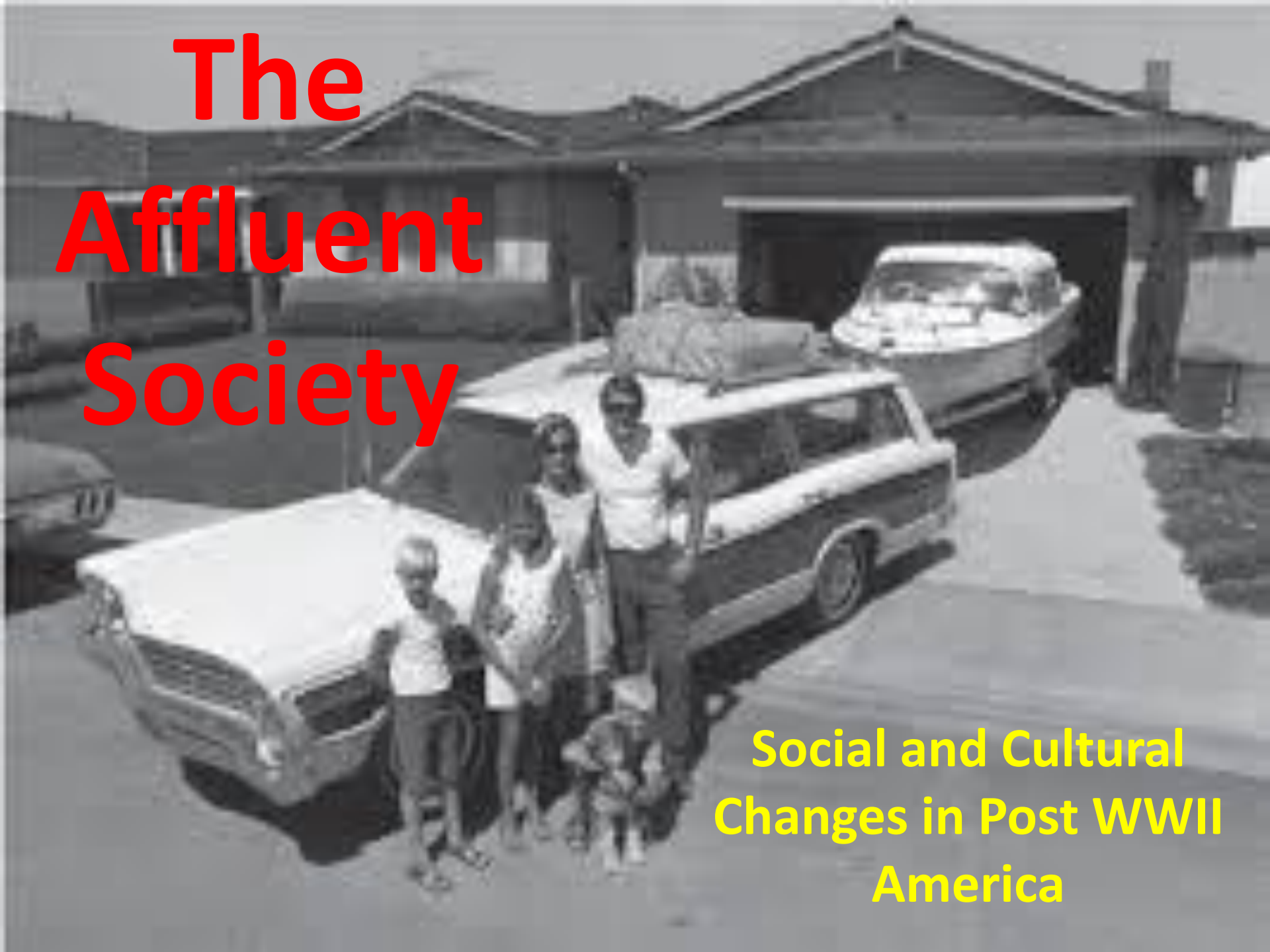


The Affluent Society

Social and Cultural
Changes in Post WWII
America



Government invests in a middle class: KNOW!



