathleen Tobin in 2002, but this is changing, she said.¹⁰ One of the earliest historians to address this topic was propaganda expert Guy Oakes in 1994.¹¹ Currently, however, communications researchers must synthesize overviews from various disciplines. In 2003, geographer Matthew Farish, using primary documents, many of which had

⁶ Marx, 1981. Also see Marx, 1964. Also see White and White. *The Intellectual Versus the City*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press and MIT Press, 1962.

⁷ Mark O'Steen. “The Big Secret: Film Noir and Atomic Fear.” *Journal of Popular Film and Television* 22 (2), Summer 1994, 79. Also see Edward Dimendberg. “Kiss the City Goodbye.” *Lusitania* 7. Spring: 55-56. Reprinted in Edward Dimendberg. *Film Noir and the Spaces of Modernity*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004.

⁸ Williams, 1973.

⁹ Lewis Mumford. *The City in History: Its Origins, Its Transformations and Its Prospects*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1961.

¹⁰ Kathleen A Tobin. “The Reduction of Urban Vulnerability: Revisiting 1950s American Suburbanization as Civil Defense.” *Cold War History*, 2 (2), January, 2002, 1.

¹¹ Oakes, 1994, passim.

been classified, assembled a convincing case that suburbia's explosive phase in the 1950s was indeed stimulated by the development of the atomic bomb and planners' reactions to it. He outlines in detail several programs of "deconcentration" or "defensive dispersal" that were instigated by the executive branch in the wake of the USSR's development of an atomic bomb. Feminist scholar Katrina Zarlengo discussed this aspect in her 1999 study and also provided additional primary sources.¹² Beauregard, on the other hand, argued that although decentralization was an ongoing process, atomic fear was a "minor factor" because no official policy had ever been announced.¹³ Architectural critic Reinhold Martin examined the influence of the Cold War on urban architecture and provided actual "decentralized city plans" from 1945 that indicates the area of an atom-bomb blast and how designers might deal with it.¹⁴ Urbanist Michael Quinn Dudley presented an overview of the origins of sprawl as a civil-defense strategy and also addressed the international implications of deconcentration and oil dependency on U.S. foreign relations, especially on the Middle East.¹⁵ In 1949, Ralph Lapp, head of the nuclear physics branch of the Office of Naval Research and a participant in the Manhattan Project,

¹² Farish, 2003, 125-148. Also see Zarlengo, 1999, 925-958. Zarlengo includes Norbert Wiener's geographic plan for defensive dispersal, which was featured in a two-page spread in *Life in 1950*. See Wiener, Norbert. "Cities that Survive the Bomb." Norbert Wiener Papers at Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Undated draft 10, box 12, folder 638. Shown in Zarlengo, 934. Also see "How U.S. Cities Can Prepare for Atomic War," *Life* 29 (25). Dec. 18, 1950, 76-77.

¹³ Robert A. Beauregard. *Voices of Decline: The Postwar Fate of U.S. Cities*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1995, 58. This is not exactly the case. The 82nd Congress passed the Defense Housing, Community Facilities and Service Act of 1951, which promoted dispersal, and also in 1951, President Truman issued a memo (not exactly an executive order, but a written directive) promoting industrial dispersal. Floyd M. Riddick. "The Eighty-Second Congress: First Session." *Western Political Quarterly* 5 (1). March, 1952, 94-108. See also Harry S Truman. "Memorandum and Statement of Policy on the Need for Industrial Dispersion." August 10, 1951. From John Woolley, and Gerhard Peters. *The American Presidency Project*. University of California. n.d. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=13875> (retrieved April 2, 2007).

¹⁴ Reinhold Martin. *The Organizational Complex: Architecture, Media and the Corporate Space*. Boston, Mass.: MIT Press, 2003. Martin includes the Norbert Wiener plan as well as three other possible plans by U.S. Navy nuclear physicist Ralph Lapp. Lapp, 1949, 163.

¹⁵ Michael Quinn Dudley. "Sprawl as Strategy: City Planners Face the Bomb." *Journal of Planning Education and Research*, 2001; 21-52. Also see Michael Dudley, 2001.

described in a book-length study what the actual results might be if an atomic bomb landed a direct hit on Grand Central Station. According to Lapp, this was a lesson the Allies had learned from Germany during WWII: The reason Germany was able to hold out so long against a colossal pounding was because its industries were dispersed over wide areas, which made bombing them much more difficult and costly.¹⁶

Feminist, Critical, and Cultural views

Zarlengo is primarily concerned with the ways in which civil-defense strategies called for a standardized role for suburban housewives.¹⁷ Wendy Kozol also examined the 1950s suburban boom from the point of view of the U.S. housewife, by examining women's portrayals in the media and how they were expected to behave.¹⁸ Kozol analyzed dozens of issues of *Life* during the Cold War years and noted the way the magazine actively supported and promoted suburban development. Kozol also notes suburbia's ties (or dependence) on Cold War politics but concludes that suburban home building and the consumption that went along with it most likely represented an economic-stimulus program that began in the 1930s, was postponed during the war, and was then reintroduced as a civil-defense imperative.¹⁹ The effects of suburbanization and suburban *ennui* on women have been a popular theme in feminist studies, going back to Betty Freidan's seminal 1963 book, *The Feminine Mystique*.²⁰ Her study inspired a generation of feminist scholars such as Zarlengo, Kozol, Nina Leibman, Mary Beth Haralovich, Patricia Mellencamp, and others. Most of these scholars have examined how the media (particularly TV

¹⁶ According to Lapp, in 1949, 60% of the U.S. population lived in cities. Lapp, 1949, 141.

¹⁷ Zarlengo, 1999, 925-958.

¹⁸ Wendy Kozol. "The Kind of People Who Make Good Americans." *From Life's America: Family and Nation in Postwar Journalism*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994, passim.

¹⁹ Kozol. E-mail correspondence with author. June 14, 2005.

²⁰ Betty Friedan. *The Feminine Mystique*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1963.

sitcoms) and the suburbs, working symbiotically, created a “gender prison” for both sexes but mainly for women, who were expected to be obedient and grateful housewives.²¹ Lynn Spigel primarily examined the origins of the nuclear family in the nuclear age.²²

There have been several studies of the ways in which U.S. network-television sitcoms promoted suburban, middle-class values as well as real estate. Two of the most prominent authors in this critical view are Gerard Jones and David Marc.²³ Douglas Rushkoff addressed the role of the city in contemporary television in a 2002 journal article, stating,

“Suburban sitcoms of that era, like *Father Knows Best*, *The Dick Van Dyke Show*, *Leave It to Beaver*, and even *The Brady Bunch*, all tended to promote life in the suburbs as somehow more wholesome than the city for a postwar American family.... The ability of these families to solve their problems in a half-hour was *really an advertisement for the suburbs* [emphasis added].”²⁴

Sociologist Stuart Hall, generally regarded as the leading expert in British cultural studies, incorporates elements of postcolonial and psychoanalytical literary theories (including the psychological, virtually archetypal origins of racism), semiotics and “ideologies of representation” (i.e., how minorities are portrayed in ways that benefit the dominant group) to media studies.²⁵

²¹ One of the most chilling works addressing (or possibly lampooning) this phenomenon was an ironic 1972 novel written by a man. See Ira Levin. *The Stepford Wives*. Harper & Row, 1972. It was made into a Hollywood movie twice (1975, 2004).

²² Lynn Spigel. *Welcome to the Dreamhouse: Popular Media and Postwar Suburbs*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2001.

²³ Jones, 1992. Also see Marc, 1989. Also see Nina Leibman. *Living Room Lectures: The Fifties Family in Film and Television*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995.

²⁴ Douglas Rushkoff. “Mediasprawl: Springfield, USA.” *Iowa Journal of Cultural Studies*. 3, Fall, 2003. Reprinted at <http://www.uiowa.edu/~ijcs/suburbia/rushkoff.htm> (retrieved Aug. 31, 2005).

²⁵ Stuart Hall. “Culture, the Media, and the ‘Ideological Effect.’” *Mass Communication and Society*. James Curran, Michael Gurevitch, and Janet Woollacott. London: Edward Arnold, 1977, 315-348. Also see Stuart Hall. “The Spectacle of the ‘Other.’” *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*. London: Sage Publications, 1997, 223-290.

Developments in the Broadcasting Industry

Changes in way the broadcasting industry did business as well as in the composition of its audiences contributed to changes in its geography. Perhaps the most extensive overview of developments of the broadcast industry is a 1979 historical study by Erik Barnouw.²⁶ Barnouw traces the origins and often deleterious effects of advertising on radio and TV, as does Robert McChesney.²⁷ The lifting of the 1948-1952 FCC license freeze and some of its ramifications are discussed by Castleman and Podrazik.²⁸ More enlightening, however, is CBS chairman William S. Paley's autobiography, in which he provides insider views of demographics research and their influence on programming decisions.²⁹ Vincent Brook has suggested that another development, the change from live production based in New York to filmed production (mostly based in Hollywood), drastically changed production values and settings on TV sitcoms.³⁰

²⁶ Erik Barnouw. *Tube of Plenty: The Evolution of American Television*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990. For a retrospective view of television's business practices, see Barnouw. *The Sponsor: Notes on Modern Potentates*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978, passim.

²⁷ Robert W. McChesney. *The Problem of the Media: U.S. Communications Politics in the 21st Century*. New York: Monthly Review Press, 2004.

²⁸ Harry Castleman, and Walter J. Podrazik. "The Thaw." In Castleman and Podrazik, eds. *Watching TV: Six Decades of American Television*. Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 2004.

²⁹ Paley, 1979.

³⁰ Brook primarily referred to *The Goldbergs*, which began on radio in 1929, went to live TV in 1949, and finally appeared in filmed TV form in its last season, 1955-1956. Vincent Brook. "The Americanization of Molly: How Mid-Fifties TV Homogenized 'The Goldbergs' (And Got 'Berg-larized' in the Process)." *Cinema Journal* 38 (4), Summer, 1999, 45-67.

CHAPTER 3 THEORETICAL BASIS

The theoretical basis for my study is expressed by the term “norm setting.” Norm setting is not related to McCombs and Shaw’s agenda-setting theory with the exception that both theories recognize gatekeepers have the power to define the terms of public discourse.¹ Norm setting as referred to herein is a synthesis of cultivation analysis (Gerber, Signorielli, et al.) and spiral of silence (Noelle-Neumann).²

Cultivation analysis was a middle ground between the early “hypodermic” theories of a hapless, vulnerable public injected with ideology and some later-developed theories that media have little effect on the public’s attitudes and behavior.³ Developed by George Gerbner and associates in the late 1960s, cultivation analysis builds on Berger and Luckmann’s 1964 social construction of reality.⁴ Cultivation analysis was initially referred to as a “stalagmite theory” because it suggested that media effects build up over time for heavy TV viewers. The key element in cultivation analysis is *heavy viewing*, because the researchers showed that light viewers experienced little or no effects. To be effective, the message must be persistently *cultivated*, the way a gardener carefully and continually fertilizes a plant. In 1994, Gerbner et al. wrote:

¹ Maxwell E. McCombs, and Donald L. Shaw. “The Agenda-Setting Role of the Mass Media in the Shaping of Public Opinion.” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 36, 176-187. There are psychological studies that refer to “norm setting,” but these generally refer to educational practices and bear little or no relation to media studies.

² Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann. *The Spiral of Silence: Public Opinion—Our Social Skin*. Chicago: University of Chicago, 1974. Also see Noelle-Neumann. “The theory of public opinion: The concept of the spiral of silence.” In J. A. Anderson, ed. *Communication Yearbook* 14, 1991, 256-287.

³ The latter extreme is untenable in light of the fact that the advertising industry’s existence depends on the media’s having measurable effects; if they didn’t, there would be no advertising industry and no “free” TV.

⁴ Peter L. Berger, and Thomas Luckmann. *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (Garden City, New York: Anchor Books, 1966, 51-55, 59-61. Also see McQuail, Denis. *McQuail’s Communication Theory*, 4th Edition). Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications, 110-111.

What is most likely to cultivate stable and common perceptions of reality is the overall patterns of programming, to which total communities are regularly exposed for long periods of time. That is the pattern of *settings* [emphasis added], casting, social typings, actions and related outcomes....⁵

Gerbner and associates demonstrated that cultivation produces effects such as the “mean-world syndrome,” in which heavy viewers of crime shows presumed their cities to be much more crime-ridden than they really were and as a result were much more fearful of their surroundings than light viewers.⁶ In short, cultivation analysis posits that if television presents certain images often enough, heavy viewers eventually come to accept these as self-evident or as “common sense.” “What is most popular naturally tends to reflect—and cultivate—dominant cultural ideologies....”⁷

Many critical and cultural theorists, from Antonio Gramsci, Theodor Adorno, Louis Althusser to Douglas Kellner, and Todd Gitlin broach the subject of norm-setting using the phrase “cultural hegemony” or simply “hegemony.” What they mean is that the media, being owned by wealthy, white males, tends to disseminate the values and ideology of the upper classes. Through massive exposure and repetition, these beliefs become so deeply ingrained in the culture that they are generally adopted by the lower classes without question. This, in effect, is the same phenomenon described herein as the result of media norm-setting.⁸

⁵ George Gerbner, Larry Gross, Michael Morgan, and Nancy Signorielli. “Growing Up With Television: The Cultivation Perspective.” In Jennings Bryant, and Dolf. Zillmann, eds. *Media Effects: Advances in Theory and Research*. Hillsdale, N.J: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1994, 16.

⁶ Gerbner went so far as to suggest that this effect could be put to use by authoritarian elements to promote a repressive agenda: “You have increased demagoguery, more jails, more capital punishment.” Quoted in David A. Gershaw. “News Media and the Mean World.” *A Line on Life*. April 21, 1996. <http://virgil.azwestern.edu/~dag/lol/MeanNewsMedia.html> (retrieved Aug. 31, 2006).

⁷ Gerbner, et al., 1994, 16. In demonstrating this, Gerbner et al. were in a sense supporting the adage that “if something gets repeated often enough, it eventually becomes true” (in the eyes of the public). In that sense, this effect could be related to classical conditioning.

⁸ Postmodern theories of hyperreality seem to take cultivation analysis a step further, suggesting that *symbolic reality* (e.g., television) often seems more “real” to heavy viewers than their own perceptions. Jean Baudrillard.

Although Gerbner and his team of researchers showed that television cultivation does indeed work and how it works (and even what uses it could be put to), they did not address the mechanics of *why* it works. A precise explanation might be found in a series of experiments conducted in the 1970s by Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann.⁹ Noelle-Neumann and associates found that humans have a built-in “barometer” for perceiving dominant opinion. The researchers estimated that about 90% of the participants tend to remain silent if they feel they are on the losing side of public opinion; most people seem to refrain from challenging the dominant view, especially if they are vastly outnumbered. In sociological terms, dissenters are perceived as deviant. This, she concluded, is based on fear of isolation (this behavior is typical of pack animals, whose very survival depends on the cohesion of the group). When fewer people speak up, the additional silence makes the minority opinion seem even less viable, spurring more silence and so on, creating a self-perpetuating spiral. Noelle-Neumann’s theory is more or less the reverse of what marketers called the “bandwagon effect.”¹⁰

An often overlooked aspect of her work is that in explaining the suppression of opinion, she also explains how the reverse effect (i.e., the bandwagon) works: Media can foster an *artificial consensus*. Using media to promote certain views and making them appear more widespread and common than they really makes other views appear deviant or abnormal.

