

GEOGRAPHY AND HISTORY

NATO Military Bases, 1950s



Study the map to answer the following questions:

3. Determining Cause and Effect

What caused the mistrust between Harry S Truman and Joseph Stalin? How did this mistrust affect the way in which each nation handled its foreign affairs?

1. How many military bases are on the map?
2. Near what part of the Soviet Union do you see the most bases?
3. Where are the Soviet Union and the United States closest together?
4. Which NATO bases may have been the most serious threat to the Soviets?

Portfolio Project



Interview someone who lived through the Cuban missile crisis. Ask the person to describe what it was like. Write a summary and keep it in your portfolio.

Cooperative Learning

Create a newspaper about a topic from this chapter. Include editorials, political cartoons, and feature articles.

Reinforcing Skills

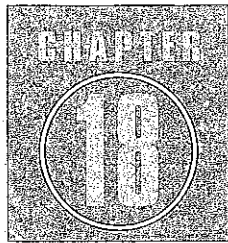
Analyzing Secondary Sources

The photo on page 577 is a primary source that catches a glimpse of childhood during the cold war. Write a paragraph for a secondary source explaining what it was like to grow up at the height of cold war tensions.

Technology Activity



Using the Internet Search the Internet for information on how the United Nations is organized. Design a flowchart that shows the names of each of the main bodies of the UN and how they relate to each other.



The Postwar Era

1955: MIDDLE-CLASS SUBURBANITES BIND TO URBAN POVERTY

The sun glinted off the tail fins and chrome bumpers of the new Buick in the driveway as the Wilsons piled into the car for their weekly ritual—the Sunday afternoon drive. After a brief struggle over who would get the window seats, Sally, Tom, and Susan settled themselves in the backseat.

The car turned onto one of Chicago's newly completed expressways, and shortly the Wilsons were driving north on Michigan Avenue with its exclusive shops and fine restaurants. They parked to window-shop a bit, and when the children clamored for ice cream, the family stopped at an ice-cream parlor. Then they headed home to the tree-lined streets of their comfortable suburb of Morton Grove.

The Wilsons were a lucky family. Exactly 10 years ago, John Wilson was one of thousands of exhausted GIs marching on the road to Berlin.

Now John and Julie had 3 great kids with a fourth on the way and a beautiful home in the suburbs. Thanks to the GI Bill, John had a college degree (something his parents had never achieved) and a promising future with a large company.

On their drive the Wilsons never saw the not-so-lucky Americans who lived on Chicago's West Side: women talking on the steps of decaying buildings; men slumped in doorways; children playing ball on a sidewalk strewn with broken glass. ■

HISTORY  JOURNAL

Based on your own knowledge of the 1950s and the picture on page 597, write down what you think this chapter will be about.

HISTORY
Online



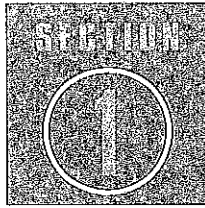
Chapter Overview

Visit the *American Odyssey* Web site at americanodyssey.glencoe.com and click on **Chapter 18—Chapter Overview** to preview the chapter.



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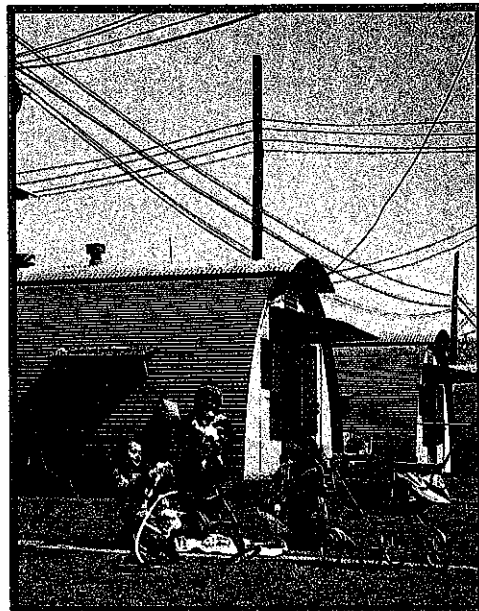
THE SUBURBAN VALUES OF THE 1950S
STRESSED TOGETHERNESS, FAMILY,
AND THE "GOOD LIFE."



Postwar Economy Booms

FALL 1947: VETS ENROLL IN COLLEGE ON GI BILL

WORLD WAR II VETERAN KENNETH BAKER, HIS WIFE, LAURA, AND THEIR BABY DAUGHTER ARRIVED ON THE CAMPUS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA ON A COOL SEPTEMBER MORNING IN 1947. Ken was one of 6,000 married "vets" on campus ready to begin the fall semester. His family was assigned to one of the 674 housing units in Veterans' Village, a university community for ex-GIs, where rents were based on each vet's ability to pay. Veterans who had the most seniority were assigned to the best units—converted steel barracks with gas heat and indoor bathrooms. As newcomers, Kenneth and Laura would be living in a trailer with no plumbing. That meant that they



UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

GI Housing
Veterans flooded college campuses after the war. Some ex-GIs and their families at the University of Minnesota lived in quonset units.

would have to use the public bathhouse and the public laundry.

Nevertheless, the Bakers considered themselves lucky. As Ken observed, "Even a hovel in Veterans' Village is heaven compared to the way I lived in the service." Living in Veterans' Village meant that Ken and Laura could get by on their monthly government allowance of \$90.

Life in Veterans' Village fostered a spirit of cooperation. With more than 900 babies among the village population, every adult became a guardian to every child. The Bakers shopped in the village grocery store, which the veterans' campus community owned and operated. Ken and several of his buddies joined the veterans'

GUIDE TO READING

Main Idea

A postwar economic boom and benefits extended to veterans under the GI Bill contributed to a general prosperity and a higher standard of living for most Americans.

Vocabulary

- ▶ demobilization
- ▶ real income
- ▶ discretionary income
- ▶ conglomerate

Read to Find Out . . .

- ▶ reasons for continued prosperity during the postwar era and how the growth of a consumer culture helped fuel that prosperity.
- ▶ the programs that helped returning GIs reenter society.

bowling league. Laura took special classes in sewing, cooking, and child care. On Friday nights, Laura and Ken joined other residents of Veterans' Village in the recreation center to dance to the recorded music of popular big bands of the day.

Similar veterans' communities could be found on most large college campuses in the postwar United States, thanks to the GI Bill of Rights. The GI Bill was designed to ease the transition from military to civilian life by providing veterans with financial aid for education and housing and to begin small businesses. Nearly 8 million veterans took advantage of educational assistance. Armed with college degrees or technical training, the vets contributed their energy and talent to what would become the nation's longest unbroken period of prosperity.

From War to Peace

Returning GIs Spur Economy

More than 16 million Americans had served in the armed forces during World War II. **Demobilization**, the dismantling of the huge United States war machine, was a daunting task, somewhat like trying to reverse the direction of a river's flow. After peace was achieved in 1945, war-weary soldiers stationed around the world waited eagerly to come home. After thousands of citizens appealed to their congressional representatives to speed up the process, the number of soldiers on active duty dropped from 12 million in 1945 to 1.6 million by mid-1947. This rapid demobilization provided much-needed workers for United States industry, which was in the process of converting from wartime to peacetime production.

Economic Growth

After years of "going without" during the Great Depression and the war, Americans hungered for new cars, electronics, appliances, and gadgets. Industry set out to fill the growing demand for consumer goods. The automobile industry produced 2 million cars in 1946 and nearly 2 times that many by 1955. Americans bought 975,000 television sets in 1948, and 2 years later they bought 7.5 million sets. By 1960 about 75 percent of all American families owned at least 1 automobile, and 87 percent owned at least 1 television set. Consumers also purchased more refrigerators, washing machines, vacuum cleaners, and cameras than ever before. Electric can openers, electric garage door openers, and electric pencil sharpeners appeared on the market and quickly became part of the new American way of life.

The GNP, or gross national product (the total value of a country's goods and services), rose rapidly—

NOW, for the first time anywhere

Motorola Color TV

THE GREATEST DEVELOPMENT OF THE ELECTRONIC AGE

MODEL 1902—Stylish modern design built for the GI's in postwar and military sets, and features beautiful new design by the GI's (1945 to 1947) series.

MODEL 1901—Stylish modern design in solid hardwood and mahogany veneer. Dual speaker, a new sound and built 1948 of outstanding GI's (1948 to 1949) series.

MODEL 1903—Stylish modern design in solid hardwood and mahogany veneer. Dual speaker, a new sound and built 1949 of outstanding GI's (1949 to 1950) series.

Now, you can take your choice of three beautiful Motorola color TV sets. Their superb craftsmanship, outstanding design and lovely woods will earn them a place among the finest furnishings. Without a doubt, they are worthy cabinets for Motorola color TV—the finest in color television.

A 1950s Spending Spree During the 1950s, electricity consumption more than doubled, due in large part to the purchases of electrical appliances and televisions. *Why did Americans have so much money to spend?*

from just more than \$100 billion in 1940 to about \$300 billion in 1950 and then to \$500 billion by 1960. This increase in goods and services that characterized the postwar period gave Americans the highest standard of living the world had ever known. People lived more comfortably than ever before. The United States, home to just 6 percent of the world's population, produced and consumed nearly half the world's goods.

Wage and Price Issues

The reconversion to a peacetime economy brought problems, too. During the war, civilian paychecks included plenty of overtime pay. In addition, government policies had kept a lid on prices. When postwar wages failed to keep up with now-rising prices, blue-collar workers launched a wave of strikes and work stoppages, refusing to work until their demands were met.

Despite rising prices, most American workers continued to prosper. Average annual earnings for factory workers rose from \$3,302 in 1950 to \$5,352 in 1960. **Real income**, the amount of income earned taking into account an increase in prices, increased more than 20 percent during the same period. Working-class Americans began to accumulate **discretionary income**—money to buy what they wanted as well as what they

needed. This increased purchasing power further fueled the rapid economic growth.

Persuading the Consumer

Advertising became the fastest growing industry in the postwar United States. Manufacturers employed new marketing techniques. These techniques were carefully planned to whet the consumer's appetite. It was also the purpose of these advertisers to influence choices among brands of goods that were essentially the same. In his 1957 best-seller, *The Hidden Persuaders*, Vance Packard described the role of advertisers:

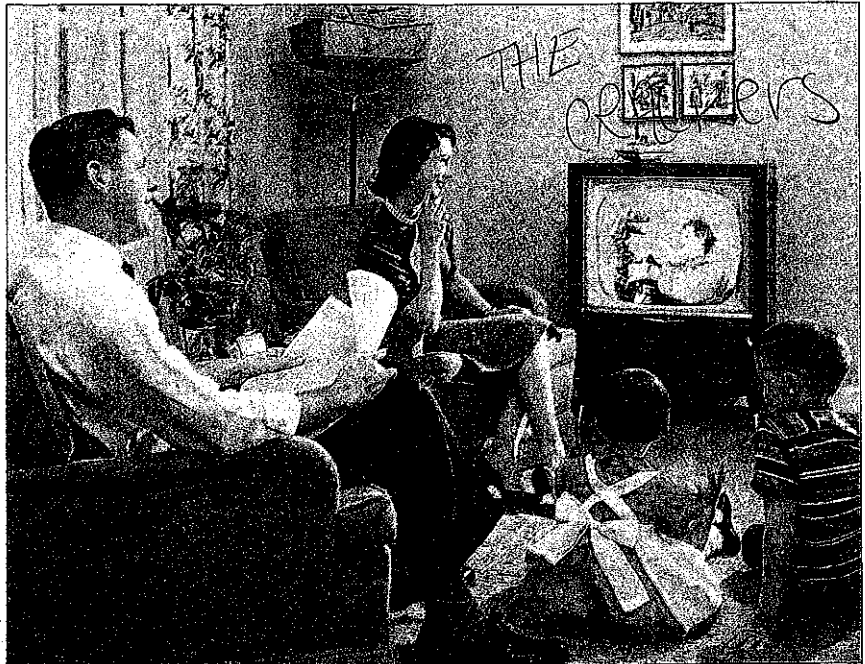
These motivational analysts . . . are adding depth to the selling of ideas and products. They are learning, for example, to offer us considerably more than the actual item involved. A Milwaukee advertising executive commented to colleagues in print on the fact that women will pay two dollars and a half for skin cream but no more than twenty-five cents for a cake of soap. Why? Soap, he explained, only promises to make them clean. The cream promises to make them beautiful.

—Vance Packard, *The Hidden Persuaders*, 1957

According to these hidden messages, a freezer became a promise of plenty, a second car became a symbol of status, and a mouthwash became the key to immediate social success.

The increased popularity of television played a major role in the development of the advertising industry and the gospel of consumerism. Television networks depended on advertising revenues to pay for the programs they produced. At the same time, advertisers found television a perfect medium for reaching consumers. Television, after all, was still a novelty for most people in the United States during the early 1950s, and they watched the television commercials just as avidly as the television programs.

Television ads became something of an art form in themselves. They not only sold products, they also entertained the viewers with showy dramatizations and catchy jingles. As the decade progressed, the presence and influence of television advertising became pervasive, and acquiring material goods like those shown on TV became a goal of the growing, status-conscious middle class.



TV Commercials Advertisers discovered that television was a good way to reach consumers. Advertising was the fastest growing industry in the postwar United States. What techniques did advertisers use?

© HAROLD M. LAMBERT/SUPERSTOCK

Impact of the GI Bill

A Boom for Colleges and Housing

More than any other factor, the GI Bill of Rights, Congress passed in 1944, shaped American society in the postwar period. One veteran concurred:

The GI Bill of Rights, of course, had more to do with thrusting us into a new era than anything else. Millions of people whose parents or grandparents had never dreamed of going to college saw that they could go. . . . Essentially I think it made us a far more democratic people.