- WWII – the impact of the GI Bill
 - passed unanimously by Congress in 1944
 - Veterans benefits for
 - Education
 - Mortgages – home loans
- College graduates soar – 160K in the 30s to 500K in the 50s
(personal note – one of these dudes was Charles C. Tyler, Jr.
my daddy!)

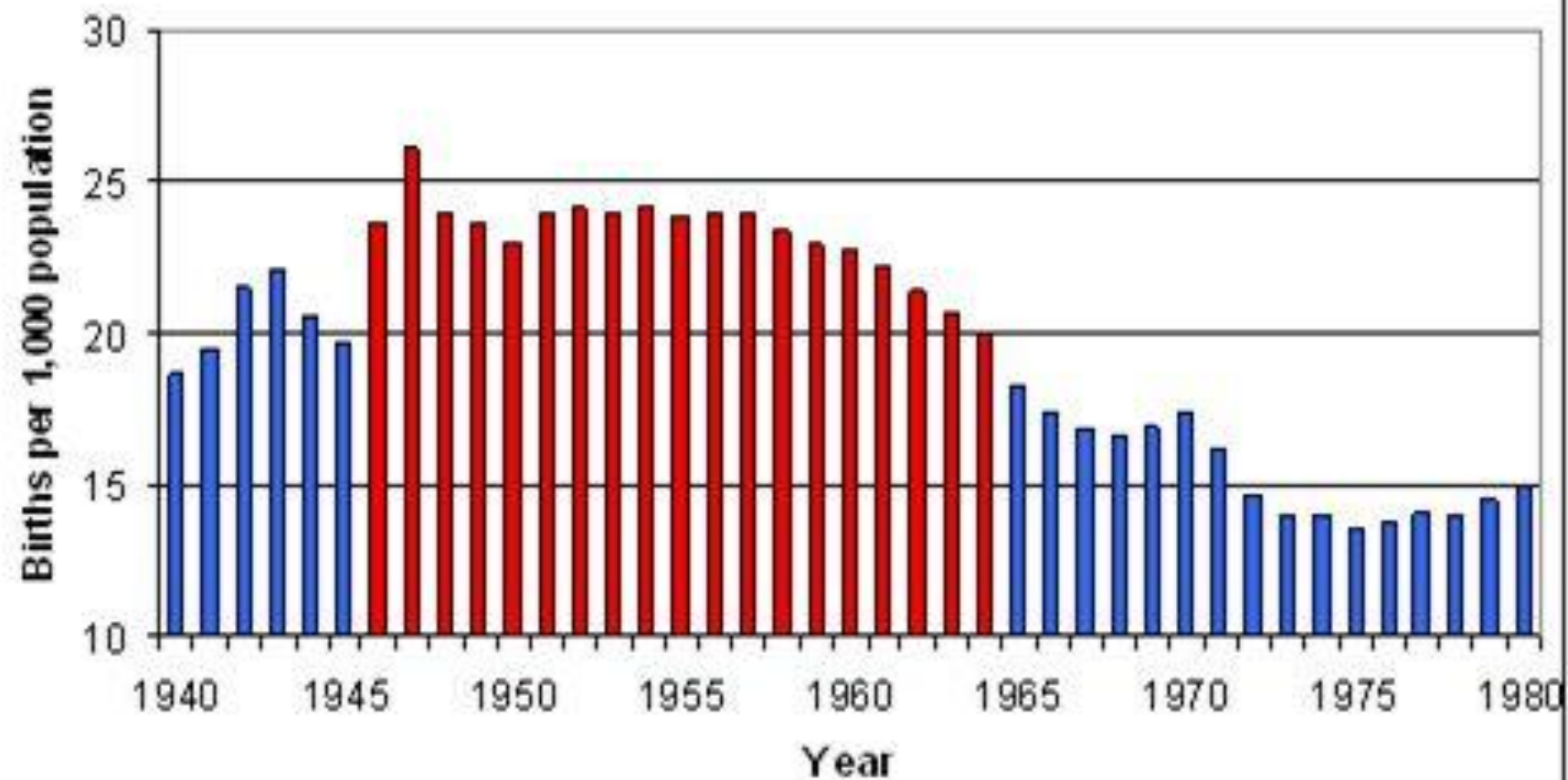


Baby BOOM! KNOW!