This is the built-in advantage of media’s norm-setting function: if most members of the

“Simulacra and Simulations.” In *Jean Baudrillard, Selected Writings*. Mark Poster, ed. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988, 166-184. Also see Daniel Boorstin. *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America*. New York: Vintage Books, 1992 [1962].

⁹ Noelle-Neumann, 1974, *passim*. Also see Noelle-Neumann, 1991, 256-287.

¹⁰ Harvey Leibenstein. “Bandwagon, Snob, and Veblen Effects in the Theory of Consumers’ Demand,” *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, May 1950.

public only hear one side of a debate, their social barometers falsely register that that view is the “winning” or predominant opinion and is therefore normal.¹¹

Citing a 1982 report for the National Institute of Mental Health conducted by Robert P. Hawkins and Suzanne Pingree, psychologist Albert Bandura tended to support Noelle-Neumann’s hypothesis and explained how it could apply to television:

“Verification of thought by comparison with *distorted television versions of social reality* can foster *shared misconceptions* [emphasis added] of people, places and things.”¹² In 1997, media critic Noam Chomsky summed up the spiral of silence in simple terms as well as how it might relate to TV sitcoms:

“The rest of the population [is] sitting alone in front of the TV and having drilled into their heads the message, which says the only value in life is to have more commodities or live like that rich, middle-class family you’re watching....[S]ince you’re watching the tube alone you assume, ‘I must be crazy,’ because that’s all that’s going on.... [Y]ou never have a way of finding out whether you are crazy, so you just assume it, because it’s the natural thing to assume.... Since there’s no way to get together with other people who share or reinforce that view and help you articulate it, you feel like an oddity, an oddball. So you just stay [quiet]... .”¹³

When dealing with mass communications, it is always advantageous to ask Lasswell’s questions: Who is presenting these messages and for what purpose?¹⁴ Neither cultivation analysis nor the bandwagon effect/spiral of silence appears to explain the purpose in combining repetitive

¹¹ This effect often manifests itself as peer pressure and is sometime crudely referred to as “herd mentality.”

¹² Albert Bandura. “Social Cognitive Theory of Mass Communication.” In Bryant and Zillman, 1994, 65. Also see Robert P. Hawkins and Suzanne Pingree. “Television’s Influence on Social Reality.” In D. Pearl, L. Bouthilet, and J. Lazar, eds. *Television and Behavior: Ten Years of Scientific Progress and Implications for the Eighties*. Vol. II. National Institute of Mental Health, 1982, 224-247.

¹³ Noam Chomsky. *Media Control: The Spectacular Achievements of Propaganda*. New York: Seven Stories Press, 1997, 27.

¹⁴ What Lasswell actually said was, “Who says *what* to *whom* through *what channel* and with *what effect*?” Harold D. Lasswell. “The Structure and Function of Communication in Society.” In *The Communication of Ideas*. Lyman Bryson, ed. Institute for Religious and Social Studies, 1948. Lasswell conducted top-secret research on propaganda and psychological warfare for the U.S. government during WWII.

and highly selective messages in a proliferation such that they overshadow contradictory messages and dominate public discourse and posits that the actual purpose is prescriptive; i.e., an attempt to create artificial “norms.” In other words, those who have the ability to bombard the media with repetitive messages (i.e., advertisers, content producers, network executives, news editors, et al.) have the power to make their ideas *appear* dominant, regardless of these ideas’ actual predominance in terms of public opinion. These ideas then take on a façade of normalcy, suggesting that people who disagree are by definition abnormal or deviant. The end result is that, as Noelle-Neumann demonstrated, making an idea *appear* prevalent may be enough to convince 90% of the public to go along with it, regardless of whether the individuals themselves actually agree with it.¹⁵

Media scholar Ella Taylor observed, “[T]elevision celebrates the ordinary, and by doing so it suggests that certain versions of family life are normal and others deviant, strange or, by exclusion, nonexistent.”¹⁶ If most if not all characters on television shows are seen as living in the suburbs, after a few years of such symbolic predominance (taking cultivation into account), this recurrent setting would suggest that the suburbs were the “normal” place to live. As Noelle-Neumann showed, most people (i.e., 90%) do not wish to appear deviant. Hence, any institution (such as a major religion or media oligopoly, such as the “Big Three” TV networks, which operated much like a cartel during the Cold War era) that can control or alter the proliferation of images would be in a position to set norms for the rest of society.¹⁷ Norm-setting analysis is an

¹⁵ Noelle-Neumann, 1984, 39-40.

¹⁶ Ella Taylor. *Prime Time Families: Television Culture in Postwar America*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989, 19.

¹⁷ Some researchers, such as Gerbner, believe television has largely taken the place of religion in U.S. society. “Television: The New State Religion?” *Et Cetera*, June 1977. Reprinted in Larry Hickman, ed. *Philosophy, Technology, and Human Affairs*. College Station, TX: Ibis Press, 1985.

attempt to examine an agglomeration of media messages *at a* macro-level and to ascertain patterns and possible meta-narratives. It is my theory that the purpose of norm setting is one of social control: to create social norms for viewers, whether these are new norms or reinforcements of established norms.

The networks went even further by implying that the city was a place for deviants and losers. As television sitcom scholar David Marc noted, “The city was a place where one might expect to find an *eccentric bachelor* [emphasis added] like Jack Benny or a ‘working girl (i.e., spinster) like Susie McNamera [Eve Arden]....”¹⁸ During the Cold War TV years, African American inner-city denizens, apartment dwellers, working women, old people, gays, lesbians, or simply anyone who didn’t fit TV’s Norman Rockwell mold may have had to deal with anxiety the generated by being perceived as social deviants.¹⁹ Probably the least represented, if represented at all, were gays, lesbians, and people with disabilities. Such characters might have made “normal” Americans uneasy, and no sponsor wants his product associated with discomfort.

At the point where they dominated network television, family sitcoms set standards many “normal” nuclear families could not attain. Film director Oliver Stone remarked that “lots of people couldn’t live up to the image and cracked.”²⁰ Many of the wives and children of suburbia came to feel trapped in the patriarchal world of suburbia. The boredom and isolation of living in suburbia and the feelings of inadequacy many women felt—when they did not live up to the ideal exemplified by June Cleaver—led Betty Friedan to coin the phrase “the problem that has

¹⁸ David Marc. *Comic Visions: Television Comedy and American Culture*. Winchester, Mass.: Unwin Hyman, 1989, 81.

¹⁹ Fostering anxiety has been a technique used by Madison Avenue to sell products since the 1930s. See, Vickie R. Shields, and Dawn Heineken. *Measuring Up: How Advertising Affects Self-Image*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002.

²⁰ Nathan Gardels. “The David Letterman Disease.” *New Perspectives Quarterly* 12, Spring, 1995, 40-41.

no name.”²¹ The children of the sitcom suburbs also began to question the paternalism, the sterile lifestyle, and the crass consumerism of both TV and suburbia. This generational conflict of values was probably best exemplified in Mike Nichols’ 1967 movie *The Graduate*.²² Many young people, raised in the suburbs and weaned on television, became so fed up they decided to “drop out.” Tired of the pressures of conformity and rigid gender roles, they embraced their deviance, often referring to themselves as “freaks.” Feminist scholar and baby-boomer Susan Douglas explains, “We were starting to gag on the widening disjunctures between our lives... and the increasingly infantile and surreal offerings of network television.”²³

Billy Gray, who played teenager Bud Anderson on *Father Knows Best*, a generic precursor of *Leave It to Beaver*, said he felt the show was “a hoax” and that it did the public a great disservice: “I’m ashamed I had any part of it,” Gray told an interviewer in 1983. “I wish there were some way I could tell kids not to believe it.... *Father Knows Best* purported to be a reasonable facsimile of life [but] it’s an incredibly destructive pattern for emulation.”²⁴ Middle-class sitcoms such as *FKB*, *Leave it to Beaver*, and *The Brady Bunch* (Marc called these “benevolent Aryan melodramas”)²⁵ purported to represent reality but did not even come close. For one thing, there was not a single African American, not even in the background, in all 203

²¹ Friedan, 2001 [1963].

²² Mike Nichols. *The Graduate*. MGM Films, 1967.

²³ Susan J. Douglas. *Where the Girls Are: Growing Up Female with the Mass Media*. New York: Times Books, 1994, 133.

²⁴ Original source unknown; quoted in Jones, 1992, 101. The author contacted Gray himself, who did not recall the source of the quote but confirmed its veracity. Billy Gray. E-mail correspondence with author. Feb. 10, 2007. Gray later added: “*FKB* is decidedly the most culpable [of all the suburban sitcoms].... I think we fucked up everybody the most because we were so good.” Gray, Feb 16, 2007.

²⁵ Marc, 1997 [1989], 4.

episodes of *FKB*, which ran from 1954 to 1960²⁶ (there was, however, a Mexican gardener named Frank Smith). These suburban domestic sitcoms are still popular in re-runs, though their appeal to youth today is probably ironic.

²⁶ Gray said he felt the show's producers, Eugene Rodney and Robert Young, missed an opportunity to lend support to the cause of desegregation after the *Brown* decision in 1954 but either chickened out or were dissuaded by network execs and/or the show's sponsor. Gray, Feb. 13, 2007.

CHAPTER 4 METHODS AND MATERIALS

My study uses mixed methods, primarily historical, augmented by content analyses of network television shows of the era plus some textual analyses of literary and filmic examples of anti-urbanism.

Primary historical sources were films and television shows on DVD and videocassette, contemporaneous news reports from publications such as *New York Times*, *Time*, *Life*, *Variety*, and *TV Guide*, government documents, and court decisions. Selected literary texts from American literature were also examined for patterns of anti-urban bias (see Table 1: “A Survey of Anti-Urban Literature in England and the U.S.”) Secondary sources were journal articles and book-length studies from various fields, including media history, diplomatic history, cultural geography, cultural and feminist studies, and Cold War histories.

Using sources such as Brooks and Marsh’s *Complete Directory to Prime-Time Network and Cable TV Shows*, McNeil’s *Total Television*, *International Movie Database*, *Tim’s TV Showcase*, and other sources, I examined story lines and synopses to obtain information on the settings for approximately 500 TV sitcoms. To the best of my knowledge, this sample very nearly represents the universe of TV sitcoms that ran during the 43 years of the Cold War (1947-1991). However, my study begins in 1949 because there were so few sitcoms in the years 1947 and 1948 that the sample size from these years is negligible. Four additional years afterwards were added to confirm the trajectory. The unit of analysis was the show itself. The categories were simply urban or non-urban settings.

Reasoning that short-lived (i.e., “flop”) sitcoms had little impact on public awareness, I ran a second sort, deleting shows that ran only one season. “Most popular shows” (see Fig. A-2 in Appendix) are shows that ran two or more seasons and could therefore be considered

reasonably successful. Percentages of total shows for each year were used to indicate the prevalence or absence of sitcoms with urban settings and a line graph was constructed to provide a visual representation (see Fig. A-2 in Appendix).¹

There was an inherent semantics problem in regard to how to distinguish small towns from what are now consider suburbs. These places are difficult to define because they are constantly shifting and melding. The term “suburb” itself is problematic because the Census Bureau does not specifically define this term.² Another definitional problem is that many now-suburban areas were independent townships before they became “bedroom communities.” These problems were circumvented by simplifying the coding categories as either “urban” or “non-urban.” Considering the simplicity of the categories, I determined that reliability generally was not an issue.³

¹ In the event there was no information available about a show’s setting, its entry was deleted from the sample; however, such shows were very few; moreover, none of these was in the “most popular” category, so they made no difference whatsoever in the final results.

² Karen D. Thompson. U.S. Census Bureau, Information and Research Services Branch, Population Division. E-mail correspondence with author. June 21, 2005. The bureau does define the categories “central cities” and “metropolitan areas” (MAs are defined as “agglomerations with a central city of 50,000 plus nearby areas with a significant level of commuting into the city and a specified amount of urban characteristics”), however. It is possible, then, to obtain an estimate of suburban populations by subtracting central-city figures from the MA totals.

³ Some previously suburban areas have been annexed by nearby cities and so are now considered urban. The show *All in the Family* presented a unique definitional problem. Its Queens setting was once a suburb, and the opening sequence showing the neighborhood shows a Levitt-style housing development. However, since Queens is officially a borough of New York City, it was categorized as urban.

CHAPTER 5 RESULTS

After gathering data from approximately 500 shows I constructed a time graph denoting the percentage of TV sitcoms set in urban places as opposed to suburban, rural, small-town or “other” (see Figs. 2 and 3 in Appendix). At first this graph did not suggest many correlations with events relating to either foreign relations or domestic policies. However, it was suggested that a delay be imposed to allow for television production schedules and other lags. A three-year delay seemed to fit the best because it correlated the number of urban settings with the greatest number of crucial points in Cold War history. When it was imposed, several correlations with contemporaneous events (also see “Timeline” in addenda) fell into place.

My interpretation of these results is that as long as peace prevails, urban settings automatically seemed to increase in proportion. But when events implied a threat of conflict or war, the level of urban settings was, perhaps artificially, pushed down. This pattern on the adjusted (delayed) chart appears fairly reliable (see Fig. A-3).

CHAPTER 6 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Examination of Factors Contributing to Phenomenon

Economic Stimulus

During the onset of the Great Depression in the early 1930s, President Herbert Hoover created policies to boost the building trades while also making mortgages affordable for the working class. The Roosevelt administration followed suit with a cluster of organizations centered on the Federal Housing Administration, through which the government guaranteed loans by private banks to “qualified” buyers. Presidents Hoover and Roosevelt both made it clear their intentions were to stimulate the economy and to create construction jobs as much as to provide housing. These subsidies, both direct and indirect, could be construed as early examples of supply-side economic stimulus. They were certainly one of the biggest boosts the banking industry had seen.¹

Taking his cue from the quasi-Keynesian policies many Western economies were beginning to implement, Le Corbusier had seen it all coming as early as 1933.² Free-market capitalism was in free-fall. In many countries, the state took control of the economy in an attempt to restore stability and ameliorate unemployment. In Germany, National Socialism formed a public-private partnership with government-sanctioned cartels. The German “economic miracle” engineered by the Nazis was based on motorization and highway construction.³ Highway construction was another economic stimulus Roosevelt embraced. He urged the passage of the

¹ Jackson, 1985, 232-233, 248. Also see Kunstler, 1993, 102.

² Le Corbusier, 1967 [1933], 74. Quoted in Hall, 1988.

³ R.J. Overy. “Cars, Roads and Economic Recovery in Germany, 1932-1938. *Economic History Review* 28 (3), August, 1975, 469. In 1943, Hitler commissioned Franz Porsche to design a German equivalent of Ford’s Model T, a “people’s vehicle,” or *Volkswagen*.

