HOMEWARD BOUND

AMERICAN FAMILIES IN THE COLD WAR ERA

ELAINE TYLER MAY

BASIC
BOOKS

In Memory of Ken Edwards who taught me the meaning of courage;

For Sue Tyler Edwards who taught me the meaning of strength.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

IN SUMMER OF 1959, a young couple married and spent their honeymoon in a bomb shelter. *Life* magazine featured the "sheltered honeymoon" with a photograph of the duo smiling on their lawn, surrounded by dozens of canned goods and supplies. Another photograph showed them descending twelve feet underground into the 22-ton steel and concrete 8-by-11-foot shelter where they would spend the next two weeks. The article quipped that "fallout can be fun," and described the newlyweds' adventure—with obvious erotic undertones—as fourteen days of "unbroken togetherness."[1] As the couple embarked on family life, all they had to enhance their honeymoon were some consumer goods, their sexuality, and privacy. This is a powerful image of the nuclear family in the nuclear age: isolated, sexually charged, cushioned by abundance, and protected against impending doom by the wonders of modern technology (See Figures 1 and 2).

The stunt was little more than a publicity device; yet, in retrospect it takes on symbolic significance. For in the early years of the cold war, amid a world of uncertainties brought about by World War II and its aftermath, the home seemed to offer a secure private nest removed from the dangers of the outside world. The message was ambivalent, however, for the family also seemed particularly vulnerable. It needed heavy protection against the intrusions of forces outside itself. The self-contained home held out the promise of security in an insecure world. It also offered a vision of abundance and fulfillment. As the cold war began, young postwar Americans were homeward bound.

Demographic indicators show that in this period, Americans were more eager than ever to establish families. The bomb-shelter honeymooners were part of a cohort of Americans who lowered the age at marriage for both men and women, and quickly brought the birthrate to a twentieth-century high after more than a hundred years of steady decline, producing the "baby boom" (See Tables 1 and 2). Virtually everyone of childbearing age participated in the production of the baby boom. Americans of all racial, ethnic, and religious groups, of all socio-economic classes and educational levels, married younger and had more children than at any other time in the twentieth century. Black and white, rich and poor, they all brought the marriage rate up and the divorce rate down. Although the nation remained divided along lines of race and class, and only members of the

prosperous white middle and working classes had access to the suburban domesticity that represented the "good life," family fever swept the nation and affected all Americans. These young adults established a trend of early marriage and relatively large families that lasted for more than two decades (See Table 3). From the 1940s through the early 1960s, Americans married at a higher rate and at a

FIGURE 1   Atomic-age newlyweds prepare for their "sheltered honeymoon" in their new fallout shelter. Surrounded by consumer goods and other supplies, they pose for *Life* magazine. At the rear of the photo, next to the portable toilet, is the entrance to the shelter. (*Courtesy of Bill Sanders, photographer.*)

younger age than did their European counterparts.[2]

Less noted but equally significant, the men and women who formed families between 1940 and 1960 also reduced the divorce rate after a postwar peak. Marriages forged in the late 1940s were particularly stable. Even those couples who eventually divorced remained together long enough to prevent the divorce rate from rising until the mid-1960s (See Tables 4, 5, and 6). Although the United States maintained its dubious distinction of having the highest divorce rate in the world, the temporary decline in divorce did not occur to the same extent in Europe. Contrary to fears of observers at the time, the roles of breadwinner and homemaker were not abandoned; they were embraced.

FIGURE 2   The honeymooners kiss as they descend into their backyard bomb shelter for two weeks of "unbroken togetherness." (*Courtesy of Bill Sanders, photographer.*)

TABLE 1

MEDIAN AGE AT FIRST MARRIAGE, MALE AND FEMALE, 1890–1995
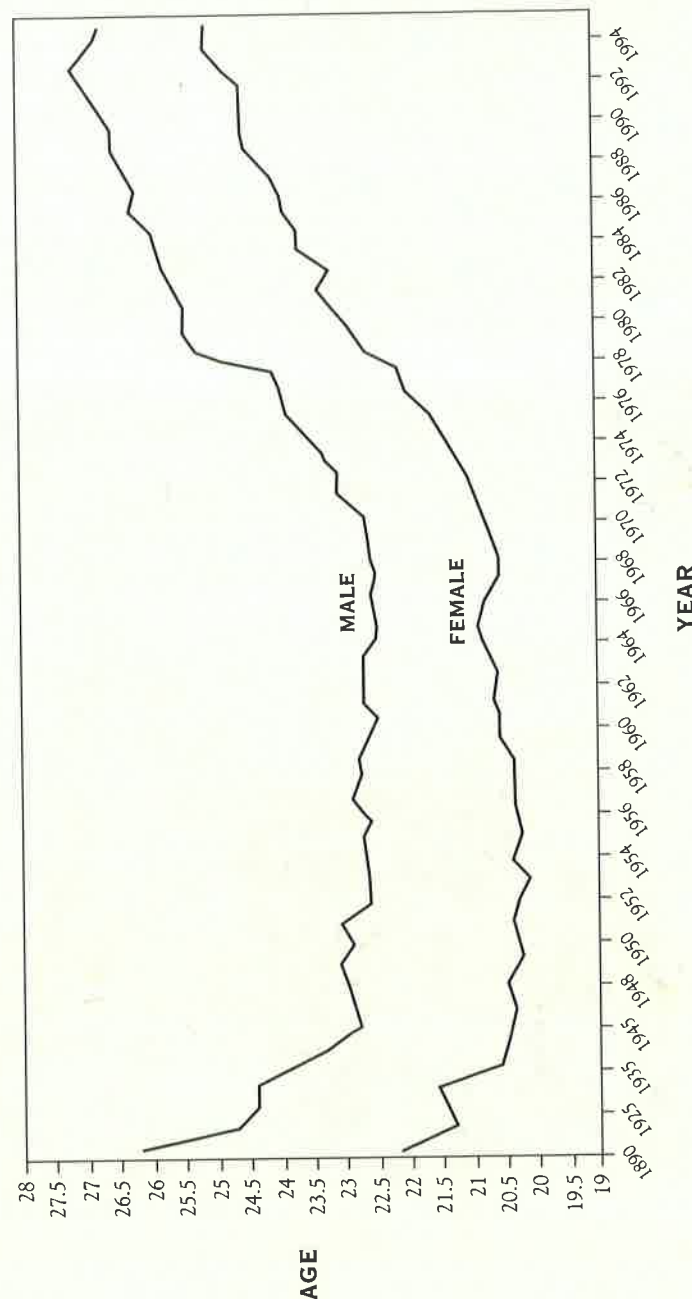
SOURCES: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, Series P20-514, "Marital Status and Living Arrangements: March 1998 (Update)"; U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Historical Statistics of the U.S., Colonial Times to 1970* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1975), Part 1, p. 19; U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services, Public Health Service, *Vital Statistics of the United States, 1981* (Hyattsville, Maryland: National Center for Health Statistics, 1985) Vol. 3, Table 1-9, pp. 1–11.

TABLE 2

FERTILITY RATE PER 1,000 WOMEN AGED 15–44 YEARS, 1800–1995
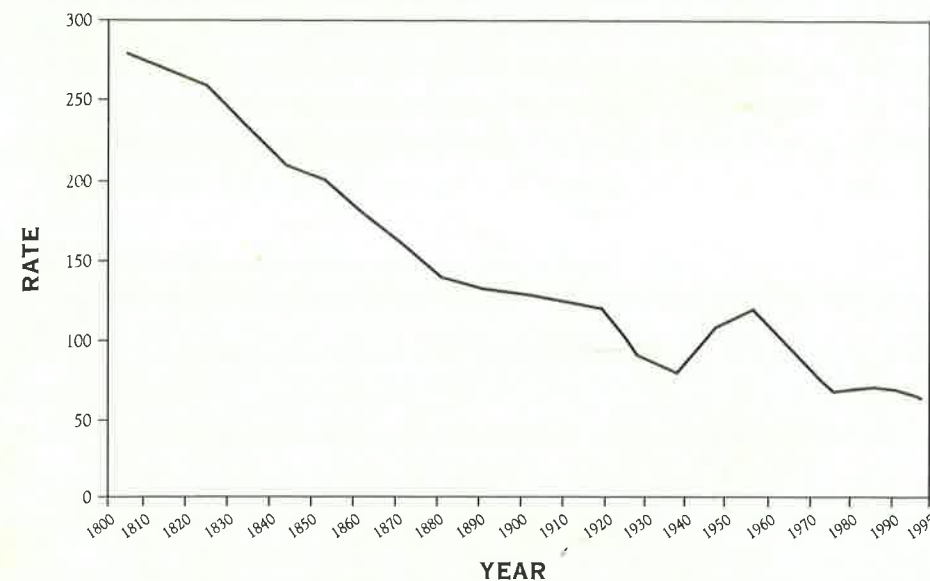
SOURCES: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1979* (Bicentennial Ed., Part 1), Washington, D.C. 1975 Series B 5-10, p. 49; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstract of the U.S., 1986* (107th Edition), Washington, D.C.: 1986, p. 57; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *National Vital Statistics Report* (Hyattsville, MD: Maryland National Center for Health Statisics, 1999), Vol. 47, No. 18, Table 1, p. 22.

Why did postwar Americans turn to marriage and parenthood with such enthusiasm and commitment? Scholars and observers frequently point to the family boom as the inevitable result of a return to peace and prosperity.[3] They argue that depression-weary Americans were eager to put the disruptions and hardships of war behind them and enjoy the abundance at home. There is, of course, some truth in this claim, but prosperity followed other wars in our history, notably World War I, with no similar increase in marriage and childbearing. Peace and affluence alone are inadequate to explain the many complexities of the postwar domestic explosion. The demographic trends went far beyond what was expected from a return to peace. Indeed, nothing on the surface of postwar America explains the rush of young Americans into marriage, parenthood, and traditional gender roles.

It might have been otherwise. The Great Depression of the 1930s brought

TABLE 3

BIRTH RATE, WHITE AND NON-WHITE, 1909–1998

about widespread challenges to traditional gender roles that could have led to a restructured home. The war intensified these challenges and pointed the way toward radical alterations in the institutions of work and family life. Wartime brought thousands of women into the paid labor force when men left to enter the armed forces. After the war, expanding job and educational opportunities, as well as the increasing availability of birth control devices, might well have led young people to delay marriage or not marry at all, and to have fewer children if they did marry. Indeed, many scholars and observers at the time feared that these changes seriously threatened the continuation of the American family. Yet, the evidence overwhelmingly indicates that postwar American society experienced a surge in family life and a reaffirmation of domesticity that rested on distinct roles for women and men.[4]

The demographic explosion in the American family represented a temporary disruption of long-term trends. It lasted only until the baby-boom children came of age. The parents, having grown up during the depression and the war,

had begun their families during years of prosperity. Their children, however, grew up amid affluence during the cold war; they reached adulthood during the 1960s and 1970s, creating the counterculture and a new women's liberation movement. In vast numbers, they rejected the political assumptions of the cold war, along with the domestic and sexual codes of their parents. This generation brought the twentieth-century birthrate to an all-time low and the divorce rate to an unprecedented high.[5]

Observers often point to the 1950s as the last gasp of time-honored family life before the sixties generation made a major break from the past. But the comparison is shortsighted. In many ways, the youths of the sixties resembled

TABLE 4

MARRIAGE RATE PER 1,000 UNMARRIED FEMALES, 1920–1990

TABLE 5

ANNUAL DIVORCE RATE
PER 1,000 MARRIED FEMALES,
1920–1980

SOURCE: Cherlin, Andrew J., *Marriage, Divorce, Remarriage* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1992), Fig. 1–5, p. 21.

TABLE 6

PERCENTAGE OF MARRIAGES
PROJECTED TO END IN DIVORCE, 1930–1980
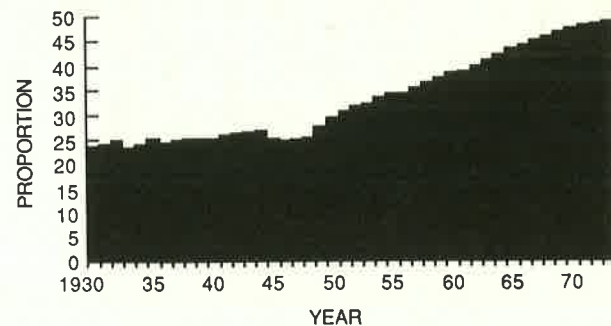
SOURCE: *National Estimates of Marriage Dissolution and Survivorship*: U.S. Series 3, No. 19 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Human Services), p. 5.

their grandparents, who came of age in the first decades of the twentieth century. Like many of their baby-boom grandchildren, the grandparents had challenged the sexual norms of their day, pushed the divorce rate up and the birthrate down, and created a unique youth culture, complete with music, dancing, movies, and other new forms of urban amusements. They also behaved in similar ways politically, developing a powerful feminist movement, strong grassroots activism on behalf of social justice, and a proliferation of radical movements to challenge the status quo. It is the generation in between—with its strong domestic ideology, pervasive consensus politics, and peculiar demographic behavior—that stands out as different.[6]

It is important to note that observers normally explain the political activism and the demographic behavior of the baby-boom generation as the effects of affluence and the result of expanding opportunities for women in education and employment. Yet the same conditions existed twenty years earlier at the peak of the domestic revival. The circumstances were similar, but the responses were different. What accounted for the endorsement of "traditional" family roles by young adults in the postwar years and the widespread challenge to those roles by their children?