—Nelson Foyrter, in
Americans Remember the Home Front

As a result of the GI Bill, the greatest wave of college building in the nation's history took place during the postwar years. Many states vastly increased their support of higher education. For example, during the postwar period California State University opened campuses at Sacramento, Los Angeles, Long Beach, Fullerton, Hayward, Northridge, and San Bernardino.

In addition to educational benefits, the GI Bill offered low-interest mortgages to veterans who wanted to purchase homes. This spurred a huge demand for housing after the war, creating a construction boom and fostering a trend toward mass production. Using mass production methods, the housing industry built 13 million

new homes during the 1950s. Home ownership had always been a part of the American dream. The rate of home ownership increased between 1940 and 1960 from 44 to 62 percent of American households. The GI Bill allowed millions of Americans to achieve a standard of living that was generally better than that of their parents.

The New World of Business

Corporate Values Stress Conformity

During the postwar years, the motto of major corporations became "bigger is better." Business mergers, the combining of several companies, created **conglomerates**—firms that had holdings in a variety of unrelated industries. Many of the nation's biggest corporations grew even bigger during the postwar years. The net sales of IBM jumped from \$119.4 million in 1946 to \$1.7 billion in 1961. General Motors doubled its net assets during the 1950s from \$1.5 billion in 1951 to \$2.8 billion in 1960.

Up the Corporate Ladder

Rapid corporate growth during the 1950s gave rise to new employment opportunities and a new lifestyle for the nation's white-collar workers (clerical and professional workers) who viewed the corporate life as a secure career. Major corporations provided their employees

with everything from company neckties to memberships in exclusive country clubs. Training programs encouraged employees to adopt the company point of view. Companies such as IBM sent their managers to schools to learn not only management techniques, but company beliefs as well.

Critics charged corporations with destroying individuality by expecting employees to conform to company standards of thinking, dressing, and behaving. As sociologist C. Wright Mills commented, "When white-collar people get jobs, they sell not only their time and energy but their personalities as well."

Major corporations greatly influenced American life and values in the 1950s. To those climbing the corporate ladder—that is, being promoted to higher and higher levels of responsibility—wages were but one concern. Equally important were benefits such as a pension plan, medical insurance, a performance bonus, an expense account, a paid vacation, and a company car. For employees who dedicated themselves to the corporate lifestyle and successfully met the expectations of their superiors, the rewards of corporate life were further proof that the United States was a land of opportunity—at least for some Americans.

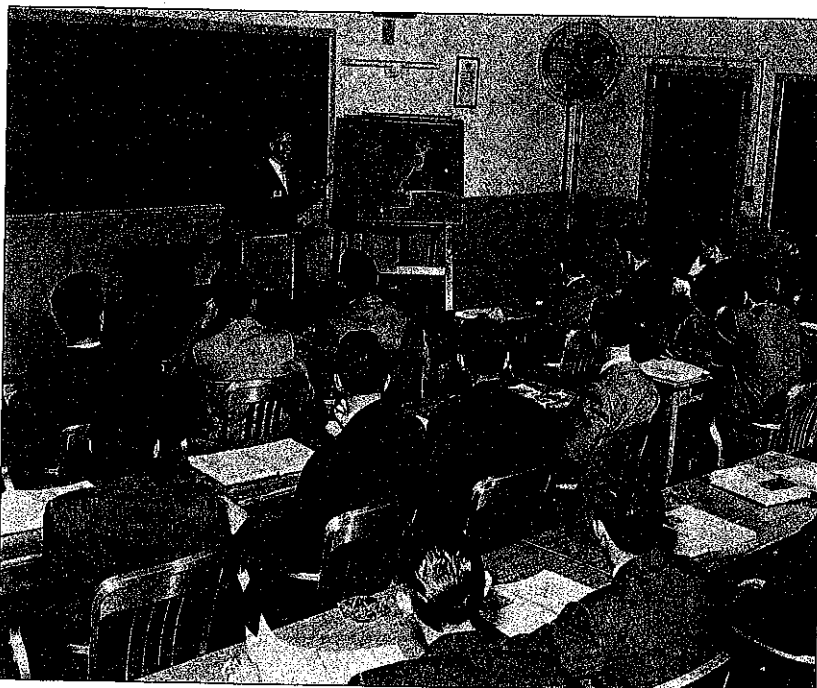
During the 1950s positions of power and authority within the corporate world belonged mostly to white males. Minority representation was very rare. Women were expected to fill different roles in the postwar American workforce. The widely read *Life* magazine explained women's roles one way:

Household skills take her into the garment trades; neat and personable, she becomes office worker and saleslady; patient and dexterous, she does well on repetitive, detailed factory work; compassionate, she becomes teacher and nurse.

—*Life*, 1956

The Service Sector

The nation's public and private service industries enjoyed tremendous expansion during the postwar years. Government jobs at the national, state, city, and county levels included social workers, teachers, and civil servants. In private business, there was a big growth in the number of secretarial and clerical workers, bank tellers, and telephone operators, as well as service workers in the insurance, transportation, and retail sales areas. Hospitality and recreation industries needed more service workers



Corporate Image Large corporations encouraged conformity and offered training programs that helped develop the "corporate image." At some companies, holding the proper beliefs was just as important as wearing the proper necktie. What might be the benefits and disadvantages of working for a large corporation?

with the increased number of bowling alleys, skating rinks, movie theaters, hotels, and restaurants. The unprecedented number of cars, appliances, radios, and television sets purchased by consumers created a need for skilled mechanics and repairpeople. For the first time in United States history, workers who performed services began to outnumber those who manufactured products.

Farms Become Big Business

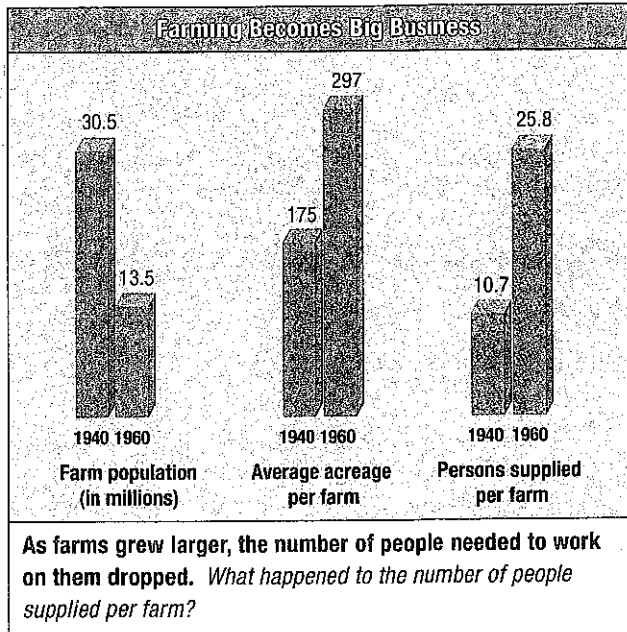
Small Farmers Leave for the City

The postwar years also saw a transformation in agriculture from family business to corporate enterprise. Two studies conducted of Plainville, a pseudonym for a small rural community in southeast Missouri, told a large story. The first study, conducted in 1939, revealed a community of small farms. Here, farmers grew a variety of small crops, raised a few chickens, and bred a few cows. Fifteen years later, Plainville had been transformed. Farming had become big business. As incomes doubled, or even tripled, residents joined the consumer society. Nearly every home had a television set. The way of life in rural Plainville was almost indistinguishable from that in suburban areas.

Plainville was typical of the changing nature of farming throughout the postwar United States. The size of farms increased. Farmers learned that large-scale farming lowered the cost of production. For example, in 1960 the average cost of corn production was \$61 per acre when grown on 160 acres (64.8 ha); the cost dropped to \$54 per acre on 640 acres (259.2 ha). As the size of farms grew, the value of fertile farmland rose rapidly.



Farm Auction A farmer, defeated by weather and economic conditions, must auction off his Nebraska farm. Why were small farms unable to compete with large farms?



While a few farmers benefited from these changes, others suffered. Because small farms could not compete with large farms, many small-farm families sold their land and migrated to urban areas. As farm size doubled, the total number of farms dropped from more than 6 million in 1940 to fewer than 4 million in 1960, and the farm population fell from about 30 million to about 13 million. By 1960 only 8 percent of the population lived on farms.

An Automobile Culture

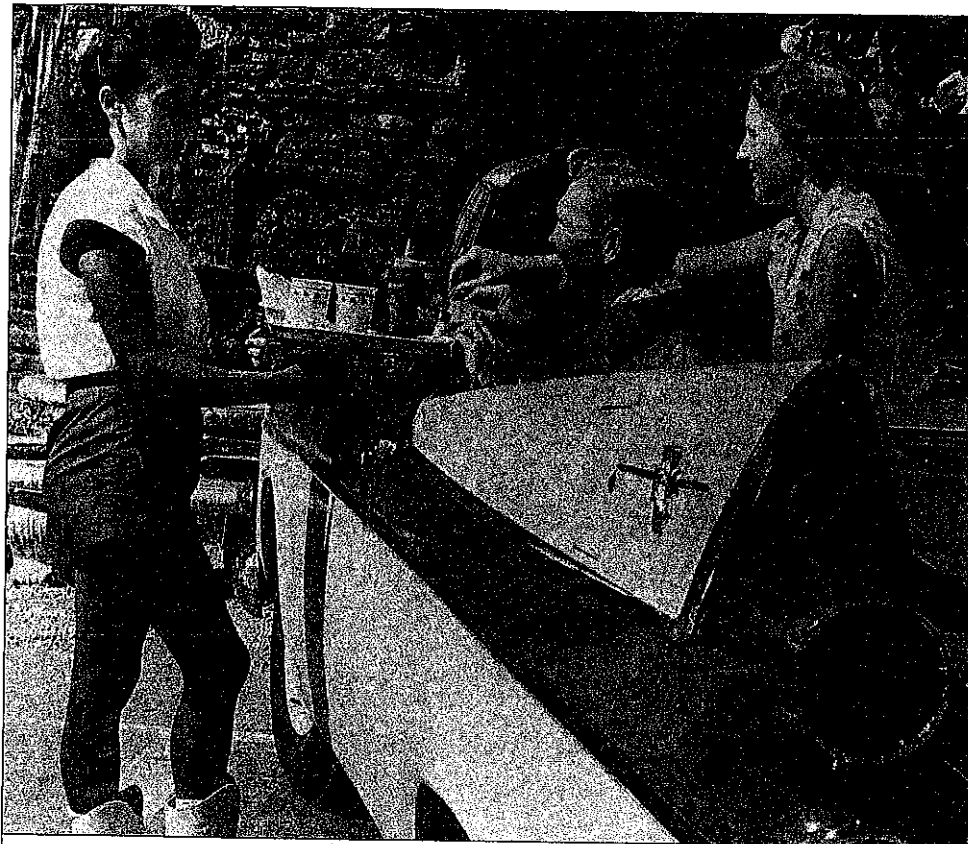
The 1950s' Fascination With Cars

The migration of farm families to the city was characteristic of the population as a whole. Americans were on the move, and the automobile became indispensable to their way of life. Auto dealers sold a record 58 million cars during the 1950s. Car manufacturers kept the public buying by changing body styles and adding more options, which made the previous year's models obsolete, at least in style. Turning out large, high-powered, steel-and-chrome fantasies in every color of the rainbow, the automakers provided sparkling steel chariots for every taste and income level.

Curb Service and Drive-ins

Americans practically lived in their automobiles. "Come as you are, eat in your car" became a popular slogan of fast-food drive-ins that provided curb service. Traveling on roller skates, waitresses and waiters, called carhops,

UPI/BETTSMANN



Drive-in Restaurant Hamburgers, french fries, and Cokes were drive-in favorites during the 1950s. What encouraged automobile travel?

Albuquerque boomed. The greatest population surge took place in California. By 1963 it had surpassed New York as the nation's most populous state.

By far the most significant population shift was the migration of white Americans from cities to suburbs. The greater availability of automobiles, the expansion of the highway system, and the affordability of mass-produced housing spurred suburbanization. By the end of the 1950s, more than one-fifth of all Americans lived in the suburbs, changing the landscape of the nation and the lifestyle of middle-class America.

took orders and delivered food to the customer's car window. Drive-in theaters showed movies on outdoor screens as audiences watched from inside their cars.

Ribbons of Highway

The development of an extensive interstate highway system encouraged automobile travel. The Highway Act of 1956 authorized \$32 billion for the construction of more than 40,000 miles of federal highways. President Eisenhower proudly described his administration's commitment to the interstate highway system:

The amount of concrete poured to form these roadways would build . . . six sidewalks to the moon. . . . More than any single action by the government since the end of the war, this one would change the face of America.

—President Dwight D. Eisenhower

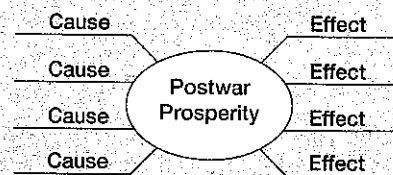
Migration to the Suburbs

The moving van became the new symbol of American mobility. During each year of the 1950s, nearly one-fifth of the population changed residences. Attracted by warm climates and plentiful jobs, Americans began to head to the West and the Southwest. Cities such as Houston, Dallas, Phoenix, and

SECTION ASSESSMENT

Main Idea

1. Use a diagram like this one to show the causes and effects of the postwar prosperity enjoyed by most Americans.



Vocabulary

2. Define: demobilization, real income, discretionary income, conglomerate.

Checking Facts

3. What benefits did the GI Bill of Rights offer?
4. What caused the heavy demand for consumer goods after the war?

Critical Thinking

5. Analyzing Information How did the return of the GIs change the job market for women? Were any of the changes positive? Explain.