Federal Aid Highway Act in 1938 primarily to provide jobs. According to a federal-government history of its involvement in highway building, “The movement behind the construction of a transcontinental highway started in the 1930s when President Franklin D. Roosevelt expressed interest in the construction of a network of toll superhighways that would provide more jobs for people in need of work during the Great Depression.”⁴ It would also provide a network for automobiles to travel on, spurring sales of autos, tires, and gasoline. However, WWII interrupted these projects. After the war, still fearful of a return of the Depression, President Harry Truman continued to apply supply-side economics to the housing industry, and suburbia became a bonanza for builders, lenders and automobile-related industries. Automakers, rubber companies, oil companies, real-estate associations and builders formed a cartel called the American Road Builders Association (ARBA), “a lobbying enterprise second only to the munitions industry,” to pressure federal and state governments for subsidies. ARBA’s biggest contributor was General Motors.⁵

The federal government heavily subsidized these industries, although indirectly. Developers, builders, and banks would feed at the federal trough, thanks to FHA-backed loans that were easy to obtain, as long as prospective buyers were white, married and had steady jobs. With the passage of the Serviceman’s Readjustment Act in 1944, which would allow the Veteran’s Administration to underwrite loans for returning G.I.s, bankers, real-estate developers and builders began rubbing their hands in glee.⁶ What is more, the tax code, in the form of

⁴ “National Interstate Defense Highways Act of 1956.” U.S. National Archives and Records Administration. n.d. http://www.ourdocuments.gov/print_friendly.php?flash=old&page=&doc=88&title=National (retrieved Feb. 10, 2007).

⁵ Jackson, 1985, 248. On fear of a renewed depression after the war, see Jackson, 1985, 248; also see Kunstler, 1993, 106.

⁶ Kunstler, 1993, 232-233.

mortgage-interest write-offs, actually made it cheaper for middle-income workers to buy houses than to rent apartments.⁷ Kozol agreed that stimulating the economy and creating jobs had been a prime impetus behind the suburbanization movement since the 1930s:

In the 1930s, federal policies began to support suburban growth and abandon cities.... Cities were increasingly associated with working-class unrest and immigrants, and, in contrast, an idealized “America” based on a nostalgic view of idyllic [ruralism] became increasingly popular. In the postwar period, especially the 1940s when there was a serious housing crisis, the solutions promoted by the federal government and supported by *Life*, *Look*, and other news organizations (and, of course, Hollywood and later television) was suburban development. Suburban housing was *seen as crucial to economic prosperity* [emphasis added], and again cities were abandoned.⁸

Deconcentration

During the Cold War, each breakthrough development in nuclear-weapons technology seems to have created an accompanying wave of sensationalism and hysteria in the media, particularly in mass-circulation magazines such as *Time*, *Life* (both Henry Luce publications), *Reader’s Digest*, and *Collier’s*. When a new development took place, the media seemed to project the U.S. government’s aggressive intentions onto its putative enemies. As postcolonial theorist Homi K. Bhaba suggested, “paranoid projections outward return to haunt and split the

⁷ Lazare, 2001, 231. Also see Kozol, 1994, 81. At the beginning of the loan, the interest comprises the biggest portion of the monthly payment. Homeowners are allowed to deduct this interest from their declared incomes, recouping much of their monthly payment by lowering their federal income tax. This is an unusual practice for the Internal Revenue Service. Although interest deductions (or lease payments) on durable items are generally allowed for businesses, IRS rarely if ever allows such deductions for personal expenses, except for house payments. It was designed to benefit small, family-operated farms in the 1930s but now benefits any homeowner. In this way, the federal government subsidizes the home-mortgage banking industry at a projected cost of \$76 billion to the U.S. Treasury. Lowenstein, Roger. “Tax Break: Who Needs the Mortgage-Interest Deduction?” *New York Times Magazine*. March 5, 2006. Section 6, 79. In addition, houses are great investments that usually appreciate in value. Often homeowners can, after selling a house at a handsome profit, recoup all their payments, essentially living rent-free or nearly rent-free for the entire time they are in the house—they get most of their investment back when they sell.

⁸ Kozol. E-mail correspondence with author. June 14, 2006.

place from which they are made....”⁹ For example, mere weeks after the 1945 U.S. bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, publications such as *The New York Times*, *Life*, and the *Chicago Tribune* began wondering aloud what would happen to U.S. cities if they were victims of a nuclear bombing: What if the country’s enemies did the same thing to the U.S. that it had done to the Japanese?¹⁰ As author Paul Boyer noted, “Americans envisioned themselves not as a potential threat to other peoples but as potential victims.”¹¹ However, from 1945 until 1949, these fearful scenarios played out in the media *could not have been based on any real threat*, because the U.S. at that time enjoyed a nuclear monopoly.

In any case, when the USSR did develop an atomic weapon in 1949, U.S. planners immediately began seeing American cities as irresistible targets. Nuclear physicist Edward Teller called them “death traps.”¹² Zarlengo remarked, “In the logic of civilian defense, downtown was ‘ground zero.’”¹³ Federal policymakers and planners began developing evacuation programs, called by such names as “defensive dispersal,” “deconcentration,” and “decentralization.” These were based on a 1946 study of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, cities specifically chosen by the U.S. as atomic targets for their dense populations.¹⁴

According to Farish, British designer Ebenezer Howard’s 1899 “Garden City” plan was deemed the best model for ensuring the highest survival rates in the event of a nuclear attack. In

⁹ Homi K. Bhaba. *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge, 1994, 149.

¹⁰ See, for example, “The 36-Hour War.” *Life*. November, 1945.

¹¹ Boyer, 1985, 14.

¹² Farish, 2003, 125-148.

¹³ Zarlengo, 1999, 935.

¹⁴ In 1946 former Manhattan Project scientist Philip Morrison visited postwar Japan at the request of the War Department. Philip Morrison. “If the Bomb Gets Out of Hand.” In Dexter Masters, and Katherine Way, eds. *One World or None: Report to the Public on the Full Meaning of the Atomic Bomb*. New York, McGraw-Hill, 1946, 3. Another key term is “urban vulnerability.”

1949, Lapp offered plans for a “doughnut city” surrounded by a beltway connecting smaller satellite cities, with no discernible city center at all.¹⁵ Lapp’s “doughnut” plan contained dispersed satellite villages, later called “technoburbs” or “edge cities,” connected by beltways. A similar model had been proposed in 1933 by Le Corbusier.¹⁶ According to feminist scholar Kristina Zarlengo, the new, atomic-age city would serve two purposes: In the event of war, it would “bolster the nation’s civil defenses; in peace, it *would expand and accelerate the current trend of many city dwellers toward the suburbs* [emphasis added].”¹⁷

In 1951, President Harry Truman announced his Industrial Dispersion Policy as part of his civil-defense program. This was accomplished through a directive that federal financial assistance to cities be predicated on their dispersal.¹⁸ That same year, Congress passed Truman’s Defense Housing and Community Facilities and Services Act of 1951 (S. 349). The *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* devoted an entire 1951 issue to “urban dispersal,” outlining in detail how cities would be reconfigured, including a plan for “speeding up construction of broad express highways.”¹⁹

The development of the superhighway was a major factor in the sudden growth of the automobile suburbs. Technically, these Interstate Defense Highways were part of a civil-defense

¹⁵ Lapp, 1981 [1949], 161-65, 180. According to Zarlengo, Lapp’s plans were also published in 1949 in *U.S. News and World Report and Reader’s Digest*. Zarlengo, 1999, 934. Washington, D.C., was the first U.S. city to follow this beltway model. Dudley, 2001, 52-63.

¹⁶ Le Corbusier, 1967 [1933]. Satellite cities had also been proposed by Graham Taylor in 1915, during a period of severe labor unrest. Industry leaders thought it might be a good idea to move workers away from industrial plants, where strikers and ruffians could wreak havoc: “[B]y removing workingmen from a large city, it is possible to get them away from the influences [that] foment discontent and labor disturbances.” Graham R. Taylor. *Satellite Cities: A Study of Industrial Suburbs*. New York: Appleton & Co. 1915. Cited in Lazare, 2001, 192.

¹⁷ “How U.S. Cities Can Prepare for Atomic War.” *Life* 29 (25). Dec. 18, 1950, 76-86.

¹⁸ Truman, 1951.

¹⁹ Donald Monson, and Astrid Monson. “A Program for Urban Dispersal.” *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, 7 (9). 244-250. Quoted in Zarlengo, 1999, 933.

program to evacuate the cities in case of a nuclear attack.²⁰ President Dwight Eisenhower “made the interstate system one of his administration’s top priorities and continued to promote the idea even after he had signed the [National Interstate and Defense Highways Act of 1956],” which provided \$100 million for a web of superhighways comprising 41,000 miles.”²¹ They also served as a conduit for customers for realtors and developers and as a Keynesian economic-stimulus and job-creation program, and as such, could be construed as a continuation of FDR’s highway-building program of the 1930s.²²

“Salvation, for some families, as Washington, D.C., realtors advertised, meant moving, ‘beyond the radiation zone.’”²³ The pattern was simple: The best (i.e., safest) real estate was the farthest from the city center but still close enough to take advantage of the city’s amenities and its economy via automobile. With mass-manufacturing techniques developed by Levitt and others, safe housing fell into the price range of the working man with a family to support. With government-backed loans, nearly any married, white person with a steady job and decent credit could be accommodated. Between 1950 and 1970, suburban populations more than doubled, going from 36 million to 74 million.²⁴ White workers and war veterans would be generously accommodated with government-backed loans. Cities, with their large populations of blacks and immigrants, were seen by conservatives as “breeding grounds for discontent and trouble.” Senator Joseph McCarthy called public housing “a breeding ground for communists.”²⁵

²⁰ Farish, 2003, 127.

²¹ Jackson, 1985, 249. Also see Kunstler, 1993, 106.

²² Kunstler, 1993, 206-207.

²³ Farish, 2003, 128-134.

²⁴ Elaine T. May. *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era*. New York: Basic Books, 1988, 170.

²⁵ Jones, 1992, 89.

Looked at another way, it became a question not of who would move, but *who would be left behind*, or in more blunt terms, who might be considered *expendable*. Immigrants were at the top of the list. New arrivals tended to live in the inner cities, following a pattern of spatial assimilation that had been established for centuries. Xenophobia was rife in those days of anti-communist fervor; foreigners were considered the most likely to harbor communist sympathies. According to *New York Times* military correspondent Hanson Baldwin, not only were immigrants' political sympathies questionable, but their habit of settling in the cities would increase the chances of panic and plague because many of them were "depressed and ill." Baldwin went on to state that "hordes of the foreign-born, speaking no English, strangers in their own cities" posed "a danger to themselves and to all their neighbors."²⁶

Another group that would be left behind was inner-city African Americans. Since African Americans were legally barred from suburbia by way of FHA loan policies as well as by the restrictive covenants issued by developers such as Levitt, urban blacks, effectively barred from the suburbs, would remain in the radiation zone. After the FHA's segregation rules and "racial covenants" were struck down by the Supreme Court in 1948,²⁷ many middle-class blacks also fled the cities. Still, "red-lining" by lenders remained a common practice, forcing middle-class

²⁶ Hanson Baldwin. *The Price of Power*. New York: Harper, 1947, 256-257. According to Farish, this book was actually a collaboration by a study group convened under the aegis of the Council on Foreign Relations. Farish, 2003, 130.

²⁷ *Shelley v. Kraemer*, 334 U.S. 1 (1948). http://www.agh-attorneys.com/4_shelley_v_kraemer.htm. (retrieved April 25, 2007). Lorraine Hansberry's 1959 play *A Raisin in the Sun* depicts the struggles of a black Chicago family who bought a house in an all-white suburb only to discover that the home's owners were bound by a racial covenant. The Hansberry family filed suit in 1937 in federal district court challenging such covenants as violations of the Fourteenth Amendment. The case went to the Supreme Court in 1940, and such covenants were ruled unenforceable in state courts. *Hansberry v. Lee*, 311 U.S. 32 (1940). *FindLaw for Legal Professionals*. n.d. <http://caselaw.lp.findlaw.com/scripts/getcase.pl?court=us&vol=311&invol=32> (retrieved April 25, 2007). Also see Lorraine Hansberry. *To Be Young, Gifted, and Black: Lorraine Hansberry in Her Own Words*. New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1969, 20.

blacks to create their own suburbs.²⁸ Left behind in the cities was the poorest of the poor, a group who would later be called the black “underclass.” These desperately poor people in the cities would be even more densely concentrated in high-rise apartment buildings, another creation of Le Corbusier’s and a disaster in and of itself.²⁹

Developments in the TV industry

Other developments led to a dearth in urban settings on TV. After 1952, the television industry’s center of gravity was shifting from the urban northeast to Southern and rural areas.³⁰ This was because broadcasting in those areas had been limited by the Federal Communications Commission’s “freeze” on broadcasting licenses. In 1948, the FCC instituted what was to have been a six-month moratorium on issuing television-broadcasting licenses in order to sort through issues such as how to allocate limited VHF bandwidth, whether to create a new UHF band and which color system, RCA’s or CBS’s, would become standard. But because of the outbreak of the Korean War, the freeze lasted four years. In 1948, there were 108 TV licenses in existence, and these were limited to major cities, places that had been the most cost-effective for broadcasters to reach the most viewers. Marc stated that these were concentrated in three “megalopolitan” areas: the Northeast coastal corridor from Boston to Washington, D.C. (referred to as “BosNyWash” by geographers); the Great Lakes rim from Cleveland to Milwaukee; and the

²⁸ Dolores Hayden, 1984, 74. The term “red-lining” originally referred to lenders’ drawing lines on a map in red ink in order to designate areas where banks would not support loans for mortgages. These areas were usually inner-city or minority neighborhoods.

²⁹ Jackson, 1985, 219, 227-230. Also see Hall, 1988, 227, 235. Also see Von Hoffman, 2000, 180-205. For a view of how segregation operates in Paris, see Risen, 2005.

³⁰ That is, from “blue States” to “red States.”

West Coast, mainly Seattle, Los Angeles, and San Francisco. By 1952, the FCC had more than 700 applications on hold.³¹

After expanding into cities that still did not have stations, such as Denver and Austin, television stations began appearing in small towns. Whereas only 6% of U.S. households—mostly confined to the urban Northeast—had televisions before the freeze, by 1957, TV was seen in 70% of U.S. homes.³² Network executives already realized that viewers identify with TV characters resembling themselves, so in order to attract the sudden influx of small-town consumers, producers created more small-town characters. Thus TV's geographic expansion into small towns might explain the increasing prominence of small-town settings during that period. “[U]rban constituencies weren't enough to support a national program anymore.”³³

Southern viewers, in particular, became a large and relatively powerful constituency for the major networks, especially for CBS, which before the “thaw” had considered itself the most cosmopolitan of the “Big Three” networks.³⁴ Advertisers suddenly became particularly wary of offending Southern sensibilities.³⁵ New, medium-size markets in the South, with their often provincial tastes, were gaining a considerable amount of clout with the networks. In Charlotte, N.C., for example, in 1954, NBC's urbane *Milton Berle Show* scored a 1.9 rating against the syndicated Western *Death Valley Days*, which scored 56.3.³⁶ Within three or four years after the

³¹ Kimberly Massey. *Museum of Broadcast Communications*. “Freeze of 1948.” <http://www.museum.tv/archives/etv/F/htmlF/freezeof1/freezeof1.htm> (retrieved April 2, 2007).

³² Leo Bogart. *The Age of Television: A Study of the Viewing Habits and Impact of Television on American Life*. New York: Frederick Unger Publishing, 1956, 15.

³³ Paley, 1979, 255.

³⁴ CBS executives liked to refer to the company “the Tiffany network.” CBS News. “Former CBS Exec Frank Stanton Dies At 98.” CBS News. <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2006/12/25/national/main2295178.shtml> (retrieved April 2, 2007).