Getty Images

U.S. Birth Rate: 1940-1980
(Baby Boomer Generation in Red)

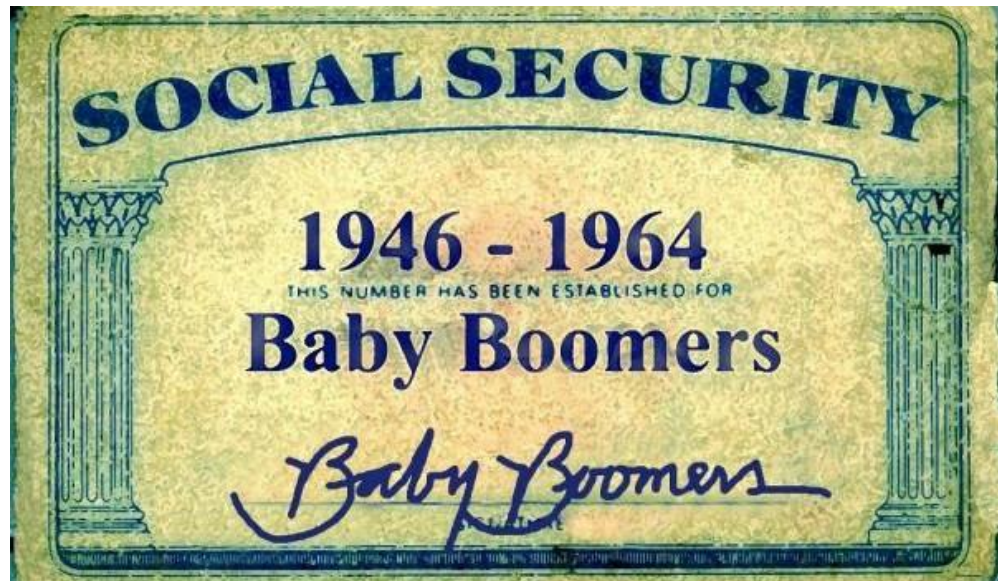


Baby Boom and Consumer Demand: KNOW!

- US population in 1945 – 140M
- US population in 1967 – 200M
- Childhood and adolescence invented
- Prosperity allows kids to stay in school longer
 - High school graduates increase
 - College graduates increase
- Marketers, entertainers and psychologists take notice
 - Disneyland
 - Theme parks

Thought Question

- What impact might the increased population of the baby boom generation have on crime rates? When would you expect to see crime rates go up? Why?



Suburbanization: KNOW!

- Mass produced suburbs
 - Low population densities
- Sunbelt cities like LA, Miami, San Diego
- What made this possible?
 - Highways
 - Air conditioning



Suburbanization, White Flight: KNOW!

- Many African Americans moved from the South during the war and continued to move in the 1950s and 1960s to escape poverty and racism.
- These population shifts contributed to white flight from the cities that also spurred suburbanization.
- As middle and upper class people moved to the suburbs, so did jobs and businesses, leaving the cities with high unemployment, limited services, and a shrinking tax base.
- This set the stage for the race riots of the 1960s.

Thought Question

- Should people living in the Rock Hill pay taxes to support building roads in Charlotte?



Postwar Technology: KNOW!

- The postwar period also saw advances in medical technology that impacted the health of the American people.
 - Penicillin and other antibiotics
 - scientists developed various vaccines to prevent diseases such as polio.
- surgeons who had treated wounded soldiers came home to develop new surgical techniques including advancements in heart surgery.
- The widespread use of pesticides and chemical fertilizers provided a greater array of foods and improved nutrition
- Reliance on chemicals had a long-term environmental impact
 - resulted in environmental legislation in the 1970s and, eventually,
 - a worldwide concern about global warming

Thought Question

- How did improvements in medical technology impact demographics?

Mobility Increases: KNOW!



Ribbon-cutting ceremony along the first portion of Interstate highway to be completed in Wisconsin on September 4, 1958—I-94 in the Waukesha area. (Photo courtesy Wisconsin Historical Society Archives.)

