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WA2

10/23/2017

**Tentative Title:**

Sex, Money, and Food – Mass Consumption and Immediate Gratification in 1950s America

**Thesis:**

The events in 1950s America contributed to the society-wide push towards mass consumption, immediate gratification, and the ever-revitalizing American Dream in specific reference to money and the use of credit cards, sex and the rise of Playboy, as well as food and the exponential influx in the fast food industry. I am going to try to analyze at least one film/documentary/video for each sphere: sex; money; and food. I have only found one such film however, “Fast Food Nation,” which you happened to reference in class as a good source for a topic related to one such as mine.

**Explanation of Thesis:**

The use of credit cards and the concept of “buy now— pay later” brought upon a more solidified society-wide consumer mindset and encouraged immediate gratification. This also planted the seeds for future economic difficulties within American society; the increased widespread acceptance and normality of debt within American society redefined economic “stability” and success. This theme only is multiplied and dramatized through the decades.

The wider acceptance and meshing of sex/sexuality within society and the public sphere represented the huge shift towards modern promiscuity and a weakening of traditional modest ideals. The now wider availability of licentious material made indistinct what should and should not be displayed and also blurred where and when appropriate situations for this material was. The overall takeaway of the founding and society-wide acceptance of Playboy Magazine, made known to all Americans that immediate gratification, the concept that you can get “what you want, when you want, wherever you want it,” was supported and easy— all you had to do was pick up a magazine.

The rise of the fast-food industry represented the growing dissociation with the traditional structured meal-time as well as the growing instability of familial and societal roles of the time. For example, if the mothers weren’t the meal-makers, who was? Better yet, who couldn’t be? The increased occurrences of families eating out and buying their food out-of-home directly influenced the exponential rise of the food industry, and moreover, its expansive employment opportunities for Americans across the country.

**Credit Cards:**

Mandell, Lewis, and Sarah Holmes. “Diners Club Begins a New Industry.” *Salem Press Encyclopedia*, Jan. 2017. *EBSCOhost*, eds.b.ebscohost.com/eds/detail/detail?vid=0&sid=e3ccafde-7df3-419e-b303-e3bb32f02e7d%40sessionmgr102&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWRzLWxpdmUmc2NvcGU9c2l0ZQ%3d%3d#db=ers&AN=89314354.

Lewis Mandell and Sarah Holmes explicate the origins of the modern day credit card. They also detail how it impacted the decade of its founding, the 1950s, as well as the following decades. It discusses the concepts roots in the dining industry as well as its speedy adoption throughout other industries such as clothing, entertainment, and electronic amenities. They provide consistent documentation of their all their sources from all well-known/reliable publishers. Some of which included (but were not limited to) the Ann Arbor Institute for Social Research, Forbes, MIT Press, and Consumer Reports. The information provided in this article will help me to illustrate the beginnings of, what some might call, the Card of Consumerism –a concept essential for an exposition describing the consumer culture and mass consumption in America.

Lindquist, Peter D. "Establishment and Expansion of Banking." *Salem Press Encyclopedia*, Jan. 2016. EBSCO*host*, <http://eds.b.ebscohost.com/eds/detail/detail?vid=3&sid=37bb3b4d-3ff7-4d93-9fc4-c55c956d4f08%40sessionmgr101&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWRzLWxpdmUmc2NvcGU9c2l0ZQ%3d%3d#AN=89550903&db=ers>

Notes:

Discusses an indepth history of banking in the United States and gives more reasons why credit cards were started and supported so widely. (Military and post-war influence)

Summary of Content:

Relevance to Topic:

Sources Strengths:

Sources Weakness:

Useful Because:

Logemann, Jan. “Different Paths to Mass Consumption: Consumer Credit in the United States and West Germany during the 1950s and '60s.” *Journal of Social History*, vol. 41, no. 3, 2008, pp. 525–559. EBSCO*host*, eds.a.ebscohost.com/eds/detail/detail?vid=3&sid=a7cbe8e2-cb3f-4321-bcd5-00e2480db11d%40sessionmgr4010&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWRzLWxpdmUmc2NvcGU9c2l0ZQ%3d%3d#AN=31639604&db=a9h.

Notes: Correlating mass consumption to finances and credit spurring from WW2 postwar society in Germany and the United States. My focus will be on the US consumerism and consumption patterns.