³⁵ “Land of the Boycott.” *Time*. April 2, 1956.

³⁶ Jones, 1992, 103-104.

freeze was lifted, small towns and suburbs became *de rigueur* on TV sitcoms. Small-town and suburban settings were conflated, and small towns might easily be seen as symbolic stand-ins for the suburbs:

It's no wonder that the suburb and the small town were always blurred together on television. Springfield [the home of *FKB's* Anderson family] is meant to stand in for the uniform whiteness and social fluidity of the new suburbs. No "suburban" sitcom ever really showed the blank, barren developments, populated by recent strangers, with economies dependent on nearby cities and commerce concentrated in shopping malls.³⁷

Soon television began venturing even farther out into the boondocks.³⁸ *The Real McCoys*, featuring a family of Ozark farmers who had relocated to the San Fernando Valley in a classic fish-out-of-water formula, appeared on ABC in 1957 (CBS picked it up in 1962 for its final season). CBS followed its own rural road in 1960 with *The Andy Griffith Show*, set in the idyllic Mayberry, N.C.³⁹ Griffith's show was such a huge hit that it would inevitably be followed by several more rural comedies. Appealing to this small-town aesthetic, CBS began introducing one "hayseed comedy" after another, including *The Beverly Hillbillies* (created by former *McCoys* writer Paul Henning in 1962), *Petticoat Junction*, (1963, created and produced by Henning), *Green Acres* (1965, also from Henning), *The Glen Campbell Goodtime Hour* (a musical-variety show, 1969) and *Hee Haw* (comedy and music, 1969). In fact, CBS's subsequent No. 1 status in the network ratings was in large part due to these hayseed comedies.⁴⁰

³⁷ Ibid., 100.

³⁸ The road to rural America had been cleared in 1934 by Al Capp's comic strip, *Lil' Abner*, which featured a hillbilly family from a small village called Dogpatch (Capp himself never specified exactly where the village was located but suggested it could be in the Ozarks). The strip was adapted for NBC radio in 1939 and appears to be the template for some of the characters in *The Beverly Hillbillies*.

³⁹ Griffith had already made a name for himself as a standup comic, a Broadway actor, and as a film star, specializing in Deep South characters. IMDb.com. "Andy Griffith." <http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0341431/> (retrieved April 2, 2007.)

⁴⁰ Paley, 1979, 255-256.

CBS chairman William Paley, in his autobiography, did not mention the lifting of the license freeze in 1952 or the expansion of TV broadcasting into rural regions as having anything to do with the appearance of these rural settings on sitcoms: “[C]omedy—especially rural comedies—dominated our [CBS’s] program schedule [in the 1960s].” Paley ascribed the plethora of rural sitcoms on CBS as merely an outgrowth of the success of the Griffith show and *The Beverly Hillbillies*. These, he claimed in his autobiography, “were not part of any conscious plan”; they “just seemed naturally to follow the Westerns that had begun to fade in popularity....”⁴¹ Sociologist Daryl Hamamoto agreed that these rural comedies were not meant as critiques of urban culture or its excesses; rather, they were simply meant “to tap the growing audience in rural areas of the country.”⁴²

This was hardly the case, according to author David Halberstam. Halberstam noted that during the early 1960s, CBS Television president James Aubrey (in charge of programming for the network) indeed had a conscious plan, one that involved a vehement anti-urban bias. Being from the heartland (LaSalle, Ill.) himself, Aubrey felt he had a handle on what the expanding rural TV audience wanted. According to Halberstam,

His [Aubrey’s] belief was that television as a mass instrument was not reaching the large rural mass out there. He was convinced that the people who ran television were too urban in their orientation, too educated.... They were, he was sure, neglecting a vast and less-educated rural audience, for whom television was likely to be the prime if not only form of entertainment.... He wanted rural comedies and detective stories.... Lots of action and as little thinking as possible.... “The people out there [in Middle America] don’t want to think,” [Aubrey said]. “I come from out there.”⁴³

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Daryl Hamamoto. *Nervous Laughter: Television Situation Comedy and Liberal Democratic Ideology*. New York: New York: Praeger, 1989, 54.

⁴³ David Halberstam. *The Powers That Be*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979, 254.

Brook suggested that the change from live to filmed TV had an important influence on TV's aesthetics as well as its geography. Nearly all comedies shown on live television were presented before 1950, when Hollywood studios, previously opposed to dealing with television, began aggressively moving to producing filmed product for the networks.⁴⁴ Since Los Angeles is a highly decentralized area (its downtown is miniscule), it is logical to assume that a suburban aesthetic might find its way into shows filmed there, especially considering there is a strong chance that most of the writers and producers themselves lived in suburbs. There also appears to be a difference in aesthetics, production values and settings on sitcoms that originated on radio and transferred to television (such as *The Goldbergs*, *The Life of Riley*, *The Jack Benny Program*, *Amos 'n' Andy*, and *I Love Lucy*, which appeared on radio as *My Favorite Husband*) and shows that were designed specifically for television. Most of the radio-originated shows were set in the city.

Another development that had a great deal of influence was a change in business models, which all three networks introduced after the quiz-show scandals in the late 1950s. Since radio advertising debuted in 1922, sponsors had virtually owned their time slots and everything that went in them. Network executives, led by Pat Weaver of NBC, determined to wrest control over the content of their shows from sponsors. They did this by breaking up the sponsorship of shows from a single sponsor, who had virtually dictated his show's content, to groups of "spot" sponsors, whose power was thereby diffused. Single sponsors had been able to micromanage their show's scripts and for deleting any potentially "controversial" subject matter on their shows. This included any references to African Americans or the Civil Rights

⁴⁴ Brook, 1999, 46-47.

movement. Groups of spot sponsors, however, tended more to behave like passive investors, whose only power was to withdraw their financial support from a program, but not to dictate changes (although some did still try).⁴⁵ This change in network TV's sponsorship system, along with recommendations from the Kerner Commission, may have contributed to a more "integrated" environment that would be seen in the late 1960s.⁴⁶

Race Relations

The Great Migration of Southern blacks to Northern industrial cities began during the "Jim Crow" days after Reconstruction folded, but picked up steam during World War I, when the defense economy stimulated manufacturing jobs. Factory owners sent recruiters to rural regions of the South to seek low-paid, unskilled, uneducated workers, many of whom were eager to escape the segregated South, to come to the manufacturing capitals of the North, particularly Chicago and Detroit. This migration picked up even more steam during WWII. From 1941 to 1944, more than 60,000 African-Americans relocated to Detroit to work in defense jobs.⁴⁷ Becoming citified became a marker of modernity for these relocated African Americans. Being called "country" was considered an insult.⁴⁸ Urbanity and blackness thus became closely associated. For example, a consortium of civil-rights groups began calling itself the National *Urban* League in 1910. In the late 1970s, WBLS-FM (New York City) disk jockey and program manager Frankie Crocker applied the term to his mix of R&B and hip-hop, dubbing it "urban

⁴⁵ Barnouw, 1978; passim.

⁴⁶ The Kerner report and its possible effects on TV representations will be discussed in depth later.

⁴⁷ Ronald C. Tobey. *Technology as Freedom: The New Deal and the Electrical Modernization of the American Home*. Berkely, Calif.: University of California Press, 1997, 196.

⁴⁸ See the 1967 song "Tramp" by Otis Redding and Carla Thomas (Stax Records single No. 216), in which Thomas disparages Redding by calling him "country."

contemporary.” Thus, the word “urban” gradually became conflated with “black.”⁴⁹ This semantic device would create serious repercussions when whites too began seeing urbanity as black. With cultivated television portrayals of the suburbs as a place of refuge from crime and carefully crafted political-campaign rhetoric from reactionary politicians, the terms “urban,” “crime,” “unrest,” and “black” became conflated in the minds of many white Americans, possibly contributing to the phenomenon labeled “white flight.”⁵⁰

Whereas only 41% of metropolitan residents in 1950 were suburban dwellers, by 1970, 54% were. Not all groups shared equally in this suburbanization, however. As middle-class whites abandoned central cities for the suburbs, blacks arrived in large numbers to take their places. Largely because of rural-urban migration from South to North, the percentage of blacks living in central cities rose from 42% in 1950 to 58% in 1970. *Central cities became increasingly blacker and suburbs grew whiter* [emphasis added], creating the familiar pattern of “chocolate cities and vanilla suburbs.”⁵¹

In July, 1967, President Lyndon Johnson formed an 11-man commission, the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, headed by Illinois governor Otto Kerner Jr., already addressed these dangerous trends in 1968. The commission was formed to try to explain the causes for the inner-city riots the country had been experiencing every year since 1964 and to provide recommendations for solutions. In March 1968, a mere month before Martin Luther King was shot in Memphis, the commission released the “Kerner Report.” Predicting that the country’s central cities

⁴⁹ Monte Williams. “Frankie Crocker, a Champion of Black-Format Radio, Dies.” *New York Times*. Oct. 24, 2000. C23.

⁵⁰ In 1988, George H.W. Bush, taking his cue from Nixon’s law-and-order rhetoric, helped reconfigure the word “crime” as a coded reference to urban blacks with his “Willie Horton” ads. According to Kathleen Hall Jamieson, dean of the Annenberg School of Communications, Bush’s “Willie Horton” ads gave crime “a black face.” Jake Tapper. “The Willie Horton Alumni Association.” *Salon.com*. August 25, 2000. <http://archive.salon.com/politics/feature/2000/08/25/horton/index.html> (retrieved March 15, 2007).

⁵¹ Douglas S. Massey, and Nancy A. Denton. “Suburbanization and Segregation in U.S. Metropolitan Areas.” *American Journal of Sociology* 93 (3). November, 1988, 529-626.

would become 72% black by 1985, the report warned that the U.S. faced a “system of apartheid” in the cities, because white flight had left the inner-city poor virtually isolated, and industrial dispersion had left them jobless.

“Pervasive unemployment and underemployment are the most persistent and serious grievances in minority areas. They are inextricably linked to the problem of civil disorder. . . . To continue present policies is to make permanent the division of our country into two societies: one, largely Negro and poor, located in the central cities; the other, predominantly white and affluent, located in the suburbs and outlying areas.”⁵²

The Kerner Report recommended a program of job training, job creation and housing support. Johnson rejected these recommendations. Thirty years later, things had changed, but not for the better: former Kerner Commission member Fred R. Harris co-wrote a study that found that inner-city unemployment had gotten even worse and had reached “crisis levels.”⁵³

In the 1950s and 1960s, the Civil Rights movement certainly benefited from the massive media exposure it garnered, particularly on television news (however, these topics were assiduously avoided on entertainment programs, especially sitcoms). Perhaps as a result of media coverage the protests garnered, there were several major federal-court decisions and legislative reforms. Perhaps the most notable among these events was the *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* ruling in 1954, which signaled to the white majority that its children would henceforth have to share classrooms with underprivileged African American children, many of whom had

⁵² National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders. *Report on National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders*. New York Times Edition. New York: E.P. Dutton & Co.: 1968.

⁵³ Fred R. Harris, and Lynn A. Curtis, eds. *Locked in the Poorhouse: Cities, Race, and Poverty in the United States*. Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000.

substandard educations due to having attended substandard schools.⁵⁴ On its heels came the Civil Rights Act of 1957, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

But media coverage was a two-edged sword: the same media exposure (some might say overexposure) that created legislative reforms also created a white backlash. Fear of integration and the extensive media coverage integration efforts received created a negative reaction among anxious whites, and not only among racists: even many “white liberals” who actively supported equal rights for African Americans didn’t relish the idea of living next door to them. Many were simply afraid their neighborhoods would go entirely black if integrated at all and that their home-investment values would largely be lost.⁵⁵ Moreover, after a wave of urban uprisings that began in the mid-1960s and culminated in a national outbreak after Martin Luther King’s assassination, many whites got tired of seeing riots and urban mayhem on TV news. Even some white liberals who had initially supported the Civil Rights movement began to feel that black protest had gone too far.⁵⁶ Richard Nixon, once a moderate on race issues, now hoping to appeal to this backlash for reelection in 1972, pragmatically assessed the mood of the “silent majority.” In his speeches he began using the catch-phrase “law and order,” which some observers believed was a coded commitment to forcefully putting down urban uprisings. As journalist Earl O. Hutchinson noted, rather than working to improve conditions in the cities as the Kerner report had urged, the white backlash preferred to blame the victims:

The urban riots convinced many whites in the south and the northern suburbs that the ghettos were out of control and that their lives and property were threatened by the menace of black violence.... The majority of Americans, [Nixon]

⁵⁴ Michael J. Klarman. “How *Brown* Changed Race Relations: The Backlash Theory.” *Journal of American History*, June 1994, 81-118.

⁵⁵ Ruth Fitzgerald (author’s mother). Personal interview with author. March 15, 2007.

⁵⁶ Earl O. Hutchinson. “The Nixon Tapes, Racism, and the Republicans.” *AlterNet*. December 18, 2003. <http://alternet.org/columnists/story/17422> (retrieved April 2, 2007).

explained, were decent, hard working, law-abiding citizens. They were sick of the *lawlessness and violence in the cities* [emphasis added].⁵⁷

“Nixon told reporters that he resented anyone who said ‘law and order’ was a code [phrase] for racism,” Hutchinson added. Nixon denied being a racist but it was shown in his White House tapes (held in the National Archives) that he often used racial slurs in private.⁵⁸

In 1970 a federal appeals court (Fourth District) ruled that busing would henceforth be an acceptable method of surmounting *de facto* segregation.⁵⁹ A similar 1974 ruling by a federal judge for the district of Massachusetts, which ordered all students to be bused to other schools created mayhem in Boston.⁶⁰ Many white parents were horrified at the thought of their children being taken to mostly black and most likely substandard schools. The reaction was intense: mob violence by whites, and the National Guard was dispatched. By 1976, more than 20,000 white students transferred to private schools or moved out of town with their families.⁶¹ By 1980, the city of Boston lost 80,000 people, 12% of its population.⁶²

As consumers fled, so did stores (to suburban malls) and retail jobs. Downtown retailers, whose business had been adversely affected by demonstrations, protests and clashes in the

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Schools were no longer *officially* segregated, but because schools are tied to their neighborhoods and since the neighborhoods themselves were unofficially segregated, the court reasoned that the result was essentially the same and that school segregation therefore still existed. This decision was upheld by the Supreme Court in 1971. *Swann et al. vs. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education*, 402 U.S. 1 (1971).

⁶⁰ *Morgan v. Hennigan*, 379 F. Supp. 410, 480-81 (D. Mass. 1974).

⁶¹ “A Brief History of Civil Rights in the United States: School Busing.” *African Americans.com*, 2004. www.africanamericans.com/SchoolBusing.htm (retrieved March 15, 2007).