These questions stimulated the exploration that led to this book. Answering them requires entering the minds of the women and men who married and raised children during these years. The historical circumstances that framed their lives shaped the families they formed.

What makes the postwar demographic explosion even more curious and remarkable is its pervasiveness across all groups in the society. Americans of all backgrounds rushed into marriage and childbearing, even though many of these newly formed families—most notably Americans of color—were excluded from suburbia, the site of the "American way of life." Racial and class divisions were concealed beneath an aura of unity in the aftermath of the war. Post–World War II America presented itself as a unified nation, politically harmonious and blessed with widespread affluence. Emerging triumphant from a war fought against racist and fascist regimes, spared the ravages of war-torn Europe and Asia, and prosperous from the booming wartime economy, the United States embraced its position as the "leader of the free world."

But major challenges lay ahead if the nation was to maintain its leadership in the world. The atomic blasts that devastated Hiroshima and Nagasaki marked both the end of the Second World War and the beginning of the cold war. The United States now faced its former ally, the Soviet Union, as its major foe. The cold war was largely an ideological struggle between the two superpowers, both hoping to increase their power and influence across the globe. The

divisions in American society along racial, class and gender lines threatened to weaken the society at home and damage its prestige in the world. In the propaganda battles that permeated the cold war era, American leaders promoted the American way of life as the triumph of capitalism, allegedly available to all who believed in its values. This way of life was characterized by affluence, located in suburbia, and epitomized by white middle-class nuclear families. Increasing numbers of Americans gained access to this domestic ideal — but not everyone who aspired to it could achieve it.

Poverty excluded many from suburban affluence; racism excluded others. Nevertheless, experts and officials ignored these realities and insisted that the combined forces of democracy and prosperity would bring the fruits of the "good life" to all. They perceived class divisions as particularly dangerous, because dissatisfied workers might be drawn to left-wing political agitation, leading to socialism or even communism. According to the cold war ethos of the time, class conflict within the United States would harm our image abroad, strengthen the Soviet Union, and weaken the nation, making it vulnerable to communism. The worst-case scenario was Communist takeover, and the defeat of the United States in the cold war. Although strategists and foreign policy experts feared that the Soviet Union might gain the military might and territorial expansion to achieve world domination, many leaders, pundits and observers worried that the real dangers to America were internal ones: racial strife, emancipated women, class conflict, and familial disruption. To alleviate these fears, Americans turned to the family as a bastion of safety in an insecure world, while experts, leaders and politicians promoted codes of conduct and enacted public policies that would bolster the American home. Like their leaders, most Americans agreed that family stability appeared to be the best bulwark against the dangers of the cold war.

These widely held beliefs and the public policies they generated led to some dramatic transformations in American society, beyond the rush into marriage, childbearing and domesticity. Most importantly, they blurred class lines while sharpening racial divisions. The massive infusion of federal funds into the expansion of affordable single family homes in suburban developments made it possible for white working-class families to achieve a middle-class lifestyle. Second generation European immigrants moved out of their ethnic neighborhoods in the cities, leaving their kinship networks, along with their outsider status, behind. Postwar prosperity and the promise of assimilation made it possible for ethnic Americans with white skin to blend into the homogeneous suburbs. Jews and Catholics joined Anglo-Saxon Protestants in these all-white communities, even if they could not join their country clubs or social gatherings.

Greeks, Poles and Italians joined Norwegians and Swedes as members of the white middle class, reaping the benefits of affluence and the American way of life.

People of color were excluded from these suburban communities, and denied the benefits of American prosperity even if they could afford them. With very few notable exceptions, residential segregation defined the postwar suburbs. Persistent racial discrimination proved to be the nation's worst embarrassment throughout the cold war. It also proved to be a situation that African-Americans were unwilling to tolerate. It is no accident that the Civil Rights Movement developed in the wake of World War II, as black soldiers returned from fighting a war against racism to face segregation, discrimination and brutality at home. Black leaders and federal officials also understood that the national government needed to promote Civil Rights at home in order to save face abroad, as the Soviet Union and other communist countries pointed to American race relations as an indication of the hypocrisy and failure of the American promise of freedom for all.[7] But the strategic alliance between the national government and Civil Rights leaders required that the movement remain limited to legal and political rights, which were consistent with principles of equal opportunity. Issues such as school desegregation and access to public transportation did not violate private property rights. Although most Americans approved of the Supreme Court decision to desegregate public schools, as late as 1964, 89 percent of those polled in the North and 96 percent in the South believed that "an owner of property should not have to sell to a Negro if he doesn't want to." Anything that hinted of a redistribution of wealth evoked fears of socialism and a threat to American capitalism. These cold war principles precluded governmental efforts to strengthen the hand of those with less against those with more. Civil Rights leaders understood these imperatives, and limited their efforts to achieving political rights rather than economic justice. After all, the rallying cry of the United States in the cold war was "freedom," not "equality," and "freedom" became the rallying cry of the Civil Rights movement as well.[8]

The focus on political rights allowed the government to support certain aspects of the Civil Rights Movement, such as the dismantling of the Jim Crow system in the South, while doing nothing to alleviate residential segregation or the widespread poverty that kept Americans of color at the bottom of the society. As a result, American leaders spoke loudly and often about the efforts the nation was making to eradicate institutionalized racism, claiming that the situation for black Americans was improving. At the same time, they allowed racial segregation to prevail in the suburbs, where the Federal Housing Authority and

lending banks maintained red-lining policies that prevented black Americans from obtaining home mortgages.[9]

These policies did little to challenge the racial attitudes of white Americans. In the late 1950s, in spite of widespread support for school desegregation, white Americans were less enthusiastic about bringing the races into closer contact in more private realms. Although 60 percent of whites outside the South said they would stay if a black family moved next door, only 45 percent said they would remain in the neighborhood if large numbers of people of color moved in. Disapproval of racial integration was strongest in the most intimate realm of life: the family. The vast majority of Americans—92 percent in the North and 99 percent in the South—approved of laws banning marriage between whites and non-whites. As late as the mid-sixties, more than half of northern whites and over three-fourths of southern whites still opposed interracial marriage.[10]

The long-term effects of these policies and attitudes were devastating. Black Americans were excluded from the suburbs, even if they could afford to live there. That exclusion denied them the opportunity for capital accumulation and upward mobility that home ownership provided. So while white working-class Americans prospered and joined their middle-class peers as suburban homeowners, African-Americans lost ground economically. They were forced to reside in substandard urban housing, left out of postwar prosperity, and denied the government subsidies available to whites.

Out of these developments came a society with a rhetoric of classlessness, but sharply divided along racial lines. From a pre-war nation made up of many identifiable ethnic groups, postwar American society divided rigidly along the color line. Children of immigrants identified as outsiders before World War II became "white" after the war, gaining access to the privileges and opportunities that whiteness bestowed, such as life in the suburbs.[11] Political leaders highlighted the nation's prosperous all-white suburbs, hid its poverty in rural and urban areas, and masked its racial oppression by promoting the Civil Rights Movement. Nevertheless, the "American way of life" embodied in the suburban nuclear family, as a cultural ideal if not a universal reality, motivated countless postwar Americans to strive for it, to live by its codes, and—for black Americans—to demand it.

Scholars of the postwar era have largely overlooked the connections among cold war politics, suburban development, race relations and the domestic ideal. The context of the cold war points to previously unrecognized connections between political and familial values. Diplomatic historians paint one portrait of a world torn by strife and a standoff between two superpowers who seemed to hold the fate of the globe in their hands. Sociologists and demographers provide

a different picture of a private world of affluence, suburban sprawl, and the baby boom. These visions rarely connect, and one is left with a peculiar notion of domestic tranquility in the midst of the cold war that has been neither fully explained nor challenged.[12] In *Homeward Bound*, public policy and political ideology are brought to bear on the study of private life, locating the family within the larger political culture, not outside it. This approach illuminates both the cold war ideology and the domestic revival as two sides of the same coin: postwar Americans' intense need to feel liberated from the past and secure in the future.

The power of this ideological duality, as well as its fundamental irony, are most apparent in the anticommunist hysteria that swept the nation in the postwar years. It is well to recall that McCarthyism was directed against perceived internal dangers, not external enemies. The Soviet Union loomed in the distance as an abstract symbol of what Americans might become if they became "soft." Anticommunist crusaders called on Americans to strengthen their moral fiber so they might preserve their freedom and their security. The paradox of anticommunism, however, was precisely in that double-edged goal, for the freedom of modern life seemed to undermine security. McCarthyism was fueled, in large measure, by suspicion of the new secularism, materialism, bureaucratic collectivism, and consumerism that epitomized not only the achievement but the potential "decadence" of New Deal liberalism. The cosmopolitan urban culture represented a decline in the self-reliant entrepreneurial spirit, posing a threat to the national security that was perceived as akin to the danger of communism itself. Indeed, the two were often conflated in anticommunist rhetoric. The domestic ideology emerged as a buffer against those disturbing tendencies. Yet domesticity ultimately fostered the very tendencies it was intended to diffuse: materialism, consumerism, and bureaucratic conformity. This inherent tension defined the symbiotic connection between the culture of the cold war and the domestic revival. Rootless Americans struggled against what they perceived as internal decay. The family seemed to offer a psychological fortress that would protect them against themselves. Bolstered by scientific expertise and wholesome abundance, it might ward off the hazards of the age.[13]

This challenge prompted Americans to create a family-centered culture that was more than the internal reverberations of foreign policy, and went beyond the explicit manifestations of anticommunist hysteria such as McCarthyism and the "Red Scare." It took shape amid the legacy of the depression, World War II, and the anxieties surrounding atomic weapons. It reflected the fears as well as the aspirations of the era. Prosperity had returned, but would there be a postwar slump that would lead to another depression, as there had been after World War I?

Would the GIs be able to find secure positions in the postwar economy? Women had proved themselves competent during the war in previously all-male blue-collar jobs, but what would happen to their families if they continued to work? Science had discovered atomic energy, but would it ultimately serve humanity or destroy it? The family was at the center of these concerns, and the domestic ideology that was taking shape provided a major response to them. The legendary white middle-class family of the 1950s, located in the suburbs, complete with appliances, station wagons, backyard barbecues, and tricycles scattered on the sidewalks, represented something new. It was not, as common wisdom tells us, the last gasp of "traditional" family life with roots deep in the past. Rather, it was the first wholehearted effort to create a home that would fulfill virtually all its members' personal needs through an energized and expressive personal life.[14]

To gain insight into this unique historical era, I have drawn on a wide range of sources, including evidence from the popular culture, especially movies, mass-circulation periodicals, and newspapers; the writings of professionals in numerous fields; and the papers and statements of those who influenced and formulated public policies. In addition, I have utilized a remarkable data collection—the Kelly Longitudinal Study (KLS)—which consists of several surveys of 600 white middle-class men and women who formed families during these years (See Appendix I).[15] E. Lowell Kelly, a psychologist at the University of Michigan, was interested in long-term personality development among married persons. The 300 couples who participated in the study were contacted through announcements of engagements in the late 1930s in New England local newspapers. Kelly sent questionnaires to them every few years and took his most detailed and extensive surveys in 1955. By that time, most of the respondents had been married for at least a decade and were rearing their baby-boom children in suburban homes.

The KLS questionnaires are a valuable source for finding out why white middle-class Americans adhered so strongly to a normative and quite specifically defined notion of family life at the time. Many respondents filled pages with their detailed testimonies, often attaching extra sheets to explain their answers more fully. They wrote about their lives, the decisions they made concerning their careers and children, the quality of their marriages, their family values, their sexual relationships, their physical and emotional health, and their major hopes and worries. They also reflected on their marriages, what they felt they had sacrificed, and what they had gained. In these open-ended responses, freed from Kelly's categories and concerns, they poured out their stories.[16]

The respondents to the KLS were among the cohort of Americans who began their families during the early 1940s, establishing the patterns and setting

the trends that were to take hold of the nation for the next two decades. Their hopes for happy and stable marriages took shape during the depression, when many of their parents' generation struggled with disruption and hardship. They entered marriage when World War II thrust the nation into another major crisis, wreaking further havoc on families. They raised children as the cold war took shape, with its cloud of international tension and impending doom.