- Cars, Cars, Cars
- **Interstate Highway System**
- **Mass air travel displaces the railroads**

Women in the 1950s

Central Historical Question

*Is the image of the happy 1950s
housewife accurate?*

WWII employment for women



Women's Auxiliary Corps laboratory technician conducts an experiment, Fort Jackson State Hospital, 1944



Aircraft engine technician and senior supervisor, Naval Air Base, 1942

Post-WWII employment



A secretary and her boss, an industrial designer, New York City, 1950

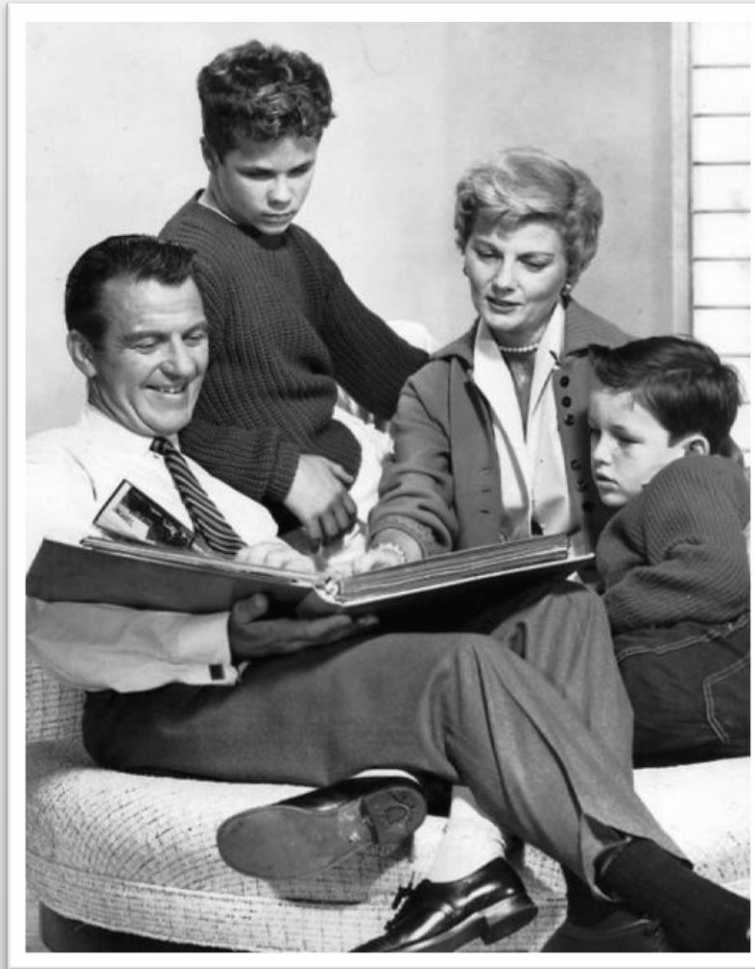
Social pressures: KNOW!



- *Early marriage*
- *Childbearing*
- *Stay-at-home motherhood*
- *Nuclear family*

Kennedy wedding, Jacqueline throwing the bouquet, 1953

Media portrayals of gender



A photo of the Cleaver family from *Leave it to Beaver*, a popular TV show in the 1950s-60s

Suburbia, home of the “happy housewife”



- *G.I. Bill*
- *Mass-produced, affordable homes*
- *Great Migration and “white flight”*

Levittown track homes of the 1950s

Household products marketed to women



A 1950s ad for an electric iron



A 1950s ad for a cleaning product

Central Historical Question

*Is the image of the happy 1950s
housewife accurate?*

Women in the 1950s: KNOW!

- Although forty percent of women held jobs outside of the home by 1960, their career opportunities were limited
 - nursing,
 - teaching,
 - domestic service, social work,
 - retail sales and secretarial work.
- Few women were promoted to managerial positions
- women's pay was a fraction of what men earned.
- As more young women graduated from college, they were frustrated by their inability to find and advance in jobs that matched their skills.
- The publication of [*The Feminine Mystique*](#) by Betty Freidan in the early 1960s helped launched the modern women's rights movement.