⁶² Allison Fitzgerald. “Records from busing give glimpse into history.” *Boston Globe*. Dec. 7, 1998. http://www.boston.com/dailynews/wirehtml/341/Records_from_busing_case_give_glimp.shtml (retrieved Dec. 30, 2005).

streets, fled to suburban malls.⁶³ Factories and manufacturing jobs began relocating to “edge cities,” satellite enclaves located near strategic hubs along the peripheries, connected by beltways. “[U]nfortunately, the Edge City phenomenon represents more an escape than a solution,” wrote Kenneth Jackson; it “uses the beltways and interstates to keep one step ahead of the huddled masses.”⁶⁴

This situation made it doubly difficult for urban dwellers to find employment. In the 1960s, a chronically underemployed, urban underclass would riot in the cities of Los Angeles, Detroit, Newark, and other cities. By 1993, 97% of new businesses and 87% of new jobs in 77 metropolitan areas had moved outside the central cities, according to a 1998 Department of Housing and Urban Development study.⁶⁵ Conditions, however, are not much different even today, wrote *Wall Street Journal* writer Witold Rybczynski: “The jobs are in the suburbs, but much of the labor force is in the cities.”⁶⁶

Self-Segregation

Segregation isn’t always forced. It may stem from human instinct or it may simply be an economic fact of life. The fact is humans want to live with other humans much like themselves. The factors involved can be racial, economic, age, etc.⁶⁷ Just as the British exhibited a tendency

⁶³ Malls are carefully separated from the street; they are veritable fortresses. Moreover, they are private property, places where First Amendment rights such as freedom of assembly and the right to demonstrate (i.e., free speech) do not apply. Kunstler, 1993, 119-120.

⁶⁴ Kenneth Jackson. “The View from the Periphery.” *New York Times Book Review*, Sept 22, 1991, 11. Database: ProQuest.

⁶⁵ U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. “The State of the Cities.” 1998. *Washington, D.C.* Government Printing Office. http://www.huduser.org/intercept.asp?loc=/Publications/pdf/soc_98.pdf (retrieved March 15, 2006).

⁶⁶ Witold Rybczynski. “The Virtues of Suburban Sprawl.” *Wall Street Journal*. May 25, 1999, A26. Database: ProQuest.

⁶⁷ Scott J. South, and Kyle D. Crowder. “Escaping Distressed Neighborhoods: Individual, Community, and Metropolitan Influences.” *American Journal of Sociology*, 102. 1997, 1040-1084.

to segregate themselves geographically by “rank,” Americans seem to automatically segregate by income.⁶⁸ “We will be lined up or zoned according to our occupations, *perhaps our origins*

[emphasis added], or...by some conferred status or rank that depends on the central agency.”

⁶⁹This proclivity has been recognized by sociologists since 1924, when University of Chicago urban sociologist Ernest Burgess came up with the “concentric-zone hypothesis.”⁷⁰ Sociologists can often predict the income bracket of a given residence by its distance in a radius from the central city (see below).

Until the inner-city deindustrialization of the 1970s [this was actually initiated in the 1950s with Truman’s industrial-dispersal memo⁷¹], Zone 2, the zone in transition, contained both older factory complexes, many from the last century, and an outer ring of deteriorating neighborhoods of tenements. The zone in transition was the area where immigrants received their first view of the city. Immigrants settled in the cheap housing near the factories because they could not compete economically for the more desirable residential locations. The zone in transition was known as an area of high crime rates and social disorganization. As the immigrants moved up in socioeconomic status, they moved out spatially and were in turn replaced by newer immigrants. Thus, a nonrandom spatial structure or pattern emerged, *with groups of lower socioeconomic status most centrally located* [emphasis added].⁷²

Burgess’ model provides an explanation for the inner-city riots that began in the 1960s.⁷³

It suggests that until Truman’s industrial-dispersal memo, which was issued in 1951, U.S.

⁶⁸ Jackson, 1985, 241, 371-372. Also see Andres Duany, Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk and Jeff Speck. *Suburban Nation: The Rise of Sprawl and the Decline of the American Dream*. New York: North Point Press, 2001, 43-49. In many cases, this may simply be the result of the obvious economic reality that people with decent incomes can afford better locations, such as higher ground where flooding is less likely. The results of this basic economic fact were evidenced in 2006 during the flooding of New Orleans, which mostly affected poor residents in lower areas. The colloquialism “folks on the hill” as a reference to the well-heeled is probably based on this phenomenon.

⁶⁹ Spiro Kostoff. *The City Shaped: Urban Patterns and Meaning Throughout History*. London: Thames & Hudson, 1991, 164.

⁷⁰ J. John Palen. *The Suburbs*. 7th edition. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2004, 182.

⁷¹ Truman, 1951.

⁷² Palen, 182.

⁷³ Note that in Paris, where the central areas are considered the most desirable, most rioting by the unemployed occurred *outside* the city’s perimeters. Risen, 2005.

metropolitan demographic patterns would most likely have remained similar to what they had always been, except that in 1951 industries with their accompanying jobs were encouraged to leave the cities. This was, in effect, tampering with an already-precarious social contract. By the 1980s, unemployment rates in inner-city areas of Chicago, Milwaukee, and Pittsburgh soared to more than 40%. In Detroit they went as high as 56%. The resulting urban uprisings may have, in turn, had the effect of driving more and more middle-class whites to the suburbs.

The Return of the City in Sitcoms

However, by the late 1960s, the nation's demographics were again changing, and the networks, led by CBS, would change with them. Paley attributed this change to new research techniques, particularly the newly developed science of demographics.⁷⁴ These new research techniques allowed broadcasters to categorize and “qualify” viewers rather than merely delivering great masses of eyeballs to advertisers. Advertisers and network executives discovered the “golden” demo (i.e., demographic segment): those 18-to-49 year-olds who comprise the up-and-coming generation of consumers who still have major purchasing decisions ahead of them. The writing was on the wall: those rebellious baby-boomers would become a generation of powerful consumers. According to Judy Kutulas:

This generation defied the networks' previous assumptions about audience. They were, as a group, freer spending, certainly by comparison to their Depression-raised parents. They [stayed] single longer, so less of their income was given over to mortgages and car payments. In short, they were a highly desirable audience for advertisers.⁷⁵

By 1970, the “youth market” had already dominated the music industry for years.⁷⁶ CBS executives agreed that in order to attract this up-and-coming demo, the network would have to

⁷⁴ Paley, 1979, 281-282. Also see Barnouw, 1990, 473.

⁷⁵ Kutulas, 2005.

⁷⁶ CBS at the time owned and operated the Columbia and Epic record labels and distributed several others.

take some risks and update its programming.⁷⁷ Despite their consistent top ratings, the rural comedies skewed toward older audiences. In his autobiography, Paley remarked, “The action was in the streets of our major cities, not in bygone rural settings.”⁷⁸ This decision resulted in a purge of CBS’ rural programs that had been approved by Aubrey, and the network gradually replaced them with “socially relevant” shows such as Norman Lear and Bud Yorkin’s *All in the Family* (CBS, 1970). The surprising success of *AitF* created a wave of relevant shows, most of them set in urban spaces.⁷⁹ Producer Lear told a *New York Times* reporter:

“We [*AitF*] followed a whole bunch of shows like *Father Knows Best*.... They were all fine shows, but you would think by watching them that America had no blacks, no racial tension, that there was no Vietnam.... [Network TV was] wall-to-wall television comedy that would let you think there were no problems in the 1960s.”⁸⁰

The networks, however reluctantly, were beginning to recognize that not everyone lived in the suburbs or small towns in a nuclear family with two parents, a stay-at-home- mom, 2.5 kids, and a dog. NBC had in fact preceded CBS in resurrecting urban settings and creating modern “relevance.” In 1968, it presented Diahann Carroll in *Julia*, a sitcom about an African American widowed mother living and working in Los Angeles. In 1969, NBC followed with former *I Spy* co-star Bill Cosby in his own sitcom as a physical-education coach at an urban Los Angeles high school. RCA chairman David Sarnoff had been staunchly committed to NBC’s on-

⁷⁷ Paley, 1979, 255-256.

⁷⁸ Paley claimed he began worrying about alienating the youth audience as early as 1965. Paley, 1979, 264.

⁷⁹ Yorkin and/or Lear almost single-handedly revived the all-black sitcom, which had not been seen on network TV since *Beulah* and *Amos 'n' Andy* were canceled in 1953. These would include *The Jeffersons* (CBS, 1975-1985), *Good Times* (CBS, 1974-1979), *Sanford & Son* (NBC, 1972-1977) and *What’s Happening* (ABC, 1976-1979).

⁸⁰ Thomas Morgan. “Norman Lear Starts Off Museum Lecture Series.” *New York Times* (West Coast edition), June 16, 1986, C16. Database: ProQuest National Newspapers.

camera integration, even in the face of recalcitrant sponsors, since championing *The Nat “King” Cole Show* in 1956, which ultimately failed despite Sarnoff’s nearly heroic efforts.⁸¹

ABC had been ahead of the other two networks with a revival of the working-woman sitcom. These were almost always set in the city. Sitcoms featuring single, working women had been around since the 1950s, but the women in these shows had often been portrayed as either hopeless spinsters or as widowed mothers. ABC reintroduced the working-woman format in 1966 with *That Girl* (1966-1971) starring Marlo Thomas, whose character had a regular boyfriend. More importantly, the show was set in Manhattan.⁸² *That Girl* was followed in 1968 by NBC’s *Julia* (1968-1971, set in Los Angeles), and in 1970 by CBS’s *Mary Tyler Moore Show* (1970-1977, set in Minneapolis). *MTM* is credited with spawning several imitators, including *Murphy Brown* (CBS, 1988-1998), most of whom lived and worked in the city.⁸³

By the mid-1970s the Cold War ethos was wearing thin, especially among younger viewers.⁸⁴ The city, New York in particular, was beginning to experience something of a renaissance in its reputation as well as in media depictions.⁸⁵ The media credibility New York established during the *détente* years continued to gain momentum, even though crime shows such as *Kojak* (CBS, 1973-1978) and films such as *Fort Apache*, *The Bronx* (20th Century-Fox,

⁸¹ This may have reflected Sarnoff’s unofficial commitment to the Eisenhower administration, which was in turn being pressured by the State Department, the U.N., and by world opinion to make a stand against segregation. Bob Pondillo. “Saving Nat ‘King’ Cole” *Television Quarterly* 35 (3/4). Spring/Summer 2005. Regarding State Department pressure, see Borstelmann, 2001, *passim*.

⁸² *IMDb*. “That Girl.” <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0060034/plotsummary>. (retrieved April 23, 2007.) Also see Brooks and Marsh, 2003, 1183.

⁸³ Serafina Bathrick. “Mary Tyler Moore Show.” In *MTM: Quality Television*. Feuer, Jane, ed. London, British Film Institute, 1984, 99-131.

⁸⁴ Douglas, 1994, 133.

⁸⁵ Michael V. Tueth. “Fun City: TV’s Urban Situation Comedies of the 1990s.” *Journal of Popular Film and Television* 28 (3), Fall, 2000, 98-107.

1981) made the city look like it had already been bombed. Woody Allen, for one, had never abandoned his home town and always romanticized it in his films.⁸⁶ Broadway too was experiencing a revival. In 1975, NBC's *Saturday Night* ("...live from New York!") made the city appear exciting and vital.

Much of the credit for the city's renaissance goes to municipal and state government. During this period city leaders had been diligently working on a program to lure jobs and businesses back to the city. In 1977, the State of New York hired advertising agency Wells Rich Greene to create a marketing campaign, which resulted in "I love [heart symbol] NY" bumperstickers seen all over the U.S. Also in 1977, Martin Scorsese, only a year after his vehemently anti-urban *Taxi Driver*, made a 180-degree turnaround with *New York, New York*. Possibly the most memorable aspect of this film, however, was its theme song, sung by Liza Minelli. Frank Sinatra's 1980 remake of the song was seen by many as a celebration of his former home, an endorsement that put the city back on the map, in terms of the country's consciousness. In 1982 David Letterman made New York even more fun with his antics in and around Radio City on *Late Night with David Letterman*.

The period from 1975 to 1987 was a mixed bag for sitcom settings, as it had been in the early 1950s, but the city setting remained strong until 1986, despite Reagan's efforts to reinvigorate the Cold War.⁸⁷ Hayseed comedies again began popping up with *The Misadventures of Sheriff Lobo* (NBC, 1979-1981). Still, cities such as San Francisco, Los Angeles, Milwaukee and Cincinnati made good showings, but by far the most prominent urban setting was NYC, with

⁸⁶ See Allen's breakthrough hits, *Annie Hall* (United Artists, 1977) and *Manhattan* (United Artists, 1979).

⁸⁷ Ronald Reagan. Speech at House of Commons. London. June 8, 1982. If the networks took their cues from Reagan's speech and city settings again began to disappear in 1986, it would suggest a four-year delay might be applied to the data. This four-year delay would be consistent with Truman's 1951 memorandum and the marked reduction of urban settings in 1955. However, I found that a three-year delay worked best overall.

shows like *Barney Miller* (ABC, 1975-1982), *Diff'rent Strokes* (NBC, 1978-1985; ABC, 1985-1986) *Taxi* (ABC, 1978-1982), *Night Court* (NBC, 1984-1992) and *The Cosby Show* (1984-1992). The immensely popular and long-running *Cheers* (NBC, 1982-1993) was set in Boston (a *Cheers* spin-off, *Frasier*, was later set in Seattle).

New York, New York

According to my research, New York City is by far the most popular setting in sitcoms. The city has not followed any predictable pattern in population loss and gain. From 1940 to 1950, the city's population (total of its five boroughs) grew nearly 6%. By 1960, its population had shrunk, as might be expected, approximately 1.4%, but by 1970, it had regained its 1950 footing. So the first segment of the Cold War, from 1950 to 1959, had a relatively minor impact on the city's population, which completely reversed itself during the 1960s. However, despite détente and the proliferation of urban sitcoms on television, the 1970s were not kind to NYC's population growth.⁸⁸ This disparity between media images and reality suggests, among other things, that television programming does not always follow trends, that it sometimes works against them. Or it may simply suggest that NYC was somehow insulated from trends in other cities. NYC lost 10.4% of its population during the 1970s, of which it only recouped approximately 3.6% in the 1980s. This does not correspond to the pattern in TV sitcoms, in which urban settings, particularly those of NYC, peaked during the 1970s (see Fig. A-2 in Appendix) and dropped again in the 1980s. NYC took its hardest hit in population loss in the 1970s but staged a minor comeback in the 1980s. By 1986, however, urban settings again began declining, with 1989 seeing the lowest level of urban settings since 1971. Still, one hit show can

⁸⁸ Campbell Gibson. "Population of the 100 Largest Cities and Other Urban Places of the United States: 1790 to 1990." Population Division Working Paper No. 27, 1990. U.S. Bureau of the Census. <http://www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps0027.html> (retrieved August 2, 2006).

change the tide of television, with copycat shows scurrying to replicate its success. This show would be *Seinfeld* (1990-1998), heralding Gotham's third golden age on the small screen.