Yet, these women and men were hopeful that family life in the postwar era would be secure and liberated from the hardships of the past. They believed that affluence, consumer goods, satisfying sex, and children would strengthen their families, enabling them to steer clear of potential disruptions. In pursuing their quest for the "good life," they adhered to traditional gender roles and prized marital stability; few of them divorced. They represent a segment of the predominantly Protestant white population who were relatively well educated and who generally lived comfortable middle-class lives. In other words, they were among those Americans who would be most likely to live out the postwar American dream. Their poignant testimonies, however, reveal a strong undercurrent of discontent; their hopes for domestic happiness often remained unfulfilled.

The KLS participants, as well-educated, affluent, heterosexual and married, represented the white Protestant men and women who were most likely to reap the benefits of postwar prosperity and achieve the ideal of "the American way of life." As long as they conformed to the prevailing norms of political and personal behavior, their virtue and patriotism would not be questioned, and they would have access to the suburban dream. It is important to keep in mind who was not represented in the sample. With very few exceptions, Americans of color had no such access. Nor did single women or men, because suburban homes were built for families. Those who divorced faced a powerful stigma that cast their personal virtue and even their status as mature adults into question. Childless couples were excluded from the child-centered culture of the suburbs, and regarded with either pity or scorn, depending on whether their childlessness resulted from chance or choice.[17]

The most severe censure was reserved for gay men and lesbians. Harsh repression and widespread institutionalized homophobia followed quickly in the wake of wartime, when gay and lesbian communities had flourished. As anticommunist crusades launched investigations to root out "perverts" in the government, homosexuality itself became a mark of potential subversive activity, grounds for dismissal from jobs, and justification for official and unofficial persecution. To escape the status of pariah, many gay men and lesbians locked themselves in the stifling closet of conformity, hiding their sexual identities and pass-

ing as heterosexuals. As one lesbian recalled, "It has never been easy to be a lesbian in this country, but the 1950s was surely the worst decade in which to love your own sex."[18] The participants in the KLS study may not have found the perfect contentment they hoped to realize in their comfortable suburban homes, but they had the best opportunity to pursue its promise.

Although all groups contributed to the baby boom, it was the values of the white middle class that shaped the dominant political and economic institutions that affected all Americans. Those who did not conform to them were likely to be marginalized, stigmatized, and disadvantaged as a result. So although the KLS sample included only a few individuals from other ethnic or socioeconomic backgrounds, it was made up of men and women who wholeheartedly and self-consciously attempted to enact cultural norms. These norms represented the ideal toward which upwardly mobile Americans strove, and reflected the standard against which nonconforming individuals were judged. It is all the more important, then, to understand the standards of appropriate behavior established by the white middle class. During the postwar years, there were no groups in the United States for whom these norms were irrelevant.

The responses of individuals in the KLS breathe life into contemporary values and reveal how postwar Americans fortified the boundaries within which they lived. They wanted secure jobs, secure homes, and secure marriages in a secure country. Security would enable them to take advantage of the fruits of prosperity and peace that were, at long last, available. And so they adhered to an overarching principle that would guide them in their personal and political lives: containment. Containment was the key to security. The word had currency at the time in its foreign policy version, first articulated by George F. Kennan, the American chargé d'affaires in Moscow, in 1946. The power of the Soviet Union would not endanger national security if it could be contained within a clearly-defined sphere of influence.[19] But the term also describes the response to other postwar developments. The terrifying destructive potential of the atomic bomb would not be a threat if it could be contained, first in the hands of the United States and later through peaceful applications. If the atom were "harnessed for peace," as the proponents of nuclear energy claimed, it would enhance, rather than threaten, our security. Domestic anticommunism was another manifestation of containment: if presumably subversive individuals could be contained and prevented from spreading their poisonous influence through the body politic, then the society could feel secure.

In the domestic version of containment, the "sphere of influence" was the home. Within its walls, potentially dangerous social forces of the new age might be tamed, where they could contribute to the secure and fulfilling life to which

postwar women and men aspired. Domestic containment was bolstered by a powerful political culture that rewarded its adherents and marginalized its detractors. More than merely a metaphor for the cold war on the homefront, containment aptly describes the way in which public policy, personal behavior, and even political values were focused on the home.

There were, of course, those who did not live in tune with the containment ethos. In addition to southern black Civil Rights activists, there were dedicated women and men who continued to work for liberal political causes such as peace and women's rights, often labeled as "pink" for their efforts. There were also increasing numbers of married women who worked outside the home, a few of them managing to juggle domestic responsibilities with full-time careers, although most worked in jobs or community volunteer efforts that were secondary to their responsibilities as homemakers. Rebellious youths and nonconforming Beats of the 1950s made it clear that not everyone or everything could be contained in the nuclear family ideal. But these were the exceptions. Vast number of American women and men during the early years of the cold war—more than ever before or since—got married, moved to the suburbs, and had babies. If they felt frustrated with their lot, the women were more likely to turn to tranquilizers, and the men to *Playboy* magazine, for escape. But few were willing to give up the rewards of conforming for the risks of resisting the domestic path.[20]

The familial ideology that took shape in these years helps explain the apolitical tenor of middle-class postwar life. With the notable exceptions of labor unions and black civil rights organizations, and the incipient anti-nuclear movent, the 1940s and 1950s did not foster the emergence of grass-roots social movements whose leaders would challenge the system. Rather, professionals became the experts of the age, providing scientific and psychological means to achieve personal well-being. These experts advocated coping strategies to enable people to adapt to the institutional and technological changes taking place. The therapeutic approach that gained momentum during these years was geared toward helping people feel better about their place in the world, rather than changing it. It offered private and personal solutions to social problems. The family was the arena in which that adaptation was expected to occur; the home was the environment in which people could feel good about themselves. In this way, domestic containment and its therapeutic corollary undermined the potential for political activism and reinforced the chilling effects of anticommunism and the cold war consensus.

Ultimately, containment proved to be an elusive goal. But it held sway well into the 1960s, on the diplomatic and the domestic levels, when it collapsed in

disarray. The next generation abandoned the idea, shrugging off the obsession with security and the vision of the family in which their parents had placed their highest hopes. By the late 1960s, many among this new "uncontained" generation had rejected the rigid institutional boundaries of their elders. They substituted risk for security as they carried sex, consumerism, and political activity outside the established institutions. Activism replaced adaptation as the strategy for changing the conditions of life. Despite their simultaneous assault on the cold war ideology and the imperatives of domesticity, the baby boomers did not abandon the therapeutic methods and personal values that had motivated their parents.[21] Rejecting familial security as the means but retaining individual freedom and fulfillment as the ends, they carried forward the quest for liberation through politics as well as their personal lives. When a powerful backlash emerged in the 1970s and 1980s in reaction to the assault on containment, the rhetoric of the cold war was revived, along with a renewed call for the "traditional" family as the best means to achieve national and personal security.

The story of domestic containment—how it emerged, how it affected the lives of those who tried to conform to it, and how it ultimately unraveled—will help us come to terms with ourselves and the era in which we live. In the postwar years, Americans found that viable alternatives to the prevailing family norm were virtually unavailable. Because of the political, ideological, and institutional developments that converged at the time, young adults were indeed homeward bound. But they were also bound to the home. The chapters that follow explore the reasons why, in the cold war era, it was the vision of the sheltered, secure, and personally liberating family toward which homeward-bound Americans set their sights.

HOMEWARD BOUND

CHAPTER ONE

CONTAINMENT AT HOME: COLD WAR, WARM HEARTH

I think that this attitude toward women is universal. What we want is to make easier the life of our housewives.

—VICE PRESIDENT RICHARD NIXON, 1959

FIGURE 3   Vice President Richard Nixon and Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev spar verbally at the American Exhibition in Moscow in 1959. Here they engage in the "kitchen debate" as they fight the cold war over the commodity gap rather than the missile gap. *(Wide World Photo.)*

IN 1959, the year the atomic-age newlyweds spent their honeymoon in a fallout shelter, when the baby boom and the cold war were both at their peak, Vice President Richard M. Nixon traveled to the Soviet Union to engage in what would become one of the most noted verbal sparring matches of the century. In a lengthy and often heated debate with Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev at the opening of the American National Exhibition in Moscow, Nixon extolled the virtues of the American way of life, while his opponent promoted the Communist system. What was remarkable about this exchange was its focus. The two leaders did not discuss missiles, bombs, or even modes of government. Rather, they argued over the relative merits of American and Soviet washing machines, televisions, and electric ranges—in what came to be known as the "kitchen debate" (See Figure 3).

The "kitchen debate" was one of the major skirmishes in the cold war, which was at its core an ideological struggle fought on a cultural battleground. For Nixon, American superiority rested on the ideal of the suburban home, complete with modern appliances and distinct gender roles for family members. He proclaimed that the "model" home, with a male breadwinner and a full-time female homemaker, adorned with a wide array of consumer goods, represented the essence of American freedom:

To us, diversity, the right to choose, . . . is the most important thing. We don't have one decision made at the top by one government official. . . . We have many different manufacturers and many different kinds of washing machines so that the housewives have a choice. . . . Would it not be better to compete in the relative merits of washing machines than in the strength of rockets?[1]

Nixon's focus on household appliances was not accidental. After all, arguments over the strength of rockets would only point out the vulnerability of the United States in the event of a nuclear war between the superpowers; debates over consumer goods would provide a reassuring vision of the good life available in the atomic age. So Nixon insisted that American superiority in the cold war rested not on weapons, but on the secure, abundant family life of modern suburban homes. In these structures, adorned and worshiped by their inhabitants, women would achieve their glory and men would display their success. Consumerism was not an end in itself; it was the means for achieving individuality, leisure, and upward mobility.

The American National Exhibition was a showcase of American consumer goods and leisure-time equipment. But the main attraction, which the two leaders toured, was the full-scale "model" six-room ranch-style house. This model home, filled with labor-saving devices and presumably available to Americans of all classes, was tangible proof, Nixon believed, of the superiority of free enterprise over communism.

In the model kitchen in the model home, Nixon and Khrushchev revealed some basic assumptions of their two systems. Nixon called attention to a built-in panel-controlled washing machine. "In America," he said, "these [washing machines] are designed to make things easier for our women." Khrushchev countered Nixon's boast of comfortable American housewives with pride in productive Soviet female workers: in his country they did not have that "capitalist attitude toward women." Nixon clearly did not understand that the Communist system had no use for full-time housewives, for he replied, "I think that this attitude toward women is universal. What we want is to make easier the life of our housewives." Nixon's knock-out punch in his verbal bout with the Soviet Premier was his articulation of the American postwar domestic dream: successful breadwinners supporting attractive homemakers in affluent suburban homes.

Although the two leaders did not agree on the proper social roles for women, they clearly shared a common view that female sexuality was a central part of the good life that both systems claimed to espouse. Noting that Nixon admired the young women modeling American bathing suits and sports clothes, the Soviet leader said with a wink, "You are for the girls, too." Later in the day, when the two leaders faltered over a toast in which Khrushchev proposed to drink to the removal of foreign bases and Nixon would drink only to the more general hope of "peace," Khrushchev smoothed over the impending confrontation by gesturing to a nearby waitress and suggesting, "Let's drink to the ladies." Relieved, Nixon chimed in, "We can all drink to the ladies."

American journalists who were present, however, viewed the appearance and situation of Soviet women as anything but feminine. An article in *U.S. News and World Report,* noted for its anticommunism and cold war militance, suggested that Soviet women, as workers and political activists, desexualized themselves. It described Moscow as "a city of women—hard-working women who show few of the physical charms of women in the West. Most Moscow women seem unconcerned about their looks. . . . Young couples stroll together in the parks after dark, but you see many more young women [stride] along the streets purposefully, as though marching to a Communist Party meeting."[2] The implied contrast was clear. American women, unlike their "purposeful" and unfeminine Russian counterparts, did not have to be "hard working," thanks to the wonders of American household appliances. Nor did they busy themselves with the affairs of men, such as politics. Rather, they cultivated their looks and their physical charms, to become sexually attractive housewives and consumers under the American capitalist system.