Geography: Impact on History

MOVEMENT

New American Landscape: Suburbia

By 1945 a severe housing shortage had developed in the United States. During the war new housing starts had slowed to a standstill. Then hundreds of thousands of GIs came home, got married, and began looking for homes. The nation needed 5 million new housing units—the sooner, the better.

The Suburbs

The construction industry in the United States had to meet quite a challenge. Cities were too crowded for new construction to occur, and relocating millions of people to remote, sparsely populated areas of the country would be expensive and impractical. The builders' solution was to create a new addition to the country's landscape—planned communities on the outskirts of cities. This decision would transform not only the landscape of the country but also the lifestyles of the mostly white, middle-class Americans who began migrating from crowded cities to the open, quieter environment of the suburbs. Following World War II, several planned communities were constructed just outside many of the nation's big cities.

Levittown, U.S.A.

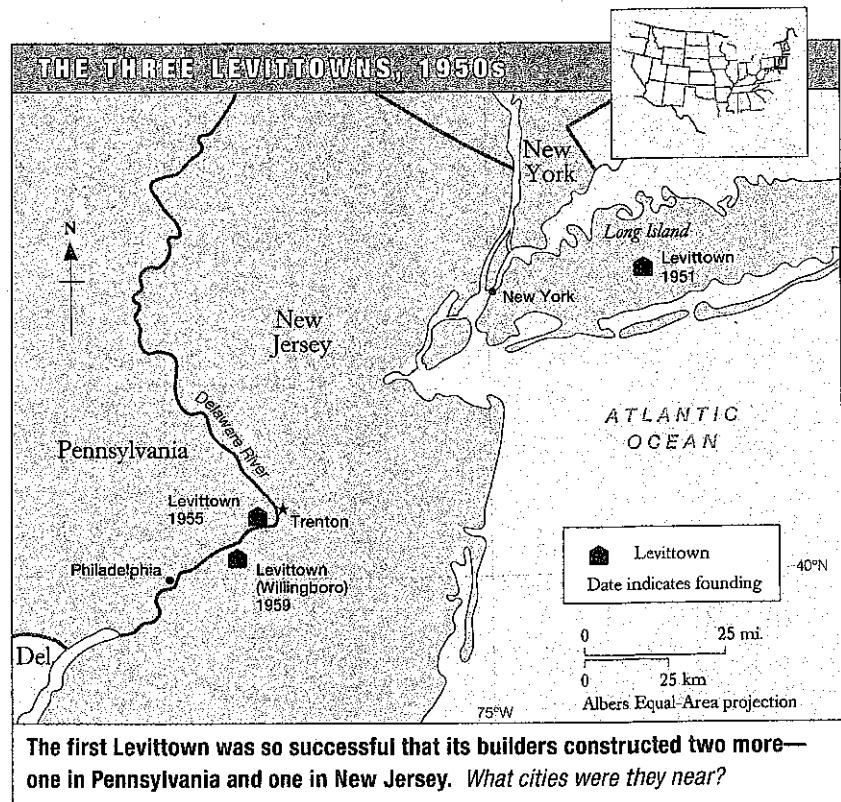
The first and most famous post-war planned community was begun in 1946 on Long Island, New York, about 30 miles (48.2 km) from midtown Manhattan. The community, called Levittown, was named for the company that built it, Levitt & Sons, and was constructed on 1,200 acres (486 ha) of potato farmland.

Levittown's design included single-family homes, parks, playgrounds, shopping centers, swimming pools, baseball diamonds, handball courts, and clubhouses for fraternal and veterans organizations. Each home was exactly the same and sold for the same price: \$7,990.

The homes at Levittown were mass-produced. Specialized construction crews hurried from one

home site to the next, digging foundations, pouring concrete, erecting walls and roofs, and installing plumbing and electrical fixtures. During the height of the construction at Levittown, workers finished a new home every 15 minutes.

Levittown was an immediate success. Just 3 years after construction began, 10,600 houses had been built, and Levittown's population



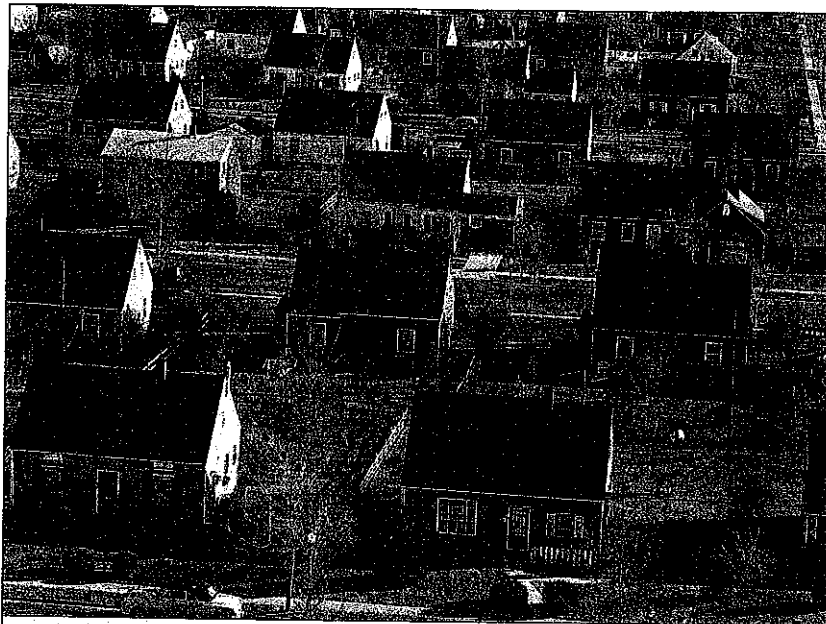
had swelled to more than 40,000. The residents loved their new community. One former GI who had moved to Levittown with his wife and another relative from a 1-bedroom apartment in Brooklyn said, "That was so awful I'd rather not talk about it. Getting into this house was like being emancipated."

A New Landscape

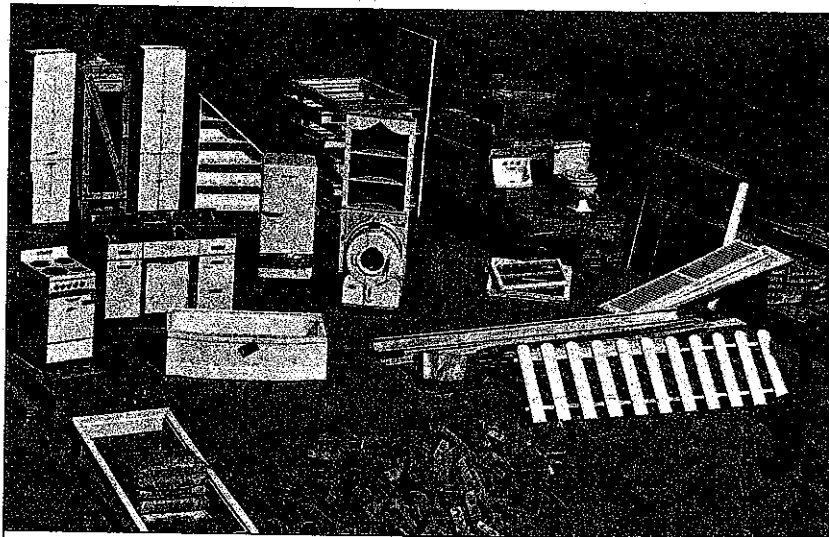
The construction of planned communities such as the three Levittowns accounted for several important changes in the landscape. First, these types of planned communities, or subdivisions, had never existed before. They combined elements of city life with features of rural living, blurring the distinctions that had once existed between these two ways of life.

Second, the new communities were an attractive alternative to the increasingly crowded, dirty cities in which most Americans lived. People who could afford to move did so, resulting in a migration of white middle-class Americans from the cities to surrounding suburbs.

Finally, the suburbs created a new way of life for many Americans. Long daily commutes to and from jobs in the cities became more and more common. New local governments were created to administer the affairs of these fledgling communities and new school systems were needed to educate the children of the suburbs. In short, the postwar housing shortage led to a transformation in the way the nation looked and in the way many Americans lived.



Suburban Living All the streets in Levittown curved at exactly the same angle, and trees were planted along them, 1 every 28 feet (8.5 m). Despite such rigid conformity, residents from the city loved the openness and country feel of this new suburb. How many homes were constructed in the first Levittown?



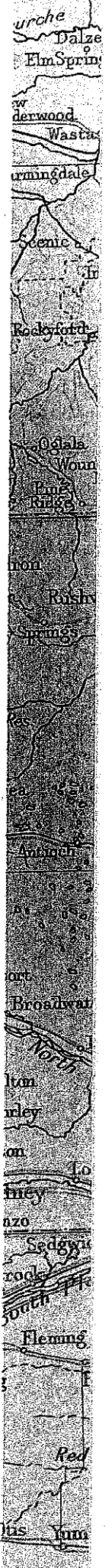
Modern Conveniences Homes in Levittown had a living room with a fireplace, two bedrooms, and a large attic that could be converted into two additional bedrooms. They also had the latest conveniences: radiant heat, an electric kitchen, an automatic washing machine, and a built-in television. How much did these homes cost when they were first built?

MAKING THE GEOGRAPHIC CONNECTION

1. Where was the first Levittown built, and what major city was it near? Where do you think many of the Levittown residents had lived before they moved to Levittown?
2. How were the homes in Levittown mass-produced? During the height of construction at the Levittown on Long Island, how often was a new home completed?
3. **Movement** After a decade of middle-class migration to the suburbs, the quality of life in most big cities began to decline. What were possible reasons for this decline?

JOE SCHERSCHLAGE/MAGAZINE © 1970 TIME INC.

ANTHONY LUKW/LIFE MAGAZINE © 1948 TIME INC.



Suburban Lifestyles

1950s: AMERICANS MIGRATE TO SUBURBS

JILL JOHNSON PARKED THE GREEN AND WHITE STATION WAGON NEXT TO A NUMBER OF OTHER SIMILAR VEHICLES AT THE TRAIN STATION. AS Bob Johnson joined the crowd waiting for the 8:22 A.M. commuter into the city, the Johnson children waved and blew kisses to their dad. Jill Johnson's next stop was Eisenhower Elementary School where Bill, a fourth grader, and Susan, a second grader, spent their day. Mary Ann, age four, and baby Jimmy then accompanied their mom to the shopping center.

The Village Market Mall provided ample parking for its 30 or more stores and offices. Shoppers had access to a large department store, a bank, a beauty salon and a barber shop, a drugstore, a dry cleaner, and a supermarket. Physicians, dentists, and attorneys occupied offices on the



Family Values

Following World War II, many families moved to the suburbs in search of the good life.

second floors of the two-story buildings in the shopping center.

Jill dropped off Bob's suits at the dry cleaner and then stopped at the supermarket to pick up cookies for the Cub Scout meeting and steaks to barbecue on Sunday. She also picked out frozen TV dinners so that the family could eat while they watched *The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet* on Friday night.

With the morning errands completed, Jill Johnson and her children headed for home, a neat one-story frame house with a picture window and an attached garage, located on a street with many similar houses. The neighborhood's well-kept lawns and newly planted flowers and trees

reflected pride of ownership. The Johnsons, along with 60 million other white Americans, were enjoying the comfortable lifestyle of the suburbs.

GUIDE TO READING

Main Idea

For some people, the child-centered suburban culture fulfilled the American dream; for others, it represented a dream unfulfilled and the shortcomings of postwar society.

Vocabulary

- ▶ suburbia
- ▶ baby boom

Read to Find Out . . .

- ▶ the major population patterns that helped reshape American society in the 1950s.
- ▶ the suburban values of the 1950s.
- ▶ that status of women and children during the 1950s.

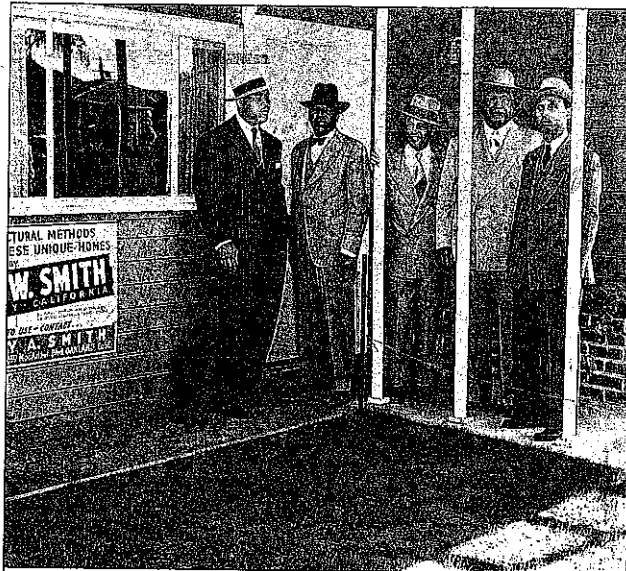
Growth of Suburbia

Cities Lag Behind as Suburbs Grow

During the 1950s, 85 percent of new home construction took place in suburbia—residential areas outside the city. The number of suburban dwellers doubled, while the population of central cities rose only 10 percent. Reasons for the rapid growth of suburbia varied. Some whites wanted to escape the crime and the congestion of city neighborhoods. Others fled because of their prejudices against African Americans and Hispanic Americans who were moving to cities in growing numbers. Generally, middle-class white Americans considered migration to the suburbs a move upward to a better life for themselves and their children.

In contrast to city life, suburbia offered a retreat to the picturesque countryside. As developers in earlier periods had done, the developers of the 1950s attracted home buyers with promises of fresh air, green lawns, and trees. Many suburbs had “park,” “forest,” “woods,” “grove,” or “hill” as part of their names.

