

The Era of Relevancy

1970s television

RTF 308 // Kathy Cacace



Key concepts

Television advertising in the 1970s

Era of relevancy

Norman Lear

Archie Bunker and *All in the Family*

Polysemy

Good Times

Mike Evans, Eric Monte & Esther Rolle

The Mary Tyler Moore Show

Chico & the Man





1950s Coca-Cola ad



1961 Coca-Cola ad

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Classic

TV

Ads.com

I'd Like to Buy the
World a Coke, 1971





Take a moment to think

How are the 1950s/60s Coke commercials different than the 1971 Coke commercial?

Who is the 1971 commercial aimed at?

Why this shift?

approx. 1960



approx. 1970





Coke Commercial or *Midsommar*?
A parlor game that guarantees
whole MINUTES of fun for all
ages!

The 1970s are often called television's “era of relevancy”

Advertisers no longer want to appeal to *everyone*

Want to target 18-34 demographic (more \$\$, fewer habits)

This market is younger, more liberal, and more political

What kinds of shows do they want to watch?

Shows that are *relevant* to their lives & beliefs

A black and white portrait of Norman Lear. He is wearing a light-colored fedora-style hat and round-rimmed glasses. He is looking slightly to the right of the camera with a thoughtful expression. He is wearing a light-colored, possibly white, button-down shirt. The background is out of focus, showing what appears to be a crowd of people.

Norman Lear

All in the Family

Sanford & Son

The Jeffersons

Good Times

Maude

One Day at a Time (1970s)

One Day at a Time (Netflix)

All in the Family

(1971 to 1979)

Archie Bunker (main char.)

He is overtly a bigot

Stands in for a generation

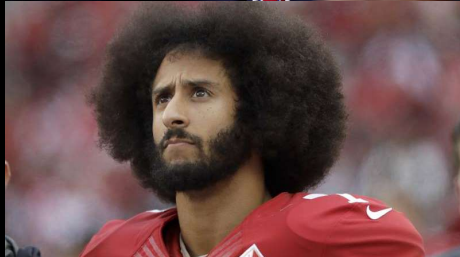
“Meathead” = counterculture





polysemy

**the capacity for a sign or
symbol to have multiple
meanings**





Good Times

(1974 to 1979)

Spinoff of Lear's show *Maude*

Follows Florida, Maude's housekeeper

All Black cast (first since *Amos 'n' Andy*)

Evans family lives in high-rise tenement

Family deals with real issues:

Unemployment

Working poor

Racism

Evictions

Rent parties

Muggings & crime



Mike Evans
(1949-2006)



Eric Monte

These shows weren't just thanks to Norman Lear, however. **Eric Monte & Mike Evans** were writers and creators of *Good Times*.

Esther Rolle

(1920-1998)



Snap Miss Rolle of J.J.: “He’s 18 and he doesn’t work. He can’t read and write. He doesn’t think. The show didn’t start out to be that. Michael’s role (finely etched by the 14-year-old Ralph Carter) of a bright, thinking child has been subtly reduced. Little by little—with the help of the artist, I suppose, because they couldn’t do that to me—they have made him (J.J.) more stupid and enlarged the role.” Negative images, says Miss Rolle, “have been quietly slipped in on us through the character of the oldest child. I resent the imagery that says to black kids that you can make it by standing on the corner saying ‘Dyn-o-mite!’” Miss Rolle says she does not want Walker’s “humor and funny little ways cut out, but they can be real. I think there’s a happy medium here somewhere. “Bad Times on the Good Times Set” *Ebony* (September 1975)

Chico and the Man

(1974 to 1978)

Latinx main character

Set in a Mexican-Am. Neighborhood*

(*First ever...still rare!)

**Culture clash between Chico & boss
Stars Freddie Prinze until death**





CHICO AND THE MAN

Chico and the Man
(1974-1978)

Theme song by Jose Feliciano



The Mary Tyler Moore Show

(1970 to 1977)

Played wife on *The Dick Van Dyke Show*

Mary Richards (character) is single

MTM Enterprises (production company)

Hill Street Blues

St. Elsewhere

Newhart & The Bob Newhart Show

Focused on her career
“Work family”
***Not* domestic sit-com**



Single best friend, Rhoda
Both struggle with dating
Friendship = main partnership





The era of relevancy is about a new target audience

Were these shows progressive?

Why did these shows appeal to a large 18-34 demographic?

Can social messages and advertising tactics coexist?