Of course, in reality, both American and Soviet women worked outside as well as inside the home; and in both countries women had primary responsibilities for housekeeping chores. But these realities did nothing to mitigate the power of gender ideologies in both countries. Assumptions about Soviet women workers versus sexually attractive American housewives were widespread. More than a decade before Nixon's trip to Moscow, for example, Eric Johnston, president of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, wrote contemptuously of the claim that Soviet women were emancipated because they held jobs. He argued, "Russian women, like women in all undeveloped countries, have always done the . . . hardest work." He labeled as "simply Communist propaganda" the claim that Soviet women were "emancipated from housework," and noted sarcastically that they were "permitted the glory of drudgery in industry" in the Soviet Union. Like Nixon, he pointed to the home, where breadwinners supported their housewives, as the place where American freedom was most apparent.[3] The implication, of course, was that self-supporting women were in some way un-American. Accordingly, anticommunist crusaders viewed women who did not conform to the domestic ideal with suspicion.

With such sentiments about gender and politics widely shared, Nixon's visit was hailed as a major political triumph. Popular journals extolled his diplomatic skills in the face-to-face confrontation with Khrushchev. Many observers credit this trip with establishing Nixon's political future. Clearly, Americans did not find the kitchen debate trivial. The appliance-laden ranch-style home epitomized the expansive, secure lifestyle that postwar Americans wanted. Within the protective walls of the modern home, worrisome developments like sexual

liberalism, women's emancipation, and affluence would lead not to decadence but to a wholesome family life. Sex would enhance marriage, emancipated women would professionalize homemaking, and affluence would put an end to material deprivation. Suburbia would serve as a bulwark against communism and class conflict, for according to the widely shared belief articulated by Nixon, it offered a piece of the American dream for everyone. Although Nixon vastly exaggerated the availability of the suburban home, he described a type of domestic life that had become a reality for many white working-class and middle-class Americans—and a powerful aspiration for many others.

The momentum began to build toward this ideal long before it became widely available. Those who came of age during and after World War II were the most marrying generation on record: 96.4 percent of the women and 94.1 percent of the men (See Table 7). These aggregate statistics hide another significant fact: Americans behaved in striking conformity to each other during these years. In other words, not only did the average age at marriage drop, almost everyone was married by his or her mid-twenties. And not only did the average family size increase, most couples had two to four children, born sooner after marriage and spaced closer together than in previous years.[4] At a time when the availability of contraceptive devices enabled couples to delay, space, and limit the arrival of offspring to suit their particular needs, this rising birthrate resulted from deliberate choices. Nixon could, therefore, speak with some conviction when he placed the home at the center of postwar ideals.

What gave rise to the widespread endorsement of this familial consensus in the cold war era? The depression of the 1930s and World War II laid the foundation for a commitment to a stable home life, but they also opened the way for a radical restructuring of the family. The yearning for family stability gained momentum after the war, but the potential for restructuring the family withered as the powerful ideology of domesticity was imprinted on everyday life. Ironically, traditional gender roles became a central feature of the "modern" middle-class home.

Since the 1960s, much attention has been paid to the plight of women in the 1950s. But at that time, critical observers of middle-class life considered homemakers to be emancipated and men to be oppressed. Much of the most insightful writing examined the dehumanizing situation that forced middle-class men, at least in their public roles, to be other-directed "organization men," caught in a mass, impersonal white-collar world. The loss of autonomy was real. As large corporations grew, swallowing smaller enterprises, the number of self-employed men in small businesses shrank dramatically. David Riesman recognized that the corporate structure forced middle-class men into deadening,

TABLE 7

MARITAL STATUS OF THE POPULATION*
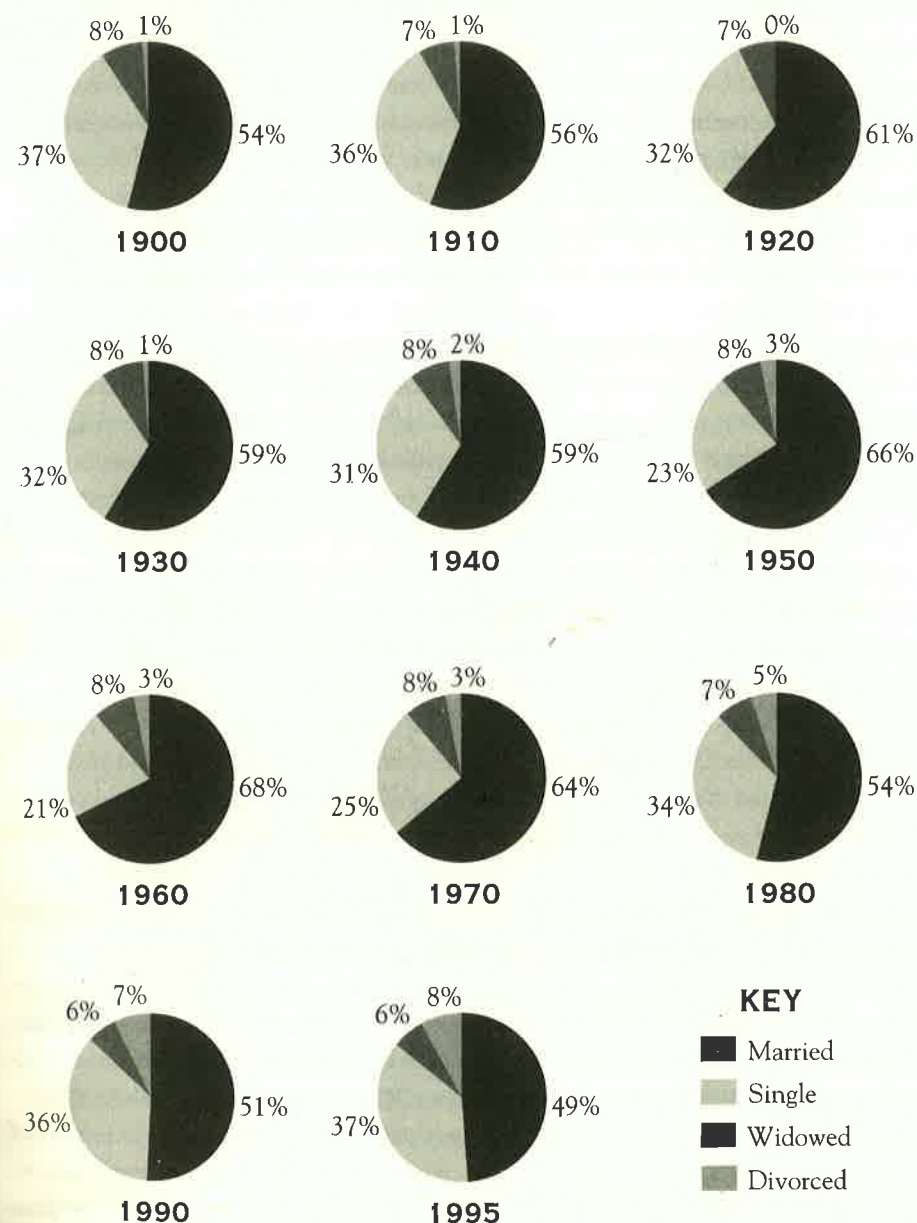
KEY

- ■ Married
- ▨ Single
- ■ Widowed
- ▨ Divorced

*1900–1995

highly structured peer interactions; he argued that only in the intimate aspects of life could a man truly be free. Industrial laborers were even less likely to derive intrinsic satisfactions from their jobs. Thus, blue-collar and white-collar employees shared a sense of alienation and subordination in the postwar corporate work force. At work as well as at home, class lines blurred for white men in the postwar era. Both Riesman and William Whyte saw the suburbs as extensions of the corporate world, with their emphasis on conformity. Yet, they perceived that suburban homes and consumer goods offered material compensations for organized work life.[5]

In spite of the power of the homemaker ideal, increasing numbers of married women worked outside the home in the postwar years. But their job opportunities were limited, and their wages were low. Employed women held jobs that were even more menial and subordinate than those of their male peers. Surveys of full-time homemakers indicated that they appreciated their independence from supervision and control over their work; they had no desire to give up their autonomy in the home for wage labor. Educated middle-class women, whose career opportunities were severely limited, hoped that the home would become not a confining place of drudgery, but a liberating arena of fulfillment through professionalized homemaking, meaningful childrearing, and satisfying sexuality.[6]

While the home seemed to offer the best hope for freedom, it also appeared to be a fragile institution, subject to forces beyond its control. Economic hardship had torn families asunder, and war had scattered men far from home and drawn women into the public world of work. The postwar years did little to alleviate fears that similar disruptions might occur again. In spite of widespread affluence, many believed that the reconversion to a peacetime economy would lead to another depression. Even peace was problematic, since international tensions were palpable. The explosion of the first atomic bombs over Hiroshima and Nagasaki marked not only the end of World War II but the beginning of the cold war. At any moment, the cold war could turn hot. The policy of containment abroad faced its first major challenge in 1949, with the Chinese revolution. In the same year, the USSR exploded its first atomic bomb. The nation was again jolted out of its sense of fragile security when the Korean War broke out in 1950. Many shared President Truman's belief that World War III was at hand.[7]

Insightful analysts of the nuclear age have explored the psychic impact of the atomic bomb. Paul Boyer's study of the first five years after Hiroshima showed that American responses went through dramatic shifts. Initial reactions juxtaposed the thrill of atomic empowerment with the terror of annihilation. The atomic scientists were among the first to organize against the bomb, calling for international control of atomic energy, and others soon followed suit. By the end of the 1940s, however, opposition had given way to proclamations of faith in the bomb as the protector of American security.

Along with that faith came fear. In 1950, 61 percent of those polled thought that the United States should use the atom bomb if there was another world war; but 53 percent believed there was a good or fair chance that their community would be bombed in the next war, and nealy three-fourths assumed that American cities would be bombed. Most agreed that since Russia now had the bomb, the likelihood of another war increased. By 1956, nearly two-thirds of those polled believed that in the event of another war, the hydrogen bomb would be used against the United States.

As support grew for more and bigger bombs, arguments for international control waned, and the country prepared for the possibility of a nuclear war by instituting new civil defense strategies. Psychologists were strangely silent on the issue of the fear of atomic weapons, and by the early fifties, the nation seemed to be apathetic. Boyer echoed Robert J. Lifton in suggesting that denial and silence may have reflected deep-seated horror rather than complacency; indeed, in 1959, two out of three Americans listed the possibility of nuclear war as the nation's most urgent problem.[8]

Lifton argued that the atomic bomb forced people to question one of their most deeply held beliefs: that scientific discoveries would yield progress. Atomic energy presented a fundamental contradiction: science had developed the potential for total technological mastery as well as for total technological devastation. Lifton attributed "nuclear numbing" to the powerful psychic hold that the fear of nuclear annihilation had on the nation's subconscious. He pointed to unrealistic but reassuring civil defense strategies as the efforts of governmental officials to tame or "domesticate" the fear.[9]

Americans were well poised to embrace domesticity in the midst of the terrors of the atomic age. A home filled with children would create a feeling of warmth and security against the cold forces of disruption and alienation. Children would also be a connection to the future and a means of replenishing a world depleted by war deaths. Although baby-boom parents were not likely to express conscious desires to repopulate the country, the devastation of thousands of deaths could not have been far below the surface of the postwar consciousness. The view of childbearing as a duty was painfully true for Jewish parents, after six million of their kin were snuffed out in Europe. But they were not alone. As one Jewish woman recalled of her decision to bear four children, "After the Holocaust, we felt obligated to have lots of babies. But it was easy because everyone was doing it—non-Jews, too."[10]

In secure postwar homes with plenty of children, American women and men

might be able to ward off their nightmares and live out their dreams. The family seemed to be the one place where people could control their destinies and perhaps even shape the future. Of course, nobody actually argued that stable family life could prevent nuclear annihilation. But the home represented a source of meaning and security in a world run amok. Marrying young and having lots of babies were ways for Americans to thumb their noses at doomsday predictions. Commenting on the trend toward young marriages, one observer noted, "Youngsters want to grasp what little security they can in a world gone frighteningly insecure. The youngsters feel they will cultivate the one security that's possible—their own gardens, their own . . . home and families."[11]

White working-class and middle-class women and men were not the only ones who hoped to embrace this vision of domesticity. Other groups of Americans had their own particular reasons for aspiring to the nuclear family ideal. Postwar prosperity allowed African-Americans, for the first time, to imagine the possibility of a family life where the earnings of men would be ample enough to allow women to stay home with their own children, rather than tending to the houses and children of white families. Celebrating that possibility in 1947, *Ebony* magazine proclaimed, "Goodbye Mammy, Hello Mom." World War II "took Negro mothers out of white kitchens, put them in factories and shipyards. When it was all over, they went back to kitchens – but this time their own. . . . And so today in thousands of Negro homes, the Negro mother has come home, come home perhaps for the first time since 1619 when the first Negro families landed at Jamestown, Virginia." For black women, domesticity meant "freedom and independence in her own home."[12] People of color longed for the "good life," just like anyone else. But their exclusion from the opportunities most citizens took for granted intensified their desires. Black artists expressed this yearning for a new life. Lorraine Hansberry's powerful 1959 play, *A Raisin In the Sun*, articulated with great eloquence the importance of a home in the suburbs, not to assimilate into white America but to live as a black family with dignity, pride, and comfort.