The City's Third Golden Age on TV: The 1990s

Among the most enduring images of the 1990s are TV-news scenes of Berliners celebrating the fall of the wall separating East from West, symbolizing the end of the Cold War, exactly where it (ostensibly) began. A year later the Soviet Union itself would disintegrate from within, with its constituent members becoming independent nations. The bogeyman of communist aggression was finally dead. The military establishment would have to find other justifications for its existence. "I'm running out of enemies," Chairman of the Joint Chiefs Gen. Colin Powell told *Defense News* in 1991. "I'm down to Kim Il Sung and Fidel Castro."⁸⁹

Coincidentally or not, urban settings were back, in a big way, especially NYC. The city in sitcoms saw one of its biggest growth spurts, one that would be seen in a spate of shows such as *Seinfeld's* 1990 celebration of all things Manhattan. *Seinfeld's* quintessentially urban setting would be followed by the immensely popular *Friends* (1994-2004), *Sex in the City* (HBO, 1998-2004), *The Nanny* (CBS, 1993-1999) *Cosby* (CBS, 1996-2000), *Spin City* (ABC, 1996-2002), *Caroline in the City*, (NBC, 1995-1999), *Just Shoot Me* (1997-2003), *NewsRadio* (NBC, 1995-1999), *Veronica's Closet* (NBC, 1997-2000), *The Wayans Brothers Mad About You* ((WB, 1995-1999), and *The Parent 'Hood* (WB, 1995-1999) were all set in New York City. Whether these *reflected* a new glamorous image for New York or helped *create* it is difficult if not

⁸⁹ Powell's remark originally appeared in *Defense News*. April 8, 1991. Quoted in *U.S. News and World Report*. "Communism's Collapse Poses a Challenge to America's Military." October 14, 1991, 28. Also quoted in Arkin, William. "Early Warning." *Washington Post*. April 11, 2006. http://blog.washingtonpost.com/earlywarning/2006/04/wild_speculation_and_the_nucle.html (retrieved April 2, 2007).

impossible to discern. In any case, NYC hit its biggest population peak ever in 2005.⁹⁰ Living in the city once again became a normal, respectable thing to do, at least for single, working, young people, TV's most desirable demo.

Cultivation, Fear, and Flight

Fig. A-1 shows that while the U.S. population was headed to the suburbs in any case, a sudden, exponential expansion occurred from 1950 to 1960. This correlates with Truman's deconcentration policies and with Eisenhower's "emotion-management" program as well as with his interstate-highway program. However, it also exactly corresponds with the vast expansion of television broadcasting after 1952, suggesting that TV itself may have been a catalyst in this sudden growth spurt of suburbia and highway building. The data clearly show that by 1955, the networks were beginning to depict non-urban areas as the "normal" place to live by excluding urban settings. Prior to 1955, sitcom characters live in both urban and non-urban settings, but by 1965, *all* sitcom characters lived in non-urban settings (see Fig. A-2). Network TV clearly had created a new standard as to where "normal" people should live. This strongly supports my norm-setting theory.

While the suburbs were depicted as safe and idyllic, the city was depicted as a place of crime and fear. This brings us back to cultivation analysis. Gerbner and Gross concluded that one result of watching too much television is that heavy viewers tend to develop what they called the "mean world syndrome," in which heavy viewers see the world as much more dangerous than it really is.⁹¹ In another example, researchers Lichter, Lichter and Rothman, using content analyses and comparing their results to FBI crime statistics, discovered that the murder rate on TV dramas

⁹⁰ Andrew Beveridge. "Hitting the 9 Million Mark." *Gotham Gazette: New York City News and Policy*. June, 2006. <http://www.gothamgazette.com/article/demographics/20060627/5/1894> (retrieved April 2, 2007). Also see Gibson, 1990.

⁹¹ Gerbner and Gross, 1976, 41-45.

was 1,400 times the real-life murder rate.⁹² Police/detective crime shows have been hugely popular since CBS' *Man Against Crime* appeared in 1949 and are still a large ratings draw.⁹³

Crime shows, descendants of pulp fiction and film noir, are the opposite side of the coin of domestic sitcoms. While crime shows present the city as a dangerous and fearful place, domestic sitcoms invited scared viewers into a safe, nostalgic world where family values still rule and everyone drives a new car and has perfect teeth. Some observers have suggested that these two genres work synergistically to form a meta-narrative:

They are closely interconnected: The sitcoms and crime shows build on each other, deriving added meaning through combination.... In many ways the gaps in one formula are filled in by the conventions of the other. Together these two dominant formulas reiterate a world view or zeitgeist that has some very telling aspects [regarding their underlying ideology].⁹⁴

It isn't only crime shows that scare people out of the cities, however. Sensationalistic local-news stories focusing on crime and race are also guilty of contributing to this phenomenon: A 1998 study by Mark Crispin Miller concluded that negative news stories focusing on crime and racial division were an important factor in the exodus of businesses and jobs in Baltimore.⁹⁵

⁹² S. Robert Lichter, Linda Lichter, and Stanley Rothman. *Prime Time: How TV Portrays American Culture*. Washington, D.C.: Regnery Publishing, 1993, 276.

⁹³ A complete listing of TV crime shows is too long to be presented here, but Cold War-era examples would include *Dick Tracy*, *Racket Squad*, *Dragnet*, *Big Town*, *The Falcon*, *Highway Patrol*, *The Lineup*, *Official Detective*, *The Vise*, *M Squad*, *The Untouchables*, *Meet McGraw*, *Perry Mason*, *Richard Diamond*, *Suspicion*, and dozens more. For contemporary crime shows, see T. K. Arnold. "TV Crime Shows Are Busting Out." *USA Today*. March 29, 2004. http://www.usatoday.com/life/television/news/2004-03-29-crime-show-dvds_x.htm (retrieved May 15, 2006).

⁹⁴ Joyce Nelson. *The Perfect Machine: TV in the Nuclear Age*. Toronto: Between the Lines Publishers, 1987, 51-52. Nelson connects the bomb to TV by way of the fact that both atomic energy and broadcasting were pioneered by the same corporations, General Electric and Westinghouse. *Ibid*, 162. Also see Barnouw, 1978, 162.

⁹⁵ Mark C. Miller. "It's a Crime: The Economic Impact of Local TV News in Baltimore, a Study of Attitudes and Economics." *Project on Media Ownership*. June, 1998. Cited in Trigoboff, Dan. "Study Blasts Baltimore News." *Broadcasting & Cable* 33, July, 1998. Database: ProQuest National Newspapers.

Barry Glassner described the “sick city” narrative he has identified as a common theme on local TV news all across the U.S.⁹⁶

Fear seems to be the main force that drove Americans out of their cities: fear of Russian atom bombs, fear of crime, fear of black violence and rioting, fear of losing their home values, etc. Realtors and developers were waiting for them in the outskirts with open arms.⁹⁷ In 1950, CBS ran a series of government-sponsored programs titled *Retrospect* aimed at educating the public on the dangers of nuclear attack. Less than a decade after Japan’s surprise attack at Pearl Harbor, “*Retrospect* played on one of the darkest themes of American postwar culture: the fear of a nuclear Pearl Harbor.” The show was hosted by CBS News’ evening anchorman, Douglas Edwards, and gave no indication that it was sponsored by the Office of Civil Defense Management.⁹⁸

During the 1964 presidential election, both sides used television to propagate fear tactics. The Democrats invoked nuclear fear with their famous “Daisy” political ad, suggesting that if Barry Goldwater were elected, nuclear war would be on the horizon. On the Republican side, Mothers for a Moral America produced a show that spotlighted all the decadence and crime of the city, including topless dancers, porno shops, and blacks rioting. Erik Barnouw explained, “The film associated sexual emancipation and the rise of nudism with Negro protest movements; all were considered aspects of the breakdown of ‘law and order.’” According to one of its

⁹⁶ Barry Glassner. “The Culture of Fear.” Lecture, University of North Florida. Oct. 28, 2004. Also see Glassner, 1999.

⁹⁷ Grutzner, 1950.

⁹⁸ Oakes, 1994, 123-129. This show, which showed the public the necessity of civil-defense drills and preparedness, was sponsored by the National Security Resources Board (now incarnated as Federal Emergency Management Administration). Paley had served on this board and had been recruited by its chairman, Stuart Symington, in 1950, to produce a report. Paley, 1979, 215-224.

creators, the show was designed to “turn *the anti-city feelings of rural people* [emphasis added] against the Democratic administration of Lyndon Johnson.”⁹⁹

Fear of crime, perhaps cultivated by television, has long been a major motivation for people fleeing U.S. cities. The suburbs have traditionally been sold as safe places to raise children, but, ironically, children are much more likely to be killed by automobiles in the suburbs than by crime in the cities. “[P]eople often flee crime-ridden cities for the perceived safety of the suburbs, only to increase the risks they expose themselves to.”¹⁰⁰ Because of the several correlations of Cold War events with drops in urban settings (see Fig 3), my conclusion is that deconcentration was the largest factor in the exodus from the cities to the suburbs. However, other scholars (Kozol, Kunstler) have suggested to me that economic stimulus was most likely the main driving factor and that deconcentration may have merely given this aspect a defense rationale.¹⁰¹ The USSR’s development of an atomic weapon in 1949 gave many industries the defense rationale they had been looking for since 1944.¹⁰² A defense rationale, as Vandenberg pointed out to Truman in 1947, would make Truman’s intervention program easier to “sell” to the public. Eisenhower also gave his interstate-highway system a defense rationale. Selling these

⁹⁹ The half-hour program, titled *Choices*, was set to run on NBC but was pulled by Goldwater himself due to a wave of complaints. Barnouw, 1990, 361-362.

¹⁰⁰ Alan Thuning. *The Car and the City*. Northwest Environmental Watch, 1996. Cited in Gerstenzang, James. “Cars Make Suburbs Riskier Than Cities, Study Says.” *Los Angeles Times*. April 15, 1996, A1. Also see Lucy, William H. and Raphael Rabelais. “Traffic Fatalities and Homicides by Strangers: Danger of Leaving Home in Cities, Inner Suburbs and Outer Suburbs.” April, 2002. Cited in “University of Virginia Study Reveals Outer Suburbs More Dangerous Than Cities.” *University of Virginia News*, April 30, 2002. <http://arch.virginia.edu/exurbia/death-in-exurbia.pdf> (retrieved August 15, 2006).

¹⁰¹ Kunstler, e-mail correspondence with author. May 23, 2005 and June 7, 2005. Also see Kozol, June 14, 2005.

¹⁰² This was made clear by GE’s Charles Wilson in 1944. Quoted in Garber, 1995, 33.

programs to the public, as Kozol noted, became a task for certain well-connected sectors of the mass media.¹⁰³

The Big Three TV networks played a leading, not a following, role in this by promoting the suburbs as the “normal” place to live. Another primary factor appears to be race relations and civil-rights issues, which drove a white backlash and white flight to the suburbs. The explosion of television itself as a predominant cultural power is also a major component. The expansion of TV into rural areas was a factor, but perhaps a less important one than the growing power of television to set norms and create its own reality: Americans on the whole began to take TV much more seriously in the 1950s than they had in the 1940s.¹⁰⁴

The question still arises as to whether TV followed social movements or promoted them. The general consensus among scholars is that U.S. network television follows rather than leads most social trends, but there is a good deal of argument on this point. Many scholars, such as James H. Wittebols, have concluded that television is a highly conservative medium that lags five to ten years behind social changes.¹⁰⁵ On the other hand, many conservative observers have complained that TV has become an irresponsible agent for social change.¹⁰⁶ There are also many

¹⁰³ Kozol, 1994.

¹⁰⁴ The verdict was still out as to the efficacy of television even as late as 1952. In 1948, advertising agency Batton, Barton, Durstine and Osborn (who would run Eisenhower’s ad campaign in 1952) had proposed a television campaign for Republican candidate Thomas E. Dewey, but Dewey declined. In 1952, Democratic presidential candidate Adlai Stevenson also chose to ignore television as a campaign tool. Eisenhower is considered the first candidate to recognize the enormous power of TV. Vice-presidential candidate Richard M. Nixon also pioneered the political use of television with his famous “Checkers” speech during the same campaign. Barnouw, 1990 [1975], 135-139.

¹⁰⁵ James H. Wittebols. *Watching MASH, Watching America. A Social History of the 1972-1983 Television Series*. New York: McFarland and Company, 1998. Also see Jenny Weight. “Reception Theory.” School of Applied Communication. RMIT University (Melbourne, Australia). <http://mmp.adc.rmit.edu.au/?p=727> (retrieved April 2, 2005).

¹⁰⁶ See, for example, Lichter, Lichter and Rothman, 1994, 9.

in the critical and cultural schools who believe that the media actively manipulate the public and that manipulation is in fact television's purpose.¹⁰⁷

The consensus of scholars who have examined this question is that television followed the trend to the suburbs rather than promoted it. Sociologist Herbert Gans concluded that the “dominant media audience had moved to the suburbs before the popular dramas and situation comedies followed them” and that the mass media “follow taste more often than they lead it.”¹⁰⁸ The fact that the three-year delay seems to address this question suggests that network programming lags behind social trends. However, this does not always have to be the case. There can be instances in which network chiefs and executives take it upon themselves to lead the public in whatever direction they deem necessary or perhaps whatever direction the federal government deems necessary.

The question of whether the networks actively promoted suburban growth or merely reflected prevailing trends does not need to be a mutually exclusive proposition: the answer could be *both*, in a “feedback loop,” in which audience demand is taken into consideration by programmers and then re-amplified, in a reverse spiral.¹⁰⁹ As an advertising medium, television's whole purpose is to *create* demand for products, but in order to draw large audiences for advertisers, TV must simultaneously satisfy the demands of its viewers as well as its advertisers.

This precarious position might be more clearly explained in marketing terms: if television re-

¹⁰⁷ Certainly it is reasonable to say that television *attempts* to manipulate the public, through advertising. Prime proponents of the manipulation school are Chomsky, McChesney, Schiller, Glassner, Rushkoff and Parenti. Chomsky, 1997, op. cit. McChesney, 2004, op. cit. Schiller, 1973, op.cit. Glassner, 2000, op. cit. Douglas Rushkoff. *Coercion: Why We Listen to What “They” Say*. New York, Riverhead Books, 1999. Michael Parenti. *Make Believe Media: The Politics of Entertainment*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992.

¹⁰⁸ Herbert Gans. *The Levittowners: Ways of Life and Politics in a New Suburban Community*. New York: Vintage Books, 1967, 286. In 1994, Gerbner et al. found the linear model unsatisfactory, stating that “television neither ‘creates’ nor ‘reflects’ images, opinions, and beliefs. Rather it is an integral part of a *dynamic process*.” Gerbner et al., 1994, 23.

¹⁰⁹ Weight, n.d.

amplifies trends that are *already* underway, then it is *both* following the “early majority” (or “pragmatists”) and leading “the late majority” at the same time.¹¹⁰ TV generally reinforces rather than sets developing norms, yet it still has the power to set new norms by either adopting or ignoring new trends. This power is analogous to the agenda-setting power of gatekeepers in the news media.

¹¹⁰ These terms are taken from Everett Rogers. *Diffusion of Innovations*. Fifth edition. New York: Free Press: 1995 [1962], 281-284.

CHAPTER 7 FUTURE WORK

Terrorist Threats, Urban Vulnerability, and City Settings on TV

How depictions of the cities in TV sitcoms have evolved since the attacks of 9/11 or taking into account the current proliferation of atomic weapons in countries considered adversaries of the U.S. are salient questions for further study. The events of 9/11 once again illustrated the New York City's vulnerability. The question should arise as to how cities will fare in a new age of urban fear and how they will be portrayed on TV (or even *if* they will be portrayed on TV) in the near future. It is reasonable to assume that fear of terrorism and/or nuclear attacks could well drive more urban dwellers out of the cities and that their sitcom counterparts will follow. The city's image as relatively safe place, which had been assiduously cultivated by Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, was certainly set back if not irreparably harmed. People in cities again began flocking to the 'burbs.

