“Conservatism, Complacency, and Contentment”

“Anxiety, Alienation, and Social Unrest”
It seems to me that every other young housewife I see is pregnant.

-- British visitor to America, 1958
Dr. Benjamin Spock and the Anderson Quintuplets
Levittown, L. I.: “The American Dream”

1949 → William Levitt produced 150 houses per week.

$7,990 or $60/month with no down payment.
k 1 story high
k 12'x19' living room
k 2 bedrooms
k tiled bathroom
k garage
k small backyard
k front lawn

By 1960 → 1/3 of the U. S. population in the suburbs.
SHIFTS IN POPULATION DISTRIBUTION, 1940-1970

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1940</th>
<th>1950</th>
<th>1960</th>
<th>1970</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Central Cities</td>
<td>31.6%</td>
<td>32.3%</td>
<td>32.6%</td>
<td>32.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suburbs</td>
<td>19.5%</td>
<td>23.8%</td>
<td>30.7%</td>
<td>41.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Areas/</td>
<td>48.9%</td>
<td>43.9%</td>
<td>36.7%</td>
<td>26.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small Towns</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

U. S. Bureau of the Census.
The Donna Reed Show 1958-1966
Leave It to Beaver 1957-1963
Father Knows Best 1954-1958
The Ozzie & Harriet Show 1952-1966
All babies were potential consumers who spearheaded a brand-new market for food, clothing, and shelter.

-- Life Magazine (May, 1958)
6 e #rqvxp hvyp
Automation:

1947-1957 → factory workers decreased by 4.3%, eliminating 1.5 million blue-collar jobs.

By 1956 → more white-collar than blue-collar jobs in the U. S.


Corporate Consolidation:

By 1960 → 600 corporations (1/2% of all U. S. companies) accounted for 53% of total corporate income.

WHY?? Cold War military buildup.
New Corporate Culture:
“The Company Man”

1956 → Sloan Wilson's *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit*
Car registrations:  
1945 → 25,000,000  
1960 → 60,000,000

2-family cars doubles from 1951-1958

1958 Pink Cadillac  
1959 Chevy Corvette

1956 → Interstate Highway Act → largest public works project in American history!

- Cost $32 billion.
- 41,000 miles of new highways built.
America became a more homogeneous nation because of the automobile.

First McDonald’s (1955)

Drive-In Movies

Howard Johnson’s
The U. S. population was on the move in the 1950s.

NE & Mid-W → S & SW ("Sunbelt" states)

1955 → Disneyland opened in Southern California.
(40% of the guests came from outside California, most by car.)
1946 → 7,000 TV sets in the U. S.
1950 → 50,000,000 TV sets in the U. S.

*Television is a vast wasteland.* → Newton Minnow, Chairman of the Federal Communications Commission, 1961

Mass Audience → TV celebrated traditional American values.

*Truth, Justice, and the American way!*
Davy Crockett
King of the Wild Frontier

The Lone Ranger
(and his faithful sidekick, Tonto):
Who is that masked man??

Sheriff Matt Dillon, Gunsmoke
Glossy view of mostly middle-class suburban life.

But... Social Winners?... AND... Loosers?
In the 1950s the word “teenager” entered the American language. By 1956 13 mil. teens with $7 bil. to spend a year.

1951 “race music” → “ROCK ’N ROLL”

Elvis Presley → “The King”
“Juvenile Delinquency”

1951 → J. D. Salinger’s
A Catcher in the Rye

Marlon Brando in
The Wild One
(1953)

James Dean in
Rebel Without a Cause (1955)
The "Beat" Generation:

- Jack Kerouac → *On The Road*
- Allen Ginsberg → poem, "Howl"

"Beatnik"  "Clean" Teen
Behavioral Rules of the 1950s:

- Obey Authority.
- Control Your Emotions.
- Don’t Make Waves → Fit in with the Group.
- Don’t Even Think About Sex!!!
Today in the U. S., the Christian faith is back in the center of things. -- *Time* magazine, 1954

**Church membership:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Membership</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>64,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>114,000,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Television Preachers:**

1. Catholic Bishop Fulton J. Sheen → “Life is Worth Living”
2. Methodist Minister Norman Vincent Peale → *The Power of Positive Thinking*
3. Reverend Billy Graham → ecumenical message; warned against the evils of Communism.
**Hollywood:** apex of the biblical epics.

*The Robe* 1953  
*The Ten Commandments* 1956  
*Ben Hur* 1959

*It's un-American to be un-religious!*  
--- *The Christian Century, 1954*
The ideal modern woman married, cooked and cared for her family, and kept herself busy by joining the local PTA and leading a troop of Campfire Girls. She entertained guests in her family’s suburban house and worked out on the trampoline to keep her size 12 figure.

-- Life magazine, 1956

The ideal 1950s man was the provider, protector, and the boss of the house. -- Life magazine, 1955

1956 → William H. Whyte, Jr. → The Organization Man

A middle-class, white suburban male is the ideal.
Changing Sexual Behavior:

Alfred Kinsey:

- 1948 → Sexual Behavior in the Human Male
- 1953 → Sexual Behavior in the Human Female

- Premarital sex was common.
- Extramarital affairs were frequent among married couples.

Kinsey's results are an assault on the family as a basic unit of society, a negation of moral law, and a celebration of licentiousness.

-- Life magazine, early 1950s
1951 -- First IBM Mainframe Computer
1952 -- Hydrogen Bomb Test
1953 -- DNA Structure Discovered
1954 -- Salk Vaccine Tested for Polio
1957 -- First Commercial U. S. Nuclear Power Plant
1958 -- NASA Created
1959 -- Press Conference of the First 7 American Astronauts
1957 → Russians launch SPUTNIK I


SOVIET FIRES EARTH SATELLITE INTO SPACE; IT IS CIRCLING THE GLOBE AT 18,000 M.P.H.; SPHERE TRACKED IN 4 CROSSINGS OVER U.S.

1958 → National Defense Education Act
UFO Sightings skyrocketed in the 1950s. Hollywood used aliens as a metaphor for whom??
Atomic Anxieties:

- “Duck-and-Cover Generation”

Atomic Testing:

- 1946-1962 → U. S. exploded 217 nuclear weapons over the Pacific and in Nevada.
1959 → Nixon-Khrushchev
“Kitchen Debate”

Cold War --->
Tensions

<----- Technology & Affluence