The new suburbs were usually located on the fringes of major cities. Farmland or vacant wooded areas became



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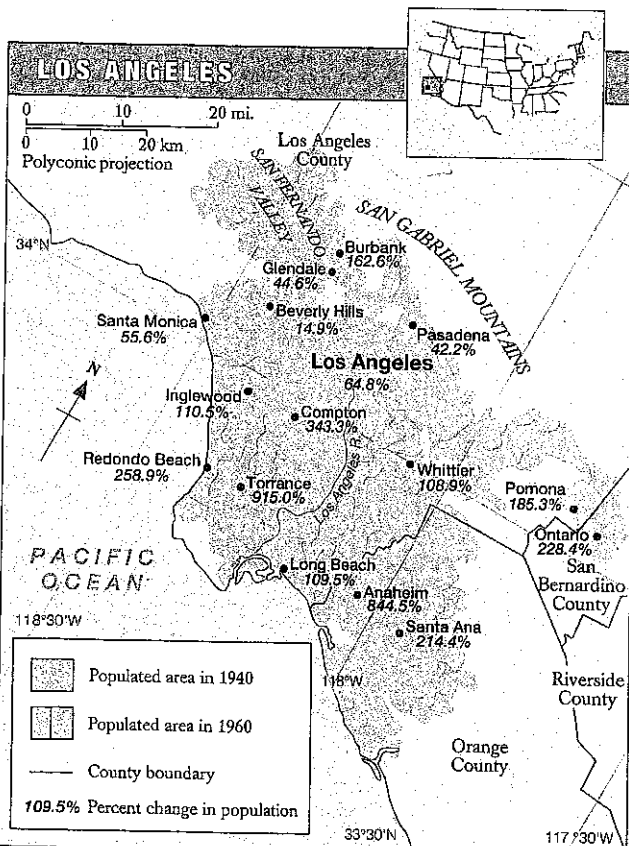
African American Suburbs In Richmond, California, a group of African American community leaders developed a planned community, named Parchester Village, for middle-class African Americans. Why was suburban life denied to many African Americans in the 1950s?

sites for new subdivisions. In southern California, development of the San Fernando Valley, formerly sprinkled with orange groves, helped make Los Angeles the fastest growing area in the postwar period.

Suburbs had low population densities compared with cities. Single-family homes on large plots of land, wide streets, and open spaces gave suburbs the “country” feeling that new middle-class homeowners craved. They could enjoy this openness because residents owned automobiles, which allowed them to travel to jobs, schools, and shopping facilities.

Affordability became a key factor in attracting home buyers to the suburbs. Because the GI Bill offered low-interest loans, new housing was more affordable during the postwar period than at any other time in American history. Equally attractive was the government’s offer of income tax deductions for home mortgage interest payments and property taxes.

Though affordable, the suburbs did not offer opportunities for homeownership to everyone. Many American cities had small but growing populations of middle-class minorities, particularly African Americans and Hispanic Americans, who also longed to escape the noise, the dirt, and the crime of the cities. By and large, however, the developers of the nation’s postwar suburbs refused to sell homes to minorities. By 1960, for example, Levittown, Long Island, had a population of more than 65,000, but it had not a single African American resident. Despite having achieved a measure of financial success, America’s middle-class minorities were still denied full access to the American dream.



The Los Angeles area was one of the most rapidly growing parts of California between 1940 and 1960. Which counties experienced the most growth between 1940 and 1960?



LAMBERT/ARCHIVE PHOTOS

Suburban Ideal Togetherness was an important value during the 1950s. What criticisms were leveled at the suburban dream?

Such criticism would not have rung true with most suburbanites. Emerging from an era of depression and a world war, the residents of suburbia during the 1950s saw themselves creating thousands of new communities built on a common desire for a decent existence. They prized the informality and togetherness of suburban life. The Welcome Wagon, a community organization that provided information and offered gifts and coupons from local stores, greeted new families. Most newcomers moved easily into the social life of their new neighborhood by joining a bowling league, a bridge club, or a church

The American Dream

Community Spirit in the Suburbs

Low-income and minority groups were largely excluded from suburban society. Millions of white, middle-class Americans, however, shared a lifestyle that represented to them the American dream. They owned their own homes, sent their children to good schools, lived in safe communities, and were economically secure. Such were the dreams of the immigrants who had sailed into New York Harbor half a century before, and now those dreams finally had been realized by many of their children and grandchildren.

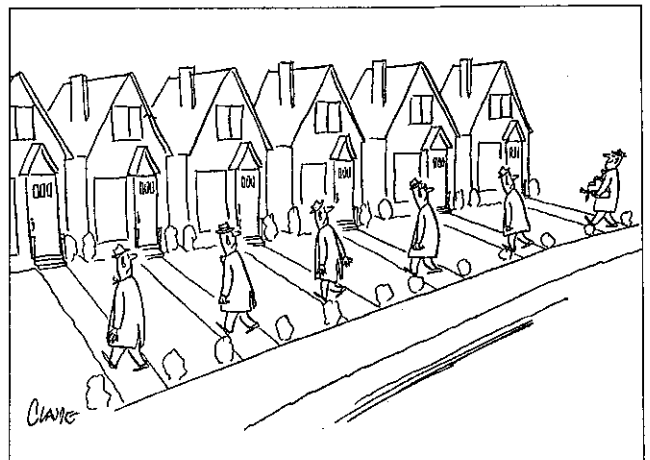
Nevertheless, some Americans found fault with the “dream.” Social critics of the 1950s deplored the conformity of suburban life. They mocked what they regarded as the sameness of the “cookie-cutter” houses, the lack of privacy, and the decline of individuality. Folksinger Malvina Reynolds satirized the middle-class suburbanites in a popular song titled “Little Boxes”:

And they all play on the golf course
 And drink their martinis dry,
 And they all have pretty children
 And the children go to school,
 And the children go to summer camp
 And then to the university,
 Where they are put in boxes
 And they come out all the same.

—Malvina Reynolds,
 “Little Boxes”

group. One suburban resident observed: “Before we came here, we used to live pretty much to ourselves. . . . Now we stop around and visit with people or they visit with us. I really think [suburban living] has broadened us.”

Cooperation and group participation helped forge community spirit in the suburbs. This spirit extended to church membership, which increased from 48 percent of the population in 1940 to 63 percent in 1960. The resurgence of religion became evident in all areas of life, from movies to politics. Hollywood’s hit films included such religious extravaganzas as *The Robe*, *The Ten Commandments*, and *Ben Hur*. Congress added “under God” to the Pledge of Allegiance and “In God We



DRAWING BY CLAUDE © 1956, 1964 THE NEW YORKER MAGAZINE, INC.

“Cookie-cutter” Houses A cartoonist pokes fun at the sameness of suburban life. Why did many people like the suburbs?



Billy Graham An ordained Southern Baptist minister, Graham first gained recognition through his radio broadcasts, tent revivals, and appearances at "Youth for Christ" rallies. During the 1950s, many considered him fundamentalism's chief voice. How did religion help shape values during the 1950s?

Trust" to all United States currency. President Eisenhower told Americans, "Everybody should have a religious faith, and I don't care what it is."

Religious leaders helped spread religious commitment with the aid of modern media. They had their own radio and television programs, best-selling books, and newspaper columns. Billy Graham, a popular Protestant minister, attracted thousands of people throughout the United States and in other parts of the world with his huge evangelical campaigns. Fulton J. Sheen, a Roman Catholic bishop, became a television personality through his weekly program optimistically titled *Life Is Worth Living*. Protestant minister Norman Vincent Peale attracted followers with his message of "positive thinking."

Critics claimed that churches downplayed faith and emphasized comfort and security. Instead of searching for God, the critics said, most Americans turned to religion for peace of mind and a sense of belonging. For whatever reasons, American families flocked to their churches and synagogues throughout the 1950s. Billboards and television commercials proclaimed: "Bring the whole family to church" and "The family that prays together stays together." Messages like these clearly indicated that postwar society was focused on the family.

Baby Boom

A Child-centered Culture

Like the economy, the family enjoyed unprecedented growth in the postwar years. The nation's population increased by 19 million in the 1940s and by almost 30 million in the 1950s. The fertility rate—the number of births per thousand women—peaked at 123 in 1957, up about 20 percent from the Depression years of the 1930s. That meant that a baby was born in the United States every 7 seconds! This phenomenal population growth, known as the **baby boom**, continued until the mid-1960s.

HISTORY

Online 

Student Web Activity 18

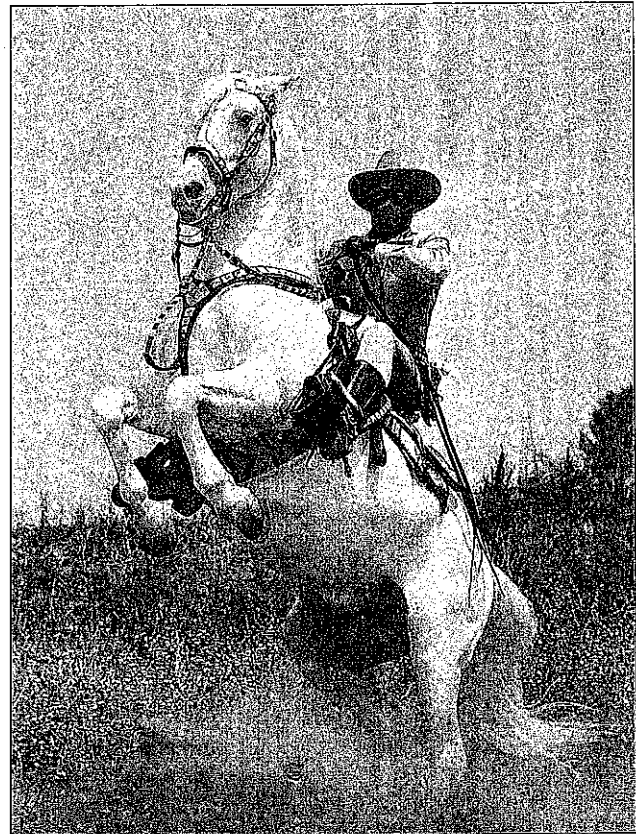
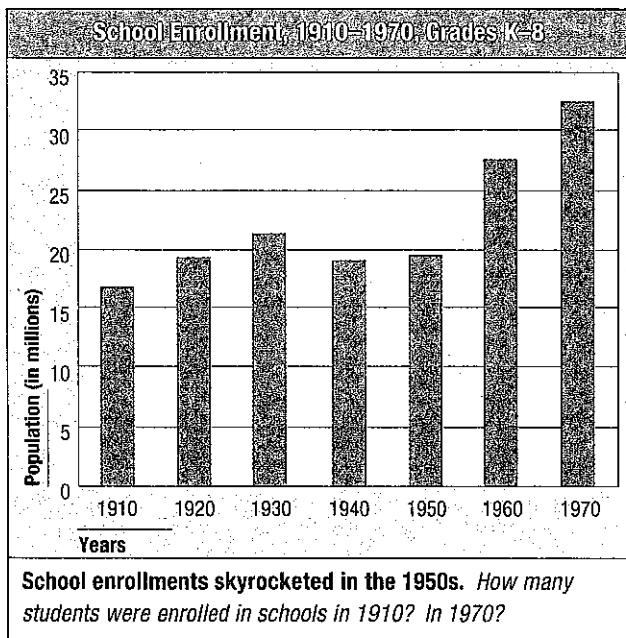
Visit the *American Odyssey* Web site at americanodyssey.glencoe.com and click on **Chapter 18—Student Web Activities** for an activity relating to society and culture in the 1950s.

Like the resurgence of religion in the 1950s, the emphasis on family reflected a desire for close social and emotional ties. A *McCall's* magazine article in 1954 coined the term "togetherness" to describe young married couples whose lives centered on raising large families. Americans in the 1950s married at an earlier age and had more babies than their parents. Between 1940 and 1960, the birthrate for third and fourth children in a family more than doubled.

The baby boom further fueled the economy and helped sustain prosperity. Growing families needed larger houses, so the construction industry prospered. As the baby boomers progressed from diapers to school classrooms to college diplomas, industries and institutions grew to satisfy their needs. During the 1950s, school enrollments increased by 13 million. School districts struggled to erect new buildings and temporary classrooms to accommodate the nation's children. In California a new school was completed every 7 days throughout the 1950s, and still the state faced a shortage of classrooms.

Catering to the Kids

Many baby-boom kids enjoyed a lifestyle of unprecedented privilege. Schools became not only institutions of learning but also centers of social activity. After-school programs included an endless variety of lessons and sports events. Parents, who wanted to give their children all the advantages their new prosperity allowed, enthusiastically supported these activities. Music lessons in the schools drove up the sale of musical instruments from \$86 million in 1950 to \$149 million in 1960. The number of Girl Scouts and Brownies doubled, and the number of Little Leagues grew from about 800 to nearly 6,000 during the 1950s.



© JACK WOODS. 1955/NOTION PICTURE & TELEVISION PHOTO ARCHIVE

The Lone Ranger In this very popular television western, the Lone Ranger and his Native American friend, Tonto, set out to bring law and order to the West. Who were some of the other television heroes of the 1950s?

Baby boomers were the nation's first generation raised on television from their earliest years. Programming for children included everything from puppet shows to tales of the Old West. Young viewers gathered around the television to watch Buffalo Bob and his freckle-faced marionette, and when the youngsters heard the familiar opening line, "Say kids, what time is it?" they responded in unison, "It's Howdy Doody time!" At its height the popular *Kukla, Fran, and Ollie* puppet show attracted an audience of 10 million viewers. Kukla (a clown), Ollie (a snaggle-toothed dragon), and several other Kuklapolitan puppets visited with Fran Allison in an unrehearsed weekly program that charmed adults as well as children.