However, this trend was already taking place before 9/11. Sixty-eight of the U.S.' largest 251 cities began losing population; from 2000 to 2004, the U.S.'s 100 largest cities (such as Chicago, Boston, Cleveland, Philadelphia, San Francisco, Minneapolis, and Baltimore) have lost population. Economist Paul Harrington of Northeastern University's Center for Labor Market Studies told a *Washington Post* reporter that many of these cities were hurt primarily by the collapse of the high-tech economy (i.e., the bursting of the "dot-com bubble"). NYC, however, has proven surprisingly resilient and was not among those cities losing population. Its population has continued to grow.¹ According to an analysis by the Federal Reserve Board of New York, as long as NYC keeps offering incentives programs to create new jobs, its economy and its

¹ D'Vera Cohen. "Cities Losing People After '90s Influx, Census Bureau Finds." *Washington Post*. June 30, 2005, A3. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/06/29/AR2005062902663.html> (retrieved Aug. 15, 2006).

population should continue to grow despite 9/11.² As to cities in general, however, it would be logical to assume that the target potential of densely populated areas combined with the relatively new threat of terrorism could create a replay of the atomic fear of the 1950s and 1960s.

Entertainment and Ideology

The many ways the federal government has attempted to bend television programming to its will and recruit the networks as its own public-relations vehicles have been well documented.³ The results of my study show that network crime shows and domestic sitcoms, whether by coincidence, design or simply due to a case of groupthink, dovetailed with federal deconcentration as well as economic-stimulus policies. This concurrence raises the questions of whether the networks actively cooperated with or followed directives from the executive branch. If they did, and there is documentation to suggest this,⁴ how did government officials convey their wishes to the networks? Were there unofficial meetings? Phone calls? Were former government officials working in network television and vice versa?⁵

² Bram, Jason, Andrew Haughwout, and James Orr. "Has September 11 Affected New York City's Growth Potential?" *Economic Policy Review*. November, 2002. <http://www.newyorkfed.org/research/epr/02v08n2/0211bram.pdf> (retrieved Aug. 15, 2006)

³ See, for example, Halberstam, 1979, 138. Also see Herbert I. Schiller. *The Mind Managers*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1973, 162.

⁴ David N. Eldridge. "'Dear Owen': The CIA, Luigi Luraschi and Hollywood, 1953." *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 20 (2), 2000, 149-196. Also see Paper, Lewis, J. *Empire: William S. Paley and the Making of CBS*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989, 211, 303. Also see Pondillo, 2005, 15.

⁵ Both David Sarnoff, who as chairman of RCA called the shots at NBC, and William Paley, chairman of CBS, had worked for Eisenhower during WWII as psychological-warfare and communications consultants. RCA during this period was a prominent defense contractor (as is General Electric, NBC's current parent company). Barnouw, 1990 [1975], 93. Both network chiefs had incentives for doing favors for the Eisenhower administration. Paley was particularly close to Eisenhower and had served as Ike's unofficial media consultant during his election campaign in 1952. Paley had hoped for an appointment as ambassador to England as a political reward. Sally Bedell Smith, *In All His Glory: The Life of William S. Paley*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990, 373. Also see Paper, 1989, 211. Paley served in several government positions even during his tenure as CBS chairman (CBS president Frank Stanton ran the company during Paley's frequent absences). Paley had been a psychological-warfare officer in Europe during WWII, a member of the National Security Resources Board in 1950, Eisenhower's special ambassador to the Republic of the Congo in 1960 and had served in New York City's municipal government in 1967 as chairman of the Mayor's Task Force on Urban Design. According to Daniel Schorr, Paley admitted he had a "special

Cold War, TV, and Auto Industry Connections

Another topic for study could be the symbiotic relationship between the Big Three automakers and the Big Three television networks. For example, Eisenhower's secretary of defense was the former CEO of General Motors, Charles E. Wilson,⁶ who declared during his tenure as secretary in 1955, "What's good for the country is good for General Motors, and vice versa." Gen. Lucius D. Clay, who had served as Eisenhower's deputy in Europe during the war, chaired the president's Committee on National Highways to study the feasibility of Eisenhower's interstate system, which it wholeheartedly approved. Clay was a board director for General Motors while he was a board member of Eisenhower's study commission.⁷ Both JFK's and LBJ's secretary of defense was a former Ford CEO, Robert McNamara.

One of the major effects of Truman's "scaring hell out of the country" was the economic stimulus it provided: nuclear fear, by encouraging middle-income workers to leave the cities for outlying areas, helped sell lots of new houses, new roads, and *new cars*, which in turn created many thousands of jobs. Le Corbusier had envisioned exactly this type of economy in 1933, perhaps not realizing, as Senator Vandenberg suggested, that in the U.S. it would take a permanent war to politically justify it and keep it primed.⁸ Automakers in turn provided a veritable bonanza for (and perhaps the financial foundations of) the TV industry: they have

relationship" with the CIA. Schorr, Daniel. *Clearing the Air*. Boston: Houghton-Mifflin Co., 1977, 274-275. Also see Bernstein, Carl. "The CIA and the Media." *Rolling Stone*, Oct. 20, 1977, 65-76.

⁶ Quoted in Marjorie B. Garber. *Secret Agents: The Rosenberg Case, McCarthyism, and Fifties America*. London: Routledge, 1995, 33. This was not the same Charles E. Wilson of GE who proposed a "permanent war economy" in 1944. There were two Charles E. Wilsons, both captains of U.S. industry and important members of production boards. The president of General Electric was nicknamed "Electric Charlie," and the president of GM was known as "Engine Charlie."

⁷ Jackson, 1985, 249.

⁸ See quote from Le Corbusier at beginning of Introduction. Le Corbusier, 1967 [1933], 74.

traditionally been TV's largest advertisers. In 2005 alone, automakers spent \$9.9 billion on TV ads.⁹

Media Effects: Feedback Loops

Most early communications models, including cultivation theory, presume a linear, one-way flow of information from sender to receiver. Later models, such as "active audiences,"¹⁰ took viewer responses as well as viewer interpretations into consideration. During the oligopoly of the Big Three networks, however, audience feedback was minimal: it consisted of a small sample's participation in the Nielsen ratings. Although ratings were crucial, they were one-dimensional in the feedback they provided: Nielsen's "black boxes" only measured whether a household tuned into a certain show or did not. The audience could offer no other input.¹¹ What is more, respondents' choices were limited to what was offered, and during the oligopoly of the Big Three, the selection was minimal. Theories of audience feedback could not have counted for much at a time when there were only three producers of a product and their offerings were remarkably similar. Sociologist Leo Bogart observed this issue in 1965, contending that that

⁹ John Lafayette. "Networks, Automakers Intersect." *TV Week*, Jan. 8, 2007. <http://www.tvweek.com/article.cms?articleId=31251> (retrieved March 2, 2007).

¹⁰ Elihu Katz, Jay G. Blumler and Michael Gurevitch. "Utilization of Mass Communication by the Individual." In Jay G. Blumler and Elihu Katz, eds. *The Uses of Mass Communications*. London: Sage Publications, 1974, 19-32. Also see John Fiske. "Television: Polysemy and Popularity." *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 3 (2), 1986, 391-408.

¹¹ Programming executives later test-marketed new shows, especially ones that risky premises, to see what kind of reaction these draw. Shows can be modified at this stage to suit audience tastes. Still, interpreting audience feedback was more art than science. According to William Paley, TV programmers need to have a "feel" for what American audiences might want *in the future*, because often the viewing public develops a taste for something it didn't realize it wanted until it was made available. Paley, 1979, 266-267. ABC, for example, tested *All in the Family* in 1970 and decided the public was not ready for it. CBS, despite having reservations about the show, found a completely different result in 1971. CBS executives, then, *overrode* the test-market audience's judgment. The point is that viewer feedback counts, yet gatekeepers, not viewers, make the decisions over what flies and what dies.

media use by most viewers was non-selective and usually based on what was available.¹² Nancy Signorielli found this to be the case even as late as 1986.¹³

The problem with all of these models, from Lasswell's to Fiske's, is that they presume a two-way transaction between distributor (i.e., sender) and audience (receiver), when in fact there were (and are) *three* active parties: distributor, audience and advertiser(s). Before subscription TV became popular, advertisers, not audiences, supported production costs. Advertisers, then, were (and are) the audience whose feedback really counts, because they are the ones footing the bills. Therefore, *advertisers are the true consumers of network television*, not viewers.¹⁴

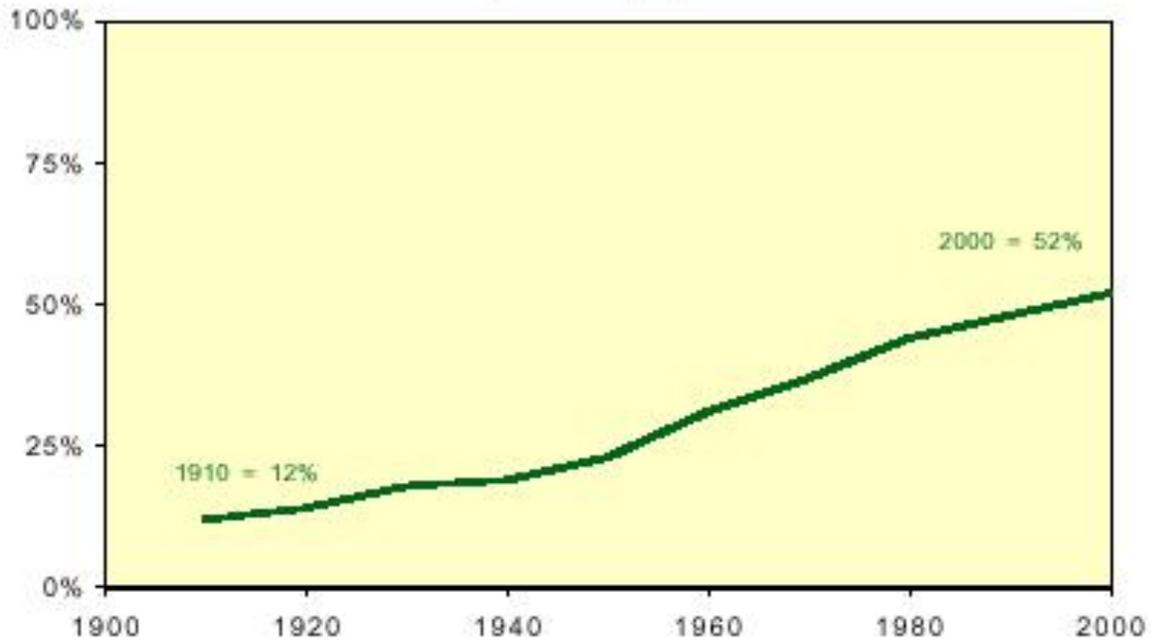
Advertisers don't dictate what gets *on* network TV as much as what *doesn't*: Even if a show gets high viewer ratings, if no advertisers will back it, it will still most likely get dropped. This was even more the case in the early days of TV (before "spot" ads became prevalent) when a single sponsor controlled a program.¹⁵ A revised model that includes feedback loops among networks, audiences, *and advertisers* should be considered.

¹² Leo Bogart. "The Mass Media and the Blue-Collar Worker." In Arthur Shotak and William Gomber, eds. *Blue-Collar World: Studies of the American Worker*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1964, 416-428.

¹³ Nancy Signorielli. "Selected Television Viewing: A Limited Possibility." *Journal of Communications* 36 (3), 64-75.

¹⁴ Note, for example, the failure of *The Nat "King" Cole Show* (1956-1957) to land a sponsor despite a big push from NBC. Pondillo, 2005, 15.

Population Living in the Suburbs
Percentage of total population



PBS.org. "The First Measured Century." <http://www-tc.pbs.org/fmc/book/pdf/ch1.pdf?mii=1>. n.d. (retrieved April 5, 2007.)

Figure A-1. Population Living in the Suburbs

Most popular sitcoms in the city

Shows running 2 or more seasons, 1949-1995
REAL TIME

78

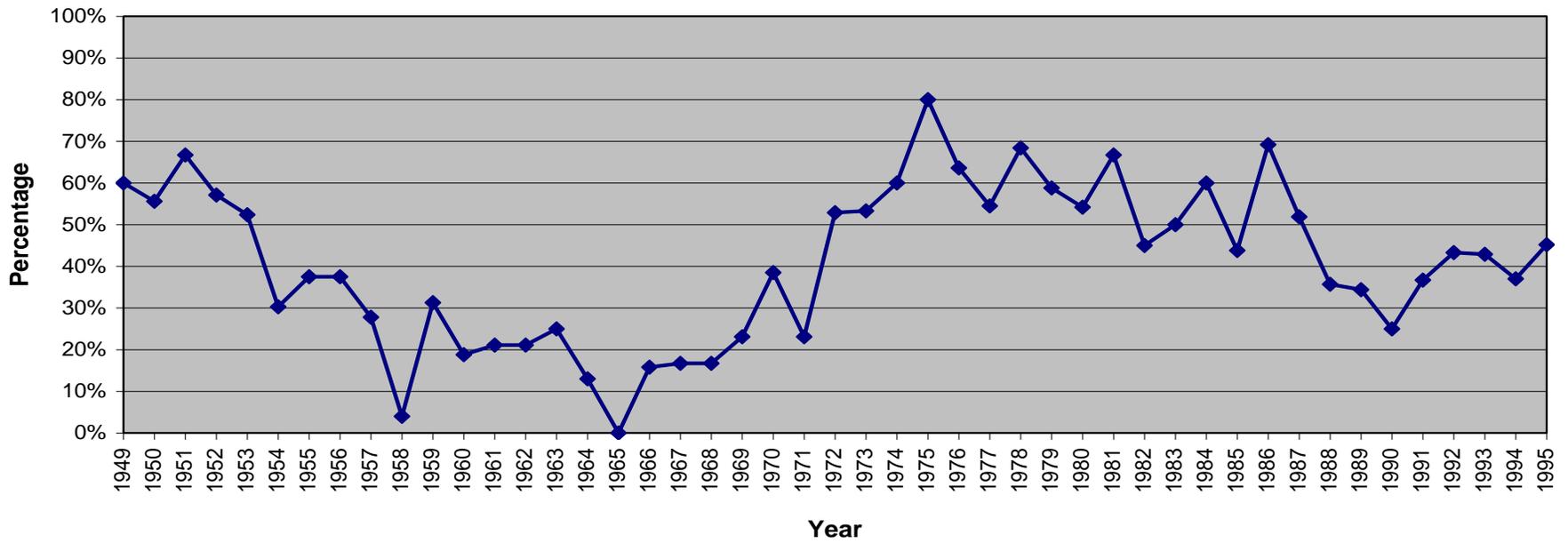


Figure A-2. Most Popular Sitcoms in the City

Most popular sitcoms set in the city, delayed

Shows running 2 or more seasons, 1949-1995.
 NOTE: A three-year delay has been imposed.