Asian-Americans also had good reason to celebrate home and family life. With the end of the exclusion of Chinese immigrants during World War II, wives and war brides began to enter the country, transforming communities like New York's Chinatown from small societies of bachelors into thriving family oriented communities. Japanese-Americans, after the humiliations, disruptions, and anguish of internment, were eager to put their families and lives back together. Children of European immigrants hoped to use the fruits of postwar abundance to escape the crowded ethnic neighborhoods of the cities and blend into white America, in spacious single-family homes in the suburbs.[13]

For all of these groups, thoughts of the family rooted in time-honored traditions may have allayed fears of vulnerability. Nevertheless, much of what had provided family security in the past became unhinged. For many Americans, the postwar years brought rootlessness. Those who moved from farms to cities lost a familiar way of life that was rooted in the land. Children of immigrants moved from ethnic neighborhoods with extended kin and community ties to homogeneous suburbs, where they formed nuclear families and invested them with high hopes. Suburban homes offered freedom from kinship obligations, along with material comforts that had not been available on the farm or in the ethnic urban ghetto. As Whyte noted about the promoters of the Illinois suburb he studied, "At first they had advertised Park Forest as housing. Now they began advertising happiness." But consumer goods would not replace community, and young mobile nuclear families could easily find themselves adrift. Newcomers devoted themselves to creating communities out of neighborhoods composed largely of transients. As Whyte noted, "In suburbia, organization man is trying, quite consciously, to develop a new kind of roots to replace what he left behind."[14]

Young adults aged 25 to 35 were among the most mobile members of the society, constituting 12.4 percent of all migrants but only 7.5 percent of the population. Higher education also prompted mobility; fully 45.5 percent of those who had one year of college or more lived outside their home states, compared to 27.3 percent of high school graduates. Overwhelmingly, these young educated migrants worked for large organizations: three-fourths of all clients of long-distance movers worked for corporations, the government, or the armed services, with corporate employees the most numerous. In their new communities, they immediately endeavored to forge ties with other young transients that would be as rewarding and secure as the ones they left behind, but free of the restraints of the old neighborhood.[15]

Postwar Americans struggled with this transition. The popular culture was filled with stories about young adults who shifted their allegiances from the old ethnic ties to the new nuclear family ideal. When situation comedies shifted from radio to television, working-class ethnic kin networks and multigenerational households faded as the stories increasingly revolved around the middle-class nuclear family.[16] One of the most popular films of the 1950s was *Marty*, winner of the Academy Award for Best Motion Picture in 1955, and first produced as a television play in 1953. In the film, Marty, a young man living with his mother, has a deep commitment to the ethnic family in which he was reared. The sympathy of the audience stays with him as he first demonstrates his family loyalty by allowing his mother to bring her cranky aging sister to live with them and doing his duty as the good son. As the story unfolds, Marty falls

in love and, to the horror of his mother and his aunt, decides to marry his sweetheart and move away from the old neighborhood. Far from his family and their obligations, the young couple can embark on a new life freed from the constraints of the older generation. By the film's end, the audience has made the transition, along with the main character, from loyalty to the community of ethnic kinship to the suburban ideal of the emancipated nuclear family.[17]

Whyte called the suburbs the "new melting pot," where migrants from ethnic working-class neighborhoods in the cities moved into the middle class. In the process, they lost much of their identity as ethnic outsiders, and became simply "white."[18] Kin and ethnic ties were often forsaken as suburban residents formed new communities grounded in shared experiences of homeownership and childrearing, and conformity to the modern consumer-oriented way of life. Young suburbanites were great joiners, forging new ties and creating new institutions to replace the old. One such suburban community, Park Forest, Illinois, had sixty-six adult organizations, making it a "hotbed" of participation. Churches and synagogues, whose membership reached new heights in the postwar years, expanded their functions from prayer and charity to recreation, youth programs, and social events. Church membership rose from 64.5 million in 1940 to 114.5 million in 1960—from 50 percent to 63 percent of the population (100 years earlier only 20 percent of all Americans belonged to churches). Religious affiliation became associated with the "American way of life." Although many observers have commented on the superficiality and lack of spiritual depth in much of this religious activity, there is no question that churches and synagogues provided social arenas for suburbanites, replacing, to some extent, the communal life previously supplied by kin or neighborhood.[19]

Still, these were tenuous alliances among uprooted people. With so much mobility and with success associated with moving on to something better, middle-class nuclear families could not depend on the stability of their communities. As much as they tried to form ties with their neighbors and conform to each other's lifestyles, they were still largely on their own. The new vision of home life, therefore, depended heavily on the staunch commitment of individual family members. Neither the world nor the newly forged suburban community could be trusted to provide security. What mattered was that family members remained bound to each other—and to the modern, emancipated home they intended to create.

The wisdom of earlier generations would be of little help to postwar Americans who were looking toward a radically new vision of family life and trying self-consciously to avoid the paths of their parents. Thus, young people embraced the advice of experts in the rapidly expanding fields of social science, medicine, and psychology. After all, science was changing the world. Was it not reasonable to expect it to change the home as well?

Postwar America was the era of the expert. Armed with scientific techniques and presumably inhabiting a world that was beyond popular passions, the experts had brought us into the atomic age. Physicists developed the bomb, strategists created the cold war, and scientific managers built the military-industrial complex. It was now up to the experts to make the unmanageable manageable. As the readers of *Look* magazine were assured, there was no reason to worry about radioactivity, for if ever the time arrived when you would need to understand its dangers, "the experts will be ready to tell you." Science and technology seemed to have invaded virtually every aspect of life, from the most public to the most private. Americans were looking to professionals to tell them how to manage their lives. The tremendous popularity of Benjamin Spock's *Baby and Child Care* reflects a reluctance to trust the shared wisdom of kin and community. Norman Vincent Peale's *The Power of Positive Thinking* provided readers with religiously inspired scientific formulas for success. Both these best-selling books stressed the centrality of the family in their prescriptions for a better future.[20]

The popularity of these kinds of books attests to the faith in expertise that prevailed at the time. One retrospective study of the attitudes and habits of over 4,000 Americans in 1957 found that the reliance on expertise was one of the most striking developments of the postwar years. Long-term individual therapy, for example, reached unprecedented popularity in the mid–1950s. The authors concluded:

> Experts took over the role of psychic healer, but they also assumed a much broader and more important role in directing the behavior, goals, and ideals of normal people. They became the teachers and norm setters who would tell people how to approach and live life. . . . They would provide advice and counsel about raising and responding to children, how to behave in marriage, and what to see in that relationship. . . . Science moved in because people needed and wanted guidance.[21]

The Kelly Longitudinal Study (KLS) confirmed these findings. By the mid-fifties, one out of six respondents had consulted a professional for marital or emotional problems; yet fewer than one-third that number considered their personal problems to be severe.[22] It seems evident, then, that people were quick to seek professional help. When the experts spoke, postwar Americans listened.

Despite the public's perceptions of scientific mastery and objectivity, professionals groped for appropriate ways to conceptualize and resolve the uncertain-

ties of the times. Like other Americans, they feared the possibility of social disintegration during this period. As participants in the cold war consensus, they offered solutions to the difficulties of the age that would not disrupt the status quo. In the process, they helped focus and formulate the domestic ideology. For these experts, public dangers merged with private ones, and the family appeared besieged as never before. The noted anthropologist Margaret Mead articulated this problem in a 1949 article addressed to social workers. The methods of the past, she wrote, offered "an inadequate model on which to build procedures in the atomic age." Children were now born into a world unfamiliar even to their parents, "a world suddenly shrunk into one unit, in which radio and television and comics and the threat of the atomic bomb are everyday realities." The task for helping professionals—psychologists, psychiatrists, family counselors, and social workers—would be especially complicated because conditions had changed so drastically. Each adult faced "the task of trying to keep a world he [sic] never knew and never dreamed steady until we can rear a generation at home in it."[23]

According to the experts, political activism was not likely to keep the world steady. They advocated adaptation rather than resistance as a means of feeling "at home." The modern home would make the inherited values of the past relevant for the uncertain present and future, but it had to be fortified largely from within. Married couples were determined to strengthen the nuclear family through "togetherness." With the help of experts to guide them, successful breadwinners would provide economic support for professionalized homemakers, and together they would create the home of their dreams.

The women and men who embraced this vision were not simply victims of an ideology foisted upon them by the power elite. Although political repression and institutional barriers constrained their options, many were deeply committed to the promise of domestic security and happiness. Marriage not only promised happiness, but also a positive alternative to the lonely life of a single person. In the postwar years, many agreed with the experts that single women would be doomed to an unfulfilled and miserable existence, and that bachelors were psychologically damaged and immature, locked into "primitive and infantile modes of thinking," in the words of one psychiatrist.[24] The respondents to the 1955 KLS survey articulated that fervent commitment to marriage. These white middle-class Americans were among the first to establish families according to the new domestic ideology. Relatively affluent, more highly educated than the average, they were among those Americans who were best able to take advantage of the postwar prosperity (See Appendix I). They looked toward the home, rather than the public world, for personal fulfillment. No wonder that

when they were asked what they thought they had sacrificed by marrying and raising a family, an overwhelming majority of them replied, "Nothing."

One of the striking characteristics of the KLS respondents was their apparent willingness to give up autonomy and independence for the sake of marriage and a family. Although the 1950s marked the beginning of the glamorization of bachelorhood, most of the men expressed a remarkable lack of nostalgia for the unencumbered freedom of a single life. Typical responses to the question, "What did you have to sacrifice or give up because of your marriage?" were "nothing but bad habits" and "the empty, aimless, lonely life of a bachelor." One who gave up only "a few fishing and hunting trips" claimed that "the time was better . . . spent at home." Many of these men had been married for over a decade and had their share of troubles. The comment of one man was especially poignant. Although he described his wife as addicted to alcohol and "sexually frigid," he claimed that "aside from the natural adjustment, I have given up only some of my personal independence. But I have gained so much more: children, home, etc. that I ought to answer . . . 'nothing at all.' "[25]

Women were equally quick to dismiss any sacrifices they may have made when they married. Few expressed regrets for devoting themselves to the homemaker role—a choice that effectively ruled out other life-long occupational avenues. Although 13 percent mentioned a "career" as something sacrificed, most claimed that they gained rather than lost in the bargain. One wife indicated how her early marriage affected the development of her adult identity: "Marriage has opened up far more avenues of interest than I ever would have had without it . . . I was at a very young and formative age when we were married and I think I have changed greatly over the years. . . . I cannot conceive of life without him."[26]

Many wives who said they abandoned a career were quick to minimize its importance and to state that they "preferred marriage," which suggests that the pursuit of both was not viable. Many defined their domestic role as a career in itself. One woman defended her decision to give up her career: "I think I have probably contributed more to the world in the life I have lived." Another mentioned her sacrifices of "financial independence [and] freedom to choose a career. However, these have been replaced by the experience of being a mother and a help to other parents and children. Therefore the new career is equally as good or better than the old." Both men and women mentioned the responsibilities of married life as sources of personal fulfillment rather than sacrifice.[27]

Further evidence of the enormous commitment to family life appears in responses to the question, "What has marriage brought you that you could not have gained without your marriage?" Although the most common answers of

men and women included family, children, love, and companionship, other typical answers were a sense of purpose, success, and security. It is interesting to note that respondents claimed that these elements of life would not have been possible without marriage. Women indicated that marriage gave them "a sense of responsibility I wouldn't have had had I remained single" or a feeling of "usefulness . . . for others dear to me." One said marriage gave her a "happy, full, complete life; children; a feeling of serving some purpose in life other than making money." Another remarked, "I'm not the 'career girl' type. I like being home and having a family. . . . Working with my husband for our home and family brings a satisfaction that working alone could not."[28]

Men were equally emphatic about the satisfactions brought about by family responsibility. Nearly one-fourth claimed that marriage gave them a sense of purpose in life and a reason for striving. Aside from love and children, no other single reward of marriage was mentioned by so many of the husbands. Included in the gains they listed were "the incentive to succeed and save for the future of my family," "a purpose in the scheme of life," and "a motivation for intensive effort that would otherwise have been lacking." One man confessed, "Being somewhat lazy to begin with, the family and my wife's ambition have made me more eager to succeed businesswise and financially." A contented husband wrote of the "million treasures" contained in his family; another said that marriage offered "freedom from the boredom and futility of bachelorhood."