The topic of mass consumption is referred to but not as frequently specifically addressed within articles and books discussing shifts in American culture over time. Jan Logemann defies these standards in her article, “Different Paths to Mass Consumption: Consumer Credit in the United States and West Germany during the 1950s and '60s.” She connects her claims of the exponential rise of mass consumption with the development of consumer credit as well as some of the keynote major events in the 1950s and 1960s. The article reiterates my argument on an incremental scale, seeing as it analyzes the effects credit, but does not include the influence of the food industry or Playboy. Logemann also describes the push to consumerism and consumption within West Germany in her paper, however I will be focusing only on the US and its influences.

**General Consumer Attitudes:**

Jundt, Thomas. *Greening the Red, White, and Blue: the Bomb, Big Business, and Consumer Resistance in Postwar America*. Oxford University Press, 2014. ISBN: 9780199378562

Notes: Discusses the origins of environmentalism and its root in the defiance of emerging big business and consumer attitudes of the 1950s. (<http://www.oxfordscholarship.com.ezproxy.coloradomesa.edu/view/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199791200.001.0001/acprof-9780199791200-chapter-1> or <http://eds.a.ebscohost.com/eds/detail/detail?vid=0&sid=0e04d180-2fcd-4cbb-96b4-a4753d5270d6%40sessionmgr4010&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWRzLWxpdmUmc2NvcGU9c2l0ZQ%3d%3d#AN=cmu.b42831805&db=cat01465a> )

Thomas Jundt illustrates the beginnings of Environmentalism and its roots in mid-20th century American citizen defiance against the emerging big-business/consumerist culture. The frequency of the federal government during the previous generations to put full confidence in economic growth as the nation’s primary goal regardless of environmental or human-health repercussions, compounded with the steady creeping rise of powerful corporations started to cause deep-rooted tensions to arise among some members of the population—thus forming the Environmentalists. Though my paper will not be focusing on the neglect of the environment by large companies and the government, it does center on the public’s reaction to the shift in consumer attitudes. These attitudes are the less popular of the advertised viewpoints because companies didn’t want to show people defying the new shift to consumerism. I will be able to apply the information provided in this exposition about the Environmentalists’ defiant viewpoint and reactions to and of big business and mass consumption.

"A Look Back at the World in the 1950S & 1960S." *Journal of Property Management*, vol. 73, no. 3, May/Jun2008, pp. 40-41. EBSCO*host*, http://eds.b.ebscohost.com/eds/detail/detail?vid=4&sid=9b03cb3c-16e5-4bf3-be3b-5b8c24633100%40sessionmgr104&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWRzLWxpdmUmc2NvcGU9c2l0ZQ%3d%3d#AN=32184104&db=bth

Notes: Infographic providing important milestones and statistics of 1950-1959 contrasted against and added to the milestones of 1960-1969.

Summary of Content:

Relevance to Topic:

Sources Strengths:

Sources Weakness:

Useful Because:

**Sex/Playboy:**

Fraterrigo, Elizabeth. *Playboy and the Making of the Good Life in Modern America*. Oxford University Press, 2009.

Notes: Analyzes the addition of Playboy into society and how it changed/shaped the different aspects of culture in 1950s America.

(<http://eds.b.ebscohost.com/eds/detail/detail?vid=0&sid=58c009ce-94e5-4563-8ed9-cc2b69f31631%40sessionmgr104&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWRzLWxpdmUmc2NvcGU9c2l0ZQ%3d%3d#AN=cmu.b29722809&db=cat01465a>

Summary of Content:

In this book, Elizabeth Fraterrigo provides a breadth of information and analysis into the 1950s founded, but still ever-popular magazine, Playboy. She discusses the magazines early days, as well as mentions and briefly elaborates upon the short airing Playboy TV show, “Playboy’s Penthouse.” Her main claims follow the general notion that Playboy redefined the successful—and “good life”— for men in America during the 1950s and for all succeeding generations as well. The portrayals in the magazine blurred the gender roles/authorities and helped establish the uneven, and inappropriately enforced hierarchy within society. Playboy displayed a world “in which expensive goods and sexually available women were plentiful, obligations were few, and if one worked hard enough, one could enjoy abundant leisure and consumption.” (Fraterrigo) The conclusions made in this book will help me to demonstrate my claims about the shift in the mindset to mass consumption and immediate gratification through the avenue of the advertisement of sex and leisure.