Television heroes included the Lone Ranger, Hopalong Cassidy, and Captain Video (Guardian of the Universe). Also popular were shows featuring heroic dogs and horses—*Lassie*, *Rin-Tin-Tin*, and *My Friend Flicka*. On *Ding Dong School*, kindly Miss Frances led her television audience in constructive preschool activities and songs. Millions of viewers joined Annette, Cubby, Karen, and the other Mouseketeers on *The Mickey Mouse Club*. Captain Kangaroo, Mr. Green Jeans, and a collection of puppet friends entertained more than one generation of youngsters.



UPI/BETTMANN NEWSPHOTOS

First Polio Vaccination Some polio victims (above) needed an iron lung to breathe; others suffered paralysis and had to use crutches. A massive vaccination program (right) began after the Salk vaccine was approved for use in 1955. How did Dr. Albert Sabin contribute to eliminating the polio threat?



MARCH OF DIMES BIRTH DEFECTS FOUNDATION

Advertisers and toymakers jumped on the television bandwagon. Products aimed at the growing market of 5- to 14-year-olds rang up big sales. In 1954 a popular Walt Disney television program introduced folk hero Davy Crockett, portrayed by Fess Parker. The resulting Davy Crockett "cult" created a \$100 million market for coonskin caps and dozens of other items with Davy's picture on them. The show's theme song, "The Ballad of Davy Crockett," sold 4 million records.

Critics argued that television produced passive children. Children's programming, they claimed, was boring, mindless, and often violent. Still, some programs carried positive messages. Good triumphed over evil. Gentleness, kindness, and truthfulness prevailed. The joy and wonder of childhood were encouraged and celebrated.

Healthier, Happier Children

By the 1950s medical science had made great strides toward combating childhood diseases. Antibiotics and vaccines helped control diseases such as diphtheria, influenza, and typhoid fever. Polio, however, continued to baffle the medical profession. In 1952 a record number of 58,000 cases of polio was reported in the United

States. Those who survived were often permanently paralyzed. The most severe cases were confined to iron lungs—large metal tanks with pumps that helped patients breathe. Polio became the most feared disease of the postwar period.

Dr. Jonas Salk finally developed an effective vaccine against polio and in doing so became the medical hero of the 1950s. Salk first tested the vaccine on himself, his wife, and their three sons. In 1954, 2 million schoolchildren took part in a mass testing program. The test, which was the largest effort of its kind in history, utilized the services of thousands of physicians and millions of volunteers. On April 12, 1955, the Salk vaccine was declared a safe and effective weapon against polio. Through the work of Dr. Salk, who became a hero to people throughout the world, and Dr. Albert Sabin, who developed an oral version of the vaccine, the threat of polio was virtually eliminated.



AP/WIDE WORLD PHOTOS

Dr. Benjamin Spock The famous doctor visits the Anderson quintuplets. How did his books influence the rearing of children?

Mother and Homemaker

In the 1950s women were discouraged from attending college. A high-school textbook on family living counseled young women that “Men are not interested in college degrees, but in the warmth and humanness of the girls they marry.” Many women who did graduate from college concentrated their studies in such fields as home economics or child development. A survey found that most college women believed “it is natural for a woman to be satisfied with her husband’s success and not crave personal achievement.”

The suburban lifestyle strengthened the distinctions between male and female roles. Fathers often left home early in the morning to commute to jobs in the city. When they returned home in the evening, the children had been fed, bathed, and dressed for bed. Most mothers assumed responsibility for the daily routine of child rearing in addition to

cooking, cleaning, shopping, washing clothes, and participating in school and community activities. John Cheever, who set many of his novels and short stories in the suburbs of New York, described one such woman:

Dr. Salk’s fame was paralleled by that of another medical person, Dr. Benjamin Spock. During the 1950s only the Bible sold more copies than Spock’s book *Baby and Child Care*. Spock popularized the theory that early childhood experiences influence an individual’s entire life. He urged mothers to spare the rod and to devote themselves to creating an atmosphere of warmth and trust for their children so that they would grow into happy, well-adjusted adults. “You can think of it this way: useful, well-adjusted citizens are the most valuable possessions a country has, and good mother care during early childhood is the surest way to produce them.” Dr. Spock suggested that the government should pay mothers so that they would not have to seek outside employment. This idea failed to gain popular support, and opponents even suggested that it smacked of socialism.

She gets up at seven and turns the radio on. After she is dressed, she rouses the children and cooks the breakfast. Our son has to be walked to the school bus at eight o’clock. When Ethel returns from this trip, Carol’s hair has to be braided. I leave the house at eight-thirty, but I know that every move that Ethel makes for the rest of the day will be determined by the housework, the cooking, the shopping, and the demands of the children. I know that on Tuesdays and Thursdays she will be at the A & P between eleven and noon, that on every clear afternoon she will be on a certain bench in a playground from three until five, that she cleans the house on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, and polishes the silver when it rains. When I return at six, she is usually cleaning the vegetables or making some other preparation for dinner. Then when the children have been fed and bathed, when the dinner is ready, when the table in the living room is set with food and china, she stands in the middle of the room as if she has lost or forgotten something, and this moment of reflection is so deep that she will not hear me if I speak to her, or the children if they call. Then it is over. She lights the four white candles in their silver sticks, and we sit down to a supper of corned-beef hash or some other modest fare.

—John Cheever, “The Season of Divorce”
from *The Stories of John Cheever*

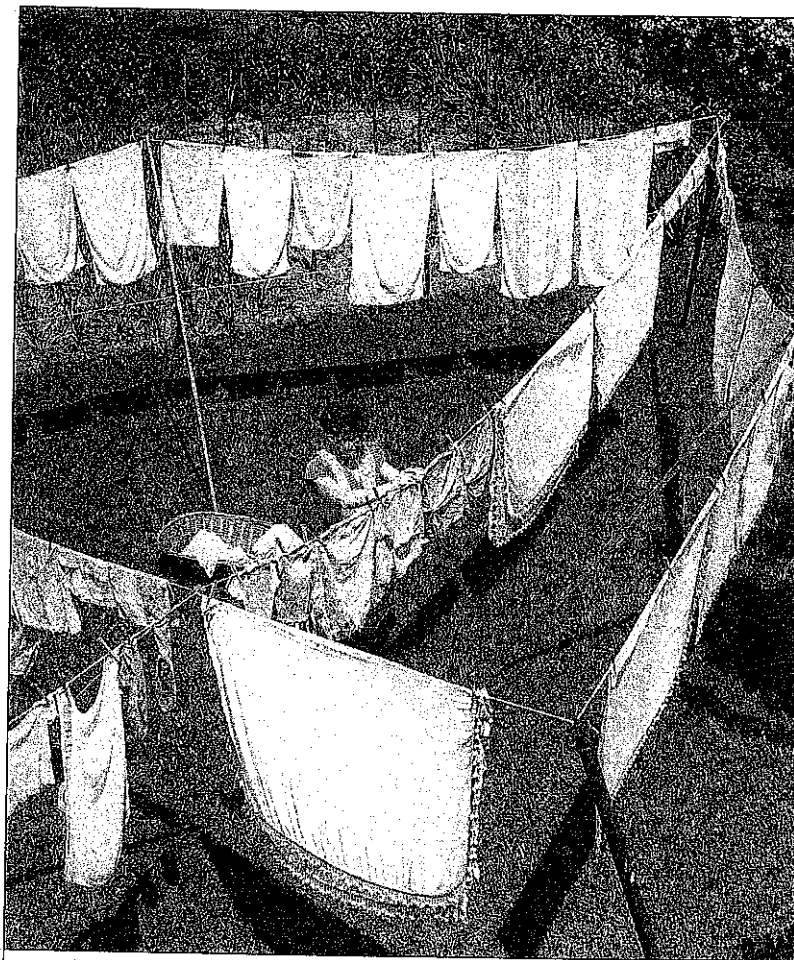
A Woman’s Place

Back Into the Labor Force

Spock’s theories helped reinforce the concept of motherhood as a profession in itself and strengthened the old idea that a woman’s place was in the home. “No job is more exacting, more necessary, or more rewarding than that of housewife and mother,” stated an article in the *Atlantic* in 1950. Statistics indicated that American women agreed. The median age of marriage for women fell from 21.5 in 1940 to 20.1 in 1956. By 1950 nearly 60 percent of all women between the ages of 18 and 24 were married.

Popular culture reinforced the image of women as cute and perky rather than intelligent or career-minded. Actresses such as Doris Day, Debbie Reynolds, and Sandra Dee became role models for white women of the 1950s. Each portrayed the sweet, funny, innocent, wholesome, blond girl-next-door in popular box-office hits of the decade. Television situation comedies (sitcoms) emphasized the role of woman as wife and mother. In such shows as *Father Knows Best* and *Leave It to Beaver*, Dad dispensed wisdom and advice while apron-clad Mom tended to domestic matters. In programs such as *Our Miss Brooks* and *Private Secretary*, the main character was an unmarried career woman whose goal in life was simply to find a husband.

The educational system often encouraged schoolgirls of the 1950s to follow in their mothers' footsteps. While boys studied woodworking, auto mechanics, or courses preparing them for college, girls learned typing, cooking, and etiquette. However, a Gallup Poll in 1962 showed that 90 percent of the mothers surveyed hoped that their daughters would not lead the same lives as they had.



LAMBERT/JASCONE PHOTOS

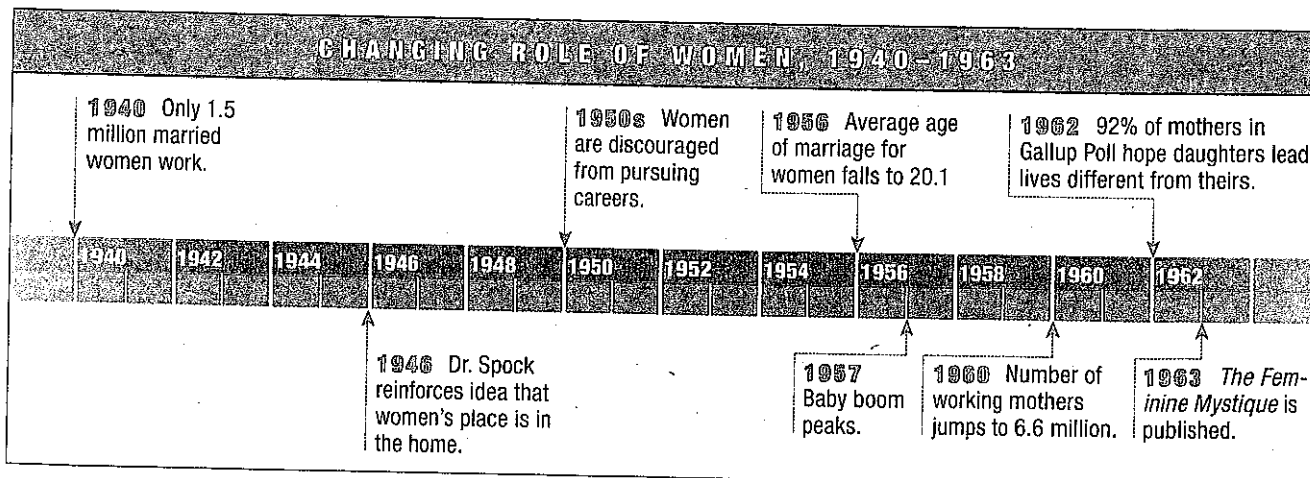
Housework In the 1950s, hanging the laundry outside to dry was common. What did Dr. Spock think was the most rewarding profession?

Women Question Their Role in Society

Despite the apparent happiness of the middle-class American woman, something was amiss. Many of these women did not feel the complete fulfillment that devotion to their homes and families was supposed to provide. Yet many considered women who were dissatisfied with this role to be either mentally disordered, unfeminine, or both. For example, psychiatrist Helene Deutsch declared that

truly feminine women related to the outside world only through identification with their husbands and children.

In 1957 Smith College graduates of the class of 1942 answered an alumnae questionnaire prepared by Betty Friedan that raised the issue of a woman's role in society. Years of such research and interviews with women led to Friedan's landmark book, *The Feminine Mystique*, published in 1963. Friedan described the situation:



The problem lay buried, unspoken, for many years in the minds of American women. It was a strange stirring, a sense of dissatisfaction, a yearning that women suffered in the middle of the twentieth century in the United States. Each suburban wife struggled with it alone. As she made the beds, shopped for groceries, matched slipcover material, ate peanut butter sandwiches with her children, chauffeured Cub Scouts and Brownies . . . she was afraid to ask even of herself the silent question—“Is this all?”

—Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*, 1963

Friedan had finally identified the “problem that had no name.” While many American women were happy with their roles as housewives and mothers, many others felt social pressures had relegated them to roles as lifelong domestics.

Women in the Workforce

At the end of World War II, the government and industries urged women to “go back home” and “give your job to a vet.” Women, who were largely excluded from important jobs in the corporate world, were also squeezed out of the manufacturing jobs they had held during the war.

Whether by pressure or by choice, many women who had taken on nontraditional jobs during the war returned to the familiar roles of full-time homemakers and mothers. For women in the lower economic ranks, however, staying at home was not an option. Millions of such women continued to enter the job market while still maintaining their roles as housewives and mothers. During the 1950s the rate of female employment increased 4 times faster than that of males. The number of working wives nearly doubled from 17 percent in 1940 to 32 percent in 1960. The number of working mothers leaped from 1.5 million to 6.6 million. By 1960 nearly 40 percent of women with children between the ages of 6 and 17 had jobs outside the home.

Married women over 35 represented the greatest



Betty Friedan After the publication of *The Feminine Mystique*, Friedan organized the National Organization for Women. What was Friedan's book about?