Others linked family life to civic virtues by claiming that marriage strengthened their patriotism and morals, instilling them with "responsibility, community spirit, respect for children and family life, reverence for a Supreme Being, humility, love of country." Summing up the feelings of many in his generation, one husband said that marriage

> . . . increased my horizons, defined my goals and purposes in life, strengthened my convictions, raised my intellectual standards and stimulated my incentive to provide moral, spiritual, and material support; it has rewarded me with a realistic sense of family and security I never experienced during the first 24 years of my life.[29]

The respondents expressed a strong commitment to a new and expanded vision of family life, focused inwardly on parents and children and bolstered by affluence and sex. They claimed to have found their personal identities and achieved their individual goals largely through their families. Yet, the superlatives ring hollow, as if these women and men were trying to convince themselves that the families they had created fulfilled all their deepest wishes. For as

their extensive responses to other questions in the survey will show, they experienced disappointments, dashed hopes, and lowered expectations. Many who gave their marriages high ratings had actually resigned themselves to a great deal of misery. As postwar Americans endeavored to live in tune with the prevailing domestic ideology, they found that the dividends required a heavy investment of self. For some, the costs were well worth the benefits; for others, the costs were too high.

Ida and George Butler were among those who felt the costs of marriage were worth the benefits. After more than a decade together, they both claimed that they were satisfied with the life they had built. When they first embarked on married life, they brought high hopes to their union. Ida wrote that George "very nearly measures up to my ideal Prince Charming." George, in turn, noted Ida's attractiveness, common sense, and similar ideas on home life and sex. He was glad she was not the "high stepping" type, but had "experience in cooking and housekeeping." For this down-to-earth couple, the home contained their sexuality, her career ambitions, his drive for success, and their desires for material and emotional comforts.

Yet, like all things worth a struggle, it did not come easy. Ida's choices reflect the constraints that faced postwar women. She sacrificed her plans for "a professional career—I would [have] liked to have been a doctor—but we both agreed that I should finish college, which I did." Following her marriage, there were "obstacles" to her continuing to pursue a career in medicine. It was difficult to combine a professional life with a family. For one thing, the children were primarily her responsibility. She explained:

> My husband works very hard in his business and has many hobbies and friends. The care and problems of children seem to overwhelm him and he admits being an "only" child ill prepared him for the pull and tug of family life. We work closely together on discipline and policies, but he is serious minded and great joy and fun with the children [are] lacking.

If Prince Charming's shining armor tarnished a bit with the years, Ida was not one to complain. She had reasons for feeling contented with the family she helped build:

> I think a *stability* which runs through my life is important. I cannot recall any divorce or separation in my immediate family. We are a rural close-to-the-soil group and I was brought up to take the "bitter with the sweet"—"you made your own bed, now lie in it" philosophy, so it would not occur to me to "run home to mother."

Although marriage was not Ida's first career choice, it eventually became her central occupation: "Marriage is my career. I chose it and now it is up to me to see that I do the job successfully in spite of the stresses and strains of life." She felt that the sacrifices she made were outweighed by the gains—"children, a nice home, companionship, sex, many friends." George also claimed to be "completely satisfied" with the marriage. He wrote that it brought him an "understanding of other people's problems, 'give and take,' love and devotion." He felt that he sacrificed "nothing but so-called personal freedom." Her medical career and his so-called personal freedom seemed to be small prices to pay for the stable family life they created together.[30]

For couples like the Butlers, the gains were worth the sacrifices. But their claims of satisfaction carried a note of resignation. Combining a profession with a family seemed an unrealistic goal for Ida; combining personal freedom with the role of provider seemed equally out of reach for George. They both thought they faced an either/or situation and they opted for their family roles. At first glance, this case appears unremarkable: two people who made a commitment to marriage and made the best of it. But the Butlers' choices and priorities take on a larger significance because they were typical of their generation, which was unique in its commitment to family life. The costs and benefits articulated by the Butlers—and their willingness to settle for less than they bargained for—were conditions they shared with their middle-class peers.

Unlike the Butlers, Joseph and Emily Burns emphasized the costs of family life. Haunted by the legacy of the Great Depression and World War II, Joseph expected marriage to yield the "model home" described by Nixon, where affluence, intimacy, and security would prevail. But the worrisome state of the world was inescapable for him, even in the family. Nevertheless, he articulated the way in which the world situation contributed to the intense familism of the postwar years.

At the time of his engagement, Joseph Burns had high expectations for his future marriage. He had chosen his fiancee because he could trust and respect her, her "past life has been admirable," she did not drink or smoke, and "she is pleasing to the eye." If anything made him uneasy about their prospects for future happiness, it was the fear of another depression: "If the stock market takes another drop . . . business will be all shot." The depression had already made him wary, but his disillusionment would be complete by the end of World War II.

Looking back over his life from the vantage point of the 1950s, Joseph Burns reflected:

As I review the thoughts that were mine at the time of my marriage and as they are now, I would like to give an explanation that should be considered . . . A

young couple, much in love, are looking forward to a happy life in a world that has been held up to them by elders as a beautiful world. Children are brought up by their parents to love God and other children, honesty is a must, obedience to the Ten Commandments and to the golden rule is necessary.

With such training, I started out my life only to find out the whole thing is a farce. Blundering politicians lusting for power and self-glory have defiled what is clean and right, honesty is just a word in the dictionary, love of God—who really believes in God? Love of neighbor . . . get him before he gets you.

I agree it does sound cynical, but let us face the facts. Mankind has been slowly degenerating, especially since 1914, and today, what do we have to look forward to? Civil defense tests, compulsory military training, cold wars, fear of the atomic bomb, the diseases that plague man, the mental case outlook? . . . I submit these things to show how a marriage can be vitally affected as was ours and, therefore, many of my ideals, desires, and, most of all, my goal.

Joseph's cynicism toward the wider world made him place even higher hopes on the family to be a buffer. When world events intruded into that private world, he was devastated: "On December 7, 1941, the question burned in my mind, How can so-called Christian nations tear each other apart again?" Joseph resolved his personal anguish by becoming a Jehovah's Witness. But he continued to cling to the family as security in a chaotic world. Although he claimed that the world situation had dashed his ideals, he still rated his marriage happier than average and said it gave him "the opportunity to think and reason." As far as what he sacrificed for his marriage, he wrote, "Whatever [I gave] up, which probably would have been material possessions, has been offset by the things [I] gained." Joseph's rage at the world was tempered by the benefits of having a family. He believed that the family provided him with security and satisfaction, and fulfilled at least some of the hopes he originally brought to it.

Emily Burns had a different view of their marriage, and found little comfort in her life with Joseph. Although his religious conversion was at the center of her dissatisfaction, her responses raise other issues as well. Emily complained about her husband's pessimism, coldness, aloofness, and lack of a love of beauty. She emphasized that her husband's change of religion had affected his whole life—"[his] attitude toward wife, children, home, friends, and world. Unless I become absorbed in [his religion], we [will come] to a parting of the ways, since I'm an outsider in my own home."

In addition to the major rift over her husband's conversion, Emily enumerated her sacrifices as follows:

1. A way of life (an easy one).
2. All friends of long duration; close relationships.
3. Independence and personal freedom.
4. What seemed to contribute to my personality.
5. Financial independence.
6. Goals in this life.
7. Idea as to size of family.
8. Personal achievements—type changed.
9. Close relationship with brother and mother and grandmother.

Her complaints add up to much more than religious incompatibility. They suggest some of the costs of adhering to the domestic ideology of the postwar era: an emphasis on the nuclear family at the expense of other relatives and friends, loss of personal freedom, financial independence, "goals" and "personal achievements." For Emily, like Ida Butler and others of their generation, marriage and family life led to a narrowing of options and activities. But it was a bargain she accepted because it appeared to be the best route toward achieving other goals in life. Although she claimed that she would not have married the same person if she had to do it over again, she never considered divorce. The benefits she gained in marriage offset her discontent with her spouse. Her list of benefits reveals why she chose the domestic path:

1. The desire to give up all for the love of one.
2. The placing of self last.
3. A harmonious relationship until religion . . . changed this.
4. Two ideal children even though the boy is cold and indifferent like his father. (They have strong religious ties in common.)
5. A comfortable home independent of others.
6. Personal satisfaction if all turns out well.
7. Personal satisfaction in establishing a home.

In this list, Emily mentioned practically all the major subjective compensations that made marriage such an important commitment for so many women at the time. Yet, it was a qualified list. Her dissatisfaction was obvious even in her enumeration of her gains. So she struggled to improve her situation as best she could. While her husband used the last space in the questionnaire to brood over the world situation and explain his turn toward religion, Emily used it to reaffirm her faith in the potential for happiness in marriage. She wrote to Kelly and his research team: "Honestly wish this survey will help future generations to maintain happiness throughout marriage and that your book will become more than cold facts and figures. We have enough such now!"

Emily revealed a submerged feminist impulse that also surfaced in numerous testimonies of her peers. To help her formulate these ideas and influence her husband, she turned to experts:

> Have tried to arouse interest in the woman's point of view by reading parts of Dr. Marie Carmichael Stopes' works pertaining to marriage, to my husband. He says, "Oh, she is just a woman, what does she know about it?" and "How can such things (marriage relationship) be learned from a book?" I have ideas on marriage and when I see the same ideas expressed in print by a person of authority, at least I can see that I am not the only woman or person who thinks "such and such."

Recognizing that her husband was not sympathetic to her rebellion against female subordination, she predicted, "Because of a developing hard, slightly independent attitude on my part, I believe my husband's report on me will be anything but favorable."

Joseph and Emily Burns, in spite of their numerous complaints, stayed together. Through all their disillusionment and anger, they never waivered in their commitment to their imperfect relationship and insisted that their marriage was worth the struggle. Emily chafed against the limits to her freedom and turned to experts to bolster her status within the family. Joseph turned to the home to provide solace from the miseries that surrounded him in the public world. Both had invested a great deal of their personal identities in their domestic roles and were not willing to abandon them. Even if the home did not fulfill their dreams of an emancipated, fulfilling life, it still provided more satisfaction and security than they were likely to find elsewhere. For all their struggles and strains, Joseph and Emily Burns had created something together that met their needs. In 1980, they were still married to each other.[31]

Like the Butlers, the Burnses demonstrate the powerful determination and the considerable sacrifice that went into the creation of the postwar family. Even if the result did not fully live up to their expectations, these husbands and wives never seriously considered bailing out. It is important to consider the limited options and alternatives that these men and women faced. It was not a perfect life, but it was secure and predictable. Forging an independent life outside marriage carried enormous risks of emotional and economic bankruptcy, along with social ostracism. As these couples sealed the psychological boundaries around the family, they also sealed their fates within it.

Decidedly less
happy than
average
Extremely
unhappy

B VI. *Anything Else?*

1. Because marriages are as varied as the personalities of the people who make them, we may not have given you a chance to tell us about everything which is important to understand your particular marriage. If we have missed anything, won't you add it here? (Use additional sheets if necessary.)

2. This last question is one which we are certain will be asked by many of those who read the report of this research: "Did participation in this research have any influence, either positive or negative, on the lives and marriages of the participants?" While we can never be sure of the answer to this question, it would be most interesting to report the opinions of our participants. What is yours?

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

1. "Their Sheltered Honeymoon," *Life*, 10 August 1959, pp. 51–52.

2. Ronald R. Rindfuss and James A. Sweet, *Postwar Fertility Trends and Differentials in the United States* (New York: Academic Press, 1977), p. 191. On the similarities and differences of the demographic patterns of whites and non-whites, *see* Andrew Cherlin, *Marriage, Divorce, Remarriage* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992). For distinctive patterns of black family life, *see*, for example, Herbert Gutman, *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom, 1750–1925* (New York: Pantheon, 1976); Jacqueline Jones, *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow: Black Women, Work and the Family from Slavery to the Present* (New York: Basic Books, 1985); and Carol Stack, *All Our Kin* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974). On the exclusion of blacks from the suburbs, *see* Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985). For comparisons with European demographic patterns, *see* Hugh Carter and Paul C. Glick, *Marriage and Divorce: A Social and Economic Study* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1976), pp. 22–24, 31, and 41.

3. In the historical literature, most references to the boom in family life after the war refer to the return to peace and prosperity. Recent investigations point to the legacy of depression as well. For an excellent summary and critique of scholarly explanations of postwar demographic trends, *see* Cherlin, *Marriage, Divorce, Remarriage*, pp. 33–44.