Mock, Erin Lee. “Getting Comfortable: Sex, Reading, and Postwar Adjustment in 1950s Playboy.” *Journal of Popular Culture*, Apr. 2017, pp. 363–388., doi:10.1111/jpcu.12542.

Notes: Discusses the appropriateness and acceptance of playboy within 1950s postwar society

The introduction of the explicit material within Playboy brought up several controversies of the appropriateness of its place within day-to-day society. People were now casually viewing advertisements that were flashing women who were literally flashing the camera—this phenomenon was bizarre and unparalleled in society up to the time Playboy was released. Erin Lee Mock discusses this transformation of acceptance and appropriateness of explicit material within the post-war society of the 1950s. She focuses her argument on soldiers returning from home and their re-entrance into this shifting atmosphere that was modern mid-20th century America. For the purpose of supporting my argument, I will be analyzing her claims about the demand for the content within Playboy and how this influenced the backing of immediate gratification and free-will mass consumption of whatever one might want, including sex and casual pleasure, which was new to this era.

**Food:**

McDonald, Bryan L. “Fixed Stomachs and Convenience Foods: Abundance and Food in the 1950s.” Oxford University Press, *Food Power: The Rise and Fall of the Postwar American Food System*, 2017. doi:10.1093/acprof:oso/9780190600686.003.0003.

Notes: Discusses the transformation in the food/agricultural industry in the 1950s with the rise of convenience foods.

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Scholliers, Peter. "Convenience Foods. What, Why, and When." *Appetite*, vol. 94, Nov. 2015, pp. 2-6. EBSCO*host*, doi:10.1016/j.appet.2015.02.017.

Notes: Discusses the history of convenience foods, why they were invented and so widely accepted, and how their emergence effected American culture. (<http://www.sciencedirect.com.ezproxy.coloradomesa.edu/science/article/pii/S0195666315000641>)

Peter Scholliers highlights the past and present studies of convenience foods—an umbrella term which comprises eating in, the meal, as well as industrially manufactured food— in this cohesive article. He uses Google Scholar to map the usage of several convenience-food related key terms and phrases since the conception of convenience dining around the 1950s. This article is prepared on behalf of FOST, the Social and Cultural Food Studies unit out of Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB), a group which “studies all aspects of food since the late eighteenth century and up to today.” (Scholliers) Taking this into account, I feel confident using this source as a primary resource for a lot of my fast-food historical information.

Liebman, Roy. "Food Retail Industry." *Salem Press Encyclopedia*, January 2015. EBSCO*host*,

http://eds.a.ebscohost.com/eds/detail/detail?vid=0&sid=ac5728f4-032e-4d53-a277-f87dc052507f%40sessionmgr4010&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWRzLWxpdmUmc2NvcGU9c2l0ZQ%3d%3d#AN=89088160&db=ers.

Notes: Key statistics about the food industry and its growth during the 1950s time period.

Roy Liebman summarizes the history, significance, and impact of the retail food industry over time spanning from as early as 1859 to present time. He notes prominent retailers and their influence on the industry and America as a whole. Liebman specifically references several important data figures showing the magnitude of American citizen employment the food industry constituted. Accumulating this information into my argument, my readers will have the ability to better understand the persuasion of the American government and big business to support the spread of the food retail business.

Consumption became a cultural prerogative, mass consumption the prerogative of mass culture. (Gartman, 1994:6).

Mass Consumption became further embedded in the American psyche in post war America as a means to creating post war abundance, but not only was abundance a necessary requirement for recovery after the war but on a more fundamental level it became an ideological weapon to be used in the Cold War. Mass consumption, both domestically and abroad, of American goods became the standard bearer for capitalism, egalitarianism and liberal democracy against Communism (Rupert, 1995:160).

The argument set forth here is that mass consumption has changed American society at a more fundamental and structural level. So far it has been argued that society has gradually moved away from mass consumption as a civic duty to mass consumption as a personal act of self expression and that the marketing industry has been successful in identifying values that has allowed mass production to successfully sell its products to an individuated mass market.

<http://www.e-ir.info/2012/10/18/mass-consumption-and-meaningful-democratic-politics/>

Playboy Transgender Women