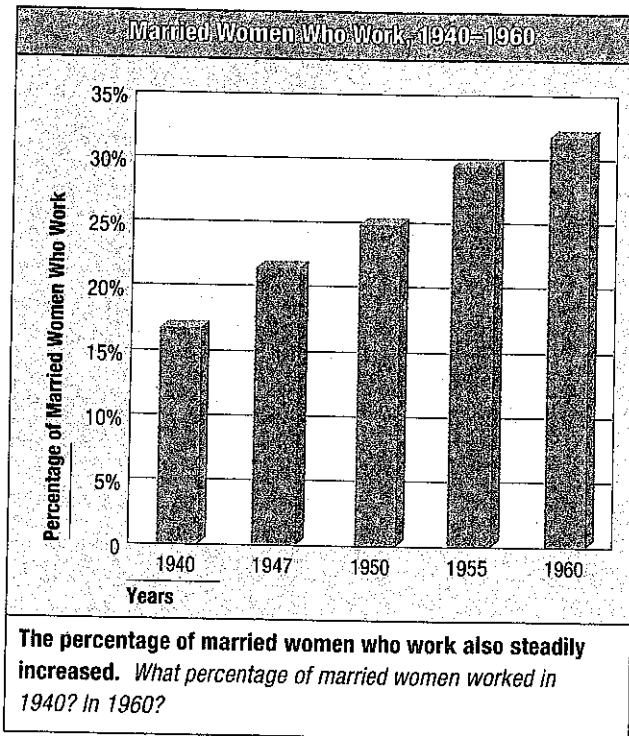
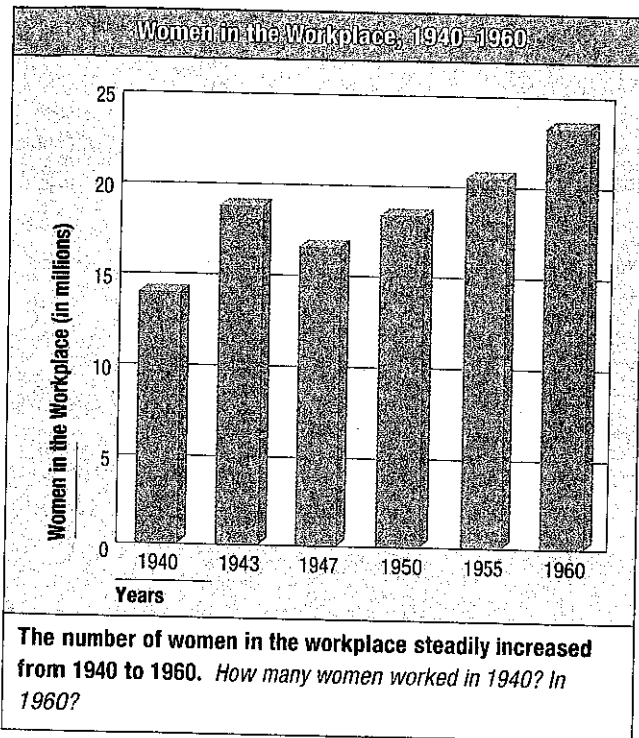
increase in female employment in the 1950s. Many of these women had worked outside the home before having a family. They then had stayed home to raise their children, who were now either married or off to school. These women filled the millions of clerical and secretarial positions created in the postwar period that the relatively small number of young single women who were entering the job market could not fill.



Women at Work Women run folding machines at this plant in Chicago. How much faster did the rate of female employment increase than that of males in the 1950s?

JPI/BETTMANN NEWSPICTOS

© ARTHUR D. BARAZIEN/SUPERSTOCK



When surveyed about why they worked, married women no longer talked about professional advancement. Many women said they wanted to help pay for the children's education or the mortgage or a second car or a vacation—in other words, to get a piece of the American dream. In households where the husband earned between \$7,000 and \$10,000 a year, the rate of women's employment increased from 7 percent in 1950 to 25 percent in 1960. The 1960 United States census indicated that the number of households earning \$15,000 or more would be cut in half if women's earnings were excluded. Women thus faced a dilemma. Economic pressures to maintain a comfortable lifestyle forced them into the workplace, while social pressures led them to believe their proper place was at home.

Most women's jobs, however, were low-paying and were either temporary, part-time, or held no opportunity for advancement. In areas such as insurance and banking, for example, women made up 50 percent or more of the workforce, but they held 20 percent or less of higher-level managerial positions. Many women in these industries worked as bank tellers or secretaries. High-level positions were reserved for men.

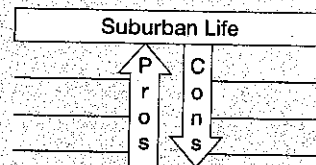
Stereotyped images of women's roles erected barriers to equal treatment. After World War II, the salary gap between full-time male and full-time female wage earners widened. In 1955 women earned 64 percent of average male wages; in 1963 they earned only 60 percent as much as men. A 1959 study concluded that women could not expect a professional career. Men simply would not take their professional goals seriously.

Women were not alone in their plight. Despite the prosperity of postwar society, many Americans—victims of racial prejudice and discrimination, neglect, and cultural differences—were denied full participation in the American dream.

SECTION ASSESSMENT

Main Idea

- Use a diagram like this one to show the pros and cons of suburban life.



Vocabulary

- Define: suburbia, baby boom.

Checking Facts

- How and why did baby-boom kids enjoy privileges not available to their parents?
- What role did religion play in the 1950s?

Critical Thinking

- Recognizing Bias** In 1955 women earned only 64 percent of the average wages men earned. What bias does this statistic reflect?

CULTURE OF THE TIME

Rock 'n' Roll Arrives

After the upheaval of World War II, Americans sought security in an uncertain world. Many women left wartime jobs to become full-time housewives. Veterans returned to a pumped-up economy full of opportunity. Parents who had experienced the Depression lavished their newly acquired affluence on their children.

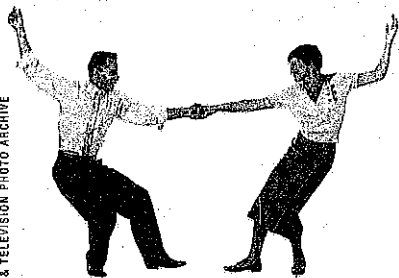
MOVIE STILL ARCHIVES



UNIVERSAL APPEAL

Little Richard (Richard Wayne Penniman) started his career as a gospel singer. In the mid-1950s, however, his single "Tutti Frutti" became a hit. Pat Boone's rendition of the song made it popular among white teenagers and introduced them to the rock music already popular among African Americans. Until the record company Motown began releasing the records of African American artists, most of these musicians were relatively unknown to white audiences.

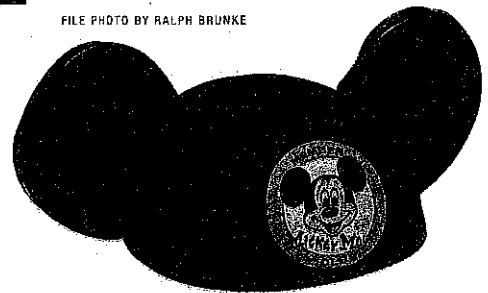
© SID AVERY, 1956/MOTION PICTURE & TELEVISION PHOTO ARCHIVE



POPULAR ICON

With the popularity of the Mouseketeers on the *Mickey Mouse Club* television show and the opening of Disneyland in Southern California, Walt Disney became one of the most well-known and beloved figures in the United States.

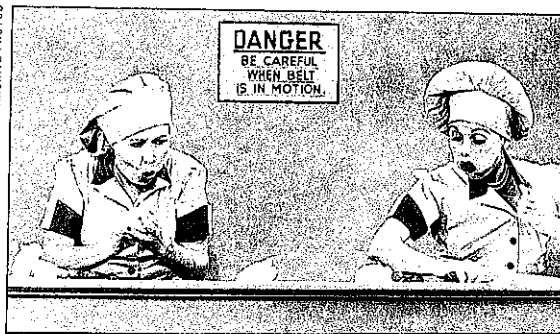
FILE PHOTO BY RALPH BRUNKE



ROCK 'N' ROLL IS HERE TO STAY

On *American Bandstand*, hosted by the youthful-looking Dick Clark, teen fans danced in front of the TV camera to the live music of hit singers. From its studio in Philadelphia, *Bandstand* helped spread the urban rock scene throughout the country and tapped into a growing market for records.

ARCHIVE PHOTOS

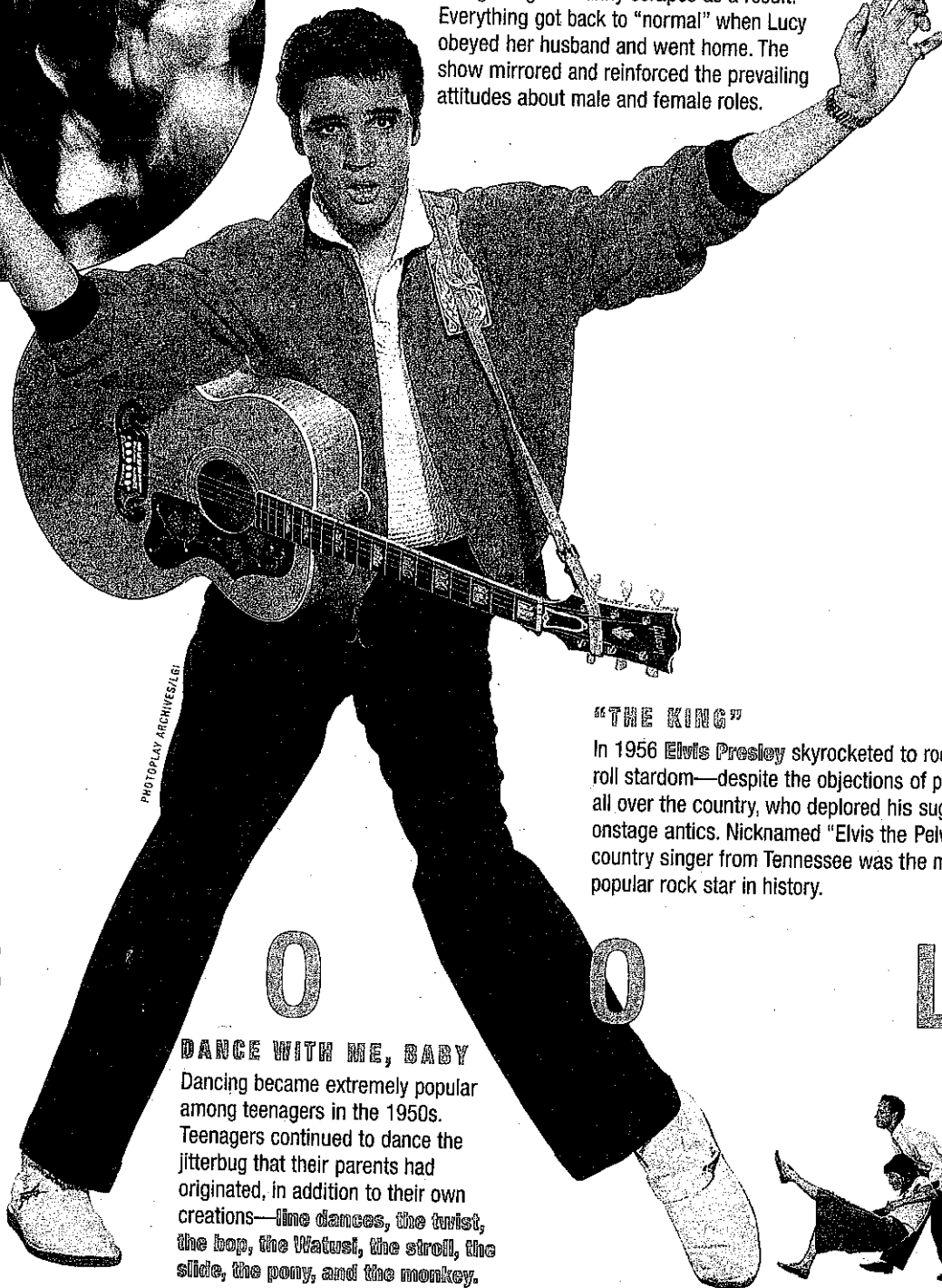


LOVABLE LUCY

I Love Lucy was television's first smash-hit situation comedy. Lucy (Lucille Ball) was always concocting harebrained schemes and getting into funny scrapes as a result. Everything got back to "normal" when Lucy obeyed her husband and went home. The show mirrored and reinforced the prevailing attitudes about male and female roles.



PAUL SCHUTZ/REDFERNS INC. © TIME, INC.



PHOTOPLAY ARCHIVES/LEI

"THE KING"

In 1956 Elvis Presley skyrocketed to rock 'n' roll stardom—despite the objections of parents all over the country, who deplored his suggestive onstage antics. Nicknamed "Elvis the Pelvis," the country singer from Tennessee was the most popular rock star in history.

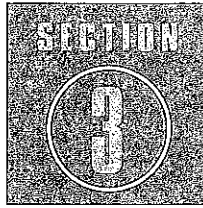
C O O L

DANCE WITH ME, BABY

Dancing became extremely popular among teenagers in the 1950s. Teenagers continued to dance the jitterbug that their parents had originated, in addition to their own creations—line dances, the twist, the hop, the Watusi, the stroll, the slide, the pony, and the monkey.



© SID AVERY, 1956/MOTION PICTURE & TELEVISION PHOTO ARCHIVE



Poverty and Plenty

1955: FAMILIES STRUGGLE IN EL BARRIO

PEDRO AND MARIA LOPEZ AND THEIR FIVE CHILDREN LIVED IN AN UNFURNISHED APARTMENT IN EAST HARLEM. El Barrio, as this section of New York City was called, had become one of the most densely populated places in the world, with nearly 300,000 people per square mile.