4. Scholars have begun to uncover the contradictions inherent in the postwar culture, particularly the potential for radically altered gender relations that did not occur. For an insightful analysis, *see* Winifred Breines, "The 1950s: Gender and Some Social Science," *Sociological Inquiry* 56 (Winter 1986), pp. 69–92. The literature on the worries about postwar family life is abundant. *See*, for example, Judson T. Landis and Mary G. Landis, *Building a Successful Marriage* (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1948); and Reuben Hill and Howard Baker, eds., *Marriage and the Family* (Boston: D. C. Heath & Co., 1942). These sources express widespread fears about the future of the family, particularly following the disruptions in gender roles brought about by the war.

5. Cherlin, *Marriage, Divorce, Remarriage*, pp. 1–5.

6. *See*, for example, the account of the study in progress by the Battille Memorial Institute's Health and Population Research Center in Seattle, Washington, in Nadine

Brozan, "What's New about Women Really Isn't," Minneapolis *Star and Tribune*, 1 September 1986, pp. 1C and 2C.

7. There were a few notable exceptions to the all-white suburbs, such as Shaker Heights, Ohio, a suburb outside Cleveland. The residents of Shaker Heights decided to create a racially integrated community, in part by keeping class constant and recruiting prosperous and respectable black families into the neighborhood. The Shaker Heights experiment in racial integration is one of small number of exceptions that prove the rule of postwar residential segregation. *See* Cynthia Mills Richter, "Integrating the Suburban Dream: Shaker Heights, Ohio," (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Minnesota, 1999). For an outstanding examination of the connections between the Cold War and the Civil Rights Movement, *see* Mary Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Equality as Cold War Policy, 1946–1968*, Princeton University Press, forthcoming 2000.

8. *See* Eric Foner, *The Story of American Freedom* (New York: Norton, 1998). For public opinion poll data, *see* Gertrude J. Selznick and Stephen Steinberg, *The Tenacity of Prejudice: Anti-Semitism in Contemporary America* (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), p. 171.

9. Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights*. On racial segregation and redlining in the postwar suburbs, *see* Kenneth Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).

10. For public opinion poll data, *see* Gertrude J. Selznick and Stephen Steinberg, *The Tenacity of Prejudice: Anti-Semitism in Contemporary America* (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), p. 171. Also included was the statement: "Before Negroes are given rights they have to show that they deserve them." 58 percent of northerners and 74 percent of southerners agreed. Other poll data cited is from George H. Gallup, *The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion, 1935–1971*, vols. 1 and 2 (New York: Random House, 1972) pp. 1465–66, 1486–87, 1572–73.

11. In the last decade, scholarship on theories of race and race formation has flourished, with a number of important works that look particularly at the historical construction of whiteness and its impact on race privilege and race relations in the United States. See for example David Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (London: Verso, 1991, and Roediger, ed., *Toward the Abolition of Whiteness: Essays on Race, Politics, and Working Class History* (London: Verso, 1994); Noel Ignatiev, *How The Irish Became White* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995); George Lipsitz, *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: How White People Profit from Identity Politics* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998); Mathew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998); Ruth Frankenberg, *White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993); Karen Brodkin, *How Jews Became White Folks and What That Says about Race in America* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1998).

12. Recent scholarship on the cold war era has begun the process of integration. *See*, for example, Paul Boyer, *By the Bomb's Early Light: American Thought and Culture at the Dawn of the Atomic Age* (New York: Pantheon, 1985); Martin Sherwin, *A World Destroyed: The Atomic Bomb and the Grand Alliance* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1975); Godfrey Hodgson, *America in Our Time: From World War II to Nixon, What Happened and Why* (New York: Random House, 1976); Lawrence S. Wittner, *Cold War America: From Hiroshima to Watergate* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1974); James Gilbert, *Another Chance: Postwar America, 1945–1985* (2nd ed.; Chicago: Dorsey Press, 1986); and William Chafe, *The Unfinished Journey: America Since World War II* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986). A few scholars have begun addressing the problem of the 1950s in new ways. *See*, for example, Leo P. Ribuffo, "Abusing the Fifties," *Worldview*, November 1973, pp. 143–47. Work on women in

the 1950s is beginning to emerge, such as Dennis Lee Frobish, "The Family and Ideology: Cultural Constraints on Women, 1940–1960," Ph.D. dissertation, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1983; Eugenia Kaledin, *Mothers and More: American Women in the 1950s* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1984); and Leila J. Rupp and Verta Taylor, *Survival in the Doldrums: The American Women's Rights Movement, 1945 to the 1960s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987). For opposing views on the postwar era, *see*, for example, Marty Jezer, *The Dark Ages: Life in the United States, 1945–1960* (Boston: South End Press, 1982); and William O'Neill, *American High: The Years of Confidence, 1945–1960* (New York: Free Press, 1986). For the specific connection between sex and politics, *see* John D'Emilio, "The Homosexual Menace: The Politics of Sexuality in Cold War America," paper presented at the annual meeting of the Organization of American Historians, Philadelphia, April 1982; and D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of a Homosexual Minority in the United States, 1940–1970* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983). Recent studies of the family and demographic trends after World War II have offered valuable insights, as well as widely differing interpretations. For example, Richard Easterlin, in *Birth and Fortune: The Impact of Numbers on Personal Welfare* (New York: Basic Books, 1981), explains demographic swings in terms of the relative economic well-being of each generation; but he does not consider the unique historical circumstances that affected each in different ways. Glen Elder, Jr., in *Children of the Great Depression: Social Change in Life Experience* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), focuses on the impact of the thirties by examining the long-term effects of the depression on the people who grew up in that era. But Elder slights the profound impact of the later historical developments that faced this cohort in early adulthood, specifically the changes in men's and women's lives brought about by the war and the cold war. Christopher Lasch, in *Haven in a Heartless World: The Family Besieged* (New York: Basic Books, 1977), portrays the modern family besieged by outside institutions that strip it of its vital functions of educating and socializing children. But Lasch does not explore the motivations of family members themselves, who were active participants in the shift toward reliance on outside experts. Barbara Ehrenreich, in *The Hearts of Men* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1983), explores the revolt against the breadwinner ethic of the 1950s, but leaves us wondering why so many postwar men embraced that role in the first place.

13. For an insightful discussion of the anticommunist preoccupation with "deviant" behavior as a source of national weakness and vulnerability, *see* D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities*, pp. 40–53. For essays that explore the paradoxical nature of the postwar years, *see* Lary May, ed., *Recasting America: Culture and Politics in the Age of Cold War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989).

14. Feminist scholarship has done a great deal to break down the academic barriers between public and private life by demonstrating that the personal is political. The feminist scholarship that has influenced this work is too voluminous to list here. For a discussion of its impact on the writing of American history, *see* Elaine Tyler May, "Expanding the Past: Recent Scholarship on Women in Politics and Work," *Reviews in American History* 10 (December 1982), pp. 216–33. The following are a few pathbreaking historical studies that are particularly relevant to the relationship between gender, family, and politics: Linda Kerber, *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980); Nancy Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood: "Women's Sphere" in New England, 1780–1835*, and *The Grounding of Modern Feminism* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1977 and 1987, respectively); Sara Evans, *Personal Politics: The Roots of Women's Liberation in the Civil Rights Movement and the New Left* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979); Estelle Freedman, *Their Sisters' Keepers: Women's Prison Reform in America, 1830–1930* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1980); Linda Gordon, *Woman's Body, Woman's Right: A Social History of Birth Control in America* (New York: Grossman Publishers,

1976); Mari Jo Buhle, *Women in American Socialism, 1870–1920* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1981); Mary Ryan, *Cradle of the Middle Class: The Family in Oneida County, New York, 1790–1865* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981); and John D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities.* Other studies that provide important insights into post-war America include Robert J. Lifton, *The Broken Connection: On Death and the Continuity of Life* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1979) and Robert N. Bellah, et al., *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985). For studies of theoretical issues pertaining to the relationship between the state, the structure of the economy, and the family in advanced capitalist systems, *see* Eli Zaretsky, *Capitalism, The Family, and Personal Life* (New York: Harper & Row, 1976); Jurgen Habermas, *Legitimation Crisis,* trans. Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1975); and Joel Kovel, "Rationalization and the Family," *Telos* 37 (Fall 1978), pp. 5–21.

15. This research used the *Kelly Longitudinal Study, 1935–1955* data set [made accessible in 1979, raw and machine-readable data files]. These data were collected by E. L. Kelly and donated to the archive of the Henry A. Murray Research Center of Radcliffe College, Cambridge, Massachusetts (Producer and Distributor). This data set is hereafter referred to as the KLS, in the text and notes. Two articles from the study were published: Charles F. Westoff, Elliot G. Meshler, and E. Lowell Kelly, "Preferences in Size of Family and Eventual Fertility Twenty Years After," *Journal of American Sociology* 62 (March 1957), pp. 491–97; and E. Lowell Kelly, "Constancy of the Adult Personality," *American Psychologist* 10 (1955), pp. 659–81. An earlier article, based on a different data base, suggests the direction of Kelly's research in the early years of the study: Kelly, "Marital Compatibility as Related to Personality Traits of Husbands and Wives as Rated by Self and Spouse," *Journal of Social Psychology* 13 (1941), pp. 193–98. Kelly spent years gathering, organizing, coding, and entering into machine-readable form an enormous amount of data. He then became involved in other projects without publishing a major work summarizing the findings of his study. Quotes from the KLS in the text have been edited slightly to correct spelling and punctuation, and occasionally grammar, since responses were often written in haste. Also, all names used are fictitious.

16. Kelly's data are a social historian's dream, but they are also something of a nightmare. Kelly devised his questionnaires for his purposes, not mine. As one among a growing number of social scientists who were interested in the scientific determinants of marital compatibility, he hoped to identify long-term patterns of marital adjustment that could be used as predictors of successful marriage in the future. His assumptions were implicitly ahistorical, since his study was based on the premise that personality characteristics are as likely to surface in one generation as another, regardless of historical circumstances. Accordingly, he believed that marriage is an institution grounded in personality adjustment, not social or cultural change. My assumptions are the opposite.

The questions Kelly asked locate his study in its era, in spite of the survey's presumed timeless objectivity. Kelly assumed, for example, that distinct domestic gender roles were universally endorsed. Thus, he asked women to rate their adequacy as "cooks" and "homemakers" and men to rate themselves as "handymen" and "providers." In addition to these value judgments, the questionnaires focused exclusively on personal life. There were literally hundreds of questions concerning the respondents' sex lives, but—remarkably—not one item about their political views, not even party affiliation. Kelly and his data, then, were raw material for this study, for they provide evidence of certain assumptions prevalent at the time. It is nevertheless frustrating to draw on a collection of data so rich in some areas and so silent in others. The problem is unavoidable, since my intention is to break down the traditional disciplinary division between public and private lives—a division that provided the guiding assumptions for scholars such as Kelly.

17. *See* Elaine Tyler May, *Barren in the Promised Land: Childless Americans and the Pursuit of Happiness* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997), especially Chapter 4, "The Baby Craze."

18. Brett Harvey, *The Fifties: A Women's Oral History* (New York: HarperCollins, 1993), p. 175. *See* also Lillian Faderman, *Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers: A History of Lesbian Life in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991).

19. For a discussion of Kennan's articulation of the containment theory of foreign policy, *see* John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of Postwar American National Security Policy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), pp. 302–4.