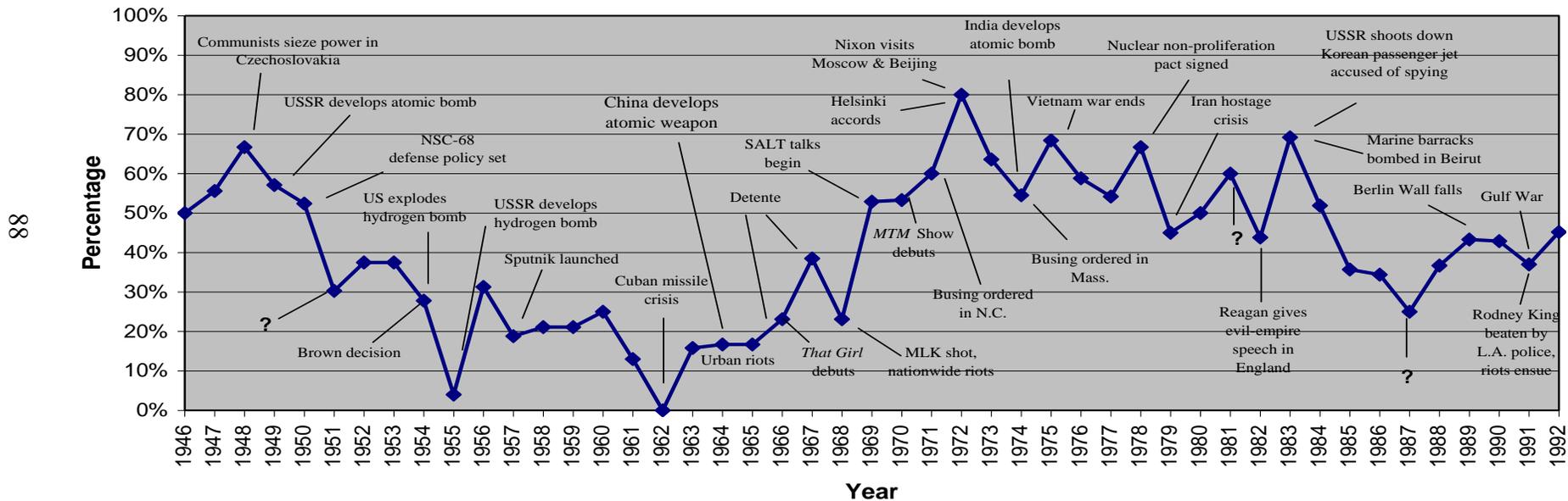


Figure A-3. Most Popular Sitcoms in the City, Delayed.

APPENDIX A
COLD WAR-SUBURBIA TIMELINE

- 1630 Muddy River Hamlet (now Brookline, Mass.), first suburb of Boston, built.
- 1795 Jacob Perkins patents nail-making machine, which will significantly lower the expertise level and labor costs of house building.
- 1814 Steam-powered ferry developed, first ferry suburbs appear.
- 1820 First planned suburb, Eyre Estate, designed by John Nash, appears in St. John's Wood (London).
- 1833 Thanks to the development of the mass-manufactured nail, "balloon-frame" houses appear in Chicago, which revolutionize American home-building.
- 1850 Cholera epidemic in London.
- 1852 "Horsecar suburbs" appear near Boston (steam engines deemed too dangerous for city use).
- 1860 Railway suburbs developed near London.
- 1868 Frederick Law Olmstead lays out Riverside, Ill., 11 miles from downtown Chicago.
- 1883 Cheap Trains Act passed in Britain, makes rail commutes affordable, brings more people to the suburbs.
- 1886 Ramsom.E. Olds patents gasoline-powered motorcar (Oldsmobile).
- 1898 Ebenezer Howard designs Garden City model.
- 1900 Olds Motor Works founded in Detroit, auto considered a luxury item.
- 1908 Whites mobs attack black residents in Springfield, Ill.
- 1908 Henry Ford introduces Model T, price: \$825.
- 1913 Ford introduces the moving assembly line, Highland Park, Mich. plant assembles Model Ts in less than three hours.
- 1916 Ford drops the price of Model T to \$360.
- 1916 First federal highway act, Federal Aid Road Act, passed.
- 1921 Whites mobs attack black residents in Tulsa, Okla.
- 1921 Henry Ford makes large donation to Hitler's political campaign.
- 1924 Italian promoter Piero Puricelli designs first superhighway (*autostrada*) in Italy.
- 1926 Puricelli introduces superhighway concept to Weimar Germany (Koln-Bonn Autobahn).
- 1930 Cartoonist Chick Young creates the master template for suburban sitcoms with his comic strip *Blondie*, featuring a bumbling dad, patient wife, two kids, and a dog.
- 1933 LeCorbusier comes up with the Radiant City (office/industrial park) model.

- 1935 Hitler adopts Ford's idea of a vehicle for the masses, commissions Franz Porsche to design Volkswagen.
- 1938 First McDonald's restaurant opens in Arcadia, Calif.
- 1938 Hitler awards Ford the Grand Cross of the Order of the German Eagle.
- 1939 Roosevelt administration begins secret atomic experiments (Manhattan Project).
- 1941 A. Philip Randolph threatens a massive march on Washington if blacks are not included in defense jobs; Roosevelt issues Executive Order 8802.
- 1943 Race riots in Detroit.
- 1944 *Life of Riley*, first sitcom explicitly addressing the suburban experience, premieres on NBC Radio.
- 1945 First atomic bomb detonated in Alamogordo, N.M.
- 1945 FDR dies; Truman drops "the big one" on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.
- 1946 William Levitt brings Ford's assembly-line techniques to house construction.
- 1946 Supreme Court rules segregation on interstate buses illegal.
- 1946 Truman establishes committee on civil rights.
- 1947 First Levittown built in Hempstead (Long Island), NY.
- 1947 *Mary Kay and Johnny*, TV's first sitcom, premieres on DuMont.
- 1948 First drive-through 'burger stand, the In-'N'-Out, opens in Baldwin Park, Calif.
- 1949 Russians develop own atomic bomb, "defensive dispersal" recommended, anti-communist hysteria sweeps nation.
- 1949 Supreme Court strikes down racial restrictions in FHA loans.
- 1949 First suburban TV sitcom, *The Life of Riley*, premieres on NBC with Jackie Gleason.
- 1950 Senator Joseph McCarthy initiates notorious "witch hunts" for communists.
- 1951 White mobs attack black residents in Cicero, Ill.
- 1951 Congress passes the Defense Housing, Community Facilities and Service Act of 1951,
- 1952 First hydrogen (fusion) bomb tested on Eniwetok, Marshall Islands.
- 1953 Sec. of State John Foster Dulles announces policy of "massive atomic retaliation," claims president has authority to initiate nuclear war without Congressional declaration of war. Eisenhower backpedals, saying it won't happen without Congressional approval.
- 1953 Dulles announced policy of "massive retaliation."
- 1954 U.S. tests new hydrogen bomb (1,000 times more powerful than the bomb dropped on Hiroshima) at Bikini in the Marshall Islands; information not released to public until 1955.
- 1954 Supreme Court declares segregation in public schools illegal in *Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka*, "white flight" begins.

- 1955 USSR develops hydrogen bomb.
- 1955 TV's *The Goldbergs* leave Brooklyn for fictional Haverville, NY.
- 1955 Montgomery bus boycott begins after Rosa Parks is arrested for refusing to give her seat to a white woman.
- 1956 Eisenhower signs Interstate and Defense Highway Act.
- 1957 Eisenhower signs Civil Rights Act.
- 1957 Eisenhower has showdown with Arkansas Gov. Orval Faubus over school desegregation in Little Rock, sends in federal troops.
- 1957 Russians launch first space satellite; "Sputnik hysteria" in U.S. ensues.
- 1957 Ricky and Lucy Ricardo leave Manhattan for Westport, Conn.
- 1958 Race riots in seven U.S. cities.
- 1960 Student stage "sit-ins" at segregated lunch counters in Greensboro, N.C.
- 1960 Elijah Muhammad calls for separate state for blacks.
- 1960 Race riots in Mississippi.
- 1960 Kennedy calls for a fallout shelter in every household in U.S.
- 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis reminds Americans of Russian atomic threat.
- 1962 *Father Knows Best* premieres.
- 1962 Beach Boys release entire album of "car songs," *Little Deuce Coupe*, on Capitol.
- 1962 Seven years after Rosa Parks was arrested the Supreme Court rules segregation illegal in all public transportation facilities.
- 1962 Federal troops sent to protect James Meredith, first black student at University of Mississippi, riots ensue, Kennedy calls out National Guard.
- 1963 Riots in Alabama; Kennedy calls out National Guard.
- 1964 Urban uprisings in New York City and Rochester, N.Y., Jersey City, Paterson and Elizabeth, N.J, Dixmoor (Chicago), Ill., Philadelphia, Pa., and Cambridge, Md.
- 1964 Congress passes second Civil Rights Act.
- 1964 China tests atomic weapon.
- 1965 Urban uprisings in Watts (Los Angeles), 34 dead.
- 1965 Bill Cosby, first African American in a lead role on a television series since *Amos 'n' Andy* was canceled in 1953, appears.
- 1966 *That Girl* (Marlo Thomas) leads sitcoms' return to the big city.
- 1967 More race riots in Detroit.
- 1968 *Julia*, the first TV sitcom to feature an African American woman who is not a servant, premieres on NBC.
- 1968 Martin Luther King shot in Memphis; riots break out in more than 100 U.S. cities.

- 1969 Urban uprisings riots in Detroit.
- 1969 Urban uprisings in York, Pa.
- 1970 Mary Tyler Moore popularizes sitcoms' return to the city.
- 1971 Bill Cosby returns as the first male African American sitcom star since *Amos 'n' Andy*.
- 1971 Norman Lear's *All in the Family* satirizes suburban values and the sitcom genre itself.
- 1972 Busing to achieve public-school integration legislated in Massachusetts.
- 1975 NBC's *Saturday Night Live* presents Manhattan as an exciting, fun place.
- 1981 WBLS New York disc jockey DJ Frankie Crocker coins the term "urban contemporary," a euphemism for modern black music, particularly hip-hop and modern R&B. Unfortunately, the word "urban" also becomes synonymous with "black" in the minds white Americans fleeing the cities.
- 1989 *Seinfeld* sitcom glamorizes city life.
- 1990 Busing begins "winding down."
- 1990 Germany reunites; the Berlin Wall, the very symbol of the Cold War, is torn down.
- 1991 USSR disintegrates; Cold War officially over
- 1991 Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Colin Powell, quips that he is "running out of enemies."
- 1993 New Urbanism (a.k.a. "smart growth") movement gains traction in U.S.
- 1996 Busing grinds to a halt.
- 1998 *Sex and the City* premieres on HBO.
- 2001 World Trade Center attacked.
- 2005 U.S. Census Bureau reports 68 of the U.S.'s largest cities (except NYC) are again losing population.

APPENDIX B
SURVEY OF ENGLISH AND AMERICAN ANTI-URBAN LITERATURE, 1700-PRESENT.

Swift, Jonathan. "A Description of the Morning."	Poem	1709
Defoe, Daniel. <i>The Life and Actions of the Late Jonathan Wild</i> .	Novel	1725
Gay, John. <i>Beggar's Opera</i> (based on Defoe, 1725).	Play	1728
Wordsworth, Henry. "London."	Poem	1802
Poe, Edgar Allen. <i>Murders in the Rue Morgues</i> .	Novel	1841
Hawthorne, Nathaniel. <i>The Scarlet Letter</i> .	Novel	1850
Dickens, Charles. <i>Bleak House</i> .	Novel	1852
Thoreau, Henry David. <i>Walden: A Life in the Woods</i> .	Memoir	1854
Thomson, James. <i>The City of Dreadful Night</i> .	Poem	1882
Twain, Mark. <i>The Adventures of Tom Sawyer</i> .	Novel	1884
Booth, William. <i>In Darkest England</i> .	Journalism	1890
Most murder mysteries.	Novel	1890 to present
Doyle, Arthur Conan. <i>The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes</i> .	Novel	1892
Much of the work of the "muckrakers," such as Upton Sinclair's <i>The Jungle</i> .	Journalism	1900 to 1915
London, Jack. <i>People of the Abyss</i> .	Journalism	1902
Western novels starting with Wister, Owen. <i>The Virginian</i> .	Novel	1902 to 1949
Most movie and TV westerns.	Film, television	1903 to 1976
Fitzgerald, F. Scott. <i>The Great Gatsby</i> .	Novel	1925
Nearly all gangster movies.	Film	1927 to 1949
Brecht, Bertolt and Kurt Weill, <i>Threepenny Opera</i> (adapted from Gay, 1728).	Musical play	1928
Nearly all "pulp fiction" (i.e., detective/crime novels).	Novel	1930 to 1972

Orwell, George. <i>Down and Out in Paris and London</i> .	Journalism	1933
Nearly all <i>film noir</i> (derived largely from pulp fiction).	Film	1940 to 1965
Nearly all TV crime dramas: <i>Man Against Crime; Dragnet, Kojak, Law and Order, CSI</i> , et al.	Television	1949 to present
Kazan, Elia. <i>On the Waterfront</i> .	Film	1954
Bernstein, Leonard, Arthur Laurents & Stephen Sondheim. <i>West Side Story</i> .	Musical play	1957
Kerouac, Jack. <i>On the Road</i> .	Novel	1957
Mann, Barry, and Cynthia Weil. "We Gotta Get Out of this Place."	Song	1965
Phillips, John, and Michelle Phillips. "California Dreamin'." Recorded by The Mamas and the Papas.	Song	1965
Davis, Mac. "In the Ghetto." Recorded by Elvis Presley.	Song	1969
"Psycho" and "slasher flicks" (variants of film noir?)	Film	1969 1974
Gangster-movie revival starting with Coppola, Francis Ford. <i>The Godfather</i> .	Film	1972 to present
"Disaster" movies.	Film	1974 1980
"Blaxploitation" movies (variant of gangster movies and/or film noir).	Song	1973 to 1996
Gaye, Marvin, and James Nyx. "Inner City Blues."	Song	1974
Scorcese, Martin. <i>Taxi Driver</i> .	Film	1977
Carpenter, John. <i>Escape From New York</i> .	Film	1981
Baerwald, David, and David Ricketts. "Welcome to the Boomtown." Recorded by David & David.	Song	1986
Rose, Axl, and Slash. "Welcome to the Jungle." Recorded by Guns N Roses.	Song	1987
Chapman, Tracy. "Fast Car." Recorded by Tracy Chapman.	Song	1988

Disaster movie revival.

Film 1996 1998

Chase, David. *The Sopranos*.

Television 1999 to present

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Michael Ray Fitzgerald started as a freelance journalist since 1984, writing music criticism for Jacksonville, Florida's *Southeast Entertainer*. Fitzgerald earned a full scholarship at Florida Community College at Jacksonville serving as a writer and editor of the college's newspaper, *The Campus Voice*. At Jacksonville University, from which he graduated *summa cum laude* with a bachelor's degree in communications in 2004, he wrote for the college's newspaper, *The Navigator*, as well as for literary magazine *Lede*. As an undergraduate, he earned numerous scholarships and awards and was a member of *USA Today's* ALL-USA Academic Team. He also created, edited, and designed a pilot magazine, *Cowford*, for a local nonprofit organization and served three internships with *The Business Journal*. At the latter, he stayed on as a freelance correspondent, writing more than 100 articles. He has also written for regularly for Jacksonville's *Folio Weekly* and was managing editor of *Jacksonville Business Quarterly*. He has contributed articles to four national publications, *The Humanist*, *Free Inquiry*, *Left Curve* and *Utne*, and was a stringer for Associated Press.

Fitzgerald taught creative writing at Douglas Anderson School of the Arts in Jacksonville before attending graduate school at University of Florida's College of Journalism and Communications, where he is now Ph.D. student. His research area is media history, focusing on Cold War television. He plans to teach journalism and communications while writing and editing for a magazine or newspaper.