The Lopez family paid \$40 a week in rent for their fourth-floor walk-up, which consisted of a living room, a bathroom, a kitchen, and one bedroom. Despite Maria's scrupulous housekeeping, the apartment was infested with rats and roaches.

Six days a week, Pedro got up at 4:30 A.M. to commute to his job as a die cutter, for which he earned \$75 weekly. Maria earned another \$60 weekly by working part-time and weekends in a supermarket, which was a 45-minute trip from home.



© BRUCE DAVIDSON/MAGNUM PHOTOS

El Barrio

Families like the Lopezes worked hard but struggled to make ends meet. The urban poor, who flooded cities after World War II, had little or no political representation.

When Pedro had to miss work because of a stomach ulcer, Maria applied for temporary aid from the Department of Social Services. The application was denied because her son Anthony had been suspended from school for truancy.

Because of additional medical expenses, Pedro and Maria came up \$5 short that month when the rent was due. Their landlord promptly issued an eviction notice. In desperation, Pedro ignored his doctor's orders and returned to his job and even took a second job evenings and Sundays. Ten-year-old Manuel dropped out of school and found a job to help pay his family's bills.

Like many American families in the 1950s, the Lopezes were dedicated to the values of thrift, hard work, and a good education. The American dream, however, seemed always beyond

GUIDE TO READING

Main Idea

Overshadowed by the general affluence of the 1950s was a culture of poverty made up of the groups barred from the mainstream of American life by prejudice and discrimination.

Vocabulary

- ▶ culture of poverty
- ▶ termination policy

Read to Find Out . . .

- ▶ how groups of people—young and old, rural and urban—got caught in the cycle of poverty and why the poor often felt invisible.
- ▶ the hardships of poverty during an age of general affluence.

their grasp. Pedro, Maria, and their children belonged to a class of Americans whose dreams rarely came true and whose problems went largely unnoticed by the rest of society. The Lopezes were unfortunate members of the nation's **culture of poverty**, the poor—largely invisible—members of a generally affluent American society.

The Invisible Poor

The Causes of Poverty

Picture postcards of New York City in the 1950s reflected the glory of the postwar United States. Skyscrapers soared heavenward; the waters swarmed with commercial traffic; sleek passenger jets cruised a cloudless sky; and in the harbor, Madame Liberty beckoned with promises of freedom, equality, and opportunity.

Hidden Poverty

Hidden behind the tall buildings, away from the bustling harbor, was a very different United States. It was a nation of crumbling streets and tenements, of hungry and sometimes homeless people; a nation not of freedom and equality but of prejudice and discrimination; a nation not of plenty but of desperate need.

The "invisible poor" were so well hidden that many Americans believed that poverty in the United States had been nearly eliminated. In 1956 historian Arthur Schlesinger stated that "the central problems of our times are no longer problems of want and privation." Four years later *Fortune* magazine declared that there were fewer than 1 million poor people left in the United States and predicted that by 1970 there would be none at all.

Reasons for Invisibility

Social and political factors combined to make the poor invisible. Prosperous Americans, for example, simply closed their eyes to the poverty around them because the postwar popular culture glorified the "good life."

As the middle class moved to the suburbs after World War II, they left the poor behind. The inner cities became isolated islands of poverty—out of sight and out of mind. The population of midtown Manhattan dropped from 1.5 million during the day to 2,000 at night. Writer John Brooks noted that midtown Manhattan was "tidally swamped with bustling humanity every weekday morning . . . and abandoned again at nightfall when the wave sucked back." Working in midtown Manhattan, the suburbanites rarely saw the hundreds of thousands of poor families who lived in the Bronx, Brooklyn, and Queens.



Michael Harrington When Harrington published *The Other America*, many denied that poverty was a problem in the United States. What was Harrington's definition of poverty?

The lack of any effective political voice also kept the poor invisible. In the past the urban poor had included large numbers of European immigrants who were aided by big-city political bosses, most of whom had European backgrounds themselves. With such aid the immigrants and their children often struggled out of poverty and fled the noisy, dirty cities for the calm and quiet of the suburbs. Progressive urban reforms of the 1900s and the increase in federal programs in the 1930s, however, helped undermine the political-boss system's monopoly on social services. The urban poor of the 1950s, who flooded the cities during and after World War II, included displaced white people from Appalachia, African Americans, Hispanic Americans, and Native Americans.

In 1962 author Michael Harrington shocked prosperous Americans by revealing the extent of poverty in their midst. In his book, *The Other America*, Harrington wrote that 50 million Americans lived in poverty. He explained that poverty was defined not only by a lack of money but also by the absence of hope:

The poor live in a culture of poverty . . . [and] for reasons beyond their control, cannot help themselves. . . . The poor get sick more than anyone else in the society. . . . When they become sick, they are sick longer than any other group in the society. Because they are sick more often and longer than anyone else, they lose wages and work, and find it difficult to hold a steady job. And because of this, they cannot pay for good housing, for a nutritious diet, for doctors . . . [and] their prospect is to move to an even lower level . . . toward even more suffering.

—Michael Harrington, *The Other America*, 1962

The Culture of Poverty

The Downside of Government Programs

Harrington and others pointed out that the poverty of the 1950s was a “new” poverty. The poverty of the Depression era was a general condition that affected large parts of society. Nationally organized, large-scale social welfare programs and labor organizations had responded with work programs and relief payments. When the economy began to recover, so too did the people. In contrast, the poor in the postwar era had no such massive social welfare programs to enable them to break out of poverty.

Additional studies supported Harrington’s findings. One study concluded that 40 percent of the American people were ill-housed, ill-clothed, and ill-fed. Another study found that 34.5 million Americans lived on less than \$2.10 a day. Americans could no longer deny that poverty was a major social problem.

The reasons for poverty in the United States were varied. Some of the poor, particularly African Americans

and Hispanic Americans, faced long-standing racial and ethnic prejudice and discrimination. The poor also included jobless Appalachian whites, who moved to the cities because of the lack of opportunity in the hills, and Native Americans, who lived both in the cities and on reservations. Finally, there were the growing numbers of elderly Americans who were not covered by Social Security and had never received pensions from their employers. Whatever the reasons for the existence of poverty, the problem was not limited by age, race, or ethnic heritage.

The Young and the Old

Almost half of the poor were children under the age of 18. By the early 1960s, many of the nation’s poor children were the third generation in their families to have been raised on welfare. A depressing cycle of poverty was born—generation after generation totally dependent on government aid for their sustenance, knowing no other way of life.

While many children were born into poverty, many elderly Americans simply grew into it. Approximately 8 million Americans over the age of 65 had incomes of less than \$1,000 a year. The following testimony details the problems afflicting the elderly during the 1950s and 1960s:

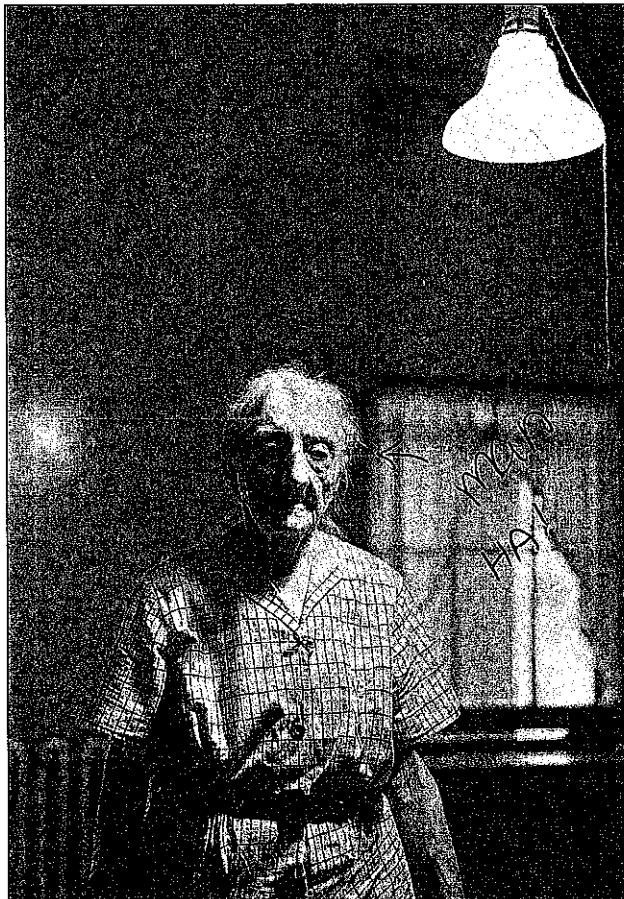
Louise W____, age 73, lives by herself in a single furnished room on the third floor of a rooming house located in a substandard section of the city. In this one room, she cooks, eats, and sleeps. . . . Widowed at 64, she has few friends remaining from her younger years. Those who do remain do not live near her, and it is difficult for her to see them. . . . And so she stays confined to her one room and the bathroom shared by nine other people. When the weather is warm enough, she ventures down the long flight of stairs about once a week for a walk to the corner and back.

—Testimony at the 1960 Senate hearing on the aged

The plight of the nation’s elderly citizens was, ironically, partly the result of scientific and technological progress. Modern medicine prolonged their lives, while modern technology often left them unemployed. Mechanization wiped out the farm chores and factory jobs formerly available to older workers. Thus, many elderly Americans spent their final years without work and without dignity.

Rural and Urban Poverty

At least a third of the poor worked on farms or lived in depressed rural areas. Changes in modern farming created deep pockets of rural poverty. As corporate farms and large-farm owners came to dominate production, many small independent farmers found it difficult to



The Elderly Harrington estimated that there were more than 8 million elderly poor in the United States. What contributed to the poverty of elderly people?

HARD TIMES IN APPALACHIA

Mining companies in Appalachia determined and controlled every aspect of a miner's life. Companies provided "cradle to grave" benefits: housing, utilities, meals, transportation, hospital care, and even funerals. As shown in the deductions column on the pay slip below, miners paid exorbitantly high fees for "mandatory benefits." Consequently, a work-related dispute meant a miner lost not only his job, but housing and food for his family as well.

DEDUCTIONS

Powder (\$5.67): Miners usually owned the equipment to mine coal, but purchased blasting powder from the mining company.

Scrip (\$44.00): A mining-company purchasing system that had worth only within a particular company camp.

Rent (\$4.50): Fee charged to workers for company-built housing.

Burial Fund (\$1.00): A deduction to provide proper burials for those killed in mining accidents.

Doctor (.80): Miners were required to pay for a camp physician selected by the mining company.

Due Company: It was possible for a miner to work all month, yet owe the mining company money because his deductions exceeded his wages.

TOTAL DEDUCTIONS: (\$69.45)

(Coal Miner's Pay Slip (2-Week period))

Period Ending 7-28-76 No. 11
 Name Clayton Harris

| DEDUCTIONS | CREDITS |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Powder <u>5.67</u> | Coal at <u>96</u> |
| Mine Checks | Mine at <u>492.26777</u> |
| Self Rescuer | Van at |
| Scrip <u>44.00</u> | at |
| Rent <u>4.50</u> | at |
| Lights | at |
| Coal <u>140.13</u> | Mine <u>961</u> <u>1/16</u> |
| Acct. Rec. | at |
| Bath House | <u>7.26</u> |
| Overhead | <u>1.27</u> |
| Hospital <u>10.7</u> | Machin Cutting <u>1.24</u> |
| | Labor Transfer |
| Burial Fund <u>1.00</u> | Overtime <u>1.92</u> |
| Doctor <u>.80</u> | Mine Conv. Time |
| | Shift Differential <u>1.60</u> |
| Powder | Wagon Examination |
| Pinch <u>7.80</u> | Approved by N.W.J.B. |
| U.S. Bond | Total Earnings |
| M. C. Advance | Pinch |
| Mine Checks | Mine Checks |
| Overhead | Self Rescuer |
| U.S. Bond | Transfer |
| U.S. Bond | Transfer |
| Whistle Blowing | Transfer |
| TOTAL <u>69.45</u> | TOTAL <u>105.29</u> |
| The Company | Due Worker <u>35.84</u> |
| Day <u>7-28-76</u> | Less Check |
| | Net Amt. Due |

KINGSTON-POWELL COAL CO.

CREDITS

Overtime (\$8.94): Miners worked 6 days a week, 10 hours a day, but many exhausted themselves by working several shifts in a row to earn more.

Shift Differential (\$2.60): The difference, usually an increase, in wage rates for different shifts or types of work performed.

Pinch: A charge for coal deducted from a miner's haul because pieces were too small or were of poor quality.

Total Amount Due Miner (\$35.84): After deductions, the miner might receive a small salary.

| | |
|--------------------------|-----------------|
| Bottom Line | |
| Total Earnings: | \$105.29 |
| Total Deductions: | \$ 69.45 |
| TOTAL DUE MINER: | \$ 35.84 |

Few workers were able to save enough money to enable them to leave a mining company; so it was not unusual to see three generations of a single family working the same mine, side by side. It was difficult, if not impossible, to rise above the cycle of debt created in a mining camp. *What put 70 percent of Appalachia's coal miners out of work by 1960?*

compete and slipped into poverty. Across the Southern United States, thousands of small-farm families lacked adequate diets in the midst of the world's most productive agricultural system.

Residents of Appalachia, a region covering 80,000 square miles (207,200 sq. km) and parts of 9 states, suffered severely. In 1960 about three-fourths of Appalachia's 8 million people had a median family income of about \$2,000 a year. A drop in the demand for coal coupled with the increased use of machinery put almost 70 percent of the region's coal miners out of work.