20. Some of the recent scholarship on the 1950s, including the power of the domestic ideal, the risks of deviating from it, the strains within it, and the efforts to resist it, include: Winifred Breines, *Young, White, and Miserable: Growing Up Female in the Fifties* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992); William Chafe, *The Unfinished Journey: American Since World War II*, Second Edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); Andrew J. Cherlin, *Marriage, Divorce, Remarriage* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992); Barbara Ehrenreich, *The Hearts of Men: American Dreams and the Flight from Commitment* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1983); Betty G. Farrell, *Family: The Making of an Idea, an Institution, and a Controversy in American Culture* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1999); Peter Filene, *Him/Her/Self: Gender Identities in Modern America*, Third Edition (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998); William Graebner, *Coming of Age in Buffalo: Youth and Authority in the Postwar Era* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990); Susan Lynn, *Progressive Women in Conservative Times: Racial Justice, Peace, and Feminism, 1945 to the 1960s* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1992); Joanne Meyerowitz, "Beyond the Feminine Mystique: A Reassessment of Postwar Mass Culture, 1946–1958," *The Journal of American History* 79, 4 (March 1993); Joanne Meyerowitz, ed., *Not June Cleaver: Women and Gender in Postwar America, 1945–1960* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994); Melody L. Miller, et al., "Motherhood, Multiple Roles, and Maternal Well-Being: Women of the 1950s." *Gender and Society* 5, 4 (December 1991); Steven Mintz and Susan Kellogg, *Domestic Revolutions: A Social History of American Family Life* (New York: Free Press, 1988); Andrea L. Press, *Women Watching Television: Gender, Class, and Generation in the American Television Experience* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991); Leila J. Rupp and Verta Taylor, *Survival in the Doldrums: The American Women's Rights Movement, 1945 to the 1960s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987); Arlene Skolnick, *Embattled Paradise: The American Family in the Age of Uncertainty* (New York: Basic Books, 1991); Rickie Solinger, *Wake Up Little Susie: Single Pregnancy and Race Before Roe V. Wade* (New York: Routledge, 1992); Lynn Spigel, *Make Room for TV: Television and the Family Ideal in Postwar America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

21. For a discussion of this therapeutic ethos, *see* Bellah et al., *Habits of the Heart.*

CHAPTER 1: CONTAINMENT AT HOME

1. Quotes from the debate between Vice President Richard Nixon and Soviet premier Nikita Khrushchev in Moscow are drawn from "The Two Worlds: A Day-Long Debate," *New York Times*, 25 July 1959, pp. 1, 3; "When Nixon Took On Khrushchev," a report of the meeting, and the text of Nixon's address at the opening of the American National Exhibition in Moscow on 24 July 1959, printed in "Setting Russia Straight on Facts about the U.S.," *U.S. News and World Report*, 3 August 1959, pp. 36–39, 70–72; and "Encounter," *Newsweek*, 3 August 1959, pp. 15–19. For a discussion of the propaganda battles of the Cold War, which

included an analysis of the "kitchen debate," see Walter L. Hixson, *Parting the Curtain: Propaganda, Culture, and the Cold War*, 1945–1961 (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), especially pp. 176, 179–80.

2. "Setting Russia Straight," *U.S. News and World Report.*

3. Eric Johnston, *We're All In It* (New York: Dutton, 1948), pp. 60–61. *See also* Johnston, *America Unlimited* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1944), p. 234.

4. Susan Hartman, *The Home Front and Beyond: American Women in the 1940s* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1982), p. 165. U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1970* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1975), part 1, pp. 49, 54, 55, 64; John Modell, et al., "The Timing of Marriage in the Transition to Adulthood: Continuity and Change," in *Turning Points: Historical and Sociological Essays on the Family*, supplement to *American Journal of Sociology* 84 (1978), pp. 120–50; Paul C. Glick, "A Demographer Looks at American Families," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 37 (February 1975), pp. 15–26; and Andrew Cherlin, *Marriage, Divorce, Remarriage* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981), pp. 22–23.

5. No widely read examination of women's oppression in the 1950s appeared until Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: Dell, 1963). William H. Whyte, *The Organization Man* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1956), p. 267; David Riesman, *The Lonely Crowd: A Study of the Changing American Character* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1950). *See also* George Lipsitz, *Class and Culture in Cold War America: 'A Rainbow at Midnight'* (South Hadley, Mass.: J. F. Bergin, 1982), pp. 7, 88–95; C. Wright Mills, *White Collar: The American Middle Classes* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956).

6. The survey of housewives is reported in Lipsitz, *Class and Culture*, p. 94; attitudes of middle-class housewives are drawn from responses of wives to open-ended questions in the 1955 Kelly Longitudinal Study (KLS), Henry Murray Research Center, Radcliffe College, Cambridge, Mass. For a detailed description of the KLS, see the Introduction and Appendices to this volume.

7. *See* Martin Sherwin, *A World Destroyed: The Atom Bomb and the Grand Alliance* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1975); John Lewis, *A Critical Appraisal of Postwar National Security Policy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982); Truman's belief about World War III is discussed in William Chafe, *The Unfinished Journey: America Since World War II* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), pp. 248–51.

8. George H. Gallup, *The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion*, 1935–1971, vols. 1 and 2 (New York: Random House, 1972), pp. 916, 869, 929, 950, 1434.

9. Paul Boyer, *By the Bomb's Early Light: American Thought and Culture at the Dawn of the Atomic Age* (New York: Pantheon, 1985). On the unrealistic nature of civil defense strategies, *see* the excellent documentary film by The Archives Project, *The Atomic Cafe*, 1982, Thorn Emi Video. Robert J. Lifton, *Broken Connections: On Death and the Continuity of Life* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1979), p. 338. Data from the poll appear in Boyer, *By the Bomb's Early Light*, p. 335.

10. Conversation with Jewish writer Ruth F. Brin, 11 April 1987, Minneapolis, Minn.

11. Mildred Gilman, "Why They Can't Wait to Wed," *Parents Magazine*, November 1958, p. 46.

12. Ebony photo-editorial, "Goodbye Mammy, Hello Mom, " Ebony, March 1947, pp. 36–37.

13. Xiaolan Bao, "When Women Arrived: The Transformation of New York's Chinatown," in Joanne Meyerowitz, ed., *Not June Cleaver: Women and Gender in Postwar America, 1945–1960* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994), pp. 19–36. For a powerful comment on Japanese-American experiences in the wake of internment, *see* John Okada's

novel *No-No Boy* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1980).

14. Judith Smith shows that this process began before 1940 and intensified after the war. *See* Judith Smith, *Family Connections: A History of Italian and Jewish Immigrant Lives in Providence, Rhode Island, 1900–1940* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985), pp. 107–23. Whyte, *The Organization Man*, p. 284. *See also*: Kenneth Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).

15. Whyte, *The Organization Man*, pp. 268–70.

16. George Lipsitz, "The Meaning of Memory: Family, Class and Ethnicity in Early Network Television Programs," *Cultural Anthropology* 1 (November 1986), pp. 355–87. *Marty*, 1955, screenplay by Paddy Chayefsky.

17. For an excellent analysis of the television and film versions of *Marty*, see Judith E. Smith, "Ethnicity, Class and Sexuality: Popular Conceptions of Gender in *Marty*," paper presented at Gender: Literary and Cinematic Representations, Florida State University, 1986.

18. *See*, for example, Mathew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998); Ruth Frankenberg, *White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993); Karen Brodkin, *How Jews Became White Folks and What That Says About Race in America* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1998).

19. Whyte, *The Organization Man*, pp. 287, 300, 380; William O'Neill, *American High: The Years of Confidence, 1945–1960* (New York: Free Press, 1986), pp. 212–15; Chafe, *Unfinished Journey*, pp. 120–21. For an excellent discussion of the role of the suburban synagogue in the community life of upwardly mobile assimilating Jews, *see* Riv-Ellen Prell, *Recreating Judaism in America: An Anthropology of Contemporary Prayer* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1988).

20. Of course, the cult of the professional or expert did not emerge suddenly after World War II, although it was institutionalized in new ways then, especially during the Eisenhower years. *See*, for example, Burton J. Bledstein, *The Culture of Professionalism: The Middle Class and the Development of Higher Education in America* (New York: Norton, 1976); Terrence Ball, "The Politics of Social Science," in Lary May, ed., *Recasting America: Culture and Politics in the Age of Cold War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989); Robert Griffith, "Dwight D. Eisenhower and the Corporate Commonwealth," *American Historical Review* 87 (February 1982), pp 87–122; and Joseph Veroff, et al., *Mental Health in America: Patterns of Help-Seeking from 1957 to 1976* (New York: Basic Books, 1981), pp. 8, 10, 226; Christopher Lasch, *Haven in a Heartless World: The Family Besieged* (New York: Basic Books, 1977). For the professionalization of motherhood through expertise, *see* Nancy Pottishman Weiss, "Mother, the Invention of Necessity: Dr. Benjamin Spock's *Baby and Child Care*," *American Quarterly* 29 (Winter 1977), pp. 519–46. On Peale, *see* Donald Meyer, *The Positive Thinkers: A Study of the American Quest for Health, Wealth, and Personal Power from Mary Baker Eddy to Norman Vincent Peale* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1965). Quote from *Look* magazine is from an undated, unpaginated clipping in the Social Welfare History Archives, University of Minnesota (SWHA).

21. Joseph Veroff, et al., *The Inner American: A Self-Portrait from 1957 to 1976* (New York: Basic Books, 1981), p. 194.

22. Aggregate data from the KLS. For a detailed explanation of the KLS, *see* the Introduction to this volume.

23. For an interesting discussion of Spock's struggle to come to terms with an unsettling world, *see* William Graebner, "The Unstable World of Benjamin Spock: Social Engineering in a Democratic Culture, 1917–1950," *Journal of American History* 67 (December 1980), pp. 612–29. For a social scientist's criticism of social science at the time, *see* Robert S. Lynd,

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24. On the decline of bachelor culture in the postwar years, see Howard P. Chudacoff, *The Age of the Bachelor: Creating an American Subculture* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1999), especially Chapter 8. Quote is on p. 252.

25. Quotes are from responses to open-ended question #B.V.7., 1955 survey, KLS, "Looking back over your life, what did you have to sacrifice or give up because of your marriage?"

26. Responses to #B.V.7, 1955 survey, KLS.

27. Ibid.

28. Responses to open-ended question #B.V.8., 1955 survey, KLS, "Looking back over your life, what has marriage brought you that you could not have gained without your marriage?"

29. Ibid.

30. Case 158, KLS. All names are fictitious; the KLS respondents were identified in the survey only by number.

31. Case 290, KLS.

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1. Case 145, KLS.

2. Case 145, KLS.

3. Case 147, KLS.

4. Case 83, KLS.

5. Susan M. Hartmann, *The Home Front and Beyond: American Women in the 1940s* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1982), pp. 16–19; and Sherna Berger Gluck, *Rosie the Riveter Revisited: Women, the War, and Social Change* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1987), pp. 13–14.

6. William Chafe, *The Unfinished Journey: America Since World War II* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), pp. 8–9; Jacqueline Jones, *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow: Black Women, Work, and the Family from Slavery to the Present* (New York: Basic Books, 1985), pp. 199, 209–10.

7. Paul Popenoe, as quoted in John Modell, "Institutional Consequences of Hard Times: Engagement in the 1930s," in Joan Aldous and David M. Klein, eds., *Social Stress and Family Development* (New York: Guilford Press, 1988).

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10. Robert S. Lynd and Helen Merrell Lynd, *Middletown in Transition* (New York: Harcourt Brace & World, 1937), p. 11; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Historical Statistics of the United States*, part 1, p. 133.

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12. "What Hollywood Is Thinking," *Photoplay* 52 (December 1938), pp. 17, 89.

13. On the twenties, see Lary May, *Screening Out the Past: The Birth of Mass Culture and the Motion Picture Industry, 1896–1929* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980). On the portrayal of marriage in films in the twenties, *see* Elaine Tyler May, *Great Expectations: Marriage and Divorce in Post-Victorian America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), Chapter. 4.

14. Steven Lassonde, "A Survey of Major Themes in *Photoplay* Magazine, 1920–1960," unpublished paper, University of Minnesota, 1984.

15. David Seabury (psychologist), "Why Can't the Stars Stay Married?" *Photoplay* 51 (December 1937), p. 81.

16. Jane Hampton, "Lupe and Johnny Were Lovers," *Photoplay* 45 (June 1934), pp. 58, 100.

17. Jeanette MacDonald, "Up the Ladder with Jeanette," *Photoplay* 43 (December 1932), pp. 77 and 102–3; Sara Hamilton, "The Stormy Heart of Margaret Sullivan," *Photoplay* 49 (June 1936), p. 99; Joan Crawford, "Fan Experiences With the Stars: Joan Crawford—My ideal," *Photoplay* 50 (December 1936), p. 16.

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19. *Blonde Venus*, 1931, starring Marlene Dietrich, directed by Erich Von Sternberg.

20. *His Girl Friday*, 1940, directed by Howard Hawks, remake of *Front Page*, 1931, screenplay by Ben Hecht. In the 1931 version, the hero is a newspaperman, Hilde Johnson, whose boss will not let him marry and quit the paper.

21. David O. Selznick, producer, *Gone with the Wind*, 1939.

22. *See* Lois Scharf, *To Work and To Wed: Female Employment, Feminism, and the Great Depression* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1980), pp. 46, 111.

23. Winifred D. Wandersee, *Women's Work and Family Values, 1920–1940* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981); and Wandersee, "The Economics of Middle-Income Family Life: Working Women during the Great Depression," *Journal of American History* 65 (June 1978), pp. 60–74; *see also* Susan Ware, *Beyond Suffrage: Women in the New Deal* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981); and Scharf, *To Work and To Wed*, Chapter 5; Linda Gordon, *Pitied But Not Entitled: Single Mothers and the History of Welfare* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1994).

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28. Milkman, "Woman's Work," pp. 73–91 and 95–97; and Ware, *Holding Their Own*, p. 6.