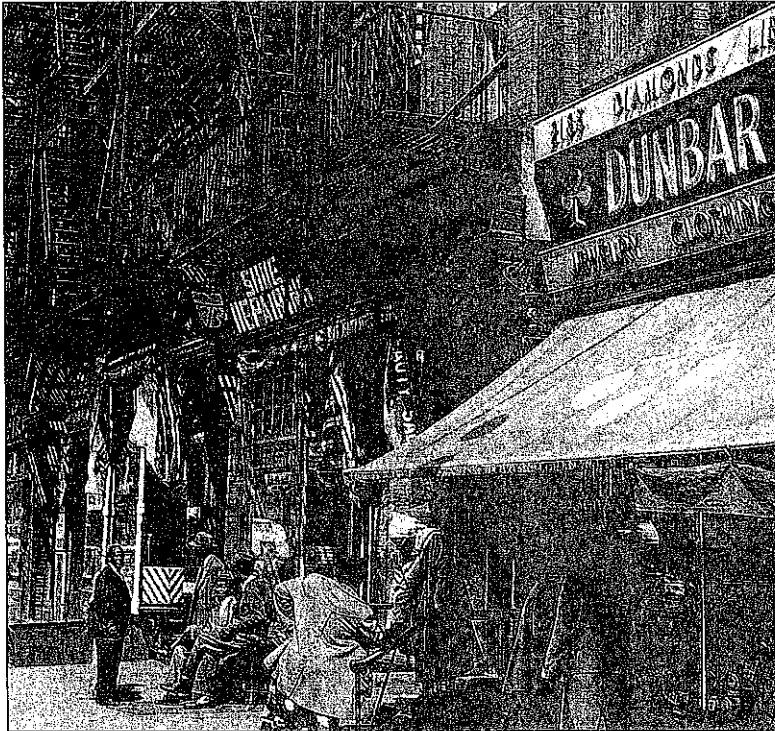
Rural poverty drove thousands of people to the cities, straining already inadequate housing, school systems, and transportation facilities. Governmental efforts to provide low-cost housing often did more harm than good. Slum clearance merely shoved the poor from one part of the city to another. The projects—low-rent public housing complexes—imposed harsh restrictions on

tenants. Large families with low incomes had priority. A family could be evicted if the marriage broke up or the family income exceeded the limits set by the housing authority. Housing projects often actually contributed to the cycle of poverty.

The African American Experience

Overcoming Racial Roadblocks

The poverty of African Americans had a unique quality that other groups did not share. African Americans, unlike many of the other poor, had to contend with deep-seated racial prejudice. While Southern African American farmers suffered the same poverty as their



Harlem in the 1950s Harlem was the home of a great African American literary circle in the 1920s. After the Depression, however, overcrowding, the deterioration of old buildings, and high unemployment had their effect on the area. How did James Baldwin describe the problems facing the people of Harlem?

white counterparts, the rural South harbored that force of racial terrorism, the Ku Klux Klan. The Klan used physical violence, including many instances of torture and lynchings, to intimidate African Americans and keep them "in their place."

African Americans carried this fear of white terrorism with them when they migrated to Northern cities. By the mid-1950s, nearly half of the African American population lived in cities. Atlanta, Los Angeles, Detroit, Chicago, New York—each had its ghetto. James Baldwin, African American novelist, essayist, and activist, described Harlem in the postwar period:

Harlem, physically at least, has changed very little in my parents' lifetime or in mine. Now as then the buildings are old and in desperate need of repair, the streets are crowded and dirty, there are too many human beings per square block. Rents are 10 to 58 percent higher than anywhere else in the city; food, expensive everywhere, is more expensive here and of an inferior quality; and now that the war is over and money is dwindling, clothes are carefully shopped for and seldom bought. Negroes, traditionally the last to be hired and the first to be fired, are finding jobs harder to get, and, while prices are rising implacably, wages are going down. All over Harlem now there is felt the same bitter expectancy

with which, in my childhood, we awaited winter: it is coming and it will be hard; there is nothing anyone can do about it.

—James Baldwin,

Notes of a Native Son, 1955

In New York City in 1955, 50 percent of African American families had incomes under \$4,000 a year (compared with 20 percent of the white families), and 40 percent of all New York's welfare recipients were African American. Unemployment among African American workers was double that of white workers, and average wages were about half of what white workers earned.

Racial prejudice formed a barrier to economic as well as social advancement. Many African American workers, because of their color, were denied access to all but the lowest-paying jobs. Many African American students lacked opportunities in a segregated school system. African American doctors and lawyers often found it difficult to practice anywhere but in African American neighborhoods where they would never earn as much as their white colleagues.

Hispanic Hardships

The Search for Migrant Farmwork

Spanish-speaking Americans made up the nation's second largest minority group. Puerto Ricans, like Pedro and Maria Lopez, who were described earlier, flocked to the United States in the 1950s, drawn by stories of abundance and a desire to escape the poverty of their island homeland. During the decade, the Puerto Rican population of the United States grew from 300,000 to nearly 1 million. Many of these immigrants crowded into the slum neighborhoods of New York City.

Puerto Rican immigrants faced other difficulties in addition to their poverty. The language barrier slowed their assimilation into United States society. Native culture and strong family traditions were slowly lost as young Puerto Ricans adopted American ways. Women found jobs more easily than men did, which strained the traditional husband-wife relationship.

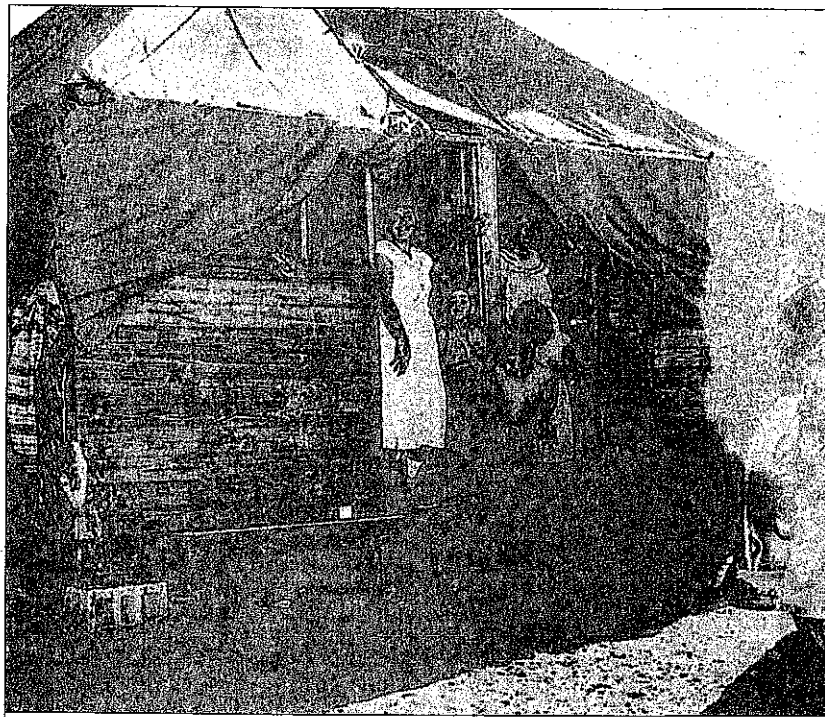
Mexican Americans suffered from the same discriminations that Puerto Ricans faced, with an added burden—they rarely felt politically secure. Because Puerto Rico is a commonwealth of the United States, Puerto Ricans are United States citizens, free to travel, work,

Francina Juncos

and live within the country. Mexico, however, is a sovereign foreign state, and Mexican immigrants are legally defined as aliens. Officers of the Immigration and Naturalization Service were charged with tracking down immigrants who were in this country illegally. In the process, they could stop any Mexican American on the street and demand proof of citizenship.

Agricultural Workers

Many Mexican American families had been citizens of the United States for generations. Many lived in urban centers, especially in California, Texas, and the Midwest. They were less noticed than the migrant farmworkers, however. While Mexican Americans made up the largest group of migrant farmworkers, African Americans, Puerto Ricans, and poor whites lived and worked under the same oppressive conditions. Migrant workers followed the crops from state to state for 7 or 8 months a year, from harvesting spring vegetables in Texas to picking fall apples in Washington. They slept in shacks or in labor camps and worked 10 or 12 hours a day in the



Living Conditions A 1960 television documentary titled *Harvest of Shame* revealed the shocking living conditions of the nation's 2 million migrant workers. *What was the bracero program?*

fields. Some migrant workers worked for piece rates; others received an hourly wage of 50 cents. Migrant workers toiled outside the protection of labor laws. Children worked the fields with their parents, often on ladders or using hazardous machinery. Injured farmworkers received no workers' compensation.

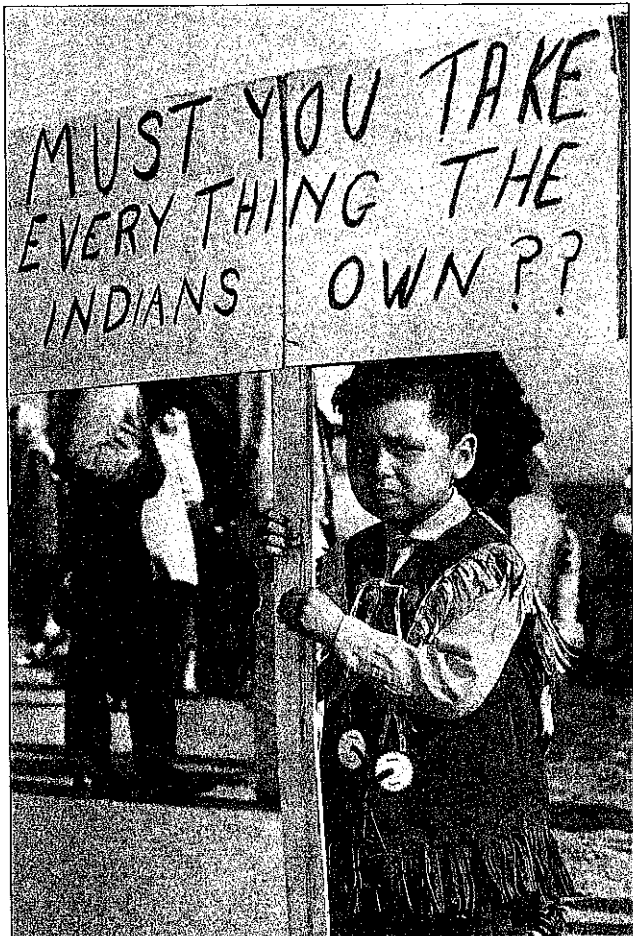
Some Mexicans illegally entered the United States to work in the fields. Others entered this country legally, under the *bracero* program—an agreement forged with the Mexican government during World War II to permit seasonal immigration of farmworkers. State employment officials recruited Mexican braceros, or temporary workers, to harvest crops. Braceros were expected to return to Mexico after the harvest, but many stayed on illegally.

In 1953 the government launched a deportation program that became known as Operation Wetback. Illegal Mexican aliens were called wetbacks—a derogatory term—because thousands of them entered the United States by swimming across the Rio Grande. In 3 years, Operation Wetback deported more than 3 million people.



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Field Work Agriculture depended heavily on migrant workers to do the stoop labor associated with harvesting crops such as tomatoes and beans. *What is the work and travel cycle of a typical migrant family?*



SOLON HOBBS PHOTO

Relocation Under the Voluntary Relocation Program, more than 60,000 Native Americans moved to cities. Nearly one-third later returned home. *Why did the government urge Native Americans to leave their reservations?*

Displaced Native Americans

The Government's Termination Policy

Native Americans were one of America's smallest, poorest, and most ignored minority groups. By 1960 almost two-thirds of some 600,000 Native Americans lived on reservations. Unemployment rates were staggering—more than 70 percent among the Blackfeet of Montana and the Hopi of Arizona; 86 percent among the Choctaw of Mississippi. Native Americans who migrated to the cities faced much of the same discrimination and poverty as African Americans and Hispanic Americans.

In 1953, the federal government adopted the **termination policy**. While the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 had attempted to restore lands to Native American ownership, the new policy tried to end the reservation system and related federal services. The policy resulted in the loss of thousands of acres of Native American lands to agricultural, lumber, and mining interests.

As an incentive to leave the reservations, the government helped Native Americans relocate to cities through the Voluntary Relocation Program. Relocation offices provided moving expenses, help in finding housing and jobs, and temporary living expenses. Relocating to the cities, however, proved to be culturally wrenching for thousands of Native Americans who left their Native American groups. A Seminole petition to President Eisenhower spoke for all Native American groups who struggled for identity in the 1950s:

We do not say that we are superior or inferior to the White Man and we do not say that the White Man is superior or inferior to us. We do say that we are not White Men . . . do not wish to become White Men but wish to . . . have an outlook on all things different from the outlook of the White Man.

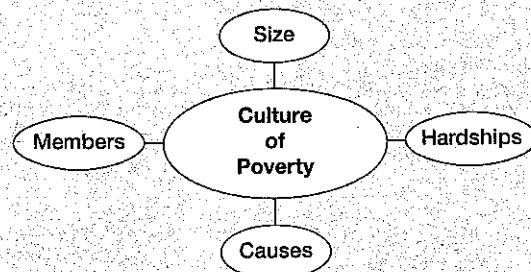
—Seminole Petition to President Eisenhower

The termination policy of the 1950s, like nearly every Native American policy before it, ended up victimizing Native Americans. Individual Native American nations and organizations of Native Americans officially protested termination. Lacking political representation, their protests went unanswered, and Native Americans remained the most "invisible" of all minority groups.

SECTION ASSESSMENT

Main Idea

1. Use a diagram such as this one to describe features of the culture of poverty.



Vocabulary

2. Define: culture of poverty, termination policy.

Checking Facts

3. How did the poverty of the 1950s differ from the poverty of the Great Depression?
4. Why did Mexican Americans rarely feel politically secure in the United States?

Critical Thinking

5. **Identifying Assumptions** Keeping in mind that during the 1950s the poor were "invisible," what do you think many middle-class Americans of the 1950s assumed about the poor?